# Some working-class families and their struggles over education: How can we know what is real?

RON COLLIER.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Nottingham Trent University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

October 2001.

## Contents.

## Acknowledgements.

Woven into the fabric of this dissertation is an important strand that I see as fundamental for our personal, social and cultural development. I refer to this as the search for common ground and its achievement involves not only areas of agreement but also the acknowledgement and acceptance of differences. I take full responsibility for the construction and outcome of this enterprise, including its shortcomings and mistakes. However and significantly, in the preparation and evolution of this project I have been fortunate and privileged in engaging with a number of people contributing towards the development of my ideas.

I offer my appreciation and thanks to my two tutors, Professors Morwenna Griffiths and John Bastiani, for their challenges, advice, guidance, human care and support; to my former tutor, Steve Bennett, for advice and support at a crucial stage of earlier development; to my fellow Ph.D./M.Phil. part-time student colleagues, Max Biddulph, Karen Chantrey Wood, Barbara Cross, Simone Galea, Jill Gaunt, Margaret Simms, Sue Sorrell, Lydia Spencely and Carlos Thrale, for sharing with me about their work and accepting the sharing of my work in return; to the pupils, teachers, parents and school governors of Lowfield for the trust they put in me and for the privilege of working with them. Lastly, but not least, to Annie, my wife, for the years of commitment and support in the face of the necessary isolation of great wodges of my time and to whom I dedicate this literary account.

## Abstract.

My study is an account of two journeys, one ethnographic and the other epistemological. The first is set within the context of a history of educational disadvantage that has persisted in this country since the implementation of the 1944 Education Act. My first journey leads on from this and I explore the relationship between teachers from an infant, a junior and a comprehensive school with the children and parents from 25 families living in a particular working-class community for whom the schools provide education. The teachers consider that these families do not benefit from education and wish to change this. The research question asks: what are the practical problems facing schools in their communities as understood by the families and teachers concerned? I engage in a series of discourses and dialogues with the teachers, families and some school governors in order to draw up a map of my own of this terrain. These reveal that they, too, have their own maps. Additionally, I consult the comprehensive school's GCSE examination results and disciplinary records. I conclude that not only the children from these 25 families but the pupils from this whole community are failing to access effective education. I argue that this community is experiencing the effects of cultural disintegration and that the pupils' failure to access effective education stems from cultural misunderstanding and disaffection between schools and community. I make recommendations for changes to the schools aimed at countering this, based on evidence I have accumulated. I conclude by proposing that the results of my study have major implications concerning present central government policy and for the selection and training of teachers.

I begin to have doubts concerning the fit between the theoretical underpinning for this study and the emerging data. Subsequently, I experience a crisis in my professional/personal life that makes me question my capacity to observe and interpret effectively. A further encounter with the philosopher, David Hume, calls into question the possibility of knowing about the world around us. This motivates me to embark upon my second, epistemological, journey in an attempt to develop a more applicable theoretical template for my map and for those of others I encounter on my ethnographic journey. The question addressed on this journey asks: is it possible to know about what is real within such a context of overlapping, differing and conflicting perspectives that also include my own?

In Part Two I explore the nature of socially constructed reality, emerging from those sceptical arguments that question our capacity to know and to understand. The developing theory is continually focused back upon the data from my ethnographic inquiry in Part One. The theory also reflects back on to itself and continually challenges its own premise. I make use of the epithet 'we', in Part Two, as a means of situating the theoretical development into a more public arena. This reminds the reader to check continuously regarding common ground between us. The theory affirms that what is real for us is formed at the unpredictable interface between our beliefs, our knowledge/thoughts about our constructions of our worlds and our experiences. It confirms the collective nature of our constructions and the centrality of culture that enables us to become identified with and participate in our social milieu as a means of involving us in the process of constructing ourselves within our worlds.

Finally, this theoretical development forms the template for the map of my ethnographic journey, with all the latter's former doubts and reservations. It also, potentially, forms the template for the maps of other educational journeys and for the maps of other individuals encountered by researchers. The implications for social justice in the process of educational provision are identified and my original recommendations concerning the need for radical change in the cultural basis through which it is mediated are confirmed. I conclude by confirming the premise taken up by Hume concerning induction and affirm my conclusions by forming a bridge between the sensitive and cognitive aspects of his philosophical approach.

# Introduction.

## Overall research questions and method of approach.

The initial research focuses on a number of working-class families and the differing perspectives of the parents, pupils and teachers in their struggles over education through the primary and secondary stages. The research question is:

What are the practical problems facing schools in their communities as understood by the families and teachers concerned?

This leads onto a deeper question:

Is it possible to know about what is real within such a context of overlapping, differing and conflicting perspectives that also include my own?

My thesis is an account of two journeys. I undertake the first through territory occupied by the teachers and families. It is a record of my encounters with them, my observations on their behaviours and environment and an account of my communication with them. I attempt to map this journey, to examine the maps presented to me by the pupils, parents and teachers of their journeys through their home and working environment, to compare these maps and help in the construction of new ones that can be developed and shared on a wider basis. Looking back on this journey I begin to question whether I really did see what I thought I did. Is the map I constructed of use to anyone and, if so, why? Can others use my record of the journey I took to tell them what the territory is (or was) like? My second is a journey through a new terrain, from which I can view the pathways of my first from the vantage point of a different landscape that leads back into it. It is an exploration into unknown territory in an attempt to find epistemological underpinning for my previous journey. As I develop my argument a map of this new and very different landscape begins to emerge and is brought to bear on my first journey as a means of understanding its pathways and my experiences in exploring them more clearly. I wish to engage in a continual dialogue with the reader in order for her/him to be constantly aware not only of the development of my thought but also of her/his view of this development during my second journey. This may well fluctuate continually in relation to the development of ideas. I shall, therefore, employ a device that will constantly remind me of my audience, the other who will be engaging with me in what may prove a journey of self and collective discovery. I will refer to the reader in an inclusive way by the use of terms such as 'we' and 'our', rather than exclude the reader and emphasize authority by use of the words 'the researcher' and 'I'.

## The context for the initial empirical study.

At the time of undertaking this research I am employed as a social worker in a local authority education department's special educational needs support service. My role is to negotiate tasks with schools in line with the aims of the service, the requirements of the schools and the range of my skills. My involvement with the three schools (one infant, one junior and one comprehensive) in a north Midland town commences in October 1989. The local education authority for which I work has identified a number of schools at primary level as having a

significant percentage of pupils from 'disadvantaged school catchments'. The criteria for disadvantage are as follows:

Children receiving free school meals,

Single parent families,

Population dependent on those in employment,

Adults unemployed,

Youth unemployment,

Households with more than one person per room,

Families with four or more children.

The geographical area for the infant and junior schools feeding into the comprehensive school figures 82nd on a list of 345 catchments, in descending order of disadvantage.

Between them the teacher representatives from the three schools (who also represented the management of the schools) identify 25 families from one community. I give the generic pseudonym 'Lowfield' to this community. In the teachers' opinion these families receive little benefit from the education provided by their schools. They consider that the educational problems thrown up by these families represents the schools' most pressing need for support service input.

## The particular detailed research problems of the empirical investigation.

**A) The problem for the teachers.** The teachers raise two questions concerning the families.

1. How can we communicate with the parents?
2. How can we provide effective education for their children?

By 'communication' the teachers mean 'explanation'; how they can explain to the parents the basis on which the schools are providing education and their expectations concerning parental involvement (cf. Bastiani, 1991, 1993 & 1996; Macbeth, 1993; Vincent & Tomlinson, 1998). The second question implies that State education, in the way it is being provided, is not working out for these particular pupils. The underlying assumption is that, if the difficulties in communication as defined by the teachers can be resolved, this will lead to teachers and parents pulling in the same direction and in a more consistent approach between home and school regarding education. As a result the education of the pupils concerned will improve. Overlaying this is a partial or unconfirmed belief among some of the teachers that something may be wrong with the way they are communicating their ideas to these parents and to these pupils. There is a suspicion that some change may be needed in the way education is being mediated to these children (cf. Midwinter, 1972; the whole School Inclusion debate – see Ball, 1998, Dyson & Robson, 1999).

**B) The problem for me as researcher.** I wish to combine my research on behalf of the schools with research that can lead to a higher degree. Will it be possible for me to combine the research objectives as outlined by the teachers with objectives of my own? What I want to get out of this investigation is also bound up with two other areas of interest on my part.

My work with schools has uncovered a number of themes identified by teachers in relation to children experiencing learning difficulties and their parents. Teachers identified that they lacked an understanding of, or empathy for, the community in which their schools were situated. They considered the values operating in their schools and in their communities did not always coincide and that this could result in conflict between pupils and teachers. They expressed ambivalence about the roles of parents in the education of their children. They felt convinced that children are unable to learn effectively if they cannot or choose not to accept the social norms of behaviour laid down by teachers in schools. This led to an intellectual capacity to understand the need for some change in attitude accompanied by a fear of not being in control of the change process or of being able to operate competently within it. I can identify with this ambivalence and wish to understand more about the value clashes that they encounter at times with sections of their communities.

I also wish to gain more understanding of some of my own problems in coming to terms with the education system when I was a boy from a working-class family and whose neighbourhood peers, unlike me, were unsuccessful in gaining grammar school access; some resolution to my ambivalence about teachers. So, another component in Part one is the personal and cultural position I take up as researcher (p. 36). I attempt to reveal what my research journey has meant to me and this piece of research is as truthful an account as I can give of that journey. I do not believe that it represents, on an objective basis, the viewpoints and values of the teachers, governors, pupils and parents whom I encounter. Even so, I struggle to be as true as I can to what they say to me and to the contexts in which they speak. I hope that they have had an effect on my own viewpoint and values and that I have given sufficient evidence to enable you, as reader, to make up your own mind as to whether this has been so. The corollary of this, being the impact I have made on the individuals with whom I have attempted to communicate, is also a matter you are likely to form an opinion about from reading this text. I consider these dynamics to be important aspects of the way in which I have undertaken this research, as a series of interconnected dialogues and discourses.

My study and its conclusions appeared valid at that point in time. As a result of subsequent encounters in the field of philosophy, however, I become very much less certain. The first of these encounters is with the philosopher David Hume (initially through reading Bertrand Russell's 'History of Western Philosophy'). Hume's rejection of the principle of induction challenges me to question the basis for my observations within the Lowfield inquiry, located, as they are, in reasoning from what I observe. A second encounter (this time in the social world) occurs in my professional/personal life. This poses questions for me about my observations of my own behaviours and differing observations from others of those same behaviours. It leads me to question further the validity of observation as a means of finding out about the social world. By addressing these particular questions the completion of my second journey impinges on my first.

**Part one: my ethnographic journey.**

My study is set within the context of a working-class community and its schools during a period of economic recession. For the purpose of this research study I am using the term 'working-class' in two senses: the first to define status group affiliation (cf. Weber in Runciman, 1978, pp.60-61). The families involved form part of a living community whose social position is differentiated (internally and externally) by style of life, formal education and prestige. Indeed, the dynamics of the relationship between schools and families is such that it is the social status of these families that forces itself to the fore. Nevertheless, in my ethnographic inquiry, I give due consideration to the context of economic realities within which the families live their lives, recognizing that they also operate within the context of a market economy and are, therefore, part of a social class.

In chapter one I refer to other journeys made by pupils through the state education system and to the mapping of contexts within which educational disadvantage can be seen to operate. Two of these are the long tradition of consensus liberalism and the cultural context within which much of State education is provided. I explore ideas that have influenced central government policy since the inception of State education in 1944 and the impact of social class cultural practices on access to mainstream education. I draw attention to initiatives that recognize the need for cultural integration and those attempting to expand educational accountability. Finally, I conclude that the possibility of establishing a more culturally egalitarian framework as a means of combating educational disadvantage is far from certain.

In chapter two I begin to map my journey through the environment in which the families reside. I bring with me my experiences of other neighbourhoods that could prove useful or a hindrance. I build up a picture of the community infrastructure from information given to me by the teachers, some school governors and family members. I find that a number of overlapping contextual conditions profoundly affect this community, placing severe restrictions on this community's ability to effect the course of change.

Chapter three sets out the theoretical and practical frameworks for the inquiry. The relationship between the two I liken to that between a template and the maps designed to fit. I question some aspects of my theoretical approach and the analysis based on it. I draw attention to the second part of this study where fresh theoretical development (a new template) will be directed onto (will provide a basis for) my analysis and its position regarding ethnographic research.

Chapter four explores the relationship of 46 teachers, across the three schools, with the parents of these particular pupils, set within the context of the teachers' approaches to the education of pupils generally. I focus on the cultural context within which the parents operate and on those parents that reflect most clearly the teachers' interests and concerns. These concerns are with the parents' lifestyles, their capacity to function adequately as parents and the nature of the communication they have with these parents. I identify the infant school teachers as exhibiting the most extreme antipathy towards these Lowfield parents.

In chapter five I described my interaction with parents in the setting of their own homes, revealing something of the range of life experiences they choose to share with me. These life experiences are seen to inform and shape the parents' perceptions of the schools through which their children pass and their views on the educational needs of the children.

Chapter six categorizes the relationships the teachers have with their pupils according to teachers' likes and dislikes within the school environment. I detail a range of pupil behaviours that are approved by these teachers and ones of which they disapprove. By this means I begin a construct of the stated values of these teachers with regard to their pupils. Teachers are seen to vary significantly in their abilities to reach into and understand the world of these pupils as a means towards the mediation of effective education.

The pupils' views regarding education and the environment of the schools they attend or have attended are contained in chapter seven. By and large, they perceive a marked difference to exist in teachers' attitudes toward them between their junior and comprehensive schools. They identify a connection to exist between perceiving to be accepted and valued by their teachers and being able to access what the teachers have to offer.

In chapter eight I outline my research findings. I identify a certain continuum of teacher values across the three schools. These values, I argue, are reflected in the behaviours of the teachers towards these Lowfield pupils and parents and in their attitudes towards the Lowfield community generally. Teachers emphasize different value weightings within this continuum that can result in less or more positive relationships with individual pupils.

The pupils attempt to make sense of their schooling from very different cultural backgrounds to those of the teachers. They express opinions on the sort of teacher/pupil relationships that contribute to learning, on their exclusion from decisions involving how and what they are taught (in the comprehensive school), their relationships with their peers and the importance of being contented within the environmental setting of their schools. These opinions reflect their social and cultural vulnerability.

The parents make more positive than negative comments about teachers in all three of these schools. They are very affirmative about the infant school and largely unaware of the weight of negative opinion within the school towards them. That the schools care for as well as educate their children is important to them and, by and large, they perceive their comprehensive school as failing their children on both counts.

I argue from the 1990 GCSE examination results and the comprehensive school's disciplinary records that it is reasonable to view my sample of Lowfield pupils within the context of their Lowfield peers. There are serious question marks as to how the young people from the Lowfield community are failing to achieve academically and how a disproportionately high number, when compared with other sections of the school's catchment area, fail to conform socially. I make recommendations concerning the practice of teachers in relation to their pupils and communities as a means gaining more effective access to education and propose

that any effective implementation will depend on changes in both government policies and the selection/training of teachers.

**Part two: my epistemological journey.**

An exploration into the nature of socially constructed reality is the theme of the second part of our project. The raw data are drawn from a variety of philosophical, artistic, scientific, sociological and psychological sources, from the Lowfield inquiry, itself, and from elements in my personal biography. I make more use of the epithet 'we' in this section, as a means of seeking common ground with the reader. This is not to assume a basis of shared viewpoint that does not exist but to remind the reader, continually, to check-out whether he/she is with me or not. Each reader is likely to share and disagree about the ways in which this second journey is traversed. The emerging theoretical perspective (that, by its nature, is capable of further development, modification and transformation) is then focused back onto the ethnographic inquiry in Part one.

Chapter nine identifies a crisis in perception within my personal/professional life that occurs subsequent to my ethnographic journey. This, allied to my doubts concerning the fit between template (theory) and maps (my ethnographic research), referred to in chapter three, and to my encounter with the scepticism of David Hume, leads me to embark on my second journey. This will be a search for a template of my own (an epistemologically based theoretical tool) that will enable me to ground my doubts and provide a basis for what is real for me now about my ethnographic journey. This, necessarily, will be broad-brush rather than fine-line. I conclude with an outline of this second journey and refer to its significance regarding future ethnographic research into mainstream schooling.

In chapter ten we move forward from this crisis to an exploration of what is real for us in our social relationships. We commence by querying present methods used by teachers for assessing pupils and relate this to my doubts about my own assessment of those I encounter in Lowfield. We then go on to discuss those sceptical arguments that question our capacity to know and understand. We develop an argument that separates knowledge from belief and begin to put into place grounding for my Lowfield journey. We commence the build-up of a theoretical framework for understanding our social and material environments that are accessible to our capacities to understand and know about. We begin with an exploration of consciousness and perception (since we are dealing with the latter as an aspect of the former) and this leads to difficulties concerning both respecting the constitution of phenomena. This takes us into consideration of pre-linguistic experiences. From this we infer pre-linguistic perception and this leads to the conclusion that sensations and thoughts require no justification, that all other certainties emerge from belief and that linguistic awareness is concerned with constructing frameworks for communication.

Chapter eleven confirms that our social realities are formed at the volatile and unpredictable interface between our sensory experiences, our ability to know about and our beliefness, all within the context of contemporarily available idea parameters. We develop a line of argument from our discussion of pre-linguistic and cognitive perception in chapter ten and

relate this to events in my personal life, in particular to my work as an abstract painter. From here we develop the proposal that we employ two perspectives, simultaneously, in encountering our experiences of our social realities. One of these is a process of change perspective whereby we are aware of these experiences as they are happening. A further here-and-now perspective enables us to make sense of these experiences by relating them to past events. Events that do not make sense require some change to take place in our here-and-now perspectives. We develop the argument that the decisions we make about our approach to our social and material realities have consequences for all future decisions that we make and that the position that we take up to observe our realities involves us in the creation of those realities of which we form a part. As a result, we develop further our theoretical perspective and relate this to the way in which I undertook the Lowfield inquiry.

We begin chapter twelve with a brief recapitulation of our position so far. We then move forward to examine the system that we employ to communicate with each other and that we name 'language'. We investigate hypothetical constructs, how they fit into our constructions of social reality and the problems in using language to tell each other about our experiences in order to find common ground between us. We inquire into the function that culture performs in establishing common ground and relate this to the Lowfield project. At the conclusion of this chapter we establish our completed theoretical framework.

Chapter thirteen brings this study to a close. I review and bring together my two journeys, the ethnographic and the epistemological. The research questions underpinning both are addressed. I relate this to how I might have undertaken my ethnographic project. I next address the logical consequences for educational research drawn from my conclusions, with particular regard to issues of social justice. The chapter concludes with reference back to David Hume, whose penetrating thought challenges me to reconsider the basis for my research, and a reply that builds on the foundation of his conclusion.

Appendix A is my interim report to representatives from the three schools, following my interviews with the teachers, school governors and some comprehensive school pupils and their parents. I outline my analysis of the statements the teachers make to me and make a number of recommendations based on my analysis and observations.

Appendix B includes modification by a parent of the written transcript I have made of my meeting with her. I draw attention to the fallible nature of the way in which I record my interviews.

Appendix C is a dramatis personae of those who participate in my ethnographic study.

## Final remarks.

The implications for the way in which I undertook the Lowfield inquiry have been to re-contextualize both the process and my findings. These reveal options and developmental potential previously hidden from view. Also thrown into sharp relief is the way in which I construct my role as researcher and the implications this has in the search for common

ground between those others involved in this project and myself. The process of re-contextualization enables me to view, from a significantly different position, my original viewpoint. How much of this is influenced by the viewpoints of the parents, pupils and teachers? How much do I suppress or fail to take into account their views? More subtly, are they able to see themselves through my eyes if they read my narrative? Would this confirm, enhance or distort those perceptions they have of their own personal and collective identities? These questions, in themselves, are unanswerable in any objective sense. What the development of this particular theoretical perspective provides is insight into the cultural processes that enable us to construct ourselves within our worlds; to communicate, share and develop - and their flip sides, to isolate, deny and destroy - in relation to others.

My original ethnographic study proves to be very much 'unfinished business'. I need to take it, its findings and the cultural contexts within which it is now situated into a more collective public arena. This brings me again to you, as reader, who will (hopefully!) accompany me on these two journeys and of whom I have been constantly aware. What will my theoretical perspective mean to you and how will you see this relating, not only to the Lowfield inquiry but also to your own concept of personal identity and value? Will we be able to establish some common ground and, if so, on what basis and to what extent? These questions have fundamental implications, alongside the logic of its argument, for the extent to which this study contributes to discourse in two areas of knowledge. The first area concerns the nature of socially constructed reality. The second is an aspect of it. This is specifically concerned with issues of social justice within our State education system and argues for radical change in the cultural basis through which it is mediated.

# PART ONE.

# My ethnographic journey.

## Chapter One. Mapping the contexts of educational disadvantage.

Apart from, but related to, the two journeys I make in the course of this study are other journeys made by pupils through this country's State education system. For some the journey is, or has been, hazardous and largely unproductive and provides a link to the pupils I am concerned with in Lowfield. I will be making the case that schools, rather than communities, are the focus of school improvement, even if, at the same time, I place importance on the roles played by parents, home-school relations and economic factors. In this chapter I argue that effective access to State education has been problematic for sections of Britain's working-class since its inception in 1944 and that this is an on-going phenomenon. The contextual conditions that contribute to this situation, I propose, have their roots in a long tradition of consensus liberalism that has provided the conceptual framework underpinning much of the approach. This takes no account of incompatibilities that are a feature of post-industrial Britain (see pp. 3, 5, 6). A second, and related, factor is the cultural context within which much of State education has taken place. This is middle-class in its aspirations and individualistic in its approach. Both are likely to provide difficulties for pupils from cultural backgrounds that do not espouse these to the same extent. For pupils from cultures that, additionally, are struggling to maintain their cohesiveness and integrity, access to this form of State education will prove well nigh impossible.

In the introduction to this study I explain my use of the term 'working-class' for the purpose of my ethnographic research; culture and socio-economic status are two separate concepts that may overlap but are not necessarily synonymous. Mortimore and Blackstone (1982) point out that, often, the literature that they have reviewed makes no clear distinction between *social class differences in attainment and the educational problems of the most materially disadvantaged children in society* (ibid, p.22). They see a problem in operationally conceptualising educational disadvantage as a result (ibid, p.23). Later in this chapter I will be arguing that attention to the antecedents and effects of cultural disintegration can help us to separate out this problem.

I will be approaching the literature to which I refer as a collection, on my part, of maps to the territory of educational disadvantage. Some were examined prior to and others during and subsequent to my sojourn in Lowfield. Some may assist and others hinder me in making sense of the territory I explore on my ethnographic journey. I begin by examining the ideas that have influenced central government policy over the years and the impact of those policies on educational disadvantage. I proceed to evaluate research into social class cultural practices and their bearing on access to mainstream education. I then draw attention to strategies that have recognized the need for cultural integration; leading on from this to explore initiatives that seek to expand the concept of educational accountability. I conclude by proposing that the possibility of establishing a more culturally egalitarian framework as the basis for addressing the question of educational disadvantage is far from certain.

### 1.1. Ideas influencing government policy.

**1.1.1. Concepts of intelligence.** The development of the tripartite system that followed in the wake of the 1944 Act divided secondary education into three categories - grammar, technical and modern, with selection at the age of 11+. This was based on current psychological theories that considered intelligence to be largely inherited and measurable by use of a test at a relatively early age (Burt, 1943). Burt's research was later discredited due to a number of his results being invented, but at the time it was considered possible for a selection procedure at 11+ to be both fair and to meet each child's needs (Fenwick, 1976). Of the three types of secondary school for which pupils were selected, it was the grammar schools that attracted the prestige and the majority of educational resources. Some local authorities failed to provide technical schools and the secondary modern schools became the under resourced providers of education for the majority of secondary school pupils (Silver, 1973).

Floud, Halsey and Martin (1956) point out that a disproportionate amount of grammar school places are being allocated to the children of middle-class parents. Lady Simon of Wythenshawe (1948) and Simon (1953) question a culture bias in I.Q. selection tests, arguing that selection is according to environment rather than ability. Blackburn, as early as 1945, has reservations on the grounds of both social justice and efficiency. A case is building that the children of working-class parents are being denied access to grammar schools and that those gaining places tend to leave at the earliest opportunity (C.A.C.E., Early Learning, 1954). The system is labelling many working-class children as failures at an early age and denying them fulfilment of their educational potential.

A shift takes place in the 1950s and early 1960s in the concept of equality; away from the notion that the same measured intelligence at a certain age can give children equal access to education. There is an acknowledgement that environmental factors have a bearing on measured intelligence. As a result

> *every child should have the same opportunity for acquiring measured intelligence, so far as this can be controlled by social action* (Crosland, 1961).

This shift is due to a changing climate of thought reflected in a number of government reports (Early Leaving, 1954 and those by Crowther, 1959, Newsom, 1963, and Robbins, 1963). Evidence is accumulating that the country is wasting the talents of its working-class children and, finally, the myth is exploded that there is a limited pool of ability within each age group.

Arthur Jensen (1969) in defining intelligence as 'abstract reasoning ability' claims that it forms a selection of just one part of a person's mental abilities (1973). Memory and knowledge are not measured by I.Q. tests that, he argues, are biased in favour of the sub-culture of the middle- class. Moreover, Howard Gardner (1993) affirms that all 'normal human beings' (ibid. p. 81) develop at least seven forms of intelligence and all children do not learn in the same way (ibid. p. 14). Our own education system measures, at best, only two - linguistic and logical-mathematical (ibid. p. 15). The anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) referring to the capacity for mental functioning states,

> *There is no such thing as a human nature independent of culture. Men without culture.... would be unworkable monstrosities with very few useful instincts, fewer recognizable sentiments, and no intellect.* (p. 49).

This complex web of culture with intelligence and the multiple nature of both cultural phenomena and manifestations of intelligence remain a challenge to our present system of education. As I will continue to demonstrate, that system continues to remain fundamentally limited and inflexible in its mediation of intellectual development.

**1.1.2. Home background as a determinant of academic success.** The 70s bring growing recognition that measured intelligence can be affected by environment, poverty and parental education. Halsey (1972) argues that the liberal policies of equality had failed because they were based

> *on an inadequate theory of learning. They* [the liberal policy makers] *failed to notice that the major determinants of educational attainment were not school masters but social situations, not curriculum but motivation, not formal access to school but support in the family and community* (Mortimore and Blackstone, p.6).

Halsey (1975) sees the liberal reformers as failing to recognize the structural aspects that maintain identity within a class society. He criticizes them for 'trivializing' the concept of class by attempting to reduce its components to a set of individual attributes. Emphasis, at this time, is beginning to shift away from the schools and the focus of attention is into the community.

Sharp and Green (1975) see more sinister implications in a 'liberal' approach to education. They study a child-centred approach to education as it applies to 3 classrooms in the infant department of a new housing estate school. They attempt to demonstrate how knowledge of low economic status and a 'deprived' background can subtly affect teachers' assessments of their pupils. Sharp and Green propose that such 'radical practices' of progressive education might be a modern form of conservatism and social control. The teachers' views, they deduce, are grounded in the traditional assumptions of liberalism. The researchers claim that the liberal concept of man is individualistic and consensual, taking no account of the wider social context and backed this up with a rigorous review of the relevant literature. By attempting the separation of politics and education the teachers are seen as keeping within the boundaries of common sense liberal assumptions and as having failed to recognize education as an implicitly political process.

Barry Sherman (1970) looks at differences in the nature of jobs between middle-class and working-class occupations in Britain. He maintains that working-class jobs offer less opportunity for advancement and lead to a different outlook that tends towards collectivism rather than individualism. Pupils from working-class backgrounds will, therefore, tend to be socialized in terms of these values; thus placing them at a disadvantage in accessing mainstream education.

During the early 1970s research in America is beginning to have its effect on British educational policy. Coleman's (1966) large-scale survey and Jencks' re-analysis of his and

others' research indicate that school reform cannot be expected to bring about significant social change outside schools. One myth has been demolished but a new myth is about to be constructed. Compensatory education emerges as a means of combating the problems caused by working-class families, now seen as being responsible for the failure of their offspring to achieve academically.

**1.1.3. Positive discrimination and compensatory education.** Many of these policies grow from the recommendation in the Plowden report (1967) that the principles of 'positive discrimination' be applied to allocate extra resources according to need. The report states:

> *The justification is that the homes and neighbourhoods from which many of their children come provide little support and stimulus for learning - the schools must provide a compensating environment.*

It was believed that such children were concentrated in certain schools in deprived areas. By identifying those schools or areas and by giving them extra resources those children would be helped. The committee suggests 8 criteria that, on the basis of information supplied by the local authority, can be used to identify schools in need of special help.

The Plowden committee recommended that Educational Priority Areas be established. The Department of Education and Science and the Social Science Research Council initiated action research in 5 E.P.A. areas in accordance with the suggestion of the Plowden committee. The action researchers had four aims: to raise educational standards; to raise teacher morale; to improve links between home and school by increasing parental involvement; and to assist in giving the communities a sense of responsibility.

Since parental motivation is considered more important than such physical factors as new school buildings, Meacher (1974) asks why, given the resources available, there was no concentrated effort directed towards parental involvement. Both Acland (1972) in his analysis of Plowden data, and Barnes and Lucas (1975) in the course of the London E.P.A. project, argue that the majority of disadvantaged children are not in designated disadvantaged areas and that most of the children in these areas are not disadvantaged. They consider that the policies implemented through the schools are likely to benefit the children of non-manual workers who were born in the United Kingdom. Halsey (1977) thinks the principle of positive discrimination led to confusion between two kinds of policy - one aimed at social and the other at individual aggregates. This led to two fallacious conclusions – falsely predicting individual circumstances and performance from average conditions and, by ignoring social and structural factors that limit opportunity and ambition, assuming that low performance of a particular community is the sum of individual low performances. Halsey (1977) argues strongly that education alone is unable to solve an area's problems. Unfortunately, no comprehensive social policies emerge, sections of the working-class population are targeted and the opportunity for an egalitarian approach to community education and community development is not taken.

**1.1.4. Raising standards and the perceived needs of industry.** In the wake of this failure Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government takes over in 1979 and a fresh

approach characterized as the 'New Right' begins to dominate the political scene. One of the few sociologists to embrace this approach, David Marsland, (1989) argues that universal welfare provision creates a culture of dependence, undermining initiative and self-reliance. The huge public expenditure entailed diverts financial investment away from industry. Vulnerable groups should be targeted but money should not be given to those capable of supporting themselves. Translated in terms of education, New Right opinion considers liberal ideals and equality of opportunity are holding back the most talented pupils and reducing standards of education. The curriculum is not relating to the skills required by employers and the profits of industry are being ploughed into an inefficient education system.

Changes are brought about in 1988 that reflects this shift in viewpoint to a concern for standards and the perceived needs of industry. The 1988 Education Reform Act introduces a National Curriculum together with testing and attainment targets for pupils at the ages of 7, 11, 14 and 16. It also introduces a number of measures aimed at preparing pupils for work and providing work experience. This during a period of economic recession where there are severe reductions in the number of jobs available, particularly in traditional working-class occupations such as mining, the steel industry and the building trade. The 'work related' initiatives merely highlight the futility of this endeavour in the minds of many 'unemployable' young people. The concentration on attainment targets and testing brings further pressure on those pupils who cannot achieve them and now perceive themselves as confirmed in their failure to do so.

From their post-Thatcher position, Ranson et al (1997) describe this period as one of *neo-liberal consumer democracy*. Individuals are considered to be morally self-sufficient and should be allowed to pursue their own self-interest in the market place. A concept of equity, where each individual is treated as if equality of opportunity already exists, replaces equality of opportunity as the principle of justice. The unintended effects result in reduced consumer choice and in the empowerment of producers. Power becomes increasingly centralized and located in unaccountable appointed boards. Ranson et al argue that this 'reinforces rather than resolves the predicament facing education and society', strengthening the pre-existing social order of wealth and privilege. At the same time, the emphasis on isolated individual effort takes debate out of the collective, public domain - the only arena where dilemmas of reconciling different cultural traditions can be resolved (ibid, pp. 119-120).

**1.1.5. New Labour – raising standards and social inclusion.** The National Commission on Education (1993) reveals extensive levels of under-achievement in areas of high social stress. In the same year an OFSTED report insists that a culture of low expectations by family, community and schools must be combated. As a result the Conservative government and the succeeding one under New Labour have focused on two key areas: what makes a school effective in terms of individual children reaching attainment targets, and how non-effective schools can be improved (Ball, p.3). The link between schools, the families of their pupils and the wider community has taken on more importance recently as a means whereby schools can drive up standards of attainment and address the problem of social exclusion. Dyson and Robson (1999, p.viii) point to a potential conflict within government policy that

seeks to achieve ever higher standards in curriculum achievement and the broader concern about social exclusion that emphasizes an extended community involvement for schools. They see education reforms of the Eighties and Nineties as favouring individual parents as consumers over community interests. This further marginalizes parents who are unable to operate as such. A further point is that there is little research adopting a community as opposed to a professional point of view.

**1.1.6. Summary.** The history of government policy on education and its impact on educational disadvantage has been dominated by liberal attempts to address the problems faced by those disadvantaged from the perspective of those having the resources and some power to achieve effective change. The basis of liberal thought, however, is individualistic and egalitarian, lacking a firm theoretical framework with which to address the structural components in a class society. Those accounts based on liberal premises are likely to reinforce the status quo because of this incapacity to address inequality as a structural component. Attempts to deal with matters in terms of school reform in isolation to the social and economic realities of working-class communities have been doomed to failure. When action has been taken to combine educational, social and economic factors, it has been in the context of this absence of a coherent framework. There has been little political commitment from the policy makers; minuscule amounts from the national exchequer and ad hoc programmes have proved incapable of significantly contributing to any form of educational, social or political change.

Another factor has been the absence of the working-class as a social group in planning for educational change. The OFSTED/School Effectiveness researches embody a rather WASP (white / Anglo-Saxon / protestant) and suburban set of values. Therefore the perspectives of working-class people, as potential contributors towards and co-initiators for change, have been absent from the thinking of both policy makers and theoreticians. Neither this liberal approach nor the neo-liberal consumer orientated Thatcher model has brought about significant improvement in the field of educational disadvantage.

## 1.2. Research into social class cultural practices and mainstream education.

I undertook my Lowfield study in 1989/90, just as the 1980s research on the effectiveness of schools (e.g. Mortimore and Sammons with their ILEA study into 50 randomly selected London schools, 1988) was fresh in my mind and was bringing about a change of focus. Earlier pieces of research had explored the relationship between child-rearing practices and educational achievement. This, at the time, informed my thinking, as did some quite early research on the effects of teachers' attitudes, and on secondary schools and cultural conflict. These areas of research, although old, still appear to me to have something relevant to say to the erstwhile ethnographer of Lowfield.

**1.2.1. The effects of child-rearing practices on educational achievement.** . Hess and Shipman (1965), Bee (1969) and Schoggen (1969, cited in Blumer, 1974) find differences in child-rearing practices between middle-class and working-class mothers. The former pay more attention to goal-directed action, encouraging their children to make more decisions

and set their own pace, questioning their children as a means of problem solving and praising success rather than criticizing failure. Robinson and Robinson (1968) conclude that children with a high degree of achievement motivation tend to become brighter as they grew older and that this degree of achievement motivation is related to the socio-cultural background of the child; middle-class children being more strongly motivated than those from working-class backgrounds.

A factor affecting motivation being the attitude of the mother, Greenfield (1969) asks,

> *if a mother believes her fate is controlled by external forces, that she does not control the means necessary to achieve her goals, what does this mean for her children?*

Hess et al (1968 and 1969) show that working-class mothers are more likely to experience life events that reinforce those feelings of not being in control than middle-class mothers. The incidence of depression and neurotic disorder is higher among working-class women. Even so they are less likely than middle-class women to seek medical help (Rutter, 1976). Brown et al (1975) show that working-class women with young children experience far more acute stress than middle-class women with young children. Phillips (1968) too finds more stress amongst the lowest social groups and that disturbance is more likely if there is a lack of positive experience. He suggests that the balance between positive and negative experiences is important. Interestingly, when Zigler and Butterfield (1968) operate the Stanford Binet intelligence test in a way that is intended to increase the child's motivation by giving her/him a feeling of success, then disadvantaged pre-school children increase their test score.

Pilling and Pringle (1978) in reviewing evidence on language development, come to the conclusion that there is evidence of social class differences in the mastery of language. Bruck and Tucker (1974) claim that differences between social class groups in terms of understanding are not always found. Nurss and Day (1971) and Labov (1973) suggest that where differences of understanding do occur they may be due to dialect difficulties. Socially and educationally disadvantaged children tend to score low on psychometric tests not through linguistic and intellectual deficits but through cultural differences. They come to school with the same ability to reason and the same language structure as middle-class children according to Ginsburg (1972) and Labov (1973). They argue that every human society provides experiences sufficient for normal cognitive and linguistic development and that lower working-class children come from cultural backgrounds that are different but not deficient.

Differences may occur in the ease with which children from different social class backgrounds are able to meet school demands. Cole et al (1972), Blank (1973) and Bruner (1974) consider working-class children fail to use their abilities partly through insufficient motivation and partly because they have difficulties in transferring skills from their cultural background into the classroom. Bernstein (1977) maintains that middle-class children learn from their mothers in early childhood a different approach to socialisation and communication than that experienced by working-class children. This enables them to exploit better the opportunities that education has to offer. Tough (1974, 1977) considers disadvantaged children are not

deficient linguistically but are unable to adapt effectively to the requirements of the classroom due to lack of opportunities, practice and encouragement.

There is, however, evidence to suggest that the great majority of working-class children do talk and are talked to a lot at home and only a small minority may suffer in this respect (Wootton, 1974). Tizard and Hughes (1984) find that conversations at home with working-class mothers and their young children are just as prolific as in middle-class homes and that there are few signs of language deprivation. But children's conversations with their teachers are in marked contrast to their conversations with their mothers. The questioning, puzzling child is gone; replaced by a subdued child whose conversations with adults are mainly restricted to answering questions rather than asking them. This is particularly pronounced for working-class children although working-class children often take part in long and sustained conversations at home. The researchers consider that it is not hard to see how the myths about working-class verbal deprivation arise. Tizard and Hughes comment that this shows how strongly young children can be affected by the move from one setting to another. The researchers propose that the schools' problem is how to foster, harness and satisfy the interests and curiosity that the children show at home. A higher priority should be given to widening the children's horizons; extending their general knowledge and listening to them talk. Tizard and Hughes maintain that schools and playgroups tend to underestimate children's abilities and interests. This is fostered by the belief that the children learn mainly through play and from the Piagetian theory of the child's limited intellectual power; also from the belief that working-class children do nothing at home apart from watching television. The researchers challenge the assumption that professionals know how parents should interact with and educate their children. They find no real evidence that parents need to interact with children in any particular way and that, often, the advice offered by professionals appears to be based on what a 'good' middle-class parent does.

Francis (1975), in his study of children with reading difficulties, finds that they have sufficient knowledge of the language structure and vocabulary to master reading. Poor test scores or reading failure in socially disadvantaged children may not be due to language or cognitive defects but to lack of motivation and interest. Ginsburg (1972) discovers that working-class parents provide fewer reading experiences for their children than middle-class parents but concludes that this does not warrant compensatory education. Schools should adapt to the language and ways of thinking of working-class children. This point, that compensatory education is totally inappropriate, is also emphasized by Bernstein (1970), who proposes that schools should not attempt to compensate for what they mistakenly perceive to be linguistic or cultural deprivation. The introduction of universalistic forms of thought to working-class children reared on common sense principles is education and not a means of making children middle-class.

> *If the culture of the teacher is to become part of the consciousness of the child, then the culture of the child must first be in the consciousness of the teacher* (Bernstein, 1970).

This quotation aptly sums up the attitude of the 'good' middle-class teacher in her/his relationship to working-class children. Unfortunately, as my research indicates, this attitude is far from being universal.

Moreover, we need to examine a little more closely what Bernstein has to say about 'universalistic forms of thought'. He proposes that differences in early life socialisation have a bearing on how children from different social class backgrounds are able to respond to the language used in schools. Bernstein maintains that the speech pattern typical of working-class families is of the restricted code type whereas middle-class families emphasize the elaborated code. Consequently, working-class children have problems in a classroom-learning situation where formal teaching is conducted through the elaborated code (Bernstein, 1977a, pp. 27-8 and 194-6). He produces no empirical evidence to support the view that middle and working class families differ in their capacities to operate the elaborated code; neither does he address the issue of any variation in capacity within each social class. Such researches of the time were almost invariably with white, monolingual, mono-cultural children and families. This would never happen now. Samples would have to be balanced to show proper representation in terms of ethnicity, gender and regional differences. It cannot be assumed, therefore, that Bernstein's comments concerning the inappropriateness of compensatory approaches to the education of working-class children be taken at face value. Even so, the notion that there is a compensatory component in Bernstein's approach to the education of children with restricted speech patterns should not prejudice us to the view that effective education *can* fill gaps in our learning. Fluency in English is strongly associated with performance in the early key stages of learning (Gillborn and Gipps, 1996, p. 1) and this can affect achievement levels of some ethnic minority and working-class pupils (the two groupings are not mutually exclusive). Moreover, Bernstein's statement (quoted above) concerning the cultural role of the teacher brings him close to the position of the developers of cognitive education. We will be exploring this issue a little later in this chapter.

**1.2.2. Summary.** There is some evidence to suggest that the child-rearing practices of working-class parents should be seen within the context of their life experiences and social situation. Where the cultural pattern is imbued with limited expectations it tends to make these practices less goal orientated then those of middle-class families, with less emphasis on installing motivation in children. There is no evidence to suggest that class differences in child-rearing practices result in differences in children's capacity to learn. Evidence does exist that schools have difficulty in adapting to the language and culture of their working-class pupils and children from disadvantaged backgrounds appear to experience difficulties in adapting their linguistic and cultural inheritance to the school environment.

**1.2.3. Social class differences in relating to and accessing schools.** Some studies into parents' attitudes undertaken by Floud, Halsey and Martin (1956), Fraser (1959) and Douglas (1964) indicate that the children of working-class parents are disadvantaged at school largely through parental lack of interest in their educational progress. Acland's work (1973) also shows the stronger influence of attitudes over material circumstances in shaping educational achievement. The Plowden committee's own commissioned survey found that, in terms of

parental responsibility and interest over their children's education, in the time and attention parents paid to their children's development and in their knowledge of their children's work, the better the social circumstances of the home the more favourable the situation was likely to be (Morton-Williams, 1967). The Plowden committee concluded that *a strengthening of parental encouragement may produce better performance in school.*

However, Bernstein and Davies (1969) are of the opinion that what Plowden considered measures of parental interest and attitudes are, in reality, measures of strongly class-linked behaviour patterns and it is these patterns that have a bearing on educational achievement. Acland's (1980) re-analysis of the Plowden data lead him to find that variables measuring parental aspirations and the literacy of the home are more important than parental contact with the school in relating to achievement. Encouraging schools to increase parental contact will not, by itself, improve working-class children's school performance.

Halsey's (1972) research in Education Priority Areas finds evidence of considerable concern and interest in education by working-class and/or disadvantaged parents. He proposes that teachers represent authority and parents who have had unhappy experiences at school themselves or with authority figures, may be reluctant to meet them. They may also be subject to criticism about their children when they attend school. Midwinter (1977) recognizes that working-class parents tend to have less knowledge of the education system and school practices than middle-class parents and that the disadvantage of many working-class children at school is due to this. Jackson and Marsden (1962) discover that many working-class parents are ill informed about the curriculum and that even small changes in methods can be a source of confusion to them. Tizard et al (1981) draw attention to the communication gap between working-class parents and nursery teachers. They suggest this was not due to lack of interest or differences in knowledge but to the differing perspectives on such activities as reading, play and learning and the different values they attached to such activities.

**1.2.4. Summary.** There is data to indicate the achievement of effective education in schools is determined by class-linked behaviour patterns and not by parental attitudes to education. The highly motivated middle-class home environment has significant advantages over the working-class one where an equivalent interest and concern for education is linked to different values and perspectives born of a very different life experience. Moreover, the value differences between home and nursery can lead to serious communication problems at the very start of a working-class child's formal education.

**1.2.5. Teachers' attitudes towards educationally disadvantaged pupils.** Merton (1948) first introduced the idea of self-fulfilling prophecy. He described it as an expectation or prediction, originally false, that triggers-off a series of events resulting in the original expectation coming true. In 1968, Rosenthal and Jacobson test the hypothesis that teachers' expectations of pupils' achievement will function as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Brophy and Good (1974) and Pilling and Pringle (1978) heavily criticize the study on methodological grounds. However, Brophy and Good accept that the potential for self-fulfilling prophecy effects exist when teacher expectations are inaccurate or inflexible, so that the teacher begins to treat the

pupil consistently as if he/she were different from what he/she is in reality. If this leads teachers to treat disadvantaged pupils differently it can have damaging consequences on their educational performance.

Some studies of naturally occurring teacher expectations show significant, though small, effects on pupil progress. Seaver (1973) demonstrates that knowledge of an older sibling appears to influence teacher expectations. Lunn (1970) finds that although teacher ratings of ability are, in most cases, closely related to test scores, where there are discrepancies teachers tend to underrate the ability of working-class children and overrate the ability of middle-class children. He suggests that the deterioration of the children's performance may be partly due to the negative teacher expectations of them.

In her 1968 study, Fuchs discusses how the belief that social conditions outside the school make such failures inevitable does make such failures inevitable. She studies the effect on a well intentioned but inexperienced teacher of the socialisation process imposed on her by other members of staff who had accepted the rationale that in the slum the child and family fail but never the school. Even a humane and good intentioned approach on the part of teachers towards disadvantaged pupils may mask dangerous attitudes which belittle the possibilities of educational growth for pupils is maintained by Marland (1980). Their attitudes can lead to an over emphasis on the social aspects of the teacher's role which leads to major under teaching justified by the pointlessness of aiming high in the face of such immense difficulties of background. Rutter et al (1979) in their study of 12 London secondary schools, include teachers' expectations in their assessment of academic progress. It is found that children achieve higher levels of academic success in schools where the teachers make it obvious that they expect a high proportion to do well in public examinations. Rutter et al affirm that the pupils are likely to work better 'if taught in an atmosphere of confidence that they can and will succeed in the tasks they are set'.

**1.2.6. Summary.** To what extent and how teachers in schools make any difference to children's learning is still under investigated although the literature reviewed suggests that what goes on in school may, unintentionally, contribute towards educational disadvantage. My own research, later to be outlined within this thesis, differs radically from this position. It proposes that teacher attitudes, intentionally or otherwise, can make a major contribution to the educational disenfranchisement of their pupils.

**1.2.7. Secondary schools and cultural conflict.** Peter Woods in 'The Divided School' (1979) states that the ways in which pupils accept or reject the academic aims of the school and its behavioural norms are reflected in a variety of modes of adaptation. He suggests that the more conformist adaptations tend to be more typical of middle-class pupils and the less conformist more typical of working-class pupils. Both pupils and teachers are caught up in 'divisions'. These are inherent in the structure of the school. Personal/professional, laughter/conflict, pleasure/pain are some divisions that Woods identifies. Splintering and fragmentation are everywhere. The conflict identified in these divisions reflects the wider concerns of society. Woods proposes that if these contradictions go unrecognized by

educators they will continue to predominate and grow. Thus 'non-recognition means slavery, with faceless institutions and their factotums as our slavemasters' (ibid, p. 257). He recognizes that schools and the education provided within them should be seen within the context of other aspects of socially constructed reality. A further factor in children's access to learning is one that they share with their teachers, difficulty in maintaining coherence and a sense of identity when faced with the alienating fragmentation of daily life.

Hargreaves (1967), in his study of a secondary modern school, drew attention to the effects of streaming and labelling on the emergence of sub-cultures within the school. Pupils placed in secondary modern schools had already been labelled as failures. The further labelling of troublemakers and the placement of these students in lower streams, he considered, resulted in them protecting their sense of self-worth by collectively reinforcing the value of breaking school rules and generally disrupting the system. He recognized two distinct sub-cultures to emerge - the conformist and the non-conformist delinquents.

Paul Willis (1977) has also explored an aspect of culture within a secondary school. His study involved only 12 pupils and these may not have been representative of the majority of working-class pupils within the educational establishment. He has, however, drawn further attention to the phenomenon of group reinforced non-compliance in a secondary school. They had their own counter-school culture that took the form of disruptive behaviour and 'having a laff'. They projected an image of superiority to the teachers and to conformist pupils whom they labelled as 'ear 'oles'. He attempted to demonstrate that this rejection of school helped to prepare 'the lads' for their future roles as unskilled or semi-skilled manual workers. It is, though, their own choice in behaving in the way that they do that traps them in the most exploitative occupation that capitalism offers. This study has had considerable influence on subsequent research because it has shown that it is possible to combine an ethnographic study within a school with a wider analysis of the role of education.

Lacey's study (1970) of 'Hightown Grammar' and his subsequent investigation of de-streaming in the same school (1974) revealed some interesting results. It would appear that streaming can contribute towards educational disadvantage and have sometimes unforeseen consequences not only for individual pupils but for the development of polarised sub-cultures within the school system. These sub-cultures, by establishing a counter-school value system, can contribute further to this process of educational disadvantage. He found that de-streaming enabled pupils with lower measured IQs to achieve better 'O' level results. He related this to a combination of a different teacher view of the pupil groups, the pupils having higher self-esteem and improved relationships between pupils and teachers. Both Hargreaves and Lacey found that lower stream pupils tended to be taught by younger, less experienced and less qualified teachers or those with weaker discipline.

**1.2.8. Summary.** Secondary schools are part of a wider milieu of unresolved social and cultural tensions. These result in conflict and fragmentation within the school environment. Pupils from working-class backgrounds can tend to adopt non-conformist modes of cultural identity when faced with educational disadvantage within such a context. These can further

re-enforce that process of disadvantage (Also cf. my study of the dynamics within Lowfield comprehensive school.). A process of genuine equality of opportunity for such pupils and positive changes in teachers' attitudes are required for any effective change.

## 1.3. Possibilities for cultural integration?

**1.3.1. The nursery and infant stages of learning.** Tizard Mortimore and Burchell's (1981) exploration of the involvement of parents in nursery and infant school and Tizard's (1986) research review into the under threes threw up some interesting findings. There was clear benefit for young children being part of a social network that included adults other than their parents and children of a wide age range. There were greater benefits if the relationships were marked by attachment, familiarity and responsiveness. Home visiting by nursery and infant school teachers was found to be an important way to increase familiarity with children by getting to know their families, pets, toys etc. If carried out in a non-investigative way, home visiting could be rewarding to staff, parents and children and helped to bridge the gap between their two lives – home and school. We see here that part of the education process is about the recognition and sharing of different cultural components within people's lives (in this case the cultures of home and school). Home visiting is not a regular feature of Lowfield infant school although mothers were invited to attend a group meeting regularly within the school for a period of time. We will examine the dynamics of this process and its contribution to learning in chapter four.

Tizard et al also found it important that children became familiar with other children in the learning group. They considered that the need for children to maintain consistency among the *children* in a group has received little attention. This is probably because the role of friendship in under-threes is rarely taken seriously. The researchers maintained, nevertheless, that the developmental and protective function of social friendships had been clearly demonstrated.

**1.3.2. Summary.** These studies suggest that a degree of attachment to other children and other adults and a sharing of different cultural components between home and school enhance the child's emotional and educational functioning.

**1.3.3. The role of culture and mediation in the education process.**

**The ethnic dimension.** Gillborn and Gipps (1996) confirm that 'issues of race and equal opportunity have tended to slip from policy agendas' for more than a decade' (ibid p. 1).

Differences have been identified between the achievement levels of ethnic groups. During the first half of the 90s a number of studies were undertaken. Drew and Gray (1991) reveal that the achievements of African/Caribbean pupils in many LEAs are significantly lower than other groups. Caribbean young men in particular appear to be achieving considerably below their potential (Barnard and Kalra 1994; Runnymede Trust 1994). White groups tend to make greater progress than ethnic minority groups at the end of junior school (Mortmore et al 1988; Smith and Tomlinson 1989). Studies outside London tend to show white pupils leaving school with the highest average achievements (Smith and Tomlinson 1989; Thomas and Mortimore 1994). Bangladeshi pupils on average have less fluency in English and experience

greater poverty levels than other South Asian groups (Runnymede Trust 1994; Tower Hamlets 1994). Regardless of ethnic origin, pupils from more economically advantaged backgrounds achieve the highest averages (Drew and Gray 1990). So social class is strongly associated with the differences in pupil progress.

More recent research gives a somewhat different picture. Current data show that Chinese students perform best at 16, followed by Indian students. Middle-class pupils from professional/executive backgrounds come next (Gillborn and Mirza, 2000).

Research in infant, junior and secondary schools reveals an unusually high degree of conflict between white teachers and African Caribbean pupils (Driver 1977 and 1979, Wright 1986, Mac an Ghaill 1988). Teachers have more positive expectations of Asians in comparison with African Caribbeans as being relatively quiet well-behaved and highly motivated (Gillborn 1990, Mac an Ghail 1988 and 1989).

Clark (1983), in his study of 10 poor black families living in Chicago, found that

> *the form and substance of the family psychosocial patterns are the most significant components for understanding the educational effects of high achievers' families and low achievers' families - not their race or social class background per se* (p. 199).

Even so –

> *Clearly, program solutions calling exclusively for 'family strength' or 'parent education' will provide limited accomplishment when the family's basic socio-economic needs are not met* (p.209).....*Black American parents are frequently unable to provide their children with the knowledge resources or 'cultural and linguistic capital' that will help to improve their life chances* (p. 209).

Clark's conclusion is that the most important factor in terms of successful academic achievement for poor black families lies in the quality of the family culture and its ability to adapt to the culture of the school. The absence of basic socio-economic requirements, however, incapacitates families from transferring the cultural and language skills necessary for successful educational achievement.

During the 1950s the Israeli clinical psychologist Reuven Feuerstein began to work with very backward children who had emigrated with their families to Israel from North Africa and from Europe. The children were not only low achievers (40 to 75 I.Q.) but a number were also delinquent. There was no question of the children's retardation being due to inadequate upbringing on the part of pathological individual families as the phenomenon was far too widespread through certain cultural groupings. The Yemenite and Ethiopian Jewish communities, for example, integrated effectively into the Israeli culture and their children were not low achievers, while the children from the Moroccan Mellah did not and were.

When the societies of the Moroccan Mellah were compared with the Yemenite and Ethiopian societies, the former were found to have fragmented under the impact of French colonialism. One of the forces leading to the Moroccans becoming alienated from their own culture was

the internal migration to the urban colonial centres. Traditionally the Jews had lived in small closely-knit ghettos in which the culture was transmitted to the younger generation by the grandparents and the old people generally. When the nuclear families migrated to the urban centres this system broke down because the grandparents were often left behind or could not live with the families because living space was so overcrowded. This was made worse by the urbanised children rejecting the values and traditions of their uprooted, but still basically rural, parents. Feuerstein concluded that these children were culturally deprived as a result of being alienated, by sociological and psychological factors, from their own culture. Not only children from the Mellah but also those from Central European countries, their culture and their families physically expunged during the Holocaust, came to Israel suffering cultural deprivation. So did the children of the poorer immigrant families from Britain and the USA. The children of the Yemenite and of the Falashas from Ethiopia, although coming from the most technically primitive groups to emigrate to Israel, did not suffer this cultural deprivation. These societies had lived in very isolated communities before arriving in Israel and their cultures had persisted in a more or less integrated way for thousands of years. Cultural transmission was highly elaborate and its impact on the children very effective. Feuerstein hypothesized that individuals from different but, nevertheless, rich and still coherent cultures, having learned one culture, usually have the means to learn another. Those who have been deprived of their own culture do not (Feuerstein, 1974).

His view of human growth and development has much in common with the phenomenological approach to sociological methodology. Children will acquire a common sense view of reality that accords with the culture into which they are born and in which they grow up. Should this culture fail to provide them with meanings for their experiences then they cannot make sufficient sense of the world around them. This will result in them being unable to 'learn'. A process of learning to classify will be necessary before they can make sense of the world. Having learned one system of classifying the world, children can then learn other systems of classification. Ultimately it will be possible, through such a process, for human beings to arrive at their own view of the world, at their own meanings and their own reality.

This has implications for working-class culture in advanced Western societies constantly under threat from changes in work patterns and internal migration as well as from subordination to the values of the more affluent middle-class. The culture of the working-class in the regions of Britain has undergone profound change as traditional industries, such as mining, shipbuilding and steel, go to the wall, leaving mass unemployment in their wake. There is no greater distance between cultures than one based on work and one based on unemployment. Feuerstein argues that a strong culture can enable a group and the individuals within it to negotiate its relationship to another culture more successfully than a group whose culture has already been fragmented (Feuerstein, 1973).

Donnison (1991) puts the case for a more savage increase in inequality having taken place in Britain during the 80s than in any other Western European country. He proposes that a new kind of poverty has emerged in the world's richest nations that has resulted in a significant minority of the citizens of these countries experiencing a degree of poverty, poor health,

stigma and powerlessness that has excluded them from the main stream of society. A research team led by Professor Rout Veenhoven of the Netherlands (Did The Crisis Really Hurt? Rotterdam University press, 1989) found similar patterns in most of the world's richest countries and that these indicated a growing split in society between a majority of active citizens and a minority of welfare-dependent rejects. Donnison maintains that while other Western European countries have attempted to check these divisive trends through their social and economic policies, Britain has followed the opposite strategy by allowing unemployment to rise as the main device for managing our economy. Additionally, housing and urban policies have trapped many of the poorest in badly resourced areas clearly demarcated from the neighbourhoods where the more affluent of the country's population live (e.g. Lowfield). Thirdly, changes in benefits and taxes have transferred income from the poorest to the richest. Although the 'new' poverty has not been restricted to the working-class, by far the largest segment will, inevitably, be made up of working-class people. The isolation and powerlessness that is an unavoidable consequence in Britain is having a devastating effect on the most vulnerable working-class communities in this country.

Moreover, the attitude of the 'contented majority' can have a profound effect in reinforcing this situation. Galbraith (1993) claims that there is a growing resentment among the economically fortunate and aspiring towards welfare and public infrastructure funded through their taxes. He considers there to be a sizeable underclass in the USA that does not vote because they have no voice in the political arena. He identifies a similar trend in the UK (ibid, p. 152).

It would be wrong to generalize that working-class culture in Britain is an exploded culture but evidence does suggest that it is a culture under threat, with sections politically, socially and economically marginalized from the mainstream of society. The conditions that make possible the beginnings of cultural breakdown are the very conditions that exist in some of our more marginalized working-class communities such as Lowfield. In such communities it is essential that the local culture is understood, supported and negotiated with if working-class children are to develop emotionally, socially and intellectually. Within this context the values and norms of teachers, the other major mediators of learning for children, are of crucial importance.

Research into Feuerstein's 'Instrumental Enrichment' programme, involving three United States universities (Louisiana, Phoenix and Vanderbilt), found it works best for persons of average or above average intelligence whose learning difficulties may arise from environmental maladjustment, psychiatric disorder, specific learning disability or related problems (Heywood et al, 1977). In other words, children similar to those who come from our more socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods. A teacher who teaches the same children a range of different subjects best teaches the programme, and the programme is by no means teacher proof. This is interesting because it suggests that successful teachers of this particular programme of mediated learning may be applying a similar approach to other aspects of the curriculum and that the effective implementation of a mediated learning programme for cognitive development is dependent upon the way teachers use it. This particular study as

well as other research studies into Instrumental Enrichment (Rand et al, 1979), (Bolivar, 1985), (Walker and Meier, 1983) confirms that the teachers themselves viewed the supervision and evaluation of the programme teachers positively. They saw their own development as practice teachers to be part and parcel of the total learning experience for themselves and their pupils. The Vanderbilt study highlighted that not all teachers are capable of learning to teach the programme. Those that are have certain characteristics. Teachers who see their goals as making learning a positive experience, who encourage original thinking, who developed self- regard, who emphasize co-operation, who have respect for divergent thinking and who have few disciplinary problems, tend to be more successful in teaching the Instrumental Enrichment programme. Such teachers also scored well on the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory. There was a correlation between poor Instrumental Enrichment teachers and those who scored low on the Minnesota inventory.

So, there is some evidence to suggest that certain characteristics tend to be present in successful teachers of mediated learning in the field of cognitive development. These are respect for other viewpoints, respect for the pupil, encouragement of co-operative endeavour and a belief in learning as a worthwhile accomplishment for both teacher and pupil.

From the mediation of cognitive development we now move to the mediation of emotional and social development. Truax and Carkhuff (1967) reviewed extensive research evidence for then current approaches to training and practice in psychotherapy and counselling. They attempted to define the effective ingredients of successful therapeutic effort. The role of the therapist within this context is that of mediator for effective learning in the area of personality and behavioural development. This can be seen as analogous to emotional and social development. They found that three basic characteristics of an effective counsellor emerged:

1.He/she came over as a genuine, integrated and non-defensive person in dealing with people.

2. He/she provided a non-threatening, trusting and secure environment by unconditional positive regard (or non-possessive warmth) for the other person.

3. The therapist was able to 'grasp the meaning of ' what it was like for the other person, to understand the other person for a high proportion of their time together (a capacity to empathize).

The characteristic values for the successful mediation of cognitive development, on the one hand, and for emotional and social development, on the other, are congruent. Respect for the learner, for original and divergent thinking and the encouragement of co-operation are important for the mediation of cognitive development. These characteristics contain two of the three attributes of a successful counsellor - positive regard for the learner and the ability to empathize with her/him. The third attribute is 'genuineness' - the ability to show and be the person (the human being) behind the professional. This attribute of 'genuineness' is an essential component in the mediation of emotional and social development and its absence in teachers who are involved in the personal and social education of their pupils will seriously disable the capacities of their pupils to grow and develop.

**1.3.4. Summary.** If a local community is experiencing conditions that are depriving it of the resources necessary for maintaining its cultural identity, the cognitive, emotional and social development of its children will suffer unless that culture is supported. Teachers play a pivotal role in this development and it is the mediation aspects of this role that largely determine the effectiveness of the learning process for such children. A lack of respect and understanding for their culture and an inability to respect and understand them as individual young people can stunt and distort this process, denying them access to educational achievement.

This has wider implications for the mediation of learning in schools generally. Within the context of a fluid multi-cultural society the selection, training and professional development of teachers needs to take on board that teaching in schools is an *explicitly* cognitive/cultural endeavour with major political implications. I am arguing that this has to be *explicitly recognised* and acted on. I have made connections between developments in the fields of cultural learning, school teaching and therapeutic counselling. I have reasoned that successful mediators in all three fields share certain characteristics and that these characteristics are essential if effective learning is to take place. Moreover, teaching in the classroom cannot be isolated from the cultural, social and personal relationship needs of the pupils and so components from all three fields require to be assimilated. Teachers must be able to recognize, share and address these needs if effective learning is to take place.

## 1.4. Schools and educational accountability.

We now move on from issues of cultural integrity and teacher responsibility towards pupils to issues of school responsibility in relation to their communities and parents.

