

**UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CHICHESTER**

**an accredited college of the UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON**

**'How Children Experience National Curriculum Physical Education'**

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**Thesis submitted for qualification of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Department of Physical Education**

**March 2001**

**This thesis has been completed as a requirement for a higher degree of the  
University of Southampton**

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**ABSTRACT**

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There has been a general reluctance within education, and in particular physical education, to involve the child proactively in the research process. Assessments of children's experiences have occluded possibilities for the development of understanding by the proclivity to employ restrictive methods of research. Herein potential is confined to accessing only those categories deemed to be of significance by the researcher.

This study aimed to expand upon existing studies by opening potential for accessing new possibilities through the involvement of children directly in the exposition of research issues and development of theory. An interpretive approach, adhering to a grounded theory methodology, was taken over a three-year period of data collection and analysis. Following an initial year of familiarisation with the research field, through observations in four secondary schools, a case study formed the basis of the main body of research. Diaries, group and individual interviews formed the essential basis of data that was supported by observational study.

Children involved in this study were found to have the capacity for reflection and analytic acumen to cast their experience meaningfully and constructively for interpretation. Therefore, although superficially findings supported many more general issues studied to date within the subject area, analysis revealed more specifically that children's experience of physical education was organised around certain domains of awareness. These configurations formed what I have termed a 'working consciousness' in given situations. 'Physical education' as a practical, spacial and social phenomenon heightens the significance of experience through the multiplicity of sentient possibilities that it creates for the child. However, in particular, the presence of 'significant' peers was found to be a predominant determinant of actual working consciousness, on occasion overriding 'curriculum' itself.

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## **PREFACE**

This research took place in five schools on the south coast of England. The main body of the study was conducted in one school which, for the purposes of anonymity, I refer to as 'Hansford Park'. If a school named Hansford Park exists, no association should be made between it and the content of this study.

Throughout this text pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of children and teachers involved.

By September 1999, Chichester Institute of Higher Education had received University College status.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr Chris Laws for making this whole project possible and for his guidance and exceptional understanding throughout.

Thank you to the children and staff involved in this research, particularly those of Hansford Park who shared so much.

Very special thanks to Keith who has lived this with me, especially through the tough times.

Thank you to my father Alex for teaching me the value of education. To my sister Alison, who is, and has always been, my inspiration. And to my niece Rebecca, who shows me how to keep things in perspective.

**In memory of my mother, Carol Ann Groves 1936 –2000**

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>PE</b>	Physical Education
<b>PSE</b>	Personal and Social Education
<b>NCPE</b>	National Curriculum Physical Education
<b>QCA</b>	Qualification and Curriculum Authority
<b>SCAA</b>	Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Anyone who has ever worked with children will know them to be sentient, analytical beings, with an innate desire not simply to express themselves, but to be heard doing so. Often children can surprise us with their sagacity and candour if we pause to listen to them. Ergo, I feel it is to be lamented that there appears to have been a general reluctance in education and in particular physical education, to involve the child directly in researching their perceptions and experiences. Although in recent years researchers have begun to address issues of assessing the perspectives that children hold of physical education by actually asking them, I contest that their genuine beliefs are often occluded by the restrictive basis of methods employed in this capacity. With this study I aim to bring the child directly into the process of physical education research. For me, this does not simply mean involving them as subjects in data collection, but in defining the research problem itself collaboratively with the researcher.

Historically children have been largely absent from educational research in what I would term any 'real' sense as the result of a tendency to cleave to the idea that the child is essentially passive. This applies both to the nature of methods used to involve them and to the way in which they are portrayed in findings.

The location of children in educational research has as its point of departure their treatment as a product to be assessed before and after the impact of education. In this way the efficacy of curriculum programmes have been measured. There are now, however, tentative movements towards embracing the concept that children might have some agency in defining research issues within education, but not within physical education. Along the way children have been, and indeed still are, presented as a 'victim'. Victim of the pathology of their home background where it is not reflected in dominant school ethos, victim of the vagaries of a school culture that seeks to remedy this pathology, and ultimately victim of their own action should they seek to resist either phenomenon. It is my contention that it is possible that this representation in itself is the result of their being 'victimized' by research processes predisposed to presenting them in a particular way.

Relatively early education studies focused analysis on the construction of knowledge within the school, considering curriculum content and the cultural biases in the implementation of that curriculum (Young 1971, Bernstein 1971, Apple 1979). This is a critical tradition that has proved enduring and has been specifically developed within the specialism of physical education research. In particular, issues surrounding the introduction of a national curriculum physical education stimulated a great deal of debate concerning the potential political biases that were perceived to be ensconced in curriculum rhetoric (Kirk 1992, Sparkes 1990, Evans and Penney 1992).

Other studies have taken an interactionist perspective, that afforded children an element of 'voice' directly, considering interpersonal relationships within the classroom, and/or school generally in order to assess social relations (Hargreaves, D 1967, Keddie 1971). These have more closely analysed the experience of children and involved the child more directly in the research process itself.

Some research has even taken this idea of directly including perceptions of children a stage further by extending beyond the classroom in an attempt to give children voice on issues regarding school outside of that immediate educational context. In particular, Mac an Ghaill's work with black children addressing 'the' issue of underachievement in school examinations, involved them within school but also allowed them to come into his own home on an informal basis, as part of an integrative approach to researching their perspectives (1988). Others have considered the impact that 'education' has upon children's life chances following them through the process of leaving school and entering the world of work (Willis 1977, Mirza 1992).

However, focus within many studies that claim to give the child 'voice' tend towards the researcher determining what is to be observed and discussed. I contend, therefore, that these still fall short of actually giving genuine representation of the child. Essentially, the portrayal of children remains as individuals without any real agency.

Since the inception of my research, some development in approaches to increasing the involvement of children in research that directly concerns them has taken place (Lewis and Lindsay 2000, Greig and Taylor 1999). There has however, been limited movement towards involving the child more in guiding the education research process itself. Within physical education, although there has been a clear move towards seeking the child's perspective (Mac Fadyen 1996, Williams 1996, Williams and Bedward 1999), there is still a need to address problems of involving the child more in defining research issues and contributing to the direction of the research process.

It is perhaps understandable that there appears to have been a reluctance to give the child voice in educational research since the essential premise of so much in education is that the child has a passive role to play. It appears that curriculum decisions are always made on behalf of the child and there is separation of curriculum and human agency in curriculum design. With the imminent introduction of a national curriculum for physical education, research concerns within physical education became ensconced in the selection, prioritisation and legitimation of knowledge (Kirk and Tinning 1990, Evans 1990, Kirk 1992, Evans and Penney 1992). Since the selection of knowledge is inevitably a conscious process through which those in control of the curriculum would exercise their own interests, as had been seen within 'education' generally, schools and departments within physical education came to be



seen as 'arenas of struggle' (Sparkes 1990 p198). However, the child as such was seen to have no place in this conflict.

A now nationally prescribed curriculum means that, rather than necessarily homogenising physical education, it highlights the significance of manipulation in 'delivery', and the context within which it is received. What remains significant here, is that the child itself is not without agency, and may contribute to the framing of its own experience. Additionally, children act within and as part of a collective, and their experience will vary according to the 'human environment' within which they are working.

### **The school context**

In order to approach the new National Curriculum, the first phase of this study acted as reconnaissance for the research as a whole and took place in four secondary schools involved in teaching national curriculum physical education (NCPE). The purpose of this was in part to familiarise myself with a variety of schools and possible approaches to delivering curriculum text. However, it also served a more significant function in that it gave me the opportunity to seek an understanding of the way in which children function and how best I might establish a collaborative relationship with this age group.

As I was seeking to give an ideographic account, I worked largely within one case study school. The main body of research took place in Hansford Park, an 11-16 co-educational community comprehensive, with a cohort of approximately 800 students in 1998 which increased to 900 in the year 2000. The school has outdoor facilities of grass pitches for soccer, hockey and athletics, a floodlit all-weather surface, four tennis courts and six netball courts. Indoor facilities comprise a four badminton court sized hall, weight training area and gymnasium.

This part of the study began in the autumn and spring terms of 1998/9 when children kept 'PE diaries', in which they recorded their 'experiences' of physical education. At the same time I met with children to discuss those issues identified in their notes. These issues were used to subsequently guide the entire research project. As the research progressed, because of the nature of physical education, inter-personal relationships emerged as a precurrent theme determining children's experience. In the third phase of the research, sociometric testing was used to identify individuals who were significant to specific children. Initially, testing took place with a view to assess potential patterns of power within groups, but ultimately, were utilised to identify the nature of relationships between children and positively and negatively significant peers. Interviews took place with children on an individual basis to identify the impact that these others and teachers had upon their experience when directly involved in their learning environment.

The physical education department at Hansford Park consisted of two male and two female teachers. At the commencement of the research, the Head of Department, 'Mr Handley', had been in his post for 14 years; the second male, 'Mr Mitchell', had been with the school for 22 years. One female teacher, 'Miss Harrison', was in her first year with the school after two years of teaching in an equivalent post elsewhere in the same county. The other female post changed part way through the study at the beginning of the 1999 academic year. Initially, this had been filled by 'Miss Merrett' who was a newly qualified teacher when she joined the school in September 1997. She left at the end of the 1998/9 academic year in order to pursue other interests, although she returned to the department for the autumn term whilst Miss Harrison was convalescing from an operation. Miss Merrett's formal position was filled by 'Miss Blackwood', in her first post, having been placed there in the previous year on her final teaching experience whilst at university.

The department and school share a formally declared ethos of including and valuing all children regardless of ability, promoting 'the highest standards of achievement for all pupils in all fields of endeavour' (School Prospectus 1998). The teachers sought sincerely to pursue this aim, offering a complex programme of extra-curricular activities for all years and abilities, and perhaps more significantly actively encouraging children to join. Thus a genuine effort was made to turn equality of access into actual equality of participation.

This extra-curricular programme supported the positive self-image as regards participation that teachers sought to promulgate in children within physical education. As I shall discuss, the staff sought consciously to involve each child as an individual. This was a skill that was perhaps more refined in the older members of staff although, in my opinion, the department fostered a highly positive and coherent image of 'physical education' for the children.

The school timetable worked on a two-week programme, with weeks being described as 'A' and 'B', offering the national curriculum at Key Stage three and GCSE programme at Key Stage four. The examination course was compulsory and therefore constituted what physical education 'was' for the child. However, in their diaries, children did not allude at all to the academic component of their studies, and it was rarely mentioned at other stages of the research. Therefore, the clear majority of comments in my analysis refer to the practical component of study at this level. All lessons are taught in mixed sex groups. Groupings vary according to different tasks and the various demands that the teachers wish to place upon the children.

## **The aims and purposes of the research**

This study aimed to gain an understanding of how children experience physical education. The purpose was to access the nature of 'experience' as it pertains to this subject area, and assess the implications that this may have for the implementation of 'curriculum'.

Research was designed so that children would identify those elements of the curriculum that were of greatest significance to them and these then formed the basis of an exploration into the meanings that underpinned this significance. I was interested in what was important in experience of physical education from the child's perspective and why. In particular, I wanted to investigate whether children would categorise their experience of physical education in a way that curriculum design might imply: Would children consider both hockey and netball in terms of 'games' activities or would aspects of organisation, equipment and teacher affect the ways in which each was perceived? What might be the difference in experience of 'dance' if the music were taken from the popular scene or country? What are the implications of cross-curricular themes such as 'working with others'?

Because the concept of 'experience' can only be understood in terms of the subject concerned, in practice, the study followed the dual aims of exploring not only the initial research theme, but also that of the nature of involving children proactively in the research process.

In this study I adopted an interpretive paradigm because I believe that 'reality' is socially constructed through interaction between individuals. In taking this stance, I do not mean to ignore the macro aspects of educational situations, but rather to give a more detailed account of the subjective experiences of children. It is my feeling that a rapprochement might be sought of different perspectives to create a holistic picture of different issues. I am interested in the meaning that is applied to interaction and the way this serves to build and develop perspectives, and hence determine experience.

In order to address the subjective reception of the physical education programme by children, I shall address issues surrounding the nature of physical education, the way in which they perceive their environment and construct reality, and ultimately, the nature of experience. Indeed, the provenance of the whole study lay in fact, in addressing this last issue and identifying what is meant by 'experience'. When two individuals are placed in an identical situation their experience of that same situation may greatly differ. In listening to accounts of the particular incident the nature of individual experiences may be understood. The indicators of experience in physical education will be those factors that the child perceives and therefore discusses in their account. In any circumstance the individual will perceive specific factors only, and those aspects towards which attention is drawn will be those that have meaning for them. Therefore, 'experience' becomes an amalgam of perception and meaning, and through these two factors we may understand the different realities that children construct for

themselves.

Access to perception and meaning can only be made where the child is free to express an account. Therefore, it is my feeling that in order to understand experience, by implication, subjects will need to be involved in identifying the research 'problem'.

Within educational research there has been a conceptual separation of 'research' per se and the researched. Research approaches have generally been developed independently of contributions made by subjects. Both problems and the way in which they are to be addressed, particularly where children are subjects, are defined by the researcher, or other 'legitimate' adults involved in the education process. In my case, to access 'experience', I felt it necessary to take standard educational research methodologies one stage further and actually involve children in collaboratively defining the research problem.

As I wished to involve the child proactively in the research process, I chose to 'ground theory' in an approach developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, and later modified by Strauss and Corbin (1990). This is a methodology that emanates from the essential premises of symbolic interactionism that particularly suits gaining access to the way in which individuals perceive 'objects', be they material or otherwise, from which they apply meaning and create 'realities' (Blumer 1969, Shibutani 1955, Charon 1985).

This approach essentially allows the researcher to develop rather than test theory through induction and deduction, something that I was particularly interested in doing as I sought to allow children to guide me to my conclusions. Under this methodology research builds on data collected. Thematic representations are made which are then linked across continued data collection, until a point of 'theoretical saturation' is reached wherein no new themes are identified, and an overall theory may be 'grounded' in the initial data collected.

As I wished to involve children directly in identifying the research problem at the earliest possible stage, I wanted initial data collection to be in the form of 'PE diaries' kept by the children. In this way the children were free to identify only those issues that they felt of importance in their experience of physical education. Children were encouraged to write in the vernacular on any elements in their experience of salience to them. Through the configurations of language as symbol, meanings were extricated.

Pseudonyms are used throughout to protect the identity of people and places involved in this study. The research as a whole, took place in a series of four phases. I specifically use the term 'phase' here,

to maintain the fluidity of movement of analysis between periods of data collection characteristic of grounded theory.

This thesis begins with a representation of how I believe 'experience' is constructed; I discuss the way in which meanings may be represented and therefore accessed through language (Chapter Two). I then move on to consider the way in which research in education has been conducted and the impact that this has had in promulgating the representation of children as passive (Chapter Three). Following this I scrutinise a selection of texts that have sought to give the child voice in education and physical education research. Here I particularly draw attention to issues associated with the way in which such research has been approached and some of the limitations I feel that they place on the expression of children (Chapter Four).

The restrictions that I identify here, are then discussed in terms of my own methodological approach and the attempts I made to explore certain possibilities in involving children more actively in research (Chapters Five and Six). My approach is then placed in an ethical context considering the specifics of conducting research with children (Chapter Seven). My findings offer some reflection of existing theory but also raise issues of the nature of the interactive basis in experience of physical education (Chapter Eight). In particular, the impact of inter-peer relationships is discussed (Chapter Nine).

My point of departure here, is the nature of experience within physical education; how it is manifest for the child, and might be made accessible in order that the child's voice can be understood. It is to these issues that I now turn.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A THEORETICAL BASIS TO APPROACHING 'EXPERIENCE' IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

#### **Experience and the nature of physical education**

Physical education under a national programme is a curriculum text that is reinterpreted at various sites and ultimately framed by the teacher for the child. All of these sites of reinterpretation are filled by the legitimate adult authorised to make decisions on behalf of what is deemed to be to the benefit of 'the child' but which ultimately incorporates the interests of all those who are able to represent curriculum content.

I agree with Rintala (1991) in that the key to really understanding experience in physical activity lies in considering not so much human movement but the human moving (p270). This entails not only analysis of the child in action, but also of how the child perceives that action, and how that perception is affected by the human environment within which it is set. She suggests that in order to understand how individuals experience physical activity it is necessary to eliminate from our consideration those aspects of it which are descriptive of movement itself. In other words, it is necessary to look beyond how fast a race is run, how many goals are scored, how aesthetic a movement is and consider the essential reaction of the individual to what they are doing. Yet this is only a starting point.

Very often, assessments of physical education focus on product rather than process; this applies not only to the implications of the NCPE but also the response of the research profession. Physical education is evaluated in objective terms; essentially, these can be applied to the child; the child is again conceived as being acted upon, and physical education 'experience' decontextualised.

Within physical education, the individual's reaction to the physical nature of the activity in isolation provides not only just one element of an experience as a whole, but one which may not predominate. Generally speaking, because of the compulsory nature of national curriculum subjects, children are placed within a learning environment over which they have very limited control. Usually they are allocated an activity and, therefore, are constrained by a predetermined working environment either physical or human. Where they partake in elective activities, they cannot always determine which of their peers will also be working with them so also have limited control. They may opt for an activity that they believe will be pursued by others that they like, or not pursued by those that they do not like, but still there will be only a degree to which they can determine who they are working with. They may choose an activity because they like or do not like particular teachers. Whatever format the child is presented with is either determined for them entirely, or is rendered a compromise of ideal options.

However, although this determination or compromise provides a framework within which the curriculum itself is actually delivered, it is one within which the children will seek to actualise their own interests. In individual's general assessment of one another, initial evaluation is based upon what can be seen, and within physical education this becomes highly pronounced. Whilst behaviour might disguise thought, the body cannot be hidden entirely, and effectively becomes an existential representation of the individual that provides a basis for others with which to judge and interact with them.

Ennis (1998) suggested that in order for children to have a positive experience of physical education, they need to see meaning in what they are being asked to do. I suggest, however, that clarification as to what is meant by 'meaning' is required here. Where a child is asked to participate in any activity with which they have no cultural or personal affinity, this does not render the experience meaningless. Rather, it takes on a meaning that may conflict with the intentions of the teacher seeking to provide the child with a particular experience. Therefore, what occurs in physical education has potential to be rather more pervasive than is perhaps ordinarily recognised. Issues of the nature of meaning for the child need to be accounted for beyond what is observable. There will always be meaning; what is in question is the nature of that meaning for the child. I shall now consider the way in which environment is perceived and the meaning applied to it that constitutes experience.

### **Experience and meaning**

As discussed in my introduction, I believe that the constituent elements of 'experience' are an amalgam of perception and meaning. At a basic level, experience is essentially an 'occurrence' of which one is aware and thus pertains to an individual's consciousness. As different individuals have varying levels of consciousness, it is possible that the nature of an incident as it occurs to one individual is cognitively different to the 'same' incident to another. We actively 'construct' our experience and, therefore, it does not necessarily possess the property of specific material existence but may exist purely as a cognitive event. For one person, a situation 'reads' in a particular way; they see certain aspects of a situation and ascribe meaning to them. There are, therefore, specific points of focus that might be termed 'objects' of consciousness, and intentional relationships with those 'objects'. In phenomenological terms (Husserlian) this is categorised as 'intentional experience' (Pivcevic 1970):

*In a presentation...something is presented, in a judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love something is loved, in hate something is hated, in desire something is desired*  
Pivcevic (1970 p46)

Such a belief relates to symbolic interactionist paradigms. Here, objects are defined in the individual's

mind by the use that they have for us. In other words we define objects at any point, in terms of the line of action we are about to take towards them (Charon 1985 p28). Therefore, the metaphysical existence of tangible objects is determined by the individual's perception of them; for one child a hockey stick is a tool with which to play a game, yet for another it is a potential weapon with which to 'legitimately' attack a peer. Within a lesson it may become an aide to standing or to drawing in the dirt surface of the pitch. Thus an object will not only be defined in terms of its function but redefined as that function alters.

When considering the concept of investigating 'experience' within research, it is inevitable that during discussion, past experience would actually be recalled in the present. Therefore, present 'values' that may be affected by experiences outside the particular issue at hand, would, nevertheless, be applied in judgement of them. The internal structure which is given to the experience concerned is, therefore arguably different to that which pertained to the event as it occurred.

Effectively, individuals will create a perspective with which to frame their interpretation of the world:

*It is an order of things remembered and expected as well as things actually perceived, an organized conception of what is plausible and what is possible; it constitutes the matrix through which one perceives his environment*  
Shibutani (1955 p564)

Selective in their emphasis, current recollections will affect future action; in other words, particular salient aspects of experience will determine a child's perception of a situation both past and present. Essentially, individuals have a 'perception' which will inevitably itself be a developing phenomenon as the child modifies 'recollections' with continued experience. Therefore:

*...meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formation of action*  
Blumer (1969 p5)

As perceptions of the same factor will also vary between individuals, their experience of particular events will similarly vary; children are:

*...animate, thinking beings with developing beliefs and value systems, who place emphasis on what they think is happening rather than on what is happening*  
Woodhouse (1996 p41)

A child will be sensitised to particular aspects of physical reality and desensitised to others (Charon 1985 p3) by the framework they are using for their interpretation. In my study, during an interview, one year nine girl, Kim, had felt that a particular teacher was 'cool' because she was relaxed and a 'good



laugh'; she knew her outside formal class time, being part of the school netball team and felt they got along well. However, having attempted a skill on the trampoline for which she had not been prepared and fallen awkwardly, the teacher berated her for her actions. Discussing the incident with Kim afterwards, she claimed that the teacher was a 'control freak' and was unable to conceive that the teacher's actions had resulted from safety concerns. The following lesson, Kim felt 'nagged' each time the teacher attempted to teach her, hearing suggestions only as directions for control:

*Kim appears very 'anti'- refuses to try anything new that Miss Blackwood is attempting to introduce to her – comment 'don't know why she can't f...ing keep off me back'... 'naggin' me all the time'.. 'I can't be bothered anyway' – comment not made directly to me but feel made ensuring I would hear – moved closer as made point to Sarah Capstan  
(Field notes 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1999)*

The key factor to remember here, is that whenever one individual acts towards another as an object, that 'object' does in fact, experience that action subjectively:

*...every time a teacher or the coach...gives corrective feedback there is the subjective experience of the person who was corrected.  
Rintala (1991 p274)*

This presents a rejection of the separation of mind and body; a rejection of our tendency to present experience by understanding the 'measurables' of performance since whilst the body is acted upon both by self and others it is the 'mind-body' that experiences. Therefore, the reaction of another individual to the child may have greater impact upon their perceptions of the situation than the physical 'actualities' of what they are doing:

*Judgements rest upon perspectives, and people with different outlooks define identical situations differently, responding selectively to the environment  
Shibutani (1955 p564)*

Essentially, children embark on a journey in education, a journey that in practice continues throughout life and pervades all aspects of existence. Throughout that journey they progressively seek to make sense of their world. Children's journeys are particularly heightened as they develop strategies according to the information they infer from new and changing environments. These strategies they will continually modify and make more sophisticated. The strategies adopted by the child will be confirmed as appropriate or otherwise and subsequently retained or otherwise: 'When strategies become outdated, new ones are developed' (Beynon 1985 p21). Woods (1980 p16) describes the individual here as a 'perplexed copier' and one for whom more questions than answers may be raised.

*Our 'perplexed copier' is perplexed for life. Though he finds out more answers as he progresses*

*through life, and though some areas of thought and activity may become routinised, he also discovers more questions, so that his bewilderment in some respects may appear to increase. The point is...that such strategies may appear temporary, but they become part of the individual's stock of experience which provides a resource for meeting future contingencies which are bound to arise*  
Woods (1980 p 16)

Thus children develop 'perspectives' with which to frame their responses to particular situations. Although it is arguable that 'perspectives' of one person may be deemed by another to be 'wrong' and as a result 'skew' an experience, they are nonetheless essential in the construction of meaning since they 'make it possible...to make sense out of what is 'out there' (Charon 1985 p4). By Plato's definition we understand that one has knowledge about the world of being; one has opinions about the world of becoming (Rintala 1991 p262) and the 'knowledge' that the child has will determine not only their opinion, but guide their action. Subsequently, all perception may be described as hypothetical (Shibutani 1955p569); effectively, hypotheses are formulated and either supported or reformulated. It is the collation of perspectives that determines how reality for the individual is constructed; since perspectives arise from a social context, reality becomes in itself socially constructed and it is this phenomenon that I now discuss.

### **The social construction of reality**

Essentially, then, understanding 'perspective' facilitates understanding an individual's view of the world and subsequent behaviours since 'reality' is necessarily an 'applied reality'. The individual structures perception around objects; objects being any 'thing' that may be indicated (Blumer 1969 p10). As mentally defined, objects become fluid and redefinable. Objects of experience exist differently between individuals' and within individual's perceptions. The very same object may be loved and hated simultaneously by different people. Additionally, a single object may be loved or hated by the same individual at different times. Within physical education for example, a dance lesson might be positively anticipated by some, and negatively by others. Also, the same individual may look forward to the lesson or dread it, according to whom they are working with. Each child will have their own configuration of perceptions that determines their perspectives at any given time in any given situation.

This raises the issue of how 'objects' of a situation fluctuate in terms of their significance to a child. In one context the official purposes of the lesson will dominate the child's consciousness, and the dominant object of experience may be the task in hand, whereas in another, addressing an immediate personal relationship may predominate as 'object'.

This has further application in the fact that 'knowledge' for individuals is based on its usefulness to

them. We 'see what we 'want' to and remember what we 'want' to' (Charon 1985 p27). Children will pay attention only to those factors salient in their own hierarchy of importance, constructed from their own experiences. Therefore, conversely, recollections of particular incidences will identify those aspects of an experience that defined, and/or define, the situation as remembered by the child. This is not to suggest that children will have had to experience something in order to make a decision as to how to react to it. In my study, where children were attempting a new skill, some would make a decision as to how to approach it following the advice of the teacher; they could not know themselves, but would trust the experience of their teacher to direct them in action. Thus the child's experience of the teacher predominates over their lack of experience in the activity, and this takes priority.

What is also clear here, is that objects need not necessarily be of material conception. A belief that something exists, even where it is not a tangible entity, for example, the belief that another child 'likes' them, will act as an object of perception and consequently of action. The only necessity for a phenomenon to 'exist' is for an individual to believe that it does so. Following this, it is often the case that children will react according to what they consider to be other people's perceptions of them and will take on identities accordingly. Blumer (1969) states that:

*Objects have no fixed status except as their meaning is sustained through indications and definitions that people make of the objects*  
Blumer (1969 p12)

In many cases, individuals subsequently come to view themselves as others see them, self-perception resulting from interaction with other people (Charon 1985). I do not argue, however, that children will necessarily internalise the meaning of a role that is allocated to them, but rather that they learn to behave in that role as defined by others. What also proved significant to my study, is that children's roles will vary according to the social situation which will be redefined according to the presence of specific others. As active beings, individuals will behave in what I shall term a 'relative' context.

Given a thorough biographical understanding of self-conceptions and an understanding of presentational concerns then a second stage of analysis becomes possible. Mead (1934) postulated that in interaction there will be continued attempts to realise the 'I' but 'since it is a social self, it is a self which is realised in its relationship to others' (p204).

As Blumer (1969) suggested objects may therefore be categorised into three types; physical objects, social objects and abstract objects (p10). Thus within the current study physical objects were those such as basketballs and playing fields, social objects were peers and teachers, and abstract, the ideologies of those social objects. What I needed to understand were the complexities of the

relationship between these objects and within them.

Charon (1985 pp38-39) collates all of the above under one title, 'social objects'. These he defines as those objects 'that an action uses in that situation'. Thus they may be 'people, ideas and perspectives and symbols...even an individual's own past can be a social object' (Charon 1985 p39). Thus the nature of social objects is broad ranging and the same commodity may become any number of social objects. If this classification is applied to my study, to exemplify, when a child uses a hockey stick to play a game it is a material tool. When they choose to play with a particular hockey stick that is the same as their friend's, it becomes a symbol of that friendship. In certain situations, such an 'object' could be used to distinguish one group from another in an assertion of sub-cultural identity.

The perceived value of an object determines the process by which it is interpreted. Pivcevic suggested that the identification of an object and the process of interpreting it are different facets of the same mental phenomenon:

*First of all, my having something as an object – in our example, the sound coming from the room next door – and my consciousness of having something of an object are part of one and the same mental phenomenon  
Pivcevic (1970 p48)*

In terms of social objects, children will place significance on an object and simultaneously 'apply' the meaning of that existence through the process by which they interpret it. Therefore, one child will perceive 'height' at which they are working as of significance to them whilst completing a task on wallbars. They will look at the ground and actively gauge their distance from it; another child will consider the task set as of significance, and where height is not an issue, look at the ground but not engage in a conscious process of evaluating their distance from it. Taking the same starting skill level and ability, the two are likely to perform very differently.

Following this, in certain cases, interpretations of specific situations may often be 'mis'interpretations, but nevertheless still vivid and valid in the individual's reality. Additionally, an object need not exist extra-mentally for it to be the focus of experience. Taking the earlier example of Kim (year 9), following the incident in which the teacher had 'told her off', she analysed her relationship with the activity, the teacher and the others in her group. She made predictions as to their possible reactions to her potential actions and conducted her behaviour accordingly the following week. Here she became relatively inactive in class, rolling her eyes each time the teacher addressed her. This resulted from her 'inaccurate' assessment of the teacher's intent.

At the time of her 'mistake' in the lesson, the children around the trampoline had laughed at Kim. Kim had also laughed. She rolled on the trampoline in self-mockery. Certain others in the group felt that they were sharing a joke. The incident had very different meanings to all involved and, therefore, the object of each individual's interpretation did not exist extra-mentally.

In this example, what is in material 'reality' an identical situation, in practice constitutes very disparate 'realities' for those involved:

*...it is the meaning of our experiences, not the underlying ontological structure of objects, that constitutes the reality we respond to*  
*Oliver (1998 p247)*

Therefore, my conception is that reality is necessarily interpretive; all reality is subject to the individual's interpretation of what they 'see' before them. This subsequently raises the question as to whether 'that for human beings truth about physical reality is impossible in any absolute sense' (Charon 1985 p1). As Blumer (1969) states:

*Individuals and also groups, occupying or living in the same spatial location may have, accordingly, very different environments; as we say, people may be living side by side yet be living in very different worlds*  
*Blumer (1969 p11)*

This issue is not only significant in terms of realities of the children involved in this research but similarly in the value of the research as held within the research community itself. The validity of this study, as an interpretive piece of research will inevitably depend upon the audience it reaches; each of which will constitute an interpretive group holding their own perspectives as to acceptable handling of issues. Each 'community' will have its own 'contextually grounded linguistic and interpretive practices on which the acceptance of a study will be based (Mishler 1990 p421). Where there is a match in interpretive practices verisimilitude will be achieved.

Interpretations made by the individual must under normal circumstances necessarily be derived from the perspective of the situation that they hold. Therefore, there must be certain 'signals' that indicate to the individual, how they should be conceiving the situation. The interpretation of specific signals may vary between individuals in much the same way that their general interpretation does. Through the existence of such symbols, the meaning of identical situations for different individuals, although potentially diverse may also be shared. The complexities of interpretation may, therefore, be subsumed under a more limited number of ostensibly shared constructs and categories, general and flexible guidelines for understanding and interpreting experience. In order for this to happen, aspects of

experience must be typified, such a process makes it possible to account for experience, rendering objects as belonging to particular categories of meaning. Once certain aspects of a situation have been classified, they may be applied to a new situation displaying like characteristics and, therefore, that situation will be given meaning accordingly. What exists within the classroom is a situation wherein a physical situation is created and under control of the teacher but nevertheless a situation, like any other that is responded to actively (Blumer 1969 p14, Charon 1985 p36). Rather it is responded to by the child actively, through the paradigm of their own perspective:

*Meaning requires the interpretive application of a category to the concrete particulars of a situation*  
*Holstein and Gubrium (1994 p263)*

Yet, typifications are not static; they will inevitably be modified over time and situation. As experience continues, a more sophisticated range of possible categories may be established leading to more complex possibilities for interpretation.

The implications of a belief that we construct reality are perhaps far greater for the child than for the adult. The complexities of defining situations becomes heightened as the child is a specific object of adults seeking to mould their realities:

*We are perplexed for life, but pupils have reasons for special perplexity. At school they are initiated into secondary socialisation, and inducted into a functioning world of utilitarianism and manipulation among roles*  
*Woods (1980 p 23)*

The expectation that children will adopt particular perspectives comes close to denying children their own reality. The degree to which a child will internalise particular meanings will be subject to those extant aspects of their own definition of self, and how they relate to the values and ideas which they are being manipulated into accepting, through systematic punishment and reward.

What does occur, is a process of ongoing negotiation in which the child seeks both understanding and self-actualisation. This process may establish relatively stable relationships between actors within education, but will never be finite:

*...the whole of schooling is a transitional phase...the child is 'growing' or 'becoming' without actually ever getting there*  
*Woods (1980 p 23)*

If however, reality is created through a refinement of perspectives, it may be deduced that the older the

child, the more sophisticated their perspectives because of the wider variety of specific interpretive resources that are available to them. What this means for my research is that the nature of experience is likely to be simpler in a dimensional sense for the child in year 7 as compared to that of a child in year 11. However, this also inevitably depends upon the life experiences to which the child has been exposed, and potential sophistication of perspectives cannot be considered dependent upon age. The individual's potential for interpretation is limited only by the confines of their perspectives but all interpretation at whatever 'level' constitutes experience. Of significance here, is how this stock of knowledge was achieved; the processes through which the child has gone, and is going, determine their perspective of particular situations. This is necessarily a selective procedure since no individual can see all aspects of a situation (Charon 1985 p3). The child will, therefore, choose which aspects of a situation are significant to them and involve those aspects deliberately in the formation of their own reality.

The aspects of a situation that the child 'targets' will be subject to their previous interpretations of what they deem to be similar situations. A paradigm for interpreting particular types of situation will have been established. Where the situation is not recognisable in a broad sense, they will pinpoint more specific points of familiarity and apply those to the environment. This application of sense will determine the child's overt response, the outcome of which is subsequently analysed and evaluated, ultimately determining a new paradigm of interpretation, refining a new one or resulting in the individual being left with an indeterminate situation, and essentially returning to their original 'stance'. In this sense, social learning shapes the individual's perspective and it is through this process that children 'grow', learning to adopt particular roles within certain contexts. They learn to behave differently in different environments according to their position or function within them.

Up to this point I have discussed the way in which individuals will interpret a situation according to their 'perspective' on it which determines the meaning that they infer from it. In essence, this has been considered in a singular, introspective sense. However, since a child will behave differently in the 'same' situation but with different individuals present, it may be inferred that they need to learn their role 'in relation to a complex set of others' (Charon 1985 p69). The sensitivity of children here is acute and may not even require any visible interaction between the two parties.

Group co-operation is essentially dependent upon children understanding their role within the unit; this is placed on long term bases that are initially negotiated but later implicitly understood. Essentially a group holds shared meanings that determine the behaviour of its members. Mead identified the organised community or social group which gives rise to the individuals concept of themselves as the 'generalised other' (Mead 1934 p154). Essentially this is the phenomenon to which the child will refer

as a guide to the conduct of their behaviour, since the '...attitude of the generalized other is the attitude of the whole community' (Mead 1934 p154). However, when considering the structure of experience within physical education, the broad 'generalised other' will be replaced by a localised version of the same; the class will share meanings that tend to determine individual's behaviour within it in the 'minor' communities that it presents. In development of self, the individual takes attitudes of other to him/herself and others but also:

*...towards the various phases or aspects of the common social activity or set of social undertakings in which, as a member of an organized society or social group, they are all engaged*  
Mead (1934 p154)

This includes the isolate within groups since, if they exist within a group, they form a key part of the group dynamic. Whilst this may seem a rather ambiguous statement to make, in the current study I found that those children who were identified as isolates in fact responded to, and 'played out' that role. They were treated in a certain capacity by others and for as long as they played their designated 'roles' they remained unchallenged and preserved their sense of self.

Children perceive certain others in a specific way; subsequently they expect them to behave accordingly; as a result, children perceive their role in that same way and the situation becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy:

*Members of society learn the rules for appropriate behavior and how to interpret the behavior and events they observe*  
Aamodt (1991 p42)

This is not to suggest that 'free will' does not exist. As I have already argued, children will manipulate their presentation of self in order to determine others' reaction to them and they, therefore, play a creative part in establishing the role that they play. They may also establish varying roles for different environments; herein their role will be reinforced by others acting towards them.

Shibutani (1955) identified what he termed 'reference groups' on which the individual will base their role by inferring perspective of particular collectives. What I find significant in his conception of reference groups as compared to the 'generalised other', is his emphasis on its possible basis in being a psychological phenomenon, rather than abstract reality. Thus an individual is described as assuming the perspective of some collectivity. Because he argues the potential psychological basis for a reference group, he acknowledges that such an assemblage may be imagined; yet following my argument so far, it exists in the reality of the beholder. What is of significance here is that children may aspire to



become part of a group who in practice may offer and hold a very different reality to that which the child supposes. Therefore, in seeking to identify with a particular group, the child may not strive towards displaying the 'correct' behaviours. Ultimately, they are not perceived by the group as being 'part' of their collectivity, are not treated as being so, and therefore remain 'outside'.

In effect, Charon (1985) argues that society's rules become the child's. This may well be the case, although I feel that there is some doubt that a child will have internalised the rules of society simply because they appear to be acting within them. There may well be some conflict between the rules of different groups to which the child belongs. Consequently, children might seek to draw attention to certain behaviours that concur with the canons of what is for them, the most dominant group within which they are functioning at any particular time.

Children will be identified and identify with particular groups. Yet they may also aspire to become part of others. This was particularly clear in the study which found that there were clear delineations of cultural groups within the school, and children were either happy with the way in which they were categorised, or aspired to attain new 'identities'. Therefore, they watched those groups and learned how to behave 'like them'. In order to be regarded as part of a group (and, therefore, be part of it) they needed to adopt certain symbolic behaviours. Children have their own codes for establishing identity; some are easily identifiable cultural mores such as hairstyle and dress, but others have more subtle cultural implications, such as how individuals spend free time within school, which teachers they get on with (if any), which PE activities they 'like'. All of these effectively become symbols to the child. Once children have attempted to display specific symbols in order to be perceived in a certain way they will reflect on the success or otherwise of having done so. Subsequently, behaviour will be modified and/or goals redefined.

During the final phases of research, I found that in certain cases, children would actively seek to be involved in the research; this may have been in the sense of offering isolated pieces of information, or in that they wanted to join those involved in a more long-term capacity. Whilst certain individuals showed interest in order to become involved in an activity simply because their friends were, there was undoubtedly an underlying intention that I should understand their 'point of view'. Essentially then, there was a belief that they might affect my perception of their experience of physical education, thus demonstrating the implications that the concept of redefining other's perceptions is not confined to the research field, but the research itself.

Teachers may also seek to redefine objects for children within the 'legitimate' process of their job. In the school teachers were identified by children as being able to persuade them to attempt a skill that

they felt unable to execute. In this instance, it could be that a teacher gives a temporary redefinition of the situation. This redefinition may be verbally constructed through persuasion and/or physically through support in the actual execution of the skill. In such contexts there exists the likelihood that the teacher's approach is to teacher assess the perspective of the child and then determine the language or other means by which they may best communicate a temporary perspective. Often this appeared to take the form of convincing children that their expertise meant that they would 'know' the children's abilities where they did not. Where successful assessment and action occurs, the child will attempt the new skill. Following the attempt the reflection will adopt the new definition, return to or adapt their original perspective. Therefore, the definition may be re-formulated to a permanent status.

Anticipation of another's response to given symbols is based on an essential belief that individuals recognise symbols in a common manner. In many social instances, individuals organise their reactions on a shared basis. Whilst individuals may respond very differently to certain stimuli, different responses are ensconced in the differences in meaning that symbols have for the individual. Where we are concerned with social behaviour, it is clear that there is an assumption that 'others experience the world basically in the way we do, and that we can, therefore, understand one another in our dealings in and with the world (Holstein and Gubrium 1994 p263).

At secondary school age, children will be at different stages of internalisation of the implicit codes of behaviour that surround them. This will not necessarily follow a linear process of gradual incorporation of values into meaning for the child. Transition from primary school creates a whole new community within which the child will be required to function for a large part of the day; different groupings for lessons similarly remould that community, potentially structuring it along alternative principles. In time, niches will be established for behaviour. Since children here will be at a particularly critical stage of physical, cognitive and emotional maturation, it is a time in which individuals potentially 'reinvent' themselves and one another a number of times, as they undergo transitions from one meaning system to another (Fine and Sandstrom 1988 p 57).

Thus the active and subjective creation of self for the child recognises the need to acknowledge their agency in relation to one another and themselves. This is a treatment of the child that has been largely absent in the study of education generally, and more specifically in the study of physical education where the physical and cognitive aspects of 'experience' are so highly pronounced. In the following two chapters, I shall address the way in which children have been treated within educational research and more specifically, physical education research.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE CHILD AS 'VICTIM' – HISTORICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE CHILD IN EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

In this chapter I shall consider the way in which the child has been treated historically within educational research. Discussion here needs to take place on two levels, the first being in the way children have been, and are viewed within education, the second concerning the way in which they have been treated within educational research; the one often reflective of the other. It is my contention that the 'child' began as a social problem requiring amelioration through the education system; slowly they have been credited with a degree of human agency in the determination of their working environment. However, this treatment considers them initially as a homogenous group and then as part of particular subcultures. I seek to illustrate here, the essential absence of the child as an active agent within the research process and representations made in research findings.

The phenomenon of mass education presented possibilities for large-scale research into the social condition of children. It meant that the child became a subject convenient for study where previously they had been ensconced in a world of family and work; a world not easily accessible to the researcher.

Education, as a phenomenon, only came to be studied 'in its own right' after the Second World War (Finch 1986 p13). At this point, the child featured solely in terms of having the skills and abilities they embodied, measured to assess the impact that education had upon them. The 'child' as such was here seen as representative of a social problem for which education was to perform an ameliorative function. From 1955 until the late sixties, inequality of opportunity, under utilisation of skills and ability, the selectivity of schools and their organisation, formed the general foci of educational research (Young 1971). It is these issues that I shall now address in terms of the place that children held within them.

This early research was positivistically directed towards assessing the efficacy of education in the transference of social value, ignoring the individual within education. The dominant focus here lay in the relationship between social stratification and education as a potential pathway towards social mobility or otherwise. Such an approach came to be known as 'political arithmetic' tradition, and served to assess the potential for progress of children from different class origins along the educational 'ladder' and/or to indicate the degree to which schooling could 'combat' delinquency (Hammersley 1986 p178, Finch 1986 pp29-31).

Essentially, researchers concerned themselves with access to schooling, treating children as naturally homogenous creatures differentiated through social class, the potential disadvantages of which were to be 'remedied' through education. Apple (1979) refers to such analysis which

'measures' children prior to attending school, then during their school career and finally as they enter the world of work, as a 'black box' theory. Here the focus is on rates of return rather than the concrete experience of children and teachers in the process of education (Apple 1979 p26). This type of research, largely survey based, did not involve the child as such in the collection of data, and inevitably this disenfranchisement of the child within the education system and the research process led to 'cultural deprivation theory' characterising children as victims of their own circumstance.

However, the remedial work that the school as institution became involved in, targeting low achievers who were considered disadvantaged, may have actually served to enhance division rather than redress it. As identified by Apple (1979) the very fact that certain groups were in receipt of help emphasises their status of need. In essence, since it is those who are already in positions of authority under the existing social, economic, political and cultural structure who determined who may be in 'need' of reformation, the practice actually served to sustain the status quo. In practice, such research reinforced social divisions as it girded belief in the ameliorative function of education, supporting the concept that children were without personal agency and could, therefore, be manipulated by and into a culture alien to them.

Although studies in the politico-arithmetic tradition survived into the eighties (Finch 1986), the nature of this approach began to be derogated in the seventies alongside what became mainstream sociological research, which took a more critical view of educational issues. Essentially, through the work of sociologists who became involved in educational research in the seventies, the focus turned to the curriculum and the construction of knowledge. The cultural biases imbued within 'education' were exposed, and there was a move away from the objectivist treatment of education as a 'product' rather than a process. The debate within education subsequently reflected a wider interest in sociology with the functions of organisations, the theories of which were applied to schools (Young 1971 p21). With schools, this focused on the relationship between the dominant culture of the school inherent in the curriculum, and its presentation in relation to the child's home background (Whitty 1985).

Within this whole context however, it is my contention that children were ultimately presented as victims, not only of social background but also the education system. In addition, I suggest that there was a failure to recognise that children were also rendered victim of the researchers' own whims, since they were the ones identifying which were the appropriate issues to study and methodologies to employ.

The move towards a critical stance, in the seventies and eighties was reflective of mainstream sociology moving towards neo-Marxist perspectives (Hargreaves, D 1986 p136). Under this newly formed treatment of Marxism, concepts such as bourgeois control of curriculum presented

'education' as a socialising influence to rival the family in its strength as a cultural superstructure (Whitty 1985, Apple 1979). This was a progression on earlier accounts of the deterministic nature of education in that it provided a somewhat less 'naïve' view, drawing away from the concept that education was in its entirety a 'good thing' for the 'masses'.

These studies identified the vested interest in education held by certain dominant groups and how this was reflected in the discourse of schools. Ultimately, they indexed how the 'status quo' might be perpetuated to the advantage of those holding political, economic and social power, rather than of those being 'educated'. This stance formed an implied criticism of earlier approaches, which were presented as inadequately analysing and addressing the needs of the groups they purported to be supporting.

A central concern, therefore, became the construction of knowledge within schools to the advantage and disadvantage of certain groups. Initially attention focused on the selection and prioritisation of certain types of knowledge progressing to also consider the process involved in its transmission. Largely, Young (1971) is attributed with bringing this debate to the fore when he suggested that the way in which knowledge is stratified is key to understanding the political basis of education that 'naturally' advantages certain groups. He discussed the social bases of different kinds of knowledge and what does or does not 'count' as knowledge (Young 1971 p35). Whilst highly influential at the time, Young still failed to incorporate the agency of either teachers or children in his analysis, adhering to the representation of them as passive players. What he did do, however, through extracting cultural elements of social background and the curriculum, was initiate debate that began to acknowledge the relationship between children and their social environment.

The actual subject matter of education had been accorded little attention prior to the seventies (Young 1971, Whitty 1985). The general view of 'what' knowledge 'was' would be based in an objectivist epistemology as a structure of immutable facts in independent existence of the individuals who present it (Apple 1979). Ultimately, then, knowledge is imbued with meaning beyond the 'facts' taught in schools. The imbalance in the distribution of power that such studies within education ultimately revealed was perhaps illustrative of why the issue of curriculum content had been avoided. Indeed, it acted as 'an indication of the interrelationship between the existing organisation of knowledge and the distribution of power, the consideration of which might not be comfortable in an era of consensus politics' (Young 1971 p23).

The prioritisation of certain forms of knowledge and ways of knowing, was identified as advantaging those who were already powerful within society (those who already control cultural or economic capital), and therefore contributing to the maintenance of a specific social, economic and political order (Apple 1979 p154). What this meant for children was that those who issue from

dominant class strata perform better within school, since the knowledge valued within education was concomitant with that which was valued within the child's home culture.

Within the sociology of education, knowledge is considered to be dialectically constructed (Esland 1971, Apple 1979). Apple (1979) suggests that imbued in the language of the school and its presentation are the cultural links between dominant ideology and hegemonic control. Children are not merely manipulated but implicitly assent to and contribute to the maintenance of the 'status quo'; if knowledge is socially constructed, 'inability' to become part of the dominant dialect reinforces the child's existent social 'position'. Therefore, the working class and other marginalised groups will be predisposed to educational failure (Young 1971, Esland 1971). Such a belief has been enduring in critical perspectives (Whitty 1985, Kirk 1992). However, there is clearly a tendency to treat the child as necessarily susceptible to social control; or conversely, incapable of change. What is particularly worth revisiting is the basis of knowledge initially identified as 'high status' in relation to the groups it disadvantages.

The nature of prioritised knowledge revolves around its tendency towards the abstract; the creation of modes of knowing that exist as detached from the business of 'real life'. Essentially, high status knowledge is that of 'expert' as opposed to a generalised ways of understanding (Young 1971, Keddie 1971, Bernstein 1971, Apple 1979). The ability to deal with the abstract was presented as a property of the dominant sectors of society and the ultimate theory here, is that those aspects of knowledge in schools considered of value, reinforce the cultural and economic basis of the working environment. The same children disadvantaged within education will retain that disadvantage as they enter the world of work. Essentially this reinforces the concept of culture as being an aspect of capital. This seems a logical conclusion, but as Apple (1979) himself recognised, the way in which school knowledge is generated places limits on cultural responses rather than mechanistically determining them.

So, towards the late seventies, children were seen to have certain potential for actualisation of their own intentions; yet only within the context as defined by 'the school'. In practice, the concept arose that the whole process of the implementation and assimilation of knowledge became essentially a power struggle between the vested interests of participants (Apple 1979, Kirk 1992). Therefore, issues of the way in which knowledge was transmitted in school demanded consideration (Esland 1971, Apple 1979).

In Apple's work, children are acknowledged as attaining a level of reasoning sufficient to assess their own social and cultural condition (Apple 1979 p83). Essentially, here there is a necessity for the school as an institution to legitimise and justify the existence of the social rules it advocates (Apple 1979). It is as though representatives of the school can access the child's consciousness and combat opposition through redefining education in terms with which they can identify. What

emerges is a conciliation or otherwise of the latent identities that students bring with them to school, and the dominant interests of the school as institution (Hammersley and Turner 1980). The question that emerges for me here, is to what extent did Apple et al really acknowledge children's ability to analyse their own condition. I raise this issue in particular since children are still represented here as subject to the manipulative potential of the school.

In his work at this time, Apple described the collective behaviour of children and their susceptibility to their treatment in school. According to Apple, children are taught how to deal with and relate to the structure and authority of the 'collectivity' to which they belong, by the patterns of interaction they are exposed to in schools (Apple 1979 p85). Ultimately, in order for schools to successfully implement an ideational basis for the successful functioning of their institution, it needs to establish an apparently neutral basis of 'commonsense' rules of belief and behaviour. On an observational basis I do not question that this is what Apple saw; however, I do question the assumption that children's overt conformance is necessarily indicative of any internalisation of specific values.

Where the ideal situation of 'normalisation' was established, variations to prescribed behaviour become a form of deviance since they challenged 'norms' common to all in that environment. Debate arose where commonsense constructions were questioned. Where the 'status quo' was challenged, a dominant group's status became threatened and hence debate ensued. I contend that these issues inappropriately formed the basis of research since they were based on essentially spurious assumptions.

Alongside the development of critical studies were those that sought to address the interactive basis of education. Whilst, as has been discussed, mainstream sociology began to converge into a neo-Marxist body, in Britain interpretive stances were also developing in their own right, creating a bifurcation within the sociology of education (Hammersley 1986, Hargreaves, D 1986). Whilst this politicisation of educational debate may have resulted in a plethora of research paradigms that lead to the polarisation of the profession (Hammersley 1980, 1984), I argue that conflict in debate is not necessarily a negative issue since it highlights different ways of viewing issues. The fact that conflict exists is indicative of the importance of the concepts being discussed; however, the danger arises where the difference in approaches demands more attention than actual research issues.

Within the representation of knowledge construction, I feel that somewhat deterministic conclusions representing the child as victim of circumstance, detract from the real business of education and learning. We are offered inadequately addressed issues of human agency and no real picture- beyond a simplistic reproduction theory analysis- of what the outcomes of prioritising a particular type of knowledge are for individuals involved. As Esland (1971) suggested at the time, the links between curriculum research, the practicalities of teaching and the organisation of

knowledge were conceptually separated. I add to this argument that the agency of the child was not only separated, but in many cases either discredited, or more basically ignored.

I contend that not only the child, but the teacher was disenfranchised by this work. Hammersley (1984), suggested that one outcome of knowledge construction research was that:

*...teachers could be forgiven for concluding from our work that their plight was hopeless since whatever they did would lead to the reproduction of capitalism, and the persistence of all those ills customarily ascribed to that type of society by sociologists*  
Hammersley (1984 p 232)

This interpretation appears to me to be somewhat of an overreaction since the agency of the teacher, particularly in the later work he refers to, is commented on. However, like I agree with Hammersley that such issues of teacher agency are given far from adequate attention within curriculum studies. I now move to consider the involvement and representation of the teacher as concerns the perceived impact upon the child.

Whilst curriculum studies largely neglected the human agency of the teacher and its impact upon the child, interactive studies did incorporate a study of the influence of teacher action upon the learning environment. The involvement of teachers in research has, as with children, been somewhat limited within education, and this is of some concern, since for many years this has been identified as problematic (Gannaway 1976, Dyson 1995).

Regrettably, the result of research that did involve teachers often rendered them represented as victims of the 'system' within which they work, or vilified as suppressing and controlling the children in their 'charge'. By implication here, the child becomes victim of the teacher. As the focus of this study lies in the experiences of the child within education I shall consider the way in which research has presented teachers and the impact that they are believed to have had, and have, on the learning experiences of the pupil.

### **Presentation of the child and teacher in conflict**

The point of departure for much educational research appears to be the disparity between the child's and the teacher's definition of the learning situation. Woods suggested that since the teacher's pedagogical approach is culturally bound, and that culture may well conflict with that of the child, at times the teachers appear to attack the very 'self' of the child (Woods 1983 p14). Hence, before any analysis of teachers' actions can occur, they are already placed at odds with the child. As a result, where their actions are analysed they are often seen to be bringing into question the validity of the child's background. Indeed, as I shall discuss, in order to fulfil the demands of their role, it appears that the teacher is often 'required' to do just this.



Within much educational research, the essential role of the teacher is defined in terms of establishing and maintaining control of the child. This is true particularly within those studies considered up to this point but also those I shall consider now. Thus before research even begins, the teacher is placed at odds with the child. In interactive studies, the teacher is seen to create a scenario wherein, even above academic performance, 'good behaviour' is prioritised. Behaviour embodying the social and moral values prioritised by the teachers themselves is valued and rewarded, whereas that which does not is either trivialised, ignored or punished (Keddie 1971, Tattum 1984, Bain 1990).

Even where they may disagree with the aims and objectives, teachers have been considered to 'carry institutional contamination with them into the classroom' (Boomer 1984 p249). In time, more attention was paid to the cultural disparity between children and schools, which made the teacher's role even more sinister as:

*...any attempt on the part of teachers to shape what pupils learned represented a suppression of pupil's culturally given abilities and a denial of their rights  
Hammersely (1984 p232)*

Indeed, the tendency to attribute children's 'failure' to their social background as both teachers and researchers do (Keddie 1971), inevitably creates a pathology of children's home life and, therefore, children themselves. Yet, as I shall discuss, creating such a scenario may well be a case of the teacher acting within the parameters of a system that constrains them. Ultimately, whether from personal or institutional volition, teachers are seen to encourage behaviour that reinforces and legitimises their own role and status.

Under this representation, the role of children becomes standardised and 'normalised'. The term 'normalise' here I interpret as bifurcated in its meaning. Firstly, teachers are seen to have certain 'norms' that they wish children to aspire to and, therefore, embark upon a 'normalisation process' that encourages them to do this. Secondly, once teachers have categorised children within this 'normalisation' process as 'conformers' or otherwise, then they will treat them accordingly, creating expectations and setting standards within the confines of those categorisations. In particular, the implication is that teachers act en masse, all treating the same children in the same 'different' way to that in which they treat others. This not only ignores the individual teacher's interpretive capabilities, but suggests that there is no situational differentiation made. The recognition that children behave according to the subject they are studying, or that the social environment in which they are placed may affect the way in which they might be categorised by staff, is not acknowledged.

The 'accusation' that teachers might manipulate the child to the 'ends' of the school as institution or to their own ends, which may or may not be one and the same thing, indicates that there is some

kind of power being exercised unidirectionally. Simplistically, the starting point of such analysis is the essential belief that teachers hold 'legitimate' power over the child, which is defined as a situation where one party considers another to have a given right to tell them what to do (French and Raven 1968 p264). This ultimately renders pupils obligated to respond accordingly. Generally, there is a belief that teachers control the framework of what 'goes on' in the classroom (Furlong 1976, Ball 1980) and there is an entire ideation that the child is more acted upon than acting (Boomer 1984 p231).