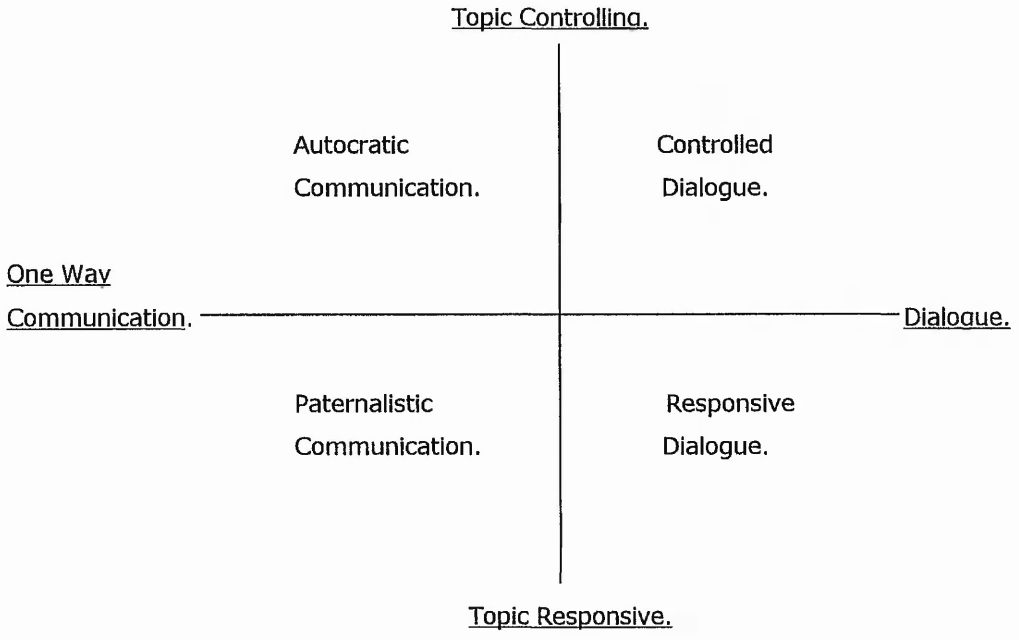
The concept of community education had a brief flowering in the 1970s (Vincent, 1993) but has largely disappeared from the education agenda due to the market-orientated reforms of the 1980s (Jeffs, 1992). The idea of homogeneous communities no longer holds good (Clark, 1992, 1996) although policy-makers, managers and teachers still appear to hold on to this idea as a means of avoiding engagement with the actual diversity and real needs of local communities (Fielding, 1996, Fletcher and Bramley, 1996). There are many examples of 'bolted on' practice but there is no overall education strategy that could generate an effective dynamic for change within schools (Monck and Husbands, 1996). Under such circumstances it is not surprising that there is no effective way for community members to exert influence on the education system collectively (Dyson and Robson, 1999).

Some schemes have focussed on community regeneration. The work of DIECEC network (1998) has developed a notion of 'scaffolding children's learning through multi-level working' (pp. 14-15). This involves a support structure for learning with children, parents, carers and a whole range of community agencies. Some research has been undertaken into school/family/community links as part of wider regeneration initiatives (DETR, 97; Social Exclusion Unit, 1998) but their effectiveness has not been demonstrated. Dyson and Robson point out that much of the literature illustrating school/family/community links reflects initiatives that are not seen by the schools as a core activity and are therefore 'bolted on to the school's main concerns and resourced through short term, locally-determined projects'

(1999, p. 9). They see the lack of national policy initiatives as lying at the root of this ad-hoc development.

Bastiani and Wolfendale (1996), and Wolfendale (1992) produce evidence to support the effectiveness of good home-school links on better individual achievement and better behaviour in schools. There is some evidence to suggest that parents would prefer something more akin to partnership with schools (Hughes, 93; Hughes et al, 94) rather than the consumer relationship imposed by market orientated strategies. Research by Carspecken (1991) and Giles (1992) shows that direct action by communities and of local structures *can* act as a counterbalance to statutory bodies. Even so there is no evidence to suggest that local communities as a whole have been able to engage effectively with their schools.

Bastiani suggests (1991) that home-school partnerships may be too large and complex for schools to manage alone and that partnerships take place very much on the professionals' terms (1989). In 1979 the Social Science Research Council sponsored a study into six secondary schools from three local authorities, focussing on the schools' abilities to respond in an answerable way to their local communities including parents and employers. The Cambridge Accountability Project was undertaken over a two-year period from 1979 to 1980. The aim was to explore an alternative view of school accountability to the one that emphasized a school's contractual obligations to central and local government. John Elliott, in his introduction to volume one, refers to the dialogue model of accountability, the feasibility of which the project was set up to explore. The model implies willingness on the part of the school to engage in genuine dialogue with those who have a legitimate interest in its activities. Later in his study of Uplands School he refines his model in terms of communication and accountability. Elliott (1981, pp. 178-179) sets out the following model of communication and accountability. He considers that it is possible to derive four types of communication between school and parents.



1. Autocratic communication. The school controls the topics it communicates about, giving its audience few opportunities to discuss.
2. Paternalistic communication. The school allows its audience to define the topic it communicates about but provides few opportunities for free discussion.
3. Controlled dialogue. The school controls the topics under discussion but provides its audience with opportunities for free discussion about them.
4. Responsive dialogue. The school gives its audience opportunities to define the topics *and* opportunities for free discussion.

The Cambridge Accountability Project demonstrates just how difficult that is to achieve in practice. We will be returning to this topic of accountability when we explore the relationship of the comprehensive school with its Lowfield parents later in this study (Inferences, p. 76; p. 128).

John Bastiani (1986) drew attention to the role of parents in the transfer of children from primary to secondary school. He placed great emphasis on the need for teachers to listen to parents as an explicit recognition that the latter play an important part in the education of their children. He considered that the role of teachers in relation to parents and to other teachers across the primary/secondary divide requires a specific training input (ibid, p. 122). A fundamental new appraisal of existing arrangements and the development of new attitudes among teachers, pupils and parents to the process of school transfer is required. This cannot be achieved without institutional reform. Even so 'many deep seated and fundamental differences between the two sectors' will remain (ibid, p. 123). Bastiani's aim is a more effective partnership between teachers and parents in the education of pupils and a greater recognition between pupils, parents and teachers of their own and each other's roles in the education process. There are implications here for the development of relationships of mutual accountability between teachers, pupils and parents regarding children's formal education. The context within which a development of this nature could take place, we will be arguing in our study, must be one where there is a willingness to recognize and work with the differing cultural inheritances that enable us to learn and to make sense of our social environment.

David Bridges (1987), in his paper 'The Non-Attending Parent', referred to the psychological complexity of parents' relations with teachers. He also highlighted the social and cultural character to these relationships that can operate to the advantage of some parents and to the disadvantage of others. In the same volume Leslie Sharpe (1987), in his study of Thameside secondary school, found that parents who were less skilled as users of academic and social resources (some working-class parents) brought their levels of resources to bear on the school at a later stage than the more skilful parents. This was at a time when the school was structurally tighter and less amenable to influence from outside. So, psychological and cultural components are brought to bear at the interface between parents and teachers and within the context of the life of the secondary school where it becomes less amenable to outside influences the longer the pupil remains in school. This can progressively intensify

disaffection between teachers and some parents who psychologically and culturally have found little common ground.

**1.4.1. Summary.** The relationship between schools and their localities is beset with difficulties; the concept of locally based accountability being tenuous and subject to both ambiguity and ambivalence. There has been no central investment in any of these initiatives and research into their effectiveness has been sketchy. The relationship between schools and the parents of their pupils has to be seen within this context. Teachers are often uncertain about the role of parents in the education of their children and to the roles that teachers and parents should perform in relation to each other.

## 1.5. Conclusion.

In exploring the literature that relates disadvantage and education we have drawn attention to the mistakes made early on in educational reform at the time of the 1944 Act and to the confusions that beset attempts to combat educational disadvantage up to the present time. The sociology of education has encountered the same problems as other areas of sociology inasmuch as there has been no consensus over methodology. Within the field of education this has resulted not just in conflicts over theoretical premises (e.g. liberal and individualistic versus structural) but in confusions within strategies (e.g. between individual and social aggregates following the Plowden recommendations).

The major problem standing in the way of a truly radical approach to educational disadvantage in this country is the long-standing domination of consensus liberalism as the conceptual framework underpinning much of the approach. Consensus liberalism has proved unequal to the task. The belief in one unified society that can provide for all its members and which is capable of adaptation through the actions of fair-minded legislators and their executives flies in the face of the realities of life in post-industrial Britain. Liberalism does not address the possibility of inherent incompatibilities within 'society' and so there has been a failure to take social and economic factors, such as class, into consideration when attempting educational reform.

Reviewing the literature, references have been made to both social class differences in educational attainment and the educational problems of materially disadvantaged children. It is often difficult to separate the two issues because the literature does not always make a clear distinction. Disadvantaged people find themselves in that position, at least in part, because of their social class position. So the issues of the minority of low achievers and the more general issue of inequalities in education become blurred.

Child-rearing practices of some working-class parents combined with the realities of living in materially and socially disadvantaged conditions lead to very different life perspectives from those experienced in middle-class homes. Evidence suggests that children from such backgrounds have difficulties in adapting to the middle-class classroom, whereas the motivated class-linked behaviour patterns of middle-class homes determine that the children of such parents achieve a more effective education.

It has been recognized that a comprehensive programme of social, economic and educational reform would be necessary to bring about change in an education system that forms a symbiotic relationship with the children of middle-class parents and provides problems in access for some children of working-class parents. However, there is no coherent theoretical framework upon which to base a more egalitarian approach and there has been little commitment from governments of either political complexion towards educational and social change.

Differing perspectives and values can lead to major problems in communication between teachers and parents. The role that teachers' values play within the context of educational disadvantage has been seriously under-researched and insufficient attention has been given to the socio-economic and political milieu in which teachers operate. Some of these issues are addressed in my thesis. The interface between teachers, pupils and parents where different social and cultural traditions collide has been to the educational disadvantage of one of the most vulnerable sections of our society. An exploration of some of the processes by which this takes place and whether, or not, it is possible to influence these processes, is the focus of my research.

Before concluding this chapter I will clarify the position I take concerning the issue of 'culture'. From time to time, in reviewing the literature on education, we come across references to middle-class and working-class 'sub-cultures'. The term implies that there is 'culture' to which the 'sub' is of a lower order. The position that I am taking in this study is that such a view is unjustified, presupposing as it does that it stands apart from and below the majority 'culture'. I propose that there is no single cultural inheritance by which other inheritances can be judged. I also propose to refer to the concept of culture as a process of human interaction that enables us to identify and participate in our social milieu. Education is one form of the socialisation component of culture (cf. Haralambos, p. 228). Class is a separate category from culture, one indicating socio-economic position, and we should be careful not to apply the same attributes to both, although they may overlap (pp, x, 2). Doing so has led to considerable confusion, as we have seen, in reviewing the literature concerning education and class.

Finally, I am proposing that the impact of negative socio-economic and political conditions has marginalized sections of the population in this country to the extent that cultural disintegration is taking place. A culturally relevant and nationally agreed education strategy for mediated learning should be developed to address this. However, it requires to be incorporated into a wider overall policy that recognizes and accepts cultural diversity as the very core condition of educational endeavour, whereby living and evolving communities define equally with educators the direction that future educational provision will take.

## Chapter Two. Mapping my journey through Lowfield.

I now move on from the context of educational disadvantage to the environmental context in which the families, identified by the teachers as failing educationally, reside. The teachers and some school governors supply me with initial information from their experiences of this terrain. I bring with me, too, other baggage that could prove useful or a hindrance on my journey - my experiences of other neighbourhoods that appear similar in a number of ways, socially, economically and environmentally. With this information on board I begin to explore the area myself, to encounter people who live here and to talk to the parents and pupils, a number of whom invite me into their own homes. I begin to build up my own picture of the Lowfield community.

### 2.1. The community infrastructure.

The original Lowfield village was built before the Second World War, at the time the colliery was constructed, and was situated to the east of the town of Westborough. Since the war council house development has bridged the gap between the village and the town. When 'the Lowfield area' is referred to it is to these two settlements, now joined as one, to which the term is applied. 90% of dwellings are council-owned or tenanted properties (Raymond Sellars, Ridgeway comprehensive school governor, 28/2/90).

A ridge forms the southern extremity of Lowfield, from which the area slopes sharply into a flat plain. The few privately owned dwellings are grouped towards this southern ridge. These houses are more modern, smaller and with more compact gardens than those farther down the slope. The housing stock begins to look more dilapidated, with broken and boarded-up windows beginning to appear as the lower, flatter portion of the estate is reached. The gardens are larger here, mostly unkempt, some utilized for discarded possessions such as furniture or the parts of cycles and motorcycles. It is to homes in this lower part of the neighbourhood and to flats in a two-storey complex toward the east that families coming from outside the area are re-settled by the district housing department.

An open grassed space in the middle of the settlement provides the only public access to outdoor recreation. A few swings form the only facility on this site. To the east of the community, cut-off from most of it by a public cemetery, a small play area for young children has recently been constructed. Immediately to the east of this stands the colliery after which this neighbourhood is named. As far as other community facilities are concerned, the only shops open on the precinct are a small general store, where the prices are more expensive than in the town centre a mile and a half away, a fish and chip shop and a betting shop. There used to be a small supermarket but this is now closed and boarded up. The only religious building in the community, of any denomination, is the Anglican church. The vicar runs a youth club and a mother and toddler group meets for two hours a week but these are only available to church members. The county and district councils co-operate to provide a community house for the neighbourhood. This consists of two semi-detached houses. The rooms are not large enough to provide accommodation for many people. It also forms the base for two county council community workers.

Nursery provision is available at a centre one mile distant from the western perimeter of Lowfield. It is not on a convenient bus route from Lowfield and getting there involves crossing a busy ring road. This centre was intended, originally, to provide for Lowfield but no site was found within the neighbourhood so it was located in Middleton instead (Penny Perkins, manager of centre 10/9/90). Dr Whiting, paediatrician, thinks there should be a place in Lowfield where mothers can leave their pre-school children in order to have a break from them (21/9/90). There are no library facilities, there is no GP practice and no swimming bath in the area (Brenda Parkinson 31/10/89).

There are two public houses on the estate. One is being renovated when I first visit this neighbourhood. Here I come across a retired man, like me also imbibing this lunchtime (31/10/89). Visiting this particular 'pub' most lunch times, he goes to none in the locality during the evenings for fear of aggravation. Leaning towards me he tells me, in a confidential manner, that visiting darts teams play here at 6 o'clock in the evenings. Not stopping for a drink after the match, they leave as soon as possible. The area has a reputation for violence. At the time I wonder if he is pulling my leg. Walking around the neighbourhood I become aware of a number of, mostly large, dogs tethered to posts or running free but barricaded within their owners' gardens. The owners appear to keep them for protection rather than for companionship. I come across a woman exercising her puppy in her front garden. She tells me it is a pit bull terrier and informs me how difficult it is to prize open its jaws once they have locked on some object or part of a person! I ask her why people keep such animals. She replies that it is to make people *feel safe in their homes* (16/6/90).

From Councillor Peter Andrews (27/3/90) I learn that, historically, local people have been excluded from decision-making about local provision. They are involved only after decisions have been taken elsewhere to supply resources in the first place. Whether this community needs certain resources and, if so, where they should be sited, is never discussed with them. Priorities are decided outside this neighbourhood and on a piecemeal basis according to Peter. We shall see, as this study progresses, that it is people not living in this area who decide on changes of priority for it. As local inhabitants are not involved in this process they are continually faced with others *moving the goalposts* in what appears to them to be an arbitrary fashion.

The effect of all this is that local resources are insufficient for local needs. There is no adequate provision for some immediately recognised requirements (mothers and toddlers, youth and recreational facilities, a library, reasonably priced food, a GP practice, paid employment). The cost of travelling by public transport for provisions and facilities outside the area is high. The burden on minimal community resources of sizeable numbers of poor families being recycled into the neighbourhood is also considerable. Additionally, as we shall see, there is local suspicion that external providers are denying local people resources that are ostensibly available (including effective educational provision). The sense of menace and the perception of need to protect oneself against one's neighbours may be signs of a community in the process of cultural and economic decline - the effects of resource

starvation, social marginalization and economic inviability.

Whether this community is experiencing a threat to its cultural identity along the lines Feuerstein has identified (1974) is an open question. Consultant paediatrician Dr Whiting thinks Lowfield is not as deprived as Broadglade or Camphill, two other settlements abutting Westborough (21/9/90). Roy Front, head teacher at the junior school, sees linguistic deprivation to be present among the young children in a number of the families from this neighbourhood. In the following chapters we will learn that many of the teachers consider that the parents have difficulties in functioning competently as parents. Already, in this chapter, we are aware that the composition of this community is being changed by the semi-forcible resettlement of poor families from outside and so the economic and cultural base is being further undermined.

There certainly appears to be a number of pressures operating on the cultural integrity of this community. These pressures have a detrimental effect on the capacity of this neighbourhood to operate effectively in socio-economic terms and exercise power within the context of the network of other social, economic and political groupings. These groupings include local authority policy makers and officers, employers, the Health Authority (no G.P. practices in the area) and, as we shall see later in this chapter, middle-class families.

## 2.2. The teachers' perspectives on the Lowfield community.

**2.2.1. A view from Lowfield infant school.** Brenda Parkinson (Head teacher, Lowfield infant school):

> *There are two standards, home and school. There's no work ethos in Lowfield. When I was a child it was emphasized too much; now it's getting less and less. Some of them lead a very pleasant life with nice cars, but they don't work. We're not talking about cowed downtrodden people.*
>
> June Fairbank (community teacher): *Some of them are.*
>
> Brenda: *Yes. We can see where the system has failed the parents and the children. We don't know why - and that's what we need to know* (8/1/90).

Brenda criticizes some Lowfield people as having good lives and possessions without working for them. She sees these parents as not being disadvantaged and she resents them – Brenda and her other teachers *had to work hard* for what they earn (21/5/90). Dr Whiting thinks that *a problem at* (Lowfield) *infant school is the attitude of the head teacher towards the parents* – she is not flexible and can be judgemental (21/9/90). Even should this be so Brenda recognizes the school or, rather, 'the system' as having failed these parents and their children. Later (2/5/90) Brenda mentions to me that she has recently discussed with her staff and they consider what is *the basic problem - a breakdown of communication all round, teachers/parents, teachers/children, parents/children*. She tells me she sees how this fits into my analysis (Interim report, Appendix A). Brenda perceives a communication problem to lie at the heart of why Lowfield families are unable to fully access the education on offer. Could this communication problem be due to the teachers' refusal to come to terms with the realities of life as experienced by members of this community and could the teachers be superimposing a judgement on their community that fails to take these realities into

consideration? If the communication problems affect the teacher/pupil interface, as the teachers are apparently indicating, then access to education for the children from this community is likely to be a serious problem from the very start of their journey through formal education.

I am becoming aware of an emotional intensity lying behind this condemnation of perceived parent life-styles. The life-styles may not be as Brenda describes them but she is firmly convinced to the contrary. Moreover, these life-styles are perceived as challenging the work ethos, and social values of the teachers.

But, there is still real concern felt, not only for the children, but also for some of the parents. Brenda (2/5/90) expresses disquiet for one-parent families living in this community – *often very young mums left to cope with very young children and unsupported.* Brenda thinks that, sometimes, they hate their children. *They cannot cope with bringing up their kids.* It is this empathy that keeps breaking through to counter-balance the pain of perceived rejection, the anger and resentment. At the same time, these one-parent families (many resettled into this community by the district housing department) are seen as receiving little support from the local community; reflecting a view that this community does not care for its members.

So, communication breakdown between community and school, the perception of very different values between classroom and home together with a lack of mutual support within the neighbourhood and a lack of community facilities is the view of Lowfield from its infant school head teacher. It is a view charged with strong feelings.

**2.2.2. A Lowfield junior school perspective.** Scratched on a windowpane facing into the head teacher's room are the words 'Front is a cunt'. Roy Front, the head teacher concerned, is quite amused by this and has decided to ignore it (31/10/89). Roy is busy clearing work at this school before taking up his new appointment as head teacher at a primary school in Westborough. Consequently, I have little opportunity to sound him out as to his school's relationship with its local community. His deputy is engaged in preparing for the new head teacher to take over and so I am unable to find out his views. I know, from discussion with colleagues in the special needs support service, that Roy makes extensive use of remedial teachers attached to the service for a number of his pupils. He tells me he, his deputy and his community teacher *try to link with the more culturally deprived families but with little success. They don't like being visited at home.* The implication is that home visits are not made to any other families than *culturally deprived* ones and even these visits have little to show for them. I fail to ask Roy for his definition of cultural deprivation and so I do not know if it accords with Feuerstein's (i.e. that children are so deprived if their culture has failed to provide them with meanings for their experiences). He and Brenda Parkinson are agreed about priorities, he states – *a number of local families who are unable to make effective use of the education system.* He considers the knock-on effect as largely one of linguistic deprivation – *There's not much you can do after about the age of four.* My gaze moves back to Roy's scratched windowpane.

Jack Dorking, the community teacher, considers the problem to be a community one. There are *a lot of social problems in this area*. The list of families that the school has identified for me is *only the tip of the iceberg. There are a lot of families who show no interest* in school. In Jack's opinion about 70% of parents turn up to parents' evenings in the first year. In the second year this goes down to 50% and by the fourth and fifth years often the attendance is only 10% of all parents.

> *A lot of parents have had trouble at the infants school and try again at the juniors. Then they realize that it is their kids that are at fault and not the school, so they don't turn up. The parents don't like to hear bad things about their kids so they avoid the confrontation* (13/2/90).

So the parents back off because they wish to avoid conflict with teachers. From my contacts with parents I find no evidence that they perceive their children to be wholly to blame for difficulties at school but some that shows they consider school matters to be the teachers' and not the parents' affair. Jack shares this view:

> *Mr Front has written two or three letters in the past week but has received no reply. Their attitude is 'you are the experts; you get on with the job. It's nothing to do with us'. You get the kids who are disaffected with school and parents who are the same. When you've got both together you can't get anywhere with them.*

Disaffection leads to stalemate, to a block in communication. A depressingly frustrating scenario all round for teachers, parents and children involved. From the viewpoint of this community teacher it would appear he lacks sympathy and understanding for the local community or any real insight into why parents and children behave in the ways that they do. As a link between school and home he may not be adding greatly to the pool of useful information either side has of the other. I may be misrepresenting Jack's viewpoint. He was quite reluctant to give me specific information and attempted, unsuccessfully, to persuade other members of staff to be non-specific in their comments to me. Nevertheless, the relationship between teachers and the specific families with whom I am working will be more fully examined in chapter four. A very different pupil/teacher relationship will begin to emerge from the one I had anticipated when listening to Jack Dorking.

**2.2.3. Viewpoints from the teachers at Ridgeway comprehensive school.** Tony Beard, head of first year, is the one teacher in the three schools who was born and bred in Lowfield. Up until a comparatively short time ago he was still living there. None of the other teachers live in the area so he is the only member of staff who knows what it is like to be a member of the Lowfield community. He attended school with some of the parents of the pupils who now attend Ridgeway. Teachers use him, from time to time, to fill in the background of children from the area for whom they are concerned.

Tony tells me that the home circumstances can still be financially poor for some of these families and some children come to school inadequately and shabbily clothed - Zoe Knott for instance. He sometimes wonders whether teachers at the school really know what it is like to live like this. School rules about uniform can bring added pressures on some families

(23/1/90). The school's rules regarding clothing are not over stringent for families on a reasonable income but Tony's point is a significant one. The realities of biting poverty may never have come within the living experience of many of his colleagues. They tell me of their concerns about Lowfield but do not appear to see a relationship between these concerns and the economics of living there.

Stephen Lloyd, a first year tutor, maintains of the Lowfield community that 'lots of families don't rate education' (23/1/90). Maurice Hicks, second year tutor and head of the recreational studies faculty, agrees. He sees the problems the school has with this small number of identified families as being much wider in scope. He is worried about the aspirations of the Lowfield area as a whole.

> *I get the impression that education is of no significance to these people. What's more worrying is that there appears to be no desire to get themselves out of that situation* (i.e. living there, bettering themselves) (14/2/90).

Third year tutor, John Burrows (28/2/90), perceives the attitude of Lowfield youngsters to have a significant effect on peer group educational attainment levels. He gives an instance of under-achievement of a Lowfield pupil. He was a bright lad in a study group consisting of The Pastures pupils. He was fully capable of obtaining an 'A' grading in his examination subject but only achieved a 'D'. John put this down to the boy associating socially and exclusively with his Lowfield estate peers and rejecting any values that could be associated with The Pastures youngsters, including academic achievement (The Pastures is the comprehensive school's middle-class catchment area).

Aspirations, then, may be influenced by the values of the group with whom we identify. When success in education is perceived as being identified with those with whom we do not wish to identify, education may be rejected. A teacher in the school's behavioural unit, Amanda Price, states *In Lowfield they are mainly anti-establishment and school is part of the establishment* (31/1/90). A short while before this Amanda had attended a meeting of the school's community team where Joe Greenwood (a school governor) had also been present. He had made a point with which she agreed, that Lowfield people think that the school is for 'them' *i.e.* The Pastures area children. Amanda's colleague and head of unit, Terry Venables, thinks 'there is some feeling of alienation from the school in Lowfield' (31/1/90). Parents have talked to him about the negative way they perceive themselves to be treated by teachers. The parents tend to think of Ridgeway school as being *O.K. if you've come from The Pastures but not if you've come from Lowfield.*

This feeling of alienation from parents may be partly born of past experience. *Parents are petrified to come into school because they didn't enjoy it when they were children* maintains Stephen Lloyd and he thinks

> *the kids see that the teachers live in a different world from them. There is a village attitude in Lowfield; outsiders aren't trusted, but Lowfield people can be very loyal once you're trusted by them*.

Stephen sees the parents as tending to be very young with some parents still in their twenties when they have a child starting at the comprehensive school. He says there is a

social norm in the area that *you're on the scrap heap at 20 if you're not married.* It is not unusual for the school to have a number of pregnant school kids according to Stephen. Family arguments tend to spill over into school and affect the behaviour between pupils. *You can see it building up during the day and it explodes during the last lesson.* Sometimes a parent accompanied by his child will *burst in* to a classroom while a lesson is going on, having *built himself up* into coming to school. The picture that Steven paints is of young parents, themselves already alienated from school, finding it difficult to communicate effectively with the school and, being unable to prevent neighbourhood disputes from infiltrating the classroom.

Another issue from the comprehensive school concerns attendance. Robert Groves, deputy head teacher, affirms that a number of children take odd days off because other things have a greater priority than attending school (i.e. looking after the key for the gas man to call). Robert gets the impression from their parents that they think the children can always *catch up* on what has been missed that day at school (9/1/90). *If the children are in the slightest way unwell they're allowed to stay off by their parents* according to third year tutor John Burrows (28/2/90). He gets the impression that the Lowfield children tend to be off school for minor ailments. When they come back they do not appear to have been taken by their parents to a doctor but will *wait to come to school and go to the nurse* for treatment of a modest nature such as cuts or bruises. I think it may be that parents do not always feel confident enough to take their children to a GP outside the neighbourhood and would rather go to the school nurse with whom the child is more familiar.

The view from the comprehensive school is of a materially poor community from which young parents, who themselves have not enjoyed school, perceive the educational institution as having little to offer their own children. The pupils, themselves, are seen as casually non-attendant, as setting group norms that reject the aspirations of the middle-class catchment area, including academic attainment, and who view their teachers as far removed from them socially and culturally.

When listening to teachers from these three schools about their attitudes to the Lowfield community, I become aware that the families they have identified for me may only be expressing, in a heightened form, difficulties the teachers already have with this community as a whole.

### 2.3. Some school governors' views.

I interview three governors of Ridgeway comprehensive school. Peter Andrews is a local county councillor who also organizes the town's unemployed workers' centre. Raymond Sellars is the owner of a corner shop and has lived on the periphery of Lowfield all his life. The third governor, Joe Greenwood, is a local working-class man co-opted onto the comprehensive school board of governors. He has lived in Lowfield for 14 years and is unemployed.

The governors' comments develop further three themes also outlined by the families:

1. The economic and social realities of living in this area;
2. The effects on Lowfield of the attitudes and behaviour of outsiders with whom local people have to deal;
3. The problems they have in understanding and communicating with the world outside.

They additionally introduce another motif, likewise referred to in the junior and comprehensive schools:

4. Perceptions of the Lowfield attitude to education.

The governors describe a community unaccustomed to involvement in and unskilled in the process of decision-making; a community unwilling or unable to access the sort of educational provision that could give their young people the prospect of a decent foothold in paid employment and the chance of some economic security.

**2.3.1. Economic and social realities.** It has been *a policy of the council to put tenants into this area who are of low mental ability and from deprived backgrounds* Raymond Sellars tells me (28/2/90). The resettlement of families into Lowfield by the district council is confirmed by Peter Andrews, who is the elected representative of Lowfield on the county council. Peter maintains *homeless families tend to be moved into the area, although the housing department denies there is any policy to do so* (27/3/90). Though the two governors describe the families who have been resettled into this community in different terms, both agree that the district council has been responsible for directing homeless families toward Lowfield.

Raymond states that this is a community easy to get into but hard from which to escape. The only ways out are to exchange with a family from outside or to obtain enough money to buy a home elsewhere. Because of the reputation of this community, few families are willing to move here voluntarily and very few of those living here have enough financial resources to buy into the housing market from rented accommodation in Lowfield. The consequence, in Raymond's opinion, is that the area has become more and more depressed. I ask Raymond if he considers the area a ghetto but he is very reluctant to use that term about Lowfield. The neighbourhood already has a reputation and he thinks such an appellation would encourage further misunderstandings.

**2.3.2. Attitude and behaviour of others.** A further factor is at work contributing towards the state of depression. Raymond, when considering the comprehensive school's catchments, remarks:

> *It's in two very distinct sections. The other section is The Pastures where all the houses are privately owned. The family breadwinner has to earn a lot more than the one living in Lowfield to be able to afford to live there. Houses in the area tend to be quite highly priced. The father has a job where education has played a dominant role. In Lowfield the parents are likely only to have education to a limited degree and may also be on invalidity pension or be unemployed. A stigma comes on if people are on benefit and this does affect attitudes. The difference in social status, financial resources and attitude to education between the two areas is enormous.*

When their children enter the comprehensive school, Lowfield parents and their children are

brought face to face with the families from its middle-class catchment area. Raymond is proposing that this confrontation between two polarized realities and life-styles has a debilitating effect on this neighbourhood's sense of self- worth.

Peter Andrews, too, acknowledges there to be significant differences between these two catchments feeding into Ridgeway comprehensive school:

> *Often the parents from Lowfield have had a bad experience of schools and tend to treat teachers like debt collectors or the rent man (i.e. people to avoid). In a mining area the father leaves school relations to the mother. The fathers do tend to take that insular attitude. The parents from The Pastures will attend (meetings at school) and keep coming. The parents from Lowfield will come once and feel very uncomfortable. It's not the teachers' fault - they try hard. If you ask the parents to become involved in the school in some way you get the reply 'I couldn't do that'.*

Joe Greenwood agrees. *We've got serious problems at Ridgeway - they're very different communities altogether* (3/4/90).

Peter perceives the parents as being very defensive of their own children. *It's never their children who are responsible for any petty vandalism, always someone else's*. This is reflected *when you bring parents up to school to complain about their kids. It's never their kids or they've been led on by others*. It may not be so surprising that these parents readily spring to the defence of their children. Their own life experiences have taught them that it is easy for them to come off second best in their dealings with authority figures. Where their own children are concerned they cannot afford to trust to the goodwill of those in positions of power.

Joe is concerned about the bad press that Lowfield gets. *If anything happens* (in a bad way) *in this town, it's 'a Lowfield man' but if it's outside Lowfield it's 'a man from Westborough'*. Raymond Sellars sees an important aspect of social prejudice as operating also around educational provision at Ridgeway comprehensive school. *Before they* (the Lowfield pupils) *go there, there is a pre-conceived attitude from The Pastures pupils* and, to a certain extent, from staff. There are certain expectations made as to what the Lowfield pupils are like. Dr Whiting thinks The Pastures youngsters have problems too and can show great anxiety over attempting to cope with their Lowfield peers at first. In relation to the £1 million E.E.C. allocation recently designated by the local authority to be spent on Lowfield, Peter Andrews says:

> *They're suspicious and still don't really believe they've got a million pounds. One contractor called back for faulty work said 'well, it's only Lowfield'. This sort of view of the area reflects right down the strata to the kids.*

The singling out of Lowfield for condemnation in these forms of prejudice helps to define the area, for those within and outside the community, as one where socially undesirable people live.

**2.3.3. Problems in understanding and communication.** Like Peter Andrews, Joe Greenwood finds that it is the Lowfield mothers who have the task within their families of

trying to communicate with the comprehensive school. It is the mothers who usually come to talk to him about problems they have concerning Ridgeway. He offers to go with them to meet Jeremy Evans, the head teacher, but *when it comes to the crunch they don't come*. He thinks the mothers want him to *fire bullets for them*. He does not know how to deal with this problem, which he describes as *basically one of communication* between the neighbourhood and its comprehensive school:

> *Communications with parents are a big problem at Ridgeway; getting through to them and coming up to meet the teachers. It's mostly petty things that the parents complain about.*

The most frequent issue with parents, as Joe sees it, is the subject of school uniform. *One of the troubles is the kids tend to get called, when they wear their uniform, by the other kids.* And as we know, Tony Beard, head of first year, considers school rules about clothing can bring added pressures on very poor families. Nevertheless, the problems that Lowfield families have over the school uniform has not resulted in Ridgeway school modifying school policy regarding it in any way.

Whether the comprehensive school always understands the needs of this community's young people is a point Peter Andrews makes. He thinks there are a lot of disciplinary hearings at Ridgeway. Peter had attended a workshop on 'schools and disciplinary action'. One woman claimed she had attended 6 disciplinary meetings in a year. Peter said that he had been to 43! There is, perhaps, a link here between the excessive number of disciplinary hearings at Ridgeway and the way the school deals with the non-conformist behaviour of its pupils. Peter is suggesting that the school uses this process as a means of controlling the pupils rather than really attempting to come to grips with the reasons for their behaviour. *For a lot of the time we don't listen to the kids and do things for them when they haven't been involved in the decisions*. At one hearing the pupil concerned mentioned that he was very interested in Citroen CV cars. Peter found a youth training scheme placement for him with a firm that retailed CVs. *Unfortunately, he upset the apple-cart and fell out with one of the teachers*. As a result, the deal that had been struck with him, on the basis of his subsequent good behaviour, came to an end and the placement fell through. Peter thinks questions need to be asked about whether the teachers really understand such pupils' needs.

Peter Andrews has some comments to make on community/comprehensive school communication over the education of their young people. *One of the tragedies of a school like that* (i.e. with all its resources) *is that it closes down at night*. He had tried to organize opening the school on a regular basis for evening involvement by the wider community and found that the costs involved and organisational logistics made this virtually impossible. When I make the point that a teacher at the comprehensive school had suggested some parents' meetings should be held in places where people usually congregate in the Lowfield area, Peter says that he thinks such meetings could work. At the same time he finds it difficult to get people from this area to attend the public meetings *he* has organized. *They have been deprived for 30 years - nobody before has ever consulted them*. Now Peter is helping them to look at how the £1 million of E.E.C. money should be spent on Lowfield. *It's difficult getting over to them that they can spend this on more than one option - for example, provision for*

*kids and landscaping*. The Lowfield people have tended to see landscaping *as yuppie*. They make statements such as *what if the kids damage the trees?* Peter says that he replies *well, they're your kids!* Accepting that they can take responsibility for the care of their own environment *is a new concept for them.*

*Turning anger and apathy into doing something* is a problem in Lowfield, according to Peter. *To an extent the same thing can be said for the kids*. Demoralisation and frustration in combination are awkward states to channel constructively. This community's young people and their parents have a history of non-involvement in decisions that affect their daily lives in relation to the schools they attend as we shall continue to uncover. This also applies to their employment opportunities, where they can or cannot live and to what facilities are made available to this neighbourhood. Nevertheless, Peter remarks that if a parent from Lowfield becomes angry enough he/she is able to put a point over that would not have been possible without the stimulus of that emotion. This can lead to constructive results. He continues that it was only when Joe Greenwood became angry about something that he was persuaded to become a governor at Ridgeway. Peter informs me *I believe strongly that if you want to change something you've got to join the club*. Joining the club, however, may require a degree of self-confidence that even Joe Greenwood, a Lowfield man himself, is hard pressed to muster in the high-powered middle-class arena of a Ridgeway comprehensive school governors' meeting.

Joe finds it difficult being a *lead governor* where his role is to relate closely to a deputy head teacher who leads a school development team. He sometimes feels very awkward with the governors who speak in a quite different way than he does himself. It is better when he has someone with him who understands his point of view, like fellow governors Peter Andrews or Raymond Sellars; but they are not always able to attend his meetings.

The governors identify problems in communication and understanding between comprehensive school and community. There is lack of confidence and know-how on the part of Lowfield residents; lack of understanding by the school of the needs and reasons for the behaviours of Lowfield young people. The school also fails to make facilities available to its communities out of normal school hours and when it could be easier for parents to attend. This community is also very suspicious of any goodies on offer to it. The residents have no experience of organizing on their own behalf or of meeting together regularly to make decisions. Before I complete my work in this community they will suffer the loss of a substantial portion of the £1 million originally allocated to them. They are still very vulnerable to the treatment they receive at the hands of those living outside the area.

**2.3.4. Perceptions of the Lowfield attitude to education.** Peter Andrews has something to say about the relationship between education and employment. Through his job in Westborough's unemployed workers' centre he has built up knowledge of local employers. They tend to get about 80 applications for each post advertised. The method usually adopted is, initially, to look at the grammar and spelling of the letters of application. *It's difficult getting this point over to parents* that a good education is important for their children if they

are to get decent local employment. Joe tells me:

> *A lot say it's the Lowfield people themselves and I tend to agree with them. Basically the parents don't give a damn. They aren't concerned with GCSEs.*

Joe affirms that the parents from this community find lots of other things they prefer to be doing, such as playing 'Bingo', rather than attend a function at school. Joe thinks *the only way to get them is to visit door-to-door; but it's time consuming and expensive to do it that way.* His commitment to his neighbourhood does not mean that he is uncritical of the local parents. He goes further than his fellow governor, Peter, in asserting that the parents do not care about education, where the latter's opinion is that the parents do not make the connection between a good education and a decent job. We will become aware, as this study continues to unfold, that Lowfield parents *do* want a good education for their children but consider that they do not possess sufficient influence and power to enable this to occur.

Raymond Sellars sees the pupils and parents as getting out of education what they put into it.

> *It's got to be a partnership between family and school. If it's an official baby-minding service from the parents' point of view - that's their attitude to school. I don't know how we're going to get them interested.*

But there are two sides to this partnership issue. *It's a shame,* mentions Peter Andrews, *Ridgeway had a particularly good drama teacher.* Some years ago three or four pupils had gone on from Lowfield into drama school and then into the profession, regularly, year after year. Lowfield people will sometimes attend drama productions, which have been very good at Ridgeway, *but they won't come up for everything else.* Encouraging the community to make use of the range of facilities available at the comprehensive school is not easy. Moreover, the sort of event that did attract them is no longer on offer. Neither is the educational facility that opened prospects for the future to a few Lowfield pupils.

We are back, once more, to the problem of lack of co-operation and empathy between community and school. The picture emerging is of an insular and disenfranchised community with low self-esteem; a community acutely aware that it lacks the know-how and resources to deal effectively with those who are perceived as exercising power and authority over it; and a community unable to bridge the communication gap between neighbourhood and school that would enable its young people to gain sufficient access to those educational resources that are essential in preparing them for adult life.

**2.3.5. My comments on the viewpoints of the governors.** Peter Andrews is committed to working-class politics and has a wide knowledge and experience of his field. Raymond Sellars, a shopkeeper who has lived on the outskirts of Lowfield all his life, has a more detached view of the area than Joe Greenwood. Raymond's view reflects care, concern and interest but with the experienced eye of a working-class man who has successfully accessed educational provision, has achieved standing in his community and who is confident in his ability to put forward his own ideas with clarity and authority. Joe Greenwood is a local working-class co-opted member of the comprehensive school board of governors, where he lacks confidence in putting forward his views. He has a genuine commitment to the community in which he lives. He *desperately* wants to find answers to the communication

difficulties, yet lacks a coherent conceptual framework from which to operate. He is unable to set his view of Lowfield into a wider understanding of working-class life, as his two colleagues are able to do. Because of this it is sometimes difficult for him to truly represent his community and he finds himself arbitrating between individuals and the comprehensive school on an ad hoc basis without being able to orchestrate this into a genuine dialogue that can contribute towards effective change.

The subtly different levels of understanding of the three governors appear to reflect their levels of achievement (of acquired power), which coincides with their degree of physical detachment from this neighbourhood. The governor who still lives here and is unemployed has a less coherent framework for understanding the area and appears to be caught in the same powerless trap as the families who live here.

**2.3.6. Some comments on *my* viewpoint.** My viewpoint on their viewpoints also requires close scrutiny. It may be that my comments reflect the experiences of my own working-class background. I am also now consciously seeking to re-position myself in relation to a community that may share some, but not all, of the characteristics of that background. My position is not fixed yet I am prepared to make statements on the viewpoints of others as if I am sure of where I stand, which is not always the case. This tension within my role as researcher may tempt me to use data to construct a viewpoint of my own without giving due weight and regard to understanding the viewpoints of others.

## 2.4. The families' views of their neighbourhood.

Family members are reticent in expressing opinions about their neighbourhood to an academic tourist, such as myself, with no proven credibility for the task I have told them I am performing or reason to believe that I can be trusted in any way. It may also be that my interview style, focusing broadly on *missing out on education* but largely non-directional in approach, provides no trigger for releasing information on the community. Tony Beard, a teacher at the comprehensive school, tells me (23/1/90) that it takes a while before Lowfield families feel able to accept people from outside the area. If so, this could well have had a bearing on what specific areas family members are willing to discuss with me.

Three themes run through the comments that Lowfield people have made to me about their community. There is their perception of how others view the neighbourhood (teachers, professionals outside and inside the area, people and pupils from other communities) and what effect this has on their own perceptions of themselves. There are the social and economic realities of living in Lowfield and its relationship to power, influence and the acquisition of resources. There is also a third that acts as counterpoint to these other two, never made explicit yet fundamentally affecting the character of the other two – the problem of communicating with the world outside Lowfield.

**2.4.1. Perceptions of and reactions to others' views of Lowfield.** Although he should be attending his comprehensive school, I find Michael at home when I visit his mother, **Mrs. Susan Marshall**, today (3/4/90). Susan thinks that the teachers at Ridgeway School favour

the pupils that come from The Pastures, a middle-class area of Westborough. **Michael Marshall** interjects that the reason for this is because the Lowfield pupils *are nutters. You think you are because you're treated that* way responds his mother. Here there is a polarity of self-perception; Michael taking a negative view of himself and his neighbourhood peers, while his mother maintains that such a viewpoint has been imposed from outside. Let us explore Michael's view of his world a little more to see what effect his perceptions of others' attitudes have had on his own attitude to himself and his Lowfield contemporaries.

Michael has friends among the pupils from The Pastures. *A few of them are just like us*. He does not like some of the more academically-minded Pastures pupils *who've got glasses and think they're professors, but I haven't heard of a lad glue-sniffing from The Pastures - they're all from Lowfield*. Also *There's glue-sniffing and drugs in Lowfield.* His friendship relationships with some like-minded pupils from The Pastures has given him the opportunity to compare their behaviour with that of his Lowfield peers and he sees some similarities (some are *just like us*) but he also notices differences (no glue-sniffing or drugs). Maybe some Pastures pupils do engage in substance abuse but this is not included in Michael's perception of them.

About Lowfield, Michael states *the people from Pastures say 'don't go there, you'll get your head kicked in'* and he thinks there is some truth in this. Outsiders from The Pastures would not be welcome here and would be putting themselves at some risk from the local youths, in his opinion. He certainly sees his neighbourhood as hostile and self-abusive. He also considers Pastures pupils to be brighter than their Lowfield contemporaries. When I ask him if there is any difference in the way The Pastures and Lowfield pupils are treated by the teachers at Ridgeway school, he puts the responsibility firmly on his own shoulders as a Lowfield pupil. *If Pastures bad mouth, they are told off and stop. If I mouth I carry it on and get into trouble.* Michael sees this refusal to conform as a pivotal difference in the way the two groups of pupils behave in school.

**William Phillips**, another fifth year pupil at the comprehensive school, finds that Lowfield pupils come off second best in relationship to The Pastures young people at Ridgeway School. His opinion is that the teachers take more notice of *'the snobs'* (The Pastures pupils) than of *the normal* (Lowfield) *pupils*. The *teachers seem to just talk to them*. This indicates, for him, a shared affinity between comprehensive schoolteachers and The Pastures pupils that is not extended to the Lowfield young people. *Snobs and teachers are on their side and the normal ones on the other* (28/3/90). It is interesting that William, who is unsympathetic towards his Pastures contemporaries, sees his own Lowfield peers as *normal*, while Michael Marshall, who has positive contacts with some Pastures pupils, considers his Lowfield peers to be *nutters*. The ways in which the two young people define their own realities are significantly influenced by their contact with the outside world. For one, that contact is with an alliance of antipathetic teachers and *snobs;* for the other it is more complex - some of the outsiders are his friends and his experience of their behaviour makes him question his own behaviour and that of his neighbourhood peers. It has certainly heightened his awareness of the two life-styles and thrown the disadvantages of his own into high relief. Nevertheless, whichever way they define their reality, neither is happy with his lot and both are profoundly affected by the perceived

attitudes of others towards this community.

Michael's mother, **Mrs. Susan Marshall**, remarks to me that she was once talking to a neighbour about needing to go to the dentist and she was told *don't tell him you're from Lowfield or he'll not see to your teeth.* She certainly considers that coming from this neighbourhood will affect the way others from outside the area will react to her. This view is reflected by **Mr. Colin Leaper** who tells me *they think we're all rough - all thieves and bandits*. Colin tells me he has recently seen an advertisement for a house in the local newspaper.

> *They put 'anywhere but Lowfield'. It's always put down as a rough area of the town. It's because they were miners. People think miners are rough. They got a bad name through the strike as well.* (13/6/90).

There is resentment that the views of those living outside the area are not only out of touch with the reality of living in Lowfield but are rejecting of the area as well. Colin does not deny that the area has problems. During the last World War and for a few years following *you could leave your door unlocked and no one would break in*. He put this down to no one having any money and the existence of a community spirit. Now that spirit has departed. If those outside the area do not rate this community highly, those living here do not trust each other as they once did and certainly do not welcome authority figures from outside. *In those days the police used to be welcomed into people's homes,* but no more.

**Mrs. Karen Hooper's** encounter with a professional from outside the area has certainly reinforced her feeling of powerlessness and lack of confidence in standing up for her rights in relation to an authority figure. When I interview her (14/5/90) she tells me that her son, Leslie, *is having problems with his eyes but I can't get him to a specialist until October the tenth.* Leslie's eye problem was noticed at school in November 1989. Karen took him to her doctor the same month and her GP said he would refer him on to a specialist. When nothing happened she visited her doctor again in February 1990 and was told that he had forgotten to refer Leslie. He then informed Mrs Hooper that the specialist could not see her son until October. She tells me that she feels *very mucked around, but they've got authority over us and they can do what they like*. This feeling of powerlessness in the face of authority has prevented her from taking the matter further. However, there are authority figures who can be trusted to take up the fight on one's behalf. Karen states: *Now I don't have a social worker to help me. I reckon everyone should have a social worker. If school can't help you then someone like them can*. She finds Ridgeway comprehensive school helpful over Leslie and she has found social workers sympathetic and helpful in the past. With Karen's permission I contacted the social services department and a social worker makes contact with the family over this matter. It is, perhaps, not insignificant that Mrs Hooper feels unable to enlist directly the aid of a known helping professional from outside the area, so low is her self-confidence.

The low self-regard of people living in this community, in **Susan Marshal's** opinion, is reinforced by the opinions of people living outside the neighbourhood:

> *When kids are put into school around here they're classed as 'rough'. It's a different*

*world from The Pastures children. I even get mad with my own family - that they feel a lot better than they are because they live up at Middleton.*

Susan is putting a case for the life experiences of Lowfield children being very different from those living in The Pastures and that people living outside Lowfield denigrate those living in this community instead of trying to understand the conditions under which they live.

This leads us into the second train of thought running through the family members' comments - the economics of living in Lowfield.

**2.4.2. The social and economic realities of living in Lowfield.** *It doesn't work having The Pastures and Lowfield together. We're on the dole and they roll up in their posh cars.* Immediately **Susan Marshall** defines the economic gap between these two communities and proposes that educating young people from these communities together is not working. But, why is it not working? Of The Pastures people Susan affirms *they've got money and we haven't. If you've got money you've got everything. Who's got money in Lowfield really?* For her, having young people from these two communities educated together means that the Lowfield pupils are always the losers. Nor do their parents have the financial resources that The Pastures parents are able to bring to bear in order to exert influence when required. **Mrs. Alice Arnold** thinks (26/6/90) *you must come from a well-off background like The Pastures before you're taken notice of* at Ridgeway School. In so doing she proposes that Lowfield parents lack the socio-economic clout required to press for their young people's interests at the comprehensive school.

The wider context of macroeconomics and national politics has impinged on this community. *Things have got worse now for the Lowfield people than they've ever been* states **Susan Marshall**. When I ask her why she thinks this is so she replies *it just is*; then, after a little thought, *under Margaret Thatcher, it's true, the poor are poorer.* A statement, then, that national politics have contributed to the economic depression of this area. Susan Marshall is correct. Will Hatchett (1991) indicates how the national wealth of the country is split up. Only the average income of the wealthiest 10% of the population has increased dramatically and, in 1987, 43% of the United Kingdom's post tax income was held by the wealthiest 20%. 26% of all children and 19% of the total population were living in poverty in 1987; an increase of more than half from 1979. *Living Conditions in Europe* (1999) reveals that the poorest 20% of the EU population receive only 8% of total income while the richest 20% pocket 40% or 5 times more. In the UK it is 5.5 times more.

**2.4.3. Summary.** There are indications that when young people from this community encounter, for the first time, contemporaries from a higher socio-economic background, they and their parents recognize the social, economic and power differences to work to their disadvantage. People living outside the neighbourhood are perceived as looking down on, disregarding and having some fear of Lowfield. Local people see dealings with the outside world, which include figures perceived as having authority, as often being to their disadvantage. Low self-esteem can prevent any pro-active approach or any attempts at mediation with figures in authority. Drug and solvent abuse occurs amongst the young people

living in this area. Finally, the larger political realities have, additionally, impacted to depress and impoverish further this working-class community.

## 2.5. Conclusion.

Throughout this chapter I have drawn attention to a number of overlapping contextual conditions that are profoundly affecting this community. These include macroeconomics and national politics, local housing policy and provision, educational provision, the social infrastructure and local employment prospects. These can create opportunities for structural patterns to emerge including the ways in which this community is perceived and managed by a number of resource providers and sources of major influence. These entail a range of professional groups, the schools, the local authorities, the providers of employment, the implementers of national employment strategies and the media. The ways in which they operate in relation to Lowfield place severe restrictions on the community members' abilities to bring about change or to influence, in a positive way, the allocation of and ways in which resources are or are not made available. Additionally, these structural patterns influence the ways in which local people perceive both themselves and their capacities to influence their own destinies.

# Chapter three. Template and maps: method, methodology and doubts.

In this chapter I describe the way in which I have mapped my Lowfield journey and the philosophical/sociological template I employed to contain it. I therefore set out the practical and theoretical basis on which I undertook my inquiry. I follow this by questioning aspects of the theory and analysis (the template and the effect this has on the drawing of maps) and conclude by referring to the second section of this study where subsequent theoretical development (a master template to contain the previous one and its maps) will be brought to bear on the analysis and its status for ethnographic research.

## 3.1. The research problem and methods used for data collection.

Adelman et al (1977, p.139) define case study as 'an umbrella term for a family of research methods having in common the decision to focus an enquiry round an instance'. The first part of this thesis is concerned with such a study. The instance in this case refers to the practical problems facing schools and their communities as understood by the members of 25 families and the teachers in the schools through which their children pass.

The study took place over a period of 15 months from October 1989 until December 1990. I describe experiences of my encounters with the teachers and families in the social context of a working-class community and its schools together with other related information I have sought out in the course of my enquiry. This ethnographic case study, together with all other qualitative pieces of research, is no objective undertaking. Nevertheless, I will demonstrate that the methods I have used in obtaining and analyzing my data have been both systematic and closely related to the way in which I experience my own reality. I make reference, in the course of this thesis, to aspects of my own life experiences and their bearing on the values I take with me into this sociological investigation.

The methods used for data collection have been personal observation, single interviews, informal discussions with individuals and groups of individuals and the perusal of documents relating to the schools and the community. I have made extensive use of a research diary in the gathering of data. This helped me to develop a method of analysis. I have also used this diary as a means of recording my observations when interviewing people (e.g. my meeting with Mr Gallway, p. 44), when moving about the neighbourhood and the schools and when I have taken part in various meetings with teaching staff. Additionally, I noted observations in my diary about my informal contacts with teachers, about the socio-drama sessions I have run in the infant school and my contact with the parent group at the same establishment.

I have supplemented information gathered from interviews with a perusal of available documentation. I have analysed G.C.S.E. examination results and the comprehensive school's disciplinary records. Additionally, I have consulted the latest report of the local education authority inspectors on the comprehensive school, various staff information sheets and the head teacher's article on his school structure that appeared in a national journal. The internally circulated comprehensive school staff prospectus and the school's brochure for

parents and potential pupils, together with its provisional development plan for 1990-91, have been made available to me and I have submitted them to scrutiny.

During the period I was undertaking this research I ran socio-drama sessions in the infant school with each teacher and her class and so observed the behaviours of all concerned as they interacted with each other. I attended two sessions run for parents by the community teacher at the infant school. Some teachers in the comprehensive school consulted me concerning the behaviour management of some pupils.

Although taking no part in the study I was undertaking, a colleague social worker was working with teachers and pupils in the comprehensive school and with teachers, pupils and lunchtime care staff at the junior school during the same period of time. We often met to discuss our work and to give mutual encouragement and support to each other in what could have been, both professionally and personally, isolating activities for us.

### 3.2. My approach to the interviews.

From my initial discussions with teachers I obtained the impression I may encounter some difficulties in gaining access to a number of families. Teachers had identified communication as being a problem between themselves and these parents and had anticipated I may experience similar problems with parents in my attempt to make contact with them. As a practising counsellor and social worker I have some years of experience in the field of communicating with people and I realized I would have to draw heavily on some of this experience if I was to engage effectively with the families. Additionally, when first becoming involved with teachers, I discerned that problems in communication can be just as difficult between people coming from different professional backgrounds (e.g. education and social work) as between professionals and families living in local communities. So I needed to think carefully about my approach to both parents and teachers in order to gain their trust and come to some understanding about the meaningfulness of education in terms of their daily lives. I attempted to give myself the best possible chance of encountering people so that I was in a position to explain to my potential interviewees why I wanted to talk to them. During my career as a professional counsellor, social worker and community worker I have gained experience in forming working relationships with people in the community over a wide range of age groups, extending from toddlers to very old people. I drew on this experience to help me get my viewpoint over and to help people express what they wished to say as accurately as possible. Sometimes what they wished to say was that they did not wish to take part in this study! In every case I respected the person's wishes and made no attempt to persuade her/him to have a change of mind.

I ruled out using a portable cassette recorder as a means of capturing the verbal content of interviews because its use could be considered intrusive and threatening by some of the people with whom I wished to talk. This would be particularly so if they were already feeling under stress or were unsure as to whether they should be talking to me at all! I chose, instead, to take hand-written notes and to use a conversational approach in all my

interviews, partly because I was familiar with this approach and partly because I knew, from experience, that it was a method I was able to use that helped to put people at their ease.

I bore in mind my purpose but allowed people to talk freely around the general topic that I had introduced to them. If people strayed away from the topic I tried to be sensitive in helping them to re-focus on the purpose of my interview. Should someone give me information that appeared to have bearing on the information I had gleaned from other sources, I asked the person being interviewed for some specific information on that particular area.

I had ideas about issues that might prove important and made notes of these points in my research diary but I decided not to incorporate a questionnaire or checklist into my programme of interviews. I did not raise these points directly in discussions, however, preferring the topics of interest and importance to emerge naturally from our conversations, not wishing to pin people down to specific issues that could be irrelevant to or run counter to their main concerns. Indeed, a number of my tentative issues did not prove to be central to the interests of those I met. I subsequently discarded these areas as they proved to be irrelevant to the emerging data or, certainly not in the form in which I had noted them within my diary. In this way I was able to keep a continuous check, to a certain degree, on the ideas, knowledge and experience that I brought with me and to test these in relation to the experiences I was now encountering.

I explained to the parents and pupils that I was undertaking a study about some pupils and families who may be 'missing out on education' in some ways within the schools that provided for their neighbourhood. The schools involved had raised the matter with me and I had agreed to find out what I could with co-operation from the parents, pupils and teachers involved. I hoped that, as a result, some improvements could take place. The teachers had already identified, in general terms, their concerns about and had pinpointed particular families before I began my investigations. So I needed to talk to teachers about specific pupils and individual families as well as explore what 'missing out on education' really meant to them.

Finding the appropriate places and times for the discussion of such sensitive matters needed careful thought. All interviews have been on a voluntary basis, as informal and relaxed as I could make them. I drew heavily on my experiences as a therapeutic counsellor to help people feel at ease and to enable me to work towards an empathetic understanding of each individual as he/she presented during interview. In other words I tried to 'reach into' the world of the person I was talking to so that I could begin to see their world through their eyes.

Most meetings with individual teachers have taken place in the main, or a subsidiary, staff room. Sometimes other staff members have been around but, in every case, this has been the choice of the person being interviewed. A very few interviews have taken place in empty

classrooms. In each case I asked the teachers to choose the site of our meeting. Altogether, I interviewed 44 teachers, a number more than once.

Interviews with pupils were undertaken in a private room within their schools or, sometimes, at home with or without a parent present. I gave each pupil a choice of venue and listened carefully to whether or not they wished to have their parent(s) present.

Interviews with parents took place in their own homes. I took 'pot luck' with parents and just presented myself on the doorstep. I thought this would be an effective approach to gaining access and so it proved to be. I had considered writing letters to ask for appointments to visit but decided against doing so. I feared that these particular parents might see a letter as an official missive relating to the schools. This could then have resulted in a refusal to see me. I tended to use sunny days to visit parents for the first time. There was always a chance, on a sunny day, of meeting parents outside their homes or the side door might be open, thus giving me the opportunity to look inside and make my first contact. Things were not always so easy, however. I give, below, an example from my research diary of my approach to a particular parent.

> *Very scruffy outside. Graffiti on wall. When I knocked a dog tied up in back garden started barking. So did large dog next door and large dog in garden that backs onto the Gallways' garden. These dogs kept leaping up at the fence. I could hear someone inside so knocked again. Saw a face peering at me between the curtains of the front room window. I indicated I'd seen the face. Mr Gallway eventually appeared around side of house. A big broad man with his arms folded and a stern expression on his face. When I said who I was and that his kids had already met me, he unfolded his arms, smiled and invited me in* (20/6/90).

As hinted at in the above quotation, I attempted to gain access to a secondary school student before I visited her/his parent. In this way, if I had made a favourable rapport with the student, I was more likely to obtain a friendly welcome from the parent. After a few weeks I began to be a familiar figure around the neighbourhood and parents would exchange the time of day with me or we would have a chat in the street. In course of time I think I became known as a friendly 'o.k.' sort of person in the neighbourhood.

From the 25 families that I contacted there was only one family where I was unsuccessful in gaining an interview with at least one member. With 22 of the families I was able to interview both children and parents. As far as the children were concerned, I decided that secondary school students were of sufficient age to decide whether or not they wished me to interview them. I gained the permission of parents prior to interviewing their primary age school children. In the case of the primary children, as with the secondary students, I gave them a choice as to whether they wished to talk to me about their school and teachers.

I sought out three school governors. Two chose to see me at their homes and one at his place of work.

At the conclusion of each interview I read back from my notes to the individual with whom I had been talking so that I could verify the accuracy. After these notes had been typed I gave each interviewee a copy. People then had opportunity to amend their accounts and/or to enter into further dialogue with me in order to achieve a written summary that they considered accurately reflected their views.

I have set out my method of data collection through interview in some detail because the interview has been my most frequently used tool in gathering information on site. I decided not to use a questionnaire, as it would have been inadequate for my purpose. I was seeking information from four separate groups of respondents (teachers, parents, pupils and school governors) who were likely to be giving me different types of information about a complex subject. The analysis of information from interview is necessarily more difficult than from questionnaire. In the resume of my method, as outlined above, I have stressed the pains I took to ensure the validity of my data collection - its accuracy and truthfulness to what my subjects were telling me. The interview is often regarded as having low reliability. I have had some effect on the people to whom I spoke and another interviewer may well have extracted different information or a varying perspective on similar information as a result of that interviewer's capabilities and style. A re-checking with the interviewee shortly after the initial interview did enable me to introduce a crude form of test-retest reliability to my data, however.

### 3.3. The problem of the sample.

My case study has involved me in looking at three distinct groups of people - teachers, pupils and parents. How representative are they of the topic of my research? If I bracket the pupils and parents together, since they come from the same families, I have a sample of 25 families. There is no way of knowing how representative they are of the Lowfield community. I left the selection of these families to the schools. The head teachers in all three schools told me that their teachers considered these families to be the ones benefiting least from education. I had no means of checking the criteria used by the teachers for their selection and there is no conclusive evidence that these particular families do represent the least educationally achieving section of this community. However, as I unfold my research, evidence does emerge that the children from these particular families do have considerable difficulties in accessing education.

In turning to the teachers a question arises as to whether my sample is representative of the teachers who teach these particular children and other children from this community. I interviewed 9 of the 10 teaching staff in the infant school (including the head teacher and community teacher) and 10 of the 12 teachers in the junior school (also including both head teacher and community teacher). I interviewed 25 of the total complement of 64 teaching staff at the comprehensive school. The comprehensive school tutors whom I have interviewed have, between them, 59% of all the Lowfield pupils in their tutor groups (220 of the 374 Lowfield pupils) including all the pupils attending school from the 25 families concerned. At the comprehensive school I have, additionally, interviewed the year heads from years 1 to 5. They have an overall view of the spread of Lowfield pupils across the tutor

groups. I interviewed the head teacher, the deputy head teacher responsible for development (including community liaison), the head of learning support, head of pastoral and social education, a departmental head and both members of staff of the behavioural unit. This gave me a wider perspective on the relationship the comprehensive school has with this particular neighbourhood. From this series of interviews I gained insight into the ways the teaching staff view their Lowfield pupils and their perceptions of the Lowfield community as a whole. It is information from staff about the Lowfield community in general that first alerted me to the existence of antipathy between schools and community.

### 3.4. Limitations of the study.

My case study is concerned, specifically, with investigating the relationship between 25 families from a particular neighbourhood and the schools through which their children pass. It confines itself to 3 schools - an infant, a junior and a comprehensive school. No parents or pupils from areas other than one particular neighbourhood were seen. The amount of time I had available was the determining factor in my decision not to interview members of families from outside this area. If I had been able to do so it would have been useful to see other perspectives on the comprehensive school and on the Lowfield parents and pupils. This could well have added further depth to my study.

The parents and pupils I interviewed formed only a minority of the Lowfield community. The opinions of other members of this community would certainly have thrown further light on the issues I was exploring and may have added further issues.

I interviewed three comprehensive school governors. I had wished to interview more and from the junior and infant schools. Again, time constraints on the number of hours a week I was able to devote to the area proved insufficient to extend my interviews further.

My involvement with the schools and families covered a period of fifteen months. Part of that time was devoted to work with the same schools that did not entail research. I made a conscious decision, therefore, to husband my time in the way that I did. With the advantage of hindsight I could well have cast my net wider as well as interviewing a random sample of the Lowfield families rather than a teacher-chosen group. Nevertheless, I think that the general thrust of my argument, although it would have differed in matters of detail, would have come to similar conclusions.

### 3.5. Analysing the data.

This can best be explained by an analogy to cartography. Maps of pathways of meaning, some blocked, were presented to me by the teachers and family members. These I superimposed on other maps that differed from each other in points of departure, stops along the way and destination posts.

I was being asked by the teachers to provide a map of less blocked paths that could be superimposed on a single map of staging posts (i.e. some broad consensus of values to negotiate an agreed journey through education for the teachers and families).

The parts of existing maps that I was picking up from teachers and family members alike (the data) indicated differences in drawing styles, terrain, the siting and significance of strategic centres and in the way in which the boundaries of these maps were defined (i.e. how they operated in relation to the wider environment). I decided to pick up as many pieces as possible before attempting to make any sense of them. I made faithful copies of the maps and then cut them into smaller fragments (after giving copies of their statements to participants and waiting for feedback, I assembled a list of statements made by each participant). I grouped together fragments that appeared to be of the same terrain and identified differences in style, location of objects and boundaries. I treated the maps of pathways (descriptions of meanings and values) in the same way – identifying similar and different routes and blockages. At the same time I was beginning to make interim sketchy maps of my own in order to get my bearings (making observations, talking to people informally, taking down notes in my research diary). Later I began to search out maps that appeared to be more specific and detailed (the comprehensive school's list of examination results and record of disciplinary proceedings). These I submitted to a process of reconstruction in order to examine their relevance to the Lowfield area and to these families in particular.

By this means I was able to draw my own maps for the teachers, based on *their* own maps, identifying agreements and differences and proposing a means by which they could, in future, continue to redraw and redefine their own maps (Appendix A). Time did not permit me to address the families in the same way. Neither had I negotiated with the parents and pupils a means by which I would be able to share my findings between them.

### 3.6. Theoretical considerations.

This method of approach can be described broadly as a form of interpretive interactionism (Denzin, 1989, p.27; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, pp.510-11), whereby the focus of research is on those life experiences that alter and shape the meanings people give to themselves and their living situations. These experiences are related to the experiences of others, to the cultural contexts that contain them, to other cultural contexts and to the 'moral biases that organize the research' (1994, p.511). My methodology was located within the broad paradigm of constructionism. Denzin and Lincoln define 'paradigm' as 'a basic set of beliefs that guide action' (ibid, p.99) that encompass elements of epistemology, ontology and methodology. My ethnographic enquiry (whose paradigm I was subsequently to question) was based on the belief that realities are apprehended subjectively as multiple and are constructed by social and experiential means (Guba and Lincoln, p.110-11). The findings from research are created as the interactive process between investigator and investigated continues. The final aim is to distil a consensus construction that improves on predecessor constructions in terms of being more informed and sophisticated.

Before we leave this discussion of theory I have a fundamental question to ask. What is the status of the patterns that have emerged from the data? Even if well argued, are they not just accounts of how I, as a researcher, document my social world? This is the ethnomethodological impasse. Together with certain events in my personal life subsequent

to my encounters in Lowfield, it led me, during the second part of this study, in search of what, if anything, it is possible to know about what is real for us.

### 3.7. Doubts concerning the methodology.

The quantified qualitative analysis that provides a framework for my empirical study appeared to me, at the time, to form a coherent picture of what is going on in Lowfield regarding access to mainstream education. This analysis, however, was soon to be challenged by encounters in my personal life (Crisis! p. 135ff.) and its paradigm severely tested by ethnomethodological theory. I needed to posit my analysis in a methodological context that would enable me to take on board the scepticism of the ethnomethodologists without rejecting insights gained from other perspectives and from my own experiences. The development of the theoretical perspective, as argued in the second part of this study, will provide such a context.

Before concluding this chapter I will outline the main challenges that sociological theory provides for my original analysis. Beginning with phenomenology (Schutz, 1972), because that formed the initial theoretical underpinning for the Lowfield inquiry, interaction is between individuals and meanings have no existence of their own separate from the people who own them. If we accept this premise it means that there is no such thing as oppression, that no group holds greater power than any other within their social milieu and that no group or individual can consistently exercise power over others. This presents a fundamental challenge to the position I take up regarding my analysis of the political and economic factors relevant to the development of the Lowfield community (pp. 25-6, 40, 129). Phenomenology refuses to accept the possibility that such phenomena can exist if they cannot be observed and we will be challenging this position in Part Two (pp. 162 & 172).

From the perspective of ethnomethodology (Zimmerman and Wieder, 1971; Garfinkel, 1967), any conflict of interest that I identify between the group of teachers and the group of parents are constructs of my own making to define situations that do not exist. So social conflicts, issues of power and constraints imposed on people from their socio-economic setting cannot be addressed because there is no way of proving their existence. If I take this method further and apply it to the methodology I am using to process my data, I am again using a 'documentary method' to analyze a documentary method. It is, therefore, valid only so far as it can help explain the methods and accounting procedures I employ to construct my own social world. It is invalid for me to use my methodology to explore anything else. One can go on with this, ad infinitum, and at each analysis of documentary method by documentary method, ethnomethodology reduces further until it implies that nothing is ever knowable – even the premise taken up by ethnomethodology. The argument can, therefore, be accused of circularity. This flaw does not undermine the subjective thrust of the ethnomethodological argument. It does, however, seriously limit the scope of that thrust by denying us the capability of accessing our own realities. In constructing our theoretical perspective (pp. 171-2), we will be challenging the supposition that we can separate out our constructs, interpretations and accounts, regarding them as the total we can know about our social world. We can also question the claim ethnomethodology makes regarding the

documentary method itself. By claiming that one cannot know rather than that one cannot claim to know for certain, the ethnomethodologist finds that the regress argument kicks in (p. 143). He/she is proceeding from a premise of certainty (namely, that human beings construct their own meanings that are separate from reality) and not from one that is conditionally justified. This is grounding that cannot (in the conditionally justified sense) be attained. Our own theoretical position will not seek a ground that is justified. Our ground of sense signalling and thoughts, we will argue (p.150), is not subject to justification. All other premises are subject to justification on a conditional basis.

### 3.8. Conclusion.

My method for obtaining data starts from 'hanging about' - making myself familiar with the environment (community and schools) I encounter, getting my bearings and enabling others to get accustomed to 'me' being 'among others' as a first step in working towards common ground. I identify a lack of fit between methodology and methods within my ethnographic study. The categories I construct and that emerge from my dialogues with my participants reflect the ways in which I already categorise my world and other researchers may have produced different ones. Mine are constructed at the interface between my world and those of the teachers, pupils, parents and governors and are influenced and moulded by these dialogues and discourses. Change takes place in the ways I categorise my world as a result (p.156-7, 'The two perspectives'; see also the way in which the corollary exists with teachers accepting my categorisation, p.26). This means of constructing a format for data accords with the constructionist component of my theoretical template; but my argument, based on those categories, does not always fit its allied phenomenological component. Motivation, power and the realization that we need not recognize the existence of phenomena to be affected by them are the issues here.

I outline, in some detail, the basis on which I undertook my ethnographic research within the Lowfield community and three of its schools. I do this to establish the pains that I have taken with my data (how careful I have been in drawing my maps). I further demonstrate a dichotomy to exist between my quantified qualitative analysis and certain epistemologically based principles within sociological theory (other templates I can/should use reveal faults in the maps). Additionally, I question the constructionist/phenomenological paradigm within which the methodology underpinning this analysis is set (the template I am using). Part Two of this thesis will address these questions (look at alternative templates), construct a theoretical basis within which to position this analysis and its present methodology (create a new template for the existing one and its maps) and provide a means by which research of this nature can be effectively evaluated.

# Chapter Four. The teachers' relationships with the parents of their pupils.

The 44 teachers have produced a wealth of data. These focus on their relationships with members of the 25 families seen within the context of their approaches to the education of young people generally. I will be drawing special attention to the cultural context within which these families operate. In order to make manageable and concise an otherwise unwieldy structure I will concentrate on those families that point up most clearly the teachers' interest and concern. They are, even so, a fair sub-set of these families as a whole and are not a-typical of my sample of Lowfield families. The teachers focus their interest on three areas: the nature of the communication they have with these particular parents, their views of these parents' lifestyles and their capacity to function adequately as parents. Teachers in all three schools share concerns about all three but differ in the intensity of antipathy directed towards the parents, the most extreme antipathy being among teachers in the infant school.

## 4.1. The nature of communication with these particular parents.

There is unease in all three schools that teachers are unable to make effective contact with a number of these parents. June Fairbank and Jane Peters (6/3/90), Pamela Huskinson and Sylvia Dear (7/3/90) in the infant school say they have no contact with some parents. Likewise, in the junior school: Paul Crain lives with his grandparents, Judith Simms informs me, but she has seen neither them nor his parents - *You'd feel happier if you saw the parents*. She also maintains that she *never sees Mrs. Fisher*, although we do know that Mrs. Fisher does come up to the school occasionally (6/2/90). Erica Fillingham, who was unaware that Fiona Bramley's mother is a single parent, states *mum never comes up to open days* and she has not seen her (7/2/90). Stuart Atkins has not met Mark's mother, Mrs. Shute, and Mark *has never mentioned his father* (7/2/90). Anne Moore has seen neither of Steven Hooper's parents. She tells me the head teacher *wrote home a fortnight ago asking them to make an appointment to come in* over an incident of physical violence involving Steven. Today (14/2/90) he kicked a boy in the eye. *I don't know if they'll come in*. Physical distance between parents and their children's teachers appears to be a feature of the junior school environment and not only applicable to this group of parents (cf. Jack Dorking's comments in chapter two). This is repeated in the comprehensive school. John Burrows (28/2/90), Alan Cooper (4/2/90), Gareth Walters (27/3/90), Catherine Graham (28/2/90), Tracey Eastwood (3/4/90), Tim Turner (23/3/90), Christine Burton (12/2/90), and Elizabeth Reynolds (7/2/90) have never met some parents of these pupils. Tracey Eastwood is of the opinion that *the same can be said for the majority of* (Lowfield) *parents.* .

### From lack of contact we move on to problems in communication.

**In the infant school** June Fairbank claims that if she is reasonable with Mr. Hooper he will respond *although this will have no long-term effect on him* (6/3/90). Brenda Parkinson considers that her staff cannot *get through to* the parents of the Hooper twins and *they are very difficult to contact* (8/1/90). June Fairbank wonders whether Mrs. Bearne's reason is

genuine or an excuse for not bothering when, on one occasion, she said she could not bring Simon to school because she had no one to look after the younger children. Lucinda Perkins found that sometimes Simon had to wait a long time for his mother to arrive and pick him up when he first came to school but she did not take this up with Mrs. Bearne. Lucinda thinks that perhaps she *has too much to cope with, but I would have thought having him in school would have made it easier for her* (6/3/90). Lucinda had not spoken to Mrs. Bearne about this difficulty. Obstacles are encountered in maintaining an effective pattern of communication and there appears to be reluctance by some teachers in carrying forward communication even though they recognize their need for further knowledge about the parent's area of difficulty.

We already know (p. 26) that Brenda recognizes a communication problem to exist involving parents, teachers and pupils. During the period of time I spend at this school there appears to be growing acceptance from Brenda that responsibility for the failure in communication does not rest entirely with these families and this community. The teachers share some responsibility too. Recognizing this is a start. Even so, the teachers have not been able to develop a strategy for listening to these parents in order to gain some understanding of another reality as valid as their own. The communication problems met with by the teachers and parents, I propose, emerge from their very different social, economic and cultural life experiences.

In an attempt to address the perceived lack of parental understanding of their children's needs and assist in the communication process between pre-school child and parent, Brenda and June invited six local mothers to attend a once weekly mother-and-toddler group. This meets for one hour and is facilitated by June. Brenda asks me to spend an hour with this group and I readily comply (31/9/90). June has already told me that *it's always difficult to get the mothers to play with their children. They just want to leave them alone and chat to each other* (24/9/90). June is concerned that, after showing them how to play with their children, when she returns they are no longer playing with their children. Brenda affirms that these parents do not know how to interact with their children. *They don't talk to them - that's the reason for the lack of language development* (24/9/90).

I talk with the mothers and discover that they have constructive views about their group. They would like the group to meet more often because some mothers cannot always attend each Monday afternoon. They see that the toddlers each week are progressively getting used to playing alongside other children and need this regular contact. From my observations, the parents are playing with and reading to their small children. They appear quite relaxed with each other and with their toddlers. When I discuss this with Brenda and June, June affirms that these parents are often better now when left to themselves than when she is with them (31/9/90). I think that June has helped these mothers a lot by giving them the opportunity to meet together, to see their children relate to their peers and to play with the educational toys that the school has available. I tell her so. Brenda and June still consider these mothers to be lacking in child-rearing skills, however.

It appears to be very difficult for these two teachers to accept that there may be other equally valid child-rearing practices or that it is possible, in a relaxed way, to build bridges between different practices. Similarly with Jane Peters, head of nursery – when I suggest her inclusion of parents in the socio-drama group I am running for her infant class she replies, *you'd have to be selective and even then they wouldn't understand it* (4/6/90). These teachers appear rooted in a narrowly defined culture-based viewpoint that cannot accept that the Lowfield parents can be competent parents who merely lack resources and effective access to teaching professionals.

**In the junior school,** once contact *is* made, the type of response elicited does not always lead to meaningful dialogue. Michael Gabriel (5/2/90) acknowledges that Mrs. Vernon comes into school *very occasionally*. When letters are sent home from school, Barbara often tells her teacher that her mother has torn them up. From one or two remarks of Mrs. Vernon, when I visit her (17/7/90), I come to the conclusion that she may not be able to read (and, on a subsequent occasion, she asks me to read back to her the notes I had prepared following this visit). This possibility does not appear to have been picked up by the school. Anne Moore, however, finds that Mrs. Vernon keeps mutually arranged appointments in order to discuss Kate's continuing behavioural difficulties and their possible management. We have already noted Jack Dorking's comments in the previous chapter about the lack of parental contact with this school and his head teacher's view that the *more culturally deprived families* are difficult to contact and involve.

The teachers, on the whole, find it hard work attempting to involve and sustain the involvement of their parents in the life of the school. The teachers, however, appear only to pursue the engagement of the parents when things are going wrong. Often parents can feel on the defensive and at a disadvantage in situations such as these as we will realize from comments some parents make in the next chapter (pp. 70-71). As a consequence, communication between staff and parents tends not to be a mutually rewarding experience. Underlying all this, even so and as we shall see, there appears to be a community reluctance to become involved in school matters and this runs counter to the value that these teachers place on getting to know their parents.

Three problem areas in communication are identified **at the comprehensive school.** First is lack of effective co-operation from some of these parents. Michelle Atkinson (12/2/90) says of the King family that *the parents won't come in* and talk over any difficulties they have about Peter with the school staff. At one point during last term *mother was phoning up when he was off* but that was when the family was under pressure from the court order over Billie-Jo's non-school attendance. On the occasion when Pauline Williams has telephoned Mandy Mortenson's mother *'all you get is 'Oh, I'll have a word with her'. You don't get anywhere with her* (6/2/90). The Perrymans *write absence notes but they won't do any more than that* complains Mary Gregory (24/1/90). Mary also states that although Mrs. Finden has been up to the behavioural unit on three or more occasions to see staff, it is difficult to meet with Mrs. Finden. Appointments have been made to visit and when teachers have turned up no one has been at home.

Secondly, there are obstacles due to perceived antipathetic attitudes from certain parents. Andrew Jones, head of fifth year (24/1/90), is of the opinion that David Shute's mother *sees no worth in education at all.* Robert Groves (9/1/90) considers Mr. Bearne *has a very poor opinion of teachers.* Tony Beard (23/1/90) affirms of Mr. Bearne, with whom he had attended school as a child, *it isn't surprising that he has a very poor opinion of teachers because he had a very poor opinion of school.* On the personal level relationships with the family are good but there are problems on the professional level. Veronica Haynes (6/2/90) about Mr. Gallway- *Father is very anti a lot of things* including school.

Thirdly, some parents are seen as taking action in opposition to school practice. Veronica Haynes recounts that Mr. Gallway took his son, Norman, out of school for five weeks at the end of the summer term. This was due to a disagreement he had with a member of staff. Michelle Atkinson tells of Jason Phillips' parents coming to the parents' evening last summer. He had received *a terrible report.* The parents *were very aggressive and unpleasant. Dad grunted a lot and said obnoxious things about the school.* Mum smirked as she was saying aggressive things about the school - *they just wanted to come for a moan.* Both parents thought Jason should be *in a special class.*

**Summary.** The problems in communication as perceived by teachers in the comprehensive school add an edge of antipathy and conflict to lack of parental understanding and meaningful contact as identified in all three schools. Perception can be defined as interpretation or impression based on an understanding of something. I propose that both teachers and, as we will discover later, family members perceive each other within the context of their own life experiences and the framework of very different cultural inheritances. These life experience/cultural contexts fundamentally affect and effect understanding. They also profoundly influence the way we live our lives (cf. Feuerstein in chapter one). We will now proceed to explore the teachers' understandings of the life-style and capacity of some of these parents to function competently as parents.

## 4.2. The teachers' views on these parents' lives and capacity to function as parents.

**The infant schoolteachers' viewpoints.** All the teachers, apart from the head teacher, are married women living with partners who also have paid employment. All, including Brenda Parkinson, drive themselves to work by car from settlements away from Lowfield. Socio-economically and culturally their current life-styles and experiences are likely to differ somewhat from those of the Lowfield parents.

The role that fathers play within these families is a cause of some disquiet. Jane Peters, head of nursery, refers to the absence of a father in the Shute household. Mr. Shute is West Indian and contributes toward the *very laid back* attitude at home as perceived by Jane. Is this an attitude derived from a stereotypical view of West Indian males? Mr. Shute *lives in Sheffield a lot but he's also here sometimes* (6/3/90). June Fairbank criticizes Mr. Hooper for being *no help* to his wife in looking after their four children. On the same occasion she tells

me that until very recently he was unemployed and looked after the children while his wife was out to work! Her views about Mr. Hooper do not entirely accord with the facts about which she is informing me. A similar attitude to another father is displayed by June's comments on Mr. Tom King (21/5/90). Mr. King *does nothing to get his kids to school.* She continues that any view he has on education should be disregarded because he has no interest in school. Later Brenda Parkinson joins us and declares that it is unfair that the Kings live very comfortably, he being unemployed, yet she and her other teachers have to work hard for what they earn.

These teacher statements throw some light on their views of fathers. They consider that fathers should be regularly based at home, gainfully employed and bear some responsibility for their children including getting them to school. June Fairbank goes further than this, however, by using such criteria to create a pattern that is then applied to these fathers in order to justify her criticism although the pattern may not fit. In chapter three of this study (p. 48), regarding ethnomethodology, I refer to Garfinkel's view that people select aspects of the world around them and define them, which results in the creation of a non-existent pattern. It is interesting to note that Mrs. June Fairbank is demonstrating a process that can lie behind such a selection.

Two families, perceived as representative of the area, are referred to.

> *The parents flaunt all authority. If you went around about eleven o'clock* (in the morning) *you could find the entire household in bed. It's almost as if there's a wall around Lowfield and another wall around their house.*

This statement of Brenda Parkinson (8/1/90) refers to the Gallway family, as though it represents for her the ultimate in Lowfield families. She sees the Lowfield area as if it lives its own life with no contact with the outside world. The Gallways take this to the point of demonstrating their rejection of authority by living their lives with no due regard to the demands of legitimate authority that children should be in school. Brenda may be experiencing feelings of hurt and rejection that this family refuse to recognize and appreciate what she and her teachers had offered to their children. There are no Gallway children in the infant school at present. According to Brenda *they were nice kids, really,* but she is concerned that the life-style of these parents was having an adverse effect on their children's school attendance.

June Fairbank passes comment on the Hooper family:

> *They* (the children) *are not neglected. You could almost say they are a typical Lowfield family. Whatever it is at home, they are so busy sorting out, the sheer mechanics of living and the finances mean they haven't had much time to give to the children.*
>
> and,
>
> *I don't want to say they are deliberately neglecting them, it's just their whole lifestyle* (6/3/90).

June is beginning to acknowledge a relationship between the economics of daily living in Lowfield and the pressures it brings on family life. Nevertheless, she makes ambivalent

statements about neglect within the Hooper family and such comments reflect an ambivalent attitude toward families such as this one. Does this represent the viewpoint of a teacher whose world is far removed from the realities of working-class families struggling to survive in a situation of severe material and economic disadvantage? June Fairbank thinks Mrs. Karen Hooper has great difficulty coping with four children under five years of age, without help from her husband (although we know he was their primary carer for some while). Sympathy is extended to Mrs. Hooper in this instance because she is seen as being denied the support she should be getting from her partner.

A number of statements concerning the way these mothers conduct themselves come from the teachers. Head teacher Brenda Parkinson considers that Mrs. Bearne has *got nothing out of her own education and couldn't care less about the education of her children*, though community teacher June Fairbank adds *we've failed her* (8/1/90). This is the parent whom Lucinda Perkins, worried over Simon's lack of attendance, had welcomed into her classroom and found concerned and patient about her son's class work (6/3/90). Attitudes to these parents do vary between teachers. I have found that the teachers who have most influence in the school tend to share similar judgmental attitudes toward their parents. Even so, June Fairbank is still prepared to accept responsibility, on behalf of the teachers for failing a parent. Although June has other reservations about Mrs. Bearne she gains some understanding because she is a very young mother without support from her own (normally caring) mother. *She can be very abrasive but this may be because she is on the defensive* (6/3/90).

On the other hand Brenda tells me that she thinks Mrs. Vernon sends her children to school *to get them out of the way* (8/1/90). So the perceived motivation of parents is also subject to adverse criticism from this head teacher, even if they are obeying the demands of legitimate authority.

Nursery teacher Joy Hollingworth considers Mrs. Judy Stokes to be capable of keeping her children clean and fed but *there is no feeling that there is anything going on between mum and her kids - affection-wise it doesn't come naturally to her*. The assumption she is making is that a mother should demonstrate affection towards her child in the public arena of a school. Joy Hollingworth also thinks that Graham may have missed out on attention from his mother because *every year she's had another one*. Joy expresses the opinion that Judy Stokes *likes to keep herself smart and up-to-date* (6/3/90) and that this is taking priority over the care of her children.

The head teacher informs me Judy Stokes has said she cannot cope with her children (8/1/90) and the community teacher agrees. June Fairbank states that, the week previous, two of Judy Stokes' children had been ill and she confided in June that she hoped they would soon be better because she was having difficulty coping with them. She is not sure whether Judy Stokes is depressed or not because she always looks so well groomed. June knows that this mother *is on tranquillisers* but she *seems to be very concerned about her own depression* (6/3/90). June implies that this mother may be too preoccupied with her own

problems to cope adequately with her children. It is not acceptable to this teacher if a parent is worried about the effect her health may have on her capacity to care for her children. Moreover, depression needs to be demonstrated by the parent before the teacher is prepared to take word her word for it. This is evidence of a lack of trust of the parent. Brenda Parkinson wonders whether Judy feels *hemmed-in* by her children and thinks she may be mourning her youth. Here again, Mrs. Stokes' statements about herself and her children are not taken at face value. The head teacher constructs a hypothesis based on no credible evidence (cf. chapter five pp. 65, 67 and appendix C where Judy Stokes reflects on her experiences).

*She's always got some man there* affirms June Fairbank of Mrs. Mary Fisher; indicating that Mrs. Fisher is more interested in her men friends than in the welfare of her children (6/3/90). I am in the staff room at Lowfield infant school (5/11/90): June Fairbank reports that Mrs. Fisher's eldest daughter, Zoe, has been sexually interfered with by a cohabitee of Mrs. Fisher. Zoe has now gone to stay with her grandmother, although June does not know if this is connected with the alleged offence. June states that Mary Fisher is not a good mother; she has told her neighbours that her family allowance is for her and not for her children, she spends the money on clothes and can be seen drinking at night in the local public house. At a recent case conference on the family attended by June, a health visitor said she was a good mum. June thinks the health visitor had not visited for six weeks - *so how did she know?* The social worker also thinks Mary Fisher is a good mother, *but the school knows differently*.

I repeat a number of remarks I have just heard to those present and ask them all if this information is correct. Immediately Jane Peters, head of nursery, is much less specific. She tells me that a lot of this information *is just things* the teachers have heard about the family. She states that they do not know some things for sure but they are sure that Mary Fisher is not a caring mother. Mrs. June Fairbank tells me (5/11/90) that yesterday Mary Fisher's children were not collected from school. When it came to 4.p.m. June called on Mrs. Fisher and told her that the children had not been picked-up. Mrs. Fisher replied *What children?* Was this a statement of indifference, anger or lack of comprehension? May it have been a reply of resignation, despair or sense of impending loss? June did not think to inquire. She tells me that she was *coldly polite* with Mary Fisher and left.

Eight days later, Brenda Parkinson tells me that Mrs. Fisher's children are now in the care of the local authority and have been removed from home. A man who has been living with Mrs. Fisher has abused her children and is now in jail. She has just received this information from Lowfield junior school. She goes on to say that Mrs. Fisher *is the lowest of the low* for not being able to protect her children yet *the social worker says she is a good mum*. Brenda cannot understand that the social services department could possibly have considered this mother fit to care for her children. Brenda considers that she has been justified in her past attitude toward this parent.

Later the same afternoon teacher Eleanor Stroud speaks to me about this family. Eleanor has been June Fisher's class teacher since September. She and I have had a number of discussions about June's progress. Eleanor cannot understand how Mrs. Fisher could allow this to happen. *Why didn't she intervene?* Eleanor is genuinely shocked and also perplexed; her attitude in striking contrast to the belief in her own certainty and resentment expressed by her head teacher. Eleanor has found it very difficult to get to know some of the parents of the children in her class. Because the head teacher, the head of nursery and community teacher are the main sources of contact with the families, Eleanor has been limited to gleaning information that has come through them.

The head teacher sees the teachers' values and those of many of the families to be mutually incompatible. If mothers are young and seen as being unsupported, they receive a measure of understanding from head teacher and community teacher when they fail to cope with their very young children. Such parents could not be expected to handle the bringing up of children without the support of stable partners and a caring community (Brenda Parkinson, 2/5/90). This is not forthcoming should the parents be perceived as putting their own needs before the needs of their offspring. One of the problems in communicating with the parents as perceived by the head teacher, community teacher and head of nursery is the parents' lack of understanding about their children's learning needs and the nature of education on offer. She is of the opinion that 'the OK' families are the ones who have enough drive to get out of the area and they move out. The families that are left have problems that are getting worse all the time, with her selected families being those in which serious emotional neglect of children takes place (31/10/89).

**Summary.** There appear to be two strands to the communication difficulties between teachers and parents. The first has its basis in the very different socio-economic and cultural experiences of these middle-class teachers and the working-class parents. The second is the lack of an effective strategy that would enable the teachers to listen to and begin to learn from their parents so that both could make more effective provision for their children's learning.

The teachers' attitudes to these parents reflect two contrasted positions. On the one hand there are those teachers who attempt to understand or, in an unprejudiced way, observe their parents. On the other are those teachers who make judgements about the parents, often based on insufficient or misconstrued evidence and who make little attempt to come to terms with the realities of life with which these parents have to deal. This latter group of teachers includes the head teacher, community teacher and head of nursery, who are in positions to influence significantly the school's approach to its local community.

**The junior schoolteachers' viewpoints.** Judith Simms recognizes pressures on a parent. She considers that Mrs. Fisher *seems to have too much on her plate and Bernadette has to do too much for herself with no one to look after her* (6/2/90). By way of contrast Jack Dorking disregards such pressures. The community teacher relates *none of the children were*

*at school yesterday* and so he made a home visit. Mrs. Fisher was not well and said she was waiting to go into hospital *for gallstones. None of the children were ready for school. You have to chase them all the time. I don't know what the answer is with this family* he tells me (13/2/90). There appears to be little recognition from Jack that Mrs. Fisher may not have been physically fit enough to get her children off to school yesterday. Erica Fillingham has reservations about the state in which Mrs. Fisher keeps her home. *The house is kept like a furnace, but it is filthy* she maintains (7/2/90). Erica has not visited the family home and has gleaned this information from her head teacher, Roy Front. I agree with Jack and Erica regarding the difficulties that Mrs. Fisher has in fulfilling adequately her role as parent. Even so there may be a number of factors, social, economic, and cultural as well as personal contributing towards her problems in this area.

Another family where reservations are expressed around parenting is the Briggs family. Michael Gabriel tells me that Sheila's parents bring her to school, sometimes. *Mum is very timid - she stands outside and shouts in to Sheila*. On one occasion her father came into school and was angry with his daughter. *I'll fucking kill her* he is reported as saying (5/2/90). I will have further comments to make about Mr. and Mrs. Briggs when I visit them later (pp. 63-4).

There have been one or two positive remarks made about parents. John Marshall and his friend, Daniel, started bullying, so Roy Front *actually had Mrs. Marshall up for this* confides Stuart Atkins (7/2/90). For the last two or three weeks his behaviour has improved; partly because home and school pulled together over this, it appears. Additionally, Anne Moore finds that Mrs. Vernon keeps appointments that they mutually arrange from time to time in order to discuss Kate Vernon's continuing behavioural difficulties and their possible management.

**Summary.** The school has proved successful in co-operating with two parents over the care of their children although the teachers' anxieties over the capacity of some of these parents to function adequately appear well founded. Additionally, as I have attempted to illustrate, these failures in performance cannot be attributed solely to individual pathological traits within the parents. There are social, economic and cultural processes at work as well as individual personality characteristics that may be contributing towards these failures.

**The comprehensive schoolteachers' viewpoints.** Norman Gallway is in Maurice Hicks' second year tutor group. Mother came up to school to complain because Maurice had ordered her son to register each day under a tree away from his classmates. Maurice asked her *Do you expect him to do as you tell him?* She replied *Yes, but you're picking on him.* Maurice told Mrs. Gallway *Yes I am because he won't do as he's told.* Mr. Gallway came up to see Veronica Haynes, head of year.

> *The upshot was father took him out of school for some considerable time. A lot of the kids go home, give their side of the story and the parents react and I think this is what has happened here* (14/2/90).

Maurice also points out that *the parents tend to make rather a lot of his illness* (problem with his testicles - long absence during autumn term) although he admits Norman has been absent from school for legitimate reasons. An example of parents backing their child against the school and of a teacher failing to recognize there may be a connection between parental concern for a son's health and for his wellbeing in other ways. No common ground appears to exist between the teacher and these parents.

Health is mentioned by Annette Fletcher, first year tutor (31/1/90). Mrs. Fisher has been in hospital and Annette thinks that Zoe has been kept off school to do the housework. Pupils, during PSE, write down their activities each week and Zoe has been writing such things as 'cleaning bedrooms, 'cleaning downstairs' and 'doing the washing'. Annette says *there are a lot of children* in the family and all are younger than Zoe. Her concern is that her mother's ill health is putting a lot of responsibility on Zoe and keeping her from school. Michelle Atkinson, second year tutor (12/2/90) states Geoffrey King's parents usually put his absences down to asthma, although it is difficult *getting notes out of them.* Mary Gregory, head of third year (24/1/90), affirms that Joe Shute's parents say they are keeping him off school at present because the children are teasing him about his hair loss. Christine Burton, second year tutor (12/2/90), tells me George Bramley is partially deaf and needs to have some attention for his ears. His mother has not been able to get him up to Daneborough for this. She has arranged for the EWO to take him to Daneborough for some medical treatment after the half term break. Issues around health are of some significance to these teachers but, apart from Christine's initiative with George, it has been hard for them to identify and deal with the difficulties faced by the parents.

A further problem area for the teachers is the inadequacy perceived in the parents' ability to cope with their parental functions. Veronica Haynes (6/2/90) admits Mrs. Arnold has been in to school to discuss Sandra. She will talk openly about the problems she has been having with Sandra and *seems very insignificant*. Michelle Atkinson says that Sandra Arnold *runs rings around* her mother at home (12/2/90). She understands that Mrs. King has a job and that Mr. King does not get up in the mornings. Peter has told his own tutor that his mum and dad cannot get Geoffrey to go to school. Stephen Lloyd, first year tutor (23/1/90), thinks things are so disorganised at this home. *Instincts tell me there's a bigger problem there* comments Mary Gregory on the Perryman family (24/1/90). She considers the parenting is inadequate. The parents do not see the importance or relevance of school.

Giving up or being overwhelmed with the parental task is perceived as a more extreme form of parental inadequacy. Pauline Williams, a third year tutor (6/2/90), thinks Mrs. Mortenson has had so many problems with her son, Tom, who is now in the fifth year, that *she doesn't know which way to turn* and has given up on both of her offspring. Even so, Mandy comes into school well clothed and does not appear to be short of money. Mary Gregory (24/1/90) relates Gordon Finden's parents appear to the school to have *no control over him whatsoever.* Charles Venables, head of the behavioural unit (31/1/90) divulges mother has told the school Gordon is beyond her control. *No one moves into Aldred Street voluntarily* is the opinion of Amanda Price, teacher in behavioural unit (31/1/90), who thinks the family

may have been *moved in* by the district housing department. Mr. Finden is a miner. The children do not have free school meals so Amanda thinks they cannot be too short of money. When she visited the family's home last October, however, she found the house dirty and uncared for. Amanda has heard that Mr. Finden is not popular with other miners, who prefer not to work with him, and that he is a in a minority in keeping his pay details to himself (so that his wife does not know how much he earns). Amanda says Mrs. Finden tells her that her husband has *washed his hands with* Gordon and that she *wouldn't care if he was taken away* because worry over Gordon was causing her considerable stress. Some months later (3/4/90) Tracey Eastwood, 4th year tutor, reveals that fairly recently Grace Finden's father left home.

The teachers are quick to point out that a financial worry (i.e. an economic reason) does not appear to be a contributing factor in this breakdown of care and control. Dynamics within the families themselves and environmental factors may play a role. In discussing the Endacott family, Charles Venables (31/1/90) speaks of Carol. At the time she was sleeping on dad's floor in his bed-sitting room; mum having *chucked her out*. Dad was shift working at the pit. He tried but found he could not exert much control over Carol. Then he moved into a house of his own and Carol moved in with him. They have now returned to the Lowfield area. Carol renewed her contact with her previous peer group, father appeared to have less control over her and she lapsed into absenting herself. She then left father and went to live with a young single parent approved by the social services department. From then on *we couldn't get her into school at all.* Christine Burton (12/2/90) confirms that Dennis Endacott does not live in the same house as his sister. He lives with his mother. There is a lack of discipline in the home and that is why he is not always in control of himself at school. *He's the sort of boy you would like to sort out but know that you can't because of the home background.*

Positive remarks are made in connection with two families. John Burrows, third year tutor (28/2/90), thinks the Shute family is obviously closely knit - any comments that John makes that could be construed as critical of the family in any way, Joe will leap to the defence immediately. Tracey Eastwood, 4th year tutor (3/4/90), knows that Grace Finden loves all her siblings at home and her mother.

**Summary.** There are difficulties in establishing common ground between teachers and parents regarding the pupils' welfare and health. There is concern over the lack of parental care and control, the perceived reasons being a combination of intro-family difficulties and negative neighbourhood influence.

### 4.3. Conclusion.

The perspective on parents in the **infant school** is largely defined by a nucleus of influential senior teachers. This viewpoint is characterized by the perception of incompatible values between school and community, a lack of understanding by parents about their children's learning needs and incapacity to care adequately for them. It is also characterized by a degree of venom and contempt that I do not encounter in the other two schools. Some few teachers attempt to communicate or understand but, with no effective overall strategy for

listening and learning between teachers and parents, the dominant perspective does not change. Staff members are, however, beginning to realize the need to address this communication gap and see some way forward in aspects of the analysis I undertook on behalf of the schools (Appendix A). It is difficult for the **junior** schoolteachers to involve Lowfield parents generally in the life of the school and, often, the contact with our particular families is over matters of disquiet, with mixed results from the point of view of success. Inadequacies in parenting are identified but, as with the infant school, if without the same degree of antipathy, individual families' failings are not viewed from a wider perspective that takes into consideration socio-economic and cultural factors as well as personal and familial. **In the comprehensive school** lack of co-operation, antipathy and opposition characterize the teachers' perceptions of these parents' attitudes toward the school. They consider the parents approach health and welfare issues very differently than they themselves. The absence of good parenting is put down to the impact of the community on families already stressed by internal inadequacy and strife.

I identify with the anxieties expressed by the teachers over the failure of some parents to protect and provide adequately for their children. Even so, I cannot always agree with the reasoning behind these anxieties and am beginning to uncover what may prove to be a basis for shared values among the teachers from all three schools. The macro and local political-economic pressures on this community are largely overlooked, unrecognized or minimized by the majority of teachers when discussing their relationships with these parents. Do these teachers' understandings of the life-styles and parenting capacities of these parents emerge from a shared and very different set of cultural experiences? I will be developing this idea further in chapter six when exploring the teachers' relationship with their pupils.

# Chapter Five. The parents, their lives and views of their children's education.

I begin by describing my encounters with some family members within their own homes, indicating the variety of living experiences that they have chosen to share with me. I continue by exploring their views on their children's education. This chapter is an attempt to construct, textually and by means of my own subjective perceptions, a means whereby these ranges of living experience can be seen to inform and contribute to the shaping of their perceptions about the schools through which their children pass. The viewpoints of other parents are combined to add further perspective to this series of perceptions.

## 5.1. My encounters with the parents' lives and social situations.

When I visit the **Fisher** home (24/4/90) the front garden is open to the road and the double gates are missing. Mrs. Fisher's second husband disposed of these. She is worried about the safety of her young children who could easily run out onto the road. The council is prepared to put on new gates if she pays for dropping the ground at the base. She tells me she cannot afford to pay as she only gets £60 a week 'on benefit' to keep herself and her eight children. Poverty, too, is the reason she cannot afford to clear her garden of the car parts and associated rubbish that her husband left behind when he vacated the home. Concern for the safety of her children is balanced by her powerlessness to do anything about this. I find the living room sparsely furnished and most of the upholstery threadbare. There is a hand-operated sewing machine on a small table with some sewing materials alongside. The room is clean and neat. Two men are standing at the garden entrance. One of them is her second husband. She worries about him being there. She thinks he may want to remove one of their children from her care. She is currently living with 'Graham', who is not at home on this occasion.

Is Mary Fisher a mother who does not care about her children? Today she expresses sensitivity towards them, recounting that Zoe may be worrying about her sister, Lydia, who has recently undergone an operation and is due for another. Zoe insisted on visiting her sister in hospital though Mrs. Fisher was worried for her seeing Lydia so soon after her operation with a drip feed attached. Her daughter, Bernadette, at Lowfield junior school, confims this concern for her children's welfare (9/7/90). Her mother comes up to school whenever she, as a pupil, is taking part in a parent-related activity and she likes her mother to do this. *I want to be in drama but I can't because I'm too young* she informs me. I ask Bernadette to explain this and she remarks that she would like to join Lowfield drama club *but I don't think my mum will let me because of strangers knocking around* in the evenings. This mother is perceived by her daughter to be genuinely interested in her school-based activities and concerned that no harm should come to her. As will become apparent, Mary Fisher has not been inactive in pursuit of her children's educational needs.

Why may she have been unable to protect them from harm? In talking of her daughter, Zoe, Mary thinks she is a very sensitive girl. *Her dad used to raise his voice and beat me a lot. If*

*you raise your voice she takes it to heart*. Mary Fisher has been on the receiving end of physical abuse from her first husband. We know she is also in fear of her second husband. This young woman may well find it difficult to defend herself and effectively protect her children from the aggressive attentions of males.

When I visit **Mr. and Mrs. Briggs** I am able to confirm the struggles they have in coping with their children (16/5/90). Their son, Errol, attends a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, situated quite close to the family home at one edge of the Lowfield settlement. For some months I have worked in this school with teachers and some pupils (including Errol, when he chooses to attend!) on a programme aimed at social integration. I know Errol can be physically aggressive with his peers and is inclined to 'take flight' if challenged about his behaviour.

Mr. Briggs mentions that his son is now *beginning to get awkward at home*. He and his wife wish him to stay at school on a residential basis during the week, because of their difficulties in coping with him. His educational psychologist disagrees and thinks he may keep running home. Even if he does, the Briggs maintains, they would *take him back to school.* As far as Sheila is concerned, Mrs. Briggs is happy with her daughter's treatment by the teachers at the junior school. She has also seen some improvement in her behaviour since she joined the Brownies.

Mr. Briggs is about 5 ft 3 inches tall and very solidly built. He informs me that yesterday *I had a skinful of cider in the afternoon*. The man next door had remonstrated with his son, so Mr. Briggs *dragged him off his ladder and punched him on the nose - there was blood everywhere*. He tells me of another occasion when he hit the man next door for telling off his son. The man called the police, four of whom *burst into* Mr. Briggs' house when he was playing with his daughter. He declares that they threw Sheila to one side saying *move you little bitch*. Mr. Briggs started to fight them – *no one touches my children*. He says they beat him up. One sat on him while another kept hitting him. According to him, his wife and two female neighbours witnessed the event. One witness, later, withdrew her evidence. Mr. Briggs maintains that his face was badly beaten up.

Later, Mr. Briggs was visited by another police officer, known to and liked by him. They shook hands and he informed Mr. Briggs that he had been investigating an allegation that Errol had stolen some rhubarb. The person who grew the rhubarb, however, said that nothing was missing, so the police officer thought it right that Mr. Briggs should know about this. Mr. Briggs appreciated the visit.

From time to time, during my visit, Mr. Briggs becomes agitated and uses threatening language about what he does to others. His wife visibly blanches as Mr. Briggs gives forth in this way. I shake hands with him as I leave. He seems surprised at this and does not give me a very firm grip.

I call, again, one sunny summer evening (17/7/90)) to drop in the notes I had made on Sheila. Mr. Briggs expresses his pleasure at the notes, reading them out loud quite slowly, with his wife and Sheila present. Errol is 'hovering'. He had been sent home from his school camp after two and a half days because of his disruptive behaviour. Mr. Briggs is going up to the school *in a day or two* and ask for a refund!

Mr. Briggs can, perhaps, be described as 'a character' In his emotional reactions he is quite child-like. A likeable person, he does not appear to be socially isolated. A friend of his is briefly present on my first visit and, on the second, Mr. and Mrs. Briggs are talking, on their doorstep, to Mr. and Mrs. Phillips and their son, Jason. Mr. Briggs is fiercely protective of his children but is incapable of providing effective socialisation for them. He has a strong sense of fairness though the model he provides for Errol and Sheila is of an emotionally volatile parent prone to physical violence, who reacts rather than thinking things through. He appears to dominate his wife who, less socially outgoing than her husband, responds in outbursts of 'bad temper'. These parents 'react' to their social environment and appear unable to provide their children with skills that will enable them to participate in the give-and-take of everyday social relationships. Nonetheless, there is a basic love and concern for their offspring. The Brownies may be able to build out from this into more rewarding social relationships. The junior school can, perhaps, learn from this.

I have enlarged considerably on Michael Gabriel's comments (in chapter four, p. 58) in order to indicate that quite 'difficult' parents are prepared to talk about problem areas if they see the need to do so and have opportunity to meet with someone prepared to and having time to listen.

**Mr. Tom King** is ironing in his kitchen. He invites me into the adjacent living room. Everything appears neat and clean. His sons, Geoffrey and Peter, are in the kitchen or near at hand during my visit. The explanation is that Geoffrey has been to the doctor with a bad throat and Peter has returned for some clothing. The atmosphere is calm and friendly (8/5/90). Tom has eight children, four still at school. He did not like school much when he was a lad but says he does not know why his children have disliked school. *Things seem to have got worse for them as they got older. Geoffrey is now sneaking about not wanting to go to school, just like Billie-Jo. Things were very difficult for me over Billie-Jo.* He went to Court over her refusal to attend school. He felt he could not handle the situation – *she just wouldn't go at all.* He was afraid that he might have been sent to prison. Then the comprehensive school excluded her *and that squashed it.*

Mr. King appears to show some competence in maintaining an ordered and relaxed home environment for his family yet his ability to understand and deal effectively with educational matters that impinge on the home environment is lacking. Later in this chapter (p. 74.) we will learn something of his views on education as a preparation for certain life tasks. It is, perhaps, the dichotomy between what he perceives as being required educationally and what he perceives as being on offer that contributes to the dilemma he has over his children's education.

I arrive at **Mrs. Joyce Tanner's** home one fine day, coming around to the side door (14/3/90). Mrs. Tanner and her own mother are inside. At first they appear reluctant to admit me to the house. They are surprised to see me and appear suspicious as to what I am about. I explain the reason for my visit. Our interview takes place in the kitchen. Initially, they do not wish me to take notes while we are talking and make excuses that they haven't much time to talk as they have to get dinner (lunchtime meal) ready. They both begin to relax when they realize that I am not 'authority'. They had feared I am calling about Alice's absences from school. Mrs. Tanner's mother speaks of Joyce's dislike of school when she was a child. Joyce thinks Alice allows herself to be taken along when her friends play truant. Apart from this, Alice is reluctant to go for reasons of feeling unwell. I talk with the two women about health, attendance, class work and its function in the G.C.S.E. syllabus, also about her tutor's positive attitude to her. Maybe an approach along similar lines from the school would prove more productive than perceived threats of punitive action against the parent (as noted on p. 77, later in this chapter).

The text of my interview with **Mrs. Judy Stokes,** together with that of her written reply, can be found in Appendix B, where my subsequent commentary is more pertinent to chapter nine. She describes her experiences in Hayworth, where the family lived before moving to Lowfield, and the effects, as she perceives them to be, on her confidence in herself, on her husband' health and on her son's pre-school education. Her attempts to provide for the health needs of her son appear to her to have been disregarded by the infant school. She feels she has been humiliated publicly within the school environment and, as a consequence, she became frightened (bringing back memories of Hayworth, possibly?) and her self-confidence was dealt a further blow. This influenced her future relationship with the school by being aggressive in the face of perceived equivalent 'late' behaviour by teachers. It can be seen that these different and overlapping contextual conditions have involved a continuous process of re-definition of her world for Judy Stokes. It has been a process in which structures have emerged – the organisation of the harassment, the organisation of the school at its interface with parents - that have implications for the way in which parent and teacher can interact and for the way in which power and control can be exercised. In a number of ways, Judy Stokes perceives herself to have little influence on either.

An Alsatian dog is tied up outside the **Hooper** home and two other dogs are in the garden (14/5/90). Mrs. Karen Hooper tells me it *goes for people* and invites me, by way of the kitchen, into the living room. She agrees to take part in this enterprise and remains standing throughout while I sit on the sofa. The room is untidy, not too clean, fairly bare and Spartan with little in the way of comfort. In chapter two I refer to her expressions of powerlessness and vulnerability (p. 38). Her immediate environment attests to the family's level of poverty (and, perhaps, to their difficulty in maintaining the social and material integrity of their home). Two months later (11/7/90) Ivan Markham, head teacher at the junior school, tells me Derek Hooper has been suspended. As I am leaving I see a man standing facing and outside Ivan's room. Later that day the head teacher of George Street infant school, who

arrives as I leave the junior school, informs me that this man went in to see Ivan, becoming extremely angry about the suspension of his son and threatened violence before leaving.

In chapter three, page 44, I refer to my initial encounter with **Mr. George Gallway** (20/6/90). After this opening gambit I proceed through the kitchen, where vegetables are ready for cooking in saucepans on the stove, to the next room. It is cleanly but sparely furnished, with a friendly black and white furry cat and an empty birdcage on the floor. George, in the presence of his wife, tells me he was the only member of his family to go to grammar school and they were quite poor. The school, like Ridgeway, required its pupils to wear uniform, but provided it free. Ridgeway expects the parents to supply the uniform. Although a grant is available, uniform prices are higher than for other clothes parents may choose for their children when attending school. George also looks after his elderly parents who require a great deal of support and live elsewhere on the estate. He thinks the teachers at Ridgeway do not understand the pressures that parents can be under at times. In contrast to the Hooper household, this one, although materially poor, is well cared for and the cultural integrity of the family appears to be intact.

**Mrs. Susan Marshall,** in chapter two, puts the case for the low self-esteem of this community's young people being brought about by attitudes imposed from outside the neighbourhood (p. 37). She, also, experiences problems with Ridgeway over uniform – *I've been up loads of times – mostly because of the uniform.* She is an articulate woman, with developed social skills and an ironic sense of humour. I make an impromptu visit (3/4/90). The side door is open and a toddler is outside. I say a few words to this little girl and her mother comes out. I introduce myself; she smiles and invites me in. Philip has already mentioned me to his mother and they have looked up 'sociologist' in a dictionary. Cardboard covers one window and the kitchen is badly in need of decoration but is clean. I wouldn't like to offer to decorate the kitchen, would I? The local authority is very lax in its upkeep of the property, she tells me. I am shown into a comfortable living room.

I interview **Mrs. Paula Stone** at her mother's home, where she goes every evening. Both daughters told her that their father and paternal grandfather had sexually abused them, but this only came to light at the time of her divorce. She thinks they blame her for not protecting them. Paula thinks that Karen's attitude to school changed when the marriage ended. When her daughter stays off school she remains at home with her mother. Karen's absenteeism has resulted in extra pressure on Paula from the school, as we shall see later in this chapter, and this adds to the stress she experiences from possible guilt over not being able to protect her from abuse within the home. It may be that Mrs. Stone is inclined to be acquiescent about these absences because Karen stays at home with her and appears to need her in some way.

The great majority of these families are materially poor and a number experience significant poverty. Such conditions can severely restrict the options available to them for daily living. The ways in which the schools undertake the enforcement of educational requirements add further pressures. Activities within the community can intimidate and impinge on family life. Additionally, traumatic events within the family itself are also able to threaten its coherence

and stability. A determining factor is the capacity of family members to sustain cohesion, purpose and cultural transmission in the face of such negative and overlapping contextual conditions. For them, the education of their children is inextricably bound up with many of these aspects of daily living. The journey through state education for these families is beset with problems from without and within their social networks. In these descriptions of my encounters I have attempted to reflect the varying capacities within these families to maintain the integrity of their family lives.

## 5.2. The parents' views on education.

I draw attention to the comments made by some of the parents who have given me a degree of insight into aspects of their personal lives, their social and economic experiences. I am here attempting to form a correspondence between what they say about themselves and what they have to say about their children and the schools that provide for their education. I am also attempting a further correspondence between these parents and a number of other parents who have not necessarily revealed personal life information to the same degree. These have equally valid comments to make. The combination of this range of viewpoints, in itself, provides a multifaceted discourse on how these schools are perceived by these parents.

### 5.2.1. Education in the infant school.

**Children and happiness. Mrs. Bearne** thinks that Simon likes the school *now that he's in all the time*. He now stays at school for dinner and appears to have adjusted to the school routine (23/5/90). **Mrs. Hooper** is also of the opinion that her twins enjoy being at the infant school (14/5/90). Again, **Mrs. Mortenson** finds that her two children, Thomas and Mandy, liked their infant school when they were there and that this made it easier for her to get along with the school (14/3/90). It is important to these parents that their children are happy at school and such a situation can make it easier for parents to feel positively towards that school.

**Attitude to learning. Mrs. Mortenson** perceives her children to have settled and learned more at the infant school as compared to the comprehensive school. **Mrs. Shute** thinks that her son, Ben *seems to be doing alright* at the infant school (23/5/90). Both these mothers perceive the infant education their children had or are receiving to be satisfactory.

**Mrs. Stokes** volunteers the information that, because of harassment from neighbours in Hayworth whenever she left her home, she did not take Graham to the local nursery. This was before the family moved to Lowfield. She considers, as a consequence of missing out on his pre-school education, he is now having difficulties in settling to his work (13/6/90). It worries her that he is not able to apply himself to his schoolwork. Mrs. Stokes shows some insight into a reason behind Graham's learning difficulties and she expresses an interest in his educational development. The problems she has experienced in her attempts to communicate with teachers in this school may have inhibited her in sharing this information with them.

A reservation about the quality of learning creeps in when I ask **Mrs. Perryman** why she chose to send her two girls to George Street infant and Castleway junior schools instead of to the Lowfield schools. She replies *I never wanted them to go to Lowfield. I heard they weren't learning very well there; too many pupils to one teacher* (17/7/90). The reputation of these schools regarding their capacity to teach children effectively had been sufficient to persuade this mother to send her daughters elsewhere. Some further doubts emerge when I talk to **Mrs. Mary Fisher**. *Lowfield infants aren't half as strict as Redland* she tells me. She believes that it is more lax in its discipline of pupils than was the school in the area from which she has now moved. Mary thinks the teachers allow the children to play too much. *I liked Redlands school. They make them work and don't give in to them* (24/4/90). It is interesting to note that Tizard and Hughes (1984) suggest that teachers in nursery education should change their priorities from an emphasis on play to widening the children's horizons, extending their general knowledge and listening to them talk. Mrs. Fisher appears to have a valid point.

These parents express a thoughtful and concerned interest in their children's learning, though they differ in their views on the quality of education that the infant school provides.

**Peer group relationships.** One parent passes comment on the relationship her child has with other children at school. *Our Simon picks up swear words from other children* claims **Mrs. Bearne** (23/5/90). But she also maintains that *he's got quite a few friends over there.* The dynamic interaction between peers within this school appears to be in no way extraordinary from the viewpoint of this parent.

**General O.K. statements.** There are a number of favourable statements made about the school by the parents. **Mrs. Vernon** finds the infant school *alright* though there is nothing that she particularly likes about either the infant or junior schools (17/7/90). **Mr. Gallway** waxes more enthusiastic. He has had no trouble with the school and finds it a very good one (20/6/90), appearing unaware of the attitude of the infant school towards him as expressed to me (p. 54). **Mrs. Shute**, too, says she has no problems with the infant school (23/5/90). **Mrs. Bearne** approves that there are a lot of play materials available for Simon at school (23/5/90).

**Parent/teacher relations. Mrs. Shute** tells me that she gets on with the infant teachers (23/5/90). **Mrs. Bearne**, likewise, finds the teachers in the nursery to be *alright*. **Mrs. Crain**, whose children are now in the junior and comprehensive schools, informs me that *the teachers at the infants were alright* (25/5/90). Some concern over relationships with the teachers begins to surface with **Mrs. Judy Stokes**. She is upset by the attitude towards her of some of the infant school teachers. Judy Stokes' relationship with teachers at this school is described in detail in appendix B. Mrs. Stokes speaks as a caring and anxious parent who is vulnerable to pressure from others. A very different picture of Mrs. Stokes is painted by teaching staff in the infant school as we have discovered in chapter four (p. 55).

**School meeting/not meeting parent expectations regarding pupils.** One parent, **Mrs. Bearne**, is pleased that this infant school was prepared to take *Ben before he was five* in contrast to the other infant school on the periphery of Lowfield. Apart from this, the parents appear to have some reservations about the way their children are treated at school. Mrs. Bearne, herself, is not too happy that Mrs. Lucinda Perkins can be *a bit short with him*. **Mrs. Hooper** thinks that the twins are getting into trouble because of provocation from other children. This used to happen to her when she was at school, she informs me. Her complaint is that the infant school teachers are not always fully aware of what is going on between the toddlers and this raises for her the issue of teacher fairness.

One concern of **Mrs. Vernon** is that the teachers *are always sending Helen home about her hair nits.* She keeps using the appropriate lotion on her daughter's hair and Helen's sisters are not infected so Mrs. Vernon thinks her daughter cannot really be infected. It may be that Mrs. Vernon is not applying the lotion correctly of course. Certainly on both occasions when I have talked with her she has not always understood what I was saying. I have had to re-word some of my conversation with her so that I could get my points over. Communication between Mrs. Vernon and the teachers may also be a problem for the same reason. She has a further complaint, however, that is not due to a communication difficulty. *If they're naughty they sometimes tell them they're not going swimming and that helps them - to swim*. She thinks that the teachers should find more appropriate ways of disciplining their pupils than to deprive them of effective learning experiences.

I *don't mind them standing him in a corner if he does wrong in school*, confides **Mrs. Stokes**, *he has to learn what he shouldn't do. But I'm just fed up with him coming home saying someone has either hit him or pushed him or done something to him*. She has told his teacher about this but he still comes home complaining of the same things. She has identified one child who is mainly responsible but the school has failed to stop the bullying. As a consequence Graham does not like going to school. There is a worry here, from Mrs. Stokes, that the teachers are not able to protect their pupils from harassment by their peers and that the teachers have not responded positively to a parent's legitimate concerns about their care of her son.

**Summary.** The parents' views are that their children should be happy and like school, that they should 'learn' at school (i.e. that they should develop mentally), be protected within the school environment, be dealt with fairly and be subject to social controls that do not leave them at a disadvantage. This leads to a perspective regarding their children that is compatible with that of the teachers but one that suggests that the teachers do not always appreciate the genuine interests these parents have in their children's education or meet their real concerns over their children's welfare. The parents appear to be largely unaware of the critical attitude taken up by teachers in relationship to them. Mrs. Judy Stokes, however, has indicated that she has not been treated by the school with normal respect, not been listened to, believed or trusted. This attitude does appear to characterize the relationship that a number of the infant school teachers perceive themselves as having with many of these parents.

### 5.2.2. Education in the junior school.

The parents' areas of interest regarding the junior school expand on those expressed about the infant school. Additional viewpoints emerge on parental problems in meeting school expectations regarding their children, on teacher/pupil relations and in anticipation of problems to come.

**Children and happiness. Miss Hazel Bramley** tells me that neither her son, George, who attends Ridgeway, nor her daughter, Fiona, at Lowfield junior, really like going to school. She does not know what Fiona dislikes about school (21/3/90). (In chapter seven, Fiona enlightens me). **Mrs. Vernon** says that Barbara *loves school and won't miss a day if she can help it,* but she is not so sure about Kate (17/7/90). *Samantha loves it and Patrick does* is **Mr. Gallway's** opinion of the junior school (20/6/90). *I was at Lowfield junior, myself. I liked it* states **Mrs. Bearne** (23/5/90).

Generally, the children appear contented at the junior school from their parents' points of view. Parents appear to pick up the messages if their offspring are not content, although they do not always inquire or, perhaps, know how to inquire why.

**General O.K. statements.** Some parents express general approval. *Lowfield's not so bad* proposes **Mrs. Marshall**. As with the infant school, there is nothing that **Mrs. Vernon** particularly likes about the junior school but she finds it *alright*; likewise, **Mrs. Fisher**. In her case, however, the word is used in a more approving way - there is an upturn in her voice when she expresses it. **Mrs. Shute** has had *no problems* with either of the Lowfield schools (later in this chapter we discover that this contrasts sharply with her view on the comprehensive school). **Mr. Gallway** also has had *no trouble* with the junior school and finds both primary sector schools *very good*. Finally, **Mrs. Hooper** is pleased that the junior school had alerted her to the eye problem her son, Derek, had developed.

**Parent/teacher relations.** *You can't just go up to school to see them, you know. You've got to make an appointment. Last time I went up they got an education office bloke to see me.* **Mr. Crain** sees this as the school bringing in reinforcements to back up its side of things (25/5/90). On the whole, though, the few comments that parents have made about their relationships with teachers have been favourable. Mr. Crain, himself, thinks that Mr. Markham, the new head teacher, appears to be *fair with everyone*. **Mrs. Fisher** visited the school about a difficulty with Adam and found that the teachers will *sort things out if you go up and tell them*. **Mrs. Shute** tells me *I don't bother with seeing the junior teachers, but they're always there if I want them.* Also, **Mrs. Briggs** (16/5/90) tells me she is happy about the teachers at the junior school

**School meeting/not meeting parental expectations regarding pupils** and **peer group relationships.** Two areas have been brought together that I have dealt with separately in relation to the infant school. This is because the parents' remarks have largely invited this connection.

*They don't always see what the others are doing and he always gets the blame* states **Mr. Crain**. A little while ago *the school blamed* Paul for breaking a flask. Mr. Crain went to see Mr. Front (the previous head teacher). He let him know that he thought his son was not responsible for the breakage - *you know if your son is telling the truth*. Although none of the teachers had seen Paul break the flask, Mr. Front would not believe that he was innocent of this offence. *Sometimes Paul was terrified at going to school because the older boys were hitting him. If he gets one of the boys on his own, the boy tells the teacher and Paul gets told off for it* (i.e. for standing up for himself). Parents have made a number of remarks in support of their sons engaging in physical violence as a means of reaffirming parity with peers. This runs counter to the ethos in the schools, where control of these situations is seen to be vested in the teacher and not in the pupil, nor is the threat or use of physical force considered a viable option.

**Mrs. Briggs** tells me that she knows that Sheila's teacher *couldn't go out of the classroom without her hitting the other children* though *I think she's a bit better now. The trouble is the other children are always picking on her. She's got such a bad temper - she takes after me.* Mrs. Briggs describes this crisis in peer group relationships as a matter of retaliation by her daughter and draws comparison with an identical predisposition of her own. This insight could be helpful to the school if they are prepared to involve Mrs. Briggs in a programme of social integration for Sheila. Although she has no children at the junior school at present, I ask **Mrs. Bearne** (23/5/90) if she has anything she would like to say about the school. *I was at Lowfield junior myself. I liked it* she replies. After a moment's thought she adds *I've heard you get a lot of bullying up there*.

There appears to be a correlation, in the minds of some of these parents, between difficulties in peer group relationships, recognition that such conflict exists and differences between school and home as to how these problems should be addressed. It may be that the ideas of 'fairness', as articulated by the parents, do not always accord with the methods employed by the junior schoolteachers to achieve social cohesion. This would point to a cultural difference in approach to such matters between parents and teachers.

**Parental problems in meeting school expectations regarding pupils.** Two parents comment that there are difficulties here. **Mr. Crain** is working on a government employment scheme. He hopes this may develop into a permanent job. He is on a fortnight's holiday at present (25/5/90) but his work hours mean that he cannot always get up to the junior school when the head teacher wishes to see him about Paul. His wife is pregnant and due to have twins in a fortnight, so responsibility for school liaison has been taken over by Mr. Crain over the past few months in addition to his work responsibilities.

**Mrs. Hooper** has five children in school - *the twins are in the infants, two in the juniors and one in the comp* (14/5/90). Last week Steven was sent home from school for punching and kicking. The week before, the same thing happened with Derek. *It's no good them being sent home from school during the day because it means I can't get a job,* complains Mrs.

Hooper – an important economic factor for low income families. Both primary sector schools *expect you to come up and get involved with them at school. You get enough by getting involved with them at night.* It is Mrs. Hooper who tells me how she misses having a social worker to help her (please see chapter two). The pressures of life weigh heavily on Mrs. Karen Hooper and requests from school appear to add to these.

Both these parents experience life pressures that make it difficult for them to respond to what they perceive to be unrealistic expectations from the school.

**Teacher/pupil relations. Mrs. Fisher** informs me *the kids were ganging up on Adam at school. It's just he won't mix with them. I was a bit worried so I went up to talk to them about it. Teachers there are more concerned about the children* (than at the comprehensive school). *They'll sort things out if you go up and tell them.* The teachers recognized and reacted appropriately to her concern. Her daughter, Zoe, liked Mr. Front, the head teacher, when she was there and he appeared to be fond of her. In contrast to this **Mr. Crain** states *I don't think they like Paul's attitude*. Paul will put his own point of view across quite strongly and *that doesn't always go down well with the teachers*. Mr. Crain appears to accept that his son must bear some responsibility for the attitude of teachers towards him. *Our Kate is frightened of going into her next class* (at the junior school) *because of Mrs. Spencer,* **Mrs. Vernon** informs me (17/7/90). It appears that Kate thinks that Mrs. Spencer shouts a lot and that shouting frightens her (I follow this up when discussing Kate's views on p. 101).

The personal relationship aspects of learning between pupils and teachers are recognized as important by these parents. The ways in which the teachers deal with behavioural problems appear to be major factors in determining the quality of personal relationships within this school, according to these parents.

**Anticipation of problems to come.** One of the parents, **Miss Hazel Bramley**, is worried that *things may get worse for Fiona when she leaves junior school and goes up to Ridgeway.* Fiona already dislikes school and her brother does not like the comprehensive school, according to Miss Bramley.

**Summary.** The parents, with some exceptions, consider that their children are reasonably content at Lowfield junior school. There are mixed feelings concerning some teacher/pupil relationships. Additionally, some parents have difficulties in meeting what they perceive as school expectations of parental involvement. It may be that the teachers are insufficiently aware of the socio-economic pressures some of these families experience. There also appears to be some tension created around the matching of parental ideas of 'fairness' with school 'socialisation' from the viewpoint of some parents.

### 5.2.3. Education in the comprehensive school.

**Children and happiness. Mrs. Hooper** states that her eldest son *likes it at Ridgeway. He's never had a day off unless he's been ill.* When Zoe went to Ridgeway first of all she did not like it and asked her mother if she could change to another comprehensive school where a

friend of hers attends. **Mrs. Fisher** did not think this a good reason and asked her daughter to give the school a chance (24/4/90).