Essentially, the belief that teachers hold legitimate power which functions unidirectionally, results in the representation of the child as passive. However, the suggestions implicit in research that 'most children have a passive acceptance of the inevitability of school' (Hargreaves 1975 p130), are somewhat spurious. Whilst 'school' may be inevitable, there is a degree of malleability concerning what actually goes on within 'school'. Whilst it may be that the general framework of the lesson is projected by the teacher, children will often take that framework and exercise their own agency within it, which may be contrary to the formal purposes of the class. They may even be able to exercise a degree of control in the setting of the framework itself through conformance or otherwise to the teacher's demands or desires, ultimately manipulating the nature of the class. Hammersley and Turner (1980 p38) alluded to the limitations of the teacher's power since children will conform only for as long as they perceive the teacher to be acting within a realm where they do hold legitimate authority. Therefore, we begin to see a degree of power emanating from the child towards the teacher.

Whilst the child emerged in possession of a degree of agency here, the relationship presented as predominating in the classroom was between the teacher and child, rather than between children. The point regarding teachers is that their coping interests can ultimately only be satisfied by obtaining compatible behaviour from the children so that in order to retain a necessary level of pupil goodwill, teacher strategies and action will normally be partially circumscribed by a negotiated sense of 'fairness' and 'reasonableness'. The interests of the majority of children will also be best served by avoiding teacher censures and the adverse effects of teacher power; therefore, their own coping will to some extent be based on compliance to the teacher's wishes.

The fact that teachers have been identified as being prepared to sacrifice instructional goals for the sake of 'personal survival' (Woods 1977, Pollard 1982, Beynon 1985) is further indication that the power identified as being exercised by studies in knowledge construction is not so straightforward as they might imply. Power to influence classroom context is far from unidirectional.

In particular, however, the power of children has been presented as specific to a group context. Children as a collective, potentially pose a threat to the teacher (Hargreaves, D 1975, Pollard 1982); the teacher, therefore, needs to ensure that group 'threat' is not realised, which will

essentially involve either coercing children to remove that threat or negotiating with them, therefore conformance provides mutual benefit. Hence teaching becomes an art of 'getting the pupils to do what you wish' (Woods 1980). Thus children are represented as acting as a collective in the actualisation of interests.

Although teachers are so often seen to represent the interests of the school as institution, this has been accepted as too simplistic an assumption and whilst it may be shown that many of their actions do concur with the dominant ideology of the 'system' this is not necessarily the case. Inevitably, teachers have been shown their own cultural biases (Pollard 1982 p24), which may or may not be enabled by the broader school framework. Presumably then, different teachers will invoke different reactions from groups of children according to the way in which their culture relates to that of 'the child'.

In addition, the teacher will have situationally specific goals, and long-term intentions, with short-term actions not always appearing in congruence with broader aims. They may, for example, create a situation where the pupils are accorded a certain degree of autonomy, through which they may then feel a particular teacher has empowered them, and ultimately be more likely to conform with that teacher's wishes at a later date, or in a more general sense. The implication where this is recognised, is that in fact, the children are unaware of the deal that is being struck, and we still have the children presented as vulnerable and susceptible to suggestion.

However, the teacher may not always be able to retain a focus on long term pedagogic or personal goals since situations may dictate that the immediate need is to adopt some kind of reactive or 'survival' strategy (Beynon 1985, Laws 1997). Essentially, the teacher works within institutional and environmental constraints as well as those presented by the children whom they teach. What we can begin to see here is some indication that, in fact, the child as individual or group is able to have some influence, whether intentional or otherwise, upon the framework within which the teacher works.

Earlier, Bernstein (1971) acknowledged the limited agency of children in his discussion of the concept of 'frame', which determined the freedoms of teachers and children in learning. This frame refers to the degree of control teacher and pupil possess over the selection, organisation and pacing of the knowledge transmitted and received in the pedagogical relationship. In other words, the frame determines what I would call the pedagogic potential. Therefore, the teacher-pupil relationship is based on negotiation (Pollard 1982, Woods 1980).

There was, however, some linkage between the construction of knowledge theories with the actions of teachers and responses of students. Keddie (1971) conducted a case study on 'classroom knowledge' which considered the way in which a humanities department of a secondary school

delivered a fourth year (pupils aged 14/15 years now known as year 10) examination course based on history, geography and social science. The course used 'key lessons' to introduce topics and from there work cards theoretically allowed children to work individually at the pace of their choosing.

What Keddie found was that, despite the teachers attempts to redress the differences between groups, what they had actually done was create a situation with which children of a middle class background could 'cope', whilst those of working class could not. As far as Keddie was concerned, 'working at your own pace' demanded the ability to work independently and one that was deemed to immediately disadvantage the working class children. 'Because in the educationist context the perspective is one of how things *ought* to be, it is not so obvious to teachers that they are drawn, albeit selectively, on what already *is*' (Keddie 1971 p138). This inevitably suggested that working class children were unable to work alone, and did not consider whether this phenomenon was contextually bound and would not have occurred in another subject area or different social context. I am, however, particularly interested in the final criticism that Keddie offers, since it is one that I suggest might be directed to the research process itself.

Keddie's research was based in observation and the information proffered by the teacher. The majority of analysis was made from teacher opinion. The children featured in the data collected here, in terms of the comments that they made within the teaching environment, and questionnaires that were completed. Whilst the child is at least featured here, they do so in a receptive capacity. Analysing the effectiveness of a pedagogic approach designed to redress the balance between ability groups, there was no room here for the inclusion of the child's personal perception of the way in which the programme was presented, or the teacher. Since only overt comment and behaviour of the child was considered, the child's conscious control of their explicit behaviour was also not adequately addressed.

Indeed, within educational research, there appears to have been a tendency to present those teachers who sought to voluntarily relinquish a degree of their authority, as not really capable of doing their job. A study by Nash (1976) suggested that where teachers are not reinforcing the discrepancies that they purport to indemnify; they might describe themselves as 'progressive'. According to Nash, these teachers are seen as being 'weak' as a result of their liberal attitude and unable to control the very children that they seek to help (Nash 1976). Therefore, the implication is that where teachers dare to challenge the status quo, they are doomed to failure and that as soon as the firm hand is taken away from the child, they fail to impose self-discipline.

Although I consider these research studies congenitally flawed because of the lack of adequate inclusion of the child, there is, at least, recognition of the significance of this interpersonal relationship. However, a great deal of the research that 'represents' the relationship between

teachers and children remains positivistic, and there appears to have been very little room for the presentation of subjective realities of actors within the classroom situation. Nevertheless, this is not to say that there were not those studies that sought to address issues of the 'intersubjective construction of reality' that occurs between teacher and pupils (Esland, 1971, Furlong 1976, Ball 1980, Boomer 1984). What needed to be shown was the nature of teacher-pupil relationships as developing entities with meaning for both parties, and in particular for the child.

Many of the conclusions regarding children's experiences are derived from studies of the way in which they are treated by teachers, and their response to that treatment. Essentially in such work, the teacher is often vilified and the child reified. As I have discussed, even studies that seek to assess the interactive processes of teacher- pupil relations have a tendency to begin with the assumption that the educational framework is defined by the teacher and are conducted from a 'top down' perspective (Esland 1971, Hargreaves, A 1980 p187). However, dominant paradigms are continually shifting to redefine what is acceptable in research, and research that at least incorporates 'the child' as an active being carries great value in working towards establishing an understanding of the meaning that education has for 'them'.

Although I have alluded to the dearth of research that actually seeks to represent the views of the child specifically there have been those that have sought to do so. In the seventies and eighties alongside mainstream neo-Marxism, certain researchers did begin to consider the child more directly in educational research and in particular, observational studies began to be used to assess the child 'in action' and it is to their work that I now turn.

### **Early representations of the child's perspective**

Beginning with the concept of the dialectically constructed stratification of the school as a social environment as described earlier in this chapter, Apple (1979) considered the impact that institutional labelling of children can have on their behaviour in school. Bright/dull, academic/nonacademic, clever/stupid, all represent terms by which the child is judged. Yet these appellations are socially constructed within institutions displaying the cultural biases as discussed above; therefore, they may be seen as 'historically conditioned' (Young 1971) growing 'out of the nature' of the institution (Apple 1979 p134). As a result of such labelling and categorisation of pupils, however, Keddie suggested that ultimately this lead to differences in the way that children were treated following identical behaviour to a peer:

*Equal rights are not attributed to all pupils since the 'same' behaviour may have different meaning attributed to it, depending on the normal status of the pupils  
Keddie (1971 p140)*

In using the term 'normal status' Keddie refers to the particular classification that the individual child has been allocated.

Much of the research that involved direct observation, even where this was not the initial agenda, has been criticised for tending to prioritise the reporting of what might be termed delinquent or deviant behaviour (Hammersley and Turner 1980 p29, Beynon 1985 p60). This, suggest is an inevitable result of earlier education and educational research. Moves towards seeking to sustain hegemonic control inevitably draws attention to deviants from such 'norms'. Such groups are inevitably, therefore, seen as inherently problematic and so naturally suited to sociological analysis. However, the study and typification of groups 'normalises' children as particular stereotypes, polarising research issues as well as perceptions of children.

Pupils who display what is termed deviant behaviour, or rather behaviour that is not classified within school as 'normal', possibly more simply provide more colourful subjects than other conformists who are cast as 'pale mirror images' of deviants (Hammersley and Turner 1980 p29). I disagree with Hammersley and Turner in that historically topics are only considered worthy of research where they challenge the 'status quo'. Children who do not challenge the dominant ideology do not pose a threat and therefore do not warrant consideration. This is a basis of research that has proved enduring but which is questionable in that those children who appear to conform are not worth investigating. The focus on deviant behaviour nevertheless similarly categorises children as 'normal', or more significantly as at least 'not deviant' to varying degree, and a generation of research 'grouping' children emerged that ignored the modal 'average' child.

Furlong (1976) was one of the first researchers to call for such studies of pupil interaction that lead to children being categorised as belonging to different social 'groups' within the class and was also, perhaps more significantly, one of the first researchers to identify a need to:

*...examine how the pupils themselves see their social relationships. Researchers have not asked how pupils actually interact with each other in the classroom, or examined the different action they see as appropriate in different circumstances*  
Furlong (1976 p 25)

Furlong, therefore, defined what other authors referred to as groups, more specifically as 'interaction sets' based on the belief that children continually interpret one another's behaviour in order to develop their own perceptions and definitions of situations (Furlong 1976 p27). He conducted observational study in a 'naturalistic' setting focusing on the experiences of 'non-academic' adolescent West Indian girls.

Furlong's choice of 'interaction set' was based on children arriving at common definitions of a particular situation that they achieve:

*...by drawing on similar commonsense knowledge, and (making) common assessments of appropriate action...*

However, Furlong did not suggest that all children in a group actually perceived information in an identical way:

*This does not mean that those interacting will behave in the same way, simply that they behave in a way that can be interpreted by others as showing similar 'definitions of the situation*

*Furlong (1976 pp26-27)*

Furlong develops the idea of the interaction set by using Goffman's (1959) suggestion that the interaction set's definition of a situation may differ from the individual's own, but that action would take place on a 'common point of contact' which 'demands compromise from all'. What follows is the suggestion that group response may, therefore, be drawn from a limited number of generalised definitions of particular situations.

This Furlong found to be manifest in children labelling 'strict' and 'soft' teachers, wherein two teachers labelled as 'soft', 'Mrs Alan' and 'Mrs Newman', are contrasted as provoking very different responses from the same children in the 'same' situations. In each instance the children were being reprimanded for the misdemeanour of arriving late for a lesson. Their reaction to Mrs Alan's rebuke was to initially ignore her, before one child, 'Carol', called her an 'ignorant pig', at which point they were told to leave. In a similar situation, the same child immediately said to Mrs Newman that where she had been was 'None of your business!', before continuing her conversation with her friends. Additionally, in the first instance the class continued with their work avoiding the possibility of any interaction with Carol's group; in the second they 'were keen to listen to Carol's latest exploits' (Furlong 1976 p35). Thus the broad definition is identified as generalised for common usage and Furlong cites similar examples in the way children define 'learning'.

It is my contention, however, that such a concept of disparity between personal and 'group' definition more significantly means that children may predict group definitions in order to exist within that context. Pupils may behave according to how they believe other people whom they regard as significant to them, are specifically defining the situation almost as a kind of ingratiation or more simply as means to 'self preservation'. As stated, other research suggests that children present certain 'selves' in order to manipulate other people's perceptions of them. Whilst it has largely been discussed in terms of the way children use this to frame their relationship with teachers, I suggest that they may also do so regarding their peers.

However, for Carol there is some consistency in her action when isolated or as part of a group:

*...she can be just as hostile to a teacher when acting alone as when acting as part of an interaction set*  
*Furlong (1976 p 32)*

Not only is Carol's action consistent in terms of whether or not she is acting alone, but in terms of being of a nature that would be classed as 'deviant'. Indeed, there are occasions on which Carol acts, provoking responses that indicate an alternative interpretation of meaning by her 'interaction set'. On one occasion she was described as 'shocking' her friends by pushing over their new history teacher and was subsequently not supported in this behaviour. However, the majority of the time it almost appears that her group take their common definitions of situations from Carol. This is indicated not only by the consistency of her attitude but also by the fact that teachers feel she influences the group as a whole. As described by one teacher:

*Carol is restless, awkward and often very noisy...I can get a lot more done when Carol isn't there*  
*Furlong (1976 p31)*

What is indicated here, is that not only do interaction sets exist, but within those groups there is a complex set of relationships that could be further explored. Whilst Furlong makes some interesting observations of children's behaviour, as actually indicated in the study, consideration of the nature of the groupings themselves would enhance our understanding and as such, as Hammersley and Turner (1980) suggested, her work remains somewhat descriptive. Essentially, we are told about Carol's behaviour, and we know what her interaction set is, but we don't actually know what the meaning behind her behaviour is.

However, labelling is a consistent theme in research about children's behaviour and perceptions. Willis' (1977) widely known research identified appellants of 'lads' and 'ear'oles', Beynon (1985) typographed children as: 'good kids' 'jokers' 'hardnuts/hards' 'bullies' 'bigheads' 'boasters' 'thicks' 'idiots/sillies/little kids' 'teacher's pets/goodies', and 'ponces/weaklings/ spastics/chickens and women'. Meyenn, (1980) one of the few studies other than Furlong's that concentrated on girls' groupings, found the 'PE girls', 'Science Lab girls', 'Quiet girls' and the 'Nice girls'.

The implications of groupings have inevitably been interpreted differently by different authors. Willis' lads were a group of boys who perceived day to day survival in school as a constant challenge to 'have a laff' as a means of expressing defiance of what they conceive to be the authoritarian structure of the school:

*The 'laff' is a multi-faceted implement of extraordinary importance in the counter-school culture*

*Willis (1977 p29)*

Like Willis, Beynon sees the lads as embodying 'group culture that is a means of self-preservation, deflecting threatening official forces' (Beynon 1985 p122). In both Willis' own, and Beynon's



interpretation, these boys are seen to be disadvantaged by a system of education which is culturally biased against their working class; their resistance to the formalities of education is therefore presented as a somewhat natural response to an alien environment. Apple (1995), however, takes his analysis one stage further and suggests that the boys' behaviour, rather than rebelling in any constructive sense, means that they are, in fact, promulgating the biases of the system, and contributing to the continued dominance of already powerful sectors of society. In rejecting mental labour the boys are foreclosing the opportunity to ultimately find relatively high status employment and therefore sustaining their status of inferiority (Apple 1995 p90).

Willis' and Meyenn's studies made relatively static representations of the school and, like many studies of the seventies, reinforced perceptions of stereotypes within school with Willis' work in particular being criticised as 'glorifying baddies' (Beynon 1985). The eighties saw, however, the bifurcation of pupils into 'pro' and 'anti' school. In particular, it was recognised that 'conformist' children can be committed to values other than those promoted by the school (Hammersley and Turner, 1980 pp30,31, Beynon 1985 pp56,57). What began to emerge was a far more fluid definition of social groupings within the class that were less polarised than earlier assessments.

In particular, interactionist approaches to considering children within education, of which Furlong's study might be considered a prominent forerunner, began to identify the way that children would incorporate a number of factors into their decision making processes, adding to the complexity of the analytic approaches adopted in 'choosing' their behaviour rather than acting according to 'black and white' stereotypical behaviour. A particular time at which this 'knife edging', as Woods (1990) terms this internal negotiation, proves most poignant, is during the transition between primary and secondary schools or the equivalent. Beynon (1985) and Woods (1990) in particular focussed upon this transitory period and it is to the identification of behavioural frameworks that I now turn.

### **Children coping**

In order to consciously attend to their behaviour in school, children will first need to identify the framework within which they are working; whether that be as designated by the teacher, or the teacher's interaction with the pupils. Authors assessing the behaviours of pupils in school have all discussed the way in which children will find and test the boundaries of that framework (Hargreaves, D 1975, Nash 1976, Hammersley and Turner 1980, Denscombe 1980, Ball 1980, Woods 1980, Pollard 1982, Ball 1985, Beynon 1985, Crozier 2000).

Generally this identification and testing is treated as a means to allowing the child to select future action (Ball 1980 p154). However, Beynon suggests that in itself, this 'sussing' procedure may act as a form of 'oppositional culture' (Beynon 1985 p29). Indeed, the means of assessing limits generally involve minor breaches of standard behavioural 'rules', which could be considered as

'anti' school. Such behaviour might include 'unauthorized talking, walking about and contravening all the other norms of an ordered class' (Gannaway 1976 p52).

During such exploratory phases the child will be relatively tentative in such minor misdemeanours so as not to risk being too strongly berated or causing too much damage to what will be a relatively long-term relationship. Thus the measured process forms a key part of initial encounters with particular teachers, and whilst establishing relationships with them (Gannaway 1976, Pollard 1982) children make minor breaches of the rules in order to determine the likely responses that these provoke, altering their behaviour accordingly.

The teacher's behaviour may not necessarily involve formal discipline; perhaps children will interpret a disapproving look and amend their behaviour accordingly. Testing boundaries need not necessarily be a way of discovering how far they can be pushed, but more as a means of discovering how to conform. Therefore, the fact that many children 'like' strict teachers may have more to do with their consistency than any other aspect of their behaviour (Ball 1980).

Children will seek to actualise their own interests within the learning situation; those children who can best interpret the signals given by the teacher will create a more sophisticated means through which they can present their behaviour to their teacher. As fallible human beings, the teacher's moods may vary on occasion, and the child who learns how to identify and interpret these 'moods' more likely to be able to manipulate their learning situation. One suggestion is that the ability to successfully interpret situations will be used by individual children in a 'competitive' manner (Boomer 1984). Teachers' interpretation of children's actions will often be how they compare relatively to the child's 'normal' behaviour once relationships have been established. However, during the stabilisation process, children will be assessed in relation to other children, and therefore pupils may be reluctant to share the interpretive information that they have with others.

Some analyses of 'sussing' procedures offered through these studies focus largely on the way in which the child seeks to ingratiate themselves to the teacher to win favour (Boomer 1984). Others offer a more sophisticated interpretation of the way in which children will use information to display conformant and non-conformant behaviour in order to maximise benefit and minimise loss (Woods 1983, Beynon 1985). Woods (1980) describes the complexities of the process as being akin to game playing with a serious 'edge':

*It is the greatest exercise of one's own powers of ingenuity, for both teacher and pupil and at its best can be attended by the subtlety of manoeuvre, respect for an opponent, and joy in accomplishment, whether winner or loser, that accompany the best of games. At its worst, it can be humiliating in the extreme for either teacher or pupil, for here it will breach the strategical defences constructed during primary socialisation, and hence the basis of one's identity*  
Woods (1980 pp 14,15)

What Woods alludes to here is the importance of children 'getting it right' at this stage; through this process an identity that they will carry with them into the future will be established. Although this may be altered, the strength of such an established identity will make doing so a difficult task; particularly to move from a 'poor' reputation of any kind.

Whilst these studies alert us to the way in which children seek to learn how to behave, and relate this to preserving their own identity, the general focus lies in the interaction between teacher and pupil. Although it is acknowledged that children, for example, may shield their knowledge from others, we do not hear about the methods of doing so, nor the implications for inter-pupil relationships. What we are left with again is analysis in a single dimension. Nevertheless, we are presented with an understanding of how children construct the behaviours that they display; the framework within which they develop strategies to maximise personal benefit. Children assess the situation in which they find themselves so that they can become actively involved in utilising the information they might derive. This is done in order to actualise their own interests within the context they perceive. Analysis of the strategies used by children in the day-to-day business of coping with school life is key to understanding the relationship between children's own culture and that of the school; between the child's personal beliefs and the constraints within which they seek to either express or simply protect them.

Where there is an argument, as above, that teachers establish the particulars of the interactive context in the learning environment, when these involve privileging a specific culture, those 'pupils from alternative cultures may be forced into struggle or coping or 'resistance'' (Woods 1990 pviii). Children may have gone through the 'sussing' process and either failed to grasp the principles of how the teacher seeks to construct the learning environment, or found them too challenging for their own personal values. However, rather than viewing the child as simply not meeting the cultural demands of the education system, they are portrayed as actively contravening them in response to the challenge they make to the children's sense of reality.

Ostensibly then, there are certain strategies as illustrated in the studies above that children will adopt in order to resist the dominant culture, where it does not conform with their own; strategies that children will adopt in order to be seen to conform. Since both teachers and children adopt strategies of some form, what emerges in the practice of school life is the establishment of frameworks through negotiation (Woods 1980, 1990, Pollard 1982, Beynon 1985, Dockereil 2000). What is key in all of these negotiations is the way in which children present themselves; many of the strategies involved in negotiation processes will be based on consciously constructed behaviours rather than uncalculated response.

This concept of self-presentation has formed one of the main concerns in interactive research with children (Woods 1980, Pollard 1982, Bain 1990). Inevitably, when a certain 'self' is presented, the

response of others will be directed towards whatever form that presentation took; therefore, Pollard (1982) suggests that the feedback received will reinforce that self-perception and the role that they have prescribed themselves. Whilst this may be a long term result of self-presentation, what needs also to be acknowledged is the possible transitory nature of behaviours designed to achieve short term objectives. Therefore, individuals may give an ersatz representation of themselves (Apple 1979, Woods 1980). This is what Woods has described as a 'manifest-latent discrepancy' (Woods 1980 p19) and it is a phenomenon that has implications for educational research in terms of analysing the rationale behind children's behaviours as this study seeks to do. There are essentially two ways in which a child may falsify their behaviour; the first being a direct 'misrepresentation' of themselves in which they display behaviours contrary to their own beliefs, and the second is where they give the impression of behaving in a certain way; where they 'feign' working. It is to the way in which authors have sought to gain a genuine understanding of children's behaviours that I now turn.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### LOCATING THE 'REAL' CHILD IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Studies of knowledge forms and their aetiologies give some indication of the way in which the child within education has historically been viewed. Underpinning the treatment of children in this context has been their reification by adults legitimated to systematically 'treat' them against the pathology of their own person. The value of education has lain in its potential to extract children from the malaise of their birth and 'teach' them to 'rationalise against the 'distortions' of' their 'own commonsense reality' (Esland 1971 p76). Hence, within education children have been historically conceptualised as being without real status, interests or agency. Concomitant with this, therefore, is the treatment of the child within educational research, which is characterised as being 'on' children rather than with, or for them. Ultimately, this has meant that the presence of the child was in fact until relatively recently, largely absent from educational research, in any real sense. The resultant scenario is that inevitably 'education' as an establishment, and perhaps even teachers, have remained largely ignorant of the meaning that school actually has for pupils.

I shall argue in this section that there is still a great deal of work to be done towards gaining an understanding of children in education. There remains a need to study children as a particular social group with interests (Mayall 1999 p60). In the past three decades there has, however, been some progress in overcoming, what I believe, are the fears of researchers in involving children in their own study. The development of research involving pupils in the business of education has inevitably been reflective of, and to a certain extent, active in, the changing perception of what the concept and ultimate status of 'the child' is within society.

As I discussed in Chapter Three, whilst many academics had their foci on macro perspectives of the educational process, others began to identify the need to develop micro perspectives, and in particular those involving teacher-pupil interaction. Yet in the seventies and eighties, as already illustrated, and as I shall discuss here, educational researchers began to recognise the child and children as a social group with particular interest. The view of the child as having any real agency, however, had yet, and still is, to emerge. Much of the research in this period retained the central tenet of objectification of children where there exists such a 'thing' as 'the child' to be studied and moulded; to be deterministically controlled within a politically framed environment guided by research findings. However, studies within such 'projection frameworks' fail to acknowledge, let alone incorporate into their analysis, children's knowledge and competencies (Mayall 1999 p45).

Despite calls (Keddie 1971) to assess the interactional sequences between teacher and pupil, research that has attempted to incorporate such concepts has still been conducted viewing the child in a position of constitutional weakness. Within the concept of 'the child' and derivative 'childhood' is the reduced status of the individual within society. Thus they suffer 'low status and

have limited power resources' since they are 'immature, not responsible, delicate and dependent (Pollard 1982 p34). Subsequently, children cannot be 'trusted' to either form an assessment of their own disposition, or contribute 'safely' to the research process.

Essentially, any research on children in itself appears to be viewed as more problematic than with adults. It is my contention that the essence of the issue may lie as much in the child being an unknown entity to the researcher as in the belief of the validity of the above argument. Despite being classed in the abstract, children and their cognition seem somehow threatening or somewhat obscure to the researching adult. This is inevitably compounded by associated ethical issues that may encroach on the freedoms of the academic.

The large majority of representation has, therefore, remained informed from the perspective of the child to be acted upon. The child has been a victim of deviance labelling, cultural reproduction and social pathology, able to muster very little resistance to the institutions that frame their fate. This, I suggest does an injustice to the agency of the child. More recent research with children (van Manen 1999, Greig and Taylor 1999, Lewis and Lindsay 2000) is nevertheless progressing away from such deterministic treatment of the child. However, it is my contention that in the rare cases where they have been given relatively active involvement in studies, children have, more profoundly, been victims of the failure of educationists to give them not just adequate, but accurate representation. It is essential that where they are involved in research, that they are truly listened to.

Logan (1984 p17) identified this problem when children were first emerging as research 'witnesses', wherein he criticised researchers for entering the field with preconceived 'answers'. This is prohibitive to valid research, confines possibilities to replication in kind, and also essentially breaks faith with those who have contributed as subjects. Some problems associated with actually listening to children may emanate from the simple premise that children may use language differently to adults, and combine language in what might be deemed by them to be a peculiar manner. Gannaway (1976 p56) highlighted one such difficulty when he found that children would see no ambiguity in describing a 'good' teacher as 'boring' whereas an adult, and certainly an adult involved in education, may have some difficulty in reconciling the two terms.

However, listening to children does not simply involve accepting what they say. Gaining a subsequent understanding of what the child has said requires accessing the contextual basis of the child's comment. This means that researchers need to 'disengage' themselves from their extant beliefs regarding the situation, so that alternative possibilities are not foreclosed.

Ironically, despite having identified potential pitfalls in interpreting what children say, I contend that Gannaway fails in his own intention. In analysing children's comments made during a lesson

he identified the following comment concerning the issue that children in colonised countries were taught the history of the 'mother' nation. Although raised to provoke discussion, John responded:

*I hate school but I have to sit here and take it all, so I don't see why they shouldn't teach the Africans English history  
Gannaway (1976 p65)*

For Gannaway, John's feelings about the compulsory nature of school were manifest in an 'attitude of total rejection and indiscriminating criticism of what goes on in school', and resulted in comments like the one above. He suggests that 'most teachers would find it extremely distasteful that John should see his own classroom experiences as being analogous to a process of subjugation' (Gannaway 1976 p65) and that compulsory schooling in itself was potentially resulting in broad intolerance outside of the school. For me, Gannaway offers an extreme interpretation of events that are not adequately supported by the evidence he proffers. John is not a 'high achiever', and comments at one point that 'It would be better if schools sort of taught you a trade' (Gannaway 1976 p65, 70). Consequently I argue that a very different interpretation could have been drawn here. There is no indication that John would have any real understanding of colonisation processes, which would be the only basis for suggesting that he was indeed drawing any real analogy between his having to attend school and another child having to suffer subjugation. Further, his comment regarding the nature of schooling would suggest that it is the content of schooling and its perceived lack of relevance to him that makes attendance problematic, rather than necessarily its compulsory basis.

Ultimately, then, it is my contention that Gannaway, whilst incorporating the words of children in his work has effectively included the child, his possibly erroneous conclusion indicates that he has not really understood what it means to involve the child in educational research. What we have here is an example of the type of conclusion Logan warns of: the child has been involved, but in a subjective manner, and his evidence is rendered subject to the manipulation of the researcher.