**Miss Hazel Bramley** says that one reason her son, George, does not like attending school is that *he doesn't like being shouted at*, particularly by Mr. Ball and Mr. Turner. She thinks that matters have been made worse because George has difficulty in hearing. she tells me that one of the teachers even pulled George by his ears. Now that he has been to hospital, however, his hearing has improved (21/3/90). **Mrs. Tanner's mother** is present when I call and informs me that her daughter had not liked school when she was a child. **Mrs. Tanner** thinks that Alice does not dislike school once she is there (14/3/90). **Mr. King** tells me that he did not like school much when he was a lad - *sometimes it was alright and sometimes not*. As we know, he is unsure as to why his children have not liked school.

*He completely hates school,* **Mrs. Chilvers** affirms of her son, James (6/6/90). **Mrs. Leaper** is the aunt of James and Joan Chilvers. Joan lives with her aunt, who informs me that Joan *doesn't like Ridgeway*. She has a lot of time off with hospital visits but she still tries to get more time off school by saying she has headaches. She has never said why she does not like school (13/6/90). **Mrs. Mortenson**, similarly, tells me that as far as Ridgeway is concerned, her children *don't like it and they won't go*. She does not know why because *they won't give a reason* (14/3/90). *They can't find excuses enough not to go,* asserts **Mr. Gallway** about his two sons at the comprehensive school (20/6/90). **Mrs. Shute** agrees. *Ben, David and Joseph - they've all gone to school at junior but it's impossible to get them to go to school at Ridgeway*. **Mr. Phillips**, Jason's father, says that his son has come home from Ridgeway *once or twice crying his eyes out and saying 'I'm not going back to that school to be made a fool of '.* Jason is very unhappy at Ridgeway School, his father maintains. Apropos his son, Sidney, Mr. Phillips considers that he has settled down over the last six months, since he was excluded from Ridgeway comprehensive. *He was the clever one. He would retaliate and was stubborn at school – that's why he got into trouble.* Since he has started work he is saving £30 a week, he buys his own clothes and *we have no problems with him.*

**Inferences.** Some of these parents disliked school themselves and were unable to make a satisfactory adjustment to the school environment. Some appear unaware of the reasons behind the aversion of their sons and daughters to their comprehensive school. Being shouted at by teachers, *being made a fool of,* having ability but refusing to conform are reasons that parents have been able to make. Disliking school is often accompanied by non-attendance and this brings pressures on parents if they are unwilling to or are incapable of persuading their older offspring to attend. If pupils are not happy at school their consequent behaviours can bring extra pressures on parents who perceive themselves as powerless to influence the home/comprehensive school interface. Sometimes court action is threatened and taken with, apparently, little effect on school attendance but causing considerable distress to some parents.

**Attitude to learning. Mrs. Fisher** states that Zoe does not like maths at school. She tries to help her daughter but she does it *a different way than the one taught at Ridgeway.* Her

daughter likes the rest of her work at school, is particularly fond of English and *she loves reading.* She has asked her mother if she can stay on at school after the age of sixteen, as she wants to go to technical college. Mrs. Fisher thinks her daughter is *very bright.* Mrs. Hooper points out that her eldest son likes languages at school.

**Mrs. Leaper** informs me that she takes her niece, Joan Chilvers, to out-of-school-hours classes that *show her how to ice cakes, in case she cant get a job when she leaves school.* **Mr. King** would rather his children stay on at school after the age of sixteen because there are no jobs for them to go to and he would like them to have *a good education*. I ask what he thinks the school should be teaching and he would like the school to teach more practical subjects to enable them to take on jobs they could do when they leave school, *like electrical work and mechanics.* He thinks Ridgeway should establish a centre to do this sort of thing for fifteen and sixteen year olds. He tells me that Peter likes putting things together. Peter, who is at home at the time, agrees and informs me he knows how to take a motorbike to bits and put it together again.

**Mrs. Arnold** thinks that Sandra learned more at junior school than she has at Ridgeway. She affirms that her daughter is interested in learning - *she's always at the library* - but she does not like her present school. Sandra does not always understand her work and her mother thinks the pupils need teachers who understand them and explain work to them if they have difficulties. One of **Mrs. Mortenson's** criticisms of the comprehensive school is that *they* (the pupils) *are left to get on with it more.* The pupils are not sufficiently guided by the teachers in their learning activities.

*I've been having a bit of trouble with school, with him not reading and messing about because he can't understand his lessons* explains **Mr. Phillips** about his son, Jason. He thinks Jason cannot cope with his lessons and realizes that he is unable to compete with his classmates. He compensates by engaging in behaviours that his peers would not be willing to attempt. Jason used to do well in swimming, badminton and gymnastics. *He got medals at junior school. Now he's not interested any more. He used to enjoy PE - not now. His PE's gone to pot now. He says 'send me a letter' to get out of it. If only he could be motivated.* 'But he lacks confidence?' I suggest. *Yes* replies Mr. Phillips. He mentions that Sidney had problems at Ridgeway at the time of choosing subject options. He was on holiday with his parent when the options were chosen. *I went up*, says Mr. Phillips, *about French and German being no good for him; but they wouldn't change it.*

Another issue about learning involves lack of parental choice. *I think you should have a choice of what school your child goes to....I would like to have been able to go to each* (comprehensive) *school so that I could make up my mind which was best for them* maintains **Mrs. Shute**. **Mrs. Susan Marshall** also complains that parents have no choice as to which comprehensive school their children attend. (Ridgeway and two other comprehensives are situated in close proximity to each other). **Mr. Gallway** declares *I would never have sent my children to Ridgeway* but he and his wife had no choice.

**Inferences.** These parents show genuine interest in their children's learning. Suggestions are made as to how the curriculum could be made more relevant to fifteen and sixteen year olds whose immediate employment prospects are likely to be slim. Parents notice the academic interests of the pupils and attempt to assist in weak areas or provide extra curricular input in preparation for life on leaving school. Parental understanding of the reasons behind some learning problems is identified and parents recognize the need for more guidance from the teachers to enable pupils to access the curriculum. Parental opinion based on valid observation of pupil capability can be disregarded. A major issue concerning this community's access to effective education, however, is the lack of parental choice of comprehensive school that their children attend.

**General OK statements. Mrs. Perryman** states that, on the whole, Ridgeway *is alright. I never had any trouble* except for Pamela *playing truant a bit.* **Mrs. Finden** tells me that she has three children at Ridgeway. All the schools, including the comprehensive, have tried hard to help Gordon but without success. She has had no difficulties with schooling over her other children (1/5/90). *I went to Ridgeway with my husband. I thought it was alright when I was there* declares **Mrs. Chilvers** (but see 'Parent/teacher relationships'). **Mrs. Marshall** considers that the headmaster, Mr. Evans, *is alright. I think the education* (at Ridgeway*) is good* maintains **Mr. Gallway** and we know that he had received a grammar school education as a boy. Likewise, **Mrs. Stone** thinks Ridgeway *is a good school and there are good teachers there.*

These parents have some positive comments to make about their comprehensive school. By no means are all statements negative that they make about Ridgeway as we shall continue to see.

**Parent/teacher relationships.** The sheer number of teachers at Ridgeway confuses **Mrs. Fisher** – *You don't know who you should see.*

On the one occasion she attended a parents' evening, **Mrs. Tanner** met Mr. Burrows, Alice's tutor. **Miss Bramley** only goes up to school if there is anything wrong. **Mrs. Leaper** tells me she has never visited Ridgeway school. **Mrs. Mortenson** does not have much to do with Ridgeway - *I've only been when the kids have been in trouble but they've always been helpful.* She feels some sympathy for the teachers – *since the cane's gone there is no discipline.* Mrs. Mortenson considers that it must be quite hard for the teachers to maintain discipline without being able to impose some physical force. **Mrs. Stone** agrees – *if they could bring the discipline back they'd be better kids and they'd respect the teachers.*

In complete contrast, **Mr. Gallway** states *I've been up there a few times. They like to make you look two feet tall in front of your children. You've got to go up there and walk into his room as if you intend to thump him before they'll take any notice of you.* **Mrs. Gallway** agrees – *When you go up to school the teachers don't take any notice of what you say.* One day her husband went up to Ridgeway comprehensive to complain at the way one of the teachers had man-handled Norman – *They wouldn't even bring the teacher in to interview*

*when we went up to school.* Things have changed at Ridgeway since **Mrs. Chilvers** and her husband used to attend as pupils. *I'm really bugged off with Ridgeway at the moment* she complains. *You think you've sorted things out and then you find you haven't.* Just before the Easter holidays she received a letter from Mr. Beard asking her to telephone him about why James was not at school. He had broken his arm in an accident. *I was trying all day to get through to him and I finished up leaving a message with the secretary. He never rang back. They never have the time to talk to you.* **Mrs. Shute** tells me that the education welfare officer she used to have was very helpful and sympathetic. *The people at head office are more helpful than most of the teachers* she goes on to say. *It's the teachers want changing,* proposes **Mrs. Marshall**; *it feels you are from another planet when you go up to Ridgeway.*

**Inferences**. Contact between parents and teachers can be spasmodic and very occasional. There is some parental sympathy for the teachers and some encounters with teachers are positive. Others have expressed frustration and anger in their attempts at communicating with teaching staff, feeling humiliated, confused and alienated within the school environment at Ridgeway. These examples of communication difficulty appear indicative of a socio-cultural gulf between home and school.

**School meeting/not meeting parent expectations regarding pupils**. **Mr. George Gallway** states, *I sent a note with Norman one day explaining why I'd sent him in a red jumper because I hadn't had time to wash and iron another one. She* (the year head) *made him take it off and walk around in his shirt all day, in the middle of winter.* Though he said of the same year head, *She gave him a couple of shirts and a pair of trousers once.* He thinks the teachers do not appear to know the children well (although the year heads and class tutors accompany their pupils as they progress through the school) and do not take into consideration differences in personality when dealing with their pupils. He gives the example of his two sons, Bruce and Norman. If Bruce is late for school *he never gets punished* but Norman is disciplined for infringing school rules. *They won't take Norman's personality into consideration. He's hyperactive – he is at home.* Norman was excluded from eating his free school lunch in the dining hall because of talking. *They made him eat sandwiches and he'd have to eat them outside school.* George took his son out of school for three weeks over this incident. On another occasion, because he kept talking in registration, he was made to go outside each registration period and *talk to a tree* (cf. Teacher Maurice Hicks' comments about this incident and his relationship with the brothers in chapter six, page 94).

*My eldest one wanted to take keyboard and information technology but was not allowed to take it so he stopped going to school* declares **Mrs. Shute**. *He was brainy. He could have got somewhere.* He managed to obtain employment upon leaving school but it was not the job he wanted and he is now out of work. *It puts a lot of children off school if they're prevented from doing what they really want to do.*

**Inferences.** Reservations are expressed that the teachers can put school rules before their pupils' welfare and that they are inappropriately treated when infringing those rules.

Additionally, the right of the pupil to share in decisions about subject options is perceived to have been infringed.

**Parental problems in meeting school expectations regarding pupils.** A number of parents experience difficulties in persuading their children to attend this school on a regular basis. **Mr. Tom King** expresses high anxiety at his court appearance in relation to Billie-Jo. **Mrs. Joyce Tanner** describes being *very upset* when the education welfare officer called and *was very aggressive* with Alice and her mother concerning absences from school. He indicated that the school might take her to court. **Miss Bramley** confides that she thought I may be calling about George's non-school attendance and is relieved that I have not come about this. **Mrs. Paula Stone** and her daughter, Karen, attended a meeting at Ridgeway comprehensive. According to Paula, Sandra was told that Mrs. Stone would have to appear before the court and could be fined £400 or, if she is unable to pay, could be sent to jail should she not go to school. Worry over truancy is aggravating Paula's health. She has a spastic condition down her left side and a defective thyroid gland. She needs to go into hospital for further treatment but this is not possible until her anxiety level comes down.

School uniform is another contentious issue. **Mr. Gallway** has a problem with this as we already know. Teacher Tony Beard, in chapter two, refers to the pressures on some families caused by school rules about uniform and school governor **Joe Greenwood** finds that the subject of school uniform is the most frequent issue with parents who consult him.

**Teacher/pupil relations. Mrs. Alice Arnold** explains that *many times Sandra and Esther came home and complained. I don't think they've got time for the kids That's the impression I get when I've been up to see them.* She considers that Sandra's form teacher, Michelle Atkinson, *has got time for her daughter*. She has told Mrs. Arnold so but *the majority aren't like that.* **Mr. George Gallway** complains *they don't seem to know the kids as individual people but as a lot of robots.* **Mrs. Shute** affirms, *I don't think the teachers have got time for the children at that school. It's not a good teacher/pupil relationship. They're just there to teach, full stop. If the children have a problem there's no one for them to go to for help.*

**Summary.** Overall, I find that the parents make more positive than negative statements about Ridgeway comprehensive. The negative ones, however, highlight major problems these parents have with the school and its teachers. They express considerable disquiet over the lack of positive human relationships the teachers establish with these pupils. The parents, on the whole, feel pressurised by the school's attitude towards them concerning non-school attendance; this being an area over which they consider themselves to have limited understanding and control. Another pressure is the school imposition of a uniform. Contact with teachers is spasmodic and infrequent. Although there are examples of satisfactory teacher/parent encounters, most tend to be characterised by conflict, rejection of parental viewpoints and a profound sense of alienation as described by parents. This appears to amount to a cultural divide as described by some parents (and teachers too, as chapter three reveals. See also Bastiani, 1989, pp. 175-90, who contrasts professional

knowledge, based on training and work experience, with the everyday lived experience of many children and families).

### 5.3. Conclusion.

These parents (alongside other parents from this community, from the viewpoint of the teachers) do not communicate readily with their schools. This does not mean that they are not aware of, concerned for and involved in their children's educational needs. The contact that they prefer is to approach the schools on an ad hoc basis, without necessarily making a prior appointment. This can prove disruptive to school regimes!

Within the infant school, parents make contact when taking and picking up their children. We learn, in the previous chapter, that this meeting ground can provide a basis for judgements to be passed on these parents by teachers, with little scope for dialogue and mutual understanding to take place. Additionally, parents express reservations over aspects of their children's welfare and education in the infant school. Even so, the parents are generally satisfied with their infant school and well pleased with their junior school, although there is evidence of cultural differences creating friction between home and school. Additionally, teachers appear insufficiently aware of the impact of socio-economic and culture-threatening pressures on families or of the effects that these can have on their children's capacities to access educational provision. The parents express significant dissatisfactions with their comprehensive school and these are substantially focussed on the perceived cultural divide between school and community. They consider their children to be insufficiently cared for or cared about and they experience pressured demands from this school that they are not always able to meet. They perceive themselves as having little or no power to improve the situation for their children or themselves and have no control over the decision as to which secondary school their children attend.

The cultural divide between home and school is most clearly identified at the two extremities of their children's journey through state education and it is with the infant and comprehensive schools that parents experience the most difficulties. Antipathy from teachers towards parents from this community is at its most extreme in the infant school but the parents, themselves, are largely unaware of this. Concerns that the parents do have about the school, when communicated to teachers, are seen by parents to be disregarded by teaching staff. The parents have a number of positive things to say about education in the comprehensive school and have some understanding for difficulties the teachers face but they perceive negative attitudes from the teaching staff, as a whole, towards them and their children. Cultural conflict between school and home is most apparent to the parents in their encounters with Ridgeway comprehensive, a school they perceive as failing to provide appropriate education and care for their children.

# Chapter Six. The teachers' relationships with their pupils.

I have categorized these relationships under two broad headings corresponding to the teachers' likes and dislikes regarding the children from these families. We will examine a range of behaviours and pupil dispositions that appeal to these teachers and those of which they disapprove. In this way we will begin to build up a construct of the stated values of the teachers regarding their pupils.

## 6.1. The infant school.

### 6.1.1. What pleases teachers about these pupils.

Two teachers in the infant school respond positively to certain vague personality traits in their pupils. June Fairbank (6/3/90) finds all four of the **Hooper** children who have attended the school *are lovely*. Additionally, **June Fisher's** teacher, Sylvia Dear, considers her to be *a little sweetie, really* (7/3/90). In terms of accepted pupil behaviour, June Fairbank, the community teacher, when talking to me about Lewis and Louise Hooper's older siblings, mentions that they were very aggressive when they came into this school first of all, *but they did calm down* (6/3/90). Mrs Sylvia Dear approves June Fisher being *in her way, quietly determined*. One teacher approves conformist behaviour and another assertiveness on the part of a pupil.

Another area of approval has been the physical appearance of three of the children. Grudgingly, Joy Hollingworth admits that **Jane** and **Graham Stokes** come clean and well fed to school (6/3/90). Mrs Pamela Huskinson admits that **Helen Vernon** looks well fed by her mother (7/3/90). Joy, however, has other reservations concerning the care the Stokes children receive from their mother, as we have become aware (in chapter four, p. 55).

One pupil, **Helen Vernon**, although having many problems, responds positively to a one-to-one relationship with a teacher quite well, maintains Mrs June Fairbank.

**Summary.** Some teacher values begin to emerge. Teachers approve when pupils respond positively to them. They think that their pupils should be physically well cared for by their parents and the teachers respond to certain aspects of their pupils' personalities. Certain pupil behaviours are approved - conforming behaviour by one teacher, independent behaviour by another. As this study progresses we will examine how a shared value system among teachers can accommodate differences in attitude and behaviour toward their pupils. It is certain shifts in priority choice within a shared value system that enables some teachers to communicate more effectively with pupils than others of their colleagues are able to do.

### 6.1.2. What concerns the teachers about these pupils.

The positive comments these teachers make about some of these pupils are few compared with what they have to say about areas that arouse their disquiet. In my interim report to the schools (Appendix A) I identify three major areas of unease for the teachers regarding

their pupils - problems in work performance, the persistence of discordant behaviours and concern for their well-being.

### Problems in work performance.

Mrs Joy Hollingworth (6/3/90) is of the opinion that **Graham Stokes** is not very bright and has a memory problem. Mrs June Fairbank (6/3/90) mentions **Simon Bearne's** poor concentration. Mrs Lucinda Perkins (6/3/90) has talked to Mrs Bearne about her concern over Simon's attendance affecting his achievement. Simon is of very low ability. Mrs Pamela Huskinson (7/3/90) states that **Helen Vernon** reads quite well but that listening is very difficult for her. She also has problems in P.E. where she runs about and picks up equipment spontaneously - *She won't settle.* Mrs Pamela Huskinson (7/3/90) states that **Lewis Hooper** finds it very difficult to sit and listen, though his ability is not bad once he gets going. His sister **Louise** finds listening is difficult, does not work and is lazy in class.

### The persistence of discordant behaviours.

I have been able to sub-divide these behaviours into five groups as far as the three schools are concerned and behaviours within three of these groups are present in relation to the infant school.

**1) Disruptive and immature behaviours.** Pamela Huskinson (7/3/90) records that **Helen Vernon's** behaviour *is bizarre.* Although aged five, Helen *acts like a two year old.* Pamela is not sure whether or not she is copying the behaviour of her elder sister aged eight. Her sister attended this infant school last year. Community teacher June Fairbank (6/3/90) tells me that *depending on what has been happening at home, or what she is feeling, she can be as bad as* (her sister) ***Kate***. June also surmises that she may be copying such behaviour from this sibling. Helen *will throw temper tantrums occasionally and can be very awkward.* Both these teachers think that this girl's behaviour problems may stem from her home. Another five year old, **Graham Stokes**, also has behaviour problems that his teacher thinks stem from home. He *went wild in the infants and was brought through into the nursery* Joy Hollingworth (6/3/90) informs me. She says he is not really ready to settle in class. Joy thinks that Graham may have missed out on attention from his mother because *every year she's had another one* (but also see Mrs Stokes' comments, p. 67).

Pamela Huskinson's view is that **Lewis Hooper's** behaviour has been worse over the past two weeks, *though he has always been naughty* (7/3/90). He is very active in the classroom and is *all over the place.* He hates being in the quiet room and asks, sometimes demands, to leave it. *He scribbles on everything* and cannot sit still. One example she gives of his disruptive behaviour puts the blame firmly on his parents. Mum and dad did not turn up for the nativity play just before Christmas. At the end of the play, just as the audience was beginning to leave, Lewis, dressed in his white angel's costume with wings and halo, told the other parents to *fuck off.* Pamela tells me he was upset because his parents did not come to see him. I think she was amused by this and has a soft spot for him but was there a hint that he was voicing something of Pamela's frustration as well? Pamela says that his sister, **Louise** is, at times, *horrified at her brother's behaviour.*

**2) Problems of adjustment to peer group.** The second area of discordant behaviours revolves around problems of adjustment to the peer group. ***Graham* (Stokes)** *doesn't know how to play* states June Fairbank. She thinks he has had little experience of relating to other children before he came to this school. He still behaves like a toddler. Lucinda Perkins 96/3/90) finds that **Simon Bearne** has problems in adjusting back to school after his frequent absences - *he monkeys about and acts the goat just to establish friendships again.* Lucinda can understand these attempts by Simon to adjust to his peer group but it is very disruptive for her other pupils and for the teacher concerned. *She's not part of the class as the others are* asserts Pamela Huskinson **of Helen Vernon**; she does not appear to quite fit in with her peers.

**3) Non-attendance.** Another area of discord between pupils and school is their non-attendance. June Fairbank considers **Simon Bearne's** attendance to be *very borderline*. This means that he has a sufficient number of absences to make June suspect that his mother is insufficiently committed to get him to school. Lucinda Perkins, his teacher, confides that Simon has just had another week off school (6/3/90). Sometimes, when he comes back from his frequent absences, he has not been poorly. There now appears to be a regular pattern of a few days in school with the odd day or two off. June Fairbank is also worried that **June Fisher's** attendance is poor. It also perturbs June's teacher, Sylvia Dear, whose opinion is that *if she was here every day she would be getting along quite nicely.* She sees the prospect of an intelligent girl never being able to achieve her potential.

**Inferences.** These three areas of discord - disruptive/immature behaviour, problems in peer group adjustment and irregular attendance - present problems for the teachers in terms of integrating their pupils into the system of learning that is on offer at Lowfield infant school. The teachers see these problems as originating within the child and/or the child's home background. Nevertheless, there is one further area of, if anything, even greater unease for these teachers.

## Concern for the well-being of their pupils.

Across the three schools their teachers express unease about four aspects that they consider impinge on the well-being of their pupils. In the infant school the teachers see two of these as having a bearing on the young people who attend.

**1) Unease about the physical/ emotional state of the pupils** is one. Their infant schoolteachers express concern for seven of these nine pupils.

Head teacher Brenda Parkinson says that **Helen Vernon and her sister Kate** (in the junior school) have been statemented under the Education Act as requiring extra resources because of special educational needs. She considers both these children to be *at risk* but *can't put* (her) *finger on it* (8/1/90). Community teacher, June Fairbank, comments *we didn't know about the sexual abuse when the children came into the school* first of all (6/3/90). The social services department has since informed the school that some of Mrs Vernon's

daughters had been sexually interfered with by a previous co-habitee of hers. Both June and her head teacher are being reticent about their views concerning whether any abuse is still going on but Helen's teacher, Pamela Huskinson, is a little more forthcoming (7/3/90). Helen told Pamela that, one night recently, Helen had slept with Victor (mum's common law husband) in his bed, while her mother slept in Helen's bed. Pamela does not know if this was the result of some tiff between husband and wife or whether this had sexual implications. Every afternoon Helen's eldest sister, Barbara, comes from the junior school to pick her up and asks how she has behaved that day. If she has been ill-behaved she will go straight to bed when she goes home. If not, Victor rewards her with sweets or money. Pamela does not know whether to believe Barbara or not and she has made no attempt to verify the story. To her it appears an inappropriate way of addressing Helen's behaviour difficulties.

Pamela is of the opinion that Helen's mother does not look after her very well from the physical point of view. Her clothing and underwear are usually dirty. She does not appear to Pamela to be a happy child. She cries in music and movement lessons and *she cries a lot apart from that.* After a tantrum she will go to Pamela for a cuddle of reassurance that she is still cared about. Often, after that, she will go to sleep. She drops off to sleep from time to time *but not as much as she used to.* There are many indications that Helen's physical condition, general behaviour when at school and the doubts the teachers have about adequate care at home, should have alerted the school to open a dialogue with her mother in order to address these problems jointly. In chapter four we identified reluctance on the part of some teachers to carry forward communication with parents despite recognition that further information is required (p. 51).

*June is a very neglected little girl*, June Fairbank tells me (6/3/90). *She looks neglected; she hasn't much stamina. She's always sucking her thumb.* **June Fisher** is also inclined to fall asleep in class. She either makes her way to the junior school to be picked up there or she is picked up after school at the infant school *by whoever is around* (i.e. Mrs Fisher's current boy friend). June Fairbank is also worried about **Lydia Knott** (June Fisher's half-sister) who is now at the junior school. She finds her very frail. I offer to follow this up and have referred to Lydia in chapter five (p. 62). June's teacher, Sylvia Dear, observes that her pupil *sucks her thumb practically permanently* and sees this as a sign of distress. June seems to be very tired and, often, she used to fall asleep at story time. Once, some months ago, *she dropped off in the hall* during assembly. She looks a little waif. I ask if Sylvia considers her to be undernourished but Sylvia is not saying (7/3/90). June Fairbank considers that the **Hooper twins**, Lewis and Louise, *crave attention* while at school and that this is the result of their parents not having much time to give to their children at home. Their teacher, Pamela Huskinson, informs me that Louise has been ill a lot. Joy Hollingworth also suspects that Mrs **Stokes** neglects the emotional needs of **Jane and Graham** - *She does what she has to do and no more.*

**2) Secondly, one pupil is perceived as being negatively similar to his siblings.** Both Mrs Jane Peters, head of nursery, and Mrs Fiona Jackman, a teacher in the nursery, think that **Ben Shute** *will end up exactly the same way* as his older siblings and gradually drift out

of education (6/3/90). They put this down to the lack of general direction given by his mother at home.

**Inferences.** The problems over the well-being of these pupils are seen by their teachers as stemming from home and being the result of inadequate physical and emotional care from their parents.

**Summary.** Some further teacher values begin to emerge in relation to these pupils. Pupil behaviour that the teachers perceive as disruptive/immature, together with problems in adjusting to the pupil's peer group are not welcomed because they threaten these values. The teachers also regard their pupils' behaviour as having an adverse effect on their response to class work and that these problems in social adjustment are inherited from their home environment. The teachers regard the physical and emotional state of their young people as further disabling them in their capacity to concentrate on class work. This also impinges on another teacher value - that children should be physically and emotionally well and if they are not this is the fault and responsibility of their parents. Regular attendance is important and has a positive effect on both work performance and social adjustment. It is contravened by some of these pupils. The teachers regard responsibility for all this as resting with the parents concerned.

## 6.2. The junior school.

### 6.2.1.What pleases teachers about these pupils.

**Pupil responds positively to teacher. Bernadette Fisher** relates well to her second year teacher, Mrs Judith Simms informs me. Judith finds her *a nice girl* (6/2/90). Michael Gabriel finds that his third year pupil**, Sheila Briggs**, can talk to him about herself (5/2/90). **Steven Hooper** is in Anne Moore's first year class. *Underneath I have a very soft spot for Steven. There's a very nice boy in there somewhere* says Anne. He really needs affection and is beginning to respond to Anne when she puts an arm around him. *I try to appeal to his better nature* she tells me (14/2/90).

**Pupil responds positively to other pupils.** In the fourth *year*, **Fiona Bramley** gets on well with the other children and with her teacher, according to Erica Fillingham. She also finds her *a good little gymnast* (7/2/90).

**Pupil responds positively to class work.** As far as his schoolwork is concerned *he can try really hard* Anne Moore states concerning **Stephen Hooper**. Last term he began to take some reading material home from school. He tries hard with his spelling and is in the middle group for language work. He is about top infant level for number. Anne states that he achieves a general average level for this class. Stephen, however, has quite a wide general knowledge. He listens very well to stories and remembers quite satisfactorily. Anne considers Steven to be brighter than his elder brother**, Derek** (14/2/90). Anne has been away from school, ill, for three and a half weeks this half term and so she has been in no position to monitor his progress closely since the Christmas break. It would appear that during the autumn term, however, Anne has spent some time in getting to know him, in finding out

how best to relate to him and in helping him to apply himself to learning constructively. Steven's brother **Derek** is a third year pupil in Michael Gabriel's class. Derek's reading is now coming on *in leaps and bounds* although he is still a long way behind most of the children in his class (5/2/90). So, in the opinion of both teachers, the brothers, within their individual ability ranges, are making progress academically.

Anne Moore, the teacher of first year pupil **Kate Vernon**, finds her *reading is not too bad.* She is in the middle English group. She can copy beautifully from the blackboard when she is in the mood.

> *There's a lot of intelligence there. If only someone had time to channel it in the right area she could go far.* (14/2/90)

Teaching Kate is an exhausting and frustrating experience for Anne, not only because of her behaviour problems (see below) but also because Anne sees Kate as having so much latent ability she is unable to help her to develop. **Barbara**, who is Kate's sister, is a third year pupil and Michael Gabriel is her teacher. He considers that Barbara is possibly the brightest of the three sisters. Basically she is quite able, She *struggles a bit with her maths but it is beginning to click* (5/2/90).

Michael Gabriel maintains that **Sheila Briggs** can cope quite well with her remedial work but only on a one-to one basis. Stuart Atkins tells me that his fourth year pupil, **Mark Reeves**, (he sometimes uses his mother's surname **'Shute'**) is a good worker and tries hard. His ability level is about average for this class (7/2/90). Stuart Atkins thinks that, even though there are other problems for **John Marshall**, he is beginning to try hard again at getting things right for himself at this school.

**Pupil perceived by teacher as enjoying school.** Michael Gabriel finds that *on the whole she is a happy girl and doing quite well.* Though one might doubt how happy **Barbara Vernon** really is in the light of other comments he makes below.

**Pupil exhibits behaviour approved by teacher.** Michael Gabriel has seen a *spasmodic* improvement in **Sheila Briggs'** behaviour since she joined the Brownies just before Christmas.

**Pupil attendance performance approved by teacher.** Judith Simms acknowledges that **Paul Crain's** attendance is reasonable and he seems to be quite healthy. Stuart Atkins also approves **Mark Reeves'** good attendance since last September (7/2/90). The attendance of **Adam Fisher**, Bernadette's older brother, *isn't that bad* says his third year teacher, Erica Fillingham, and he usually brings a note from his mother when he has been away from school (7/2/90).

**Pupil's personality approved by teacher. Derek Hooper**, Michael Gabriel's third year pupil, is found by Michael to be *a nice lad* even though he does clown around. Likewise, **Erica Fillingham** acknowledges another of her pupils, **Patrick Gallway**, to be *just a lovely kid* and it also pleases her that his attendance has much improved recently.

**Summary.** The affection felt by these teachers for some of these pupils is readily apparent. These teacher statements regarding what pleases them about their pupils give clear indications of their willingness to get to know their pupils and to do their best to forge meaningful relationships with them.

### 6.2.2. What concerns teachers about these pupils.

Teachers at the junior school make nearly 79% more statements about discordant behaviours than do their infant school colleagues. Apart from these statements, the pupils themselves have significant information to impart as to the nature of these behaviours (as we shall see in the next chapter: Summary, p. 106).

Excluding three examples of refusal to conform, the teachers' comments on disruptive and peer group problem behaviours often overlap. Moreover, concerns for the well-being of their pupils are closely interwoven within the fabric of these teachers' narratives. It would be confusingly disjointed to attempt to separate it out within this text and would also tend to blur the character of each child as perceived by her/his teacher. Figure ii in Appendix A gives a statement breakdown of teacher concerns across the three schools and will be a useful reference point for comparison. By this means it will be possible for you, as reader, to check incidents, embedded within the text of this section, against the list of categories under figure ii of the appendix.

**Problems in work performance.** Erica Fillingham finds **Adam Fisher** to be *very poor academically* (7/2/90). Stuart Atkins sees **John Marshall** as the worst in the class as far as ability is concerned (7/2/90). *He has a lot of remedial input from different teachers but he never seems to improve* (May input from many different professionals not be confusing for him?). **Kate Vernon**'s attention span is very short and she has very little retention according to Anne Moore and **Steven Hooper** too has a short attention span although his performance is about average for his class (14/2/90). **Sheila Briggs** has great learning problems affirms Michael Gabriel (5/2/90). His pupil, **Derek Hooper**, does not appear motivated to get on with any class work and **Barbara Vernon** *doesn't listen.* Judith Simms states *it's reading that is the problem* with **Paul Crain**. **Bernadette Fisher** *is very disorganized in her work – always losing bits and pieces.*

**Discordant behaviours and concern for the well-being of their pupils.** Anne Moore states that **Steven Hooper** is very aggressive in the playground - he thumps, strangles and scratches the other children. Today (14/2/90) he kicked a boy in the eye. *He probably hasn't been socialized at all* comments Anne and *he can't stand any kind of criticism.* In his relationship with Anne, although he responds, *he's afraid to let himself go*. She thinks he may consider it unmasculine to lend himself to demonstrations of affection. Anne, nevertheless, appears to be making some progress in establishing a caring relationship with her pupil that may enable him to develop caring responses that could be generalized to some of his peers.

When **Derek Hooper** first came into Michael Gabriel's class he was *very immature* and still spends a lot of time sitting under tables. Michael tells me that Derek makes a lot of *cooing* noises when things are quiet in class and *he can't cope with silence*. He has reached the stage in his emotional development when he is ready to be playing with 'Leggo' but he finds it difficult to cope with group activities and he is very disruptive in a junior class. He throws temper tantrums from time to time. The head teacher is about to write to Derek's father (5/2/90) inviting him to call at the school to discuss his behaviour. From Michael's comments it would appear that he sees Derek's behaviour problems as stemming from his immaturity. This makes it very difficult for him to cope with the social co-operation among peers that is an integral part of the junior school classroom. Michael's contention that Derek does not appear to be motivated to get on with any class work may well be related to his inability to function effectively within the social situation of the classroom.

**Kate Vernon** is *one who wears anyone down* states Anne Moore. *She needs a much smaller group but I don't know how long it would be effective* she goes on to say. Kate needs a firm hand all the time. Anne tells me that she is sending Kate *to the boss*, quite frequently now, at his request. Her head teacher realizes how stressful it is attempting to teach a class of 27 pupils, most of who have learning problems, and having to cope with Kate's behaviour as well. Anne shows me a detailed and extensive list of disruptive behaviours Kate has engaged in since the beginning of the academic year. When Kate is out of the classroom Anne can see the positive effect on the other children and she realizes how much they have been missing out because she has had to spend so much time on her (14/2/90).

I have a further discussion with Anne a few months later (6/7/90). I ask her if Kate's behaviour has improved. Anne does not think so. She regards Kate as having been through a phase of being more devious and is now back to being openly disruptive again. Anne is of the opinion that when she, herself, had been unwell she had allowed Kate to wear her down. She has since decided that Kate will not get the better of her. As a consequence she is not so openly disruptive at present (this appears to contradict a previous statement of Anne's). Anne thinks she is likely to revert to her previous level of disruption when she gets into her next class with another teacher in September.

**Kate's sister, Barbara** is in Michael Gabriel's class. She seeks instant gratification in the classroom. She bed-wets and comes in smelling some days. *She doesn't listen* - she does not focus on what is said to her. Barbara is a frustrating pupil to teach; she does not appear to get on with men, according to Michael, and will not engage in talk with her teacher. It may well be that, as Barbara has been subject to sexual abuse from a man in the past, she will be wary in her relationships with men in the present. When I have opportunity to talk casually with her and Kate for about ten minutes, while Anne Moore is talking to their mother in the same classroom, I find that Barbara chats to me openly in a relaxed manner. Her mother is near at hand, however, and this may give her enough security to enable this to occur. Michael mentions that Barbara has a close group of four friends who are always falling out with each other. If she falls out with them she has no one because she does not relate well to the rest of the class. *She can't cope with rejection* and gets very tearful when told by

her friends that she cannot be in their group. Additionally, Barbara has a very loud voice and, on occasions when she becomes very uncooperative, she employs it and *digs her heels in*. This stubbornness, I think, may be a valuable asset to Barbara. It could enable her to stand her ground in other more threatening situations.

Michael has the impression that Barbara has to look after her two sisters quite a lot. *She only came out of care last summer*. Barbara and her sisters were re-united with their mother a few months ago. All three children are still in the care of the local authority but at home under social work supervision. *I can't put my finger on what concerns me about Barbara*, reflects Michael *but I find her a very unsettled child*. I think, however, that there are specific factors within this general concern that can be identified as contributing towards Barbara being so unsettled. She was sexually abused by a man and is now being taught by a male teacher, with whom she has difficulties in communicating. She has been in care and is now re-united with her mother on a trial basis. This affords her no permanent security. We know that she is expected to undertake certain tasks in relation to her sister, Helen (in the infant school), that are 'parental' rather than 'sibling' in nature. These are inappropriate to her age and level of maturity. She commits herself emotionally to a very few peers, does not relate to a wider grouping and has difficulties in coping with the normal fallings-out of childhood life. She bed-wets and seeks instant gratification. These indicate to me an extremely unhappy little girl. I consider it to Michael's credit that she is beginning to make progress within his class. I leave the final word to Michael - *she'll survive but will she be able to achieve anything?*

Judith Simms tells of **Bernadette Fisher** coming into school in the winter wearing very flimsy dresses and shoes that are in poor repair. Judith thinks that Bernadette seems quite unhappy in herself. *She looks a bit grubby*, sometimes she smells and other children will not sit next to her voluntarily. *She is always by herself* and the other children tend to pick on her at playtimes. Quite frequently she will come to Judith saying that there are things wrong with her - an arm or a leg hurts - nothing specific. Bernadette sometimes talks to Judith about home matters. Just after Christmas Bernadette's mother, a brother and a sister were admitted to hospital for a few days. An aunt came to look after the household but Bernadette was off for a few days because there was *no one to get her off to school*. Judith considers that

> *Bernadette has to do too much for her self with no one to look after her. She is very serious and seems to have a lot of things on her mind. I feel sorry for her.*

I have the impression of a little girl who is largely a passive recipient. What she receives from home would appear to be towards the minimum end of acceptable physical care and she is rejected and sometimes attacked by her peers at school. Even so Judith is a person in her life with whom she can communicate. Judith is a young teacher and may not have sufficient experience to make the most effective use of this relationship, but her positive feelings and concern for her pupil are not in doubt. **Her brother, Adam**, *is totally neglected* affirms Erica Fillingham. *He comes in the most inadequate clothes*. Erica finds Adam to be very poor academically.

Judith Simms is aware that **Paul Crain** needs a pair of spectacles and has been waiting now for over a year for them. At the moment (6/2/90) he has a very bad tooth but has not been to the dentist. Do Paul's parents have difficulties in making contact with professional figures, such as opticians and dentists and, if they do, are the reasons similar to those given by Mrs Hooper and Mrs Marshall (p. 38)?

*Sheila is very aggressive*. Basically everyone in the class *hates her* and she knows it, affirms Michael Gabriel of **Sheila Briggs**. She gets *nasty* to the children who try to get along with her. She involves herself in lots of fights with both boys and girls. *She doesn't know how to relate to others* maintains Michael. When talking to him she tells him that she is sad and wants to make friends but no-one likes her or loves her. She can get very upset *but she is so foul-mouthed and aggressive that this puts people off.* She and her family live at the other end of the Lowfield estate so she does not live in close proximity to the children in her class. Michael considers that this does not help in establishing co-operative peer group relationships. When I visit Mr and Mrs Briggs I have a vividly clear impression of violence as part of the ethos of the home environment (see pp. 63-4). As Sheila lives in this environment it is not surprising that it influences, to a large extent, her behaviour elsewhere. It is interesting to learn from Michael that there has been some improvement in Sheila's behaviour since she has become exposed to the very different 'Brownie' value system.

**Fiona Bramley** is absent a lot - *almost as much as she's been here* asserts her teacher, Erica Fillingham. *For the least little thing she's off*. Before Christmas Erica thought she was obviously quite poorly but her mother did not take her to the doctor even though the school had recommended this. Fiona's brother came to this school and Erica found his attendance was very good. She does not know why Fiona's is so poor. When I interview Fiona later she indicates that she is loath to talk to Erica about things that are troubling her at school (p. 104).

During his second year in school **Mark Reeves** pilfered from one of his classmates. He stayed off school for quite a while after that because he was ashamed to come back, maintains Stuart Atkins. There are never any behaviour problems in class with Mark - *the problems are outside school*, affirms Stuart. He has had to appear in court more than once; the latest being very recently. Stuart was unable to be specific about the offences with which Mark has been charged or whether he had been found guilty.

Before this academic year began there was no trouble as far as **John Marshall's** behaviour was concerned, although he has always behaved immaturely. He is easily influenced by other children and has *picked the wrong people as friends*. Stuart also tells me that John has developed a negative attitude to school of late and makes remarks such as *I'm not doing that*. He and his friend, Maurice, started bullying. For the last two or three weeks he has been better - partly because Maurice has also been warned (7/2/90).

Apropos the children more generally, Anne Moore tells me that she regards the children in her first year class as infants still. *Everything is at least one, possibly two years behind what*

*you would expect at this stage* (14/2/90). She has taught in a range of different junior schools and so has other criteria, apart from this school, against which to measure pupil performance standards. This ties in with my experiences of the children's social behaviour throughout the school. On my various visits to the school I have observed the children within their classrooms, in the playground at break periods and in the dining hall during lunch. I have been touched by the friendliness of the pupils towards me and struck by their general verbal noisiness and physical exuberance within the school setting that appears to peak at lunch-times in the hall, spilling out into the corridors and into the playground.

**Summary**. Worry over the persistence of disruptive and aggressive behaviour allied to anxiety for the physical and emotional well being of their pupils characterizes the teachers' concern. There are indications that many children from this community experience learning difficulties and not only the pupils in which we are taking a particular interest (as we learned in chapter two, page 29). Although these teachers try hard to reach into the lives of their pupils, examples begin to emerge of communication difficulties between them. There is a lack of knowledge and experience on the part of, at least, some of the teachers in adapting their teaching skills to the social world that their pupils inhabit.

## 6.3. The comprehensive school.

### 6.3.1. What pleases teachers about their pupils.

**Pupil responds positively to teacher.** Christine Burton, **Dennis Endacott's** second year tutor, mentions *you can talk to Dennis* (12/2/90). On the same day, Michelle Atkinson, also a second year tutor, reports that **Jason Phillips** *can be quite nice*. He is always willing to do little things for Michelle such as collecting the PSE folders *and will be very pleasant. Perhaps it is because these things are within his capabilities that he is so different in his behaviour*, she goes on to say. Other, less 'acceptable' behaviours of Jason will be discussed later in this chapter. About **Sandra Arnold**, Michelle reflects *she talks to me quite a lot but not as much as she used to.* Tracey Eastwood, fourth year tutor to **Grace Finden**, states *Grace and I get on well* (3/4/90). Although she does not know a great deal about Grace's personal background, she thinks she knows her well. Later, in this section, I will be able to enlarge on this.

**Pupil responds positively to other pupils.** John Burrows expresses surprise that his third year pupil, **Joseph Shute**, after an absence from school, returned just before Christmas with *a great big box of Christmas cards* and handed them out to class members and to John. He states that the girls do this but it is not often that *one of the lads does* (28/2/90). Catherine Graham, third year tutor, observes that **Pamela Perryman** *is fairly popular* with her peers. In contrast, Pauline Williams asserts that her third year pupil, **Mandy Mortenson**, is friendly with just two girls in her class.

**Pupil responds positively to classwork.** Tony Beard, head of first year, considers that **Peter King** enjoys his subjects at school, particularly maths and swimming. He is also involved in football at school (23/1/90). Tony finds **Zoe Knott** to be *quite bright* and Pauline

Williams, **Mandy Mortenson's** first year tutor, thinks the same about her (31/1/90). Amanda Price, teacher in the behavioural unit, considers **Gordon Finden**

> *is a very good reader. He can think and put thoughts into words. He can be a neat writer. He could have done quite well at school and should have been capable of some good GCSE passes* (31/1/90).

Elizabeth Reynolds, a fourth year tutor, states that her pupil, **Karen Stone**, has voluntarily taken part in a couple of form plays (7/2/90). Michelle Atkinson's pupil, **Sandra Arnold**, tries hard at school and works well when she is on her own. Maurice Hicks, as well as being a second year tutor, is also head of recreational studies. His pupil, **Norman Gallway**, *is not a bad footballer*. **Joseph Shute**, in John Burrow's tutorial group, *performs as a lad of average ability, which is not bad considering the amount of school he's missed*. When at school he usually tries quite hard. Tracey Eastwood is not worried about her pupil, **Grace Finden**, as far as work performance is concerned - *she is doing pretty well across the board.*

**Pupil enjoys school**. Only two comments are made about this. Stephen Lloyd thinks that **Peter King** *enjoys his subjects at school*. Veronica Haynes, head of second year, explains that **Norman Gallway** has been bullied by one particular boy since they both attended junior school together. She thinks this may have been the reason he has found it so difficult to come to school. This boy has now been suspended (although I do not know if this was related to the bullying instance). Since then, Norman has changed *from a quite moody little boy to one who smiles a lot*.

**Pupil exhibits behaviour approved by teacher**. Whenever **Karen Stone** is *on report*, the comments are always favourable, remarks Elizabeth Reynolds. Maurice Hicks approves of **Bruce Gallway's** politeness. Alan Cooper (14/2/90) has *experienced no problems* with his pupil, **David Shute**, on the rare occasions that he has attended! **His brother, Joseph**, *plays his cards close to his chest.* He is *an honest boy, who owns up* when he has done something amiss, admits his tutor, John Burrows. *Though he can be a bit of a lad* he exhibits no behaviour problems.

Gareth Walton (27/3/90) approves that his pupil, **Wendy Perryman**, although *a very small undersized child* can hold her own with her peers. They used to call her names on account of her size but she shouted back at them. Likewise, Tracey Eastwood speaks favourably of **Grace Finden's** ability to *guard her territory if necessary.* She gives an example. Grace has had problems with Billie-Jo King over a mutual boyfriend. There have been occasions when Billie-Jo has been waiting for Grace after school to beat her. Tracy has kept Grace back until the other girl had left. Grace told Tracey that she was not afraid. Tracey maintains that she was but, even so, was quite capable of *sticking up for herself*.

**Physical appearance of pupil approved by teacher.** Both **Sidney Phillips and his cousin, William**, come to school *well dressed and turned out* confirms their fifth form tutor, Tim Turner (23/3/90). Pauline Williams considers that **Mandy Mortenson** *comes into school well clothed*. John Burrows has observed that **Joseph Shute** is usually well clothed *but,* he adds the caveat, *looks scruffy*.

**Pupil attendance performance approved by teacher**. Tracey Eastwood is pleased at the good attendance of **Grace Finden**. Three other tutors, Michelle Atkinson, Pauline Williams and Christine Burton state that their pupils **Sandra Arnold, Mandy Mortenson and Dennis Endacott** come into school most days now. Mandy often does not stay at school all day, though. Lately she has begun to forge teachers' signatures for attendance on report sheets. Dennis is often late in arriving at school. This is also true of **Peter King**, maintains Steven Lloyd. So, a number of reservations are expressed about the quality of attendance of some of the few pupils who do attend most of the time.

**Pupil perceived by teacher as positively different from siblings**. A further comment from Stephen Lloyd about **Peter King** is that he behaves differently from his elder siblings who had previously attended the school, in two respects. He has not rejected the school and, if he is absent, he usually brings a letter of explanation from home - something his siblings never did. Steven maintains that Peter, himself, says he *is not like the others* (his siblings).

**Teacher initiative regarding pupil is partially or wholly successful. George Bramley** has been regularly missing from school on Thursdays and Fridays. When Christine tackled him about this he cried and said that he did not turn up because he gets French on both these days and there is a lot of oral work that he cannot hear. Christine has now arranged for George to sit in the front of the class for his lessons. He was in school the previous Thursday and Friday. Charles Venables, head of the behavioural unit, explains that **Carol Endacott** had camouflaged her literacy problem for four years by acting disruptively. The unit took her on a part-time basis and put her on an individual reading programme. She made progress, became less volatile and started attending more regularly (31/1/90). Unfortunately, a series of events in her personal life, subsequent to this, may have contributed to her virtual absence from school since the last summer break. Ian James, the co-ordinator of learning support, became aware that **Peter King** could not read or write when he started at Ridgeway last September. Ian put all the R.E. work on tape for him. Ian tells me it was time-consuming for him but worth it. Now those tapes are available *for other kids with similar problems* (30/1/90). Ian wonders what other staff members are doing to help Peter in other areas of the curriculum.

**Pupil's personality approved by teacher.** *He's the sort you would like to sort out. He will do anything for you* explains his tutor, Christine Burton, about **Dennis Endacott**. Michelle Atkinson finds that **Sandra Arnold** is *the sort of girl you'd really like to do something for.* Annette Fletcher considers **Zoe Knott** *is a lovely little girl - all smiles.* According to Elizabeth Reynolds her pupil, **Karen Stone**, *is a nice girl.* Tracey Eastwood considers that **Grace Finden** has *a very nice pleasant personality.* Similarly, John Burrows, in approving his third year pupil, **Joseph Shute**, claims, *in fact he is quite a pleasant lad.* Maurice Hicks is head of the recreational studies faculty and a second year tutor. Although he has considerable difficulties in relating to **Norman Gallway**, he has found **his elder brother, Bruce**, to be *a nice lad - I've got time for him* (even though he also has his non-conformist traits). A major difference between Norman and Bruce is that Maurice finds it very difficult to forge any

meaningful communication links with the former, whereas Bruce's *politeness* enables Maurice to talk to him and begin to get to know him.

**Summary.** In the comprehensive school all ten of the categories of teacher approval concerning their pupils are present. These are the categories I am using, throughout the three schools, to identify teacher values relating to classroom practice. As is clear from the text, even within these, the teachers express reservations about some pupils. It is equally clear that some teachers have been pro-active by initiating action to counteract problems their pupils have encountered and in attempting to forge meaningful relationships with them. This shared value base, therefore, does not preclude some teachers from behaving differently from others in relation to their pupils. Eleven pupils (one third of the Lowfield sample at Ridgeway comprehensive) do not figure in these approval categories at all.

### 6.3.2. What concerns teachers about their pupils.

Of the ten categories of concerns that the teachers express about the pupils from these particular families across the three schools, nine of them are present in the comprehensive school. Only that regarding the pupil being perceived as negatively similar to sibling(s) is absent (For the pupils' perceptions that teachers do make this comparison see pp. 111-112). I have sub-divided these categories under three broad headings - the persistence of discord, problems in work performance and concern for the well-being of the pupil.

### The persistence of discord.

**Disruptive and immature behaviour.** Andrew Jones, head of fifth year, refers to **Billie-Jo King** who was excluded and now attends a neighbouring comprehensive school. There were *behavioural problems* with her. She *was good at winding other kids up* (24/1/90). **Jason Phillips**

> *exhibits the sort of behaviour problems that wind teachers up - making silly noisiness, continually telling the teacher the work is too hard for him, seeking continual attention, being a constant nuisance in class.*

Veronica Haynes, head of second year, tells me (6/2/90). It is interesting that Veronica thinks that repeatedly stating the work is too hard for him is a behavioural problem. She also mentions that **Sandra Arnold** can *deliberately work herself up into a temper tantrum* (although Sandra perceives herself as having a quick temper, p. 117). Additionally Christine Burton observes that **Dennis Endacott** is not always in control of himself at school - *It's mostly silly things that get him into trouble at school.* Finally, **Carol Endacott** had been referred to Charles Venables' unit in her fourth year for being very disruptive.

**Problems in adjustment to peer group.** Pauline Williams mentions there being a number of timid girls in her third year class. **Mandy Mortenson** *can be quite strong minded with her class mates and get them to conform to her requests on occasion*. Pauline views this as bringing undue pressure on her more vulnerable peers. Michelle Atkinson reports that **Jason Phillips** is *hopeless in a group*. Not only does he have difficulties in coping with a class group but *it is not really good for him to be in the same form as his cousin*. **William and Sidney Phillips** are cousins (the brothers of Michelle Atkinson's Phillips pair). They were both in Tim

Turner's year class until Sidney was permanently excluded from school recently. *In many ways they are more like twins than cousins* and reinforce each other's *undesirable behaviour.* **Sandra Arnold** also experiences problems in adjusting to her peer group. *She does not like working with other people and experiences great difficulties in a work group* (See p. 116, where Sandra comments on her perception that her peers target her verbally).

*He and I very quickly met head on* states Maurice Hicks of his second year pupil, **Norman Gallway.** Having *come into class he would talk or push or generally make himself a nuisance with the people he was sitting adjacent to.* ***Pamela*** **(Perryman)** *is easily led* maintains Catherine Graham *and looks for a leader. She is on the periphery of a lot of trouble that goes on in school with her peer group. She's never actually in the middle of what's going wrong.*

Disrupting the peer group, dominating it on occasion, being led by others, not coping in a group and mutual reinforcement of 'undesirable' behaviours appear to be the dynamics identified by teachers in terms of problems in peer group adjustment.

**Refusal to conform.** Tony Beard, head of first year, went to school with **Peter King's father**. *'All his children have gone through school in the same fashion and got nothing out of it* he tells me. Similarly, Stephen Lloyd affirms that, although **Peter King** is different, his previous four siblings have all rejected school. **Mandy Mortenson** *is permanently on report* in an attempt to contain her non- conformist behaviour, according to Pauline Williams (6/2/90).

Amanda Price talks of *another side* to **Gordon Finden** than the good reader and thoughtful writer.

> *He has a vicious temper that can turn in a minute. There is an air of suppressed violence about him that is quite worrying. I always know that if I laid a hand on him he'd hit out at me* (31/1/90).

Amanda thinks that Gordon also has a poor opinion of women - *you can tell by the way he speaks to them*. Mary Gregory considers that Gordon Finden *has a serious attitude problem - he doesn't recognize the help offered or respond to it.* Pauline Williams says that **Thomas Mortenson** *can be very aggressive* although she does not enlarge on this.

Neither is Tim Turner specific about **Sidney Phillips'** misdemeanours. As we know, he has now been permanently excluded from school. Tim does not know the specific reason but speculates that *he must finally have done something significantly serious* at the end of a long series of offences that have occurred over the years at school. Both **Sidney and his cousin, William,** *have been involved in malicious damage in school, although they have always denied responsibility*. Tim thinks they *are probably getting back at school - perhaps a demonstration against authority.* Michelle Atkinson is certain that **Geoffrey King** does not like school and demonstrates this by his absences. She also finds **Anthony Phillips** to be cheeky, insolent and *he smirks when you are telling him off* (Is this because of nervousness or anxiety?). Alan Cooper has found that **David Shute** has had some problems with some

teaching staff, finding it difficult to accept authority. *Basically he hasn't seen the relevance of school for himself.*

Maurice Hicks gives an example of a continuing conflict between teacher and pupil. After **Norman Gallway** had been disruptive in registration for a couple of terms, Maurice arranged for him to register outside the classroom under a tree for part of the summer term. In the previous chapter Mr Gallway comments on this incident. Norman, in the next chapter, does not mention it and does not appear to view himself as rejecting what the school has to offer. Even so, Maurice maintains *I get the impression that Norman is basically a law unto himself* and not really amenable to influence from school. Maurice makes him put time in after school for the amount of time he has lost through being late in the mornings. One of the staff at Ridgeway has calculated that Norman stayed in after school for the equivalent of three working weeks over the last academic year. *I don't think we are having any effect on him* declares Maurice and *I don't think I can treat him as a special circumstance and treat the others differently. This would undermine my work with the whole class* (Is he not, already, treating him differently?). He goes on to say

> *Norman is not a bad footballer. I suggested he comes along to the second year soccer club but he's never come along. It grieves me that we have here a lad of some talent who is not using it.*

Is Maurice trapped within his own perception that Norman rejects what is on offer? He appears to have found some common ground with his brother, Bruce who also exhibits non-conformist behaviour. Maurice tells me *he has done only 8 PE lessons out of 20 since September and only today he had no PE kit with him as he should have.* He considers Bruce could *get himself out of that situation* but appears to think that his brother cannot or will not. Maurice appears to be unaware that he may be applying different criteria to each brother. What he will tolerate from Bruce he will not from Norman. We have identified here the interface between the personal, social aspects of learning and the academic. It is on the successful negotiation of this interface that the pupils place such emphasis, as we will discover in the next chapter.

**Inferences.** This area of non-conformist behaviour appears to be complex in terms of identifying a connection between the nature of the behaviours themselves. There is likely to be present some combination of the following; overt rejection of the school itself, a pathological condition within the pupil, inability to cope with the school context and lack of mutual understanding between pupil and teacher.

**Non-attendance.** There are 36 comments from teachers involving non-attendance. 21 out of 25 staff members interviewed perceive this to be a major source of concern.

Robert Groves, the deputy headteacher, refers to attendance problems relating to **Zoe Knott** (9/1/90). Tony Beard, head of first year, says his main concern about Zoe is her attendance. He is soon to have a meeting with Zoe's mother, Mrs Fisher, and the education welfare officer (23/1/90). Her tutor, Annette Fletcher, informs me that *up until the last three weeks she has only attended school on six occasions* (31/1/90). Robert Groves is worried

about the attendance records of **Alan Bearne** and of the **King family** generally. Stephen Lloyd agrees - apart from **Peter King**, who likes school. Michelle Atkinson confirms that **Geoffrey King** has great attendance problems. *He's supposed to be suffering from asthma* but she has never experienced him in distress from breathing problems in the school. His parents usually put his absences down to asthma. The attendance record of **David Shute** *is very poor*. Andrew Jones, head of fifth year, states that absences at Ridgeway are recorded on a half-day basis. David's records of absences in the first four years are 122, 138, 328 and 123 respectively. David's tutor, Alan Cooper, confirms that his poor attendance is continuing into the fifth year (14/2/90).

Mary Gregory speaks of **Mandy and Thomas Mortenson** - *attendance is poor and there is some degree of support from the home*. She also speaks of **Joseph Shute** being *a chronic non-attender* for some time. The parents say that they are keeping him off school at present because his fellow pupils are teasing him about his hair loss. Joseph has some comments of his own to make about his non-attendance in the next chapter. Mary declares **Pamela Perryman** a poor attender. Pamela's tutor, Catherine Graham, says that, occasionally, an older sister will also write to *'cover things up'*. Mary maintains that **Gordon Finden** also has attendance problems.

There have been difficulties in getting **Sandra Arnold** into school, claims Michelle Atkinson. **Carol Endacott's** fifth form tutor, Gareth Waters, has *only seen Carol for two half days since September* (27/3/99). He has *not seen a deal of* ***Thomas*** **(Mortenson)** *since September, either*. He also states that **Wendy Perryman** *has only been in school on odd days* since she damaged a leg a few months ago - *she cannot be going to hospital every day*. Wendy has her own comments to make about this later (p. 107).

*At some time in the past, I believe,* ***Karen*** **(Stone)** *was sexually abused by an uncle and the problem of attending school regularly stems from then* Elizabeth Reynolds explains (7/2/90). She also thinks *mum wants her at home because she can't cope on her own.* Although he finds her *a smashing girl*, John Burrows gets *cheesed off* with **Alice Tanner's** absences for vague physical symptoms. Alice's mother has her own views on the reasons for her daughter's absences as we became aware in the previous chapter (p. 65). Christine Burton declares that **George Bramley** has also been *absent from school a lot*. In this case we know that he has a hearing problem that Christine has now addressed. Will this improve his attendance record from now on? The attendance record of the **Phillips cousins** in Tim Turner's class was good but *has deteriorated over the past year - possibly related to the examination syllabus* but it may also be due to difficulties in coping with mainstream education after a period in the behavioural unit.

Non-attendance appears to be a feature, not just of our families, but of the Lowfield community as a whole. The deputy head teacher, Robert Groves, tells me that numbers of children take odd days off because other things have a greater priority than attending school (e.g. staying off to wait for the gas man to call). The parents think the children can always *catch up* on what has been missed that day at school (9/1/90). Andrew Jones agrees –

*The parents begin by keeping the children off school from time to time. When it gets to the fourth and fifth years it becomes more difficult to make them attend regularly.*

John Burrows finds that if the children are in the slightest way unwell they are allowed to stay off school by their parents (28/2/90). John Burrows also talks of the effect that non-attenders have on his class group. The two chronic school non-attenders tend to be out for a long period, in for a short period after being *chased up* and then out for a long period again. In general, this has a detrimental effect in class. When a pupil is taken to task for an absence offence, the offender cannot see the justice when the teacher appears to be condoning the longer absences of these two pupils.

Terry Gifford, head of fourth year, states that attendance has been *falling apart in the fourth year* from above 90% to below 80%. Terry thinks that part of the problem is that some pupils are unable to cope with certain lessons. Now that they are doing their G.C.S.E. options *what they are being asked to do they can't cope with* and so they tend to absent themselves from school. *Some kids will lose out because of the inappropriateness of what we've got to offer* (24/1/90). Ian James, co-ordinator of learning support, undertook a study of the absences in the third and fourth years. He found out 90% of the absences were of average and above pupils. In the fourth and fifth years pupils have difficulties in organising themselves to get their project work completed on time. *They have to hand in three or four at one go, haven't been able to do them and so they don't come in.* Ian is trying to rationalize this by asking staff to consider *some kind of programme in school where we have some idea of the pressures from each course.* Ian thinks *we still have a long way to go to make the curriculum available to kids* (30/1/90). Deborah Strutt, deputy head of fifth year, agrees. *Too much course work - all subjects expect course work.* Another factor affecting attendance is the upheaval caused by *going to Tech - some children cannot cope with the freedom and take advantage and play truant* (12/3/90).

**Inferences.** The teachers recognize and have difficulties in combating, on an individual basis, the chronic non-attendance patterns of some pupils from our particular families. They perceive a measure of support and acquiescence from parents over non-attendance generally. Non-attendance, however, is not just a feature of our families but is recognized as a factor involving the Lowfield families as a whole. Additionally, work pressures in the fourth and fifth years are seen as contributing to a massive upsurge in the absences of average and above average students generally. The inappropriateness of the options on offer to the students are put forward as contributory factors as is the upheaval involved in having to attend the technical college for some lessons.

**Summary.** The persistence of discord manifests itself in a wide range of pupil behaviours in relation to staff members and other pupils. Non-conformist behaviour takes a variety of forms from active rejection of the school itself, immaturity, inability to cope emotionally, socially and/or academically within the school environment and lack of mutuality between pupil and teacher. Discordant behaviour is not confined to the pupils from our particular families or to those from the Lowfield community as a whole. Even so, it does appear that

the Lowfield community pupils are perceived by a number of the teaching staff as having chronic discordant behaviour problems, particularly in terms of a non-attendance.

### Problems in work performance.

There are surprisingly few comments from teachers concerning work performance. Michelle Atkinson mentions that **Mr and Mrs Phillips** told her that they think **Jason** should be *'in a special class'*. She tells me that he *'can't write anything much. In P.S.E. he hasn't a clue'.* Michelle considers his cousin, Anthony, to be of average ability but he does not always use his brain as he should. Of their cousins, **William and Sidney Phillips**, Tim Turner remarks *'they don't achieve anything'.* He thinks that both are probably of below average ability. Deputy headteacher, Robert Groves, considers **the King pupils** to be low achievers.

The major problem areas for the teachers in the comprehensive school are the attendance records and non-conformist behaviour of their pupils - not specifically their work performance. As we shall see in the next section, their concerns for the welfare of their pupils also exceed those over work performance.

### Concern for the well-being of their pupils.

**Concern for the physical/emotional state of pupil.** Tony Beard is very worried that **Zoe Knott** - *is so very poorly dressed and sensitive about it* (23/1/90). Her tutor, Annette Fletcher says *she looks like a little waif - scrappy but clean* (31/1/90). **Joseph Shute** has alopecia. His hair has been falling out. Mary Gregory tells me this is a stress-related ailment (24/1/90). Michelle Atkinson (12/2/90) finds that **Sandra Arnold** *goes into herself* and can withdraw from the world around her. Michelle's year head, Veronica Haynes (6/2/90), agrees with her that Sandra *is a very withdrawn girl* (Sandra confirms this propensity and appears to have come to terms with it p. 117). John Burrows states that the year previous his pupil, **Alice Tanner**, was always complaining of physical symptoms that appeared to have no basis in fact. She saw the school nurse who *found her completely fit.* She did not visit her G.P. as far as John knows (28/2/90). We know that there are no G.P. practices in Lowfield and that Lowfield residents can sometimes be wary of professionals from outside the area. It may well be that the parents collude in absences for minor physical ailments but there may be other factors that discourage them from contacting a G.P.. The school nurse appears to be an acceptable local medical professional.