I am not suggesting, however, that the child is the passive subject to be used by the researcher; to do so would be contrary to my argument that children have both the capacity and interest to present their views. Children will be able to detect prejudicial bias in situations where they are able to analyse the tools of the research. Denscombe and Aubrook (1992), used questionnaires to assess performance in school and the socio-cultural condition of children. Their use of an explicit schedule exposed the categories that they were exploring and aroused suspicion in some of the children; this comment came from a year 11 (then known as 'fifth year') working class, white boy:

*I don't think homelife or parents' jobs if whether or not you take foundation or top maths has relevance. If you are trying to categorise us into your typical adult's stereotypes then I think that it's pointless for you to bother sending out this questionnaire when you obviously have made up your minds about how we are supposed to behave already  
Denscombe and Aubrook (1992 p 120)*

I feel that the researchers must be commended here for their candour, as I am sure there are many occasions where the commentary of pupils involved in research is not acknowledged. Such instances may exist where the research process does not actually afford the child opportunity for comment. Therefore such feelings are likely to distort research data but remain shielded from scrutiny. Alternatively where they are revealed in the research process, authors are empowered not to give status to such 'incidentals' and may well choose not to do so for fear of bringing the validity of their work into question.

The fact that in supplement to the main body of the research, children in Denscombe and Aubrook's study were afforded the opportunity to incorporate their own comments, and as a result did so, is testimony to the need to increase and improve the nature of our involvement of children in educational research. In a study headed by Bennett (Bennett et al 1984), researchers observed children in the classroom and rated their emotional responses to the 'content' of the lesson. Concepts used in their categorisation were: bored/interested, defeated/challenged, upset/cheerful, distracted/attentive. The children were subsequently asked to express their own assessment of their emotional response. Bennett et al (1984) found that:

*...children expressed interest less frequently than fieldworkers perceived interest  
Bennett et al (1984 p55)*

Not only, however, had the fieldworkers overestimated the frequency of what might be termed a positive response, but also failed to scrutinise the variation of response that was occurring according to attainment level or appropriateness of task (Bennett et al 1984 p54). I should like to consider the mismatch that occurs here in conjunction with a further comment made by a student in Denscombe and Aubrook's (1992) work, this time by a 'fifth year' white, working class, girl:

*I don't see what social class has to do with drugs or alcohol as the questionnaire seems to imply with questions about my parents' jobs, money and exams. My parents are fairly well off but I am in no way spoilt. I am doing very well at school although I have taken drugs. It has nothing to do with how well you do personally !!!  
Denscombe and Aubrook (1992 p120)*

Incidents such as these, I feel, lend support to the idea of incorporating the pupil in educational research. In the above examples, it is clear that the researchers have 'got it wrong' in some sense. Whilst the problem has been identified we still remain largely ignorant, for example, of what factors 'fifth year' students do consider to significantly affect them personally, or conversely, what kind of impact their socio-economic or socio-cultural background does have upon them. I argue therefore, that it is apposite for us not only to include children in educational research but allow them, at least in collaboration, to define the parameters and content of certain studies. Therefore, in the current study, children identified those aspects significant to their experience through the



keeping of diaries, without any evaluative input from me. In such a way it may be possible to limit potential for drawing erroneous conclusions.

Certain studies (van Manen 1999, Greig and Taylor 1999, Crozier and Tracey 2000, Jones 2000, Lewis and Lindsay 2000), published since the inception of this research have begun to address the issue of genuinely accessing children's perceptions. Van Manen (1999) in particular, through a study conducted in Canada sought to discover how pupils 'experience the interactive dimensions of teaching'. In this he takes the approach of asking children to recall a particular teacher and incident that they associate with that teacher. Students then wrote an anecdote representing the incident they had thought of.

In this research, an interpretation of one particular anecdote is offered to illustrate how a teacher giving praise can ironically become a somewhat 'hazardous act' for the child. One boy gives this description of events immediately following his answering what was considered a challenging question:

*...as I walked back to my seat I distinctly heard muffled name-calling and hissing. Some of the kids smirked or rolled their eyes, others looked outright hostile. I realized that things were different in this school and that doing well was not considered 'cool' ... Gradually I learned the art of pretending to be dumb' (Grade 10 boy)  
van Manen (1999 p23)*

A further anecdote concerns an occasion on which not only had one child done 'well', but this was set within the context of the rest of the class doing 'badly':

*Mr Venn made a big production of his disappointment. He went on and on exclaiming his amazement at the mistake people had made on the science test...A sense of doom seemed to be hovering over the class. I tried to tell myself inwardly that his was not the end of the world. I would do better next time. When the teacher finally reached my desk he stopped and suddenly changed his tone of voice.*

*The shift was so dramatic that I am sure everyone in class startled. All eyes were on me. But the teacher's face lit up and I heard him say, with an air of commendation, 'Oh, thank God, there is one amongst you who has caught on. It goes to show that there is still hope...*

*He waved my test paper above his head, like a silly flag, before he placed it solemnly in my hand. 'Good for you, Michael, not a single mistake. A perfect mark!'*

*I scarcely could maintain my composure. I had expected the worst and was awarded the best. I did not need a mirror to know that my face was blushing red. The class was still strangely silent. No one uttered a word while the teacher walked to the back of the room.*

*I kept my face turned down, staring at my test paper. I could not completely suppress a faint smile. Was it relief? Vanity? Embarrassment? I dared not look at my friends. I did not trust my eyes.*

*Why did I feel so stupid when I was supposed to feel smart? (Grade 9 boy)  
van Manen (1999 pp24,25)*

Van Manen analyses the above text as indicating that a 'positive gesture on the part of the teacher ...has potentially ambivalent significance' (van Manen 1999 p25). Yet he follows this statement with the following:

*As Mr Archer handed back the papers he singled out everyone for his criticism: 'Horrible writing.' 'I should send you back to elementary school.' 'Poor effort.' 'Not worth the paper it is written on.' 'You do not belong in this school.' 'Look at this garbage!'*

*Every student paper looked bloodied from the huge red markings...Too soon it was my turn, but instead of handing me back the paper he only pointed and said: 'Ellen. Stay after class today'.*

*For the rest of the period I could not concentrate. I must have done so badly. But why did he not embarrass me in front of all the others?*

*After the class had filed out I shuffled slowly to his desk. He looked up at me, smiling. I was utterly confused. You rarely saw Mr Archer smile. Then he said in distinct cheerful words that still echo in my ears: 'Ellen, you seem to be the only one that can write in this class. Here! He gave me my paper, with '97%' and 'excellent' written on top. 'Get along now', he said in a happy but brusque tone, trying to act his usual grumpy self. I stumbled out of the room, feeling mixed, flustered, ambivalent. (Grade 10 girl) van Manen (1999 pp25,26)*

Van Manen goes on to state that Ellen did not feel special in a 'positive manner' as a result of the teacher's praise, suggesting that 'The teacher seems to lack the pedagogical qualities that bring out the best in each student' (van Manen 1999 p26). However, if we compare this anecdote with the one presented earlier, it is arguable that the teacher was showing every sensitivity to the child by not publicising her success, and, therefore, avoiding the ambivalence identified above.

Additionally, although van Manen intended to analyse the interactive dimension of the child's experience of the teaching process and, therefore, emphasis was naturally given to the teacher-pupil relationship, I contend that these texts do not fully support this interpretation. Whilst their interaction with the teacher is obviously important to the children, I suggest the more significant relationship is that between the child and their peers. In the first example, the child alters his behaviour because of the response of his fellow students and not as a direct reaction to the teacher's action. Similarly the child's emotions seen in the second example are more indicative of an implied pupil-pupil relationship.

What I also read from the first example is an indication that children will mask their own 'selves' by using explicit behaviour as disguise. Thus there still seems a tendency to prioritise the role of the teacher over the child and a reluctance to really acknowledge the significance of the child-child relationship in education. My suggestion is that in his approach, van Manen has created an ideal scenario within which the child could be actively involved in defining the 'real' research problem within his field of interest. Unfortunately, I believe he has already determined his particular focus and this precludes him from incorporating issues that may actually be of greater significance to the child within the classroom.

I am, however, in support of van Manen's initial approach. I think it is essential to move away from what I would term prescriptive research where areas of importance are predetermined and, as I have stated, he at least creates a situation where a degree of freedom in defining issues is transferred to the child. I do however, have some reservations regarding his methods, that I feel should be raised. My first concern is that the anecdotes were written en masse, in a classroom situation. I feel therefore, that this work carries all the associations of schoolwork and presumably would have been interpreted as such by the children. Although van Manen does not specify how particular children became part of his study, permission may have been given by teachers and perhaps even parents for them to do so. However, there is no indication that the children were genuine volunteers in this study; this contravenes the spirit of ethical guidelines to the involvement of children in research.

There are also implications for the actual data that emanate from the format in which it was collected. The language that the children employ is rather reflective of the nature of 'high status' knowledge as classified by Young (1971). It appears far removed from the type of language that children might use in their interpersonal communications with peers. The whole exercise, therefore appears formalised and the focus of the child, to produce a 'well written' anecdote. For me, the 'work' of the pupils here indicates an implicit desire to please; there is an element of drama that serves well to highlight the significance of events, but I have some reservation that the building of tension is more a literary device than reflection of actual events. The story telling is also somewhat self-effacing; a quality that is perhaps likely to be encouraged in children if they are to conform to the model of a 'good student', indicating again a degree of ingratiating themselves to the teacher.

Although the researcher ensured the child's anonymity through editing where 'necessary', it is unclear as to whether the children were aware of this. This, therefore casts some doubt as to the authenticity of the accounts in terms of content and presentation and again raises ethical issues. I also feel that some of the immediacy of the children's expression may have been lost through van Manen's editing of their work which was designed not only to preserve anonymity as discussed but give 'plausibility' to some of the accounts (van Manen 1999 p20). More cynically, it could be suggested that this would also result in some distortion of the 'truth'.

Whilst I have some reservations about this study, these arise from a desire for educational researchers to be more ready to accept the witness of children, not uncritically, but with less compulsion to refine what they 'say' before presenting it as evidence. I suggest that approaches such as those of van Manen are highly valuable. What is really missing in his research is the subsequent discussion of the anecdotes with the children concerned. The issues raised by the children in their stories could then be clarified and verified in the child's 'own language'. Van Manen may have interpreted the children's work far more accurately than I (have reinterpreted it)

but without further contribution by pupils this cannot be known. I therefore contend that using the written evidence of children has great value in educational research since it affords the opportunity for the child to be involved in defining the research problem. However, I believe that text needs to be informal and used as a point of departure for further discussion in order that its potential be actualised. Therefore whilst I agree with van Manen's call for our need to become more 'attuned' to the experience of students, I suggest that it is necessary to work towards a more complex understanding of the meaning that children genuinely allocate to certain experiences. For me, this means involving them in the specifics of defining the research 'problem'.

This is not to say that research involving children in this way does not exist per se, but rather that it is extremely rare. One study in which I became very interested was that of Pollard (1987). He appeared to be the only author who had actively used children to 'advise' him on issues directly concerning the research, and to conduct interviews with one another. Although this was an approach initially developed due to time limitations faced by Pollard, this collaborative approach appears highly productive. The advantage here was that Pollard could gain access through his team of children to information that pupils may have been reluctant to discuss with an adult. However, although I was interested here because of the unusual control given to children, this was not an approach that I could directly transfer to my own situation. As a teacher in the school, Pollard had developed strong relationships with children and could therefore deploy their skills successfully in this way. I did not share that opportunity. Additionally, in practice, due to the nature of my findings, which were primarily concerned with the complexity of inter-peer relationships, despite my interest here, this would have proved to be a highly inappropriate method.

Pollard's (1987) research apart, although I have argued that the child has been largely neglected within educational research, issues are beginning to be addressed, as the fear of involving children in the research process seems to be being conquered. Within physical education again, although some authors have sought to involve children, we are still falling short of being sufficiently confident enough to do so in a proactive capacity. This leads me now to consider more specifically the representation of children within physical education research, in association with the implementation of NCPE.

### **Physical education research and the child**

The introduction of the NCPE continued to position physical education as a legitimate and topical focus for research, not least because the practicalities of implementing documentation introduces a 'human' element of particular volatility since 'innovation and change are rarely, if ever, neutral' (Sparkes 1990 p194).

The impact of the NCPE has been 'monitored' by policy makers and researchers generally within the physical education profession. Focus has been largely upon the implementation process, the

interpretation and reinterpretation of curriculum text and the ultimate impact that this has had upon the curriculum as actually 'delivered'. Within formalised channels of policy review such as representatives of the QCA, research and assessment has taken the form of consultations with schools (Casbon 1999, Gilliver 1996, 1999, Carpenter 1997, Harris 1993) and focused on issues of provision. From the physical education research 'profession', attention in particular focussed on issues of 'equality'; a shibboleth within curriculum rhetoric that largely used 'same treatment' as a synonym for 'equality' (Casbon 1992, Talbot 1990, 1996, Milosevic 1996, Flintoff 1996, Rose 1997). This research largely agreed that equal access did not constitute equal opportunity. Other issues addressed were those of interpretation and the practicalities of turning policy into practice (Evans and Penney 1992, 1993, 1995, 1998, Curtner-Smith and Meek 2000).

Curtner-Smith and Meek (2000) investigated this issue specifically in their assessment of the compatibility of teachers' value orientations with NCPE. They found that in many cases 'policy texts may not be compatible with the values of...teachers' (Curtner-Smith and Meek 2000). This conclusion was taken from the finding that a number of teachers prioritised concerns other than teaching matter. Curtner-Smith et al (2000) suggest that policy text emphasises a mastery-disciplinary orientation to teaching. However, few studies directly incorporate the interpretations of teachers and even fewer the experiences of children. Essentially, particularly that research which sought to address issues of equality, issues that would be seen to directly pertain to the classroom environment, decontextualised the focus of their concern. Therefore, their research was rendered still positivistic giving little insight into the meaning of the curriculum.

However, this did not mean that 'the child' as such was excluded from research, but rather that they were, as I have argued with so much research, treated as a topic in themselves to be studied, as opposed to being active contributors to the research process. I shall now consider the representation of children in physical education research highlighting their treatment as subjects without agency and arguing that such reification denies the possibility of adequately analysing their situation. However, I shall also discuss that research which is beginning to address issues of the involvement of children proactively, seeking to highlight the way in which this might form a basis for increasing their contribution.

Research in physical education has largely been framed by the wider influences of sociological research in education as a whole and its nature is reflective of this. I contend, however, that physical education research in Britain remains largely behind the progress being made in moving towards not only basic involvement of children in studies, but in developing an inclusive model of that involvement, treating subjects in an active capacity. Where it does exist, as I will discuss, it has a tendency to be prescriptive, predominantly based on large scale questionnaire surveys, is imbued with the prejudices of researchers and is largely inadequate in gaining any real understanding of what it means to be a child partaking in NCPE.

As with educational research generally, in the next chapter I shall discuss the fact that initial involvement of children has been in a passive role as observed in relation to the actions of the teachers, and over time becoming slightly more active in terms of being asked their opinions. However, the framing of children's contributions has largely been prescribed by the researcher through their isolated use of methods such as questionnaires. I lament the fact that we appear reluctant to address issues of how to embrace the contribution that pupils could make in defining and approaching research problems. In this context I suggest that physical education is 'lagging' rather too far behind in the development of new research approaches in this particular sector of the field of educational research.

The problem that I see with such research is evident in the rather one-dimensional interpretation that has to be made. Many of the studies make some interesting points and there are evidently some patterns of pupil perceptions that may be cause for concern, particularly where the NCPE is aiming to create an entitlement curriculum wherein children should be given equal access to programmes (Casbon 1992, Talbot 1990, 1996, Milosevic 1996, Flintoff 1996, Rose 1997). General patterns find disparities in attitude to particular activities, for example according to sex. However, what they fail to identify is why the students hold the views they do, and what implications this subsequently has for the meaning of physical education to them. Therefore, whilst this research is useful in highlighting problem areas of curriculum, it does little to help in addressing them.

I shall now turn to consider some specific studies which profess to present children's perspectives of NCPE within the sociology of the subject. Herein I seek to illustrate where we need to improve our approach. My first concern is that many studies that seek to give students voice, actually stop short of doing so because of the methods and methodologies used to obtain children's opinions. As I have discussed, using methods which tend to be highly structured by the researcher, means that the researcher prescribes those factors of salience which may or may not coincide with the perceptions that students have of what is important in education or physical education. However, I have made clear my support for involving children in research, about them, and for them, and would advocate studies that at least attempt to do this. However, I do have some specific reservations regarding certain approaches.

I am concerned not only that much research involving children is rather prescriptive in its design, but also that some interpretation is indicative of prejudicial approaches implicitly seeking to create a particular 'picture' of physical education. Milosevic (1996) was concerned with gender bias in physical education and conducted a questionnaire survey involving schools in inner city and rural areas of Leeds, using four Leeds high schools and including different minority ethnic groups. I have already addressed my reservations of questionnaire usage in isolation from other approaches per se, and therefore will not discuss these further. However, I do feel that there were specific

inherent problems with this questionnaire, and the way it was processed and interpreted. I remain unclear whether my concerns arise as a result of what may well be erroneous presentation of the questions in the particular article to which I refer, but shall assume that editorial processes have ensured that this is not the case.

Milosevic used pupils' ages rather than academic year in order to group the children before her results were processed using SSPS. From there, in some instances, ages were grouped together; 11 and 12, 13 and 14, 15 and 16 year olds being 'paired'. My first concern is the fact that in classifying children in this way, she inevitably combined the evidence of different Key Stages of the curriculum. Children aged 14 may be at either Key Stage three or four depending on whether they are in year 9 or 10. However, Milosevic grouped them as if they were either a homogenous group or as if they were all at Key Stage three, since she paired them with 13 year olds.

Perhaps of greater concern is the treatment of 15 year olds. Certainly from my own research it is clear that year 11 pupils have a special kind of status in terms of their treatment by staff that may greatly influence their attitude towards any subject area. The freedoms they are given allow them to have more 'control' over what they do and are likely to affect their attitudes, not only towards physical education, but also each other. By the time the questionnaires were administered at the end of the autumn term, the children had potentially experienced more than three months of their possible new 'status'. Whilst grouping children according to age may be appropriate in some cases I feel that more consideration should have been given to the Key Stage at which children working and their year group.

Milosevic also faced sample complications. She had 51 fourteen year old boys involved in the study but only eight 16 year old boys. Whilst overall there were a similar number of girls as boys involved (228 and 225 respectively), there were more than double the number of sixteen year old girls contributing as compared to boys. She did address this problem to a certain extent, however, in that the evidence of this age was always given either in conjunction with all ages, or with that of fifteen year olds. Comparisons of thirteen and fourteen year old boys made to fifteen and sixteen year olds would mean that the evidence of 101 boys was being compared to that of 53.

Whilst I have some reservations, as explained above, with the construction of analysis in Milosevic's study, these are relatively transparent, and there certainly appears to be no attempt to conceal possible biases. Therefore the research can be read with this in mind. However, I am further concerned by the conclusions drawn. These, for me, reveal prejudice in the analysis and I feel are often unsubstantiated.

Regarding children's views on netball, Milosevic states:

*Netball continues to be strongly associated with girls, with boys holding, not surprisingly, stronger views on this. (81 % of the boys, 75% of the girls)  
Milosevic (1996 p17)*

I wonder why it should not be 'surprising' that boys have stronger views on this issue, especially when as regards rounders:

*Rounders continues to be a strongly stereotyped sport: 61% of the boys compared with 74% of the girls saw it as mostly female. Girls particularly see it as an activity for them, again reflecting their experience; they often play it, whereas boys play cricket  
Milosevic (1996 p17)*

From Milosevic's comments here it appears that the girls have stronger opinions on this stereotype compared to boys, which is not consistent with her earlier analysis. Milosevic goes on to make a careless comment when describing cricket as a contact sport. She also concludes that girls poor self image as regards their body shape was a 'strong reflection' of media stereotyping, although she offers no evidence of this (Milosevic 1996 p20).

I am very concerned that where we do finally involve children in research, we do so with the greatest of care. It is my feeling that Milosevic's analysis represents superficial flippancy and gives scant regard to the seriousness of the issues she should be addressing. It also trivialises her own study, which may to some extent be believed to reflect wider research approaches being undertaken.

Whilst Milosevic apparently addressed issues of self-esteem, these were more adequately approached around the same time by Woodhouse (1996). He highlighted the importance of children's self-concept in relation to their approach to learning and resultant achievement. This is perhaps of particular significance with a subject where the exposure that children experience whilst performing is relatively high, when compared to other school subjects. In his research, questionnaires were administered by school staff, following specified guidelines, to pupils in year 9 and 11. Low attainment and low self-regard were more often to be found together than high attainment and high self-regard. Woodhouse suggested this would not be too surprising, since many within the teaching profession will have come across the pupil who has an 'over-inflated' belief in their own ability, and also the pupil who performs well but tends not to believe in their own ability (Woodhouse 1996 p43).

Woodhouse acknowledged that his study did not provide him with any 'real knowledge' of the approaches being adopted by departments or teachers of the children involved in his study, and hence any comprehensive evaluation of what was going on in the schools was not possible. His work did, however, alert us to a possible situation that would run contrary to what was popular belief at the time:



*What is worrying here is that the activity areas of gymnastics and dance, where 'pupil centred' or 'educational' approaches have long been expounded, are the very areas where pupils, overall, appear to have the weakest feelings about their ability*  
Woodhouse (1996 p44)

It is at such a stage, I contend that children need to be involved more personally in the research. Whilst Woodhouse had a large sample - 2,993 children were involved - the value of his research has been restricted. Whilst it is interesting to note that child-centred concepts in teaching physical education may not be 'working', no practical analysis can be made. Unless we know what it is about the particular learning situation that means children lack self-esteem, then the research has little pragmatic value. Woodhouse implies that it could be the student-centredness itself that is a problem; however, it could equally be having to work with particular children in a close capacity, or the public nature of performance in these areas that is the 'real' problem.

What is very positive in Woodhouse's research, is that he calls for the treatment of children as:

*...hopefully, most of us accepts that young people are much more than inanimate vessels...  
They are animate, thinking beings with developing beliefs and value*  
Woodhouse (1996 p41)

Whilst Woodhouse brings this to bear only in his analysis and not in his approach, it is an acknowledgement of the agency of children, and therefore potentially a step towards their greater inclusion in the research process.

Although, as I have stated, there is scant evidence taken from children in much physical education research, one approach by Donovan (1998), although not purporting to present the views of children as central to a study, promised to incorporate their views in a comprehensive manner by not only using questionnaires, but also combining them with interviews, as I have previously suggested is appropriate.

Addressing one issue of prominence in NCPE debate, Donovan (1998) used questionnaires to gain children's opinion in the first instance, and then involved students in both formal and informal interviews to investigate fully their perceptions of competition in school physical education. He stated that he combined observation with interviews involving children, management and PE teachers; all interviews were audio-taped. Donovan presented a 'defence' of competition suggesting that children gave it salience in both lessons and extra-curricular sport, but that in lessons, 'winning' was not all-important, and was an opportunity for the 'stronger' children to encourage the 'weaker' (Donovan 1998 p126). The head teacher was strongly supportive of the physical education programme.

The first 'problem' that I see in Donovan's research is the apparent bias in his choice of whom to give voice to in his analysis. Whilst he stated that he involved 'teachers' in his research he did not

present their views directly in his analysis. Only the Head of Department's comments were used to represent the teaching role. He did not state which children he actually interviewed, nor did he indicate how many. His analysis involved only four comments made by students; none of which concern children's feelings about competition in the physical education lesson. Therefore, although he did refer to more general comments made by 'the boys' the main basis of analysis is observation and interview text obtained from the Headteacher and the Head of Department. The direct perceptions as voiced by children on the issue he purports to be researching are not incorporated. Indeed, although Donovan begins his report by suggesting that there are significant ways in which competition might be incorporated into physical education, most of the interview data he presents does not concern the nature of competition at all. Rather it focusses on the perceived success of the department, which individuals appear to base on the success of school teams.

A further concern lies in Donovan's interpretation of his own evidence. He began his analysis with a quote from the Head Teacher that showed 'commitment to the importance of competition in physical education':

*It's got to be competitive, there has to be sport for enjoyment as well and people can go and play badminton – sport for all and sport for leisure is important, but competitive sport is important.*

*Donovan (1998 p125)*

Whilst I agree that this comment does indeed show a commitment to competition in sport, I cannot help but feel it rather worryingly indicates that 'competition' is believed to be confined to team games. In light of this comment, it is also a concern that, according to the physical education programme, children in years 10 and 11 cannot go and play badminton or, indeed, any similarly classified game since it is not offered at Key Stage four. All extra-curricular activities actively discussed in Donovan's case study appear to focus on the ubiquitous team game.

Donovan also argues that the Head of Department is committed to the inclusion of less able children in physical education lessons and extra-curricular activities; however, the teacher comments:

*I must admit though that it's getting harder to work with teams for endless hours after school if they are really struggling for natural talent*

*Donovan (1998 p129)*

The location of the less able child here remains marginalised. The potential impact that such a strong bias towards competitive team games might have for some children is not adequately assessed. No time appeared to be available for the children to learn how to plan and execute the more cognitive aspects of the national curriculum. Indeed, the concept that children should be involved in doing so was anathema to the Head of Department: 'I'm not a discovery man'

(Donovan 1998 p127); so what did this actually mean for the pupils? Whilst Donovan describes the lessons as being almost frenzied with the excitement of competition, we do not learn about the impact that such an environment has on the less able children. He suggests that 'the stronger pupils could encourage the weaker ones' (Donovan 1998 p126) in mixed ability lessons, and yet the lessons he describes effectively 'band' the children within them, so that they play in ability groups. In effect we are told about the weaker child but we do not hear from him.

I feel that it is very important for the issues of debate in physical education to be assessed in the field, involving the evidence of all those concerned. Donovan created an ideal opportunity to do just this and yet his eagerness to promote a certain type of physical education over another has meant he has in fact done a great disservice to the very issues which he so evidently supports. The research was conducted in Manchester, in a school that had falling rolls, and essentially appeared to be fighting for survival. One of the ways in which the school worked to maintain esteem was to seek success in sport. The Head of Department was, therefore, presumably under a great deal of pressure to attain the goals that had been set using the most immediate means available: to work towards fitness, and play competitive games as much as possible in the lesson. Indeed, 'games' need not be such a dirty word; prior to the prescription of the NCPE, Scott and West (1990) found that 76% of 904 students sampled in secondary schools identified 'games' as an activity that they 'liked'. Yet the school evidently faced special difficulties that were perhaps summed up by one child's comment:

*PE helps us to get rid of the bad attitudes that we learn on the streets (Year 11 boy)  
Donovan (1998 p128)*

However, there is also the implication here that the school necessarily devalues the child's home background in the values that it sets. It might, therefore, have been interesting to develop further the social context within which staff were having to work, highlighting the conflicts that arose from this.

Whilst I maintain my concerns regarding less able children, I can empathise with why Donovan might have instinctively wished to defend the work of the PE department. However, his work is vitiated as he creates a pretence of analysing something other than hard competition in what might well be described as a tough school. Suspicion is immediately aroused by his failure to explicitly incorporate the views of the less able child, and of the staff member who does not control the curriculum. He, therefore, in this instance, neither creates an argument in defence of competitive activities in physical education nor in justification of the department's approach.

Donovan's study highlights the great importance for the researcher to bracket their own experience and present things as they are. This is not to suggest that research will be without bias in any sense but rather, as I shall later argue, that it is necessarily subjective. An open mind needs to be

maintained as far as possible, yet where an argument is to be presented, then the appropriate evidence should support it. This is especially important in a subject area which is perhaps considered somewhat 'non-serious' and rather a poor relation to other mainstream educational studies.

A successful methodology used to elicit a representation of children's experience of physical education, is presented by Macfadyen (1999). He considers the impact that physical education has on children's perceptions of physical activity and their subsequent likelihood of continuing to participate in physical activity on leaving school. Macfadyen describes his research as a 'case study', complemented by 'focus group interviewing'. Here, the evidence of children is used as the main focus for analysis that clearly values their opinion. Children are found to have concerns with the teacher, curriculum content, and physical environment of the 'lesson', which included changing facilities. Whilst children essentially responded to physical activity by ability, it was clear that what may be considered context related 'peripheral' factors were important for some of the children. For example, one girl comments:

*Your make up gets smudged...you have to get dressed properly again, make sure everything is all right...it (physical education) is such a pain*  
Macfadyen (1999 p166)

What Macfadyen appears to offer is a sound analysis of the child's perception; he clearly uses the words of children to evidence his claims and therefore the concerns he raises regarding the necessity of addressing issues of how to encourage greater involvement in physical activity have great value. What we begin to see here is some kind of explanation as to why the disparities identified in the wide reaching questionnaire survey work of other authors exist.