Pauline Williams states about **Mandy Mortenson,** *she's the one who stands out in the third year as a problem. We're going to have a pregnancy or something - I don't know what.* Pauline thinks that Mandy may already have damaged her health through her glue-sniffing and possible drug abuse.

**Problems in the community affecting pupil.** In discussing the **Finden family**, Mary Gregory informs me that **Gordon** has repeatedly engaged in theft and has *been before the court for it.* He stays out late, sometimes all night (24/1/90). *We don't know what to do about Gordon* exclaims Charles Venables (31/1/90). While spending time with Mrs Vicky Franks, he has committed thieving offences with her. It is since moving into Aldred Street

that Gordon has become involved with Mrs Franks maintains Amanda Price (31/1/90) - *She's like a Mrs Fagan!*

We know that Pauline Williams considers **Mandy Mortenson** is sniffing glue and suspects she may be taking drugs. *She is definitely sexually active.* The evidence comes from *severe love bites* on her neck and overhearing her knowledgeable talk about sexual matters as she goes about the school. She has been *going about* with two young men who have been to prison for drug pushing, G.B.H. and theft offences. These young men have formed part of a larger group that includes other schoolgirls as well as Mandy. Gareth Walters (27/3/90) tells me that, from what he has heard, **Thomas Mortenson** *is into a bit of stealing* and has been *glue sniffing with one or two lads here.* Tim Turner affirms that his pupils, **William and Sidney Phillips**, are *into a life of crime* and are involved in burglary and thieving in the community (23/3/90). Veronica Haynes mentions that **Sandra Arnold** has run away from home once or twice, but does not give a reason.

**Inferences.** The teachers' concerns about the influence of the community are largely focused on stealing and substance abuse. Sometimes they can substantiate these claims and sometimes not. They certainly see these as impinging on the school itself and on the behaviour of the pupils within the school environment.

**Communication difficulties.** Pauline Williams speaks of some concern for **Mandy Mortenson**. She does not know how to *reach* her. Mandy will not talk to Pauline. She is very worried at not being able to help her pupil. Pauline tells me her head teacher thinks that, as far as the school is concerned, *we have lost her.* She fears this may be so but finds it hard to accept. Veronica Haynes affirms that **Sandra Arnold** is difficult to communicate with. Sandra's second year tutor, Michelle Atkinson, agrees up to a point. Sandra talks to her quite a lot but not as much as she used to do. Even so, she does not allow Michelle to really get to know her. Michelle is worried about Sandra's communication difficulties with her peers. She works hard when she is on her own but does not like working with others. Sandra does not have any friends at school (although Sandra perceives herself as having one or two friends, p. 117). *It's virtually impossible to make any sort of contact with Norman* asserts Maurice Hicks about **Norman Gallway**. *He'll turn his head away from you* and can be very withdrawn (which is not really surprising when considering the way Maurice treats him).

The teachers' worries over the well being of their pupils cover areas of physical and emotional health and are tied up with the negative influence of the community in terms of crime and drug abuse. Problems in getting to know or having meaningful contact with some pupils have been expressed.

**Summary.** Although problems in work performance feature in the teachers' overall picture of dissatisfaction, they do not register as the main cause for dissatisfaction. Two supersede. To these I give the headings 'the persistence of discord' and 'concern for the well-being of the pupil'. The persistence of discordant behaviour appears to be perceived by the teachers at Ridgeway comprehensive school as being particularly related to pupils from our selected

families (although, in chapter eight, p. 125, we become aware that this is not borne out by the school's disciplinary records). Yet their main worry, over non-attendance, is viewed as being a chronic feature of the Lowfield pupils as a whole. Additionally, the teachers perceive the negative influence of elements located in the Lowfield community itself as a major factor contributing to the alienation of these pupils from the education on offer from Ridgeway comprehensive.

## 6.4. Conclusion.

To undertake their tasks effectively, the teachers at all three schools consider certain norms, based on teachers' values, be adhered to by their pupils. These are that they adjust socially to the school environment, including regular attendance, and are physically and emotionally in a state of well-being. How well these pupils adhere to those norms determines their capacity to respond positively to class work according to their teachers. The teachers look upon it as the parents' responsibility to ensure that these norms are met and, if they are not, the parents are culpable. So the relationship between teachers' values and teachers' tasks is drawn. Values perceived by the teachers as being incompatible with those norms, whether held by individuals and/or community, are regarded as incapacitating the teachers from undertaking their tasks effectively. Even so, there are some teachers who, while accepting the value base, question the conclusions drawn. They perceive that the education on offer is not always appropriate and that the requirements of the syllabus are putting undue pressure not only on the pupils from our sample but also on those from the wider community. Within this overall context, teachers appear to vary significantly in their abilities to reach out into the world of their pupils in order to mediate effective education. In order to clarifying this further, we will hear what the pupils have to say about the pupil/teacher relationship aspect of education at the schools they (sometimes!) attend.

# Chapter Seven. The pupils and their schools.

## 7.1. The pupils' views about the infant school.

I did not interview any pupils who currently attend the infant school. In retrospect, I should have talked to some of these children about their school experiences. I asked all the pupils I have interviewed about their infant schooldays and, surprisingly to me, all except three said they could not remember.

**George Bramley**, who now attends Ridgeway comprehensive school, thinks his days at the infant school were *alright* (20/3/90). **Peter King**, also now attending the comprehensive school and who had not enjoyed his time at junior school, tells me *I liked the infants. I used to go every day. I liked that school best* (1/5/90). When I speak to **Zoe Knott** (Mrs. Fisher's daughter), she enthuses *I used to just love going to the infants in the morning. I couldn't wait to go to school* (23/4/90).

No child has spoken to me negatively about this school and two have been very positive about their time spent in Lowfield infant school.

## 7.2. The pupils and their junior school.

The pupils have quite a lot to say about their school including relationships with their teachers, their attitudes to work, their relationships with each other and the school ethos. They also comment on home/school relations. A wealth of data has emerged. In order to make the presentation of evidence as concise as possible much has had to be left out and we will confine ourselves to relatively few, but representative, examples.

**Steven Hooper** (11/7/90) likes his new head teacher, Ivan Markham, *because he's kind. He lets you play with toys in his office*. He gets on with two other male teachers in the school (the two I have not interviewed!) - *they let me do colouring with felts and I can take the pictures home*. About his class teacher, Anne Moore, *I only like Mrs. Moore a little. She shouts and makes me do writing. She makes me do horrible things*. 'What horrible things?' I ask. *Word searches - I don't like 'em,* replies Steven. He and his brother are transferring to Lowmoor primary school in September, where his ex-headmaster is now in charge. *I like Mr. Front* he tells me.

Steven's relationships with teachers appear to hit problems when he is asked to move on from doing the things he likes and can do, to developing new skill areas. I was unable to interview his brother, Derek, because he was suspended from school on the days I was available to see him.

**Kate Vernon** responds positively to Anne Moore - *Mrs. Moore always helps us*. As far as work is concerned, *I like doing numbers a bit but I don't like it when you do shapes in the junior book*. I ask Kate what she means by this. She explains that sometimes she can do things but

she doesn't always understand what she is doing (6/7/90). I spell Kate's name with an 'ie' to start with (i.e. 'Katie'). She notices this and shows me how she spells it. A number of things she finds *a bit horrible*. She does not like loud noises. Shouting in the hall or when *everyone keeps smashing plates in the dining room* bothers her. One girl called Michelle *isn't nice to me. She kicks me*. Kate says she has three female friends among her peers. She enjoys it *when someone plays with me*; also *when playing with Barbara - she's our sister* and *when everyone makes me keep laughing. I like laughing.*

Some of Kate's work problems may relate to a realisation that concepts lie behind the work she does but she doesn't always understand what they are. We know that Kate can be very disruptive in class. We now realize that she also reacts negatively to loud disruptive behaviour around her and positively when others relate non-aggressively toward her (even though her response may be disruptive in the classroom if she keeps laughing). Possibly due to her distressed early life (she and her sisters have been in care), Kate appears not to have internalized an effective socialization process. She realizes that there are reasons behind things but, perhaps, needs to become aware of those behind the school's attempts to socialize her.

**Her sister, Barbara**, finds school *good. I like school dinners, like playing out and like working in class. I like the teachers*. She tells me that she has a lot of friends although her class teacher informs me otherwise. *Sometimes I fall out with my friends and sometimes people take my friends off me. Then I play with someone else*. Sometimes, falling out makes her very unhappy but she usually makes up with her friends again. *I like all the dinner ladies. If you fall over they don't just leave you but take you to Mrs. Gregory's room*. She *helps you if you fall down* (6/7/90).

Barbara appears to view the school as a caring environment to which she responds favourably. Within that environment losing friendships, however temporary, can be very distressing for her. Barbara is an emotionally vulnerable little girl (see my comments on pp. 86-87) and living within a home environment about which an infant school teacher has made observations that require further investigation.

**Paul Crain** likes his teacher, Judith Simms, *'cause sometimes she helps me do it* (work) *if I can't do it*. He enjoys *making models up and all that. We was making models that drive with wood and electric* Paul tells me. He also likes reading, maths and writing. *I don't like getting into trouble*. I ask him how he gets into trouble and he replies *Laughing in the dinner hall and all that, hitting other people. I used to but I've stopped now 'cause one of my friends can't come to school no more 'cause he was lobbing bricks and all that*. Paul thinks that if he continues to hit children he may be stopped from coming here to the school he likes. *I've got to stay in at both playtimes because I was laughing when Mr. Markham talked to other people in his office. I get on alright with Mr. Markham now,* he says. I ask how long he has worn glasses and say they look good. What do his classmates does think of them? *They used to*

*laugh and tease me but they don't now*. One of his cousins is at this school, he informs me, and he has a lot of friends here (11/7/90).

Paul appears to enjoy his time at this school, struggling to overcome his anti- social behaviour and responding to the constructive approaches of his class teacher and headteacher. He sees himself as beginning to make friendships now.

*Mrs. Simms is ever so nice,* **Bernadette Fisher** states. *When the bookshelf is untidy she lets me do it.* Bernadette talks to Mrs. Simms sometimes if she's unhappy and *she tells me to go to Mr. Markham*. He then sorts things out for her. *When teachers leave who you've had for a few years, that makes me sad - Mrs. Smith and Mr. Front.* Bernadette liked them both (9/7/90). She expresses an interest in the gym club at school. She says it is only this that makes her happy at school but, after some thought, she tells me that she likes it *when we do plays. I've done a play last year and I'm doing one play today - The Enchanted Horse.* After a while other areas of interest are identified. She plays the recorder and uses the science equipment at school. She has an interest in her reading book but *I don't like writing because when I write I can't do it straight and I can't concentrate on what I'm doing*. She is getting better at this, however. She finds it satisfying *getting on to different stages* with her maths. Bernadette dislikes it *when people pick on other people. The people who get picked on get into trouble as well.* They get taken to Mr. Markham and he keeps both of them for a week. She says that she plays with friends at school. She named seven friends. At the same time, *'Shane calls me names'*. Dean, Darren and Matthew also call her. She feels unhappy about having to do work with children she doesn't like, particularly Matthew and Dibba. She finds Dibba to be selfish.

Bernadette expresses a trust of and attachment to her teachers. Although there is no identification of the peer group isolation and disorganization noted by her class teacher, she does recognize some significant problems she has with peers at school and her difficulties in concentration. Alongside this Bernadette recognizes and is satisfied when she thinks she is making progress with her schoolwork. She presents as a sensitive girl who struggles with some of her work and with the behaviour of some peers.

**Her brother Adam** thinks *this school is alright*. What he likes is *when you've finished work you can play on the computer sometimes*. In maths *I was on page 8 in September and now I'm on page 32* (5/6/90). Though he is not fond of writing he responds well to maths, singing and topic. He enjoys playing football. He also states *all your friends are at school*. This doesn't stop him from fighting with his schoolmates however for which *you get done off the teachers. I'm on the disco committee. I were off yesterday because I couldn't keep nowt down. When I came back Sean told me I weren't on the disco committee any more.* The children choose the disco committee members themselves.

Although expressing no opinion about teachers, Adam likes some of his schoolwork. Physical activities with his friends can take the form of fighting at times. They appear to have voted him off the disco committee at the moment.

**Sheila Briggs** is fond of her class teacher, Michael Gabriel, (6/7/90). She can talk to him. She smiles and mentions he is her friend. *He's nice some of the time. He's angry when people are noisy and not getting on with their work.* She also gets on with a remedial teacher who comes in to help her with work sometimes. Some peer group difficulties are identified. *I don't like boys in our class who pick on me. They call me names - 'scruffy', 'lurgy', 'nit head'.* Some of the girls pick on Sheila as well. They say things like *I'm not playing with you, smelly bag.* I state that it isn't very nice to hear this said about you and that she smells quite sweet to me. Sheila replies that this is because she is wearing perfume! She then goes on to say *I were working. Barry were messing about. He kept teasing me so I hit him. He then turned round and went on with his work.* I ask if she got into trouble for this but she says she did not. Does she have any friends in school? *Only Donna and, I think, Helen.* Sheila is not sure if Carla is her friend or not. She thinks that perhaps she is sometimes. She has no friends among the boys. Sheila enjoys being a Brownie. *You play games, sometimes you just write. You play 'squeak little piggy', 'fruit baskets upset' and 'stepping stones'...We're doing a school play. I'm doing singing and in the gym concert.* I ask if her parents are coming to see her in the gym concert. She does not think they will. They did not come to see her on sports day yesterday. *I wanted them to.* She has asked mum to come and mum said she might. I suggest to Sheila, if she wants her mum to attend the concert she may wish to let her know that she would like to see her there. (When I see her parents, later, I raise this point with them).

Sheila considers the teachers favourably and would very much like her parents to involve themselves in coming up to school and seeing her do well. She appears rather isolated from her peers and not always sure who is her friend. She views the boys as verbally aggressive towards her and she can erupt into physical retaliation. Sheila appears to make immediate reactions to situations instead of giving herself time to assess things. This may be a learned behaviour from home, where immature parental behaviour may reveal problems in effective socio-cultural transmission (chapter five, page 64).

**John Marshall** gets on *alright with Mr. Atkins; he's a good teacher.* Although he does not like writing *'cause I'm not good at spelling*, his teacher helps him at his spelling (9/7/90). He enjoys swimming and games at school; also stating *I've got lots of friends here.* He does not like it when he gets 'done'. Getting done is mostly about aggressive behaviour. He gets into *lots of fights with loads of boys* and, occasionally, with girls too. I ask how fights start. John replies *When they call me names.* He calls other children names as well and this also starts fights. *I don't like fights but it's a habit* he says. He tells me he gets done a lot. In fact, when Mr. Markham asks him to see me this afternoon he thinks, at first, he is going to *get done again.* Getting done also means *you have to stop in Mr. Markham's office for a week. I've been there nearly all the time.* Also *when people throw things and blame them onto you, I get*

*done for that too* (i.e. it not being his fault). This has not happened to John since Mr. Markham has been head teacher. It has been *good and bad* at Lowfield junior school for John and he is nervous about going to Ridgeway comprehensive in September. He is scared that he may have his head put down the toilet and that older pupils may *sling you in the sandpit*.

John appreciates fairness in his teachers, likes and recognizes teaching quality in his class teacher. Although he acknowledges friendships with other children in this school, he has considerable problems in coping with the give-and-take of peer group relationships. He is involved in a regular routine of name-calling and physical aggression even though he does not like fighting. His difficulties in adapting to the social expectations of the school do not appear to come from a rejection of the school ethos, however, but are related to his struggles with the social norms of his peer group in the community. He expresses some anxieties about going on to his secondary school and anticipates further violence there.

**Fiona Bramley** finds that *some teachers shout at me and some don't. I don't like maths and I don't like writing 'cause I'm not very good at it. I can't do my tables and I'm dreading it when I go up to Ridgeway. I'm afraid they're going to shout at me* (5/6/90). I ask Fiona what school she would like to attend. *I don't want to go to any. I'd like to work at home 'cause you don't get shouted at,* she replies. *There's too many pupils and teachers at Ridgeway and its too big and you don't know where you're going the first time. George said that he will look after me alright.* George has told his sister, Fiona, a lot about Ridgeway from his point of view. Still thinking about going up to Ridgeway Fiona states *If I don't know any sums I daren't ask anybody 'cause I don't know who they are and I daren't ask the teachers. If I get detention I don't like staying at school late 'cause nobody will wait for me and I might lose my way from school.* I ask Fiona if I can tell her class teacher what is worrying her about Ridgeway because I think she would be able to help her. Fiona agrees that I that should have a word with her. *I don't like it because people call me names, so I just lock myself in the toilet. Half of them in the third year and some in the second year and fourth years* do this to Fiona. *They call you rude names and act stupid and say I'm pregnant and everything. So I just turn round and hit 'em, which I shouldn't. They do it to make me chase 'em. I daren't tell Mrs. Fillingham - I'm a bit scared, I don't know what for though*. This has been going on now for a few weeks. I arrange with Fiona to have a word with her class teacher, Mrs. Fillingham, about this.

Fiona's absences from school appear to relate to the problems she is unable to cope with while she is there and her inability, through fear, of communicating these problems to her teacher. She lashes out when tormented. Her brother George's warnings about Ridgeway comprehensive have also added to her anxieties. She cannot understand what is happening to her and has learned no effective strategies for dealing with her present predicament. She appears not to have been able to cope with social life outside her home environment. This leads me to suspect that something within that environment may be contributing toward a lack of preparation for encountering the outside world.

**Patrick Gallway** finds *the teachers are nice* at this school (5/6/90). It makes him happy playing football, quick cricket and English. He appreciates getting five star awards for good performance - *you do jumping and that and I'm good at that.* Patrick is pleased to be on the disco committee and enjoys *doing a disco at school on Monday.* He is not fond of writing and, because of this, he finds topic and science difficult. In contrast to some of his peers he is looking forward positively to the comprehensive school in September. *I want to go up there 'cause all my friends are in that school and my big brothers.* I asked Patrick if there is anything he would like to change about his junior school. After thinking for a while he replies, *Nothing.*

Some former pupils who now attend Ridgeway comprehensive school have comments to make.

**Bernard Exton** states *It were fun at the juniors. You weren't moving around all the time.* Bernard considers that he obtained more enjoyment out of his work at the junior school when compared to the comprehensive school. *They took you out on walks and they actually explained to you what was happening when they were doing experiments and things like that. (1/5/90).*

*It was perfect at Lowfield - not one bit of trouble. You could crack a joke with them. If you're late, you're late - better late than never. You could get on with the teachers like two fingers meeting like that.... If I got detention for things I did I didn't mind.* **Joseph Shute** (16/5/90), when contrasting his experiences at Ridgeway with his memories of Lowfield junior school, may be inclined to exaggerate. There is no doubt, however, that he views his junior schoolteachers as positive, empathetic and fair.

**Philip Marshall** (26/3/90) thinks he did better work and was more interested in games, art, English and maths at his junior school. He found the work more interesting. *Teachers shouting at you didn't happen very often at the Lowfield schools.*

When I ask **Zoe Fisher** about Lowfield junior school she becomes quite animated. *I loved that school - it was 'ace'. It was just the teachers, its ways and the rules. They wanted you there, as if they wanted it for your education and not for the money.* (23/4/90)

**Mervyn Endacott** considered it to be *good at Lowfield junior school.* About the teachers he says *They all made you laugh. You didn't have to move about for lessons. If you didn't finish it* (your work) *you could go on with it the next lesson.* Mervyn recognizes that a relaxed and calming atmosphere appears to be conducive to learning (23/4/90).

One pupil, however, does not have such pleasant memories of his junior school. **Peter King** (1/5/90) *didn't like Lowfield juniors. Every time you talked you got done. I used to have nearly all the time off at the junior school.* Peter tells me that, once, a teacher at the junior school took his asthma inhaler off him, locked it in a cupboard and forgot about it. *I went*

*home poorly. I was ill with asthma. My mum came up. The teacher came back, opened the cupboard and got it out.* On another occasion *Mr. Matthews wouldn't let me paint ever again half way through the fourth year.* Peter tells me that he accidentally splashed paint on another boy. The teacher did not believe him when he said it was an accident. *For the rest of the year I had to write and copy out while they did painting. I had a lot of time off at juniors 'cause my mum didn't like me going to that school.*

Peter enjoys his comprehensive school. Certain incidents concerning trust at his junior school, allied to his perception that his mother did not like the school, appear to have adversely affected his confidence in the teachers there.

**Summary.** A small minority of the pupils I interview see their junior school negatively. They express concerns regarding fairness and not liking to be shouted at. Fears associated with and problems in communicating with teachers also figure in these concerns. Even so, a large majority of pupils recognize there to be a connection between learning and good social relationships with these teachers. Some evidence emerges that even the poorest learners can have an understanding, in conceptual terms, of what is required for effective learning to take place. There is an acceptance of violence as a fact of life but, although some pupils actively participate, they do not like it and it is not indulged in as a means of rejecting the social norms of the teachers.

On the whole, the teachers are very well liked and their pupils relate positively to them. Many pupils lack the ability to make effective use of the education on offer due to the socio-cultural gap between home and school also, possibly, due to the effects of some problems in cultural transmission within their home environment and local community.

## 7.3. The pupils and their comprehensive school.

The interrelationship between the personal lives of these pupils and their comprehensive school is both more complex and more interactively faceted for them than it had been in their primary sector schools. They are no longer young children and their adult identities are beginning to form against the backdrop of home and community and the foreground of new encounters with a wider environment.

**7.3.1. Absences from school.** I find a number of pupils at home when visiting parents during school hours - Esther Arnold, James Chilvers, Geoffrey and Peter King, Michael Marshall, Wendy and Pamela Perryman, William and Sidney Phillips (the latter pupil now permanently excluded from school), Joseph Shute and Karen Stone.

His school approves **Peter King's** attendance record and his reason for being at home is for a visit to his GP. Esther Arnold, James Chilvers, Geoffrey and Peter King and Michael Marshall make no comments about absences.

I call at Mrs. Perryman's home and find only **Wendy Perryman** there (22/5/90). She invites me in and turns off the television set. She is smoking a cigarette. Wendy shows me some work she had been set from school when she was at home recovering from her broken leg. I consider her writing to be very neat. She disagrees, explaining that part of her right thumb is missing. She finds that when she writes with her left hand she gets her 'a's and 'e's the wrong way around.

> *I like all the teachers, it's just Mr. Spencer and Mrs. Fletcher. When I came back to school (*after the accident) *Mr. Spencer asked me why I had been off. When I said 'Because of my leg', he said 'That's an excuse'. Mrs. Fletcher said I was making it an excuse for not doing games... I don't like games with Mrs. Fletcher on Wednesdays. I've got a bad leg. If I don't bring my kit she shouts at me and I don't like that. Sometimes I shout back. If she talks back at me I ignore her or just walk out of school.*

She likes English, history and drama at school. I ask why, if she likes some subjects and most of the teachers, that she doesn't go to school more often. She replies, *Joanne (*one of her sisters*) has got a social worker who says 'go to school for the things you like and stay away for the things you don't'. I can't do that.... I'll be glad when I've left. I can get a job in Central Avenue knitting when I leave school. I like textiles at school.* It appears that difficulties in coping with two particular teachers are the reasons she gives for absconding from school. She has had a number of accidents, including losing part of her right thumb in a door when younger, and she was more recently involved in a road accident, breaking her leg. Does her perceived vulnerability to the unexpected affect her ability to cope in conflict situations with teachers and does this result in flight from danger and, thus, from school?

I find **Pamela Perryman** and her mother at home (17/7/90). Pamela tells me *I don't like the men* (apart from Mr. Ball) at Ridgeway comprehensive or her tutor, Mrs. Graham. In conversation with Pamela and her mother, it appears that Pamela used to truant mostly on Tuesdays (when her head teacher teaches her) and was then off *for full week without me knowing*. Mrs. Perryman asked for her daughter to be put on report and matters have improved, apart from the odd day (this clearly being one!). *I don't think I'm going to get anything out of school,* exclaims Pamela. What she dislikes about school is the uniform, too much homework and the teachers.

The two cousins, **Sidney and William Phillips**, were the only ones at home when I call at Sidney's address (28/3/90). I explain the reasons for my visit and they invite me inside. The semi-detached house appears clean and cared for. A casserole is cooking in the glass-fronted cooker of the well-fitted kitchen. We talk in the comfortable living room. Both cousins are responsive but William is the more articulate and forthcoming of the two. Sidney is not pleased to have been expelled - *It's boring all day at home.* Neither comment directly on truancy but a number of dissatisfactions with their comprehensive school emerge and these will be discussed below. I look back, after leaving, to find both of them waving to me and smiling broadly, having lifted the net curtain covering the living room window.

I visit the Shute household one morning in the hope of interviewing a parent (16/5/90) and **Joseph Shute** answers the door. His father has left home and his mother out but should be back shortly. I return in the afternoon but his mother is still not back. I ask Joseph if I can interview him and he agrees. He is polite and considerate. A man is present, undertaking some housework - the room is spotless. Joseph turns down the cassette recorder, calls his two younger brothers in from outside and packs them off upstairs. Later, he notices they are attempting to climb out of an upstairs window, so he says *Excuse me* and goes to deal with it. He informs the man what is happening and returns to join me. He is wearing a red cap on his head (to cover his alopecia condition). I note his self-assurance and polite, friendly manner.

He tells me *It's the teachers' attitudes to you that make things bad.* Teachers at school make remarks to him such as *Doesn't your mum care about your education? Won't she make you come?* Joe informs me that his mother tries to make him but he will not. *My attendance has improved a lot. Some of the teachers I'm coping with better. The higher I get it doesn't get at me so much.* He tells me that last night he and his mother had a long talk about things and he is determined to improve matters for himself at school.

When I interview his mother at home (23/5/90), Joe is there again. Would I like a drink? He then makes tea for his mother and coffee for me. Joe comments from time to time. He tells me it was the fifth year pupils who really caused him problems about his alopecia. They would knock his cap off and hit his head. He does not mind jokes from his friends about his hair but he cannot deal with the older boys. He makes a point of showing me the cloth cap he wears to school. Joe confirms the positive impression I receive from his tutor, John Burrows (see p. 91) and the tendency to absent himself from school (p. 95). Although he makes no direct reference to his absences, he hints at his difficulties in coping with his ailment at school. There are also problems, referred to below, that may well contribute towards him severing his connections with this school.

**Karen Stone** arrives as I am about to leave, having found no one at home (26/6/90). She invites me in through the back garden, introducing me to two pet rabbits on the way. They are sometimes allowed indoors but they chew all the wires. Her mother will not be back until later. Mrs. Stone telephones while I am still here. I speak to her, explaining my visit. She points out to me that she has told the daughter not to let anyone in when she is not there. I offer to leave but Mrs. Stone says it will be OK for me to stay. Karen makes me a cup of coffee. The family lives in a newish terrace house with small front and back gardens. The living room is untidy but clean and pleasantly furnished. Again, although making no direct reference to her poor attendance record, she voices a number of difficulties she encounters at Ridgeway comprehensive school and I will be referring to them later in this chapter. *I'd change the rules and the uniform bit,* she informs me. 'What rules need changing?' I ask. *They should treat you more like adults than children,* she replies.

**Inferences.** Relationship difficulties with teachers, not being treated at school in an adult way, the way the school deals with health and injury problems and the wearing of school

uniform appear to be major issues for these particular young people and may well contribute toward their absences of from school. Their home environments may also provide a safer haven from these pressures. But we need to explore further these and other problem areas as well as the positive aspects of learning for our pupils at Ridgeway comprehensive. How does state secondary education at Ridgeway comprehensive appear to these pupils and how do they define their own learning needs within it?

**7.3.2. What constitutes a good teacher?** Two teachers emerge as models of good teaching at Ridgeway comprehensive. **Esther Arnold** mentions an R.E. teacher. She enjoyed the freedom to learn that was encouraged by this teacher and her ability to relate to her pupils in helping them to take some control and develop their potential. *With other teachers you had a say in nothing - it was out of a book* (26/6/90). **Karen Stone** was very fond of this R.E. teacher. She encouraged her pupils to choose whatever subject they wanted. *It was brilliant because if you wanted to go down town and do a survey you could do it. If you wanted to talk to her about your troubles, she would listen. More teachers should be like that* (26/6/90). Both these young people value being given some responsibility for their own learning and being related to on a personal level in order to discuss real problems and develop their human potential within a learning environment.

The other teacher is Mr. Josh Spencer. *Mr. Spencer is the best teacher I've had in any of the schools*, exclaims **Joe Shute** (16/5/90). *He's there if you need to talk to him. You can have a joke with him. He doesn't like racial things* and doesn't allow people to make remarks about Joe's alopecia. **Sidney Phillips** also approves - *Mr. Spencer is the best teacher there* (28/3/90). His cousin, **William**, adds that Mr. Spencer will mess around with the pupils but *when he says 'work', you work!* Mr. Spencer is fair with William. Some reservations about Josh Spencer begin to emerge, nevertheless. **Norman Gallway** narrates that he had turned around in one of Mr. Spencer's lessons, talking to his friends. The teacher grabbed his leg, twisted it and rammed it against a table. *All the form saw it. He said he never. I got back on my chair. I was crying. I went home and told me mum. She 'phoned the education officer up.... nothing has been done about it.... Mr. Spencer was alright at first - he just got carried away with himself* (24/4/90). Mr. Spencer does not normally teach Norman. When he comes across Norman around the school he asks if he is alright. Norman thinks that perhaps things will be OK between them now. I don't like Mr. Spencer *'cause he looks up my skirts,* complains **Wendy Perryman** (22/5/90); *he gets hold of people when they say things about me limping, gets them on the floor with his arm around their necks and gets their arm behind their back. He's messing about. But I don't like that happening because most of the lads don't say anything about my leg.* Wendy informs me she is the only girl in this particular work group and so female gender may well be a factor that Josh is insufficiently taking into consideration in his behaviour towards his pupils.

A teacher who can share a joke is appreciated and valued but 'messing about' has its dangers. Sometimes things go too far if the teacher does not think before acting or is insufficiently sensitive to the social or emotional position of individual pupils. Even so, Josh

Spencer takes up an unambiguous position with his pupils concerning prejudice and class work, he interacts with his pupils, listens to them and shows concern.

These two teachers provide a benchmark of good teaching for some of these pupils. A number of other teachers also embody aspects of good as well as bad teaching for individual pupils. We will now go on to explore the relationship between teaching and learning as perceived by these pupils.

**7.3.3. The relationship between teaching and learning.** These pupils are very clear about aspects of teacher behaviour that influence, positively and negatively, their own behaviour as learners.

**Fun.** *I like Mr. Lloyd. Sometimes he can be fun* (1/5/90) declares **Peter King**. It is also important to **Mervyn Endacott** to have a laugh with his teachers and both Mrs. Duncan and Mrs. Parker do this (23/4/90). *It's boring here. They don't do enough fun things,* complains **Bernard Exton**, *we used to at the other schools (1/5/90).* Having fun for Bernard is bound up with his enjoyment of education generally (as noted earlier in this chaper, p. 105). We know that **Joe Shute** and **William Phillips** appreciate jocularity with their teacher. *You got to know them as people and had some fun together which you don't at school. The fun at school is discouraged by teachers,* states **Karen Stone** about her teachers' response on a school trip to a country park. She noticed they were more relaxed and changed their attitude to their pupils. *There are a number of teachers who are OK*, she reflects, *but many more not OK.*

**Inferences.** Having fun with teachers appears to provide two functions for these pupils. It enables them to build up a personal relationship with their teachers and it can provide a motivation for undertaking class work. As we will continue to be aware, the successful integration of the interface between the personal, social aspects of learning and the academic is of crucial import to these pupils.

**Discipline.** *They're nice to you if you are nice to them,* according to **Zoe Knott.** She considers all the teachers to be fair - *They're strict if they have to be* (23/4/90). **Alice Tanner** also finds *the teachers are alright. They are stricter here - it isn't that they don't help you.* **Joan Chilvers**, too, finds the teachers strict but fair (24/4/90). She also finds that she is listened to. The male teachers are stricter than the females, considers **Mervyn Endacott** and he does not like this. When I ask what he means by 'strict', he replies *they make you get on with your work and you can't talk* (Later, Mervyn explains some of the problems he has in settling to work). *When you don't behave he can be nasty,* **Peter King** informs me about his tutor, Mr. Lloyd. I ask what he means by 'nasty'. *He makes you pick litter up or do detention.* **Karen Stone** finds some of the punishment meted out is rather degrading and inappropriate to her status as an adult - *if you talk too much you get silent period. If you talk then, you get to pick up litter.* Inappropriate forms of discipline can be more extreme. **Jason Phillips** tells me Mr. Venables dragged him out of the class *by the hair*. Since being in this school another

teacher has hit him four times. He says he cannot remember the teacher's name but *he got done the other week for cracking this lad's head open* (9/5/90). A female teacher, who has now left, *used to pick me up and throw me across the room,* records **Joe Shute** 16/5/90). *I had a trapped nerve inside me after that. I was scared of her.* Joe tells me that it was after this that he started to lose his hair. Lack of appropriate discipline can breed disrespect. *There is no discipline at that school. I swore in front of teachers* (not at them) *and I never got told off for it. I think the teachers should have the some more control over the pupils,* is **Esther Arnold's** opinion.

**Inferences.** The teachers vary in their behaviours to maintain discipline within the school setting. Their pupils have a clear idea of what constitutes non-acceptable forms of discipline and appear to have little protection should this be threatened. 'Strictness' within agreed limits and with some negotiation over appropriate sanctions between teachers and pupils may, perhaps, help here.

**Shouting.** One attempt to maintain discipline is by means of shouting. **George Bramley** has a hearing difficulty. *I don't like it when they chin it at you (20/3/90).* This happens when he laughs and is messing about. Maybe he does this because he has difficulties in hearing what is being said. However, his mother is concerned that two male teachers, in particular, have been shouting at him (p. 73) and thinks this is one reason he does not like school. *If I can't do my work I am scared to say 'I don't know how to do it',* states **Jason Phillips.** He is frightened of being told off and being shouted at. He gets told off a lot - *Half the teachers shout at you* (9/5/90). *Some teachers are alright,* considers **Sandra Arnold**. *The ones I don't like - Mr. Turner – he shouts at me and he's male. I don't like the male teachers (14/5/90).* **Wendy Perryman**, as we have learned above, has difficulties in coping with shouting from Mrs. Fletcher. Her sister, **Pamela,** also dislikes being shouted at by the teachers. **Philip Marshall** does not like being shouted at by teachers and *when you answer back they run to Mr. Evans* (the head teacher) *and get you in trouble.* The teachers in the behaviour unit also shout but if he answered Mr. Venables back he wouldn't go to Mr. Evans - *he wouldn't give in.* Philip respects this (26/3/90).

**Perceived teacher attitudes.** *Ever since he came he's started on me and my mates.... It's teachers' attitudes to you that makes things bad*, maintains **Joe Shute** (16/5/90) of Mr. Blake. Sometimes teachers *just go too far. I know I'm a pain to teachers,* says Joe, but he thinks a lot of the teachers over react to what he does. **.** *When I'm not in school and bring a letter in, the teacher reads it out and makes remarks in front of my mates - I feel shown up,* he confesses. Joe considers that he was treated like a human being at Lowfield junior school, but *they treat you like dogs at Ridgeway.* **Sidney Phillips** finds that the teachers do not listen to his part of the story, *so if they saw you hitting somebody it was your fault for going up*. He feels angry with the teachers for this. His cousin, William, agrees. The teachers *jump to conclusions and don't try to understand you.* He tells me that he and Sidney had a reputation before they even went to Ridgeway and the teachers treated them according to their reputation rather than *what you are.* Because they had both been in trouble at junior

school, the Ridgeway teachers' approach was 'We've heard about you'. This is also the opinion of **Esther Arnold** - *you're not judged on your own self but on other members of your family.* **Karen Stone** remarks *At Ridgeway, once you get the wrong side of them you stay the wrong side, no matter what you do.* I ask Karen if she can give me an example. *When I first went to games in the first year, it was swimming and my hat snapped. The teacher gave me another and said ' I see you're going to be a problem to us' and she's never liked me since. I was upset.... It's just Mrs. Fletcher. It may be because she's a lesbian and people take the mickey out of her.* I ask Karen if she had done this to Mrs. Fletcher and she replies that she had not. *The work I can get along with, it's the teachers I can't,* complains Karen. *The teachers talk behind your back to other teachers - they don't tell you to your face.*

**Inferences.** These pupils perceive teachers' attitudes towards them to be founded on prejudice, over reaction, refusal to understand and communicate. The teacher's subsequent behaviour can be perceived by the pupil as a form of castigation, including being shown up in front of her/his peers. It is these perceptions of each other's attitudes, teacher/pupil and pupil/teacher, that create difficulties for pupils and teachers alike. In part two of this thesis I explore further the relationship between attitude and behaviour.

**Constructive teacher-pupil relationships.** We know that **Sandra Arnold** does not like male teachers but her relationship with her tutor, Michelle Atkinson, she perceives as good. *I can really talk to her. She's just nice.* Even though **Karen Stone** disapproves of the punishments meted out by her math's teacher, he helps her if she has problems with work. *He won't say I've done well although we both know I've done well.* He always says Karen can do better. She considers that sometimes words of encouragement from him would help a lot. Karen also values the relationship she has with tutor, Terry Gifford – *it's he who gets me out of trouble.* **Wendy Perryman** finds that her male tutor *Mr. Walters is ever such a nice teacher to me.* **Mandy Mortenson** relates well and can talk to her tutor, Pauline Williams, who is getting some leaflets about nursing for her. There is no other teacher in the school to whom she considers she can talk (This contrasts with Pauline's perception of their relationship, page 98. Perhaps her tutor does not realize how much of her own efforts at communication have proved important to Mandy). **Joan Chilvers -** *Since I played truant. It was something that happened at home that I was getting back at school about. Mrs. Haynes helped me to sort all that out at school.* Mr. Summers helped **Norman Gallway** over the bullying he had been experiencing. There is evidence here of excellent input, through positive inter-personal relationships, from some of these teachers as perceived by their pupils.

**Problems with work and the way education is mediated. Mervyn Endacott** finds it difficult when pressurized to get on with his work and this contrasts with his experience at Lowfield junior where, *if you didn't finish it you could go on with it the next lesson.* He appears not to be able to work at his own pace at Ridgeway. **Esther Arnold** also maintains that she needs to work at her own level and that this was only possible with three of her teachers. *I could get on with my own work if I wanted to but I was always pushed down*, and not allowed to get on further but had to wait for the rest of the class to catch up. She had needed some

assistance from her teachers even though she perceived herself to be ahead of her class group. *I learned more at home than at school.* In contrast, **Karen Stone** finds that it is *exams pressurize you,* although *I love the course work - it's something you can do at your own pace without being pressured.*

**Peter King** complains that work is not always explained adequately to him. *I don't like getting a lot of homework I don't understand. I asked my dad last night and he helped me.* **Pamela Perryman,** too, thinks teachers should explain things a bit better and be prepared to listen to what the pupils ask of them. The teachers should *be able to relate to the children and help them to understand the problems they face* growing up in a changing world explains **Esther Arnold**. She also thinks the teachers should *relate to the pupils at the pupils' level and to help them to mature.* Esther considers that *the teachers themselves ought to change. They've got to understand the children a lot better. I know children who glue sniff and take drugs and teachers have to understand this.* She gives, as an example, a pupil coming into the classroom obviously high on gas. The teacher did not recognize this and sent the pupil out again for acting silly. She thinks the majority of the teachers at Ridgeway live in a very different world from the majority of their pupils and they don't understand them. *They have to know what it's like living in today's society.* Esther takes the view that the teachers should be there to educate for life and not just for certificates (cf. Dore, 1976, pp.72-83 and 1980, pp.345-6, expressing concern over the emphasis on examination results and sticking to the syllabus in the race for certificates to the detriment of the search for knowledge).

**Michael Marshall** feels quite angry about the way Ridgeway has dealt with his fourth year option choices. *I think you should pick your own lessons....I wasn't there so they picked them for me.* One of the subjects picked was geography, which he doesn't like. He considers that he has no control over meeting his own perceived learning needs (3/4/90). (**Mrs. Susan Marshall** provides an interesting perspective on option choices when I call on her one sunny morning (24/4/90). She is sitting on her front doorstep. Two dogs are in the garden. I give her copies of my notes on the interview I had with her and Michael three weeks ago. She says she is going to read them in the sun. Susan mentions the option subjects in the fourth year. She thinks they are geared to the needs of The Pastures pupils and not the Lowfield pupils. I ask her what she means by this and she gives, as an example, computer studies. *Of course, Philip's got a computer*, she tells me. The implication is that he knows how to use it only for games and not for the educational purposes for which The Pastures pupils are skilled in accessing. It occurs to me that these subject options may need explaining more to the pupils and to their parents.

**William Phillips** comments on his learning needs. He thinks an acceptable teacher would be one who would help him to concentrate on the sort of work he likes and make the subjects that he doesn't more interesting. He gives as an example, putting work on the computer – *At the same time you could do a computer course so that you understood how to work one properly.* Clearly he has been thinking about a variety of work topics and at a means whereby he could both access them more effectively and widen his range of working skills – but had he

discussed this with any of the teachers? (or, if he had, would anyone have listened?). I ask his cousin, **Sidney,** if he thinks there is any other way the school might have dealt with things other than by expelling him. He replies, *If they'd just kept me outside Mr. Evans' office each day,* after collecting his work from his classroom, then he could have got on with his work *with no pupils to mess around with.* **Jason Phillips** also has a clear viewpoint on his educational needs. *I'd rather go to Northcounty (*a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties). *I've been told by Errol Briggs he couldn't even spell 'A'. Since he's been there he's learned to read.*

**Inferences.** Pupils identify problems that they have in working at their own pace and in having work adequately explained to them. They should have access to teachers able to communicate, in interesting ways, the subjects they teach. They think that a large majority of teachers do not understand or relate to their pupils and to the realities of their pupils' everyday lives. In order to do so the teachers need to change their own attitudes towards their Lowfield young people. Pupils wish to have a say in the way their curriculum develops, some control over their perceived learning needs and opportunities to be consulted when things go wrong (cf. Rudduck, 1995, noting that several secondary heads she interviewed talked about the school as 'belonging' to the pupils but finding this version of ownership, in terms of power and control, generally unconvincing).

**The behaviour unit.** *It's alright in the unit. It's a lot easier working here and you get more help*, claims **Philip Marshall**. **William Phillips** had been at Ridgeway for only two weeks when he was sent to the unit – *It was a lot better than up at school* (the unit used to be sited on its own, away from the main school buildings). *In the unit I was doing twenty times as much as I was able to do* in the school. When he left the unit and rejoined his year group, *the teachers thought you couldn't do anything.* There was new work to do and William perceived the teachers as not helping him to settle back into mainstream schooling. So he 'played up' in order to get back into the unit. When there, he behaved himself and so he was put back into the school again. After that he gave up and started truanting (Note tutor Tim Turner's comment, page 95. This appears to have been recognized as a possible problem for William. Why was it not followed up?). **His younger cousin, Jason,** is in the unit at present and had been in *a special class* in his junior school. He is not happy in the unit. I ask him what he would do to change things here. He replies, *Blow it up*. We talk about this a little more and Jason remarks, *Get teachers who were gentle and kind – He's not in there* (indicating Charles Venables, head of unit). Remarks that his father makes (pp. 73 & 74) and year head Veronica Haynes (p. 92), indicate an unhappy, confused and disturbed young boy; a frightened one as well according to the statement he makes earlier in this chapter.

**Inferences.** The behaviour unit has two functions - the modification of unacceptable behaviours and to alleviate learning difficulties. Its title puts the emphasis on the former, creating problems for some pupils who would see the latter as their primary need.

### 7.3.4. Other factors bearing on education.

**Choice of school.** *You should be given a chance to spend a week in all three* (comprehensive schools), talking to ordinary pupils *about what it's like before you choose which one suits you,* according to **William Phillips.** He considers that teachers from the comprehensive schools coming down to the junior school to explain things do not give the points of view of the pupils attending those schools. Neither does he think that parents can really make up their minds about which school is best for their child. At this stage in a pupil's education, William believes he/she has the capability of making rational choices based on past experiences and information gleaned from older peers. *Most of my mates go to Dale school. I would have liked to go there because most of my mates go there,* declares **Wendy Perryman.** We already know from Wendy other reasons for feeling disaffected and from her tutor (p. 90) that she has to assert herself at times in relationship to her peers at Ridgeway. She may well feel socially isolated here.

**The 'snobs'!** We are already aware of the contrasting views about their Pastures fellow pupils held by **William Phillips** and **Michael Marshall** (p. 37). In chapter two I draw attention to the way both these pupils are profoundly affected by the perceived attitudes of The Pastures pupils towards the Lowfield community and William's perception that there is an affinity between many of the teachers and The Pastures pupils. *I'd like them all mixed - The Pastures, Lowfield and Middleton. They're like enemies now. You see who are the best fighters between Lowfield and Middleton.* Michael thinks that all the comprehensive schools should take pupils from each other's catchments. All three neighbourhoods are already represented at Ridgeway comprehensive. Michael is able to identify a situation of conflict and alienation and wishes to change this. Yet his proposed solution is already in place and is not working.

**Inferences.** In chapter two (p. 40) I propose that social, economic and power differences exist between these communities and to the disadvantage of Lowfield pupils within the school environment. It is within this environment that these issues need to be debated.

**Moving around the school and casual bullying.** *It were fun at the juniors*, affirms **Bernard Exton**. *It were better than what this is. You weren't moving around all the time; you were in one or two spaces. You're moving around all the time here. You waste a lot of time moving from one place to another.* **Joan Chilvers** - *I don't like moving around the school all the time – it's big here. If you're slow, you're sometimes late and get told off. Sometimes I've been late.* Joan doesn't like being reprimanded over a matter about which she cannot really defend herself. **Alice Tanner** also considers it is not very pleasant moving around the school in this way. *Here the big fifth years back into you.* **Mervyn Endacott** dislikes having to walk between lessons *because it's too far. You get bullied here sometimes,* by the fifth year pupils, when moving around the school. **Zoe Knott** finds that *some of the older children pick on the younger children. They tug your hair if they've been in a funny mood or been smoking on the tennis court.* It is always a gang of fifth or sixth year boys she maintains.

The school campus is extensive with buildings scattered across the site. Moving around the school campus can be disruptive for some of these younger pupils and provide hazards by means of late arrival and opportunities for casual bullying from older pupils.

**School starting time.** Ridgeway comprehensive expects its pupils to arrive by 8.45 in the morning. A number of the Lowfield pupils I interview complain that this is too early for them (**Anthony Phillips, Mark Phillips, Mandy Mortenson and Joan Chilvers)**. The school is located outside the extreme southeast corner of the community's perimeter. Lowfield slopes down from south to north. A number of these pupils will have substantially further to travel to their comprehensive school than to their junior and this will be uphill for most of them. This will inevitably entail a significantly earlier start for the comprehensive school than for the junior school if they are to arrive on time. Late arrivals can result in sanctions and sometimes these can be extreme (p 94).

**Illness and physical disability.** We have noted, above, **Wendy Perryman's** physical disabilities and the problems brought about by differences in perception between pupil and members of the teaching staff regarding the effect of disability on functioning within the school environment. Additionally, we are aware of **Joseph Shute's** comments regarding the difficulties he encounters in the school environment with his alopecia and his perception that its onset followed a physical attack by a female member of staff. His subsequent behaviour within school highlights this problem. Joe tells me that he has been banned from dinners at Ridgeway. *A dinner lady knocked my hat off. I said, ' you stupid cow' - that came out, so they suspended me from dinners.* Joe thinks Ridgeway may be thinking of getting rid of him and that worries him because it would not look good as a job reference from school. *I'd rather leave than be kicked out* (16/5/90). **George Bramley** tells me, *I've had a few days off 'cause my ears have been bleeding. I've been off two weeks now 'cause of my ears.* Yesterday he went back to hospital to have his grommets checked. They are alright and George can hear better than he could previously. George has also been off school because he has been feeling sick and because of stomach ache. He assures me there is no other reason he stays away from school. Apropos being 'picked on' for laughing and messing about, I ask George if he finds other pupils are picked on as much as he is. He replies that he doesn't know because he isn't at school long enough to find out!

**Inferences.** It may well be that illness and disability will be used as excuses to cover other reasons for absences from school. Even so, there is evidence to suggest that the school is insufficiently aware and/or unwilling to take into consideration the effect on attendance, behaviour and performance of genuine illness and physical incapacity or of the capacity of some of these pupils in coping with this.

**Self-reflexion.** *They* (her peers) *seem to call me more names than they call the other kids. I'm different, that's the problem. I suppose you could call me 'weird'.* I ask **Sandra Arnold** what she means by the term 'weird'. In reply, she gives as example her attitude to her sister, Esther. She thinks most people prefer her sister Esther to her sister Jean, because the former

is the prettier of the two; but Sandra considers it a compliment to her if people say she is like her sister Jean and an insult if she is compared favourably to Esther. I ask Sandra why she prefers one sister to the other and she replies that Jean is nice to her while Esther is *horrible* to her. I say that I do not consider she is being 'weird' about this. She then says that if she gets into fights with people, instead of hitting them *I bite them instead. I think that's weird.* We talk a bit more about why she uses the word 'weird' about herself. *I prefer to be called 'weird' than 'daft'* she concludes. Sandra finishes up by saying:

> *I've got one or two friends, not so many as other people. I prefer it like that. If I fall out with them I've always got my books. I need to change my attitude a bit. Some need staying the same - my friendly attitude, my polite attitude. Sometimes I'm rude and unfriendly. I've got a terrible temper, its very short and can go off like lightning. I'd like to get that under control.*

**Inferences.** Sandra epitomizes the self-reflexion implicit in a number of comments the pupils make about themselves while commenting on their school and environment. **Wendy Perryman's** remark about what she can and cannot do, **Joe Shute's** long talk with his mother, **Esther Arnold's** and **Karen Stone's** meanings drawn from their encounters with their R.E. teacher and a number of other statements testify to the importance these pupils give to the meanings imparted to their experiences. These meanings shape for them their environment and their world.

**Summary.** These pupils affirm a connection between the realities of their daily lives, their views of themselves as maturing human beings and their perceived educational needs at this comprehensive school (cf. MacBeath and Turner, 1989, arguing that home/school educational relationships are hard to separate and measure because they are integral parts of a dynamic whole). They perceive the majority of teachers at Ridgeway comprehensive to differ from them in their perceptions of all three. The pupils see a necessary connection between the personal, social aspects of learning and the academic. They think their teachers should be able to relate to their pupils on a personal level, listen to them and communicate areas of learning in an interesting and meaningful way. These pupils perceive a significant but small minority of the teachers at Ridgeway comprehensive to fulfil this role; the majority does not. Other factors within the school environment contribute to a sense of alienation. The way in which the school deals with health and injury problems, perceived negative teacher attitudes and behaviours towards them, lack of pupil control over their own learning needs and perceived favouring by teachers of The Pastures pupils over the Lowfield pupils are among those stated by the Lowfield young people. Perhaps the last word should be left to **George Bramley**. When I ask him what he considers important about school he replies, *I think school's important but I don't know why.*

# Chapter Eight. Research findings from the Lowfield inquiry.

## 8.1. The teachers and their social environment.

We have examined the statements that the teachers make concerning the parents, pupils and other aspects of their social environment including the schools in which they work. The teachers bring with them into their workplace ways of making sense of the world that derive from a variety of life experiences. These experiences are given meaning through engagement with others by means of cultural process. The cultural process, for the teachers, has been instrumental in enabling them to become teachers.

**8.1.1. The teachers' statements about their pupils**. On 30th September 1990 I presented to a group of teachers from all three schools the results of the analysis from my interviews with the teachers about their pupils from the 25 Lowfield families (Appendix A). I discussed the recommendations that I had based on these findings. I now realize that the implementation of these recommendations would not have been possible without a radical reappraisal, on the part of the teachers, of their role as educators. Further thought will be given to this in the second part of this study. For the moment, we will focus on making sense of what the teachers have to say about their pupils.

I propose that the teachers' statements provide evidence for what pleases and displeases them in their encounters with these particular pupils. The tables of positive and negative comments by them regarding their pupils are as follows:

| **A. What pleases teachers about these pupils.** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **INF** | **JUN** | **COM** | **I+J+C** |
| **a)** Pupil responds positively to teacher. | 1 | 4 | 9 | 14 |
| **b)** Pupil responds positively to other pupils. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| **c)** Pupil responds positively to classwork. | 6 | 1 | 14 | 39 |
| **d)** Pupil exhibits behaviour approved by teacher. | 2 | 3 | 7 | 12 |
| **e)** Pupil attendance performance approved by teacher. | 1 | 5 | 5 | 11 |
| **f)** Physical appearance of pupil approved by teacher. | 2 | 0 | 3 | 5 |
| **g)** Pupil's personality approved by teacher. | 2 | 5 | 7 | 14 |
| **h)** Pupil perceived by teacher as positively different from siblings. | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| **i)** Pupil perceived by teacher as enjoying school. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| **j)** Teacher initiative regarding pupil is partially/wholly successful. | 1 | 0 | 5 | 6 |
| **Total.** | 15 | 38 | 55 | 108 |
| **Total** as % of all teacher statements re specific pupils. | 25% | 39.1% | 35.8% | 34.7% |

**Figure i.**

| B. What concerns teachers about these pupils. | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Number of statements. | | | |
| | | INF | JUN | COM | I+J+C |
| **a)** Disruptive and immature behaviour | The persistence of discord | 12 | 19 | 7 | 38 |
| **b)** Problems of adjustment to peer group | | 3 | 11 | 7 | 21 |
| **c)** Refusal to conform | | 0 | 3 | 16 | 19 |
| **d)** Teacher initiative regarding pupil is unsuccessful | | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| **e)** Non attendance | | 4 | 1 | 36 | 41 |
| **f)** Problems in work performance | | 8 | 9 | 4 | 21 |
| **g)** Concern for physical/emotional state of pupil | Concern for well-being of pupil | 15 | 10 | 9 | 34 |
| **h)** Problems in community affecting pupil | | 0 | 1 | 11 | 12 |
| **i)** Communication difficulties | | 0 | 5 | 8 | 13 |
| **j)** Pupil perceived by teacher as negatively similar to siblings | | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| **Total** | | 44 | 59 | 99 | 202 |
| **Total** as % of all teacher statements | | 75% | 60.9% | 64.2% | 65.3% |

**Figure ii.**

The teachers had already identified the children within this sample as having 'missed out on education' and it comes as no surprise that these teachers produce significantly more statements of concern overall than of approval (65.3% compared to 34.7% of all statements). Even so, within the junior and comprehensive schools, comments indicating satisfaction with pupil class work response exceed those expressing concern over class work performance. In the infant school the number of statements is quite close (6 approval, 8 concern). So, the pupils' problems in work performance across the three schools, although of significance to teachers, do not present as their most important area of concern. Two such areas do emerge from my analysis to which I give the generic descriptions 'the persistence of discord' and 'concern for the well-being of the pupil'.

The persistence of discord is what displeases them most. This is socially disruptive or socially rejecting behaviours that challenge the teachers' capacity to establish social patterns of behaviour conducive to learning. I argue that this emerges from a socialisation mismatch between home environment and school; the clash between two different sets of cultural experience. As we discover, when examining the statements that the pupils make about their junior schoolteachers, this mismatch does not always take the form of pupils purposefully rejecting the social norms of the school. It can be the result of difficulties in adapting to the culture of the school.

Their next most sustained area of concern is for the physical and emotional well being of their pupils and the teachers' inability to alleviate this. Over a third of all teacher statements of concern in the infant school are for the state and condition of the pupils. Communication problems between pupils and teachers begin to be identified and recognized by the teaching staff in the junior and comprehensive schools. In both these schools teachers echo their infant school colleagues' worries over the well being of these pupils. The teachers in the comprehensive school, additionally, voice their anxieties over the negative influence of the local community on pupils, an influence

they are unable to combat.

Their classroom values are reflected in their statements of what pleases them. Although the teachers appear to share these values in common, the priority ordering of them will differ from teacher to teacher. For instance, if 'pupil responds positively to teacher' is seen as more important than 'pupil exhibits behaviour approved by teacher', a more informal teacher/pupil relationship will be tolerated than if it is the other way around. Recognition of this dynamic alerted me to the possibility that different priority groupings of these values can reflect very different capacities among teachers to reach into the lives of their pupils and to make education a positively meaningful experience for them. In Part Two we argue that the values that we hold may be influenced, to a certain extent, by the contexts in which we find ourselves (pp. 165 & 166). These teachers bring into their schools certain values that they appear to share with each other. Their experiences within these schools do have an effect on those values and will reinforce certain values in relation to others. Each teacher will re-assess value priorities differently. I propose that, among these expressed teacher values, patterns of priority are present that appear to reflect the differences between those teachers who are able to communicate with their pupils, to reach into their lives and to mediate the process of learning most effectively from those who are less able to do so.

From what the teachers tell me about their behaviours towards their pupils there appears to be a close correspondence between those behaviours and certain expressed attitudes regarding their pupils (e.g. Maurice Hicks' behaviour towards his pupil, Norman Gallway and his attitude towards this particular pupil's non-conformist behaviour, pp. 93, 94, 98). Later in this study, the development of our theoretical perspective will reveal that the relationship between our values, attitudes to and behaviour towards each other is significantly affected by whether or not we are able to establish any common ground between us (pp. 172-173) – the common ground that Maurice is able to establish with Norman's equally non-conformist brother, Bruce (pp. 90, 91 & 92). The achievement of common ground can result in a shift in value priorities that, in turn, can result in a significant shift in attitude and behaviour towards pupils. We will explore this point further in our final chapter.

**8.1.2. The teachers' views of the parents.** The teachers in all three schools speak at length about the parents. The wealth of information makes it difficult to break down into the sort of categorisation I am able to use for the teachers' comments about their pupils. There are numbers of comments that spread across different categories however I attempt to order the data. It was then that I realized that persons who not only see themselves as teachers but as parents, too, are making these comments. They are bringing identification with these two roles to bear on the Lowfield parents. The same dynamic is operating between the teachers and their Lowfield pupils, but the

teachers have a specific teaching role to perform in relation to their pupils. It is, therefore, easier to differentiate between comments concerning work performance, on the one hand, and other social behaviours, on the other.

In all three schools the teachers' statements about the parents can be broken down into three areas of focus: -

1. The nature of their communication with these parents as perceived by the teachers.
2.Comments on the lifestyle of the Lowfield parents.
3. The capacity of the parents to function competently as parents.

Within these three areas there are differences of emphasis between the three schools. The infant school viewpoint is characterized by a degree of venom and contempt not encountered in the other two schools. The junior schoolteachers have less contact with the parents, show disquiet over inadequacies of parenting and view parental failings as personal and familial, without taking socio-economic and cultural factors into consideration. The comprehensive school perspective is one of lack of co-operation, antipathy and antagonism from parents toward the school, a recognition that a cultural divide exists between school and community and the perception of a negative impact from that community on parenting and family life. Socio-economic factors tend to be ignored or unrecognised and cultural patterns in Lowfield are viewed as antipathetic to the culture of the school. It should be noted that only four positive comments are made about specific parents from among the teaching staff at the three schools. The teachers express considerable reservations about the perceived way of life of the Lowfield parents. The parents' way of life is seen as contributing towards their inability to function as caring parents. The teachers have considerable difficulties in engaging in communication with the Lowfield parents and, when this does occur, no common ground for maintaining it is found. Teachers do accept the need to address the communication gap between themselves and these parents and see some way forward in aspects of my analysis.

**8.1.3. The teachers and the environment of their schools.** The teachers do not exist in isolation from other teachers, from the schools in which they work or from the environment in which their schools are situated. The contextual conditions for the teachers also involve the inheritance of life experiences that they bring with them into their workplace. The teachers' social behaviours have an interdependent relationship with these other factors in their social world. This interdependent relationship has implications for how the teachers co-operate, share and accept, also for how they deal with issues such as power, decision taking and control.

In the previous four chapters we have charted these relationships using three perspectives - those of the teachers, the pupils and their parents. We have become aware of a certain continuum of teacher values to which these teachers appear to adhere. These values are reflected in the behaviours of the teachers towards these

Lowfield pupils and parents and in their attitudes towards the Lowfield community generally. Teachers emphasize different value weightings within this continuum that can result in less or more positive relationships with individual pupils.

## 8.2. The pupils' views about school.

What the Lowfield pupils have to say about their experiences in the three schools is wide-ranging in scope, often vivid and articulate in presentation. I have listed below the themes explored by the pupils and, alongside, the number of statements and the schools to which they refer.

| THEMES EXPLORED BY THE PUPILS. | INF | JUN | COM |
|---|---|---|---|
| **a)** Teacher/ pupil relationships. | 2 | 35 | 120 |
| **b)** Work, play and school provision. | 0 | 36 | 43 |
| **c)** Relationships with other pupils. | 0 | 22 | 16 |
| **)** School ethos and violation of rules. | 0 | 17 | 17 |
| **e)** The importance of happiness/ contentedness. | 1 | 13 | 8 |
| **f)** Control over one's learning situation. | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| **g)** Views on home/ school relations. | 0 | 6 | 6 |
| **h)** Thoughts about the future. | 0 | 4 | 10 |
| **i)** Teachers shouting. | 0 | 1 | 12 |
| **j)** Movement around school. | 0 | 5 | 5 |
| **k)** Ambivalence about school. | 0 | 2 | 5 |
| **l)** Reasons for absence from school. | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| **m)** School uniform. | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| **n)** Getting up early for school. | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| **o)** Changes in school timetable. | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| **p)** Judged according to family reputation. | 0 | 0 | 4 |

**Figure iii.**

Individual pupils move freely between these themes when discussing their experiences with me and relate behaviours to each other across them. A picture begins to emerge as to the sort of teacher/pupil relationship they see as contributing to learning and what relationships stand in its way, resulting in confusion, lowering of self-esteem and a sense of uselessness within these pupils. Related to their perceptions that learning is about how things are being taught, they think that teachers should relate positively to the learners, seeking to accept and understand them and their world. They find this to be largely absent from the majority of teachers at their comprehensive school. A perception exists among some of these Lowfield pupils that the teachers favour 'the snobs' (pupils from The Pastures residential area) and that Lowfield pupils can be socially excluded from the special relationships the teachers have established with The

Pastures young people. The Lowfield pupils also do not like being 'shown up' by teachers in front of their peers and they hate being shouted at.

The pupils in the comprehensive school identify another factor that involves learning. This is recognition of themselves as emerging adults and their need to be involved in decisions affecting how and what they are taught. These particular pupils find this need to be insufficiently catered for in Ridgeway comprehensive school.

The relationships that these pupils have with each other and with other pupils chart difficulties in establishing and sustaining friendships. Verbally aggressive behaviour can erupt into physical violence. Some girls in the junior school hit out physically when they can take no more of the verbal name calling from their peers. Fighting does not appear to be liked by anyone but is accepted as a social norm, particularly by the boys. Even so, friendships do develop and flourish among some of these pupils. In the comprehensive school there is evidence of some bullying although the teachers appear able to deal with this.

The pupils relate happiness and enjoying (or at least feeling OK about) school to being able to make use of what the school has to offer. The violation of school rules does not always imply a rejection of school ethos, as it tends to do in the comprehensive school. In the junior school it appears to reflect the struggles that the pupils encounter in trying to adhere to the cultural norms of the teachers regarding certain social behaviours while continuing to accept different social norms for those behaviours within the community (p. 106). These pupils also talk about why they abscond from their comprehensive school. Comments range from feeling unwell and not wanting to be there to not liking a particular teacher or to giving up on school because it is failing the pupil. In themselves, the comparatively small number of these pupil statements does not appear to measure up to the level of the problem that has been identified by the teachers in the comprehensive school. I think there is an explanation for this. From the teachers' point of view, one of the reasons why these young people are 'missing out on education' is because they are failing to attend regularly. We have been examining what being at school means for these pupils. Absenteeism is one of a number of responses they make to what is causing them concern in their social environment. It does not figure, for them, as a major cause of concern in itself. The teachers and the Lowfield young people view the world of formal education from very different cultural contexts based on two very different ways of making sense of collective and individual experiences. These pupils' comments reflect their social and cultural vulnerability.

## 8.3. The parents' viewpoints on their children, schools and neighbourhood.

The parents express clear opinions about all three schools, about individual teachers

within these schools and about their children in relation to the education on offer. They also comment on their local community and its socio-economic position regarding the rest of the town. The way in which the parents interact with their social environment is made explicit in chapters two and five. I list below the main areas of focus as identified by the parents and the schools to which they refer.

| **Parents viewpoints.** | **INF** | **JUN** | **COM** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **a)** Happiness of children at school. | + | + | + |
| **b)** Parental approaches to learning. | + | + | + |
| **c)** Parent/teacher relationships. | + | + | + |
| **d)** Statements of satisfaction with aspects of school. | + | + | + |
| **e)** Meeting parents' expectations concerning children. | + | + | + |
| **f)** Children's peer group relationships. | + | + | + |
| **g)** Teacher/pupil relationships. | | + | + |
| **h)** Anticipation of problems to come. | | + | + |
| **i)** Problems in meeting school expectations. | | + | + |
| **j)** Having little influence. | | | + |

**Figure iv.**

The parents are generally very positive about the teachers in the infant school and about the education they perceive their children are receiving there. They also appear to be unaware of the weight of negative opinion within the infant school concerning them. The parents' comments about their relationship with teachers at the junior school and their perceptions of their children's experiences there are also generally positive. They make more positive than negative comments about all three schools even though the parents consider that the comprehensive school is not meeting parental expectations concerning their children and that the parents have little influence there. There is a number of expressions of concern about parent/teacher relationships in this school, about the unhappiness of their children there and about the school not meeting the needs of the Lowfield community or understanding the problems the parents have in meeting school expectations. Cultural conflict between school and community is most apparent to these parents with Ridgeway comprehensive; an establishment they regard as failing adequately to care for and educate their children.

## 8.4. Other factors affecting the comprehensive school and its pupils.

I obtain permission from Robert Groves, the deputy head teacher, to analyse both the 1990 GCSE examination results and the 1989/1990 academic year's disciplinary reports on pupils. I wish to see how young people from these particular families figure alongside others from both within and outside the Lowfield area who also attend the same comprehensive school. I already know that the teachers consider the pupils from our sample of families are not benefiting from education and that teachers are also

particularly concerned about their non-conformist behaviour. I find that my analyses reveal an interesting and somewhat disturbing aspect of the interface between the school and its Lowfield pupils as a whole.

**8.4.1. The comprehensive school's disciplinary records.** The school keeps records of each formal meeting with parent(s) and pupil involving serious breaches in school rules by the pupil. As a result the pupil faces certain sanctions imposed by the head teacher including the possibility of suspension or permanent exclusion from the school.

In the academic year 1989/90 there are 29 disciplinary hearings held at the school. 21 of these involve Lowfield pupils. Pupils from the Lowfield area form 44.5% of the total pupil intake at Ridgeway comprehensive, yet 72.4 % of all disciplinary hearings involve Lowfield young people. From a total of 25 pupils disciplined, 17 come from Lowfield but only 4 from our family sample. If we exclude the pupils who come from our families, the remaining Lowfield young people account for 65.2% of all disciplinary hearings. This still represents a disproportionately high percentage of Lowfield pupils subject to disciplinary procedures when compared to the size of the Lowfield intake at this comprehensive school.

Teachers from the comprehensive school have commented on the problems they encounter in communicating with parents from this community. They have also expressed anxieties about the influence they perceive this community to have on the behaviour of the Lowfield young people as a social group. It should, perhaps, have come as no surprise that these problems appear to be reflected in the high percentage of Lowfield pupils involved in disciplinary proceedings at Ridgeway comprehensive. It does, however, highlight for us that the problem the school encounters with the pupils and families from our particular sample is not an isolated phenomenon. It is a component within the context of this school's interface with the Lowfield community as a whole.

**8.4.2. The 1990 GCSE examination results.** Before we look at my analysis of these examination results we need to be aware of the following distribution of pupils at Ridgeway comprehensive school. The Pastures pupils come from an area of the town where houses are privately owned and which is considered locally to be a prestigious place in which to live.

- The Pastures pupils form 9.1% of the comprehensive school intake.
- The Lowfield pupils form 44.5% of the comprehensive school intake.
- The Pastures pupils form 31.25% of the school's sixth form.
- The Lowfield pupils form 8.8% of the school's sixth form.

Most Lowfield pupils leave before their sixth year, whereas the young people from The Pastures stay on. There are 88 pupils in the school's 4 sixth forms. Of these, 25 come

from The Pastures and 7 from Lowfield. When we come to analyse the examination results in the fifth year we see that there may be a correlation between the differences in academic success between pupils from these two communities and the difference in numbers between them in the sixth form.

| **PUPIL GROUPINGS.** | **GCSE EXAMINATION RESULTS.** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Total number of pupils sitting examinations.** | **Total number of grades achieved.** | | **Average number of grades per pupil.** | |
| **Category of pupils.** | **A - C** | **D - F** | **A - C** | **D - F** |
| 11 Pastures pupils. | 65 | 36 | 5.9 | 3.2 |
| 85 Lowfield pupils. | 98 | 256 | 1.1 | 3.1 |
| Total for school (165). | 300 | 518 | 1.8 | 3.1 |
| Our Lowfield sample (5). | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0.2 |
| Top 11 Lowfield pupils. | 70 | 29 | 6.4 | 2.6 |

**Figure v.**

Grades A-C represent passes and D-F failures. The figures in brackets represent numbers of pupils who took part in the examination. My analysis of the examination results is largely self-explanatory. The 85 Lowfield pupils had an average of 1.1 pass per pupil, whereas the 11 Pastures pupils averaged 5.9 passes each. The school's declaration that certain Lowfield pupils are missing out on education has proved correct as far as the 5 pupils from our families who sat the examination were concerned. They had no passes and only one entry in the D - F failure category. They could hardly have fared worse.

If we look more closely at these figures, however, a pattern of some significance begins to emerge. The 85 Lowfield pupils average only 1.1 pass per pupil compared to the 5.9 average of The Pastures pupils. To obtain a comparable figure for the Lowfield pupils we have to average the passes of the top 11 Lowfield young people (6.4). So only 13% of the Lowfield students achieve results comparable to 100% of The Pastures students. Based on the current year's GCSE examination results 87% of the young people from Lowfield are failing to achieve academically. Those from our family sample fail abysmally but also as part of a continuum of failure affecting the vast majority of young people from the Lowfield community.

**8.4.3. Absenteeism.** The teachers draw attention to the perceived high level of absenteeism among some Lowfield young people who are registered with the school. Some teachers indicate that concerns about absenteeism apply also to pupils who come from other districts of the town. I have access to the attendance records for each form in the school for the academic year 1989/90. Some absences were approved by the school for work experience, on medical grounds or due to exclusion. Some pupils had been eligible to leave at the end of the Easter term and so would not

have attended the full academic year. I find the complexity of extracting information about unapproved absences to be a task beyond my capacity, faced as I am with limitations on the amount of time available to me and having no clerical or administrative assistance. Consequently I am unable to obtain figures for unapproved absences from this comprehensive school.

## 8.5. Is Lowfield experiencing the effects of educational disenfranchisement?

We are now aware that, during the academic year 1989/90, the GCSE examination results reveal that pupils from the Lowfield area fail, to a large degree, when compared to young people coming from The Pastures area of the town. Additionally, we know that disciplinary records for the year are substantially weighted in favour of Lowfield. I propose that it is reasonable to view our sample of Lowfield young people within the context of their Lowfield peers at the comprehensive school. Within this context they figure at the bottom of the pile as far as examination results are concerned but form less than a quarter of Lowfield pupils punished at disciplinary proceedings (17 from Lowfield but only 4 from our sample). There are serious question marks as to how it is that the young people from this community are failing to achieve academically and how it comes about that a disproportionately high number, when compared to other sections of the school's catchment, fail to conform socially.

My research confirms the findings of Sharp and Green (p. 4) that teachers' knowledge of the low economic status and deprived background of pupils can adversely affect their assessments of their pupils' abilities (Roy Front, p. 27, Jack Dorking, p. 28). It also confirms Halsey's point (p. 5) that to ignore social and structural factors that limit opportunity and ambition within a community can result in seeing low academic performance as the fault of the community (Maurice Hicks, p. 29, Brenda Parkinson, p. 26). The warnings of Brophy and Good that the inaccuracy or inflexibility of teachers' expectations can lead to treating disadvantaged pupils differently to what they really are and with damaging consequences to their education (pp. 11-12) is reflected in the Lowfield pupils' and parents' comments on Ridgeway teachers (Perceived teacher attitudes, p.111; School meeting/not meeting parent expectations, p. 76).

Donnison's analysis of the devastating increase in inequality that has taken place in Britain during the '80s (pp. 16-17) and its effects on the most vulnerable working-class communities is confirmed by my study (pp. 25-26, Tony Beard's views, pp. 28-29, Economic and social realities, p. 31). The relationship between culturally based values and perspectives as a result of different life experiences and the problems some working-class families experience in accessing effective education (p. 11) is borne out by the comments various parents make to me (The social and economic realities of living in Lowfield, p. 39). The value differences identified between home

and nursery by Tizard et al (p. 11) do lead to serious communication problems at the start of the Lowfield children's formal education (Brenda Parkinson's comments about a breakdown in communication in the infant school, p. 26; Mrs. Stokes remarks to me in appendix B).

My research also confirms the findings of Woods, Hargreaves, Willis and Lacey (pp. 13-14) in secondary schools in so far as it draws attention to non-conformist behaviour on the part of pupils faced with educational disadvantage in the school setting (Inferences, pp. 108, 111-112; Summary, p. 117; Summary, pp. 96-97).

As a matter of interest, Marsland's view that universal welfare provision creates a culture of dependence is reflected in head teacher Brenda Parkinson's comments (p. 26) that unemployed people in Lowfield do very well, financially, without having to work.

As far as the schools' accountability to the Lowfield community is concerned (see reference to The Cambridge Accountability Project, pp. 20-21), the infant school would appear to operate on an autocratic communication basis (p. 69), the junior on a controlled dialogue and the comprehensive on a paternalistic communication foundation (p. 76). The only school attempting any sort of dialogue with this community, and that in a controlled way (p. 52) is the junior school. I draw attention (p. 20) to there being no evidence that local communities are able to engage effectively with their schools and I can confirm that this is true of Lowfield. The significance for this particular community is that its cultural integrity is under threat, making it very difficult for its members, even on an individual basis, to find common ground on which to undertake a sustained and meaningful dialogue with their schools.

Perusal of the literature on ethnicity and education (pp. 14-15) suggests that it is the cultural integrity of the home allied to more economically advantaged backgrounds rather than race and ethnicity per se that determines access to effective education. The work of Feuerstein (pp. 15-16) and the theoretical development in Part Two (pp. 141, 171, 173) will confirm that culture is a process of human interaction enabling us to become identified with and to participate in our social environment. I propose that, within Lowfield, the specific cultural experiences will differ from family to family but that there is an area of shared human interaction (the 'us-ness' of their shared experiences) that amounts to a mutual awareness of common cultural ground. It is by way of this common cultural ground that we begin to build up our understanding of our world and of our relationship to it. Learning starts here and it is to do with knowing about and relating to. These are the two strands identified by our pupils when they talk about the connection between being taught and being understood. From what the pupils tell me about what constitutes a good teacher (pp. 108-9) and the relationship between teaching and learning (p. 109-10), the connection I make

between effective mediators of learning (p. 18) would appear to be applicable here. Education is woven into the very fabric of socialisation (Haralambos, 1990, p.228). I have argued that socialisation is culturally based. Education is part of cultural process and cannot operate in isolation from a cultural foundation. To attempt to educate children and young people while condemning their cultural inheritance will achieve alienation and ultimately result in their educational disenfranchisement.

There is also a literature relating to pupils' views of teachers that I have not explored to any degree in my review. Another thesis might have pursued this theme. This thesis, however, goes deeply methodological, looking at the epistemological and ontological basis of this ethnographic study and, by extension, others with research questions that go wider than this particular study. However, they have roots in this study and so conclusions about it will be drawn at the end, as well, alongside more abstract ones. These conclusions are over and above the report I make to the schools (appendix A) or the views I express at this point in time.

In chapter two we explored differing perspectives on this community and considered the ways in which overlapping contextual conditions influence the dynamics of Lowfield. The way in which resources are or are not made available to the community as a result of decisions taken elsewhere at national and local government level; the structure of the schools; the way in which this community is socially and economically isolated; the interface between teachers, parents and pupils; all these have a bearing on social interaction and self-actualisation in this community. The overlapping of these contextual conditions creates structural patterns such as how this community is perceived and 'managed' by the local authority, the schools and other providers of resources. These structural patterns also help to define how far local people can be involved in the decisions effecting their social and economic lives and in the development of their local community. The way in which these structural patterns operate upon Lowfield seriously undermines its cultural infrastructure by denying it adequate access to resources necessary for sustaining its integrity. These resources are economic, social and educational.

There is a dilemma here for the various socio-economic, educational and cultural groups living and working in this area or operating outside it but influencing the area in significant ways. The dilemma is how power, decision-taking and control can be exercised in such a way that co-operation, sharing and acceptance can also form part of the equation. Unless this can be achieved to a significantly greater extent within the sphere of state education in this country then not only Lowfield but other similarly disadvantaged cultural communities will continue to experience educational disenfranchisement. In our final chapter we will develop this argument further. For the present, it should be borne in mind that schools cannot be expected to compensate for

or to take responsibility for cultural decline but (pace Bernstein, 1970) neither should they, however unwittingly, be in the position of contributing towards it.

### 8.6. Recommendations.

I list, below, the recommendations I make to management staff regarding changes to the organisation of the schools as a result of my research at a particular point in time (30/4/90 – also included, in slightly different order, in appendix A). At the conclusion of my ethnographic research these recommendations still appear to me valid.

**1.** A factor affecting the poor attendance, not just of Lowfield pupils but of students across the catchment areas and of varying abilities, is the way the comprehensive school handles the G.C.S.E. course work. Teachers need to reconsider this.

**2.** Teachers compile from chart A their own priority order of headings. They can then match teacher values to teacher tasks. For instance, if 'pupils responding positively to teachers' is seen as more important than 'pupils exhibiting behaviour approved by teachers', a more informal teacher/pupil relationship will be tolerated than if it is the other way around. I suggest that the compiling of priorities is seen as an exercise in attitude clarification not attitude change and that teachers should not regard this as an attempt to arrive at consensus.

**3.** The family of schools establishes a practical programme for the socialisation of pupils throughout the primary and secondary phases. A crucial component in this should be aimed at the parents of pre-school children. The teachers' expectations of toddlers entering the nursery and infant stages should be explained clearly and simply to parents. Practical help should be offered to parents in preparing children for school. This will have to be sold effectively to parents if it is to be successful.

**4.** The corollary of putting over teachers' requirements to parents and enlisting their aid to achieve those requirements is to listen in turn to the parents and children about their values, life-style and educational requirements. To improve matters for the pupils their concerns and those of their parents must be addressed by the teachers. Within the Lowfield area there is little recognized practice of coming together formally to look at issues of general concern. The sure way to find out parents' views is to listen to them within the confines of their own homes. Much home visiting and parent visits to school have been about specific matters relating to the non-conformity of pupils. The two social systems have usually been locked, if not always in conflict, certainly in confrontation that has often been unpleasant for both sides. It has more often than not resulted in no satisfactory outcome for either. A mediation initiative should be considered whereby parents and schools' representatives can listen to each other's points of view without getting involved in specifics about individual pupils. It is perhaps best done through designating specific members of staff for this particular purpose. The views of pupils can be gauged as part of the schools' socialisation programme.

**5.** In the comprehensive school, the present tutorial system is in need of development. The role of the tutor could be made more pivotal in making her/him responsible for co-ordinating educational provision (both academic and social) for her/his tutor group in its progress through the school system. This would mean that the teachers could decide, in discussion with other members of staff, who should be the most appropriate persons to undertake the social education input for their groups. The year heads, I suggest, should have a development and consultation role in relationship to their tutors; the year heads and head of P.S.E. forming a social education development team. Social education should be seen in context of mediation, as a means of coming together and sharing between pupils, between teachers and between pupils and teachers.

**6.** In the infant school the staff should consider, after deciding their individual priority order of values, an agreed priority base for the nursery and infant sections. Resources necessary for the implementation of a pre-school parent education programme geared to this priority base could then be assessed.

**7.** In the comprehensive school special consideration should be paid to the needs of pupils in the first and second years, with particular regard to the social integration of pupils coming from different neighbourhoods. Additionally, some Lowfield pupils need help in coming to terms with the different social and educational expectations placed on them now that they have moved on from a primary to a secondary school.

**8.** The behavioural unit should focus on the first and second years and be more closely integrated with both learning support and social education strategies within the school. Its present name, which can be seen to reflect a concern for a specific symptom, should be changed to one that indicates more its function of integration between social and academic learning.

The possibility for implementing some or all of these recommendations is necessarily curtailed by my withdrawal from Lowfield and its schools before I have opportunity to engage with the teaching staff over their development (They are favourably received when I present them to management staff at the schools). The timing of my withdrawal also has implications for the families because I do not give the pupils and parents opportunity to consider my recommendations. They, as is the case with the teachers, have no opportunity to influence or debate the future status of these recommendations or to amend them.

## 8.7. Implications for policy and teacher training.

Ball refers to the brief attention OFSTED inspections give to links with parents and the community (1998). She also argues that the more schools concentrate on curriculum based learning the more difficult it will be to develop relationships with the wider community. Dyson and Robson (1999) point out a potential tension in government policy between the push for standards and a broader social exclusion agenda with its extended community role for schools. My research study makes the case that

education is a cultural phenomenon. Communities, such as Lowfield, experiencing the effects of cultural disintegration, depend on the understanding and acceptance of their schools for access to effective education. Government policy needs to recognize cultural decline as a major contributor to lack of educational achievement. The push for higher standards in schools will make no impact on the academic performance of educationally disenfranchised pupils. Resources need to be made available for the implementation of community engaging initiatives along the lines I have indicated above (Barber and Dann, 1996; DIECEC, 1998; Houston, 1996). This means shifting the emphasis from intensive short-term efforts at rescuing identified 'failing schools' to a more long-term approach to culturally relevant education.

A further factor in the implementation of these initiatives is the attitude and approach of teachers. In chapter one (p. 18-19) I draw attention to the importance of teachers in schools recognizing that education is an explicitly cognitive/cultural endeavour with major political implications. Their skills and approach should contain aspects of mediated learning common to the fields of cultural learning, school teaching and therapeutic counselling. This has major implications for the selection and training of teaching staff.

# PART TWO.

# My epistemological journey.

# Chapter Nine. Methodology and crisis: doubts over template and maps.

In developing further the analogy of template (theory) and maps (ethnographic research), we come to a dilemma. As I point out in chapter three (pp. 48-9), I have doubts about aspects of the template I am using (the theoretical underpinning) as I draw my maps (e.g. the ways in which I refer to political and economic contexts do not fit). Subsequent to this I begin to question my capacity to read maps (to observe correctly) and to draw them (to give a correct account). I enlarge on this below by outlining the crisis of perception that leads me to search for and construct a template of my own that will provide epistemological grounding both for my doubts and for what is real for me about my Lowfield journey.

## 9.1. Methodology.

The theoretical underpinning for my ethnographic research is broadly phenomenological, emanating from Husserl's contention that we have a series of ways of understanding and justifying the world about us but that this is in no sense objective (Husserl, 1970, pp. 25-6). Also forming part of this underpinning is Schutz's declaration that people classify and attach meanings to the outside world not merely on an individual basis but through 'commonsense knowledge' shared by other people (Schutz, 1972, p.134). At the time I was not entirely convinced by his refusal to accept the possibility that phenomena can exist if they cannot be observed, although the significance of this did not become apparent until I had collected and analysed my data. I establish my position regarding the threats to the cultural integrity of the Lowfield community by macro and local political and economic pressures (pp. 26, 40, 61, 78, 127, 129) and this position appears to run counter to both Schutz's declaration that meanings have no existence apart from the individuals who own them and that such phenomena as oppression and power do not exist.

The results of the Lowfield ethnographic inquiry show that the perceptions of the various participants are not all the same. The teachers' perceptions of these Lowfield families tend to ignore or undervalue socio-economic factors and view the local cultural patterns negatively (p. 121). This contrasts with the parents' apprehension that Ridgeway Comprehensive is not meeting or understanding the needs of its Lowfield community (p. 124). Teachers perceive these Lowfield pupils as largely socially disruptive and rejecting (p. 119), whereas these pupils see themselves as struggling to conform in the junior school and reacting to a lack of acceptance and understanding on the part of their comprehensive school teachers (p. 123). The views of the pupils, parents, teachers and other community members differ from each other not only on a group but also on an individual basis. Tony Beard (p. 28) perceives a difference to exist in the quality of understanding about the realities of living in Lowfield between himself and some of his teacher colleagues. Pupils Michael Marshall and William Phillips differ in their perceptions of their local community in relation to both the comprehensive school and The Pastures pupils (p. 37). Mrs. Judy Stokes' negative perceptions of the infant school differ from the mainly positive ones of the majority of these Lowfield parents. My own viewpoint is separate from all of theirs but appeared to me, at the

time, to have special validity since, as researcher, I had access to a wider range of evidence than that available to any of my sources (Even so, doubts about the validity of that viewpoint emerge, p. 36).

As my research develops, however, I become more aware of the significance of the dialogues taking place between the persons being interviewed and myself (e.g. those with Mrs. Fisher, p. 62-3; with Mr. and Mrs. Briggs, p. 63-4; head teacher Brenda Parkinson p. 24; the parents in the mother-and- toddler group, p. 51; teacher Michael Gabriel, pp. 86-7; and pupils Sheila Briggs; p. 103; Fiona Bramley, p. 104; Joseph Shute, pp. 108 & 116; Wendy Perryman, pp. 107 & 109; and Sandra Arnold, pp. 116-7). The ontology is dissolving from an imperfectly apprehended reality to a dynamically constructed process between persons that also includes myself. The epistemology is beginning to shift from the analysis of various constructions of the social world to an awareness of the interactional nature of the relationship between those I am interviewing and myself. This appears to *create* a reality that I then step outside when I present my findings. The ontology and the epistemology begin to merge (Cf. Guba and Lincoln on 'Competing Paradigms', 1994, pp. 105-116).

I have outlined my method of inquiry in some detail in chapter three. This method of approach can be described broadly as a form of interpretive interactionism (Denzin, 1989, p.27; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, pp.510-11), whereby the focus of research is on those life experiences that alter and shape the meanings people give to themselves and their living situations. These experiences are related to the experiences of others, to the cultural contexts that contain them, to other cultural contexts and to the 'moral biases that organize the research' (1994, p.511). My methodology was located within the broad paradigm of constructionism. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) define 'paradigm' as 'a basic set of beliefs that guide action' (ibid, p.99) that encompass elements of epistemology, ontology and methodology. My ethnographic enquiry (whose paradigm I am about to question) is based on the belief that realities are apprehended subjectively as multiple and are constructed by social and experiential means (Guba and Lincoln, pp.110-11).

### 9.2. Crisis!

Forewarnings of crisis begin to emerge. Prejudice, on my part, surfaces at the very start of my involvement in this project. At the time, I decide that I am going to use my skills as a counsellor, as a social worker and as a community developer to speak to the families that the teachers cannot reach. During the course of my research I begin to realize that this is intellectual arrogance and reflects the ambivalence toward teachers that has persisted since my own childhood experiences as a working-class grammar school boy educated in isolation from my neighbourhood peers. There are two sides to this, however. The negative one is an under-estimation of the capacities of teachers and a lack of appreciation of their social role as perceived by themselves and the families. The positive aspect is that I have confidence in my capacity to make contact with the pupils and their families.

But it is the use to which I have put that capacity that I now question. In appendix B I draw attention to a parent's modification of my interview notes with her. I had clearly mistaken

the identity of the child in my first paragraph. Her additions to the text enlarge on the comments she makes in our interview and may indeed have made but I had failed to note them down. This is one of the disadvantages of not using a tape recorder. On the other hand, she may not have been so forthcoming in the presence of a tape recorder (although she may still have taken the opportunity to develop her thoughts further by writing to me, as she did in this instance). The role that I have played in recording data such as these indicates the fallible nature of this enterprise. Why have so few people chosen to modify my interview notes? Lack of interest, inertia, problems in reading or understanding the text and a reluctance to question inaccuracies may be among the factors contributing to this lack of feedback. Stoller and Olkes (1987, p.229) describe the crisis of representation involved in their ethnographic study of the Songhay of Nigeria – 'Informants routinely lie to their anthropologists'. This led to a re-focussing of the investigation, putting the anthropologist back into the inquiry and making it into an account of the anthropologist's encounters with the world he was exploring. My primary problem is not whether the persons I interview are being truthful in terms of the accounts they relay (although that is a factor affecting my approach to the data) but my concern to record as accurately as possible what they are telling me. I am also interested in recording, as accurately as possible, both my observations on what people are saying to me and of those interactions that I have with them. In other words I wish to give as reliable an account as possible of what my research journey has meant to me (although, of course, you only have my word for this!). Why this becomes so important to me can be illustrated from an event in my personal life and an encounter with the philosopher David Hume.

In the introduction to this study I make reference to aspects of my personal biography that have implications for the way I undertake my research. An event in my personal/social life, after I had presented my interim report to the schools and made a draft of the first part of this project, leads me to question its veracity. I experience a major disruption in my career as a social worker. I begin to differ from a small but significant number of my colleagues concerning not only observation of some of my behaviours (what I am actually doing) but also in interpretation (what some of my behaviours mean). I find this period in my life extremely distressing. I am faced with a number of very strongly held beliefs, including my own, and some of those beliefs appear incompatible with each other. I begin to question my capacity as an observer and interpreter of my own behaviours. How can I trust my ability to observe and interpret the behaviours of others? Fortunately I do not find myself alone in my views; but this does throw up questions as to what is real for us on both an individual and collective basis and whether it is possible to deal with significant differences between us in the way we perceive our realities. This leads me to question and test out the effects of context or environment on strongly held beliefs and I will develop this further as we proceed on our epistemological journey.

The second event is my encounter with David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*. In Book One, Part III (Hume, 1962, pp. 115-230), he concerns himself with uncertain knowledge, such as can be obtained from empirical data. This includes everything except direct observation or logic and mathematics. His conclusion is that

> *all possible reasoning is nothing but a species of sensation....having no discoverable connection together; nor is it from any other principle but custom operating upon the imagination, that we can draw any inference from the appearance of one to the existence of the other* (ibid, pp. 151-2).

This argument appears to be sound. It challenges not only the possibility of establishing any causal relationship whatsoever, but rejects the principle of induction. The implication of Hume's argument is that we cannot draw conclusions from what we observe. This also brings into question the nature of external reality and whether it is possible to know anything at all about the world around us. My own recent experiences have even called into question the validity of direct observation! I could not really avoid consideration of the underlying problem areas here.

The implications for my empirical research are devastating. Hume questions the validity of the connections I make between teachers' values and teachers' tasks that form the basis of my analysis of teacher statements (pp. 118-120 & appendix A). The validity of my other analyses concerning the teachers, pupils and parents, in chapter eight, is also seriously challenged. Additionally, some of my own subsequent social encounters lead me to question my own observational capacity that forms the bedrock of data for chapters two, four, five, six and seven as well as the basis for these analyses. Since I have followed all the procedures for qualitative research, this is equally devastating for all such empirical inquiries.

### 9.3. Moving on.

Despite this I still retain a firm belief that my empirical investigation 'feels right'. It is clear, however, that the nature of that investigation requires firmer definition within a more explicit epistemological framework. My initial research question asks 'what are the practical problems facing schools in their communities as understood by the families and teachers concerned?' The new research question now asks, in the context of a specific inquiry located in time and space, 'what do we mean by the reality of everyday experience and how can we know anything about it?' This question is to be understood in the context of my original empirical inquiry, in relation to the practical problems facing schools in their communities, and in relation to the proper conduct of educational research (especially given the current emphasis on 'impact' and immediate practical use in DfEE circles).

The realisation that I cannot leave my ethnographic inquiry undefended in its present state provides the opportunity to search for a theoretical framework, adapt one or construct one in order to re-examine my conclusions and justify my approach. The nature of my own reality and that of the world around me, whether it is possible to determine an external world and what it is possible to know about it, are now on my agenda. I am, initially, extremely doubtful as to whether my search will prove to be successful: this being in the nature of a philosophical inquiry. As Lyotard explains such an approach:

> *It remains to be said that the author of the report is a philosopher not an expert. The latter knows what he knows and what he does not know: the former does not. One concludes, the other questions – two very different language games* (1984, xxv).

And as Ryle points out:

> *the excogitation of a theory, or of a comprehensive and explanatory narrative, is not a morning's task....Its development is a gradual, fitful and intermittent affair....Ideas have to be weeded out, or pruned back or transplanted; the soil has to be left fallow; pests have to be poisoned, and so on.* (1975, p. 42).

His point is that the construction of a theoretical argument is a gradual process like the construction of a garden and its justification is a matter of describing and explaining its evolutionary character.

Is it possible to know about what is real within such a context of overlapping, differing and conflicting perspectives that also include my own? The second part of this thesis is an investigation into the relationship between knowledge and everyday reality. Philosophical, sociological and psychological perspectives will be explored and the evolving theoretical development will be employed to re-examine the nature and status of my Lowfield inquiry.

> *This is a mode of inquiry that moves between intervention, action, research and reflection into more abstract philosophy and theory – and back again* (Professor Morwenna Griffiths' comments on this particular piece of work, 2000).

I will incorporate data from the Lowfield inquiry into the developing argument. This will not invalidate the theoretical development because it is the nature and status of the inquiry that is in question, particular data, like words or numbers are not.

As the reader, you may well be asking where 'Truth' comes into all this. Am I not, after all, constructing a framework on what, at best, is unreliable data? Developing further our discussion on representation, how do we know whether the things we tell each other are true or untrue and can we differentiate between the two? Bridges (1999, pp. 601-608) summarises five theories of truth: as Correspondence, as Coherence, as 'what works' Pragmatism, as Consensus and as Warranted Belief. He appears to agree with Ewing (1951, p.60) that 'the only way of determining the criterion or criteria (for truth) is to investigate the different kinds of well-authenticated knowledge and belief. We cannot do with just one criterion of truth'. The concept of truth, however, is inextricably bound up with the concepts of knowledge and belief. For instance, Donald Davidson makes out a case that 'we have reason to believe many of our beliefs cohere with many others, and in that case we have reason to believe many of our beliefs are true' (Davidson, 1989, p. 307). Argument based on further reading and analysis (see chapter ten) leads me to investigate the relationship between knowledge and belief and to question this statement and its implication that reason has such a strong impact on belief.

The problems involved in getting to grips with a working definition of what is true lead me to reconsider what it is about my ethnographic research that I find so troubling. If I have serious questions about it now, why did it appear so genuine and 'real' to me at the time and why do I still find this so today? My concern to pursue a truth in what is real is more important to me than to look for what is really true! This is why I find a definition put forward by John Dewey so appealing. He substitutes 'warranted assertability' for 'truth' (1938), proposing that it is arrived at by means of inquiry and that inquiry, itself, necessarily

produces it (Interestingly, Bertrand Russell outlines succinctly Dewey's theoretical position yet appears to miss the point by accusing him of circularity, 1946, pp. 778). The issue I am essentially concerned about is the nature of this piece of social reality that I am investigating and what it is possible to define and know about it. I need a more precise grounding in the more orthodox philosophical traditions of discussing knowledge and truth. All this is only relevant because of its practical consequences and so it is important to have the practical in all its complexity. So my argument will be, necessarily, curtailed and more to broad-brush rather than to fine-line.

To do this, **(A)** I will first attempt to establish an epistemological basis for our capacity to know and understand. I will clarify the relationship between sensory experience, believing and knowing about. This leads on to a linked discussion on the nature of consciousness and perception because I will be dealing with the latter as an aspect of the former. An epistemological grounding for theoretical development will be established and will be developed further as we continue our journey. **(B)** From here I proceed to develop a line of argument that proposes we employ two perspectives to create our realities; one is a process of change perspective and the other a here-and-now perspective. **(C)** I then go on to scrutinize constructs of thought that develop from a shared language and the ways in which we employ them to construct our worlds and our concepts of ourselves within these worlds. **(D)** This leads into a more detailed investigation of 'power' as a construct in human discourse and of the centrality of culture as the foundation for human involvement in everyday reality. Throughout, the theoretical development is continually related to the ethnographic inquiry. **(E)** To conclude, the expanded theoretical concept is discussed in relation to the original ethnographic inquiry and to how I might have constructed my role as researcher differently. Its implications are drawn for future research. This, then, is a map for my second journey. Where it will lead us will have significant implications for ethnographic research within the sphere of mainstream education.

Finally, I wish to return to David Hume. He outlines his hypothesis thus:

> *that all our reasonings concerning causes and effects are derived from nothing but custom; and that belief is more properly an act of the sensitive, than the cogitative part of our natures* (1962, p. 234).

In the second part of this project we will be examining the nature of belief and at the role this plays in our understanding of social reality. In a sense this will be a tribute to the penetrating and courageous thought of David Hume and an attempt to delineate belief, to reconcile and integrate it with the 'cogitative part of our natures'.

# Chapter Ten. Knowledge, belief and consciousness: a search for social reality.

In this chapter, we move forward from my crisis in perception, described in the previous chapter, to a search for how we can locate what is real for us in our social dealings with each other. We will be exploring some questions thrown up within the more orthodox philosophies about knowing, believing and being aware. We begin by questioning the validity of current methods used by teachers to assess pupil performance and link this to my doubts about the validity of my own assessment of teachers, pupils and parents in Lowfield. We develop this questioning approach further by exploring those sceptical arguments that challenge our capacity to know and to understand. Our argument results in the separation of knowledge (in the sense of knowing about) from belief and will establish grounding for my ethnographic study of Lowfield. From here we will begin to build up a theoretical framework for exploring areas of our material worlds and of ourselves that are accessible to our understanding and capacity to know about. We start with a discussion of the nature of consciousness and perception, since I will be dealing with the latter as an aspect of the former. We encounter similar difficulties with both regarding the constitution of phenomena and this leads us into a consideration of pre-linguistic experiences. We infer from this the existence of pre-linguistic perception and, leading on from this, that sensations and thoughts require no justification, that all other certainties arise from belief and that our linguistic awareness is about constructing frameworks for communication.

## 10.1. Questioning the validity of my research.

The completion of my ethnographic journey is followed by the crisis in perception to which I refer in the previous chapter. This leads me to question the validity of my observations and interpretations of the pupil, parent and teacher behaviours in the Lowfield inquiry. I know this is an argument going back to Descartes and Hume. I shall be developing this argument with reference to sources that, for the most part, are pre-1990s. This is because arguments around knowledge and belief are not currently the focus of philosophical debate but I will demonstrate that they still have an active and useful life in relation to the uses of research and education.

I am defining formal education as any systematic means of addressing intellectual, social, cultural and moral development. The systematic means under consideration is the State education system as it applies to the Lowfield community. My definition is couched in terms of a process, a means by which something is achieved. Those undertaking such a process are often assessed in terms of levels of performance relating to other peers within a work group or to certain fixed standards of achievement arrived at by those administering the education system. A case can be made against both these methods of assessment on the grounds that either is essentially arbitrary. Peers differ not only in terms of performance but also in factors contributing to performance such as natural ability, variability of access to educational resources, compatibility with the educational setting and motivation. None of

these (apart from natural ability - and that only incidentally) are taken into consideration when assessing performance by either means. This is no argument against methods of assessment per se but it does question the validity of assessments arrived at by such means.

My study acknowledges that teachers use both these methods of assessment, formally and informally, within their school environment. It also draws attention to another approach that attempts to integrate assessment of performance more closely with the methods used by teachers to educate their pupils. This approach, adopted by some of the teachers and used alongside the established methods of assessment and teaching, struggles to grapple with a number of factors that they consider having significant bearing on academic performance. These factors include positive teacher/pupil relationships and attempts to understand something about the differing socio-economic, cultural, behavioural and learning patterns that exist between pupils and their effects on educational attainment. The teachers who adopt this method of approach to the education of their pupils appear to correspond most closely to the methods described by pupils as those more conducive to learning.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines the verb `to learn' as `get knowledge of (subject) or skill in (art etc.) by study, experience, or being taught'. If I am questioning my own capacity to learn from my experiences in Lowfield, am I not also putting the whole issue of learning and what it is possible to know to the test? The pupils from Lowfield attend their schools in order to acquire knowledge and skills. We cannot, now, accept this statement at face value. It may not be possible for anyone to acquire knowledge of anything. Again, this is an argument that stretches back to Descartes and Hume. The source of this problem lies in certain well-known sceptical arguments associated with the theory of knowledge.

## 10.2. Knowledge, understanding and belief.

I propose to explore those sceptical arguments that challenge whether we have a capacity to know and to understand. I am taking a secondary source as my starting point as I want to take an overview and use it to bring the sceptical arguments together. I am particularly indebted to Jonathan Dancy's *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology* for the explanation and development of the sceptical arguments to which I will be referring. I take full responsibility, however, for the development of my own argument and for the conclusions I have drawn.

The first sceptical argument that I shall consider is our ability to know anything about ourselves or about the world around us. It involves the proposition that we do not know that we are not brains suspended in vats and being fed our experiences by external means (Nozick, 1981, pp. 167-71; though he is not the originator of the idea, he puts it pithily). This argument relies on the logical principle that we always know to be true any propositions we know to be the consequences of a proposition we know. It will be noted that this principle, itself, admits that knowledge, in the sense of `to know that', is possible. It contains, however, a closure principle, since the move from something known to something known to be implied by it does not take us outside a clearly defined area of knowledge.

Within these terms the proposition still holds, because nothing in our experience can be presented as evidence that we are not brains in vats (Dancy, 1985, pp. 10-11).

But does this logical principal hold up under the light of its own scrutiny? It does not, because it claims that it is possible to know without proving that it is possible to know. If it was possible to produce an argument that proved the possibility to know, that argument could be used to prove or disprove our original proposition. It is a limitation within the structure of logical thought that is being exposed here and, to a greater or lesser extent, in the arguments that attempt to counter the riddles thrown up by the sceptics. They are, in effect, riddles designed to test those areas with which logical thought is least able to cope. It may be that the sphere of inductive thought is more appropriate in re-formulating and addressing the type of questions raised by the sceptics. I will return to this line of argument later in this chapter.

Getting back to our main argument, we are left with the conclusion that it is not possible for us to state that we know whether or not we are brains suspended in vats. 'To know' means being able to supply evidence to back up our proposition. Having discounted the possibility of doing so, we have concluded that we cannot claim to know. This holds good for any proposition the truth of which we are unable to verify (which, in effect, covers everything!). If we cannot be certain about anything, it follows that neither can we be confident in regarding some beliefs as being more justified than others. So, this sceptical argument deprives us not only of knowledge but also of true justified belief (ibid, pp. 8-9). Does this mean, however, that we do not understand this or any other proposition, the truth of which we are unable to verify or have justification in believing?

Certainly, if we link understanding with either a theory of knowledge or justified belief, we cannot claim to understand; but do we need to do so? I may not know or be justified in my belief that I am sitting in a chair writing this paper, but I can understand the proposition that I am doing so. Indeed, if we return to our sceptical argument, we can understand the argument itself. It is only if we consider that we know we understand it, or whether we are justified in doing so, that we become ensnared by it. What I am proposing here is that understanding is its own justification (we're here because we're here because we're here because we're here). Understanding, in this sense, is to do with being conscious and the awareness that accompanies consciousness. I will develop this train of thought further when we consider perception a little later. For the time being, we can make out a case that leaves understanding intact so long as we do not link it with a theory of knowledge or justified belief.

We are now in a position to leave discussion of knowledge and justified belief to one side. It is possible to continue our examination on the basis of our claim that we are able to understand propositions concerning both, so long as this does not commit us to claim that we can know (in the sense of `know that') or be justified in believing either.

Dancy (ibid, pp. 25-36) puts forward the standard account that defines knowledge as justified true belief. In accepting this definition he avoids discussing the question of whether knowledge necessarily implies belief and we will be examining this ourselves a little later in this chapter. For the present we will accept Dancy's premise and follow the line of argument that he develops. This is the regress argument and states that one belief is inferred from another or others and that there must be some beliefs that are justified non-inferentially (ibid, pp. 55-57). The claim that there are two forms of justification, one inferential and the other non-inferential creates a problem for us. How do we define non-inferential beliefs? We cannot claim that our beliefs about our sensory states can provide this because we can make both verbal and (more fundamentally) substantive errors in our descriptions of our sensory states. We are, therefore, left with the conclusion that, if all justification is inferential, no belief is more than conditionally justified.

But, this last sentence presents a difficulty. The statement `all justification is inferential', in terms of the regress argument, can be taken as either an inferential or a non-inferential belief. In the former case it merely reverts to its meaning as stated in my sentence. In the latter case, however, it will have to go through the whole process again and, at each stage, the statement will become increasingly refined and will continue ad infinitum. In other words, we will never reach a definitive statement that satisfies the criterion of non-inferential belief. Therefore, justification by inference is a reasonable basis for proceeding.

In our understanding of knowledge we have begun to define it in terms of being justified by inference. We cannot claim to know that this is the case, for that would imply a non-inferential basis for knowledge - which we have failed to establish. The term `true' now has to be subtracted from our original definition of knowledge as `justified true belief'. As long as we equate knowledge in some way with belief we have to conclude that we have not proved a case for it. In terms of the standard account, we cannot justify using the term.

Notwithstanding the above, there is a further description of knowledge that severs it from justified belief. Merrill Ring has delineated this in an interesting way (1977, pp. 51-59). He traces its origins back to Socrates, arguing that the passage from justified belief to knowledge does not entail a carry-over. One still retains one's belief but this is a separate state from knowledge. He uses the analogy of being a father and then proceeding to be a grandfather. The two roles are separate, although one cannot be a grandfather without first becoming a father. His aim is to show `that knowing is not believing'. Ring claims that to associate the term `that' with both knowledge and belief makes grammatical sense, but that enquiry words such as `why', 'how', 'where', 'what' only make sense when used as attributes of the verb `to know' and not as attributes of the verb `to believe'. One can ask `what?' of both knowledge and belief but `why?' applies only to belief and `how?' only to knowledge. By citing Wittgenstein (1958, #371 and #373), he advances the case that there are significant grammatical differences (Ring, p.58) and that these differences amount to not just a quantitative shift but to a qualitative one.

> *Knowing is not a (true) belief which is very, very, well supported. At some point to acquire more "evidence" is to move into a radically different web of language*

*with consequent alterations in behaviour and feelings.*

This last passage throws up another aspect of Ring's thesis; that different possibilities open up for us in terms of feelings and actions as we shift between belief and knowledge.

We have to be careful, here, about our assumptions regarding our description of knowledge. Wittgenstein claims that `knowledge and certainty belong to different categories' (1969, #308). So, if to know and to believe are disparate verbs and knowledge is categorically separate from certainty, where does this leave us? When discussing Dancy, we were led to the conclusion that knowledge, if defined as justified true belief, is likely to remain unproven and, as long as we continue to link knowledge with belief, the term lacks justification. It becomes, therefore, both irrelevant and misleading as a concept. Ring has demonstrated that it is possible to separate knowledge from belief in such a way that our understanding places each in a different grammatical category. The result enables us not only to think differently about knowledge and belief but also to behave differently in relationship to each. The well-known aria from Handel's oratorio `Messiah' begins with the words `I know that my redeemer liveth'. As it is a statement about knowledge we can ask how this is known. By substituting `believe' for `know' we cannot ask the same question, but we can ask why.

'Why' and 'how' come from different sub-divisions of the category 'question'. Differences between them can be seen as quantitative rather than qualitative. A qualitative difference would only apply in the case of a category shift. (An example of this is supplied by Wittgenstein (1969, #30; 'Knowledge and certainty belong to different categories'). As we have seen, Ring argues that there is a qualitative difference between knowledge and belief which is accounted for because knowledge is inextricably evidence-orientated whereas belief is not. It is only when we link justification with a particular belief that evidence becomes a factor. In this case, however, justification is not being sought for the quality of belief. We realize now that knowledge and belief, if we accept them as belonging to different categories, appropriate different sub-divisions of questions, the term `how?' being particularly applicable to knowledge.

Is there any connection between Ring's claim (p. 143) that it is possible to construct a category for knowledge separate from that of belief and our concept of understanding? This encompasses and forms part of a category that includes comprehension, perception of meaning, grasping mentally, having intelligence, power of apprehension and power of abstract thought. We can apply our understanding to both knowledge and belief.

The sceptical arguments have demolished our claim to knowledge only in so far as 'to know that' (i.e. for certain). Our claim 'to know how' remains unchallenged. The enquiry words why, how, where and what can be posited after both the verbs to know and to understand. As is the case with the verb 'to know', we can ask `how?' but not `why?' (i.e. `for what reason') of 'to understand'. Qualitatively, both verbs would appear to belong together. Ring has not dealt with the tricky problem tackled by Dancy concerning 'knowledge that'. He comes at it obliquely by way of Ryle (1949, pp. 133-134), Austin (1961, pp. 46, 48) and Wittgenstein in maintaining that we can never be certain (Ring, 1977, p. 58). Creating a

fissure between knowledge and certainty entails the invalidity of knowledge that; although Ring does not specifically make that point. There is a significant difference between stating that I can be certain and I can know for certain. In declaring the statement of belief 'I know that my redeemer liveth' I may maintain that I am certain in my belief but I may not maintain that I know that I am certain in my belief.

We can postulate knowledge excluding the epithet `that'. Exclusion of this epithet means it cannot be applied to other attributes of knowledge and so certainty cannot be an attribute of knowledge. We can justify the use of the term `cannot be applied' since our use of it has been arrived at inferentially (p. 143) and we have already concluded that this is a reasonable method of procedure (Is 'certainty', then, an attribute of belief, since it cannot be an attribute of knowledge? – see p. 150).

Semantically, knowledge and understanding are qualitatively related and understanding entails those attributes of consciousness and awareness (p. 144) that enable us to make sense of our knowledge. In relation to belief, understanding entails those attributes of consciousness and awareness but, in this case, enables us to acknowledge and recognize (as distinct from 'to make sense of') the beliefness of belief. Belief, as distinct from beliefs, is not qualitatively compatible with knowledge, as we have argued above and is, therefore, in a separate category from the making sense aspects of understanding that relate to understanding knowledge. The nature of belief is only accessible to the sort of understanding that recognizes its own capacity to believe, as distinct from the sort of understanding that makes sense of knowledge including the validation and invalidation of statements of belief. Leading on from this, can one justify belief? When we attempt to justify we find that we are seeking to prove or disprove a proposition, not belief. Propositions belong, qualitatively, not to belief, but to knowledge. It is only at this stage and in this form that we can apply our knowledge/understanding axis, not to 'beliefness', but to statements arising from belief. We cannot gain access to the nature of belief through the knowledge/understanding axis because the questions we ask do not make sense. In order to talk about matters bearing on belief we have to formulate propositions that can be addressed by knowledge and such formulations necessarily bring about qualitative change by becoming 'beliefs'.

We have now radically changed the relationship between understanding, knowledge and belief that we started with earlier. Then, there appeared to be a progression from belief to justified belief and on to justified true belief. Justified true belief, it was proposed, amounted to knowledge. Now, we have isolated knowledge from belief and related both to understanding. We have jettisoned certainty and proposed that any link between justification and belief would be the result of a coming together of two separate qualitative entities - which is hardly likely to be possible. In other words, belief does not depend upon knowledge, neither does knowledge depend upon belief, but our understanding enables us to relate, albeit in different ways, to both.

As an example we can examine the following quotation from Stephen Hawking's `Reader's Companion to A Brief History of Time'. Raymond Laflamme, a former student of Hawking, is

explaining that his tutor had set him a problem to work out and that, usually, Hawking had a good idea of what the answer to such a problem should be. Each time Laflamme returned with the same answer and each time Hawking resisted accepting it by suggesting possible errors or omission in the calculations.

> *At that moment Don Sage came in and he said 'Raymond, I'm really interested by that because I get roughly the same thing. But from a different way'.*
>
> *So we decided we had to convince Stephen we were correct in that particular field - which was the arrow of time. I remember Don telling me, 'We're better off to go slowly and convince Stephen of our assumptions before telling him the result, because if we tell him the result and it's not the result he wants, he will conclude something is wrong with our assumptions'. Instead, we decided to lay down our assumptions correctly so that Stephen would agree before we told him the result. So together we worked on Stephen for about a month, and finally we convinced him we were right* (ibid, pp. 165-6. The underlining is mine.).

Laflamme's calculations led to an answer incompatible with Hawking's belief. This created an impasse, since successfully producing evidence against a proposition to which a belief is attached will not necessarily change the belief. With the help of Sage, common ground of other shared belief (in this case, the correct grounding of assumptions) was found. This pre-disposed all three men favourably to a common methodology. Laflamme's answer then became acceptable to Hawking because the answer was of less importance than the method by which it had been reached. Laflamme and Sage had understood (in belief/understanding terms) 'the beliefness of belief' and how to shift it. And this method of shifting belief included a belief/understanding adoption of common ground allied to a knowledge/understanding approach to the scientific problem.

As we have demonstrated, belief is incredibly difficult to pin down. When we attempt to grasp the meaning we find that we are talking about something else, about propositions, questions of faith, statements, not beliefness. Even so, as Laflamme's dilemma reveals, beliefness has a powerful impact on the way we think and feel that is qualitatively different from the way we think and feel about knowledge. It has a bearing on the way we go about our business but is separate from formulation since inaccessible to knowledge. Value, attitude and intuition may well have more in common with beliefness (as it may now be more appropriate to designate the quality of belief) than with knowledge.

We have come to the conclusion that knowledge other than `knowledge that' is conceptually distinct from our capacity to believe. This conclusion is important to me because it has evolved from the crisis in perception that I identified in the previous chapter (pp. 135-137). I needed to establish a more precise grounding in the more orthodox philosophical traditions of discussing knowledge and truth. This conclusion is only relevant because of the practical consequences of the research I have undertaken in the Lowfield area. I am not looking for truth or certainty but what I can know about what I experienced there and what is real for me in my encounters with the pupils, parents and teachers. So I need to side step certainty in the guise of 'to know that' and 'the beliefness of belief'. This conclusion means that what I

say the teachers and family members tell me about their lives, each other and their experiences of education (i.e. the data) are knowable but these data are uncertain. In other words, I am unable to know for certain that what they tell me and what I say they tell me is true. We now have the grounding for integrating my ethnographic data within a new theoretical framework. This gives us a basis for exploring those aspects of the material world and ourselves that are qualitatively accessible to our understanding and capacity to `know about'.

### 10.3. Consciousness and perception.

The next stage in developing our theoretical framework involves us in exploring the means by which we understand and know about things that are important and real to us. This takes us into a consideration of the nature of consciousness and perception. Can we define consciousness and how we encounter the material world (bearing in mind that we cannot prove that the material world exists)?

The 20th century Austrian painter, Oscar Kokoschka, describes consciousness as:

> *the source of all things and of all conceptions. It is a sea ringed about with visions. My mind is the tomb of all those things which have ceased to be, the true hereafter into which they enter.* (Hoffmann, 1947, p.287)

There is identification, here, of mind with consciousness, which is seen as both source and depository of the artist's experience of existence. It can be read as a potent and poetic metaphor, describing the visionary quality of this late expressionist painter's approach to his work, and left at that. Indeed, for those who know his work the metaphor appears particularly apt to this peculiarly individual artist. But what has this to do with those of us who do not claim to be artists and who may look askance at a view of consciousness that claims it is the creator and burier of our world?

Berger and Luckmann (1966, pp. 34-35) have developed a phenomenological perspective to the social construction of reality. Using Husserl et al. they relate their philosophy to sociological methods. For them consciousness is always intentional and intends or is directed towards objects. These objects may be external, like the New York City skyline, or internal such as identifying a personal anxiety. They consider consciousness to be the means by which we identify and differentiate between multiple realities (e.g. between people in dreams from people we meet with in everyday life). The reality of everyday life is put forward as 'the reality par excellence' because

> *the tension of consciousness is highest in everyday life, that is, the latter imposes itself upon consciousness, in the most massive, urgent and intense manner* (ibid, p. 35).

We now have two accounts of consciousness. Both agree that it is intentional in nature and the Berger/Luckmann claim that consciousness identifies multiple realities accords with Kokoschka's definition. It is in the identification of the reality of everyday life above all other realities that sharply defines the division between them; or, rather, the differences between how Kokoschka describes everyday life and how the phenomenologists describe it. The

Austrian painter implies a holistic attitude to the various manifestations of consciousness whereas Berger/Luckmann ascribe priority to those manifestations that relate directly to the social and material world. This, inevitably, places the phenomenologist in the position of needing to relate this priority reality with these other realities. This is achieved by grouping them together as aspects of subjective meaning. It is the relationship between subjective meaning and social/material reality that defines the phenomenological position. In addition, Berger/Luckmann reinforce their priority reality by ascribing to it the status of certainty.

> *It will be enough for our purpose, to define 'reality' as a quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition (we cannot `wish them away'), and to define `knowledge' as the certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics* (ibid, p. 13).

Earlier in this chapter we argued that knowledge does not imply certainty. We cannot, therefore, be certain that phenomena are real, only that we are able to understand and know characteristics pertaining to them.

For the moment we will lay aside discussion of the alternative holistic approach to consciousness implied by Oscar Kokoschka's statement and concentrate on those aspects of consciousness that focus on the material world. This brings us to a consideration of the nature of perception and how we apprehend what is going on in the material world. Perceptions might seem easier to deal with at this stage, having a more obvious relation to 'data'. However, the same difficulties arise as do with consciousness.

Heil argues that perception is the activity by which we pick up information and acquire beliefs about our surroundings. The stimuli with which we are saturated (light, radiation, pressure waves and so forth) are structured by the objects and events comprising that environment (1983, p. 216). In order to acquire this information not only must we possess the necessary sensory equipment (taste, smell, etc.) but also the ability to make sense of it, to obtain beliefs about our world. He admits that:

> *What one is capable of perceiving depends in some measure on beliefs one already possesses* (ibid, p. 217).

But he considers it does not follow that perception consists of imposing structure on an inchoate `pre-conceptual' sensory mass. A biologist and a non-biologist would bring different concepts to bear on the perception of a butterfly but it does not follow from this that we all see different things, only that we see things differently.

But can we be sure that we all see the same things? Let us consider the phenomenon of hallucination. G. F. Reed (1979, p. 163) regards the classical definition of hallucination, `perception without an object', as being inadequate. The absence of object is necessary but the experience of the person concerned possesses:

> *those phenomenological attributes which differentiate perception from images.*

In other words, the person cannot differentiate her/his perceptual state from the one in which he/she was not hallucinating. One can draw from this the conclusion that both perceptual states are equally real to the person experiencing them: the only difference being the location of the stimuli. All perceptions, therefore, are subjective. How can we be sure,

though, that the person supposedly hallucinating is not perceiving objects in the material world of which others are unaware; or the corollary to this, that our perceptions of external reality can be equally at fault?

One attempt to deal with this predicament is to consider that the difference between perception of the real world and the perception of hallucination lies in whether the perception fits other beliefs well. Surely, on this basis, it should be possible to identify those inconsistencies that identify hallucination. In order to proceed with this line of argument we would have to accept the proposition that the more coherent the set of beliefs the more likely are those beliefs to be true. We find that we are left with sets of formulae, some more coherent than others. Some arguments are valid and others are not but all models have both valid and invalid arguments in them. We cannot proceed in making this the principle by which we determine what constitutes external reality because, by doing so, we beg the question. We do not know whether external reality (should it exist) obeys the rules of logic that are applicable to the testing of propositions.

Returning to the problem of hallucination, it may be possible to tackle this from another angle. We cannot be certain about the location of our stimuli but we can know about the existence of stimuli. And we can know about the existence of stimuli in the same way that we can know about experiences occurring, whether we are brains in vats or not. Can we go further than this and propose `that experiences exist' or, in Descartian terms, `that thoughts exist' even though we have already concluded that we cannot prove that it is possible to `know that'? (Even if it were possible, proof of this sort would not constitute knowledge, but certainty.) What we are doing here is exploring the possibility of postulating certainty without justification, and the parameters that *could be justified* for this postulation.

The argument that I now wish to develop will bring us back to our earlier discussion concerning alternative descriptions of consciousness and to a re-consideration of the nature of perceptual relationships that may exist between the world(s) we inhabit and ourselves. We all experience sensations that we learn to identify through words. Pain, warmth, smells, colours and different intensities of light will be experienced, although some of us may be blind or deaf and unable to encounter directly or fully through one or more senses. These experiences will be available to us well before we acquire a language whereby we are able to identify and talk about them. We are conscious of these experiences before we are able to understand anything about them.

Sellars (1963) throws an interesting light on this. He draws distinction between awareness as discriminative behaviour and awareness 'in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says' (ibid, p. 169). Our awareness in the former sense we share with rats, amoebas and computers and is a matter of reliable signalling. He proposes that we cannot 'have a concept of something because we have noticed that sort of thing by reason of having the ability to notice a sort of thing is already to have a concept of that sort of thing' (ibid, p. 176). Understanding, knowledge and concepts are all bound up with the acquisition of language. Pre-linguistically, we just register that we have pain and other

discrete sensations. Now, we may jib at the notion that, when operating pre-linguistically, we share common ground with rats, amoebas and computers. This does not mean that our ability to function as discriminative organisms does not differ from rats, amoebas and computers or that the implications of such differences for humans, rats, amoebas and computers will not differ accordingly. I suggest that the way in which we function as pre-linguistic awareness discriminators (and this incorporates our brain, nerves, tissue, muscle, bone etc) has implications for us as human beings, in the same way that the ratness of rats, the amoebaness of amoebas and the computerness of computers has for other discriminating identities. In Sellars' terms, the acquisition of language enables us to form concepts and to talk about our experiences. We literally make sense of things. Sellars does not attempt to provide a link between these two states of awareness. Indeed, it is possible for us to know about aspects of our world of which we have no direct experience (for example, a deaf from birth person studying music). Conversely, our direct experiences through our senses are beyond our capacities to communicate (we can talk about touch but cannot talk touch).

We have been able to deduce pre-linguistic perception. Because this is pre-linguistic it is not subject to justification, since justification is an attribute of and cognition a faculty of knowledge. The leap from pre-linguistic perception to linguistic perception, I am suggesting, involves not just the acquisition of language but has to take into account our growth and development as human organisms. We encounter our environment as toddlers in significantly different ways than we do as babies in the first few months of our lives. As we become more active our environment not only impinges on us, we begin to impinge more on our surroundings. If we regard our pre-linguistic state of awareness as discriminative signalling that will continue into our adult lives, our linguistic state awareness can be seen as bound up with our maturation as human organisms and the encounters we have with the world around us. We have already concluded, however, that we cannot be certain that the outside world exists. How, therefore, can we propose that our linguistic awareness relates to encounters with something that may not exist? This is the impasse of scepticism and it is created by our capacity to function in our state of linguistic awareness. Certainty has nothing to do with the way we think, construct language or make sense of the data that flow through our brains. Our linguistic awareness is about constructing frameworks.

We can be certain that we possess pre-linguistic awareness (whether we are brains in vats or not). We can also be certain that thoughts exist as Descartes has demonstrated through the process of Cartesian doubt. Descartes claimed but did not prove a connection between thinker and thought. His presumption was that thought implies someone to think it. If we are brains in vats, though experiences may be fed to us, we are capable of processing thoughts. As the recipient of thoughts and experiences we need not doubt participation in existence, though the nature of that participation remains undefined. All other certainties arise from our beliefs (So the answer to the question in brackets on p. 145 is 'yes').

At some point we find that, in order to function at all and in order not to collapse into a state of total confusion and madness, decisions must be made. I can acknowledge existence but

there is no evidence to support a decision as to the nature of such existence. I have decided, instead of attempting to get around this dilemma, to grasp it by the horns. I will accept both the limitations of knowledge as we have defined it and the possibility of multiple realities. In other words that there is the possibility that I am a brain in a vat but there may also be a world or worlds out there. On the basis of being a brain in a vat, although I can understand the processes that I am describing, I would not be writing this sentence and you, as reader, would not be reading it: end of story. The other possibility is that I am a sentient human being who functions as the composer of this literary prose and you, another sentient human being, are able to comprehend the words I have written. The realities associated with this latter scenario are those I have decided to explore in this thesis.

Having made a decision on this approach, I have now set down a certain parameter and this parameter remains as long as I decide to maintain it. It is made on a basis of belief and it is not subject to any other conditions - for example, logic - unless I so decide. This parameter, therefore, functions as an area of containment for the way I decide, at the moment, to function. Parameters such as this or a collection of related ones can provide us with a sense of identity, security, purpose and continuity in an otherwise changing world. The stable nature of such parameters and their relative immunity to cognitive penetration mean that they can provide rich soil for the growth of beliefs. The quality of establishing such parameters I have called 'beliefness'. We should bear in mind that, within the context of belief that I have just established, knowledge and the experiences of our senses do not exist in a vacuum but within a social context that contains a variety of accepted beliefs. Developments in our capacities to know about can challenge accepted beliefs and can, in turn be challenged by them. Over time, though, this interchange between knowledge, sensory experiences and beliefs can transform the contextual parameters that we adopt to define reality.

The last paragraph defines the theoretical basis for the second part of this study. Bearing this in mind, we can now return to our earlier discussion concerning alternative descriptions of consciousness as defined respectively by Oscar Kokoschka and Berger/Luckmann. Kokoschka's description appears to group together both pre-linguistic and linguistic awareness in a synthesis and incorporate into this synthesis a conception of the mind that functions as a repository for memories. The Berger/Luckmann approach is to separate strands of consciousness, giving higher significance to one (the social/material world) than to others and providing a means whereby they can be connected (in terms of the subjective meanings people apply to their experiences). It will be seen that the latter approach is much more structured, befitting a view of consciousness as a means of identifying and differentiating realities. We have no means of knowing which approach is likely to be more valid. We could, of course, employ the Kokoschka model to analyze the Berger/Luckmann and vice versa. The analytical nature of the Berger/Luckmann system would give it an advantage here, but we would be left with the conclusion that one model is more coherently structured than the other, not that one is more likely to correspond with the way in which social reality is apprehended. A further definition of consciousness is provided by Dennett (1993) who contends that consciousness is a series of meandering sequences or streams

(ibid, pp. 214 & 253) and that 'there is no motivated way to draw a line dividing the events that are definitely "in" consciousness from the events that stay for ever "outside" or "beneath" consciousness' (ibid, p. 275). He maintains that 'every agent has to know which thing in the world it is!' (ibid, p. 427). This 'thing' for him is not a self but a representation of a self. Through streams of consciousness these self-representations grow in our brains, 'thereby equipping the bodies they control with responsible selves when all goes well' (ibid, p. 430). This explanation of the function of consciousness and the growth of self-representation (and thus, self-conception) appears to be congruent with our own developing theoretical construct. Even so, the same conclusion can be drawn should we submit this theoretical perspective to a similar analysis. Applying this to my Lowfield analysis, it would appear to be one of many possible accounts and the same status would appear to apply to our emerging theory.

All this demonstrates that we have a variety of approaches to the way we apprehend social reality and that our constructed realities are formed at the changing interface between our knowledge about, our sensual experiences and our beliefs. By accepting this and by identifying areas of agreement and differences we may be in a position, by encountering each other in a search for common ground, to enrich and transform our own constructed realities. Psychologically, our theoretical development from here will be both subjectivist and constructivist in nature.

## 10.4. The theoretical development so far.

- The capacity to process thought (i.e. to think and know about) exists but we cannot prove through logic that we exist as social beings.
- The capacity for pre-linguistic sensory awareness exists.
- The quality of belief (i.e. beliefness) exists and does not depend on logical thought. Our certainties arise from our capacity to believe. Without this capacity the construction of the social world would not be possible.
- Our social realities are constructed and are formed at the interface between knowledge, sensory experiences and beliefs.
- These realities are dynamic in nature. The 'real' for us is neither certain nor eternally fixed.