One reservation that I retain here, however, is that he involves only one year group, for which he offers no rationalisation, and which will inevitably provide a skewed view if his findings are applied to the concept of physical education as a whole. The value in Macfadyen's work, I suggest lies in his embarking on the notion of child involvement in the research process.

What is inevitably immeasurable is the degree to which the children were free to define areas of importance to them in physical education. One way in which studies such as Macfadyen's can be developed, apart from the expansion of the children taking part, is to somehow devolve the ability to identify salient factors of experience to the pupils themselves.

One piece of research that I found of particular interest, since it concerns the relevant age group for my study, and addresses many of the issues I have raised as problematic, was conducted by Carlson in 1995. Whilst this study took place in the USA, and, therefore, does not pertain particularly to NCPE, as with van Manen's work, her approach is a valuable one to consider. The resultant depth

of information that is derived is indicative of the necessity of developing the involvement of children in research.

Carlson's study concerned student alienation from physical education. She adopted an approach that began by conducting in-depth interviews concerning three affective areas, from which she considered negative locations towards a subject area to derive: meaninglessness, powerlessness and isolation. The interviews took place with two students who identified themselves as disliking physical education. The information obtained here was then used to form the basis of ensuing interviews with teachers and pupils identified through a survey as alienated from PE in another school, although the main emphasis rested on student evidence. This methodology enabled Carlson to suggest reasons for student alienation, illustrate the meaning that physical education had for the children, and touch on the strategies that students adopted in order to cope with the alienation they felt.

Facing the difficulties associated with conducting research wherein events do not always progress as anticipated, exacerbated by the desire to involve individuals in the research of something that they dislike, of the six children she ultimately conducted in depth interviews with, Carlson was able to involve only one boy. Other boys identified as alienated from physical education did not wish any further involvement.

Therefore, bearing in mind that her evidence was largely from girls, she begins to suggest reasons as to why they may find participation in particular activities uncomfortable. One of the reasons why children did not like, for example, softball was that they were 'on display' (Carlson 1995 p470). Essentially, many of the students' comments appeared to emanate from an essential perception of their own lack of ability; those who were less able, subsequently also felt the need to control their treatment and the environment that they were not afforded. As a result of that lack of control, the children felt exposed, and threatened by certain type of activities. Many of them also identified experiencing some sense of isolation which prevented them from fully participating. As a result strategies of non-participation that usually took the form of 'feigning' participation by for example, getting rid of the ball as quickly as possible to limit involvement, pretending to be busy, or withdrawing through purported but not actual illness were adopted (Carlson 1995 pp470-472).

Therefore, Carlson offers some kind of rationalisation for student perceptions and their manifestation meaning that issues can begin to be addressed pragmatically. However, one aspect of her evidence that she does not examine is the relationship between students as a contributory factor to their experience and perceptions. In many of the examples Carlson uses, the children are, in effect, identifying the presence of others as being significant:

*I didn't like batting...because...everyone was watching you (May)*

*I am afraid that I am going to mess up and everyone is going to laugh at me (Kathy)*

*The teachers always make you compete against other people. It just doesn't make me feel good (Rilla)*  
*Carlson (1995 p470)*

As with the broader educational studies, it seems that the relationship between children is somewhat overlooked in terms of its impact upon their experiences of education. One further point that may have developed Carlson's approach, would have been, as Williams (1996) did, to allow children to identify in the first instance, those salient factors that affect their experience.

In 1992, Smith suggested a means whereby individuals could pinpoint the most important aspects of an experience, and through describing it in detail, the meaning of that experience could be accessed and assessed. Smith arrived at his approach by first drawing parallels with the young child's playground and the sportsfield in terms of the interactive activities of children (Smith 1992 p73). Whilst he acknowledges the differences between informal play and the restrictions of the more 'substantive field of physical education', a parallel is drawn regarding the interactive nature of physical activity within the two instances:

*...young children will often look to one another for guidance in how certain activities should be done. They learn from each other how a swing can be manipulated in different directions, how a slippery slide can be made challenging long after the initial satisfaction of sliding down has dissipated, how one can go over, through, around and even stand up on a set of climbing bars. They learn the fundamental actions of climbing, swinging, jumping, leaping and landing...by taking their cue from other children on the playground*  
*Smith (1992 p73)*

My initial reaction to Smith's claims was that they were too simplistic and that the nature of constructed physical education was disparate to that of unstructured play. I still believe that to be the case but feel that there are many instances in which there is, as Smith alludes, a pedagogical choice to leave children to discover things for themselves; where for a short time activity is relatively undirected. The children are still working within certain parameters, for example, noise level and the need to work within a specific area to a specific task, but there is at least an element of interaction between children, that takes precedence over the rest of the activity. I do not fully agree with Smith's analogy, and perhaps with the age group with which I am concerned it is less poignant, but he does alert us to the significance of child interactions and the possibilities that leaving children to work together has.

Yet creating an analogy was not Smith's sole purpose. It was through his recollections of childhood and observations of children playing that Smith arrived at the concept of using such memories to analyse the nature of physical experience from a phenomenological perspective. Subsequently, he encouraged undergraduate students to recall specific incidences relating to physical activity in as much detail as possible and the resultant narratives were then scrutinised for meaning. The purpose

of this exercise was to 'be a way of capturing the sense of a pedagogical research question in the realm of physical education' (Smith 1992 p77).

Whilst this provides a really quite profound means of gaining access to meaning, the students involved were possibly, almost necessarily, able sports people, and therefore give accounts from such a perspective. The value I see in Smith's work lies not so much in relation to his students and pedagogic action, but in the value of narrative as a tool in the exposure of meaning. Through using anecdotes as a foundation for study, especially through inviting children to share their stories, we may gain access to the meaning of their experiences.

Williams (1996) conducted a study that relied upon the evidence of children that used a questionnaire approach, but invited children to make their 'own' comments on their likes and dislikes regarding physical education. Williams' research involved year 9 and year 11 students across nine urban secondary schools.

Many of her findings concurred with those of Macfayden, in that children would often identify contextually related issues such as having to play in the rain, or the nature of showering, as significant in affecting their orientation to the subject area. Also similarly, teachers and their teaching style, as well as content and facility related comments were made. However, although it did not become the main focus of the study, Williams' study also gave credence to the significance of the inter-pupil relationship in which the positive and negative aspects of the social basis of physical education are identified. Williams stated that this particular study did not claim to provide any definitive answers, but it did begin to introduce the concept of placing the possibilities of defining physical education in the hands of children.

In terms of findings, Williams became particularly concerned with gender differences in the extent and nature of the enjoyment of physical education. She, therefore, took these issues forward to a further study in which she specifically focused on female pupils in order to gain an understanding of their essential basis. Working with Bendelow (Williams and Bendelow 1999), further investigations were carried out, almost exclusively with girls, in three schools. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and used alongside observational data. Many comments here were reflective of those found in earlier research, reinforcing the fact that elements in the nature of provision can strongly affect the child's enjoyment of physical education. Most specifically, they found that the imposition of a national curriculum has not greatly impacted upon girls' participation due to resistance to change within the profession (1999 p31). Therefore, whilst building on earlier research meant that perhaps issues concerning girls' participation were considered in greater depth, the research processes involved were not developed and still we see the determination of research issues as being clearly in the hands of the researchers.

Although I have certain reservations regarding the nature of some of the research that has involved children, there do appear to be distinct patterns in the findings that I feel demand further inquiry. The patterns of commonality can be broadly categorised into the areas of activity, teacher-pupil relationship and self-concept and the relationship between the three. The significance of pupil-pupil relationships are hinted at but never really explored.

Children have a tendency to categorise both one another and the activity. Certain 'sports' will be seen as essentially appropriate for girls or boys (Williams 1996, Macfadyen 1999, Milosevic 1996). Children will be seen and will see themselves as more or less able, although there appears to be conflicting evidence as to how this is manifest in practice. Some authors argue that this does not impact negatively on the pupils' experience (Donovan 1998) and others indicate that those less able children feel somehow disenfranchised within the physical education curriculum (Williams 1996, Carlson 1995, Macfadyen 1998).

Inevitably curriculum content provided the basis for studies with children, suggesting that the particular activity is of significance (Goudas and Biddle 1993, Carlson 1995). Where this was not divided along lines of gender, it would largely be based according to whether activities are individual or team based. The evidence within these areas is, in fact, conflicting. This conflict appears to emanate from differences in the location of analysis. Those who use constructions of gender from which to commentate on such issues, either in the research as a whole, or in part, suggest that there is a tendency for girls to prefer individual activities and boys team activities (Goudas and Biddle 1996, Scott and West 1990, Milosevic 1996). However, those who discuss aspects of concepts such as self perception or peer influence suggest that there is a proclivity for those having a poorer self-concept within the lesson to actually prefer 'games' to individual activities because of the element of 'concealment' that team work offers (Williams 1996, Woodhouse 1996). Further support of 'team games' is offered in a more positive light by Donovan (1998), although as discussed, his analysis is imbued with its own agenda and I would not categorise his study with those of the last two authors.

Perhaps unsurprisingly the teacher is identified as a prominent 'factor' according to two dimensions, firstly in terms of their pedagogic approach and secondly in terms of their own persona presented to the children. Teachers who are more willing to engage on a personal basis with their pupils were 'favoured' (Macfadyen 1999, Williams 1996). Those who adopted authoritarian styles of teaching were disfavoured (Macfadyen 1999) as were those who appeared to spend disproportionate time with specific groups within the class, such as the more able, or children of their own sex (Williams 1996).

For me, the above research, and in particular the conflicting evidence of the above research, raises issues on both a methodological basis, and subsequently on one of content and interpretation that



emanates from that methodological choice. I feel that the way to take this research 'forward', to begin to understand the 'real' basis of the thoughts of children, is to give them more freedom to define the bases of their perceptions of physical education, and then to elaborate on those bases. Therefore, I feel that seeking access to the child's 'lifeworld' within physical education is of paramount significance. In the following two chapters I shall discuss the approach that I took to my research subject that sought to actively involve children and my rationalisation in doing so.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND FIELDWORK

In Chapter Four, I discussed the way in which research in education and, in particular, physical education has sought to access the perspective of 'the child'. I aimed to illustrate where I believe this to have been a success, but also where I believe there to remain a need to alter the approach that is taken when involving children in research. In particular, I argued for the inclusion of the child more specifically in the development of the research approach. The framework for this study, therefore, was partly prescribed by the fact that I wished to involve children, and partly emergent, as my involvement of children meant it was guided by their contribution. In this chapter I shall outline the research process that I followed; in Chapter Six, I shall discuss my rationale for this approach. Throughout both chapters, certain ethical questions arise. These are of great sensitivity particularly since I was working with children. I therefore detail these issues specifically in Chapter Seven.

My study essentially followed four main phases. I began by familiarising myself with the research 'field', visiting four secondary schools. For phase two I chose one alternative school on which to base my case study. Here, children became involved in keeping 'physical education diaries' which formed the basis of interpretation and group discussions. At this point, it appeared that the nature of experience was ensconced in the power relations between individuals; in the ensuing phase (three) therefore, I began by using sociometric testing to establish the basis of group relations. This formed the first stage of phase four wherein, rather than whole group relations, the results of sociometric tests formed a point of departure to analyse the nature of relationships specific individuals had with particular others, deemed 'significant' to them in positive and negative senses. It is the analysis of inter-peer relationships that ultimately formed the basis for the final phase of this study which involved interviewing children on an individual basis.

#### *Phase 1 (September 1997 – July 1998)*

##### *Sensitisation to the research 'field'*

The need to interpret the reciprocal nature of action within physical education directed me to develop an understanding of behaviour and symbol as they exist for children. Therefore, my prioritisation was to learn how to communicate within my field of study. Of primary consideration was how to communicate with children and teachers within the physical education context. The key purpose of the first phase of the research, therefore, was to familiarise myself with the physical education environment, and more particularly with the children working within it.

The initial phase of fieldwork took the form of a period of general observation: specific issues had yet to be determined. At this point, I generally drew from my own background in teaching physical education within further education and the beliefs I already held about the nature of experience.

Although having trained in education and taught in Higher and Further Education, my experience of secondary schools was limited, and to all intents and purposes I considered myself an 'outsider'. My training and experience, despite technically being in a different field to that of the research site, did give me some kind of credibility with 'gatekeepers': those individuals who would make decisions as to whether I should be given 'access' to particular subjects, in this case, the Head Teacher and the department staff. However, I would not contend that I was familiar in any real sense with PE teaching in secondary schools. Certainly, assuming any real prior understanding could have obscured some events from my consciousness. This is not to suggest that it possible to extract oneself from one's own experience and enter a world *tabula rasa*: more that I was aware that every effort should be made to achieve this end.

I agree with Ball (1983) that it is appropriate to 'go into the unknown, 'unarmed'', with primary reliance on my own engagement with the research 'field' which was to be achieved 'enactively' (Sparkes 1992a p29). Essentially, what I hoped to do in these initial stages (and indeed later stages also) was to be drawn into identifying 'theoretical leads' by the subjects under study themselves.

This phase of the research took place over a full academic year in four schools, visiting each, as far as possible, in rotation. Each school was visited on at least two occasions in each term. Whilst inevitably, permission would be required from the head of the school to pursue the research, it was felt that were this to be given without the involvement of the department, then the research could be jeopardised (Ball 1983 p85). I did not wish for involvement in the study to be imposed on any participant. Even if at a later date a teacher had chosen not to become formally involved, the fact that I was even there, could understandably have provoked an adverse reaction which would certainly not have been my intention. I therefore initiated the access procedure by contacting heads of department in an informal manner to explain my research intentions and request the involvement of their particular school. A positive response was subsequently followed up with a letter to head teachers (a procedure which was explained in the initial telephone call) to formally request the involvement of their schools (Appendix A). Where the response was in the affirmative I then contacted the heads of department again to arrange times to visit the school.

Once I had gained access to the schools, in all but one, the Head of Department invited me to observe their lessons prior to 'giving' me access to those of other teachers. My reservation at the time was that I felt that although each teacher gave permission for me to become involved in their lesson, there were certain instances where they may have felt professionally and, or personally obliged to do so. One probationary teacher in particular appeared very nervous about my presence. In the first lesson that I observed her, I assured her that I would not take any notes during the class (something that did not always happen in any case). During her lesson I also sought to ensure that my main visual focus where possible was always on the children in order to minimise what may

have been a 'threat' of sustained direct eye contact. Following the lesson I wished to further assure her of my intentions and spoke at some length with her about what had gone on in terms of the behaviour of the children. This served to positively mould our relationship by allaying the reservations that she had understandably held.

In the majority of cases, I was received very well by teachers, who seemed happy to involve me in their environment. Where this was not immediately the case, situations were soon positively resolved, as above. However, there was one instance where I seemed unable to convince the Head of Department that I was not forming any kind of evaluative assessment of the teaching that was going on. Although I repeatedly attempted to reiterate the purpose of the study, this particular teacher always asked me what I had 'thought' of the lesson; this was rarely a general enquiry but was demanding assessment of the class. This was a situation that I found very awkward since it gave me the sense of almost being intrusive and akin to forming part of some kind of inspectorate. Additionally it was also subsequently likely to distort some of the actions of the teacher and, by implication, those of the children that I was observing.

Nevertheless, this proved to be a good exercise in defining roles and relationships and I learnt that in practice, there might have been some ambiguity in my approach. I had believed that as a Head of Department, this teacher would not find my presence threatening in any sense; I perceived myself as privileged to be allowed into any lesson and certainly saw my relationship with any teacher having the balance of power resting firmly with them. As a result, with this teacher I had not been hesitant to take notes during the lesson. In hindsight, it is clear that I had underestimated the effect of having an 'outsider' invade what is so often a controlled environment for the teacher, particularly if that outsider is in possession of 'notebook and pen' with all the connotations that may have. Whilst I still varied my approach according to how I perceived the individual personality of the teacher, I did ensure that I emphasised my subordinate position on entry into any new field and did not prejudge individuals with regard to the professional position they held. Whilst in so doing I ran the risk of appearing nervous or reticent, this at least minimised the perceived threat that I posed to the teacher. Children at this stage were not formally involved in giving me 'access', although inevitably they could choose whether they would engage in conversation, and how that conversation might evolve.

The schools were located in two counties on the south coast of England, two from each authority. The study involved one single-sex school, with the rest being co-educational with mixed-sex physical education. Initiating the research in the four schools served as a familiarisation process with the research field. Here, the research field would extend beyond the immediate 'school' or 'class' situation in two dimensions. The first of these would be to attain broad familiarisation with education at this level: to 'look' at the nature of the schooling process in terms of policy, staff relations and pedagogical approach. The second was to ascertain the general nature of relationship

patterns between children, teachers and peers, and gain an understanding, in particular, of the language used by children. The range of observation may be represented in these two dimensions as broad ranging, but focussing on the formalities in the structure of the learning environment. This involved considering general policy, the actuality of which would be subject to the reinterpretation and 're'presentation of 'the school', and inter-personal relationships. The research here is akin to what Adler and Adler (1994) refer to as 'dramaturgical sociology' where focus is upon the order of interaction. Observation, here, formed the primary research method, chosen for being the least intrusive means and therefore least likely to interfere with the field concerned.

The process, here, incorporated researching the formal and informal environment; those aspects of the physical environment directly associated with the structured physical education lesson and those that took place incidentally but in relation to the lesson. Additionally, there is a purposive location wherein occurrences are directly related to the learning intention expounded by the teacher. This involved observing activities within the class and immediately preceding and following it, adding a further dimension to the research by becoming sensitised to the broader ethos of the department and school. Observations were also carried out in extra-curricular, structured and unstructured activities. These took place in various pockets of what Ball (1983) would term 'institutional time', within those physical areas of the school that may have been deemed as pertaining to the physical education environment. Observation also took place informally outside the immediate physical education environment. Attention was paid to the 'naturally' occurring structures of groups in free areas at break times.

Therefore, early on, a process of viewing and absorbing the whole environment as experienced by the children was followed, as much into my sub-conscious as consciousness, so that they might form the instinctive basis of ensuing data collection and selection, and more particularly help take 'creative' steps towards theory development. Whilst traditional paradigms of research would demand that the focus of attention for observation be predetermined, it was not appropriate to adopt such an approach with this discovery-oriented study. The nature of this research necessarily demanded that flexibility be the key to watching the field. It is arguable that immediately on introducing concepts such as 'flexibility' in the justification of approaches, lack of structure and purpose are hinted at. In this sense, however, it is more purposively intended to reflect the nature of the research 'question'. Pinpointing certain aspects of experience at this stage would necessarily preclude observations of certain incidents. Since the core factors determining the meaning of experience to the child had yet to be determined, a flexible, varied approach was required.

The key consideration was how to genuinely achieve a simultaneous sense of flexibility and purpose. The first consideration to make was the effect my presence might have upon the very field I was studying. The actual behaviour of the researcher is probably the most important factor in determining the degree of trust that can be developed, and the amount of help the children are

prepared to offer (Pollard 1987 p105). Strategies to minimise the impact that I had upon events necessarily varied, since the effect of my action/inaction would be interpreted differently according to the particular school and class I was visiting. These strategies did not always mean that I sought to minimise my presence. Although in the initial phase of the research I did aim to largely blend into the background, sometimes this was not appropriate. In particular with the case study school, as will be discussed, becoming part of what was going on ironically became a more effective way of limiting the effect that I had on the behaviour of children.

Explaining how different strategies were arrived at becomes a complexity of 'cause and effect' in itself. There is a certain difficulty in isolating processes when developing a management strategy from observational research itself, and essentially, the two are inextricably related. Arriving at what I believed to be the most appropriate means of minimising my 'presence' meant listening, watching and responding to cues. I was seeking what Schatzman and Strauss (1979 p59) refer to as a 'passive presence'. In any 'pure' sense this would mean avoiding entering into interaction with subjects; however, all avoidance would arouse suspicion and imply mistrust; passivity may be interpreted as impassivity. Therefore, interaction was kept to a minimum acceptable level entailing limiting it to facial expression and body language, rather than engaging in direct conversation; visual rather than verbal cues of interest and empathy were used to ease 'relationships'.

This phase of research took place in two stages; these stages did not necessarily occur in sequence in particular schools, but were moved between as required. The first stage involved listening and watching for cues of significant phenomena affecting experience; the second, watching and listening to grasp appropriate means of interpreting these phenomena. It was necessary to become sensitised to not only what was important, but also the way in which factors attained their significance and the type of language that children used to identify and express their meaning.

Whilst this approach would generally prove appropriate, as far as observing children at work in the schools was concerned, difficulties arose in maintaining a non-intrusive presence in the perceptions of some of the teachers involved. The intention was not to focus upon teacher behaviours 'per se': however, I found that on occasion there existed a belief that I was formulating some kind of assessment of professional conduct. It is impossible to ascertain the effect that this had upon teacher behaviour or indeed on the nature of the access that they chose to give me to their class, department or selves. It can only be assumed that some impact was made albeit unintentional on the part of the researcher.

Following initial visits to these schools it was appropriate, in a number of them at least, to begin to extend the level of interaction with children. The purpose of extending interaction to involve conversation was to develop understanding of the way children ascribe meaning to their

experiences: effectively to provide a deepening of information that might be obtained in 'stage two'.

In terms of heightening my sensitivity to the children's experiences, I became aware that I was alerted to incidents to which I could draw parallels with my own experience. In this instance, observations would 'bring back childhood memories not only to better understand the child but also to deepen our own view of things' (Smith 1992 pp69-71). In particular, I found myself empathising with the child's responses to the teacher. Like Beynon (1983) seeing the broader picture of the child's experience from a position where I was not on one 'side' or the other meant that I could perceive certain behaviours that would perhaps have been classed as 'undesirable', as an antidote to pedagogic tedium.

This understanding subsequently provided an 'inroad' to casualised 'conversation' or rather brief verbal interchange with some of the children, further hinting at the meaning behind their action. This interaction took me forward 'a stage' in an attempt to avoid taking the empathy that I had developed, and then applying my interpretation as an adult which would be derived from long-term recollection in combination with 'current' perspectives. Whilst the initial 'identification' with the 'parallels' I drew had been advantageous, it could serve only as a starting point if it were not to mediate experience too strongly. My purpose was not simply to articulate my memories of childhood superimposed on those children I was now observing; I needed to identify aspects of experience that perhaps even the children themselves would not yet theorise over.

To ensure that I became familiar with as much of the physical education 'context' as possible, it was necessary to vary the specific 'field' of study. Observations took place in a variety of locations. However, whilst geographically fixed, these 'locations' were in any real sense 'variable' according to their use. In discussing 'where' this research took place it is necessary to combine physical with temporal location in terms of usage of facilities. Most obviously a playing field would be a place of formal education during lesson time, of formalised recreation during extra-curricular activities and informal recreation where children were involved in 'free' activity at any other time. The meaning of 'location' therefore is dependent upon the nature of the activity taking place within it.

Additionally, the meaning of location would vary according to the school; for some schools the PE office was relatively accessible to children, in others it was wholly inaccessible remaining a domain for teachers only. In others accessibility was dependent upon the age of the child; in some cases this being formalised and in others implicitly enforced (or reinforced) by the children themselves. Therefore observations took place in central locations, transitive locations and non-related locations.

## *Phase Two (September 1998- June 1999)*

### *Creating a 'case study'*

The purpose of this second phase was to focus on one school to establish in-depth understanding. From this point then, children were involved in a far more direct and personal level; I no longer wished to restrict my enquiries to a general basis, but gain a greater insight into the functional basis of children's involvement in physical education.

Whilst in the first stage permission had been sought from gatekeepers to the lessons, the more 'invasive' nature of the study now meant that written permission from guardians of children who were to become involved needed to be obtained in the form of a 'return slip' (Appendix B). All children directly involved in the research from this point would have firstly demonstrated an interest in becoming involved, received a letter from me (Appendix C) before discussing the nature of their involvement and then obtained permission from a parent/guardian to confirm their participation.

As I shall discuss later in this section, teachers provided me with initial direction as to which children might be interesting to involve in my work. They knew the methods that I wished to employ, and also that I sought to involve children representing a range of abilities and potential attitudes towards the subject. In order to maintain interest and contribute to the relationship building process between the children and me, numbers were kept deliberately small.

Initially, children from years 8 (N=6) and 11 (N=8) were involved in diary keeping and group discussion. Year 7 children, who also had physical education lessons on the days I visited, were not included in the autumn term. I felt that asking them to become involved on entry to a new school might have meant they felt obliged to participate. Additionally, at this point they would not have had time to establish an understanding of the subject as it was presented at this key stage. Therefore, children from year 7 (N=12) were introduced to the research in an active capacity in the second term. However, I do acknowledge that having established particular relationships with teachers, certain children may actually have felt under greater pressure to participate than they would have at the start of the year.

What the involvement of children at this stage of their schooling had in addition to that of others, was that an entirely fresh assessment of the transition from primary to secondary school physical education could be made. Since the children's diaries were to be student led, in terms of what was and was not included I made the decision to interview some of the year 7 children at the end of their second term (Appendix D). Here, I discussed their perceptions of physical education generally, and sought to gain a specific insight into their comparisons of the subject at primary and secondary school.



The nature and purposes of the research were explained to children and then letters were given to them to pass on directly to their parent/guardian. Since I wished participation to take place on a wholly voluntary basis, in this way there was some assurance that the child would not pass on the letter were they to have second thoughts regarding their own involvement. Two children, one from year 8 and one from year 7 and both boys, chose to exercise this prerogative. This process was followed wherever children were to become involved in the research on what may be termed a 'personal' level.

Because I wished to be as 'true' to experience as possible, at this point the concept of taking the lead from the 'field' as I had done in stage one continued. However, the concept was enhanced as here, I wanted all direction to be indicated, in the first instance, by the children themselves. Consequently, I sought to use a method that at least initially, children would have greatest control over. Within education, as I have argued, children have freedoms within certain parameters. 'Visible' parameters are generally set by restrictions imposed by the task in hand, time allocation, teacher action and evaluation, and peer group action and interaction. I wished to minimise restrictions that pertain to the research context to allow as great a degree of free expression as possible. I, therefore, chose to ask children to keep 'PE diaries' in which they would record the salient points of the PE lesson. As writing took place in their own time, and as it exists as an individual activity, children had a large degree of control over their contribution to the research. They chose what and when to write, and experienced no external interference from me, as researcher, whilst doing so.

Although the children were encouraged to write in-depth accounts as far as possible, incorporating both 'facts' about what went on, and their own responses, no further specification as to what was required was made. This approach met my requirements most closely by providing a means that did not involve the input of teachers, could afford flexibility in approach, take place in isolation at a pace chosen by the child, and be appreciated but not evaluated. One problem that I wished to address, was the need for me to dissociate the concept of 'writing' with school 'work'. To this end, hard-backed books were chosen by the children from a range of colours on offer to differentiate from exercise books used in school. This had the added benefit of making the children, especially the younger ones, feel 'special' in their contribution to the study. Because language was to be used as a means of gaining initial access to the internalisation of experience, children were encouraged to write informally and assured that no 'assessment' of their work in an academic sense would take place.

I was particularly sensitive to the association that children make between 'writing' and 'work' (Gannaway 1976 p64). Indeed, often within my research findings, a liking for physical education emanated from the fact that it did not involve writing and therefore did not constitute work. Therefore, my approach here was designed to disassociate the research from school study. The fact

that diaries were chosen by the children, written in personalised language outside of the classroom context and not graded were all means by which I sought to achieve this.

The extant concerns identified by the children subsequently formed the basis of informal group discussions designed to access the meaning behind various statements. Whilst, often meanings were fairly explicit, in certain cases I needed children to expand on what they had said. Conversely, the diaries and information from observations would also provide a means of interpreting what was said in group interviews since, as Garfinkel has illustrated, language in its raw sense sometimes cannot be understood (Garfinkel 1967 pp39,40). This is largely because in conversation, individuals, and in particular individuals who know each other well, as some of the children did, will take certain meanings for granted that may not be self-evident to the researcher.

In order to maintain this element of children's contribution, it was my responsibility to ensure that attending the research project was and remained, an attractive proposition to them. The selection procedure was explained to the children in terms of them having been specifically chosen by the PE teachers for the contribution they thought they could make to the process. This was designed to make the children aware that they had a special contribution to make. Although genuinely the case, however, there were at least some initial suspicions regarding the way certain children viewed their inclusion, particularly from those who knew they were not considered 'good' at physical education. Nevertheless, as time progressed, it became clear to the children that their contributions were genuinely confidential and that I was not going to identify the sources of any information. Continued participation was also facilitated by the 'club' atmosphere generated at our meetings through the sharing of doughnuts and soft drinks.

The concept of writing a diary that was confidential as far as anyone's access apart from my own was concerned, incited a certain degree of excitement from some of the students. In particular for years 7 and 8 this enhanced the feeling that I was seeking to create for the children a sense of belonging to a special group. As one girl wrote in the front page of her book:

*This belongs to Sotnas ab Eilan – for club – totally PRIVATE  
(Nicky, year 7)*

The diaries were used to gain initial access to the prioritisation of experience within NCPE for children and then combined with group interviews to expound on particular issues in order to educe the meaning behind language and action.

An additional factor offered by the keeping of diaries lay in the opportunity they provided for use of 'metanarratives' for emphasis. Although not directed to, some of the children used capital letters, highlighting pens and doodles to draw attention to certain points. This provided a projective means of understanding perception (Pridmore and Bendelow 1995).

Although I wished to gain as close an insight to the experiences of children as possible, incorporating their unexpurgated views, there was a degree of selection necessary in order to make the project manageable. This may have skewed results, but is an inevitable part of the research process. Starting out with a new school and with a new approach, at this stage, I became vulnerable to the sensibilities of the PE teachers themselves. I wanted to have a range of children involved in the study in terms of 'ability' in the subject area. I needed them to be able to keep a diary, and turn up to group discussions once every two weeks. I feel that there is a certain irony in my wishing to involve those with a range of abilities since it implies an assumption that this would also provide me with a range of attitudes towards PE. In a sense, this embodies the very prejudices that I am suggesting dictate research too directly within this field. However, my main starting point had, to a certain extent, be guided by 'prejudice', and whilst I acknowledge the shortcomings of this mediation, feel that it was a pragmatic means of decision-making at this stage.

Ostensibly the requirements of my chosen approach may have excluded certain groups of children perhaps considered less 'academic' than others. However, since it was my intention to gain an understanding of the language used by 'children' I did not wish for the choice to be made on any academic basis; I was not looking for the 'good informant', associated with traditional approaches to research. Even where the children were only able to make one sentence contributions to each entry, this could be as valuable as the multiple paragraph statements made by others. The volume of writing that a child could 'produce' within a given time would naturally vary with each child, according to application, as well as ability, and therefore no specific parameters as regards 'length' were set. It was also necessary to remain sensitive to other demands of the curriculum that would inevitably impact on the 'quality' of entry that the children would make. Ultimately I was aware that the 'commitment' that children might show towards keeping a PE diary would quite understandably be variable.

A key point here was that children were involved in this research on a voluntary basis, within their own time. Group interviews took place at break and lunch times. Inevitably there were a number of conflicts that the child must have had to address in order to participate in this research, and the motivation of individuals to participate would have ensued, following resolution of these conflicts. In practice the nature of this 'resolution' was variable for individual children and within the group. For some children, those areas that competed for their attention were of greater importance to them than participating in the project. For others, there were occasions on which other activities had a greater draw, either for school work or social reasons. Either way, combined with natural absences from school this meant that the group structure would be variable.

In order to sustain long term involvement, however, children inevitably needed to see my commitment to them throughout. This situation was arrived at through a trust building process.

Certain children appeared to either be testing me regarding my loyalty to them or showing instant trust in my approach (possibly the less likely scenario), by directly criticising teaching staff in their first entry:

*Mr Mitchell makes smarmy comments, this kind of makes me feel paranoid about how I'm carrying out the task on the equipment  
(Susan, year 11, diary entry 1<sup>st</sup> October 1998)*

*Please teach Miss Harrison the rules of hockey  
(Andrew, year 8, diary entry 24<sup>th</sup> September 1998)*

My incorporation of criticisms in a 'neutral', depersonalised sense within the group discussions (no teachers were named) meant that the children recognised me to be considering their perspectives and giving them serious attention. The teacher's non-reaction no doubt assured them that their thoughts had not been disclosed outside of our relationship.

Children had, however, also expressed a concern that the PE teachers might try to look at their entries. Whilst for years 7 and 8 there were never any doubts voiced, for the older children there appeared to be some concerns. Although there should have been no instance in which the teachers would have been able to do this, and in practice I trusted their professionalism not to do so, I suggested that the children might like to choose a pseudonym to write with. In practice this appeared also to enhance the children's feeling of belonging to a specialist group of 'informants', and some responded with particular relish by thinking of creative, even potentially 'offensive' names. Among those developed some students rearranged their own names whilst other (year 11) students became 'Ivor Biggin' and 'Seamore Butt'. This may have been a further 'test' of my response, and served as an opportunity to share in the student's humour, not reacting as a teacher would perhaps have had to. This again helped disassociate me from a teacher role and bring me closer to the children.

Interviews here were informal, lasting approximately 15 minutes each and taking place once every two weeks over one term, each group attending six times. Each child was seen on a small group basis at either break or lunch times at which point I would also collect diaries to read before returning them later in the day. Prior to returning them I would write a short 'non-evaluative' comment in each to confirm that they had been read and appreciated.

Initial 'interviews' took the apparent form of unstructured discourse but were purposeful in the way they were used to establish relationships with the children involved, making them aware that I was interested in what they had to say and in reading what they had written. As specific categories emerged from diaries and were reinforced by observations, the purpose became more overt and clearly related to those aspects of physical education that the children deemed significant in affecting their experience.

Whilst I had certain reservations regarding the sustained motivation of children to keep a diary, my greatest hope was that they could be analysed as dialectical evidence; my smallest hope was that at the very least they would provide insight into the key factors influencing experience of PE. In practice, the 'quality' of evidence that I received was perhaps predictably variable, with some students writing extensively and thoughtfully, some briefly but intently, and others providing what might be termed the 'bare bones' of representation. Whichever way, the diaries provided valuable inroads into the essential perceptions of experiences by the children.

The involvement of students did not, however, remain static. Some students were attracted to the project and requested involvement (N=3), perhaps because of the 'club' atmosphere the children and I had created together. I wanted to encourage this natural development of sample group as this not only gave new perspectives from which to develop and against which to test theory, but moved away from the more formal structure that I had used to direct my sampling.

Whilst there were children who became involved in the research, there were also those who withdrew, meaning that the sample groups in themselves were somewhat dynamic. Certain children chose to withdraw in an entire or partial sense: one year 7 student withdrew from the study after being involved in the research for two weeks, and one year 7 student left the school after having been involved for six weeks. No children from year 8 withdrew at all. In terms of the maintenance of a partial participation, one year 11 boy, after one group 'interview', chose to continue with diary keeping but not attend discussion sessions due to other commitments. Diaries were kept for one full term for all students.

As the school worked to a two-week timetable, and I was only able to attend the school once a week, group interviews took place once every two weeks. Initially, this was an arrangement made for logistical purposes, but as time progressed I found that the fortnightly basis of contact retained a sense of our meetings being 'special occasions'. It also avoided problems of boredom as identified by Beynon (1983, 1985) and gave a more 'natural' pace for the collection of data (Pollard 1987). Further, it meant that conflict with other activities that the children may have wished to take part in during their free time was limited. It also gave the children time to reflect on discussions that we had had, often meaning they would later clarify or develop particular issues that had arisen.

In an effort to limit associations with schoolwork, group discussions took place in a viewing gallery; an area of the sports hall not associated with a teaching environment. Seating arrangements were determined by the children who retained the option to move around, and/or relocate, during discussions without reprimand. This meant that the children retained control of certain aspects of the discursive surroundings and meant that my only direction was to bring talk back to the main issues of my concern (once they had been established by the children), where these were strayed

from too greatly. Although I had initially considered attempting to involve more children by creating an after-school discussion time, I had some reservations regarding the ability to motivate children to remain after school. In particular I was concerned that there may have been some kind of association with punishment (the school had an after-school detention system) which could distort data. The Head of Department shared my concerns and the decision was made to keep the study within the official school day.

Additionally, so that the children did not feel that I was 'assessing' them in any way, I made notes following, and not during, group sessions. Initially, I decided to tape record discussion here. However, in the informal situation with a certain amount of background noise coming from activities taking place in the main hall, this meant that interference was such that some key comments made did not necessarily come across well in transcripts. Since I found myself adding notes to the transcript of the first meetings, I felt it to be more efficient simply to take notes immediately following each session. I was also a little concerned that children might agree to sessions being tape recorded because of peer pressure rather than personal satisfaction with this approach.

A further issue to be addressed was for how long to involve the children in diary-keeping. The answer to this issue inevitably rested on the rapprochement of two factors: firstly the time it would take for me to saturate that source of information and secondly, and more significantly, for how long the motivation of the children to participate in this way might be maintained. In practice, patterns of contribution to the diaries tended to emerge and the children eventually found little that was 'new' to say. At this point, dependent upon the student, contributions to the diaries tended to become shorter or repetitive which I took as an indication that I had obtained the information that I would be likely to derive from this means. One child, Andrew, year 8, who had made comprehensive entries compared to his immediate peer group, even noted within his work that he had identified this:

*As the year has progressed the lessons have become more and more alike so I have decided to just note down anything that I agree or disagree with (sic)  
(Andrew, year 8, diary entry, 15th October 1998)*

Nevertheless, since children did not all arrive at this point simultaneously, they continued to work with me for a full term. This enabled me to ensure categories were fully saturated, and gave the children a 'target' for the completion of their activity.

Throughout this second phase, I paid particular attention to talking informally to the children who were keeping diaries, outside of the interview situation. This was not designed to exclude other children from being included as part of this study but to familiarise ourselves with one another and sensitise myself to the nature of the child. During my period of familiarisation I had hoped to

establish that I was interested in getting to know the students as individuals and simultaneously enhance my own theoretical sensitivity.

Therefore, in this process, I progressed further from my initial position of passivity and began to more actively engage myself in the lesson. The exchanges that I shared with children needed to occur in a natural setting and I was therefore faced with the dilemma of 'who' to present myself as when actively involved in the situation.

Attention was paid to my physical presentation wherein I sought to lessen the 'distance' between myself and the children. My personal presentation provided children with symbols through which they would interpret 'me': to determine who I 'was' and what my intentions were. It was my aim to present a persona with whom the children might identify, that was conducive to the physical education environment, but would not be readily associated with the formal learning environment.

I also ensured that whilst children discussed issues of concern to them in group interviews, that I overtly empathised with that 'predicament' and showed interest in what they had to say. I also answered personal questions that were asked about my background. Had any questions been posed which I was not happy to answer, I should have explained why. Fortunately I was not asked any with which I felt uncomfortable, so was able to comply with their requests. The children had a natural curiosity about who I was, and I was happy to satisfy this, simultaneously assuaging their fears and cementing our relationship. This approach was successful as a strong element of trust was established, indicated by the children's tendency to share personal thought with me through their diaries and in one to one exchange.

Knowing the children on an increasingly personal level inevitably meant that this affected my interpretation of their activities. This highlighted the meanings behind action, and I found myself responding covertly to my observations on a far more emotional level. This empathy also helped me interpret what Thomas (1998 p145) has termed 'fugitive data' wherein for example a 'yes' means 'no'. Children's behaviour aroused a far more significant response as time progressed, aiding theoretical development.

Perhaps because of what might be termed the open and relaxed relationship that I had with the children involved in diary-keeping, I found that other children would often quite naturally 'chat' to me about what they were doing. Arguably there were 'key' individuals involved directly in my work that meant certain others were prepared to trust their judgement and accept me.

This is not to say, however, that I could become fully integrated. Apart from issues of adult status and associated connotations, being accepted by some children may have necessarily meant that others were more suspicious of me. This is a rather intangible issue, which is difficult to resolve.

Suffice here to acknowledge that this may have been the case and the research may have been subsequently affected.

Ball (1985) identifies that of one the more significant decisions to be made when conducting educational research is whether or not to teach. When I initially approached the research field I felt strongly that becoming involved in any activity that could be construed as 'teaching' would be detrimental to my research. In doing so I could have distorted both the educational environment and the children's and teachers' perceptions of who I was. This approach was conducive to the purposes of the research in the first phase of the study where, as discussed, I largely adopted the role of passive participant. However, in this second phase, the time I spent with children was far greater. I became a familiar face in physical education lessons and needed to have something more than an observational role to play. Almost immediately children would talk to me as I sat 'on the sideline', curious as to whom I was and what I was doing there. This familiarity was heightened as over time certain children would actively seek advice on the work that they were doing. Initially, I attempted to redirect their attention to the main teacher of the session, but increasingly I felt that this was actually likely to be counter-productive, and presented me in a kind of voyeuristic fashion. I therefore became more actively involved in what might be termed a version of teaching assistant, where I would support children as they worked.

At the same time as following this role, I was careful not to undermine the teacher's authority, or present myself as having any kind of control over the direction of the lesson. I agree with Smith (1992) in that 'The decision to observe children's activity creates a situation in which one is implicated no matter what one decides to do in specific instances' (p67) and therefore, the role I played needed to be the least controversial possible. The children seemed far happier with me functioning in this way, as it was far more conducive to their perceptions of the role of an 'adult'.

My concern here was inevitably not confined to the children involved in the lesson, but the way in which the teacher felt about my handling of the research. My increased involvement in the lesson was a gradual process, but I did confirm that this did not cause offence to the teachers concerned. As transpired, the teachers had in fact anticipated that I would become more directly involved with the children earlier and they viewed the ability to do so as a positive attribute in the realm of educational research. Following this positive response there were also occasions on which I would step in and start a class activity in certain instances where there may have been unforeseen staff absences or delays. This was a means of helping out, albeit in a very small way, but which meant that I could contribute a little to the work that the staff were doing, as a way of showing my appreciation for the support they had given me.

This second phase of the research was concluded by interviews with year 7 children as briefly discussed at the beginning of this sub-section. These interviews took place on a normal visit day,



and one special visit day which was facilitated by the unusual lack of synchronisation between the school holidays with my own. Interviews took place in a specifically allocated interview room where full privacy could be assured. Whilst there was a danger that this would over-formalise the interview environment, the personal relationships already established with the children overcame this potential hurdle, and a relaxed atmosphere conducive to open discussion could still be established. The rooms were not associated with teaching, and therefore were removed from connotations with 'lessons'.

Students were encouraged to see me on an individual or pair basis and most came with a friend of their choice, who had also been involved in diary-keeping.

This was a point at which I also changed my means of recording the interviews. As an isolated environment had been found in which to conduct interviews in a practical sense, this facilitated the use of a tape recorder, since this would present the most accurate means of recording all dialogue. As this would have been the first time that I had used a tape recording device, some consideration needed to be given as to how this would be introduced. Firstly an unobtrusive dictation machine was chosen and children's verbal permission to record the interview in this way was obtained.

I then considered it appropriate for the children to be given the opportunity to 'check out' the device. I allowed them to examine the machine in the moments prior to our interview proper as I ostensibly prepared my work, and answered questions about it. This meant that the children felt that they could be in control of what went on; having heard their voices as they had recorded them, the machine appeared far less 'threatening'. Additionally, I believe that the feeling of being in control of recording instruments inevitably gave the children a sense of status within the interview situation as a whole, as did the very fact that I considered what they had to say as important enough to record. This was the first set of interviews that I had recorded in this manner.

Although there are opposing perspectives as to whether interviews should be transcribed by researchers themselves, I argue to the contrary. In viewing a ready-transcribed text, often the meaning behind what was said is lost since intonation and body language cannot be described in that context. By transcribing the tapes myself I would re-live those interviews, as they stimulated visualisation of the situation and 'placed' me back in that environment. It also stimulated notation of supplementary information that could be made alongside the main transcripts (Appendix D). This for me was a significant stage in the processing of data as it served to verify my interpretation of what had occurred. This pattern was maintained in recording of all subsequent interviews.

### ***Phase Three (September 1999)***

#### ***Further selection - sociometric testing***

The second phase of research suggested that the nature of experience is, to a great extent, dependent upon the interpersonal relationships of children: the 'micro-power' relations that exist

within peer groups. In order to investigate the dynamics of interaction (and, indeed, apparent non-interaction) principles of sociometric techniques were employed.

A standard questionnaire format, as described in Northway and Weld (1966) and Northway (1967), was used, and results tabulated on a sociometric matrix (Northway and Weld 1966 p20). Herein results are cross-referenced to indicate patterns of choice, and identify partially and fully reciprocated choices (Appendices F-I). Details of how this is structured and interpreted are given in the introduction to appendices F-I.

Children (N=78) completed two simple question sheets (Appendix E). Children in years 9 (N=40), 10 (N=25) and 11 (N=13) took part in this part of the research. On the first sheet, they identified whom they would wish to work and not work with in physical education in a pair/small group/team situation. They were also asked the same question as regarding the social situations of spending time with people at break, sitting next to on a coach trip and sharing a tutor group. This was designed to disclose any differentiation between potential friendship and work groups. However, in practice the majority of children made similar, or identical choices in each. Children chose from the members of their physical education class, and were invited to make three prioritised choices in each category, although they were not required to necessarily do so.

The administration of sociometric questionnaires, unlike all other aspects of the research that took the child's time, was conducted in the PE lesson itself. In this case with year 9 and 10 pupils the teacher directed children to me whilst they were awaiting their turn in game and I explained the basic purposes of the questionnaire before they completed it. Children were encouraged to find some personal space at the side of the sports hall and not to allow any other children to see what they had written. With the year 11 pupils, as they were a relatively small group, the teacher allowed me to work with them to complete the questionnaire en masse at the beginning of the lesson. Here the students again found their own space and kept information confidential. In discussion with the teaching staff it was felt that written permission for this stage of the research did not need to be obtained from parents, and therefore, the consent of the Head of Department was considered sufficient.

Initially, it was my intention to identify significant children within the group, in what may simplistically be termed 'negative' and 'positive' senses. However, once the tests had been completed and processed using a two-tailed t-test, such an approach was rejected. A large proportion of the group was found to have been chosen a significant number of times, either positively or negatively, or both. Typically, over half of the children appeared in one or other category. Where children appeared to be chosen much more frequently/infrequently than others, they were not always willing to become involved more specifically in any further study. In practice, the information obtained from the sociometric tests was used to inform later interviews

through their identification of the significant others from the same group that the specific child viewed 'positively' and 'negatively'.

#### ***Phase Four (October 1999-December 1999)***

##### ***Understanding relationships***

Following the use of sociometric tests specific children were invited to become more involved in the next stage of the research (see appendix J for interview issues and K for transcripts).

Disappointingly, there were some children whom I specifically wished to become involved but who did not wish to do so. This I feel is an inevitable limitation of this research, since it may be that those for whom physical education might be a particularly difficult experience are perhaps less likely to wish to become involved in discussing it. Conversely, however, there were also children who 'volunteered' themselves, curious as to why they had not yet been interviewed. Again though, I must recognise this as a limitation since those involved in this way may have had a particularly positive perspective on the subject. The desire here was quite basically one of wishing to be involved. This final period of interviews was used to identify the nature of influence that positively and negatively significant peers could have on the behavioural and emotional responses of the child.

In this phase of the research, the main 'obstacle' I feel was the limited personal interaction that I had with the students. Although I observed their lessons and they 'knew' who I was, I did not have the same kind of interpersonal relationship that I had enjoyed with those children who had kept a diary for me. This had several implications, the most significant of which was the need to be particularly sensitive to what may have been the concerns of the child in this interview situation. Where children showed any sign of discomfort, I would cease my line of questioning. Such instances, arose at an earlier stage of interaction than they might have done so had I had more time to establish my relationship with the children.

This lack of foundation was also reflected in the commitment children showed in actually attending scheduled interviews since there were five students who did not turn up at our allocated time. This presented me with the dilemma of whether to pursue them for a further appointment. Of paramount consideration, was the fact that I did not wish to place any child in the difficult position of having to 'explain' why they did not come to see me as arranged. However, had it simply been an oversight on their part at the time, or an obstacle that had arisen unexpectedly, I felt it would be inappropriate for me not to mention the issue to them at all. To ignore their non-attendance would perhaps give them the message that it was not really that important in the first place and would potentially devalue the contribution made by others. I therefore decided to raise the subject with those children who failed to attend in an informal manner whilst seeking to place no pressure on them to arrange an alternative time to 'come for a chat'.

One year 10 boy had an unforeseen incident that kept him from attending and on his suggestion we rearranged our interview time; two year 11 students had 'forgotten' because of the mock exams they were currently involved with. I took the latter to imply that for the students their exams were ultimately their main concern and felt it would have been unfair for me to see them at such a time. One other year 10 boy did not attend due to forgetting and then did not appear on our second arranged meeting, as did one year 9 and two year 11 girls. I therefore interpreted this also as a desire to not be involved in the research even though the student offered to come another time. Ultimately, 22 children were interviewed here (year 9 N=13, year 10 N=5, year 11 N=4).

### ***Supplementary Interviewing (March 2000 – April 2000)***

Once the essential body of the research had been conducted, I carried out semi-structured interviews with teachers on an individual basis (Appendix L). By this stage, Miss Merrett had left the school and been replaced by Miss Blackwood, who had attended the school as a trainee teacher the year before. Therefore, no interview was conducted with Miss Merrett. This work with teachers was designed to gain an understanding of their own aims and objectives within their work, although was open to any contribution that the teachers felt would be appropriate. The purpose here was to provide additional information towards understanding 'what' went on within physical education from a pedagogical perspective.

However, this was inevitably not the only contribution that was made by teachers. Inevitably subjects of observation, they also contributed more actively. Throughout the research teachers were effectively placed to act as 'strategic informants' (Strauss and Schatzman 1973 p87). I was frequently 'fed' certain information in an active attempt by teachers to convey the complexities of the tasks they face in a favourable light. At times, this also included information regarding the personal backgrounds of children, highlighting the difficulties that some children face in school. This was, in fact, vital information that although clearly proffered with vested interest, greatly helped in both my theoretical interpretation of situations and my own sensibilities towards children. I became aware of which children were fostered, which were 'statemented' and why, which lived with single parent families, which carried responsibilities for siblings, which came from a family who shared a single room.

Inevitably, however, this raises strong ethical issues of confidentiality of the child, although often children would give me this information themselves, where they were not aware of the knowledge I had been given of their personal situations. This could have been morally questionable. However, the information heightened my sensitivities and was certainly not designed to place either the child or myself in a difficult situation neither was it offered until my relationship with the staff had been firmly established. I therefore held the information confidentially, grateful for the understanding that it had given me.

What the above tendency alerted me to was that whilst teachers involved in my case study school appreciated the fact that I was attempting to gain the perspective of the child, their close involvement was inevitably seen as central to the children's experiences. Consequently I decided to formally interview the teachers involved so that they could have more formalised input into the study. This information was not used to directly develop theory but as supplementary detail of the broader educational basis of physical education within this school.

### **Non-Linear Processing of Data**

Although I have presented the data collection as a linear process with each phase guided by the preceding one, throughout each stage of the research, emergent theory was 'tested' against earlier data and developed or rejected accordingly in accordance with the process of grounding theory as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990). In the following chapter I shall expand on this concept, providing a rationale for my approach.

## CHAPTER SIX

### METHODOLOGY

Having discussed the practicalities of the research design in Chapter Five, I now seek to provide a rationale for my approach. Again, particular ethical issues arise which will be considered specifically in Chapter Seven. Essentially, the development of a research approach emanates from answering basic ontological and epistemological questions regarding firstly the nature of the subject matter and secondly how knowledge is constructed. I have already discussed the nature of 'experience' and how it might be formulated for the individual; in the next two chapters I shall address issues of paradigmatic and methodological approach.

The point of departure here, is to acknowledge that my personal beliefs are inextricably linked with the approach that I have taken to this study. As Sparkes (1992a p15) highlighted, it is misleading to argue that the research problem dictates methodology, since research strategies and techniques are never independent of philosophical issues. It is my contention that children should be more closely involved with the research process, and that experience is ultimately socially constructed through perception and meaning; even where an event is physical, it is translated into meaning. In particular, the subjective basis of perception means that my area of interest cannot be accessed through more conventional scientific 'measurable' means. I was therefore led to adopt an interpretive 'paradigm' throughout my research. Within my research, 'paradigm' refers to the metaphysical aspect of a research approach as:

*...a basic set of beliefs, a set of assumptions we are willing to make, which serve as touchstones in guiding our activities*  
*Guba and Lincoln (1989 p80)*

In practice, my research approach is paradigmatic in its entirety, since my justification for taking an interpretive stance is in itself based on certain beliefs and assumptions. This contrasts to 'paradigm' as it exists within 'science' as a set of 'moving parameters to legitimately set co-ordinates of fieldwork' that constitute 'professionalised knowledge' (Esland 1971). Paradigm here, I base in the concept of 'perspective': a particular way of viewing the research field, wherein the parameters are not fixed. Following my argument that reality is socially constructed, by implication I acknowledge that any research field will carry a different meaning for different researchers. Thus 'physical education' for the exercise physiologist will contrast with physical education for the psychologist, will contrast with physical education for the sociologist and so on. Further to this, it will carry differing meanings for individuals who are the subject of physical education. For me, physical education is symbolic interaction. My fundamental assumption is that 'objects', as discussed in Chapter Two, are defined according to the meaning that they have for us, and subsequently there can be no explicit 'right' or

'wrong' way of viewing the world. An understanding of physical education experience needs necessarily to be enconced in the meaning applied to the various aspects of the subject by the child.

The use of such an approach is relatively new within physical education; as I have already argued in Chapter Four, the nature of human relationships within the subject has been largely neglected. Where it has existed there has been a tendency not only within physical education, but within education as a whole 'to cleave to abstract rationalism' (Thomas 1998 p141) wherein children's behaviours are accounted for in, what I would term, an externalised analysis. Here, certain categories are applied to the children's perception rather than being defined by them.

What I feel is required to gain an understanding of the individual's experience, is a willingness to yield to the possibility that preconceptions within education may, in fact, be misconceptions. This is perhaps one reason why children have been so little involved in the research process since the researcher exposes their own beliefs to contention by actively including them. Interpretive studies which do seek to involve subjects more personally, are, however, open to the criticism that they entail a neglect of macro issues regarding the impact of societal organisation and values on the way individuals experience their lives by regarding individuals as wholly autonomous (Hargreaves 1980, Lutz 1986). However, as Hammersley (1980 p199) has argued:

*The situations actors face are assigned a considerable role in shaping their perspectives and thus their actions*  
Hammersley (1980 p199)

Thus I do not naively assert that 'man is free' but rather that, like Hargreaves (1986 p140), acknowledge the existence of physical constraints within which individuals strive to exercise degrees of freedom. This focus also provides access to the way macro issues are actually manifest for the individual. I use the term 'strive' not necessarily in the sense of 'struggle', but in the sense of working towards self-realisation and actualisation. However, the constraints will differ according to the individual. Within the physical education setting, one child may perceive the threat of detention for not fully complying with the teacher's requirements very differently to another. For one child the prospect of 'failure', for example, in attempting a new skill carries greater risk than for another. Additionally, the constraints of any particular situation are variable, and as I found to be particularly significant in this study, the 'framework' within which the child is functioning will be strongly influenced by other children present.

Wider cultural and ideological values provide a structure to the way in which individuals function. In other words they provide the context within which individuals act and interpretive studies take place. Interactive perspectives can provide an insight into how the individual internalises the meaning of

those constraints which are in place, as part of the process of someone else exercising power 'over' them.

Further to this, a preoccupation with the prioritisation of certain world views I feel is regressive, since educational research should be moving towards a synthesis of approaches. I would therefore agree with Hammersley that what an interactionist study actually offers is 'a promising basis for a 'rapprochement'' where you follow a particular approach, 'while at the same time recognising its deficiencies and the aid other traditions may offer in overcoming these' (Hammersley 1980 p198).

Just as there can be no absolute reality, there may be no absolute cause; again, different groups and individuals will cast different causality to the same phenomenon. The cause of malaria to a haematologist would be the introduction of plasmodia into the bloodstream, yet to a biologist it would be the existence of the mosquito (Guba and Lincoln 1989 p97); in other words, 'multiple truths' exist (Sparkes 1992a p33). Separately, we have one perspective, and realistically each perspective needs to be researched in isolation in order to incorporate sufficient depth. However, if we are prepared to combine all information we have an understanding of 'malaria'. Therefore, although I argued in Chapter Three, that critical studies, for example, have failed to adequately represent the child, I do not suggest that they do not make a valid contribution to what is represented as 'physical education'. Rather, I contend that there needs to be a preparedness to accept alternative paradigms in order to create a holistic picture. The limited research incorporating interactive approaches to physical education combined with the dearth of studies that also involved the child, means this area is sufficiently new to demand specific attention; this does not mean that over time, it should not be used in conjunction with, for example, critical approaches. What I seek to do is provide a child's perspective to complement the adult discourse normally incorporated into curriculum development.