## 10.5. Conclusion.

So, we now have a theoretical development but does this help me to address the crisis of perception identified in the previous chapter? It validates my account of a series of social events without giving it privileged status in relation to other possible accounts of the same events. The theory proposes that my account is a construction of social reality based on my beliefs, experience and capacity to think about these things. It implies that the basis for my constructions can change over time and that it is only my belief in them that will provide me with any sense of certainty in a changing and unpredictable meeting ground with the ways I experience and think about my social world. I am, therefore, taking up a relativist position regarding my empirical research. The implications for my ethnographic study and for

educational research are that the accounts of all those involved in the events under consideration need to be given equal consideration.

## Chapter Eleven. Two perspectives on social reality.

The social reality or, perhaps more correctly, realities that we are attempting to define are formed by the interaction between sensory experiences, knowledge and belief within the context of current and available idea parameters. These realities are not fixed but change according to a variety of circumstances and cannot, therefore, be identified with either truth or certainty. Throughout this section of our undertaking we will endeavour to justify the theoretical premise set out in chapter ten. This will be justification in terms of its own internal logic. Since we are considering it as a contribution to knowledge, we can then test it against empirical data to see if it fits. We must bear in mind that if it does fit, it succeeds not in terms of truth/certainty but in terms of knowledge (i.e. 'knowledge about' as distinct from 'knowledge that').

We will also monitor the way in which our theory develops and evolves within the parameters already set down. We will keep in mind that although we will attempt to argue its logic this is not the same as maintaining that realities are necessarily coherent. We have suggested, in chapter ten (pp. 150-151), that the making of decisions is a means by which we can establish parameters. We can give reasons for making such decisions but the making of decisions, we have proposed, is a coming together of knowledge and belief. The volatile nature of the process by which we make decisions is an aspect of our reality. The relationship between an evolving theory that balances logic with empirical data that tend to affirm the changing and unpredictable nature of social reality is not going to be an easy one. For this reason, the capacity of this theoretical approach to provide a framework for empirical research will depend on its capacity continually to challenge its own premises.

Following on from our discussion of pre-linguistic and cognitive perception (pp. 149-150), we will develop a line of argument that builds from Sellars' distinction between awareness (perception) as discriminative behaviour and awareness as justified reasoning. In the introduction to this study I identify that I will be referring to aspects of my personal biography as they become relevant to the way I undertook my empirical research. As the reader, you may well be formulating questions around the ways in which my personal biography has contributed towards the position I have taken up so far. This may be an appropriate opportunity for me to relate events in my personal life to the decisions I have made in establishing the theoretical position outlined in chapter ten. In chapter nine I make reference to the disruption in my career as a social worker and its implication for the development of this study. In addition to being a social worker I am also an abstract artist and held two one-person exhibitions of my work between the onset of my crisis of perception (in both senses of the term) and writing the first draft of that chapter. The exhibitions gave me the opportunity to stand back and have a fresh look at how my paintings seemed to me to be developing. This more recent work appears to me now to pose a different and more ambiguous relationship between viewer and painting. Previously my abstracts had presented a fixed image blend of shape, colour and texture. Gradually this has changed and the viewer is confronted by an image that appears to move and shift while it is being observed. These optical effects, which I have created by manipulating the paint surface, challenge the viewer

(in a quite gentle way, really) to question the relationship between what is happening in the painting and what is happening within her/his own head.

I look back, with hindsight, at my work as a social worker, as a painter and as a writer. I am only making sense of these events at this point in time, from the perspective of *now*, not with the changing perspectives that were available to me as I was living through those events. The theoretical position we are developing, with its emphasis on the changing and conflicting contexts that make up our social realities, has emerged as a result of conscious thought. I have thought my way to this position. I am attempting to present these more recent events in my life as data contributing to the development of the emerging theory.

### 11.1. The two perspectives.

We are beginning to realise that the notion that there can be a connection between one event and another may be related to our capacity for hindsight: our ability to look back at events and to make sense of them. This is necessarily from a fixed standpoint in the here and now. The way we live, nevertheless, is quite different. We live in a constantly changing environment and our own bodies are changing along with that environment. It is the perspectives through which we perceive our existence that create our realities. Perhaps an appropriate analogue for a here-and-now perspective would be a collection of stills from a film, and for a process of change perspective the running of the film itself. One could select a number of stills for an exhibition in order to draw attention to certain facets of the film. One could, of course, use all the stills available from the film but decisions would be entailed as to their assembly as well as in whether or not to display them. The running of the film would not involve decisions as to reasoning, ordering or emphasis; nor could the exhibition of stills capture the illusion of movement created by film. This is not an argument against reasoning but an argument for placing reasoning in an appropriate context. The context we are proposing would involve one where decisions would be made retrospectively regarding matters such as ordering and emphasis. Its case can then be argued in relation to other retrospective accounts regarding ordering and emphasis.

Clearly there is a close relationship between the two perspectives. Experiences that do not make sense to us require some change in our here-and-now perspective in order to accommodate them; and other experiences that already do make sense are confirmed in this way. We can use hindsight to make sense of events without the need to allocate privileged status to here-and-now perspectives in relation to those concerning the process of change. Moreover, a here-and-now perspective of events need not entail a single viewpoint. We may employ alternate here-and-now perspectives to view the same events. The here-and-now perspective that I have outlined in looking back over recent events in my life has specifically excluded causality. This is because the causal approach attempts to explain the ordering of events with emphasis on their antecedents. Our approach, by way of contrast, focuses on the ways in which the evolution of events can be seen to interrelate, emphasising change and development.

So far, we have related our theoretical position to a consideration of certain events from my personal biography. This has emphasized the subjective nature of our theoretical premise. We have not, however, rejected causality or the validity of other premises as a result of this. We are claiming that our approach can stand alongside contrasting theoretical viewpoints and should be judged solely in terms of its own internal logic together with its ability to provide an adequate framework for empirical data. We have moved the theory forward by proposing that, in the light of empirical data from some of my own personal biography, it is possible to recognize the existence of two perspectives that operate concurrently on our perceptions of reality. There is one in which we are involved in the actual processes of change as they occur (our process of change perspective) and a second fixed-point here-and-now perspective where we order and emphasize aspects of our experiences retrospectively. This second perspective can, but need not, incorporate causality as a concept. The first involves us fully in processing our experiences of existence. The second enables us to make sense of those experiences by constructing frameworks of explanation based on a shared system of communication (p. 159ff). This shared system of communication is implied in the previous chapter and will be argued in the next.

Our theoretical perspective has evolved from our questioning of certain critical arguments in the field of epistemology. The leap from the trap that we may be brains suspended in vats has been justified by the logical argument that we are as likely to be human organisms operating in a physical environment. Either premise, however, can be valid for the development of our theoretical approach, since our access to data in both cases is through a combination of thought and sense signalling. We have proposed that our decision to accept the second alternative has been made on a basis not of logic but of necessity. The avoidance of making a decision leads to confusion and madness, we have proposed. This does not mean that we cannot bear in mind that the other alternative is a possibility but it does mean that the act of decision sets down a parameter and will affect all other decisions that we subsequently make.

It is interesting to note some comments made by John Wheeler when talking about quantum theory:

> *Quantum theory is something that is inescapable. It shows us that what we say happens, or what we have the right to say happens, is inescapably dependent on what choices of measurement we choose to make. This choice is irretrievable, there's no opportunity to reverse it, so that we have here a revolutionary side of the story of existence.* (Hawking, 1992, p. 145).

Our theoretical premise has points of similarity with Wheeler's views on quantum theory. We are stating that the decisions we make about our approach to realities have consequences for all further decisions that we make and that the viewpoint we take up to observe our realities involves us in the creation of those realities of which we form a part.

## 11.2. The way forward for our theory.

In the previous chapter we established an epistemological grounding and were able to affirm:

A. That pre-linguistic awareness exists.
B. That thoughts exist.
C. That the quality of beliefness exists.
D. That the capacity for reception of A, B and C exists.

There is no evidence to support a decision as to the nature of existence. Two possibilities remain:

1. There is a passive reception of external reality.
2. We are active participants in a reality or realities that include ourselves.

Both possibilities are accepted by this theory since access to data in both cases is through a combination of thought and sense signalling. Understanding and knowing about is capable with either possibility. Resulting from this, 'reality' cannot be identified with the characteristics of either truth or certainty. There is, therefore, no rational basis for choosing between these two possibilities; selection is made on the basis of belief and is not subject to justification.

**The development of the theory arising from the decision to accept option 2.**

- Once a decision is taken to accept that there is social reality and as long as it is acted upon, it has consequences for all future decisions.
- The positions we take up to observe our social realities involve us in the creation of those realities of which we form a part.
- There is a distinction between the logical development of this theory and the 'realities' it attempts to address. It cannot be argued that our 'realities' are either coherent or logical.
- In order to make sense of our realities we employ both **process of change** and **here-and-now perspectives.**

  **A process of change perspective** acknowledges that we live within constantly changing contexts, both biologically and socially; ones in which we are involved in the actual processes of change as they occur.

  **A here-and-now perspective** is one in which we order and emphasize aspects of our experiences retrospectively.

## 11.3. Implications for the way I undertook the Lowfield inquiry.

The pupils, parents and teachers whom I interview believe they are participating in a social reality that includes them and me. I share this belief. I am now proposing that we encounter each other on the basis of the positions we take up to observe our social realities. They and I are likely to differ from each other in this respect. As we encounter each other we will be experiencing this interaction in two ways; as a constantly changing sequence of events to which we continually adjust and interact, and by making sense of these events by relating them to the frameworks we have constructed and are constructing to explain our lives. The method I am employing to collect my data is situated within the context of this second here-and-now perspective. Throughout these interviews they and I continue to communicate on this basis. At the end of each interview I read back my construction of the sequence of events that we have shared. At this point I have already established a position of authority for my point of view in as much as I am asking my respondents to assent to or amend that position, not to challenge my right to assert it. Subsequently I use my written notes to

produce documents that I submit for further assent/amendment by my respondents. This further reinforces the position I have taken up. Later still I use the data I have collected to construct a further framework of explanation of my own.

The relationship between the here-and-now perspectives of my respondents and that of my own is not an equal one. I can claim that the ethnographic study that I have produced is true to the here-and-now perspective that I was operating at the time of writing and that this differs, in some respects, from the one I am now taking up. Both these perspectives have ascendancy over those of my respondents yet I cannot claim that this gives my account or any subsequent account I may make from my own perspective more defensible than any they may have made or will make. There is a fundamental issue of power bound up with the way I undertook my research and reached my conclusions

## 11.4. Conclusion.

We have identified two perspectives that we employ in attempting to access the realities that we are experiencing. As researcher, my own here-and-now perspective has taken precedence over those of my correspondents and this raises a fundamental issue of power between them and me. The nature of this power relationship has important consequences for the way in which I undertook this research and for its outcome. In the next chapter we will develop this argument further. For the present, we are left with an abstract account of perception and consciousness (i.e. it is a philosophical account). We now need to relate this to the psychological and sociological, to Theory, because the purpose and intention is to examine the findings of my earlier investigation. This means examining the conclusion, the validity of its construction as well as the Theory underpinning it.

In the following chapter perceptions/experiences will be considered in terms of hypothetical constructs and shared understanding, using our theory and the data from my inquiry.

# Chapter twelve. Communication: language, hypothetical constructs and the search for common ground.

The sceptical arguments that drive this investigation, starting with Hume, are important to me because they pose a challenge not only to my ethnographic inquiry but also to my capacity to undertake such an inquiry. We have proceeded with a philosophical investigation and this has led into sociology and psychology. In the previous chapter we developed and related two perspectives on social reality to our understanding of sensory experience, knowledge and belief. We propose that our process of change perspective encompasses our sensory experiences within the context of biological and social change. Our here-and-now perspective focuses on making sense of these experiences by relating them to our beliefs and to our ability to know about events in the world that encompasses and includes ourselves. But, as John Donne proposes, no man is an island (Donne, Devotions XVII, p. 538), and in this chapter we begin by examining the shared nature of the system of communication we call 'language'. From here we proceed to explore hypothetical constructs, the part they play in our construction of social reality and the difficulties entailed in using language to communicate experiences in order to establish common ground between us. The role that culture plays in establishing common ground between us is related to the Lowfield inquiry and particularly to the problems encountered by the families and the teachers in this regard. At the conclusion of this chapter we are able to complete our theoretical framework.

## 12.1.The nature of language construction.

It is necessary for someone undertaking any survey of human interaction to organize the data. This means that an editing process must take place. The researcher may claim, as I do, that the theory can emerge from the data, but this is only half the story. How do we arrive at the categories into which we fit the data? I am suggesting that the connections we make between pieces of data is a reflection of the way we already process and take part in our own 'realities' - of our own quantum approach to social reality, if you like. At some point, subsequent to our pre-linguistic awareness of existence, capacity to process thought enables language to develop. Language can, therefore, be considered to be a construction within the process of thought. This has implications for the way language develops and for the uses to which it is put. One of the implications for its development is the way in which decisions are arrived at as to the definition of words. In the analysis of our data we find that the decisions we make form part of the way in which we live our lives and view our world. If we find that we are analysing power relationships, it does not mean that something we define as 'power' is out there in the great big outside world. It does mean, however, that it is a concept of thought - a construct - that has already come into being.

Before we embark on this discussion, however, we have one further hurdle to jump on our passage through epistemology. At this point in our theoretical development and from our subjectivist/constructivist position we need to explore solipsism and the possibility of a private language. The argument from analogy

> *admits that it is possible that objects we call persons are, other than ourselves, mindless automata, but claims that we none the less have sufficient reason for supposing this not to be the case. There is more evidence that they are not mindless automata than that they are* (Dancy, p. 68).

Dancy presents sceptical criticism of this argument from analogy and states,

> *you cannot make sense of the idea of a subject of experience other than yourself. You cannot conceive of experiences which are not yours and you cannot achieve in any other way a conception of a subject of those experiences who is not you* (ibid, p. 71).

This drives us into solipsism, regarding the self as the only knowable thing. The solipsist position can, even so, be challenged as being untenable. How can I know myself? I can observe my own sense reactions and my own behaviour and make sense of this through my own private language. Kripke (1981, pp. 135-164) argues that, for a word (for example, 'pain') to have a meaning requires rules for its use. The solipsist, however, could make mistakes in applying her/his own rules and would be left in a position of having to assume that everything that seems right is right. Kripke suggests that, if we are to find some basis for an objectively correct method, we must look beyond the individual rule follower to the community of rule followers. Our grasp of the rule depends on the present behaviour of our linguistic and mathematical community. In this case, correctness is being in step with the others. This implies the impossibility of a private language. All possible languages are necessarily public, since the meanings of words are arrived at by the agreement of a community.

We can discount the solipsist position if we accept that language is a communal activity. By defining 'pain' we are not maintaining that we are either correct or incorrect in our application of that word but that our use of the word derives from collective agreement. So we need not concern ourselves with the problem of whether you feel pain in the same way as I do or with proving assumptions about the similarity or difference between your mental state and mine (or even with whether mental states exist at all!). We can look at similarities and differences in our behavioural language (how we use it) and see if this gives us clues to our other behaviours.

As we have already concluded, the way our thoughts are organized is through language, with its own constraints of logical construction that will always be there. Language is a construction within the process of thought and, as a construction, does not give us direct experiential access to the realities that include us as sentient beings. We know that thoughts are real because we have already argued that they do not require justification (p. 149), but 'thought' is a construct. Because of the construct nature of both language and our organisation of thoughts, we can never directly know by this means. We can, nevertheless, understand and know about what is real for us. We have, previously, related knowing about and understanding and come to the conclusion that we can define understanding in terms of making sense - the means by which we know about. 'Understanding' is, self-evidently, a construct, set up to define a dynamic process that cannot be observed but which, even so, is considered to have the capacity for existence apart from its definition. It is important here to

recognize the difference in semantic use between a word's definition within a language system and its meaning within the process of human discourse. I propose that discourse is part of the real for us (as is the process of language construction) in a way that static constructs as aspects of the abstract fail to be.

The words we use are, necessarily, derived from constructs and, therefore, can tell us nothing directly about the 'real' world. Some words, such as 'understand', 'knowledge', 'power', 'attitude', 'value', 'meaning', cannot be directly perceived in the outside world. Other words, while deriving from constructs, can be thought of as embodying direct perceptions of reality as bases for their derivation. These are the words such as 'touch', 'see', 'hear', 'smell' and 'taste'; words that derive from our sense signalling. This basis for derivation is pre-conceptual (i.e. I am aware of the sense signal before I am able to conceptualize that I am receiving a sense signal). Two others, 'belief' and 'thought', are aspects of our conscious awareness. Any logical development of such bases, though, is necessarily constructional. I cannot, therefore, conceptualise the reality beyond the construct, even though I can understand the possibility of its existence (i.e. the existence of the reality). I cannot, therefore, prove anything about the reality that includes myself ('myself' also being a construct) because proof is valid only in terms of producing evidence in support of knowledge and not in terms of the dynamics of human discourse and interaction (See p. 150 - 'We can be certain'). I can, however, demonstrate (as distinct from prove), by the coherence of my arguments, the validity of my construction as an explanation for social reality. If successful, this can stand as a contribution to human knowledge.

So, we use language constructs in two ways. First, they provide an explanation for the world and can be related to each other in terms of their own internal logic. It is important to recognize that we can test out our constructs on a basis of logic but we cannot test out our constructs as an explanation of reality. We perceive existence but everything else is constructed (See our argument concerning the two perspectives on social reality, pp. 154ff.). Secondly, our constructs, as we have argued, can also form part of the real for us by becoming part of the dynamics of human discourse and interaction. In this sense, we are continually creating our realities. The real is not static but dynamic in nature. We cannot pin it down. We cannot test any of our constructs in relation to some possibly non-existent objective reality. However, we can assess them on two bases: as reasonable explanations for our experiences and as significant components within the process of human discourse. Human discourse, we propose, is part of the real for us.

What implication does this have for the construction of our theory? Language has three implications for us. First, it is that part of social reality that enables us to construct ourselves within our world. Second, it provides a means of communication between constructed sentient beings (Discourse is part of social reality for us, as is the process of language construction). Third, it is formally and logically constructed. As a formally and logically constructed system, language cannot give us direct access to social reality. Proof is only valid in terms of producing evidence in support of knowledge. We cannot use our language concepts as proof of a reality. Nevertheless, our logical constructs can be used to

demonstrate their validity as explanations for social reality. If successful, these can stand as contributions to human knowledge.

We have now successfully charted our course close to the dangerous waters of the ethnomethodologists (See pp. 48-9). We share with them the contention that we construct methods to account for and give meaning to our social world and that these methods are subjective in nature. We differ from them in arguing that what we are instrumental in bringing into being *are* our own realities. We construct these realities from the raw material of our thoughts and senses. Although subjective and open to continual change and development, our realities are posited within the context of sentient beings capable of communication through a shared language. Language enables us to clarify, develop, form alliances about and differentiate between our realities. It must be borne in mind that a shared language is a vehicle for communication and does not guarantee that each of us will be equally capable or skilled in the process of communicating those realities.

## 12.2. Hypothetical constructs within the context of human discourse.

We have now set down a marker that it is reasonable to consider our entry into social life as being dependent upon our participation in a linguistic community. Hypothetical constructs are the means by which we define and re-define our concepts of the realities that include ourselves. They are non-observable phenomena – values, attitudes, personality/identity and power, for example, cannot be perceived directly by the senses. Durkheim (1938, XLIII, p. 14) considers social facts as things that can be logically inferred from the phenomena that we *can* observe. We have argued (p. 156) that the observation of phenomena depends on the establishment of a particular point of view by the observer. It cannot, therefore, be objective. Hypothetical constructs, that enable us to define and contextualize our observations, exist as aspects of our beliefness. As such, and as parts of an interface that helps form our realities, they shape our views of our worlds and provide a basis for our behaviours. There are similarities and differences regarding the definitions and applications we give to our linguistic constructs and these are dependent upon the ways in which we construct and participate in our realities.

We proceed to examine some hypothetical constructs that have particular relevance to the way in which I approached my Lowfield inquiry. My interest is what the teachers, parents and pupils value about education, their particular approaches to matters relating to their schools (norms) and their responses to each other's behaviours in relation to educational provision (attitudes).

**12.2.1. Values.** We will begin our examination of constructs with an attempt to define 'values'. I think a definition along the lines that a value is a belief that something has worth, is a reasonable starting point. If we accept this we locate value as an aspect of beliefnesss, carrying with it all that the knowledge/beliefness separation has entailed from our argued position in chapter ten. This being so, values are not subject to logical justification as is the case with aspects of knowledge. We can, however, ask what and why questions about our specific values. We can also ask questions concerning the antecedents of our values, about

how we came to the position of valuing such and such. But discrediting a value by logic does not make it untenable as a value.

In terms of definition, I can regard the comments from pupils, parents and teachers concerning what they regard as having worth to them as being expressions of value. The comments that the pupils make concerning what constitutes a good teacher (p. 109), Mr. Tom King's views on worthwhile education (p. 74) and the teachers' positive statements of what pleases them about their pupils (p. 118), are all expressions of value. In terms of application there are likely to be differences. A pupil may consider it worthwhile for her/him to attend or not attend school based on a number of different factors (Wendy and Pamela Perryman, p. 107; Joseph Shute, p. 108). On the other hand, the teacher may consider regular attendance to be of overriding worth in itself (p. 94ff.). A general agreement about definition and differences in terms of application has potential for disagreement and possible conflict at the application interface (in this particular case, in the classroom). At this stage, another hypothetical construct may help us to sharpen our focus.

**12.2.2. Norms.** Norms can be viewed as providing specific directions for conduct within the broader context of values. If I value my life I do not put that life at risk by consciously stepping in front of a speeding vehicle. Instead, I look to see if the road is clear before crossing it. Likewise, Pamela Perryman (p. 107) may decide not to attend school on one particular day each week, taking into consideration that her head teacher, whom she does not like, will be teaching her. While at school, before leaving home, or on the way to school, other events may occur that will influence whether or not she decides to increase the amount of time she spends in school. So we cannot claim that norms determine behaviour, only that they may be useful for assessing behaviour in relationship to expressed values. Specific behaviours are also interdependent upon the particular contextual conditions in which they occur.

We are also beginning to realize that if we use the construct 'value', we are addressing an area of belief and not an area of knowledge. This does not mean that we are unable to bring logic to bear on this but that we recognize that the beliefness within which these values are couched enables us to maintain coherence within a context of shift and change. In chapter ten we argue the case for a condition of beliefness that enables us to construct such parameters for containment. The term 'norms' provides a link between values and behaviours. We are suggesting here that the link is not a direct one because the behaviours of other people, the intervention of other events and the contexts in which these events occur also have a bearing upon our behaviours. We will keep this in mind as we proceed to discuss the concept 'attitudes'.

**12.2.3. Attitudes.** The connection between values, norms, attitudes and behaviour will be central to any discussion that involves the relationship between meaningful communication and worthwhile education. The words 'meaningful' and 'worthwhile' are, themselves, qualitative and subject to different interpretations depending on the viewpoint of the particular participants. A teacher informing a parent that her/his son cannot pursue a course

of study upon which that pupil had set his mind and that an entirely unrelated course is more appropriate for his level of ability, may consider that meaningful communication and worthwhile education is being appropriately addressed. The parent may consider neither area is being satisfactorily pursued (Mrs. Shute and her eldest son, p. 76).

There is a problem in looking at the dynamics of the situation that I have just outlined. It is difficult to locate the relationship between attitude and behaviour within the broader context of values and norms that would provide a framework for the differing psychosocial positions taken by these participants. The problem has partly been created because the study of the attitude/behaviour connection is largely, almost exclusively, confined to the area of empirical research and/or located within the general sociological area of the action theorists. Ken Menzies draws attention to this in his chapter on action theory (1982). By the generic term 'action theory' I refer to symbolic interactionism, phenomenology and ethnomethodology. I have discussed these more fully in chapter three and explained some of the limitations I find in social action perspectives due to their failure to come to terms with the wider social and historical context of human interaction. The effect on the attitude/behaviour axis has been to isolate it from the broader theoretical frameworks of human interaction that take into consideration the impact on human behaviour of social, economic and political forces, such as class, race, unemployment and legislative constraints. No branch of sociology other than action theory uses the attitude/ behaviour link as a major form for theory generation.

Attitudes cannot be directly observed but can be inferred by the behaviour (verbal and non-verbal) of the individual. Together with other aspects of the personality, such as values and norms and, even, personality itself, attitude is a hypothetical construct. These constructs are of use only in so far as they help us to understand aspects of ourselves or of our behaviour. Attitude theory proposes that attitudes form part of the individual's total personality and consist of a learned predisposition to respond to a given object or class of objects (Kretch et al, 1962; Zimbardo and Eberson, 1970; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Leaving this to one side, for the moment, I wish to focus more closely on the connection between attitude and behaviour. What is there about this connection that could lend support to a framework for empirical research and can attitude theory help us here? Mischel (1968) and Wicker (1969) both extensively reviewed research on the relationship between attitude and behaviour. Both concluded that there was a correspondence between the two but it was not a strong one. There was some evidence that attitude led to behaviour, all things being equal. Often all other things cannot be ignored, however, and a number of factors influence people's behaviour. So it is of no surprise that research findings are that attitudes and behaviour are often inconsistent.

Deutscher (1973), in his exploration of the relationship between 'what people say and what they otherwise do', attempts to define the interface between sentiments and acts. The definition of attitude, as understood within the terms of our present study, does not accord with Deutscher's term 'sentiments'. As a result, it does not lead us into many of the apparent incompatibilities between attitude and behaviour with which he grapples as a result of his

somewhat (although intentionally so) imprecise and behaviour-orientated definition. Deutscher states:

> *people frequently act in ways which they feel are to their own interests or which will facilitate achievement of ultimate ends regardless of their beliefs and values* (ibid, pp. 322-323).

This statement serves to sharpen the difference between Deutscher and myself in mapping this whole area of beliefs, attitude and behaviour. In critically analysing Deutscher's position, as here stated, we see that he can make a clear and oppositional distinction between self-interest and 'ultimate ends', on the one hand, and 'beliefs' and 'values' on the other. Our own definition that 'value is a belief that something has worth' (p. 162) does not preclude the possibility that we may have values that in certain contexts will conflict with each other or that some values may be held more strongly than others. Self-interest will form part of the value set of many of us. The distinction made by Deutscher is not merely unnecessary but, ultimately, misleading. It may be disconcerting and, even, painful for us to recognize that our priority beliefs and values, within particular contexts, do not always accord with those holding priority status in other contexts. We must remember, however, that 'self-interests' and 'values' are hypothetical constructs. As such, they can merely be inferred. If there are apparent inconsistencies within our constructs, this is entirely due to limitations in our methods of conceptualisation. A cognitive dissonance between interests and values is a reflection of just such an inconsistency.

One example of apparent inconsistency between attitude and behaviour, and which is analysed in Deutscher's book, is research undertaken by LaPiere. In 1934 he published findings on visits he made to two hundred and fifty one hotels, restaurants and campsites in the U.S.A. accompanied by two Chinese companions. They were refused service on only one occasion. LaPiere, later, sent a questionnaire to each of these establishments and over 91% of the replies indicated that Chinese applicants would be refused service. This research has often been cited as an example of the gap between attitudes and behaviour. Nevertheless, LaPiere himself (1934) discounted questionnaire data as a means of attitude assessment.

> *If social attitudes are to be conceptualized as partially integrated habit sets which will become operative under specific circumstances and lead to a particular pattern of adjustment they must, in the main, be derived from a study of humans behaving in actual social situations. They must not be imputed on the basis of questionnaire data.*

LaPiere's correspondents answering questions about hypothetical Chinese persons and confronting two personable and living human beings, in the company of a white American, are expressing separate attitudes to very different phenomena.

Later studies by Wrightman (1966) and Wicker (1971) have drawn attention to apparent inconsistencies between attitude and behaviour. A means of accounting for such inconsistencies has been developed more recently by Ajzen in his theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1985; Ajzen and Madden, 1986; Schifter and Ajzen, 1985; Ajzen, 1988). He defines volitional control as a continuum, with purely volitional acts at one extreme and behavioural events beyond volitional control at the other. He proposes that it is possible to

predict behaviour toward the volitional end with a great deal of accuracy on the basis of intentions to perform the behaviour in question. Intention has three characteristics: - favourable evaluation of the proposed behaviour; approval of the behaviour by important others; and availability of requisite resources and opportunity (1988, pp. 143-144).

His theory can be of some help to us here. The absenteeism among pupils from the comprehensive school has all three of Ajzen's intention components. The pupils wish to and know that they are able to abscond from school; other absconding peers approve of the behaviour and numerous opportunities exist for the performance of this act. It is, therefore, a very successful example of planned behaviour. It does not take us far enough, though. The study I have been undertaking has, additionally, a wider and deeper perspective than this and is not, as a prime concern interested in the relationship between intention and achievement, important as this may be to my field of research. The teachers in Lowfield, by behaving in the way that they do, do not intend educationally to disenfranchise their working-class pupils and, yet, this is what occurs and a number are contributing towards this. Unfortunately, Ajzen's theory does not address the consequences, unforeseen or otherwise, of planned behaviour and this is central to our study. The area of research that we are investigating aims to explore the nature of the correspondence that exists between what people value and experience and the socio-structural processes through which they pass. More specifically, how do middle-class teachers and working-class families make sense of their relationship with each other and what influence does this have on access to effective education in the state system?

In 1973 Lemon published the results from a large number of studies and revealed that how people view a situation is very closely tied to their attitudes. In my research, for instance, the way I perceive what is happening between schools and community differs from the way either the teachers or pupils see their situation. It is important that I am as fully aware of my own viewpoint as possible so that my perception of *their* viewpoints misrepresents these as little as possible. This is why I require a conceptual framework that will enable me to look at my own viewpoint alongside and on an equal basis to those of the teachers and family members that I am studying.

**12.2.4. Summary.** Let us see if we can draw together a few strands from our examination of these constructs. Within my ethnographic study, teachers and family members frequently use the term 'attitude' in relation to each other. We can, perhaps, define 'attitude' as indicating the particular point of view of an individual within a certain context that is given expression in behavioural terms. The interpretation of behaviour as an expression of 'attitude' is more likely to be correct if the factors Ajzen associates with volitional control of planned behaviour are present. Intentionality is the key requirement here. We have also come to the conclusion that our values may be conditioned, to a certain extent, by the contexts in which we find ourselves. The term 'norm' is, necessarily, context dependent. These, then, are my interpretations of these particular hypothetical constructs and, when I use them, they form part of my here-and-now perspective. They emerge from my beliefs. In this chapter we have attempted to subject them to critical evaluation and to show how, by

this means, such constructs can prove useful in making sense of the shifting social contexts of our daily lives.

Before we leave our discussion, two further constructions require our attention. Both of these are of fundamental importance because they are concerned with how we define others and ourselves and with what we mean by 'power' in the context of social life.

**12.2.5. Identity and personality.** So, who are we, you and I, who have points of view and can express these through behaviours, who possess values, appear to have patterns for doing things, who process thoughts and sensations and who understand and develop ideas?

Person impressions and the processes that give rise to their construction is the point of convergence of Donald Carlston's Associated Systems Theory (1994). We are talking here about people's impressions of other people. Most of these impressions are formed as a result of our experiences of our own mental systems 'involved in vision, language, affect and action. The recorded experiences of these mental systems constitute all knowledge' (ibid, p. 66). Additionally, Carlston points out, our mental systems need the results of these processes, this knowledge, in order to function. What we learn from past activities and experiences guides future activities and experiences. For Carlston this suggests that there 'are a variety of different kinds of cognitive representations', systematically related to each other that are logically connected to people's experiences 'and that they contribute in systematic ways to the various activities in which people engage' (ibid, p. 66).

As far as our own developing theory is concerned, AST is congruent. We can regard our representation of persons and other events in our social world as built up by us from our own experiences of our mental processes. These experiences are dynamic in nature and subject to change and development, which, in turn, can change our representational constructs. The way in which we each construct our representations is logically related to our individual experiences, which can differ from the experiences of others. We have already identified that language is the factor that enables us to identify our agreements and differences and to construct further bases for agreement and difference.

We construct our representations of ourselves and of other people but the sorts of representations have not remained constant over time. Marcel Mauss, in a lecture delivered in 1938, argues that the connections we make between 'person', 'self' and 'consciousness' came about as a result of sectarian religious movements in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries developing concepts of individual freedom, responsibility and consciousness. Mauss sees a sequence of transformation taking place from Greek rituals, through Roman perceptions of the 'persona', through the development of Christian culture to our own present Western conception of selfhood.

> *From a mere masquerade to the mask, from a role to a person, to a name, to an individual, from the last to a being with a metaphysical and ethical value, from a moral consciousness to a sacred being, from the latter to a fundamental form of thought and action* (Mauss, 1979, p. 90).

Mauss suggests that our present concept of what it is to be a person is a metaphysical fiction.

> *Who knows even if this "category", which all of us here today believe to be well founded, will always be recognized as such? It was formed only for us, among us* (ibid, p. 90).

Clearly the Greco/Judaic/Christian tradition of thought that has provided a major thrust to the development of Western ideas is not the only discourse concerning us known to people living on this planet. With rapid and extensive developments in means of communication, during the recent past, we have become aware of some of these other ways of thinking about ourselves and the possibility for fresh alignments of thought is becoming possible. This last line of thought is very interesting but, for the moment, we will confine ourselves to those representations of persons that have been built up in our modern age and which have conditioned our present Western concepts about ourselves as living beings.

Sarah Hampson, in her constructivist approach to personality theory, argues 'that personality is no longer viewed as presiding exclusively within the individual' (1988, p. 205). She views personality as being the outcome of a process of interpretation of the actor's behaviour by the actor her/himself and by the observer. Personality, therefore, 'should not be located within persons, but between and among persons' (ibid, pp. 205-6). In other words, our personalities are constructed within a social context. Hampson points to a discrepancy in the findings of empirical research between quantitative and qualitative methods regarding change or stability in the human personality over the lifespan. She considers that a constructivist approach is more likely to yield evidence of personality change whereas a personality theorist's perspective, in which only personality test data are obtained, will produce a more stable picture of personality (ibid, p. 248).

I suggest that the issue for us is not whether our personalities are subject to change or not but the status of the concept 'personality' in present day Western thought. We can, perhaps, formulate personality as a hypothetical construct based on observation and interpretation of the behaviours of ourselves as sentient animals. We can then go on to consider that characteristics associated with the ways in which we present ourselves to others and to ourselves form part of those constructions of the world that we call 'realities' (cf. Hume, 1962, Book One, pt. iv, sec. vi, where he says there is no impression of self and, therefore, no idea of self, 'nothing but a bundle of or collection of different perceptions'. Even so, Hume describes his bundle of perceptions in his own 'funeral oration' as being mild, social, cheerful and capable of attachment and this appears to accord with what is known of him). These presentations of ourselves are our perceptions of packages of behaviours and our theory argues that the ways in which we behave in social life are interdependent upon the particular contextual conditions operating at the time. They have a certain consistency but are susceptible to change within the context of our evolving realities. Erving Goffman (1979) develops the view that personality is constructed from a person's consciously manipulated self-representation. We are maintaining that this is only part of the story. Individual identity, as we have discussed, is bound up with currently available ideas about the human organism

and its place within a particular contemporary social context. Over the past century there has been a considerable development of ideas concerning the nature of personality in Western culture.

Above, we touched on the changing concept of Selfhood that Mauss has identified in the history of Western thought. Additionally, I have suggested that, within the context of our own present day concept of Self, there are individual variants in the way we present ourselves to ourselves and to other people. A third strand that may, additionally, have influenced as well as been influenced by these individual variants has been the development, over the course of the past one hundred years, of a number of theories concerning the nature of personality.

Scroggs (1985), in his survey of the central ideas associated with a number of these theories, draws attention to the range of different approaches adopted by the personality theorists and relates these to the particular life experiences of the theorists themselves (ibid, XV-XVII). He identifies four main categories of personality theories - psychodynamic, humanistic, trait and behavioural. He makes the point that 'every possible pairing of the four types of personality theories reveals certain similarities' (ibid, p. 317) even though they all differ sharply from each other. He sees the history of psychology as being a succession of shifting alliances between these differing views of personality.

Our subjectivist viewpoint would certainly incline us to favour an internalist psychological perspective and an empirical approach, thus allying us with the humanists. Even so, we have not discounted hypothetical forces that cannot be observed (e.g. psychodynamic) and have acknowledged that the adoption of such concepts forms part of the fabric of what is social reality for us. Neither can we rule out all aspects of an external perspective (e.g. trait and behavioural). Our theory acknowledges that there are differences between us in the way we represent ourselves. These differences imply that we are outside observers as well as experiencing participants. Our two perspectives on social reality, as developed in the previous chapter, are now confirmed as applicable to the ways in which we experience other sentient beings.

**12.2.6. Power.** Finally with respect to knowledge, its validity and its relation to belief, developments in the last century or so (Marx, 1974; Weber, 1958, 1964, 1968; Foucault, 1978, 1980, 1981) have brought home how power and knowledge have to be considered together, not simply as each being the basis for getting the other as in traditional theory (e.g. Bacon and followers). Foucault specifically makes the point that 'power in the substantive sense, *le pouvoir*, does not exist' (1980, p. 198) and views it as 'a more-or-less organized, hierarchical, co-ordinated cluster of relations'. For him, power is defined by the way in which it is exercised (Rabinow, p. 59) and is always accompanied by resistance and failures. Foucault's relational view of the operation of power sets it somewhat apart from more orthodox conceptions of power. For him it is not something acquired, seized or shared but part of the fabric of the relationships we form throughout society. The operation of power is, therefore, not only oppressive but also liberating. In his later work, for example, he draws

attention to the emerging practice in the State for exercising power in terms of pastoral care (1981, p. 227) and we can think of the development of the welfare state in this country as one example of this.

A feature of the twentieth century has been the expansion of nation States to cover all habitable areas of our planet and the sociology of power has largely focused on the development of the modern industrial State and its relationship to the social, economic and political groups that exist within its sphere of influence. By the 'State' we mean the institutions of government within a given territory. There is mostly general agreement that the exercise of power is unequally shared and that the concept of power, itself, is non-expandable, i.e. one group or individual exercising it reduces the capacity of another group or individual from exercising it. So the nature of our constructs of power has conflict built into it. This, necessarily, both defines its scope and limits the ways in which other concepts can be related to it. Co-operation, sharing and acceptance, when viewed from the conflict perspective of power, are seen as mirages of delusion or as the strategies employed in bids for power.

An alternative concept, proposed by Talcott Parsons (1969), argues a variable-sum concept of power. He claims that power is a generalised resource in society and can be used for the benefit of society as a whole. This approach has been widely criticized as being politically naive and as failing to take into account the sectional and conflicting interests of different segments of society. Irrespective of the validity of Parsons' political arguments, he has drawn to our attention an important aspect that, at first sight, appears not to fit into the 'constant-sum' concept of power. This is when the need to agree common purpose is recognized as the priority aim in decision-making. Compromise and the achievement of consensus are the issues at stake here rather than the achievement of power through control over the decision-making process or manipulation of the desires of others. If we look more closely, however, we become aware that groups or individuals faced with the need to agree common purpose will tacitly recognize the power held by the others and that shifts in power are taking place during the process of negotiation. Habermas's contention (1976, pp. 139-141), that equality of opportunity to speak and to challenge can only be achieved in the field of communication and that this would not avoid conflict, fits with our above analysis. We can now, additionally, locate the activities of co-operation, sharing and acceptance as being aspects of the decision-making face of power.

There is some accord between the position taken up by Habermas and our own. We can agree that equality in the area of communication has implications for the achievement of equality in potential power relationships. Nevertheless, what Habermas defines as 'truth' (as he defines the outcome of such a process) I propose as 'an accommodation of value perspectives'. We are already aware, from our theoretical premise, that knowledge and certainty - and, therefore, knowledge and truth - are separate and distinct from each other. We can believe something to be true but we cannot be certain or know that something is true. Our theory tells us that our realities are formed at the interface between beliefs, experiences and knowledge, not at the merging of knowledge and belief. Moreover, we can

define the relationship between equal opportunities in the arena of communication and equality of status in the arena of power in process terms: how people widen their value bases, how we accommodate or reject the values of others. The nature of our theoretical base is not to support a predictive model in the field of sociology but to propose a modus operandi alternative. Habermas has argued his case through a discussion of ethics in order 'to support the assertion that practical questions admit of truth' (ibid, p. 111). Our concept of shared and un-shared values is of a dynamic process that, itself, is continually redefining 'reality'. It is not that I disagree with Habermas's theoretical stance but I am proposing an alternative theoretical position alongside his.

We must also consider another factor here. Habermas accepts that the achievement of equality in the sphere of communication will not avoid conflict, since truth emerges through equal opportunities to speak and to contradict. My study examines the problems in communication that occur as a result of the imposition of a middle-class ideology base to define the interface between two different social status groups. The teachers are not conscious of describing their viewpoints in class terms but, rather, see these as being the norms of society. In terms of their current economic situation, the working-class community I have been studying has seen its lot worsen and this has accentuated the differences between middle-class schools and working-class neighbourhood. Here, a legitimation crisis is focused on the comprehensive school where what the school has to offer is seen by this community to be serving the needs of its middle-class clientele and to be largely irrelevant to the poverty and powerlessness that is its own experience. In terms of relationship between parents and pupils, on the one hand, and teachers on the other, we may consider it unlikely for the power balance to shift substantially for such equal opportunities to come about. In this case, the persistence of conflict will, necessarily, favour the more powerful side, that of the teachers. In order to achieve equality, conflict must be processed in some way. I offer the sharing of values as a viable way out of this dilemma. Unless the teachers' value set is capable of adapting to accommodate that of the pupils and parents, conflict is bound to persist. The persistence of conflict around social class values means that working-class children in similar cultural conditions (cf. Feuerstein's analysis of cultural disintegration, pp. 15-16) will continue to miss out on education.

**12.2.7. Conclusion.** Our theoretical premise proposes that hypothetical constructs are aspects of our beliefness; of our capacity to maintain fixed points of reference in a social world that is, itself, a construction founded on belief. We have argued that reality is separate from certainty and is constructed by us at the interface between our beliefs and our capacity to challenge them by a combination of senses and thoughts. This meeting ground between knowledge and belief is achieved within the context of sentient beings who share language. Reality is, therefore, a dynamic and essentially social phenomenon and is not confined to a single individual's consciousness. If we happen to be brains in vats, then we lose our identity as active participants in our social settings but this is still the nature of the reality of which there is a passive reception of sense signals. As brains we are still active as thinking and believing entities. It is this that separates us from the ethnomethodological position, namely that the status of beliefs within the context of human discourse is an essential component in

the creation of our realities. Realities are what we continually create and live. They make no sense without the active and collective participation of sentient beings.

### 12.3. The search for common ground.

The Lowfield project demonstrates that problems in communication exist between a number of community members and a number of teachers from the three schools through which the Lowfield children pass. The teachers' attempt to relate on a personal level but not understanding on a cultural level (e.g. different shared life experiences and ways of viewing the social environment) presents them with difficulties in applying their skills. We have argued that the social world is interactional in nature, that we apply our senses and knowledge to understand about it and that we communicate to each other about it through a shared language. We have also explored the problems inherent in this system of communication, in terms of the meanings of the constructs we use and how we apply them. The establishment of common ground between us, both on a one-to-one and on a collective basis can be hard to achieve. In the case of Lowfield, as we discover in the first part of this study, the achievement of common ground between schools and our section of the Lowfield community is not achieved sufficient to enable its children to gain cultural access to its infant and secondary schools in particular.

The interactional nature of the social world means that the ways in which we behave in social life are interdependent upon the particular contextual conditions operating at the time. Our beliefs and values have a significant bearing on our social behaviours, we have argued earlier in this chapter, and values can change with shifts in those contextual conditions (e.g. teacher Maurice Hicks' values shift in his different relationships with the two Gallway brothers because he contextualizes them differently, pp. 94). Our social behaviours are affected by our awareness of the options and opportunities available to us at the time (e.g. Mrs. Susan Marshall's comment on the effect that access to money has on educational provision, p. 39) and how we perceive the nature of social interaction at any particular time (e.g. William Phillips' remarks concerning his perception of the different social interactions between teachers and Lowfield/The Pastures pupils, p. 37). Our awareness of events in the wider environment that we perceive as affecting social life (e.g. the Lowfield families' views on political, economic and social impacts on their community including the nature of educational provision, pp. 36-39) will have implications for our behaviours in social life. The behaviours of others will affect our own (e.g. the relationship between Norman Gallway and his teacher Maurice Hicks, p. 94, and Norman Gallway and the pupil who bullied him, p. 90). Also, the interaction of other events, whether understood or not by us (e.g. sexual abuse: Barbara Vernon, p. 87; Karen Stone, pp. 66 & 95), will impact, sometimes devastatingly, on social behaviour.

This interactional characteristic of our social lives takes place within different and, at times, overlapping contextual conditions as outlined above. These involve us in a continual process of re-definition and participation with each other and with the worlds around us. Structures emerge from this process (including structures of language development – e.g. new words and concepts, new constructs and usage). In discussing the tactics of power, Foucault (1981,

p. 95) states that they 'end by forming comprehensive systems; the logic is perfectly clear... yet it is often the case that no one is there to have invented them'. This is very similar to our theoretical position that structures emerge from the contexts of social interaction. We argue that the structures that emerge have implications for the exercise of power in terms of decision-taking and control but also in terms of co-operation, sharing and acceptance. As far as Lowfield is concerned, the opportunities for the families to exercise decision-taking and control regarding educational matters are perceived by them as strictly limited. Moreover, the common ground necessary for co-operation, sharing and acceptance has not been established between home and school. In chapter eight (p. 129) I propose that Lowfield is experiencing the effects of cultural breakdown. This will make it even more difficult for our families to establish common ground within their own cultural environment as a basis for negotiating with the cultural environment of the schools.

Our social lives, as we have argued, can be affected by and can have effects upon events in the wider environment. The interface between social life in the Lowfield community and events in the wider environment, including the schools, creates contextual conditions that shape the effectiveness and significance of members of this community's social behaviours. These social behaviours must also be seen within the context of a community experiencing cultural disintegration and culture, we reason, is the process of human interaction that enables us to become identified with and to participate effectively in our social milieu. The search for common ground between us is the means by which we enhance our cultural development. Education, as part of the cultural process (p. 129), cannot operate in isolation from a cultural foundation and this foundation, as far as schooling is concerned, is insufficient to sustain the educational requirements of this working-class community.

## 12.4. Our theoretical perspective.

We have now completed our theory development and it is outlined below in three phases.

**Phase One. Bedrocking the theory.**

The theory is based on arguments able to affirm:

- The capacity to process thought (i.e. to think and know about) exists but we cannot prove through logic that we exist as social beings.
- The capacity for pre-linguistic sensory awareness exists.
- The quality of belief (i.e. beliefness) exists and does not depend on logical thought. Our certainties arise from our capacity to believe. Without this capacity the construction of the social world would not be possible.
- Our social realities are constructed and are formed at the interface between knowledge, sensory experiences and beliefs.
- These realities are dynamic in nature. The 'real' for us is neither certain nor eternally fixed.

There is no evidence to support a decision as to the nature of existence. Two possibilities remain:

**A.** That there is a passive reception of external reality, or

**B.** That I am an active participant in a reality or realities that include myself.
Both possibilities are accepted by this theory, since access to data, in both cases, is through a combination of thought and sense signalling. Understanding and knowing about is capable with either possibility. Resulting from this, 'reality' cannot be identified with either truth or certainty.

The theory argues that it is possible to infer that if possibility 'A' then this paper would not be written by one sentient being and read by another. It further argues that failure to make a decision regarding options 'A' and 'B' is to collapse into a state of total confusion and madness. This is not a matter of choice between options since there is no rational basis for choice. The making of a decision, therefore, is a matter not subject to justification.

Once a decision is taken and as long as it is acted upon, it has implications for all future decisions.

**Phase Two. The implications involved in accepting a social environment.**
(The development of the theory that arises from the decision to accept option B.)
This decision establishes a parameter that remains in force for as long as this option is explored; i.e. the existence of 'reality' or 'realities' that include us as active participants.

The establishment of this parameter is dependent upon our quality of beliefness and provides areas of containment for a sense of identity, security, purpose and continuity in an otherwise confusing world. The stable nature of such parameters and their relative immunity to cognitive penetration mean that they provide rich soil for the growth of beliefs.

Knowledge is inextricably bound up with limitations imposed by the way language is structured, making it distinct and separate from both certainty and belief. Knowledge does not exist in a vacuum but within a social context that contains a variety of sensory experiences and accepted beliefs. Developments in knowledge challenge accepted beliefs and vice versa.

Over a period of time the interchange between knowledge, sensory experiences and beliefs can transform the contextual parameters we adopt to define 'reality'.

There is a distinction between the logical development of this theory and the 'realities' it attempts to address. It cannot be argued that our 'realities' are either coherent or logical.

The combination of evidence with knowledge does not, necessarily, make a strong impact on beliefs.

Material, social and political contexts impact on both our knowledge and our beliefs.

**Phase three. Development of the theory for a social environment.**

This theory focuses on the ways in which the evolution of events can be seen to inter-relate, emphasizing change and development.

**A**. The perspectives through which we perceive existence create our realities. To do so we employ both a process of change and a here-and-now perspective.

**1.** A process of change perspective acknowledges that we live within constantly changing contexts, both biologically and socially; ones in which we are involved in the actual processes of change as they occur.

**i)** All our sensations and thoughts are experienced in this way.

**2.** A here-and-now perspective is one in which we view, retrospectively, past events from a fixed standpoint. Decisions entailed relate to ordering and emphasis.

**i)** The position we take up to observe our realities involves us in the creation of those realities.

**ii)** Decisions we make concerning our approach to realities have consequences for all future decisions that we make.

**iii)** Experiences that already make sense to us are confirmed but those that do not, require some change within this perspective in order to do so.

**iv)** The notion of causality is related to our capacity for hindsight. The decisions entailed also relate to ordering and emphasis, the latter heavily weighted in favour of antecedents.

**v)** A here-and-now perspective need not entail the notion of causality.

**B.** The capacity to construct language is dependent upon the way in which the human organism develops. Language has three implications for us:

**1.** It is that part of social reality that enables us to construct ourselves within our world.

**i)** As we change and develop so our language changes and develops. Consequently 'the real' for us is not static but dynamic.

**ii)** Hypothetical constructs form part of our collective behavioural use of language. As such, they are components in the construction of our realities when we bring them into use.

**iii)** The acceptance of such constructs is part of our beliefness, as distinct from our ability to know about.

**2.** It provides a means of communication between constructed sentient beings.

**i)** We can 'know about' hypothetical constructs as distinct from believing in them.

**ii)** Constructs, including 'value', 'personality/identity' and 'power' can change their meaning over time.

**iii)** We can differ from each other individually and collectively in our definition and application of constructs, but within the context of a shared language and the range of views available to us at the time.

**3.** It is formally and logically constructed.

**i)** As a formally and logically constructed system, language cannot give us direct access to reality.

**ii)** Proof is valid only in terms of logical constructs. We cannot use our language concepts as proof of reality.

**iii)** Nevertheless, our logical constructs can be used to demonstrate their validity as explanations for social reality and, if successful, these can stand as contributions to human knowledge.

**C.** The social world is interactional in nature.

**1.** Culture can be defined as the process of human interaction that enables us to become identified with and to participate effectively in our social milieu.

**i)** The search for common ground between us is the means by which we enhance our cultural development.

**ii)** Culture is dependent upon contextual conditions. These can aid the diversification and adaptation of some cultural processes or impoverish and constrict others.

**iii)** Education is part of cultural process and cannot operate in isolation from a cultural foundation.

**2.** The interface between social life and events in the wider environment creates different and, at times, overlapping contextual conditions involving a continuous process of re-definition and participation. These contextual conditions shape the effectiveness of our social behaviours.

**i)** As a consequence, unforeseen developments can arise from our social behaviours that may be beyond our capacities to control.

**ii)** At least six factors have a bearing on our social behaviours: our beliefs and values, our awareness of options or opportunities available to us at the time, the nature of the social interaction as perceived by us, our awareness of events in the wider environment that we perceive as affecting social life, the behaviour of other people and the interaction of other events.

**iii)** Structures emerge from this process that have implications for the exercise of power in terms of

decision-taking and control,

also for

co-operation, sharing and acceptance.

# Chapter thirteen. Our theory and the Lowfield inquiry.

We now relate the two journeys to each other and reply to the research questions relating to each. We review what is achieved in undertaking my epistemological journey. This is a journey of the mind in which I attempt to involve you, as reader, in a mutual search for common ground as we proceed. We apply this to my Lowfield journey, which is a physical, social and mental journey of my own in which I search for pathways of communality between disparate groups and individuals. We discuss, with the hindsight gained from our epistemological journey, the way in which I have undertaken my ethnographic research and the consequences entailed for my participants. We proceed to discuss the implications for educational projects that future researchers may undertake, paying particular regard to issues of social justice. We conclude by referring back to David Hume, whose argument challenges the conclusions I drew and still draw from my Lowfield research. Paradoxically, I give a reply that builds on and develops from his own speculative thought.

## 13.1. My epistemological journey.

The research question underpinning Part Two of this study asks if it is possible to know about what is real concerning the Lowfield project, which is set within the context of overlapping, differing and conflicting perspectives that also include my own. We have now argued and developed a theoretical construct that can stand as a viable account for the process of socially constructed reality. Our theory argues that proof is valid only in terms of logical constructs. Our theory is a logical construct. We cannot prove it as an explanation for social reality because we are unable to determine if social reality, should it exist, embodies similar logical processes. We are, however, able to demonstrate its validity as an explanation for social reality and, in particular, for taking into account those specific problem areas that, for me, current theory fails to satisfy (pp. 47-49, 135-137). The theory now provides an effective context for the cultural, social, economic and political components within my map. If successful, with respect to both its internal logic and 'fit', our theory can stand as a contribution to human knowledge.

During the second part of this study we refer back and forth between our evolving theoretical development and my Lowfield inquiry. Gradually, a more flexible and viable template is constructed for the mapping of my ethnographic journey and for the maps of others who journey concurrently with me through and within Lowfield. The theory reflects back onto itself and continually challenges its own premise. It argues that what is real for us is formed at the unpredictable interface between our beliefs, our knowledge about our worlds and our experiences. This means that the dynamic nature of the theory itself is subject to the same process. As a hypothetical construct it is an aspect of beliefness (Conclusion, p. 171); as part of the process of human discourse (p. 161) it becomes part of the real for us when we bring it into use; as a product of knowledge it can be debated, opposed, developed and changed (pp. 144-147). The organic nature of this form of theory construction makes it eminently suitable as a means of approach to the overlapping perspectives of my Lowfield study.

Our theory emphasizes the collective nature of both our constructions of social realities and of ourselves within those realities. We accomplish this through a shared system of language. Our social realities can differ as a result of sharing and learning through different experiences. We learn about our worlds through cultural process and this process can both unite and divide us from each other. Individually, we employ two perspectives in accessing our realities. Our process of change perspective involves us in our experiences as they occur (and this relates to our pre-linguistic awareness, p. 149-150). Our here-and-now perspective enables us to relate these experiences to a framework of understanding and this framework is capable of adaptation, evolution and change. The search for common ground provides us with opportunities to affirm and extend our cultural roots in co-operation with others. The lack of achievement of common ground results in misunderstanding and conflict. From the overlapping contextual conditions that form part of our social worlds, structures emerge that make it easier or more difficult to achieve common ground. Because education is part of cultural process, should insufficient common ground be achieved between educational providers and educational consumers, effective educational transmission does not take place.

### 13.2. My ethnographic journey.

During the development of our theoretical framework we have focused onto and revealed significant features about my account of my ethnographic journey. The values, norms and attitudes of the pupils, parents, teachers and myself as researcher, are affected significantly by the impact of social, economic and political forces additional to and having a bearing upon our direct encounters with each other (163-4). What I have written about my experiences in Lowfield does not constitute truth or certainty but *is* accessible to our capacity to understand and to know about phenomena (pp. 146-7). All accounts have equal validity and those of the pupils, parents, teachers and school governors involved in the events affecting Lowfield need to be given equal consideration (pp. 152-3). I identify a power imbalance to exist between the account I give of my Lowfield journey and the accounts of others that I have fed into that account (pp. 157-8). My account reveals a power imbalance also to exist between the culture of the middle-class schools and this working-class community, resulting in education being offered on a value basis that disregards/rejects the problems faced by this working-class community in maintaining its cultural identity and integrity (p. 171). Teachers attempt to relate on a personal level but not understanding on a cultural level presents them with difficulties in applying their skills effectively. This makes the achievement of common ground sufficient to sustain effective education for these Lowfield children and young people unattainable (p. 172). This, combined with the unforeseen consequences of the teachers' and pupils' behaviours, based on the ways they view their relationships with each other, create structures that contribute towards the educational disenfranchisement of this working-class community (p. 166).

In Part One I produce evidence for my conclusions and for the ways in which those conclusions are reached. My map of Lowfield can now be seen to fit the template provided by our theoretical construction. Our theory confirms that the account of my Lowfield journey also fulfils those same requirements of logic and applicability as the template into which it

fits. It can, therefore, stand as a contribution to knowledge. Even so, the theory acknowledges that other maps of Lowfield can have equal validity alongside my own.

### 13.3. My evolving role as researcher.

Initially, I construct my role as researcher within the context of the theoretical framework described in chapter three. This framework takes on an interpretive interactionist form (p.47) and aims to distil a consensus from my contacts with the participants in my study. With the hindsight gained from the development of our theoretical perspective I now perceive my role as observer, participant and recorder developing through the dialogues and discourses I have with my participants and which can lead to the establishment of common ground between us. When common ground fails to be established I step outside those dialogues and comment on them from the position I reach, at that particular point in time, as the creator of my own constructed social reality (and this reality is different in form from the socially constructed one that is achieved by the establishment of common ground). This is now from a fixed position (my here-and-now perspective) since I have chosen to disregard those aspects of my perspective of change that can give me insight into the behaviours of others of which I lack understanding/approval. This will also be happening to my participants. The implications of failing to establish common ground are the possibilities of isolation, denial and destruction in relation to others.

A second phase in my role as researcher takes place after I collect my data and subsequent to the conversations I hold with my participants. I then construct an argument based on my current here-and-now perspective. I now have no problems about this, as such, since, as a result of our theoretical construction, I consider it valid to communicate my own viewpoint on the area I am researching based on the evidence I supply. My map will, therefore, be of some use to others within the context of the template within which it is now set. However, as a further result of the theory I do now have serious doubts about the implications of this research and future research of this nature regarding issues of social justice.

### 13.4. Present/future research and issues of social justice.

The research that I have undertaken is a dynamic process set within the context of evolving realities that include my own. I claim that my Lowfield inquiry has status as the narrative account of a journey in which I encounter the narratives of others and give my account of those narratives. I step out of this context in order to establish common ground with you, as reader, who forms part of a very different community from those of the teachers, family members and school governors in Lowfield. At each stage in the development of this project I continue my journey and my account of my journey changes (the map is partly redrawn, emphasizing, curtailing and expanding certain areas and leaving out others). My research is conditionally justified by inference and, therefore, the knowledge gained from it is uncertain.

But the longer and ongoing journeys of these other participants provide other maps that our theory makes clear are equally valid. We have argued that social reality is a process over which we have but limited control yet a process we can understand and in which we are involved in constructing by cultural and social means. I construct my Lowfield inquiry as a

dynamic tool for social change but do the people who really matter in this inquiry - the family members, teachers and school governors with whom I engage – have an equal stake in the ownership of change? Each narrative can make equal claims regarding its own account of the real. But the narratives to which I refer do not have equal status to mine in defining their unique individuality. They are filtered through my own uniquely individual account. My role as researcher is, at best, the role of an honest usurper, but a usurper, nevertheless, of the rights of others to define and communicate their own realities. The ethical implications for future educational research are profound.

**13.5. The concept of common ground.**

I propose that the establishment of common ground is essential for the constructive communication and, therefore, for the effective mediation of educational provision. Common ground achieves not only areas of agreement but also the articulation, negotiation and acceptance of differences. This ground has to be modified again and again on a continuing basis. This is because the overlapping contextual conditions of our daily lives continually impact upon our values and the meanings we attach to them, making negotiation between us a necessity.

Our capacity to establish common ground depends upon the quality of the interface we establish between our two perspectives and the worlds that surround and include us. A rigid, inflexible tendency within our here-and-now perspective can militate against our capacity to negotiate and accept difference. How we maintain and adjust the values balance within the here-and-now will influence our behaviours and communication with others (Cf. Maurice Hicks' relationship with the two Gallway brothers, p.94). The establishment of common ground is possible without the overt recognition that it is taking place! (Cf. p.51, where teacher June Fairbank establishes common ground with the parents in the mother and toddler group but does not fully recognise the extent to which this has been achieved). An example of insight into and, therefore, a change of perception in the here-and-now resulting in the establishment of common ground between head teacher Brenda Parkinson and myself, takes place after she reads my interim report to the schools (p. 26). I miss the opportunity to build upon this with Brenda because my post with the education department comes to a premature end. Even so, while I am operating within Lowfield, the teachers in all three schools establish common ground with me by disregarding their initial suspicion and antagonism towards social workers. They achieve this by accepting me as 'Ron' even though I am a social worker, and choosing to relate to me on the basis of their perceptions of me as a person with certain attributes rather than as an alien professional with attributes they may well perceive somewhat differently.

I attempt to achieve common ground with the working-class families through my own working-class origins; but why do these working-class roots make it possible? It is not the working-class background per se that enables me to do this but that I come from a cultural and social background with an overlap of experience. It is this overlap of common experience (e.g. The reservations I have about my own secondary education, the struggle to retain a sense of identity within an alien-perceived [but, in my case, not a rejecting] educational

environment, the 'usness' of living within a socially identifiable community). Also, as a qualified counsellor, I have experience and training that enables me to listen, to reach into people's lives and to help them reach into mine. This has been an advantage to me in my attempts to forge common ground. For six years I was director of a community development agency and this gave me experience in exploring the interface between living communities and their wider environment. My social work background could have been problematic for both some families (e.g. child protection issues) and the teachers but I share some of these reservations myself about my own profession and I am prepared to explore those aspects of my professional background that my participants find inhibiting to the establishment of common ground.

How far I am able to establish common ground with you as reader and you with me as author depends not only on your willingness to engage with this dissertation by means of an internal dialogue within your here-and-now perspective but also on how successful I have been in communicating my ideas and in explaining the process I am using in order to communicate those ideas. Sometimes I step outside the usual way in which I integrate my comments and judgments within the normal flow of the text. This is in order to highlight a particular standpoint of my own (e.g. My comments on the viewpoints of the governors, p.35) or to signal a particular danger in my approach (e.g. Some comments on *my* viewpoints, p.36). At other times I make comments that are open ended and where you, as reader, are invited to both supply your own reading of the text and what you consider mine may be (e.g. The conclusion of the last paragraph on p.27; the last two sentences on p.117). Engagement with such problems as these, within the process of communication, is at the heart of our search for common ground with each other. Its resolution, though never wholly attainable, is both the goal of this thesis and the aim of any effective approach to educational achievement.

## 13.6. Conclusion.

Both my ethnographic study and our theoretical construction argue the centrality of culture as the means by which we learn about our worlds, construct and live our lives. This project also identifies a power imbalance to exist between the dominant cultural position of the teachers and the cultural disintegration inherent in the Lowfield community. Formal education is part of this cultural process. I present the case that the cultural means by which it is being mediated in Britain is inadequate to the extent that it can educationally disenfranchise communities such as Lowfield and that this is an ongoing phenomenon. The conclusions I draw in chapter eight are confirmed with regard to both the selection/education of teachers and the need to change radically the cultural assumptions that underpin educational transmission.