When considering the methodological implications of interactive studies, Blumer (1969), began to highlight the possibility of breaking with 'tradition' and using research to 'cast' problems in theoretical form rather than 'testing' hypotheses popularised in scientific approaches to social study. Blumer suggested that social psychological studies should be explorative and analytical in nature, opening up to the possibilities of unanticipated reasoning with a preparedness to alter direction throughout the research, in the quest to develop theory.

The development of theory avoids problems of reproducing research in its own kind. Testing theory constrains research: it limits study to particular areas and either reinforces extant beliefs in particular professional fields, or illustrates what is not the case. As Guba and Lincoln (1989) state:



*...investigators 'find' facts that are consistent with the theories that they bring to bear...the scientist who approaches human 'subjects' with a particular set of questions of hypotheses may set the stage for certain observations but may thereby be prevented from pursuing others*  
Guba and Lincoln (1989 pp99, 100)

However, the development of theory is not without its own critics. Thomas suggests that the concept of 'discovering' theory within educational research is a misnomer since he says you are 'inventing' theory in the process of 'divining what someone else is meaning', because it is only what is possibly there (Thomas 1998 p144). Since I have already acknowledged the subjectivity of both meaning and causality, I answer by accepting such criticism, but argue that it is an inevitable limitation of all research. In fact, I suggest that Thomas himself implicitly acknowledges this, since he says that major inventions have been made from an atheoretical perspective by 'intelligent noticing' (Thomas 1998 p151). In practice, once 'intelligent noticing' has taken place, it is theorised to become a manifest phenomenon accessible to a broader audience.

The implications of interactive studies and their potential for theoretical development as set out by Blumer were given a more formalised basis in the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and later Strauss and Corbin (1990) in the form of 'grounded theory'. The particulars of this approach will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. What it offered was the opportunity for the development of theory from the evidence of actors directly involved in the field of study.

Not only did I wish to avoid the limitations of theoretically based research but I wanted to take an ideographic approach that embraced the possibilities of the unexpected. I also wanted to involve the research subjects directly in defining the research 'problem'. Investigating the realm of 'experience' has meant that this study could be of a truly investigative nature. I did not wish to enter the field with any *a priori* suppositions that required explanation, seeking to pursue an enquiry of a genuinely fundamental kind (Pivcevic 1970 p13). The study followed an interpretivist paradigm, designed to educe the meaning of experience giving perspective as internalised by the subject. It is my contention that children are agents in their own construction of experience and as such provide sound witness to that condition from which can be drawn a teleological account.

To address the nature of 'experience' in this manner would necessarily be an extensive process. My intention was not simply to 'access' the internal world of the child as regards physical education, but to understand the symbolic structure of the internalisation of experience. This meant that symbols were incorporated as explicit manifestations of internal processes, with existential conditions of these symbols giving rise to the interpretation of meaning; in other words meaning is deemed to be an internal component of behaviour (Hughes 1990 p95). Additionally, action is taken to be a considered

phenomenon wherein the individual controls their behaviour and responses are 'voluntaristic' (Sparkes 1992a p13).

Furthermore, in this instance, interpretation was not of isolated incidents and their associative significance for the child, but 'theoretical interpretation' in which the purposive relationship between indicators might be used to link with others suggesting patterns of meaning. In this sense, the individual's construction of reality was taken as an indicator of a broader social structure in which meaning is applied to experience.

As a broad research design this study, therefore needed to go through four major phases. Firstly, a familiarisation with the structure and nature of NCPE as exists within schools. This would be a process of sensitisation to the nuances of behaviours of children and staff within the more formalised educational framework, and the cultural attachments from which children direct their actions. The second phase involved 'homing in' on one particular case study school, becoming sensitive to the nature of its organisation and more particularly to begin to involve children actively in the research. The third phase involved a process of sociometric testing, initially used to indicate cross-group relationships but ultimately to identify positively and negatively 'significant' peers for individuals. The final phase used interviews to form a detailed analysis of the meaning making processes of children giving an account of internalised perspectives of experience.

However, although for pragmatic reasons, the research design is described in distinct phases, certain aspects that I shall nominate as 'supplementary research' continued and developed alongside the essential study paradigm. These involved active informal data collection on my part, derived from impromptu 'interview conversations' with children and teachers, and continued observation within formal and informal settings. Additionally this field of continual context assimilation included 'inadvertent' data collection, arising from unanticipated information proffered by participants in the research field, proposed actively or inadvertently. It was with such data collection that the greatest ethical conflict arose, but from which insightful provocation to theory development was derived.

As with much research and in particular with that designed to derive theory, the research was internally guided throughout the project; in other words, the study embodied a 'temporally developing character' (Strauss 1969 p25) rather similar to the way in which reality is itself defined and redefined. The social construction of reality discussed in Chapter One is highly significant even for the research process itself. The subject presents one perception which is then interpreted by the researcher, 're-presented' by the researcher before it is ultimately once again interpreted by the research 'field'. The suggestion from Holstein and Gubrium is that the process by which narrative is created features as significantly as what is said (Holstein and Gubrium 1995, 1997). The child will gauge their response according to their

developing perception of the researcher; conversely the researcher will engage in that same process. Thus the presentation of experience to the researcher will be subject to the perception that the subject has of them and their intentions. Therefore, it was important that, as discussed in Chapter Five, I be aware of the symbols I displayed to the children indicating to them 'who' and 'what' I was.

In order for any perspective to be transferred from one situation to another, it must be held in the individual's consciousness in a structured, modifiable form. The symbols, identified by the individual, that act as indicators of any particular circumstance need to be organised and categorised in order for them to carry meaning. If the individual cannot process a symbol in this way, then the symbol remains meaningless. Charon has stated that symbols have meaning to us only because they can be described through words (Charon 1985 pp43, 44). Language in human interaction has a dual function: firstly as its own symbolic system and secondly as an interpretive one through which the individual turns symbols into sense. Therefore, language represents one means of providing 'purchase' on perspectives.

*Culture can be a common code in which all participants will apply the same meaning to words- and express the same meaningful intention through the same words, the same behaviour patterns and the same works*  
Bordieu (1971 p190)

Since expression can only be made through the symbolic systems of culture (Bruner 1991 p20), and one of these most accessible systems is language, it is possible to exploit this as a means of gaining an understanding of the experience of children. If they are left to determine the flow of language in the reconstruction of experience, it should be possible to identify objects that are given significance and how these are categorised. Morse (1992) highlighted that linguistic expressions:

*...are the structural blocks of meaning for constructing systems of cultural knowledge*  
Morse (1992 p45)

It is through the symbols of language that the individual internally organises their own reality. It is language through which the typifications of objects are categorised, generalised, and ultimately expressed.

In order to access the child's social world, it is necessary to assess the language that they might use in creating and representing the perspectives that they hold. On the assumption that children will be prepared to articulate their perceptions in the same language with which they organise their thoughts, words used will indicate to which social world the child belongs. Therefore, in the first phase of the final stage of this research, certain children were invited to maintain diaries recording their experiences of physical education. The children were free to write as they wished, with no emphasis on use of standard English, being actively encouraged to articulate their thoughts in their own words. Further,

assurances of confidentiality were made to protect children and encourage them to assess the physical education lesson and all involved in it regardless of their 'status' and relationship with the child. Inevitably, emphasis on symbols, and in particular language, had implications for the way I was presented as researcher. I was mindful of bringing the symbols I displayed as close to the children's as possible having observed them at work in detail. Attention was therefore paid in particular to my physical presentation and use of language.

The informality of group interviews as described in Chapter Five, allowed children to determine to what extent they were physically positioned to contribute, since they could move away from the main focus of conversation momentarily if they wished. Zwiers and Morrissette (1999) have suggested that as adults, we may make unrealistic assumptions as to how long children may actually be able to sit focussing on one issue (Zwiers and Morrissette 1999 pp3,4). Since even children within the same year group will show different levels of maturation, this environment meant that those who needed a 'break' from what was going on could take it if they wished. This had the added advantage of emphasising those issues that individuals considered of greatest importance as their contributions to specific aspects of the 'conversation' would become more apparent.

As I argued, in Chapter Two, that children will adopt certain roles within a social environment, I wanted to limit, however, the extent to which children would adopt a formal 'role' because of the structure of the environment which had been established. For many of the children involved in my research, this would have been the first time they would have taken part in an interview; they therefore had no existing perception based on experience that would tell them how to deal with this situation. Those for whom being involved in interviews was not new, were perhaps likely to hold perceptions derived from more formal situations with educational professionals. Having a variable environment would disassociate the discussion from any possible previous interviews and mean that children would create their own structure within it without my direction. Therefore, as far as possible, the environment was based on the standards of the children, which would facilitate them in relaying their thoughts.

My own use of symbol was itself subject to change and the children were the guide to this throughout. The children needed to be aware that what they had to say was of importance to me, and I had to present what I was doing in such a way so as for it to be of importance to them. Essentially, I was actively constructing my own presentation of self (Blumer 1969). As I became more involved with small groups, the nuances of their behaviours became more apparent and determined the way in which I handled each stage of the research. Believing that experience is structured as discussed, it was necessary for me to allow myself to be directed by the children so that an awareness of the changing nature of experience and how this is moulded could be educed. This was not only indicated by

behaviour, but also by the use of language, and it is to the concept of meaning and language that I now turn.

### **Language as meaning**

The diaries that children wrote essentially used language as symbol to gain access into the way they constructed endogenous realities. It was believed that through narrative, the children would not only identify 'what' was important to them in physical education, but also that the language they used to describe it could give the researcher an insight into the nature of that importance. As Bruner has suggested 'the structure of language and the structure of thought eventually become inextricable' (Bruner 1991 p5). In actively encouraging respondents' narratives, the interviewer invites the respondent to fashion stories that, in their content and connections, reveal how the respondent structures experiential meaning (Holstein and Gubrium 1995 p59).

Since the person is a 'cultural creation' (Denzin 1989 p39) this insight could only be achieved if the children actually used language as they wished: languages in accordance with their own culture. Indeed, the children, particularly in their diary-keeping, were encouraged to depart from conventional rubrics associated with written 'work', that they would probably have had experience of elsewhere, and record their thoughts in any manner they wished.

Narrative identifies a relationship between intentional state and action (Bruner 1991 p7). What the narrative analysis of journals does is take a collection of what may appear individually insignificant events and identify patterns of meaning. The central concern is not how narrative text is constructed, but rather how it operates as an instrument of mind in the construction of reality (Bruner 1991 pp5,6).

Giving children the freedom to express their thoughts on paper did not pose particular problems since diaries were constructed outside of my contact time with the children. However, allowing the children to explore their feelings further in group discussion or 'interview' was more difficult. In a conventional sense interview is taken to be a:

*...conversation initiated by an interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research relevant information and focused by him/her on content specified by research objectives  
Watts and Ebbutt (1987 p25)*

Whilst the research area was prescribed, the specifics of the focus were not, and it was necessary to move outside the standardised research paradigm in which children are kept focussed on particular topics.

However, it was of paramount importance that I only used the guide of themes raised in diaries to contribute to the direction of discussion myself thus retaining the conversation within the defined realms of the children's experience, even where this contravened my expectations. I was aiming to reduce the natural asymmetrical balance of power that might normally exist between interviewer and interviewee (Kvale 1996 p21). Nevertheless, ultimately, for practical reasons, I still aimed to retain a degree of control over the direction of conversation, albeit guided in the first instance by the children themselves.

Zweirs and Morrissette (1999 p18) suggest that children articulate recollections best during free recall and I needed access to the multiple realities that exist for children within what is an overtly 'identical' environment. Such 'realities', however, also contained within them certain ambiguities and even direct contradictions. Whilst it is arguable that such a situation might render the validity of 'evidence' somewhat fragile, in terms of social worlds they may in fact 'be adequate reflections of objective contradictions in the world in which (children) live' (Kvale 1996 p34).

Since group discussions were mixed sex, issues of the ability of boys and girls to 'freely' speak in such contexts became significant. There is a certain degree of conflict in opinion as regards whether boys or girls more readily articulate their thoughts. Zwiers and Morrissette suggest that boys are less able to articulate their feelings than girls and it is necessary for the researcher to remain cognisant of this (Zwiers and Morrissette 1999 p8). However, such a situation is not absolute, and will depend upon the sex of the researcher. As Cook (1985 p12) stated, boys' perceptions would be more accessible to male researchers since 'girls close down' in the presence of a male. Inevitably, I faced the inverse problem in that the boys may have had greater difficulty relating to me as a female researcher. In practice, it is my feeling that I received a mixed response.

Whilst most boys did not speak to me in a personal way, some did approach me for informal 'chats'. Additionally, within the research situation, some boys spoke to me more than others, and this was also reflected with the girls. However, in the main, I feel that the girls did relate to me more easily than the boys, but that to divide the potential relationships with children along the lines of sex is too simplistic. It is my feeling that the relationship of the boys and girls amongst themselves carried greater significance for the way they related to me. The complexities of the group dynamics were such that I believe for girls and boys, the presence of the opposite sex, and more poignantly, certain members of the opposite sex, determined how they presented themselves in the interview situation.

Whilst I agree in terms of the necessity to remain sensitive to the difficulties any child may have in articulating their thoughts, the subjects in this study appeared to contribute equally but differently in interview situations. For example, boys would often be very eager to convey their point of view, but

were perhaps less able to rationalise their thoughts overtly. One year 7 boy, Felix, had particularly strong views as to which sports girls and boys should take part in. However, he could only justify his thoughts by repeating his statement saying that that was just what boys and girls do. Nicky, also year 7, rationalised this kind of perception by suggesting that it resulted from the type of television coverage afforded different sports.

The 'freedom' allowed in children's accounts, meant that the possibility of multiple interpretations existed. Holstein and Gubrium (1995 p58) suggest that 'Coherent, meaningful configurations emerge through patterned narrative linkages' which provide 'horizons of meaning'. It is these linkages that provide the key to the meaning of statements. What would emerge was that whilst children would convey different accounts of physical education, there would be certain commonalities in the application of meaning that revealed how different 'communities' within the class would organise their reality, sharing certain of these 'horizons of meaning'.

Whilst language was used as the main symbol of communication, this did not preclude silences from having the same function, and some unspoken 'facts' were indexed by other, spoken ones (McCracken 1988p 40). Thus pauses and omissions would indicate unarticulated thought; a time in which the child was deciding whether it would be appropriate for them to express their feelings on particular aspects of the discussion topic.

As individuals recall events to relay them to another person, they will be noted in 'storied' form (Clandinin, and Connelly 1994 p415) which arguably give us as clear a reflection of 'experience' as is likely to be recounted. When a story is conveyed, the subject will themselves create theoretical links between thought and action. What we can identify are aspects of personal meaning that lead to action strategies (Carlson 1995). It may be acknowledged that it is possible individuals give meaning to their lives by casting experience in narrative form (Oliver 1998, Mischler 1990 p435). Therefore, stories provide the context of meaning to particular events and it is through this meaning that we can gain an insight into rationales for child behaviour.

*Story is...neither raw sensation nor cultural form; it is both and neither. Stories are the closest we can come to experience as we and others tell of our experience*

*Clandinin and Connelly (1993 p 415)*

Indeed, the use of stories enables the individual to retain the complexity of a given situation since they unify thought, feeling and action (Oliver 1998: 248). Taking a symbolic interactionist perspective, action, thought and feeling are inextricably interdependent. Pivcevic (1970 p17) has argued that it is necessary to distil out what is essential and basic about experiences. As children relay experience in

storied form, the core elements of who and what is/are valued or not, and the nature of that value will be revealed.

One element that 'the story' is likely to provide us with is temporal location. I have already argued that experience for the child is always ensconced in the present in terms that that is where recollections necessarily take place. However, in relaying a story, the child will identify the temporal location of specific incidents. This subsequently gives an indication of the significance of a particular experience. A child may identify an incident that happened many years previously as affecting their experience 'today'. What is being heard here is the voice of the child today reinterpreting events of the past. It is most likely that reinterpretation will be occurring, but this is itself of significance since it is that perception that determines experience now. In this sense, it may be said that narratives incorporate what may be termed a 'diachronic' dimension. In other words they incorporate a temporal element that may be considered in 'human time' rather than 'abstract time' allowing, for example, the utilisation of tools of displacement in time such as flashbacks (Bruner 1991 p6).

To establish mutual empathy and therefore facilitate understanding, it is necessary for two parties to spend time building a relationship; if time is spent interacting with the subject to understand and adopt certain cultural mores, then it is inevitable that in turn the subject will analyse those of the researcher. 'The reciprocal influence of interviewer and interviewee on a cognitive and emotional level, is...not necessarily a source of error, but can be a strong point of qualitative research interviewing' (Kvale 1996 p36). To suggest otherwise as happens in traditional research interview scenarios would render the subject a research dupe.

What traditional beliefs about subjects fail to acknowledge is the fact that individuals will have their own agenda for participating in the research. Here they may actively seek to present a particular viewpoint or simply contribute in a particular way for their own purposes. As I discussed in Chapters Three and Four, where children become subjects of research there seems to be some reluctance to acknowledge the agency of participants and very often this is reflected in the highly structured research approaches used with them.

In this topic area, I was necessarily concerned that the children be the ones who guide the direction of the study, leaving them free to articulate their feelings in their own way. Therefore they created personal narrative which has been identified as a reliable source of information since 'if ample time is devoted to the process, results should include fruitful and valid data collection and reliable decision-making on the interview findings' (Zwiers and Morrissette 1999 p3).



In fact, the consideration that children may give to conveying their thoughts should not be underestimated. I contend that in my work, children actively sought to convey their particular perspectives on issues. With younger children this would tend to occur from a relatively introspective stance, but with older pupils, they would be more attentive to what they believed to be my perspective and reality construction. Just as they learn in their natural social worlds to present concepts in a certain manner, they would communicate their feelings in a way they believed to be accessible to the researcher, adopting certain language and behaviour. Thus whilst I attempted to gain access to the symbolic world of the children, some of them would also seek to gain access to mine thus rendering the interview as a necessarily collaborative, active process (Holstein and Gubrium 1997).

### **The adult/child relationship in research**

Because of the broader structure of society, however, having a situation wherein the adult seeks the opinion of the child is an inversion of standard relations (Fine and Sandstrom 1988 p51, Zwiers and Morrissette 1999 p3). The danger here may be that the child does not have an established framework within which to respond to the situation. It has therefore been suggested that the child will respond 'half-heartedly' because they do not anticipate being listened to with any sincerity. However, the converse argument is that 'Having an adult who listens to them and who is, to some degree, at their mercy fits into preadolescents' needs for social control' (Fine and Sandstrom 1988 p58). During the earlier research stages, my interview work with the children was established over a protracted period. Time was therefore a useful tool in establishing a relationship with the children that overcame scepticism as to why I would be interested in what they had to say.

However, either barriers to communication were broken down, or children who could not come to see a purpose in what we were doing withdrew from the research. Those therefore that remained made an active contribution to the work, whether their purposes were concomitant with those of the research or otherwise. What was created was essentially that which McCracken would specify as an 'unusual form of sociality' (McCracken 1988 p27) in which the children were given the freedom to do all the talking in whatever manner they chose. An additional element here was that the children were at liberty to express their opinion about significant adults within the physical education environment, allowing them to talk about what would ordinarily be a taboo subject in front of another adult.

I also acknowledge the fact that incidences may have arisen where there was some question as to whether I should disclose what was said for the sake of the child. However, in practice, the content of what was said and the behaviours of children when they said it were kept confidential. This meant that there were occasions on which a teacher might normally berate a child, where I would remain non-reactive. Fine and Sandstrom suggest that non-intervention in such situations by an adult give a certain 'piquantness' to the child's behaviour (Fine and Sandstrom 1988 p58). This may well have been the

case and encouraged certain potentially anti-social behaviours. Yet I would argue again, that on the basis of my relatively long-term involvement with the children as a visitor, the significance of such situations diminished and non-intervention contributed to the trust that the children gave me.

My role as 'interviewer' here was not to solicit answers to specific questions but facilitate narrative production (Holstein and Gubrium 1995 p39). Of interest here, however, is the nature of self-presentation as existed during these processes.

### **The concept of 'self'**

The process of interviewing as a collaborative act, highlights the way in which the child may seek to understand the way in which the interviewer sees them. Indeed, the way in which a child believes they are viewed is key to the way in which they perceive and present themselves. The concept of formulating thought and action is an instance where the individual is in symbolic interaction with themselves, and it was this process that would prove essential to understanding children. The individual is in constant dialogue with their 'selves' interpreting the world around them and adjusting their responses through a process of self-indication (Blumer 1969 p14, Charon 1985 p58). In order to organise thoughts in this manner it is necessary for the individual to have the capacity to extract themselves from their material being and essentially become an object of their own cognition:

*The importance of what we term 'communication' lies in the fact that it provides a form of behaviour in which the organism or the individual may become an object to himself...communication in the sense of significant symbols, communication which is directed not only to others but to the individual himself*  
Mead (1934 p138)

Essentially, individuals are able to act 'towards their internal environment' (Charon 1985 p66) as well as external environments through the symbol of language. This 'conversational' self is described by Mead as the individual's 'me'. It is this thinking, rational aspect of being which formed the focal point of this study. The extent to which the individual may rationalise their sense of being determines the nature of their experience and the sophistication with which they respond to the various facets of 'physical education'.

If perspectives determine the individual's perception of the situation it may be that they are viewed as a 'limiting factor' to experience. It is certainly arguable that those who have access to a broader vocabulary or exposure to a greater variety of social objects may engage in more sophisticated interpretations than those who do not. The linguistic capacity that an individual has, contributes to the degree to which they can indulge in internal speaking; in covertly assessing a situation; in the development of rational perspective. Individuals can control their decisions and assert certain freedoms through this rationalisation process.

Thus children may manipulate their responses to a situation according to the interpretive tools that they have available to them. This means that overt response to a situation may be calculated to convey specific messages to those involved. This opens the possibility of conveying a response that does not actually exist within that child's reality, but is created for the purpose of being perceived by specific others. This is freedom in the sense that the individual may arguably 'control' the way that they are treated.

What children will do is take on the role of others mentally; and then use their own prediction of the perceptions held by them before deciding upon action. If the child 'knows' that another respects them, then they may happily present their ideas, for example, in arriving at a tactical approach to a game. Alternatively, if they 'know' that their views are not respected, they may refrain from making suggestions, even where they feel that they have a positive contribution to make. This may be because in the first scenario, the child's ideas are likely to be accepted and their position reinforced. In the second, although they do not create the possibility of having their ideas accepted, they at least avoid the potential embarrassment of having them rejected. Each action is designed to actualise the individual's overriding interest in the immediate situation, making interaction into somewhat of a 'game' (Blumer 1969, Woods 1980, Pollard 1982).

Whilst children may inevitably calculate their behaviour under certain conditions, this does not revoke the potential for more visceral response. The essential emotional and reactive 'self', referred to by Mead (1934) as the 'I' predominates over the 'me' in some instances. Taking my example, a child may be so excited about a suggestion they have thought of that it is turned into a proposal before any potential consequences have been assessed. Consciousness of experience, therefore, does not necessarily require the individual to be reflective in a cognitive sense but may be, as Pivcevic (1970 p19) describes, 'non-reflective'.

Yet, as reality is socially constructed, inclusive of the individual's perceptions of 'self', this highlights the significance of the 'group' within which the child is functioning and the impact that this has upon them. For the purpose of my study, this pertains not only to children's experience within physical education, but also as part of the research process. It is the concept of group contributions in methodology that I now consider.

### **Interactive contributions to the research process**

I have already discussed the fact that involving subjects in research of the nature I was concerned with was necessarily of a collaborative nature. However, this basis of collaboration is extended when considering the basis of group interviews. Group interviews enable the intra-relationships of children to

be identified and is arguably more akin to the nature of the interaction that would take place in the classroom. In this situation, insight is gained not necessarily, or only into the individual's construction of reality, but the way they choose to present that construction in front of certain peers. If by using a story or other form of interaction between children it is possible to see what becomes important in this situation, the story or the relationship – how does, if at all, the story become affected by the relationship? The social objects that are of significance in such a situation should identify the differences here:

*The parries and challenges of group discussion highlight the agreements and disagreements in a particular population  
Holstein and Gubrium (1995 p70)*

Essentially, having more than one subject involved in an interview introduces a new element of communicative leadership:

*...providing a way of encouraging and monitoring different lines of narrative production. It is not that such differences cannot be examined as a dialogical feature of individual interviews, but the narrative force of multivocality may be more poignant and visible when it is a matter of the individual commitments of several participants, where particular identities consistently organize responses  
Holstein and Gubrium (1995 p66)*

In such a format, evidence should arise as to the roles that are adopted, and the rationale behind such roles; this can be cross-referenced to evidence from observations in the class for similarities and disparities thus indicating the basis of adoption of certain group personas. Thus the interaction between participants is allocated arguably greater importance than that between interviewer and subjects (Watts and Ebbutt 1987 pp25,26).

The required emphasis on children's role here draws attention to what will need to be a redefined role of the researcher. The proclivity of the researcher may be to act in some kind of co-ordination role when faced with such a situation. However, if the essential aspect of the group interview is the interaction between the participants then inevitably the role of the interviewer is altered to that of facilitating discussion but withdrawing as frequently as possible.

This is not to suggest that others in the group necessarily become more important to the individual child than the interviewer or topic of 'conversation'. Rather, there is an added complexity to the formation of language due to variation in consciousness. Whilst children may be expressing opinions to 'one another' they may remain aware of the presence of the researcher. In the current research it was found that the level of consciousness would fluctuate on the basis of status of content of the

conversation, as the 'risk' involved in what was being said rose, or where there was a cessation in discussion.

Any research work regarding 'experience' might necessarily be expected to incorporate observation in a naturalistic setting. Information gleaned from such methods acts as a primary source of information regarding behaviours and as a supplementary source for aiding interpretation. In order to relate meaning to language, and to learn how to derive meaning from language, observational work contributed significantly to the way in which I learned to interpret the experience of children. Again, here data collection was guided by diary work, which was in turn 'revisited' for confirmation or application of meaning. Observation within a naturalistic setting is potentially one of the most accurate means for deriving data. However, once a researcher is present, it is arguable that the naturalistic setting has necessarily been altered. What this did allow me to do was gain direct access to children other than those who were specifically and overtly involved in the research and give children access to myself enabling and facilitating discussion of my work.

Once the grounding for the main phase of the research had been established, I identified one school that was to provide the model for the development of theory. As discussed in Chapter Five, the research 'setting' began as a broad 'educational environment' involving observational visits to four schools and then narrowed and deepened to focus on one school. Adler and Adler (1994) highlight, that for some researchers, a setting is assigned. This was true to a certain degree in this study although of particular significance here is that the specific setting at any one time was variable. During the school day, the focus of the P.E. department would alter, therefore, the research setting did also. Physical education lessons might be in the gym, sports hall, all weather playing surface, field, weights room; break and lunch times might have a focus on club activities which again might be in any of the above physical environments; changeovers of lessons involved a return to the PE office and so on. Additionally classroom lessons and tutor time altered the research setting and even when walking through the school on any business, observation continued.

Here, observations adopted a far more interactive basis: a basis upon which relationships could be built so that a deeper understanding of the subtleties of children's interactive capacities might be established. In order to gain access to children's worlds, the nature of observation progressed along similar lines to the paradigm described above. In initial stages, observation was peripheral; this occurred at the same time as certain children from each group kept 'PE diaries'. Here, issues arising from the diaries guided the focus for observations and group interviews until such time as the three formed a matrix for identification and verification of factors of importance. Effectively, there was a 'funneling' (Adler and Adler 1994 p381) of attention deep into those elements of the setting that had emerged as theoretically

significant. However, this funnelling did not exist in a pure sense since the researcher would constantly sample from the broader environment, to substantiate or refute those emergent theories.

Generally, in texts, researchers are described as adopting a specific role somewhere along the continuum of non-participant/participant observer at a fixed point (Adler and Adler 1994), with subjects being fully aware or not of 'who' the researcher is. For me, my role was never fixed and certainly did not progress from one end of a continuum to another (although for some individual relationships with specific children this would have been the case); rather it varied with time and place.