Regarding the means by which such a cultural change can take place, I refer to the limitations of my research and to all research of this nature in enabling the maps of those most engaged in the struggle for effective education to emerge. I claim that it is the dialogues and discourses that emerge from the establishment of common ground and the ongoing search for and achievement of further common ground that can produce this change

(see also Michael Fielding, 2000, - 'the means of our engagement cannot sensibly be separated from the nature of our aspirations'; Tony Cotton, 1998, calling for a transformational focus for social research; Mo Griffiths, 2000, seeing opportunities for collaboration and partnership in the politics of connection). This has implications for the way in which educational research is conducted. The ongoing dialogues need to be the focus and the spaces for them sought out, established and reinforced. Effective change is unlikely to be achieved in State education without recognition by central government for the need for such change. Ball (1997) and Russell and Morley (2000) point to the tensions in government policy and research between the push for efficiency/effectiveness and equity/social justice on the battlefield for educational change. This thesis forms my contribution to that debate. Its theme with regard to Lowfield could be 'culture rules KO'. I trust that my argument can help pave the way towards the reversal of those last two letters.

Finally, I return to David Hume, whose rejection of the notion of induction throws into question the basis for my Lowfield inquiry. In the second part of this project we achieve the separation of knowledge from belief and affirm the uncertainty of knowledge. We, therefore, confirm his premise. I do, nevertheless, draw conclusions from what I observe by identifying those conclusions as aspects of my capacity to believe. The conclusions are challenged and held in question by my capacity to know about things as distinct from being able to know for certain. My thesis goes on to affirm that we have access to and are involved in the creation of our own realities. Our theoretical premise not only separates out knowledge from beliefness but also relates both to our capacity to experience, thus uniting and reconciling the 'sensitive' and 'cogitative part of our natures'.

## Appendix A. Interim report on the schools/Lowfield families study.

25 families have been identified by teachers in the three schools (Ridgeway, Lowfield junior, Lowfield infant) as having 'missed out on education'. Often, from the teachers' viewpoint, the children of these families go through the system with little perceived benefit to themselves. Teachers see the parents as being unwilling or unable to engage in dialogue with teachers. Two questions have formed the basis for this study: -

**'How can we communicate with these parents?'**

And

**'How can we provide an effective education for their children?'**

To date I have interviewed 41 teachers, 3 school governors, 15 comprehensive school pupils and 7 parents. I still have a number of parents, pupils and governors to interview and so, although I have made reference to some pupils' comments, I have not submitted these comments to analysis. I have completed and analysed my interviews with teachers. The various headings under which I have classified teacher statements were formulated after I had completed all my interviews with teachers and I consider that they give an accurate resume of total statements about individual pupils. There are two categories of statements reflecting, respectively, teacher approval and teacher concern. Teachers made other statements during the interviews, not specifically related to individual pupils. I will deal with these at a future stage in this study.

I have used the classification of statements under A and B to work towards an identification of teachers' attitudes to these pupils. There are significantly more statements of concern overall than statements of approval (65.3 % compared to 34.7% of all statements) with the widest margin of difference occurring in the infant school (75.9% compared to 24.1%). Within the junior and comprehensive schools comments indicating satisfaction with pupil class work response have exceeded those expressing concern over class work performance and in the infant school the number of statements was quite close (6 approval, 8 concern). In the junior school half the total approval statements referred to pupils' responses to class work. So, pupils' problems in work performance across the three schools, although of significance to teachers, does not present as their most important area of concern. There are two such areas, to which I have given the generic descriptions 'the persistence of discord' and 'concern for the well-being of the pupil'.

### The persistence of discord.

This encompasses the headings a) to e) inclusive under 'What concerns teachers about these pupils'. In recording teachers' statements I have found it impossible to make any clear distinction between disruptive and immature behaviours. As described by the teachers, the behaviours have invariably had a disintegrating effect on the immediate environment. Teachers have identified problems of peer group adjustment in terms of inability to relate, hostility, rejection by peers and forming anti-social relationships. Just emerging in the junior school and much more frequently in the comprehensive school, teachers have referred specifically to negative standpoints taken by some pupils vis-a-vis themselves. One example

has been given of a teacher initiative resulting in an unforeseen and confrontational consequence. Ultimately, pupils absenting themselves from the comprehensive school have been the largest single category of statements in the study so far. The reasons for non-attendance are complex and are related to factors both within the Lowfield community and within the schools themselves. I will throw some light on this at a later stage in this study. I have included non-attendance within this particular generic description because, being a withdrawal from engagement, it is further evidence of lack of accord between pupil and school.

The conclusion I have drawn from this is that the persistence of discord has emerged from a socialisation mismatch between home environment and school. The children have not been prepared by their parents to meet the sort of social expectations placed on them by their teachers in the infant school. The destructive behaviour and problems of adjustment to peers within this school stem from the children's lack of social skills in meeting these expectations. Disruptive and peer group behaviour problems persist into the junior school because the teachers have been unable to establish the necessary social pattern of behaviour conducive to learning. Children coming into the junior school from the infant are perceived by teachers as lacking by up to two years in terms of social and emotional development. The children then have to make a further move out of their neighbourhood schools into a much larger comprehensive school that also caters for a middle-class catchment area. All three forms of discordant behaviour are present here added to a new form - non-attendance. There is some evidence to suggest that these children have particular difficulties in adjusting to the new physical environment, that they perceive that there are new expectations made on them by teachers that they have difficulties in meeting and that they experience problems in integrating with children from other catchment areas.

**Concern for the well being of the pupil.**

Headings g) to j) inclusive. Over a third of all statements of concern in the infant school has been for the state and condition of the pupils. The teachers have made no reference to communication problems between themselves and their children; however, in the junior and comprehensive schools difficulties have been encountered in communicating with some young people. In both these schools teachers have echoed their infant school colleagues' worries over the state and condition of youngsters. The teachers in the comprehensive school have been the ones to state their anxieties over the negative influence of the local community on pupils; an influence with which they have been unable to deal.

If the persistence of discord can be seen as the behavioural implications of a clash of social systems, concern for the well being of the pupil has been an attempt by the teachers to empathize with their young people, to try to understand their social situation and to establish meaningful communication with them. On the evidence presented by teachers they have found this task frustrating and, at times, distressing, having been unable to alleviate the condition of their pupils.

**What pleases teachers about these pupils.**

These headings can be seen as indicators of teachers' values within the classroom and school in relationship to this group of pupils. I suggest that for a pupil to be perceived by a teacher as benefiting from education he/she will have to figure in this chart to a greater extent than at present (by definition these young people have been categorized as having 'missed out on education'). Moreover, to improve matters for the teachers, pupils have to make a significant shift in behaviour from chart B to chart A. There will be no improvement from the teachers' point of view until the teacher value system is reinforced by a programme that enables pupils to adhere more to what pleases teachers and away from what displeases them.

## Recommendations.

**1.** Teachers compile from chart A their own priority order of headings. They can then match teacher values to teacher tasks. For instance, if 'pupils responding positively to teachers' is seen as more important than 'pupils exhibiting behaviour approved by teachers', a more informal teacher/pupil relationship will be tolerated than if it is the other way around. I suggest that the compiling of priorities is seen as an exercise in attitude clarification not attitude change and that teachers should not regard this as an attempt to arrive at consensus.

**2.** The family of schools establishes a practical programme for the socialisation of pupils throughout the primary and secondary phases. A crucial component in this should be aimed at the parents of pre-school children. The teachers' expectations of toddlers entering the nursery and infant stages should be explained clearly and simply to parents. Practical help should be offered to parents in preparing children for school. This will have to be sold effectively to parents if it is to be successful.

**3.** The corollary of putting over teachers' requirements to parents and enlisting their aid to achieve those requirements is to listen in turn to the parents and children about their values, life-style and educational requirements. To improve matters for the pupils their concerns and those of their parents must be addressed by the teachers. Within the Lowfield area there is little recognized practice of coming together formally to look at issues of general concern. The sure way to find out parents' views is to listen to them within the confines of their own homes. Much home visiting and parent visits to school have been about specific matters relating to the non-conformity of pupils. The two social systems have usually been locked, if not always in conflict, certainly in confrontation that has often been unpleasant for both sides. It has more often than not resulted in no satisfactory outcome for either. A mediation initiative should be considered whereby parents and schools' representatives can listen to each other's points of view without getting involved in specifics about individual pupils. It is perhaps best done through designating specific members of staff for this particular purpose. The views of pupils can be gauged as part of the schools' socialisation programme.

**4.** In the comprehensive school, the present tutorial system is in need of development. The role of the tutor could be made more pivotal in making her/him responsible for co-ordinating educational provision (both academic and social) for her/his tutor group in its progress through the school system. This would mean that the teachers could decide, in discussion

with other members of staff, who should be the most appropriate persons to undertake the social education input for their groups. The year heads, I suggest, should have a development and consultation role in relationship to their tutors; the year heads and head of P.S.E. forming a social education development team. Social education should be seen in context of mediation, as a means of coming together and sharing between pupils, between teachers and between pupils and teachers.

**5.** In the infant school the staff should consider, after deciding their individual priority order of values, an agreed priority base for the nursery and infant sections. Resources necessary for the implementation of a pre-school parent education programme geared to this priority base could then be assessed.

**6.** In the comprehensive school special consideration should be paid to the needs of pupils in the first and second years, with particular regard to the social integration of pupils coming from different neighbourhoods. Additionally, some Lowfield pupils need help in coming to terms with the different social and educational expectations placed on them now that they have moved on from a primary to a secondary school.

**7.** The behavioural unit should focus on the first and second years and be more closely integrated with both learning support and social education strategies within the school. Its present name, which can be seen to reflect a concern for a specific symptom, should be changed to one that indicates more its function of integration between social and academic learning.

**8.** A factor affecting the poor attendance, not just of Lowfield pupils but of students across the catchment areas and of varying abilities, is the way the comprehensive school handles the G.C.S.E. course work. Teachers need to reconsider this.

Ron Collier.
30. 4. 90.

| A. What pleases teachers about these pupils. | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | INF | JUN | COM | I+J+C |
| a) Pupil responds positively to teacher. | 1 | 4 | 9 | 14 |
| b) Pupil responds positively to other pupils. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| c) Pupil responds positively to classwork. | 6 | 1 | 14 | 39 |
| d) Pupil exhibits behaviour approved by teacher. | 2 | 3 | 7 | 12 |
| e) Pupil attendance performance approved by teacher. | 1 | 5 | 5 | 11 |
| f) Physical appearance of pupil approved by teacher. | 2 | 0 | 3 | 5 |
| g) Pupil's personality approved by teacher. | 2 | 5 | 7 | 14 |
| h) Pupil perceived by teacher as positively different from siblings. | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| i) Pupil perceived by teacher as enjoying school. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| j) Teacher initiative regarding pupil is partially/wholly successful. | 1 | 0 | 5 | 6 |
| Total. | 15 | 38 | 55 | 108 |
| Total as % of all teacher statements re specific pupils. | 25% | 39.1% | 35.8% | 34.7% |

Figure i.

| B. What concerns teachers about these pupils. | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Number of statements. | | | |
| | | INF | JUN | COM | I+J+C |
| a) Disruptive and immature behaviour | The persistence of discord | 12 | 19 | 7 | 38 |
| b) Problems of adjustment to peer group | | 3 | 11 | 7 | 21 |
| c) Refusal to conform | | 0 | 3 | 16 | 19 |
| d) Teacher initiative regarding pupil is unsuccessful | | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| e) Non attendance | | 4 | 1 | 36 | 41 |
| f) Problems in work performance | | 8 | 9 | 4 | 21 |
| g) Concern for physical/emotional state of pupil | Concern for well-being of pupil | 15 | 10 | 9 | 34 |
| h) Problems in community affecting pupil | | 0 | 1 | 11 | 12 |
| i) Communication difficulties | | 0 | 5 | 8 | 13 |
| j) Pupil perceived by teacher as negatively similar to siblings | | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| **Total** | | 44 | 59 | 99 | 202 |
| Total as % of all teacher statements | | 75% | 60.9% | 64.2% | 65.3% |

Figure ii.

## Appendix B. A parent's modification of my interview notes.

I give below an example of the one parent who chose to amend the notes I sent to her of our interview. My original notes with the amended areas indicated are accompanied by her comments in bold type (pseudonyms are substituted for real names).

*Mrs. Stokes was concerned about the attitude of some teachers at Lowfield infant school. 'They complain if we're late but they can keep them later.' Mrs. Stokes feels that the teachers make one rule for themselves and another for the parents. She said that she and her husband were five minutes late in picking ~~Graham~~ up from school. They had been stuck in traffic lights from town. Mrs. Hollingworth told Mrs. Stokes off for being late in front of other people in the school. Mrs. Stokes said she wouldn't have minded if Mrs. Hollingworth had taken her aside and spoken to her privately, but she felt shown up. 'It took my confidence out of me. I was frightened to go since then. I played up about being late after that' (on one occasion the school had been late in letting the children out).*

Same

add somet

*Mrs. Stokes told me that she is expecting her fifth child and her hormones are affecting her emotionally at present. Mr. and Mrs. Stokes used to live in Hayworth where, for two years, they suffered harassment from their neighbours. Every time she left the house the neighbours would shout at her. As a result she did not take Graham to the nursery and she feels he has missed out on his pre-school education. A local councillor helped the family and arranged the move of home to Lowfield, but this experience has upset Mrs. Stokes very much and she has lost all confidence in herself. 'My husband is on the sick list because of this'. Mrs. Stokes said that three of her four children have had convulsions and her youngest daughter, Gemma, suffers from them now. They need a 'phone in the house in order to be able to reach the doctor if necessary. Sometimes money is very tight. When Gemma had her first fit they had no telephone.*

Leave that

*Mrs. Stokes said that she finds things 'a lot better around here compared to Hayworth'. She still feels very unsure of herself however. 'I've got to have people around me to get my confidence up.'*

*Getting back to school, Mrs. Stokes finds that Graham often comes home from school with the knees of his trousers torn. She has bought him three or four pairs of trousers for school. He only has one pair of trousers that he can wear at present. 'He's constantly saying the kids have been taking his sweets off him. I've mentioned it to his teachers'. 'He's on the go 24 hours a day. He likes to get up and run around all the time'. Mrs. Stokes finds this is very wearing. Mrs. Stokes said that Graham's teacher 'makes him stand in the corner if he's been*

leave that.

*naughty'. He doesn't like this because this shows him up in the front of his friends,* (The rest of the sentence has been deleted)

*'Jane's not so bad but she's on her own in the nursery now that Graham's not there. She used to follow him around a lot. She misses him. She's a bit of a loner'.* ***We been told they're all like it the first year.***

***1) We were five minutes late picking Jane up not Graham (it was Graham's teacher I've lost my temper with.)***

***2) From "but she felt shown up" add the following "She explained why she was late But was just reminded of the time Jane should come out of school.***

***3.) leave the rest except where we crossed out then add the following paragraphs.***

***I don't mind them standing him in a corner as if he does wrong in school he has to learn that he shouldn't do it. But I just get fed up with him coming home saying someone has either hit him or pushed him or done something to him. I've told his teacher about a certain boy but since he has still come home complaining of the same thing. If they can learn Graham why can't they learn school bullies the same, as Graham says he doesn't like going to school because of this.***

***4)***

***When Graham was in the nursery (he 1st started ful-time) we gave the school (1) my Father-in-laws telephone no (2) my uncles phone no (3) cousins address and our telephone no when received it. One day we went for Graham at 3.30 and was told to take him to the doctors as he refused any dinner and slept all afternoon and had a temperature (he had tonsilitus) they were told to contact me if he had a temperature whith him having a history of convulsions he has to have an eye kept on him. With all the numbers they had why did they have to leave it untill home time. They are supposed to ask for these numbers incase of illness. It seams stupid asking for them if they're not to be used when needed.***

It is clear that I had mistaken the identity of the child in my first paragraph and that Mrs. Stokes has decided to delete a comment she had made to me at the end of my penultimate paragraph. Her additions to the text enlarge on the comments she made in our interview and may have been made but I had failed to note them down. This is one of the disadvantages of not using a tape recorder. On the other hand, she may not have been so forthcoming in the presence of a tape recorder (although she may still have taken the opportunity to develop her thoughts further by writing to me, as she did in this instance).

Mrs.. Stokes demonstrates tenacity and commitment in her decision to ensure that these very personal details are made available to me. She is aware that I will keep her identity confidential but knows her comments may be made public.

The role that I have played in recording data such as these indicates the fallible nature of this enterprise. Why have so few people chosen to modify my interview notes? Lack of interest, inertia, reluctance to question inaccuracies and problems in reading or understanding the text may be among the factors contributing to this lack of feedback.

## Appendix C. Dramatis personae.

I list below the names of the teachers alongside those of the children who are in their classes. Below this is a list of families in alphabetical order and other persons mentioned in the text.

### Lowfield infant school.

Brenda Parkinson (headteacher).
Eleanor Stroud (infant teacher).
June Fairbank (community teacher).
Jane Peters (head of nursery).
Fiona Jackman (nursery teacher). — Ben Shute.
Joy Hollingworth (nursery teacher). — Jane Stokes, Graham Stokes, Lucy Pilkington.

Lucinda Perkins (infant teacher). — Simon Bearne.
Pamela Huskinson (infant teacher). — Helen Vernon, Lewis Hooper, Louise Hooper.

Sylvia Dear (infant teacher). — June Fisher.

### Lowfield junior school.

Roy Front (headteacher until 4/6/90).
Ivan Markham (headteacher from 4/6/90).
Eric Barker (deputy headteacher).
Jack Dorking (community teacher).
Anne Moore (1st year teacher). — Steven Hooper, Kate Vernon.
Judith Simms (2nd year teacher). — Paul Crain, Bernadette Fisher.
Kathleen Spencer (2nd year teacher). — Edward Archer.
Michael Gabriel (3rd year teacher). — Sheila Briggs, Derek Hooper, Barbara Vernon.

Stuart Atkins (4th year teacher). — John Marshall, Mark Reeves (Shute).
Erica Fillingham (4th year teacher). — Fiona Bramley, Patrick Gallway, Adam Fisher.

**Pupils at Ridgeway comprehensive school who have attended Lowfield junior school.**
Bernard Exton, Peter King,
Mervyn Endacott, Zoe Knott,
Joseph Shute, Philip Marshall.

### Ridgeway comprehensive school.

Jeremy Evans (headteacher).
Robert Groves (deputy headteacher).
Ian James (co-ordinator of learning support).
James Scott (head of music department).
Terry Venables (head of behavioural unit). — Gordon Finden.
Amanda Price (tutor in behavioural unit). — Philip Marshall.
Tony Beard (head of 1st year).
Stephen Lloyd 1st year tutor). — Peter King, Terry Finden.
Patrick Ball (1st year tutor). — Zoe Knott (Fisher), James Chilvers, Mervyn Endacott.

Veronica Haynes (head of 2nd year).
Christine Burton (2nd year tutor). — Bernard Exton, George Bramley, Dennis Endacott.

Maurice Hicks (2nd year tutor). — Joan Chilvers, Norman Gallway.
Michelle Atkinson (2nd year tutor). — Geoffrey King, Sandra Arnold, Anthony Phillips, Jason Phillips.

Mary Gregory (head of 3rd year).
John Burrows (3rd year tutor). — Joseph Shute, Alice Tanner.
Pauline Williams (3rd year tutor). — Mandy Mortenson.
Catherine Graham (3rd year tutor). — Pamela Perryman.
Terry Gifford (head of 4th year).

| | |
|---|---|
| Elizabeth Reynolds (4th year tutor). | Karen Stone, Susan Wiltshire, Rodney Crain. |
| Tracey Eastwood (4th year tutor). | Grace Finden. |
| Andrew Jones (head of 5th year). | |
| Alan Cooper (5th year tutor). | David Shute. |
| Gareth Walters (5th year tutor). | Wendy Perryman, Thomas Mortenson, Carol Endacott. |
| Tim Turner (5th year tutor). | William Phillips, Sidney Phillips. |
| William Blake (5th year tutor). | Esther Arnold. |

## The families.

Below I list the families and family members referred to in the text.

**Arnold family.** Mrs. Alice Arnold. Daughters – Sandra, Esther and Jean (now left school).
**Bearne family.** Mr. and Mrs. Bearne. Son – Simon.
**Bramley family.** Miss. Hazel Bramley. Daughter – Fiona. Son – George.
**Briggs family.** Mr. and Mrs. Briggs. Daughter – Sheila. Son – Errol (attends special school).
**Chilvers/Leaper family.** Mrs. Chilvers. Daughter – Joan (lives with her aunt, Mrs. Leaper). Son - James.
**Crain family.** Mr. Crain. Sons – Paul and Rodney.
**Endacott family.** Parents are separated. Daughter – Carol (in foster care). Sons – Dennis and Mervyn (both live with mother).
**Exton family.** Son – Bernard.
**Finden family.** Mr. and Mrs. Finden. Daughter – Grace. Sons – Terry and Gordon.
**Fisher/Knott family.** Mrs. Mary Fisher. Daughters – Zoe (Knott), June, Bernadette, Lydia. Son – Adam.
**Gallway family.** Mr. George and Mrs. Gallway. Sons – Bruce, Norman and Patrick.
**Hooper family.** Mr. and Mrs. Karen Hooper. Daughter – Louise. Sons – Lewis, Derek and Steven.
**King family.** Mr Tom King. Daughter – Billie-Jo (excluded from Ridgeway and now attending a neighbouring school). Sons – Geoffrey, Peter and Victor.
**Marshall family.** Mrs. Susan Marshall. Sons – John, Michael and Philip.
**Mortenson family.** Mrs. Mortenson. Daughter – Mandy. Son – Thomas.
**Perryman family.** Mrs. Perryman. Daughters – Pamela and Wendy.
**The two Phillips families.** Mr. Phillips. Sons – Sidney and Jason. Nephews – William and Anthony (both live with own parents.
**Shute family.** Mr. and Mrs. Shute. Sons – Ben, Mark (Reeves), David and Joseph.
**Stokes family.** Mr. and Mrs. Judy Stokes. Daughters – Gemma and Jane. Sons – Graham and Paul.
**Stone family.** Mrs. Paula Stone. Daughter – Karen.
**Tanner family.** Mrs Joyce Tanner and her mother. Daughter – Alice.
**Vernon family.** Mrs. Vernon. Daughters – Helen, Kate and Barbara.
**Wiltshire family.** Daughter – Susan Wiltshire.

## Ridgeway comprehensive school governors.

Mr. Peter Andrews, Mr. Joe Greenwood, Mr. Raymond Sellars.

## The six mothers in Lowfield infant school's mother and toddler group.

## Every child in the infant school, who took part in my socio-drama sessions.

## The pupils in the special school who took part in my socio-drama sessions.

**The paediatrician:** Dr. Whiting.

**The manager of Middleton nursery centre:** Penny Perkins.

## Various members of the Lowfield community.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY.**

ACLAND, H. (1973) Social Determinants of Educational Achievement: an Evaluation and Criticism of Research, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Oxford.

ACLAND, H. (1980) *Research as Stage Management: The Case of the Plowden Committee* in M.I.A. Bulmer (ed) Social Research and Royal Commissions. George Allen and Unwin.

ADELMAN, C., JENKINS, D and KEMMIS, S. (1977) *Re-thinking case study: notes from the second Cambridge conference.* Cambridge Journal of Education, 6, 139-150.

AJZEN, Icek. (1985) *From intentions to actions: A theory of planned behavior* in J. Kuhl and J. Beckmann (eds) Action-control: From cognition to behavior, pp11-39. Heidelberg, Springer.

AJZEN, Icek. (1988) Attitudes. Personality and Behavior, Milton Keynes: Open University.

AJZEN, Icek. and MADDEN, T, J. (1986) *Prediction of goal-directed behavior: Attitudes, intentions, and perceived behavioral control.* Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 22, 253-74.

APPIGNANESI, Richard. and GARRATT, Chris (with SARDAR, Ziauddin, and CURRY, Patrick). (1999) Introducing Postmodernism, Cambridge, Icon Books.

ATKIN, Janet. and BASTIANI, John (with GOODE, Jackie). (1988). Listening To Parents: An Approach to the Improvement of Home/School Relations. London, Croom Helm.

AUSTIN, J.L. (1961). *Other Minds.* in Philosophical Papers, Oxford, Clarendon Press.

BALL, Mog. (1998) School Inclusion. The school. the family and the community. York, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

BALL, Stephen. (1994) Education Reform: a Critical and Post-structural Approach, Buckingham, Open University Press.

BALL, Stephen. (1997) *Policy Sociology and Critical Social Research: A Personal Review of Recent Education Policy and Policy Research* in British Educational Research Journal. 23 no.3 257-74.

BALLARD, R. and KALRA, V.S. (1994) The Ethnic Dimensions of the 1991 Census: A Preliminary Report, Manchester, University of Manchester.

BANNISTER, D. and FRANSELLA, F. (1986) Inquiring Man: The Psychology of Personal Constructs, London, Routledge.

BARBER, M. and DANN, R. (eds.) Raising Educational Standards in the Inner Cities: Practical Initiatives in Action. London, Cassell.

BARNES, J. H. and LUCAS, H. (1975) *Positive Discrimination in Education: Individuals, Groups and Institutions.* in J. Barnes (ed.), Educational Priority Vol. 3, Curriculum Innovation in London's EPAs. H.M.S.O.

BASTIANI, John. (1986) *Going up to the Big School: Parents' experience of the transition from primary to secondary schooling* in M. Youngman, (ed.), Mid-schooling Transfer: Problems and Proposals, NFER-Nelson.

BASTIANI, John. (1989) *Professional Ideology Versus Lay Experience,* in G. Allen et al (eds), Community Education: An Agenda for Educational Reform, Milton Keynes, Open University Press.

BASTIANI, John. (1991) *Home-school Partnership. Fallacy: A Change of Teachers' Attitudes is all that is Needed* in B. O'Hagen, (ed), The Charnwood Papers: Fallacies in Community Education, Derby, Education Now.

BASTIANI, John. (1993) *No-one ever said it was going to be easy! Some Features of the Problematic Nature of Home-School Relations in the UK* in R. Merttens, et al. (eds.), Ruling the Margins: Problematising Parental Involvement. London, University of North London.

BASTIANI, John. (1996) Home-School Contracts and Agreements – Opportunity or Threat. London, RSA.

BASTIANI, J. and WOLFENDALE, S. (eds.) (1996) Home-School Work in Britain: Review, Reflection and Development. London, David Fulton.

BECK, J., JENKS, C., KEDDIE, N., and YOUNG, M.F.D. (eds.) (1976) Worlds Apart: Readings for a Sociology of Education. London, Collier-MacMillan.

BEE, H. L. (1969) *Social class difference in maternal teaching strategies and speech patterns.* Developmental Psychology. 1,6.

BEECHEY, V. and DONALD, J. (1985) (eds). Subjectivity and Social Relations. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

BENDIX, R. and LIPSET, S.M. (eds.) (1967) Class, Status and Power. London, RKP.

BENTON, Ted. (1977) Philosophical foundations of the three sociologies. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

BERGER, P. and LUCKMANN, T. (1966) The Social Construction of Reality. Harmondsworth, Penguin.

BERNSTEIN, B. and DAVIES, B. (1969) Perspectives on Plowden. London, Penguin.

BERNSTEIN, Basil. *'Education Cannot Compensate for Society'.* in New Society, 26th February 1970.

BERNSTEIN, Basil. (1971) *Teaching and Learning as the Organisation of Knowledge.* in Michael F. D. Young (ed). Knowledge and Control. London. Collier-Macmillan.

BERNSTEIN, Basil. (1977a) Class Codes and Control. Volume 3 Towards a Theory of Educational Transmission. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

BERNSTEIN, B. (1977b) *'Class and Pedagogies: Visible and Invisible'.* in J.Karabel and A.H. Halsey (eds.), Power and Ideology in Education. Oxford University Press.

BLACKBURN, J.N. (1945) Psychology and the Social Pattern. London, Keegan Paul.

BLANK. M. (1973) Teaching and Learning in the Pre-school. Columbus Merrill.

BLOCK, J. (1971) Lives Through Time, Berkeley, Bancroft Books.

BLUMER, H. (1969) Symbolic Interactionism, Englewood Cliffs, Practice-Hall.

BOLIVAR, Ruiz. (1985) Effects of Feuerstein's Instrumental Enrichment Programme on Pre-College Students, Cuidad Guayana.

BOTTOMORE, T.B. (1966) Elites and Society, Harmondsworth, Penguin.

BOTTOMORE, T.B. and RUBEL, M. (eds.) (1963) Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy, Harmondsworth, Penguin.

BOUDON, R. (1973) Education, Opportunities and Social Inequality, John Wiley.

BOWLES, S. and GINTIS, H. (1976) Schooling in Capitalist America, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

BRIDGES, David. and NIAS, Jennifer. (1981). Case Studies in School Accountability, Cambridge, Cambridge Institute of Education.

BRIDGES, David. (1987). *'It's the ones who never turn up that you really want to see: The 'Problem' of the Non-Attending Parent'* in John Bastiani (ed.) Parents and Teachers 1. Perspectives on Home-School Relations, Windsor, NFER-Nelson.

BRIDGES, David. (1998). *Philosophising about* education*: reflections on a reflective log.* Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain, Conference papers.

BRIDGES, David. (1999). *Educational Research: pursuit of truth or flight into fancy?* British Educational Research Journal. Vol. 25. No5.

BROPHY, J. and Good, T. (1974) Teacher/Student Relationships: Causes and Consequences, London, Holt, Rinehard and Winston.

BROWN, G. W., BHROLCHAIN, M. N. and HARRIS, T. (1975) *Social class and psychiatric disturbance among women in the urban population*, Sociology, 9.

BRUCK, M. and TUCKER, C.R. (1974). *Social class differences in the acquisition of school language,* Merrill and Palmer Quarterly. 20.

BRUNER, J.S. (1974) The Relevance of Education, London, Penguin.

BUDGE, L. McKAY, D. and MARSH, D. (1983) The New British Political System. London, Longman.

BURT, C. (1943) *The education of the young adolescent: implications of the Norwood Report* in: British Journal of Educational Psychology, 13.

CAMPBELL, D.T. (1963) *Social attitude and other acquired behaviour dispositions*, in S. Koch, (ed.) Psychology. a Study of Science, Vol V1, New York, McGraw-Hill.

CARLSTON, Donal. E. (1994) *Associated System Theory: A Systematic Approach to Cognitive Representations of Persons* in Robert S. Wyer, Jr (ed.) Advances in Social Cognition, Volume V11, New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Carspecken, P. F. (1991) Community Schooling and the Nature of Power: The Battle for Croxteth Comprehensive. London, Routledge.

Central Advisory Council for Education (England) (1954) Early Learning, London, H.M.S.O.

Central Advisory Council for Education (England) (1959) 15 to 18 (The Crowther Report), London, H.M.S.O.

Central Advisory Council for Education (England) (1963) Half Our Future. (The Newsom Report) London, H.M.S.O.

CLARK, D. (1992) *Education for Community in the 1990s: A Christian Perspective* in G. Allen and I. Martin (eds), Education and Community. The Politics of Practice. London, Cassell.

CLARK, D. (1996) Schools as Learning Communities: Transforming Education. London, Cassell.

CLARK, Reginald. M. (1983) Family Life and School Achievement: Why Poor Black Children Succeed or Fail. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

COATES, D. (1984) The Context of British Politics. London, Hutchinson.

COLDRON, John. (1999). A Case Study of Parental Educational Practice. Paper presented to the International Sociology of Education Conference, Sheffield, 1999.

COLE, M. and BRUNER, J.S. *Preliminaries to a Theory of Cultural Differences,* 71st Nat. Soc. Educ. Yearbook, part 2 cited in J. Bruner, (1974) The Relevance of Education, Penguin.

COLEMAN, J. S., CAMPBELL, E.Q., HOBSON, C.J., McPARTLAND, J., MOOD, A.M., WEINFELD, F.D. and YORK, R.L. (1966) Equality of Educational Opportunity, Washington DC office of Education.

COLQUHOUN, R. (1976) *Values, Socialization and Achievement* in Beck, Jenks, Keddie and Young (eds.) Worlds Apart: Readings for a Sociology of Education, London, Collier-Macmillan.

Committee on Higher Education (England) (1963) Higher Education. (Robbins Report), London, H.M.S.O.

COTTON, Tony. (1998) *'Flipping the Coin': Models for Social Justice in the Classroom,* School Field, No.3-4 25-43.

COUSINS, Mark. and HUSSAIN, Athar.(1984) Michel Foucault, London, MacMillan.

COXHEAD, Peter. (1977) *Some Comments on Bowles and Gintis Appendix A'* in: The Social Location of Teacher Perspectives. Milton Keynes: The Open University. 70-73.

CRAFT, M. (ed), (1970) Family, Class and Education. London, Longman.

CROSLAND, C.A.R. (1961) *'Some thoughts on English education'.* Encounter, 17, 1961.

DANCY, Jonathan. (1985) An Introduction to Contempory Epistemology, Oxford, Blackwell.

DAVIDSON, Donald. (1989) *A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge* in E. Lepore (ed). Truth and Interpretation in the Philosophy of Donald Davidson, Oxford, Blackwell.

DAVIE, R., BUTLER, N. and GOLDSTEIN, H. (1972) From Birth to Seven.. a report of the National Child Development Study, London, Longman.

DAWE, A. (1970) *The Two Sociologies,* British Journal of Sociology, vol 21.

DENNETT, Daniel. C. (1993) Consciousness Explained. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books.

DENZIN, Norman. (1989) Interpretive interactionism, Newbury Park, CA, Sage.

DENZIN, Norman and LINCOLN, Yvonna. (eds) (1994) Handbook of Qualitative Research. London, Sage.

DESCARTES, R. (1955) The Philosophical Works of Descartes. 2 vols, edited and translated by E. S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

DETR (1997) Education Initiatives and Regeneration Strategies. A Guide to Good Practice, London, Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions.

DEUTSCHER, Irwin. (1973) What we say/what we do: Sentiments and acts. Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman.

DEWEY, John. (1938) Logic: The Theory of Inquiry, New York, Henry Holt and Co.

DIECEC (1998) Pathways to Intercultural Education and Raising Achievement. Bradford, DIECEC.

DONNE, John. (1941) Complete Poetry and Selected Prose. London, The Nonesuch Press.

DONNISON, D. and SOTO, P. (1980) The Good City: a Study of Urban Development and Policy in Britain. London, Heinemann Educational Books.

DONNISON, David. (1991) A Radical Agenda: after the new right and the old left, London, Rivers Oram.

DORE, Ronald. (1976) The Diploma Disease, London, George Allen and Unwin.

Dore, Ronald. (1980) *The late development effect,* in A. Finch and P. Scrimshaw (eds), Standards. Schooling and Education, Sevenoaks, The Open University.

DORLING, Lynn., JAMES, Mike., LOWE, Gillian., MARDEN., Brian, and ROBINS, Joan. (1987) The Professional Development of Head Teachers Project. Nottinghamshire County Council, Department of Education.

DOUGLAS, J.W.B. (1964) The Home and the School. London, MacGibbon and Kee.

DOUGLAS, J.W.B., ROSS, J.M. and SIMPSON, H.R. (1968) All our future: A Longitudinal Survey of Secondary Education. London, Peter Davies.

DREW, D. and GRAY, J. (1990) *The fifth year examination achievements of Black young people in England and Wales,* Educational Research, 32(3): 107-117.

DREW, D. and GRAY, J. (1991) *The Black-White gap in examination results: a statistical critique of a decade of research,* New Community, 17 (2): 159-72.

DRIVER, G. (1977) *Cultural competence, social power and school achievement: West Indian secondary school pupils in the West Midlands,* New Community, 5(4): 353-9.

DRIVER, G. (1979) *Classroom stress and school achievement: West Indian adolescents and their teachers* in V. Saifullah Khan (ed.) Minority Families in Britain: Support and Stress, London, Macmillan, pp. 131-44.

DURKHEIM, Emile. (1938) The Rules of Sociological Method. Chicago, Free Press of Glencoe.

DYSON, Alan. and ROBSON, Elaine. (1999) School, family and community: Mapping school inclusion in the UK, London, National Youth Agency.

EBBUTT, Dave. and GIBSON, Rex. (1981) Case Studies in School Accountability, Volume Three, Cambridge, Cambridge Institute of Education.

EGAN, G. (1975) The Skilled Helper. Monterey, Brooks/ Cole.

EGAN, G. (1982) The Skilled Helper: Model, Skills and Methods for Effective Helping. Monterey, Brooks/Cole.

ELDERS, Fons. (ed), (1974) *Human Nature: Justice versus Power* in Reflexive Water: The Basic Concerns of Mankind. London, Souvenir Press.

ELLIOTT, JOHN. (1981) Case Studies in School Accountibility, Volume One. Cambridge, Cambridge Institute of Education.

EUROSTAT. (1999) Living Conditions in Europe. Statistical Pocketbook, Brussels, European Commission.

EWING, A. C. (1951) The Fundamental Questions of Philosophy, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

FENWICK, I.G.K. (1976) The Comprehensive School 1944/1970. London, Methuen.

FEUERSTEIN, R. (1973) The Role of Cultural Transmission in the Development of Intelligence. Allan Bronfman Lecture, Quebec, Canada, September 1973.

FEUERSTEIN, R. (1974) Family Continuity and Cultural Development. Paper presented to Seminar of International Association for Child Psychiatry and Allied Professions. Philadelphia. 1974.

FIELDING, M. (1996) *Beyond Collaboration: On the Importance of Community* in D. Bridges and C. Husbands (eds), Consorting and Collaborating in the Education Marketplace, London, Falmer Press.

FIELDING, M. (2001) *Beyond the rhetoric of student voice: New departures or new constraints in the transformation of 21st century schooling,* Forum, 43, 2.

FISHBEIN, M. and AJZEN, I. (1975) Belief, Attitude, Intention and Behaviour. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley.

FLETCHER, C. and BRAMLEY, G. (1996) Evaluating Quality in Community Education within a Regional Context. Paper presented at ECER96 Seville.

FLOUD, J.E., HALSEY, A.H., and MARTIN, F.M. ((1956) Social Class and Educational Opportunity. London. Heinemann.

FOGELMAN, K., GOLDSTEIN,H. and GHODSIAN, M. (1978) *Patterns of Attainment,* Educational Studies, 4,2.

FOUCAULT, Michel. (1973) The Order of Things: An archaeology of the human sciences. New York, Vintage Books.

FOUCAULT, Michel. (1977) The Archaeology of Knowledge. London, Tavistock.

FOUCAULT, Michel. (1979). The History of Sexuality, vol 1, An Introduction. London, Penguin Press.

FOUCAULT, Michel. (1980) Power and Knowledge. C. Gordon (ed), Brighton, The Harvester Press.

FOUCAULT, Michel. (1981) *Omnes et Singulatim: Towards a Criticism of "Political Reasons"* in S. McMurrin (ed.), The Tanner Lecture on Human Values 11, Salt Lake City, The University of Utah Press.

FRANCIS, H. (1975) Language in Childhood. Elek Press.

FRASER, E.D. (1959) Home Environment and the School. London, University of London Press.

FUCHS, E. (1968) *How teachers learn to help children fail,* Trans-Action, September.

GALBRAITH, J. K. (1993) The Culture of Contentment. London, Penguin Books.

GARDNER, Howard. (1993) The Unschooled Mind: How Children Think and How Schools Should Teach. London, Fontana Press.

GARDNER, Howard. (1999) Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century, New York, Basic Books.

GARFINKEL, H. (1967) Studies in Ethnomethodology, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall.

GARTNER, A, GREER, C. and RIESSMAN, E. (eds) (1973) After Deschooling, What?, London, Harper and Row.

GEERTZ, Clifford. (1973) The Interpretation of Cultures, New York, Basic Books.

GERTH, H.H. and MILLS, C.W. (eds), (1948) From Max Weber, Essays in Sociology, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

GIDDENS, A. (1979) Central Problems in Social Theory, London, MacMillan.

GIDDENS, A. (1984) The Constitution of Society, Cambridge, Polity Press.

GILES, R. (1992) *Defending Community Education: An LEA Strategy,* in G. Allen and I. Martin (eds), Education and Community. The Politics of Practice, London, Cassell.

GILLBORN, David. (1990) Race, Ethnicity & Education: Teaching and Learning in Multi-Ethnic Schools, London, Unwin-Hymman/Routledge.

GILLBORN, David. and GIPPS, Caroline. (1996) Recent Research on the Achievements of Ethnic Minority Pupils. London, OFSTED.

GILLBORN, David. and MIRZA, Safia. (2000) Educational inequality: mapping race, class and gender, London, OFSTED.

GINSBURG, H. (1972) The Myth of the Deprived Child: Poor Children's Intellect and Education, Prentice-Hall.

GLASER, B.G. and STRAUSS, A.L. (1967) The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research., Chicago, Aldine.

GOFFMAN, E. (1971) The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, London, Penguin.

GOODMAN, N. (1973) Fact, Fiction and Forecast, Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrell.

GORDON, C. (ed), (1980) Power and Knowledge. Brighton, The Harvester Press.

GRAMSCI, A. (1971) Selections from the Prison Notebooks, London, Lawrence and Wishart.

GRANT, W. and MARSH, D. (1977) The Confederation of British Industry, London, Hodder and Stoughton.

GREENFIELD, P.M. (1969) *Goal as environmental variable in the development of intelligence,* Paper presented at conference on Contributions to Intelligence, University of Illinois, Urbana, cited in J. Bruner (1974), The Relevance of Education.

GREENWALD, A.G. (1968) *On defining attitude and attitude theory* in A.G.Greenwald, et al. (eds). Psychological Foundation of Attitudes, New York: Academic Press.

GRIFFITHS, Morwenna. (1998) Educational Research for Social Justice, Buckingham, Open University Press.

GRIFFITHS, Morwenna. (2000) *Collaboration and partnership in question: knowledge. politics and practice* in Journal of Education Policy, Vol. 15, 4, 383-395.

GUBA, Egon. G and LINCOLN, Yvonna. S. (1994) *Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research* in N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (eds) Handbook of Qualitative Research, pp105-117. London, Sage.

HABERMAS, J. (1976) Legitimation Crisis, London, Heinemann.

HABERMAS, Jurgen. (1979) Communicatiion and the Evolution of Society. London, Heinemann.

HACKER, P.M.S. (1987) Appearance and Reality, Oxford, Basil Blackwell.

HACKETT, Geraldine. (2000) *Inspectors insist that poverty is an excuse,* Times Educational Supplement. 10 March.

HALL, E. and HALL, C. (1988) Human relations in education, London, Routledge.

HALSEY, A.H. (1972) Educational Priority. E.P.A.Problems and Policies. Vol 1, H.M.S.O.

HALSEY, A.H. (1977) *Whatever happened to positive discrimination?,* Times Educational Supplement. 21 January.

HAMPSON, Sarah, E. (1988) The construction of personality, London, Routledge.

HARALAMBOS, Michael and HOLBORN, Martin. (1990) Sociology: Themes and perspectives. London, Unwin Hyman.

HARGREAVES, D.H. (1967) Social Relations in a Secondary School, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

HARMAN, G. (1970) *Induction,* in M. Swain (ed), Induction. Acceptance and Rational Belief, Dordrecht, Reidel.

HARRE, R. (1979) Social Being, Oxford, Blackwell.

HARRIS, Henry. (ed) (1995) Identity, Oxford, Clarendon Press.

HARRIS, N. (1971) Beliefs in Society, Harmondsworth, Penguin.

HATCHETT, Will. (1991) *Poverty: A Widening Gap*, Community Care, 23rd May 1991.

HAWKING, Stephen. (ed), (1992) Stephen Hawking's A Brief History of Time. A Reader's Companion. London, Bantam Press.

HEIDEGGER, Martin. (1962) Being and Time. Oxford, Basil Blackwell.

HEIDEGGER, Martin. (1978) Basic Writings, D. F. Krell (ed), London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.

HEIL, John. (1983) Perception and Cognition. London, University of California Press.

HESS, R.D. and SHIPMAN, V. C. (1965) *Early experience and the socialisation of cognitive modes in children.* Child Development, 36,4.

HESS, R.D. and BEAR, R.M. (1968) Early Educatioon: Current Theory, Reasearch and Action, Aldine.

HESS, R.D. et al (1969) The Cognitive Environments of Urban Pre-School Children. Graduate School of Education, University of Chicago.

HEYWOOD, H. Carl., ARBITMAN-SMITH, Ruth, BRABSFORD, John, D., DECLOS, Victor, TOWERY, Jane, R., HANNEL, I.L. and HANNEL Maria, V. (1977) Cognitive Education with Adolescents: Evaluation of Instrumental Enrichment. Vanderbilt, Vanderbilt University Press.

HINDESS, Barry. (1977) Philosophy and Methodology in the Social Sciences, Hassocks, Harvester Press.

H.M.S.O. (1990) Family Expenditure Survey.

HOUSTON, A. (1996) *Home-School Projects: Influencing Long-Term Change,* in J. Bastiani and S. Wolfendale (eds.), Home-School Work in Britain: Review, Reflection and Development. London, David Fulton.

HOWE, Christine. (1997) Gender and Classroom Interaction: A Research Review, Edinburgh, Scottish Council for Research in Education.

HOFFMANN, E. (1947) Kokoschka: Life and Work, London, Faber and Faber.

HUGHES, M. (1993) *Parents' views – Rhetoric and Reality,* in R. Mertens et al (eds), Ruling the Margins: Problematising Parental Involvement. London, University of North London.

HUGHES, M., WIKELEY, F. and NASH, T. (1994) Parents and their Children's Schools, Oxford, Blackwell.

HUME, D. (1962) A Treatise of Human Nature. Book One. D.G.C. Macnabb, (ed), Glasgow, Fontana/Collins (first published 1739).

HUME, D. (1962) A Treatise of Human Nature. Books Two and Three. Pall. S. Ardal, (ed), Glasgow, Fontana/Collins (first published 1739, 1740).

HUME, D. (1955) An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding. C.W.Hendel, (ed), New York, Bobbs-Merrill (first published 1748).

HUSSERL, E. (1931) Ideas. London, Allen and Unwin.

HUSSERL, E. (1970) Cartesian Meditations , The Hague, Nijhoff.

HYMAN, H.H. (1967) *'The Value Systems of Different Classes'* in R. Bendix and S.M. Lipset (eds) Class, Status and Power, 2nd ed, London, RKP.

ILLICH, I. (1971) Deschooling Society. London, Calder and Boyars.

JACKSON, B. and MARSDEN, D. (1962) Education and the Working Class, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

JENCKS, C., SMITH, M., ACLAND, M., BANE, M. J., COHEN, D., GINTIS, H., HEYNS, B. and MICHELSON, S. (1973) Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America, Allen Lane.

JEFFS, T. (1992) *The State, Ideology and the Community School Movement* in G. Allen and I. Martin (eds.), Education and Community. The Politics of Practice. London, Cassell.

JENCKS, C. (1979) Who Gets Ahead: The Determinants of Economic Success in America. Basic Books.

JENSEN, A.R. (1973) Educational Differences, London, Methuen.

KELLMER-PRINGLE, M. L., BUTLER, N. R. and DAVIE, R. (1966) 11,000 Seven-year-olds: First Report of the National Child Development Study, Longman.

KLINEBERG. O. (1971) *Race and I.Q.* Courier (November 1971).

KRETCH, D., CRUTCHFIELD, R.S. and BALLACHEY, E.L. (1962) Individual in Society, New York, McGraw-Hill.

KRIPKE, S. (1981) *Wittgenstein on rules and private language,* in I. Block (ed) Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein, Oxford, Blackwell.

LABOV, W. (1973) *The Logic of Non-Standard English*, in N. Keddie (ed), Tinker, Tailor...The Myth Of Cultural Deprivation, London, Penguin Education.

LACEY, C. (1970) Hightown Grammar: The school as a social system, Manchester, Manchester University Press.

LACEY, C. (1974) *Destreaming in a "Pressured" Academic Environment* in J. Eggleston (ed). Contempory Research in the Sociology of Education, London, Methuen.

LaPIERE, R.T. (1934) *Attitude versus actions*. Social Forces. vol 14, pp. 230-7.

LEMON, N. (1973) Attitudes and their Measurement. London, Batsford.

LEPORE, Ernest. (ed) (1989). Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson. Oxford, Blackwell.

LEVINSON, D.J. (1978) The Seasons of a Man's Life. New York, Knopf.

LUKES, S. (1974) Power: a Radical View. London, MacMillan.

LUNN, J.C.B. (1970) Streaming in the Primary School. N.F.E.R.

LYOTARD, Jean-Francois. (1984) The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge. Manchester, Manchester University Press.

MAC AN GHAILL, M. (1988) Young, Gifted and Black: Student-Teacher Relations in the Schooling of Black Youth, Milton Keynes, Open University Press.

MAC AN GHAILL, M. (1989) *Coming-of-age in 1980s England: reconceptualising Black students' schooling experience,* British Journal of Sociology of Education, 10(3): 273-86.

MACBEATH, J. and TURNER, M. (1989) Learning out of school, Glasgow, Scottish Office Education Department.

MANN, M. (1986) The Sources of Social Power. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

MANNHEIM, K. (1948) Ideology and Utopia. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

MARGOUS, Howard and SHAPIRO, Arthur. (Dec/Jan 1988) *Systematically Resolving Parental Conflict with the Goal-Output-Process-Input Procedure in:* The High School Journal. Volume 71, 88-96.

MARLAND, M. (1980) Education for the Inner City. London, Heinemann Educational.

MARSHALL, Tony .F. (1987) *Mediation: A New Mode of Establishing Order in Schools* in: The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice. Vol 26, 1, 33-46.

MARSLAND, D. (November 1989) *Universal Welfare Provision Creates a Dependent Population. The Case For,* Social Studies Review.

MARX, K. (1974) Capital VOL 111, London, Lawrence and Wishart.

MAUGHAN, Barbara., MORTIMORE, Peter., OUSTON, Janet. and RUTTER, Michael. *Fifteen Thousand Hours: a reply to Heath and Clifford* in: Oxford Review of Education, Volume 6, No 3, 1980, 289-302.

MAUSS, M. (1979) Sociology and Psychology. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

MEACHER, N. (1974) *The Politics of Positive Discrimination* in H. Glennerster and S. Hatch, Positive Discrimination and Inequality. Fabian Research Series, 314.

MEAD, G.H. (1934) Mind. Self and Society, ed by C. Morris, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

MENZIES, K. (1982) Sociological theory in use, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

MERTON, R.(1948) *The self-fulfilling prophecy*, Antioch Review, 8.

MIDWINTER, E. (1972) Priority Education: an Account of the Liverpool Project. Harmondsworth, Penguin.

MIDWINTER, E. (1977) Education for Sale. London, Allen and Unwin.

MILLS, C.W. (1956) The Power Elite. New York, O.U.P.

MISCHEL, W. (1968) Personality and Assessment. New York, John Wiley.

MONCK, L. and HUSBANDS, C. (1996) *Education 2000: Collaboration and Cooperation as a Model of Change Management,* in D. Bridges and C. Husbands (eds), Consorting and Collaborating in the Education Marketplace. London, Falmer Press.

MORTIMORE, Jo and BLACKSTONE, Tessa. (1986) Disadvantage and Education. London, Heinemann.

MORTIMORE, P., SAMMONS, P., STOLL, L., LEWIS, D. and ECOB, R. (1988) School Matters: the Junior Years, Wells, Open Books.

MORTON-WILLIAMS, R. (1967) *The National Survey among parents of primary school children* in Central Advisory Council for Education, Children and their Primary Schools, 2 Research and Surveys. H.M.S.O.

MOSCA. G. (1939) The Ruling Class. New York, McGraw-Hill.

NASH, ROY. (1976) *Pupils' Expectations of Their Teachers* in M. Stubbs and S. Delamont (eds.) Explorations in Classroom Observation. Chichester, John Wiley and Sons.

National Commission on Education. (1993) Learning to Succeed. London, Routledge.

NISBET, R A. (1967) The Sociological Tradition. London, Heinemann.

NOZICK, R. (1981) Philosophical Explanations. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

NURSS, J. E. and DAY, D. E. (1971) *Imitation, comprehension and production of grammatical structures*, Journal of Verbal Behaviour, 10.

OPPENHEIM, Carey (1990) Poverty: The Facts, Child Poverty Action Group Limited.

OFSTED. (1993) Access and Achievement in Urban education: A report from the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools. London, HMSO.

PARETO, V. A. (1963) A Treatise on Sociology, ed by A. Livingstone, New York, Dover Publications.

PARKIN, F. (1972) Class Inequality and Political Order. St Albans, Paladin.

PARSONS, T. (1951) The Social System. New York, The Free Press.

PARSONS, T. (1969) Politics and the Social Structure. New York, The Free Press.

PHILLIPS, D.L. (1968) *Social class and psychiatric disturbance: the influence of positive and negative experiences,* Social Psychiatry, 3.

PILLING, D. and Pringle, M.K. (1978) Controversial Issues in Child Development, Paul Elek.

RABINOW, Paul. (1984) The Foucault Reader. London, Penguin.

RAND, Y., TANNENBAUM, A.J. and FEVERSTEIN, R. (1979) *The Effects of Instrumental Enrichment in the Psycho Educational Development of Low Functioning Adolescents,* Journal of Educational Psychology. pp. 71-75.

RANSON, Stewart., MARTIN, Jane., and NIXON, Jon. (1997) *A Learning Democracy for Cooperative Action* Oxford Review of Education. Vol 23, No1, pp. 117-131.

RASSOOL, Naz. And MORELY, Louise. (2000) *School effectiveness and the displacement of equity discourses in education,* in Race, Ethnicity and Education, 3 (3) 237-258.

REED, G.F. (1979) *Sensory Deprivation* in G. Underwood, and VR Stevenson, (eds) Aspects of Consciousness1. London, Academic Press.

REID, I. (1986) The Sociology of School and Education. London, Fontana.

REINKE, B., HOLMES, D.S. and HARRIS, R.L. (1985) *The timing of psycho-social changes in women's lives: the years 25-45,* Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, vol. 48, pp 1353- 64.

RICHARDSON, J.J. and JORDAN, G. (1979) Governing Under Pressure, Oxford, Martin Robertson.

RING, M. (1977) *Knowledge; the cessation of belief,* American Philosophical Quarterly, 14, 51-9.

ROBINSON, H.B. and ROBINSON, N.M. (1968) *The problem of timing in pre-school education,* in R.D. Hess and R.M. Bear (eds.) Early Education, Aldine.

ROGERS, C.R. (1951) Client-Centered Therapy. Boston, Houghton, Mifflin.

ROGERS, C.R. (1983) Freedom to Learn for the 80s. London, Charles E. Merrill.

RORTY, R. (1994) Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature. Oxford, Blackwell.

ROSENTHAL, R. and JACOBSON, L. (1968) Pygmalion in the Classroom: Teacher Expectations and Pupils' Intellectual Development. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

RUDDUCK, Jean. (1995) *Headteachers and 'Ownership':'Whose School is it, Anyway?'* in D. Hustler et al (eds) Heeding Heads: Secondary Heads and Educational Commentators in Dialogue, London, David Fulton.

RUNCIMAN, W.G. (ed) (1978) Max Weber: Selections in translation. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

RUNDLE, Bede. (1990) Wittgenstein and Contemporary Philosophy of Language. Oxford, Basil Blackwell.

Runnymede TRUST. (1994) Multi-Ethnic Britain: Facts and Trends, London, Runnymede Trust.

RUSSELL, Bertrand. (1961) A History of Western Philosophy. London, Routledge.

RUTTER, M.L. and MADGE, N. (1976) Cycles of Disadvantage. London, Heinemann.

RUTTER, M., MAUGHAN, B., MORTIMORE, P. and OUSTON, J. with SMITH, A. (1979) Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and their Effect on Children. Open Books.

RYLE, Gilbert. (1949) The Concept of Mind. London, Hutchinson.

SAMMONS, P., HILLMAN, J. and MORTIMORE, P. (1995) Key Characteristics of Effective Schools. London, OFSTED.

SARUP, Madan. (1992) Jacques Lacan. London, Harvester Wheatsheaf.

SCHIFTER, D.B. and AJZEN, Icek. (1985) *Intention, perceived control, and weight loss: An application of the theory of planned behaviour*, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. 49, 845-51.

SCHLENKER, B.R. (1980) Impression Management. Montcrey, California, Brooks/Cole.

SCHOGGEN, M. (1969) *An ecological study of three year olds at home,* George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, cited in J. Bruner (1974) The Relevance of Education.

SCHUTZ, A. (1972) The Phenomenology of the Social World. London, Heinemann. (first published 1932).

SCHUTZ, A. (1980) *The Social World and the Theory of Social Action,* International Quarterly of Political and Social Science, Vol 28, Summer.

SCROGGS, James, R. (1985) Key Ideas in Personality Theory', New York, West Publishing Company.

SEAVER, W.J. (1973) *Effects of naturally induced teacher expectancies,* J. Pers and Soc. Psychology. 28.

SELLARS, Wilfrid. (1963) Science. Perception and Reality, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

SHARP, Rachel and GREEN, Anthony with LEWIS, Jacqueline. (1975) Education and social control: A study in progressive primary education, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

SHARPE, Leslie. (1987) *The Management of Home- School Relations in the Secondary School* in: John Bastiani (ed) Parents and Teachers 1. Perspectives in Home-School Relations, Windsor, NFER-Nelson.

SHARRON, Howard. (1987) Changing Children's Minds. Feurestein's Revolution in the Teaching of Intelligence, London, Souvenir Press.

SHASKOLSKY, L. (1970) *The Development of Sociological Theory - A Sociology of Knowledge Interpretation,* In L.T. and J.M. Reynolds (eds) The Sociology of Sociology, New York, McKay.

SHIPMAN, M. (1980) *The Limits of Positive Discrimination,* in M. Marland (ed.) Education for the Inner City, London, Heinemann Educational Books.

SILVER, H. (ed) (1973) Equal Opportunity in Education: A Reader in Social Class and Educational Opportunity, Methuen.

SIMON, B. (1953) Intelligence Testing and the Comprehensive School. Lawrence and Wishart. Extract reprinted in H. Silver (ed) Equal Opportunity in Education, London, Methuen. 1973.

LADY SIMON OF WYTHENSHAWE. (1948) Three Schools or One? Secondary Education in England, Scotland and the U.S.A.. Frederick Muller. Extract reprinted in H. SILVER (ed) Equal Opportunity in Education, London, Methuen.

SMART, Barry. (1985) Michel Foucault, London, Routledge.

SMITH, D. J. and Tomlinson, S. (1989) A Study of Multi- Racial Comprehensives, London, Policy Studies Institute.

SMITH, G.A. (1977) *Positive discrimination by area in education; the EPA idea re-examined,* Oxford Review of Education, 3, 3.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION UNIT. (1998) Bringing Britain Together Again: A National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (Cm. 4045), London, The Stationary Office.

STEELE, Jonathan. (1996) *Anthony Giddens, king of sociology* in The Observer, 8 December 1996, Page 20.

STENHOUSE, L. (1982) *The Conduct, Analysis and Reporting of Case-Study in Educational Research* in R. McCorrick et al (eds), Calling Education to Account', Heinemann.

STEPHENSON, W. (1953) The Study of Behavior: Q-technique and its Methodology, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

STOLLER, Paul and OLKES, Cheryl. (1987) In sorcery's shadow: a memoir of apprenticeship among the Songhay of Niger, Chicago/London, University of Chicago Press.

STRAUSS, Anselm and CORBIN, Juliet. (1994) *'Grounded Theory Methodology: An Overview,'* in Denzin,N and Lincoln, Y. (eds), Handbook of Qualitative Research, London, Sage.

STRONACH, Ian and MACLURE, Maggie. (1997) Educational Research Undone. The Postmodern Embrace. Buckingham, Open University Press.

SUGARMAN, B. (1970) *Social Class, Values and Behaviour in Schools* in M. Craft (ed.) Family, Class and Education. London, Longman.

SWAIN, M. (1970) Induction, Acceptance and Rational Belief. Dordrecht, Reidel.

THOMAS, S. and MORTIMORE, P. (1994) Report on Value Added Analysis of 1993 GCSE Examination Results in Lancashire, London, University of London Institute of Education.

TIZARD, B., Mortimore, J. and BURCHELL, B. (1981) Involving Parents in Nursery and Infant Schools. London, Grant McIntyre.

TIZARD, Barbara and HUGHES, Martin. (1984) Young Children and Learning: talking and thinking at home and at school, London, Fontana.

TIZARD, Barbara. (1986) The Care of Young Children: implications of recent research, London, University of London Institute of Education.

TOUGH, J. (1974) Focus on Meaning: Talking to Some Purpose with Young Children, London, Allen and Unwin.

TOUGH, J. (1977) Development of Meaning, London, Allen and Unwin.

TOWER HAMLETS. (1994) Analysis of 1994 GCSE Results, London, Borough of Tower Hamlets.

TRUAX, Charles, B. and CARKHUFF, Robert, R. (1967) Towards Effective Counseling and Psychotherapy: Training and Practice, Chicago, Aldine Publishing Company.

VAILLANT, G.E. (1977) Adaptations to Life. Boston, Little, Brown.

VAN DER EYKEN, Willem. (1974) *Compensatory education in Britain: a review of research*, London Educational Review, 3, 3, Autumn.

VEENHOVEN, R. (1989) Did the Crisis Really Hurt?, Rotterdam, Rotterdam University Press.

VINCENT, C. (1993) *Education for the Community*. British Journal of Educational Studies, 41 (4), 366-380.

WALKER, S. and MEIER, J. (1982/83) Instrumental Enrichment Programme. Office of Educational Evaluation, New York City Public Schools,

VERNON, P. E. (1969) Intelligence and Cultural Environment, London, Methuen.

WEBER, M. (1958) The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons.

WEBER, M (1964) The Theory of Social and Economic Organisations, New York, Free Press.

WEBER, M. (1968) Economy and Society: an outline of interpretive sociology (Volume 1). New York, Bedminster Press.

WEDGE, P. and Prosser, N. (1973) Born to Fail ?, Arrow Books.

WHITE, P. (1982) *Beliefs About Conscious Experience* in G. Underwood (ed) Aspects of Consciousness. Volume 3. London, Academic Press.

WICKER, A. (1969) *Attitudes versus action: the relationship of verbal and overt behavioural responses to attitude objects,* Journal of Social Issues, vol 25, pp. 41-78.

WICKER, A.W. (1971) *An examination of the "other variables" explanation of attitude-behaviour inconsistency,* Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. 19,18-30.

WIDLAKE,

WILLIS, P. (1977) Learning to Labour. Farnborough, Saxon House.

WILLMOTT, P. (1969) Adolescent boys of East London. London, Penguin.

WILLMOTT, P. and YOUNG, M. (1960) Family and Class in a London Suburb. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

WINTER, Richard. (1987) Action-Research and the Nature of Social Inquiry: Professional innovation and educational work, Aldershot, Avebury.

WITTGENSTEIN, L. (1958) Philosophical Investigations. Oxford, Blackwell.

WITTGENSTEIN, L. (1969) On Certainty. Oxford, Blackwell.

WOLFENDALE, S. (1992) Empowering Parents and Teachers Working for Children. London, Cassell.

WOODS, Peter. (1979) The Divided School, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

WOODS, Peter. (1986) Inside Schools.Ethnography in educational resarch. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

WOOTTON, A.J. (1974) *Talk in the homes of young children,* Sociology, 82.

WRIGHT, C. (1986) *School processes - an ethnographic study* in J. Eggleston, D. Dunn and M. Anjali (eds.) Education for Some: The Educational & Vocational Experiences of 15-18 year old Members of Minority Ethnic Groups, Stoke-on-Trent, Trentham.

WRIGHTSMAN, L. S. (1966) *Wallace supporters and adherence to law and order,* Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. 4, 328-332.

WYER, ROBERT. S. jr (ed) (1994) Associated Systems Theory: A Systematic Approach to Cognitive Representations of Persons. Volume V11. New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

YOUNGMAN, Michael. (ed) Mid-Schooling Transfer: Problems and Proposals, Windsor, NFER-Nelson.

ZIGLER, E. and BUTTERFIELD, E. C. (1968) *Motivational aspects of changes in IQ test performance of culturally deprived nursery school children*, Child Development, 39

ZIMBARDO, P. and EBBESON, E.B. (1970) Influencing Attitudes and Changing Behavior, Reading, Mass, Addison-Wesley.

ZIMMERMAN, D. H. and WIEDER, D.L. (1971) *Ethnomethodology and the Problem of Order* in J.D.Douglas (ed) Understanding Everyday Life, London, RKP.