Because conditions demanded that I redefine my role within the class at intervals, there is a certain complexity in describing where I might fit in conveying my position when working at this particular school. Naturally, over time, my role entailed increasing interaction with children. This interaction was often initiated by the children themselves as they became curious as to my role and would approach me initially to discuss it and then, on occasion, to advise me as to what was 'really' going on. For the sake of argument I suggest that I was perhaps a 'pseudo-participant' acting the role of a genuine participant in a real situation.

This raises the question of the validity of my observations. Observational work might conventionally be verified for example by 'interobserver' cross-checking or use of observation 'teams' (Adler and Adler p381). However, it was not appropriate in this case to do so, since observations were used as a means of sensitisation which would be employed in later work. Additionally, as I have already indicated and shall argue further, the subjectivity of interpretation would mean that since no 'tick box' method could be employed to assess the issues I was addressing, involving more researchers would itself lead to multiple interpretations that would be unlikely to lead to cross-validation.

As has been intimated by the description above, the process of 'observation' is arguably a misnomer since 'watching' does not suffice to describe a scene. Whilst 'listening' may take place in its own format e.g. of interview, it also forms part of the observation process. Much as observation e.g. of body language during interviewing will help hermeneutic processes, verbal cues will give interpretive information (Schatzman and Strauss 1973 p71). For me, however, the listening process as part of observation served a multiple purpose. Observational settings gave me the opportunity to familiarise myself with language used in a naturalistic setting and cross reference cultural 'cues' with those used in interview situations. Additionally, to establish relationships with children that would later contribute more specifically to the research process gaining access to the language and purposes of the language they used. One advantage of establishing conversations in this way was that there was no particular conclusion to them; and because they had not reached an official end they may be continued on the next meeting, making the interaction natural, unforced and open.

Whilst the field for observational work largely focussed upon the physical education lesson; for theoretical sensitivity it was extended firstly to other subject related areas such as the PE office and extra curricular clubs, and then, also to other lesson areas in school, such as tutorial times and personal and social education (PSE). Because of questions of access, the research could never entirely be extricated from 'PE' since it was the staff who came to know me through my work that were prepared to give me access to these 'lessons'. However, it did allow me to speak with the children in a different environment, listening to their language and watching their actions. Data obtained in this manner was used in a supportive capacity to that obtained in PE specific contexts. However, all data, is necessarily chosen by the researcher, and it is the subjective nature of the conduction of research that forms the basis of discussion in the following sections.

### **Subjectivity**

Within the interpretivist paradigm it is insisted that judgements of truth are always relative to a particular framework, paradigm or point of view; 'truth and rationality are equivocal' (Sparkes 1992 p37). Focussing on 'trustworthiness' as opposed to truth 'displaces validation from its traditional location in a presumably objective, non-reactive, and neutral reality, and moves it to the social world; a world constructed in and through our discourse and actions, through praxis' (Mischler 1990 p420). Therefore, it is arguable that such research is necessarily subjective both for the researcher and subject. This inevitably raises the issue of whose 'voice' is being used to report the findings here (Altheide and Johnson 1994 p 486).

Traditionally, within any research, the need for the researcher to disassociate themselves from the particulars of the situation at hand in order to achieve objectivity (Sparkes 1992b p33) has meant that 'subjectivity' has come to be a derogative term indicating that a study is invalid. However, such viewpoints presuppose that the researcher is actively constructing their own interpretation of events to the detriment of hearing the 'voice' of the subject involved. To avoid this 'problem', more recent research has advocated the 'manufacture of distance' between researcher and subject through active reflection and 'bracketing'; in other words, setting aside one's 'taken for granted' orientation to the situation being studied. (Holstein and Gubrium 1994 p263, McCracken 1988 p22, Denzin 1971, Charon 1985 p179).

As McCracken (1988p32) has suggested, it is appropriate to analyse one's own cultural preconceptions to clarify one's approach to data. In any case, the situation is one of compromise between utilisation of expertise and detachment from prejudice:

*Compromise is essential, the researcher requires a grounded background knowledge and information in order to make initial judgements. However, they must at all times endeavour to maintain ...an open mind to allow that which is relevant to their grounded data to emerge. This can then be used to contradict and enhance other concepts and categories*  
Waring (1995 p68)

Background knowledge is not confined to that associated with experience prior to entering the field. Inevitably the researcher will study the subject area in a progressive manner and work in the field, drawing on different aspects of knowledge to generate theory, and broadening possibilities of interpretation. Therefore, the researcher can be 'eclectic in his formulation of possible explanations both in and away from the actual investigation' (Sparkes, A 1986 p 43).

Since I was attempting to gain insight into the endogenous construction of experience, I needed to adopt a research methodology that placed emphasis on theory generation from issues identified as significant by subjects. One such approach is the 'grounded theory' approach.

Although the central tenet of grounded theory lies in the development of theory from the perspective of the subject, it is not to suggest that theory may be generated from a wholly neutral standpoint. Inevitably as a researcher I would approach the field with my own experiences and subsequent perceptions of the subject and whilst it is the intention to be as open as possible I would inevitably utilise what I already 'know'. In a seminar concerning open coding Strauss states:

*Apropos of this data, let me first give you a rule of thumb. If you know an area, have some experience as I have said before, you don't tear it out of your head. You can use it*  
Strauss (1987 p84)

Therefore, it was appropriate for me to use my knowledge gained from my own teaching experience and observations, as an aid, whilst constantly reflecting on possible assumptions I was making, and minimising the limitations I might be placing on data interpretation.

By drawing on background knowledge, I might be able to make my research more productive, incorporating my own interpretive resources, perspectives and landmarks into my inquiries. Within this research such 'knowledge' was largely constituted by that children proffered themselves. Thus my 'subjectivity' was arguably influenced greatly by the children concerned. This is, of course, an implicit argument in favour of combining ethnographic observation with interviewing, not only to heighten rapport with, and understanding of, information, but to take advantage of, and reveal, the local 'whats' of experience (Holstein and Gubrium 1995 p45).

The incorporation of subjectivity into the research paradigm means that it is possible to bridge the gap between concrete detail and abstract concepts. It also inevitably acts as a means to sensitise the



researcher to the possibilities of the particular situation - to heighten 'theoretical sensitivity' (Glaser 1978).

Indeed, subjectivity remains I believe an inevitable part of social research where 'experience' is being investigated, and this is not only limited to that of the researcher. Subjectivity in the consideration of the children involved in this research is compounded by the fact that not only are they recalling experience from a subjective viewpoint but also have their own interpretation as to the aims of the research, and the perceptions of the researcher. Essentially following Holstein and Gubrium (Holstein and Gubrium 1994 p264) it is possible to treat subjectivity as the very topic of discussion rather than as a methodological taboo. Since, under interpretivism, 'social reality is mind dependent, ...there can be no 'brute data' out there on which to found knowledge or verify our positions' (Sparkes 1992b p35). De-standardising the interview approach should mean that the respondents' subjective representations which are rendered invisible by the interview format, become exposed. 'In general, the more standardized the interview, the less visible are such meaning-making linkages' (Holstein and Gubrium 1995 p52). Yet subjectivity is present not only in the analysis, but also, the selection of, data.

### **Subjectivity and data selection**

When conducting a study, it is inevitable that the researcher needs to gather information in a systematic manner. However, in order to avoid over-restriction, it is necessary to remain sufficiently flexible to pursue unanticipated possibilities (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Therefore, I allowed children themselves to guide me in the sampling process, approaching the project from a grounded theorist's perspective. However, that data selection was still ultimately my choice.

As I have discussed, however, within grounded theory every attempt is made to ensure that the researcher is consciously reflective of previous experience (although it is acknowledged that this does not ensure freedom from prejudice in any pure sense). Within this approach, theoretical sampling is cumulative. In the initial stages I sampled as much information and created as many categories as possible in order to concentrate on the diversity (Strauss and Corbin 1990 p178). However, as the research progressed, selection became more refined as salient themes emerged:

*Theoretical sampling refers to the process of deciding on analytic grounds what data to collect next and where to collect it by sampling particular groups of people according to their significance to the development and testing of the emergent theory*  
*Bartlett and Payne (1997 p191)*

As data was analysed it guided the selection of further data, which methods I used and how I analysed the information generated. Ultimately, as I reached the final stages, sampling became 'discriminative' and was used for verificational purposes (Strauss and Corbin 1990 p187, Waring 1995 p67). My aim

here was to construct an accurate theoretical representation of children's experience, to give children 'voice'.

### Issues of voice

As I have already intimated, an 'experience' is something that only the individual lives through, and therefore information about it is only directly available to that person. Consequently, the only genuine means to ascertain what the child's experiences are, is to give that child 'voice'.

In light of the complexities of issues of 'subjectivity', it is necessary to consider the real implications involved in issues of whose voice is heard in research, particularly as researchers often claim to 'give' subjects voice. The first question here, is exactly what is meant by this term. On a superficial level, affording a minority group the chance to speak may suffice. And since there is little data which give the pupils a voice (Woodhouse 1996 p41) involving children in research may be the first step towards addressing this problem. However, there is a broad chasm between speaking and being heard. Schratz has indeed warned us of this danger, particularly in light of the way in which educational research has historically been conducted in this country:

*Educational research based on quantitative measurement, variables, experimentation and operationalization usually transfers the original 'voices' of its research subjects into statistical data, mathematical relations or other abstract parameters. Therefore, very little is left of the social context in which educational practices occur. What is left over represents the 'noise' in the transmission of the data and is reduced to its minimal disturbance in the research process. Thus the original voices from the field become the 'disembodied' voices in the discourse of quantitative research presented through reports, articles and books.*  
*Schratz (1993 p1)*

The quantification of data is, however, not purely to blame for the misrepresentation of the pupil's voice in educational research. Very simply, even with qualitative approaches to research design, factors of significance have already been determined and as already discussed, much work with children takes the form of questionnaire survey or structured interview (Scott and West 1990, Milosevic 1996). Thus the voice of the pupil here is limited to their 'opinion' on certain matters that the researcher considers important, and does not therefore genuinely 'give voice'.

To highlight the concept of 'voice', Rudduck discusses the issue by comparing it to the idea of being engaged in a dialogue- the dialogue being a balanced exchanged of equally valued views:

*The word 'voices' suggests something different from the word 'dialogue'. Dialogue is part of a social convention where rules underwrite the possibility of speaking and being heard: turn-taking offers more promise of equality. Voices are more emotive, more disembodied, more disturbing... they can 'represent' individuals or groups who have been denied the right to contribute or who have simply not been heard. Such voices speak to our conscience.*

Essentially, the 'onesidedness' should give the opportunity for expression to marginalised groups. The concept of giving voice immediately implies an imbalance between researcher and subject, even without the consideration in my study that other imbalances implying the child's subjugation existed. Even within itself, the concept of 'giving' voice has what might be termed a 'dual' imbalance. It begins with the researcher devoting a specific part of their work to the subjects concerned: to give them the opportunity to be heard where they have been denied expression. However, it must be remembered that it is the researcher who chooses to give this opportunity and it is they who decide which aspects of the voice must be heard. Thus whilst it is crucial on a moral basis to 'give voice' the concept somehow sits uneasily with the essential power structure on which it is based.

Additionally, in addressing the need to 'give' subjects voice it is necessarily of paramount importance that the issue of voice of the researcher be raised. Internal conditions are such that the researcher needs to gain confidence to inquire rather than just summarise, to reflect the subject whilst appearing to the audience (Clandinin and Connelly 1994 p423). Listening to children's voices is essential to the understanding of physical education, if from that understanding we seek to implement change. However, we must be prepared to dislike what is found and still respond to it positively.

Further to issues of whether to give voice, are those of how to do so. In terms of research, very often there is a tendency to be drawn to that of the more articulate subject, since their opinions may sit more comfortably with research paradigms; however, such views are not necessarily representative of the larger population and may indeed be atypical (Kvale 1996 p144).

In light of the above I suggest that the general principle of giving voice is a willingness on the part of the researcher to empower the subject. This means therefore, that the starting point of research should in effect, be determined by the subjects themselves, and that informants have the right to rectify any misinterpretations that they perceive the researcher to have made. Additionally, there is an onus upon the researcher to be reflective of their own preconceptions and in achieving critical distance from the situation, ensure that they truly listen to the subject, even where evidence becomes contrary to expectations. In this way theory may be accurately deduced from the data.

### **Developing and grounding theory**

Seeking to develop theory is one way in which new possibilities within research fields might be discovered. Grounding theory- developing and testing theory in a recurrent pattern- is one way to create self-validating theory that is reflective of the subject's voice. When conducting educational

research using children as subjects Denscombe and Aubrook received the following criticism of their questionnaire from a year 11 boy:

*I don't think homelife or parents' jobs if whether or not you take foundation or top maths has relevance. If you are trying to categorise us into your typical adult's stereotypes then I think that it's pointless for you to bother sending out this questionnaire when you obviously have made up your minds about how we are supposed to behave already*  
Denscombe and Aubrook (1992 p 120)

The point that researchers often enter the field with preconceived ideas of what will be 'discovered' and conduct their study using pre-determined criteria in accordance with those beliefs is a very valid one and a situation that I was eager to avoid. Whilst it may be appropriate to test certain theories in research, in order to preserve the nature of the research area, it is actually necessary to allow subjects within the field to identify what issues are of importance in order to develop theory.

Therefore, within this study, the issues identified by children were coded and linked; data was fractured into key elements which were then considered in terms of their dimensions according to the contexts in which they occurred. This procedure followed that developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990). The deconstruction and reconstruction of data created theoretical links that were then measured against new evidence. Similarly new evidence was coded, and earlier data revisited. Hence the whole process was one of taking 'double-back' steps (Glaser 1978 p16, Sparkes 1986 p 41). Ultimately this means that:

*theories are always traceable to the data that gave rise to them – within the interactive context of data collecting and data analyzing, in which the analyst is also a crucially significant interactant*  
Strauss and Corbin (1994 p278)

Because of the nature of grounded theory being to interrelate data collection and theory development, it incorporates 'an explicit mandate to strive toward verification of its resulting hypotheses (statements of relationships between concepts). This is done throughout the course of a research project, rather than assuming that verification is possible only through follow-up quantitative research (Strauss and Corbin 1994 p274).

As a 'style of doing qualitative analysis' (Strauss 1987) grounded theory adds to the tool kit of the social scientist by allowing the investigator to enter the life-world of participant's own understandings, while maintaining the search for justified belief central to a scientific enterprise (Bartelett and Payne 1997p178):

*Grounded Theory is concerned with the **human** status of actors studied. They have perspectives on both their own and other actors actions. As researchers we are required to*

*learn what we can of their interpretations and perspectives ... grounded theory requires that those interpretations and perspectives become incorporated into our own interpretation*  
Strauss and Corbin (1994 p280)

Adler and Adler (1994p381) suggest that 'verisimilitude' or 'vraisemblance' wherein detailed writing of the subject's experience, established through grounded theory, bring the reader into the subject's world, giving an authentic representation of them.

Access to individuals' construction of reality needs necessarily to develop over time. Data needs to be revisited in order to re-ascertain meaning of language and action as well as the way in which perspectives are developing. Therefore, for this study, my approach was designed to take into account the developmental nature of experience, the need for symbols of that experience to be identified by the subjects themselves and the interpretive nature of theory development.

It is arguable that grounded theory in itself incorporates a temporal dimension and offers the opportunity to take stock of not only intrapsychic experiences at any given point, but also over time. As a phenomenological approach, grounded theory:

*attempts to describe the relationships between an individual's intrapsychic experience and the surrounding world at a given time*  
Stern (1994 p 213)

but additionally:

*grounded theories are very fluid – because they embrace the interaction of multiple actors, emphasise temporality and process*  
Strauss and Corbin (1994 p278)

Essentially, I was considering the social cognition of children as:

*...mentalistic and process-oriented, focusing on elements such as attribution, attention, inference, memory and schemata and, from its origins in both phenomenology and experimental cognitive psychology, is able to relate the private and subjective life-world of the individual to the general cognitive processes common to all people*  
Bartlett and Payne (1997p178)

Research in western society has traditionally favoured abstract rationality (Oliver 1998:247), and whilst a clearly defined scientific approach may appear to afford a degree of legitimacy to studies, it will not necessarily give opportunity to express the complexities of 'experience'.

The general process of grounded theory is a progressive journey stemming from wide ranging incorporation of information that is, over time, narrowed and deepened with developing theory guiding selection and always remaining traceable back to the original data (Sparkes 1992 p37).

Whilst there are certain computer programmes designed to assist in this process (Richards and Richards 1994), I agree with Thomas (1998 p144) in that the use of such tools restricts the creative possibilities of theory development. I therefore took a more time-consuming, but I believe potentially more inclusive, 'pen and paper' approach. In this way a more sensitive representation of the subject could be made.

My generation of theory here was reliant upon gaining and applying an understanding of the essential 'social possibilities' that may exist within any given statement or situation: on developing 'theoretical sensitivity'. In practice, I entered the field with a degree of theoretical sensitivity that issues from a combination of personality and experience. This was not simply acceptable, but inevitable, and potentially aided interpretation, particularly in the initial stages of the research before I became more familiar with the field. The only danger, however, is that within existing sensitivities lie certain assumptions that may well have coloured my interpretation.

The difference between being truly sensitive to the subject and creating a completely under-developed theory, is the difference between reality and fiction. Taking a scenario where two children are working on developing a routine in gymnastics and begin to behave 'off task', ridiculing the concept of what they are being asked to do by pushing each other and playing around, such a situation would appear to present a case where the children are deliberately misbehaving and defying the teacher. However, that situation may also be more about friendship, an anti-school disposition, or one child exercising power as control over another. Key here, was the assurance that I maintained a degree of scepticism (Bartlett and Payne 1997 p186) and also constructed the research framework to include periods wherein I might seek to listen and watch in order to become sensitised to possibilities. Therefore, particularly, phase one of the research in which I visited a variety of schools, served to help raise awareness of the eventualities of what I could see.

Certain authors (Waring 1995 and Hutchinson 1997) have represented grounded theory approaches using concepts of spiral or helix representations. However, it is my feeling that the process may be represented as more akin to a growing molecular structure that reforms as it reaches a certain size. Within a molecular model, nodes represent categories and the forces linking them, the developing theory, which emerges as a three dimensional phenomenon linking action, perception and meaning.

As can be seen, throughout coding the researcher will constantly move between inductive and deductive logic. They will use concrete examples or empirical indicators from the data to suggest possible categories and their relationships, and then verify these against other data (Bartelett and Payne 1997 p193): in other words there is a constant interplay between proposal and verification.

Once a state of 'saturation' is reached wherein no new issues emerge, the themes are related into coherent theory. This 'selective coding' is the process wherein the themes developed throughout the study are integrated to form an ultimate 'grounded theory'. Essentially, this means 1) identification of the central phenomenon of interest 2) relating it to all of the categories that have been identified and 3) verification of the final theory (Bartelett and Payne 1997 p193) through returning to original data. Theory building in grounded theory is a progressive approach, refining and deepening ideas as new evidence is encountered and 'tested'. Theory is validated throughout the project forming a type of 'grounding' but it is not until the final stages that the emergent theory may be 'grounded' in its entirety.

Therefore, grounded theory provides not only a means of accessing the nature of a research problem, but also of involving subjects effectively in defining that research problem. This is a sensitive approach, however, as it involves methods that will necessarily be accessing what may be deemed the private lives of subjects. Combine this with the fact that, in my study, those subjects were children and a complexity of ethical issues is raised. It is the particular sensitivities of involving children in research in this way that form the basis of discussion in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### ETHICAL ISSUES – PROJECTIONS AND REFLECTIONS

In Chapters Five and Six, I discussed my approach to involving children in this study. Within any research there are likely to be ethical implications, and perhaps none more so than where that work involves children. In this chapter I shall consider the ethical issues that I came across prior to and during my research as I sought to give children ‘voice’.

#### **General considerations**

The British Sociological Association (BSA) states that when a researcher enters a field they simultaneously enter into a ‘personal and moral relationship with those they study’ (BSA1996 p1) thus ethical considerations are central to the research process, even where subjects are adults but more significantly when minors. The fact that children are likely to perceive any adult as relatively powerful means that ethical considerations are of paramount importance when approaching a study that involves minors as subjects. Yet, despite this, very limited consideration has been accorded to the specific ethics concerning the involvement of children in research; indeed, in many cases, educational research conducted using child subjects omits overt discussion of ethical considerations entirely (Hull et al 1985, Woods 1980, 1990, Schostak and Logan 1984). In fact, it is only relatively recently that the study of ethics in research involving children has been the subject of debate and discussion (Greig and Taylor 1999 p145). This is in spite of the fact that:

*...all researchers are potentially in a position of power and that power carries the potential for abuse. The relative power of adults to children makes this a double-edged sword when involving children as research subjects*  
*Greig and Taylor (1999 p148)*

In this study, the relationship was not only adult to child, but could possibly be perceived as that of ‘adult with authority’ to child. Despite seeking to limit my association with teachers, it is perhaps inevitable that at least some of the minors involved in my research would see me as a teacher figure even if not fulfilling that role entirely. The potential imbalance of power here provides the starting point for the consideration of ethical issues involved in my work.

Emphasis needs to lie in the necessity of assessing a methodology in terms of its ethical basis prior to any research being carried out. Greig and Taylor state that:

*It can be argued that ethics is the one part of the research process that should never be learned in practice and that the would-be researcher should have ensured that all the potential ethical dilemmas have been considered prior to embarking upon the research*  
*Greig and Taylor (1999p144).*

However, I feel that this is a little naïve since one cannot predict all eventualities. In particular, since there has been so little research involving children in the capacity they contributed for me, it



was inevitable that certain situations would arise that I had perhaps not anticipated; this I was perhaps inevitable. Nevertheless, it was incumbent upon me to reasonably predict as many ethical issues as possible.

The essence of establishing a sound ethical foundation for research lies in measuring the potential risk to the informant against the advantages to the research of involving them in any particular way (Waring 1995 p 50, May 1991 p199). In a general sense 'ethical principles of autonomy, beneficence and justice should be adhered to' (Greig and Taylor 1999 p149). Therefore, what considerations need to be made when conducting research with children? Greig and Taylor (1999 p145) suggest that the study of ethics in relation to research with children involves an underlying knowledge of both general ethics theory, and exploration of the general principles of undertaking research on human subjects.

It is necessary for these 'general principles' I feel, in practice, to be subdivided according to what might be termed the formal and informal. For me, the formal represents those issues that need to be addressed, and to be seen to be so, and the informal, the more subtle issues involving not only children, but the particular child. In the following sections I shall discuss the complexities of applying issues of human subjects being involved in research, and the vagaries of their application to children's involvement. Each of the factors represent instances that will need, at times to be considered not only as a group, but also on an individual basis.

### **Informed consent**

The key element that underpins the majority of discourse regarding the ethics of involving children in research is that of 'informed consent' (Greig and Taylor 1999, Field and Morse 1994, Denscombe and Aubrook, 1992 Payne 1987, BSA 1996,). The British Psychological Association (BPA 1997) states that:

*3.3 Where possible the real consent of children and of adults with impairments in understanding or communication should be obtained. In addition, where research involves any persons under 16 years of age, consent should be obtained from parents or from those 'in loco parentis'.  
BPA (1997 p8)*

The concept of informed consent was originally developed for biomedical research and laws requiring consent were formulated mainly with this in mind (Field and Morse 1994 p44, Diener and Crandall 1978 p 50). For the purposes of educational research where one might anticipate the consequences of involvement to be somewhat less radical, the need for such consent to be obtained will be negotiable and dependent upon two variables. Firstly the nature of the research and secondly, the degree to which it is believed to be likely to affect the subject, with a general consensus that:

*The greater the possibility of danger in the study and the greater the potential harm involved, or the greater the rights relinquished, the more thorough must be the procedure of obtaining informed consent*  
*Diener and Crandall (1978 p34)*

whereas,

*In research that poses non risks to participants, the absolute necessity of informed consent is more questionable*  
*Diener and Crandall (1978 p35)*

In the initial stages of the research, children defined those issues that were of significance to them within their experience of physical education. These comments then formed the basis of ensuing research. Therefore, I might reasonably assume that this sufficed to exclude topics that the children themselves felt placed them at risk.

In the case of my research, the research topic was ostensibly fairly innocuous. However, in asking the children to disclose their feelings regarding their experiences of physical education, I was potentially asking children to break certain taboos, such as discussing their perceptions of the teacher from a personal perspective. Children inevitably express opinions to one another on such topics, but the involvement of another adult sensitises the context.

By the nature of the methods employed, children involved in keeping diaries would identify issues of their choice, and therefore I might reasonably assume that issues raised could form part of further discussion, as long as the individual comment or child was not directly identified. Complexities did arise, however, where we began to discuss significant others and the teacher specifically. In such instances, where the child showed any discomfort with discussing a particular individual, I would alter the course of the interview by moving onto the next topic. Indicators were taken to be factors such as over-hesitation in answering and repeated answers of 'I don't know'.

In all cases, however, there will necessarily be at least a degree of informed consent for the study to function in an ethical and practical sense. However, determining what degree of consent is required and defining 'real consent' in any pragmatic sense is highly complex, with the assertion of cognitive understanding of the research process remaining an unlikely possibility. Yet as researchers it is our duty to seek to attain fully informed consent where appropriate.

This necessarily also involves an awareness that our own perception of what may be deemed an ethical approach may not be so by the subject. As Denscombe and Aubrook highlighted, following research they conducted using questionnaires with children:

*Their participation was sought on the basis of 'informed consent' and they were given assurances about confidentiality. However, comments written by pupils on the questionnaires and statements made by them during follow-up interviews suggest that these*

*measures may not provide a totally sufficient ethical basis on which to conduct research in schools. Their comments would indicate that whilst their participation was 'voluntary', it was not necessarily 'completely voluntary' – a point which raises important ethical issues for researchers in schools and for those 'gatekeepers' who authorise such research*  
Densombe and Aubrook (1992 pp 113-114)

One key issue that I felt I had to address in this study was that, although consent had been given by the children, there was some evidence that they remained a little sceptical regarding the objectives and confidentiality of the study. In Lisa's (year 11) case, an entry was made in her diary that could have been interpreted as a negative assessment of the teacher, and would almost certainly have been of some consternation to the member of staff concerned:

*The only thing that puts me off slightly is that if you muck up or make a shoddy catch Mr Mitchell will make a sarcastic remark (sic)*  
(Lisa, year 11, diary entry 24<sup>th</sup> September 1998)

Lisa's entry contained a note asking me to make sure I did not show the diary to the teachers. However, the next week, she had also added, as though in continuation:

*...it's not that bad cause you can have a laugh with him, well actually it's not that bad at all I don't know why I'm moaning because if he does say something I just say something stupid back and we laugh it off*  
(Lisa, year 11, diary entry made week of 31<sup>st</sup> September 1998, dated 24<sup>th</sup> September 1998)

I can infer therefore, that there may have been some concern that this entry and its origin be disclosed to staff. Inevitably, I was alerted not only to the need to reiterate the confidential basis of data to the children involved, but to ensure a degree of reflexivity in my approach using concerns voiced through direct questions as sometimes occurred, but also implicitly in the language and nature of entries.

The fact that children would display such ability to analyse for themselves why they believed me to be conducting the research, rather than taking my word on face value, is evidence of their competence in judging the appropriateness of involvement. It has been suggested that historically, child consent has not been sought where parental permission has previously been obtained (Diener and Crandall 1978 p47). It was my feeling, even prior to having such indications as those above, that children's consent should be directly sought, since I suggest we greatly underestimate not only their capacity for understanding, but also their scepticism. It is damaging to both the child and the research to treat them in such a way as to exclude them from the ultimate decision as to whether to become involved.

However, I do not suggest that children alone should make the decision for them to be involved in particular research, since there are certain safeguards that need necessarily be assured:

*When wishing to conduct research on 'special populations' such as...school children, it is necessary to obtain several levels of consent: 1) from the institution 2) from legal guardians and 3) from individuals*  
*Field and Morse (1994 p46)*

Indeed, it has been suggested that research techniques may be used only with the consent of 'all those concerned' with this phrase referring to all those immediately involved and those whose significance is only likely to emerge after the research commences (Morse p78). In practice, for Morse, this would mean explaining to pupils the aims of the investigation and asking for their co-operation where the consequences are likely to be contained within the classroom. Where the study is likely to have effect beyond the classroom, the Head Teacher and other teachers would be informed, including being given details of how the results will be used.

The BPA (1997) states that:

*3.2 Research with children or with participants who have impairments that will limit understanding and or communication such that they are unable to give their real consent requires special safe-guarding procedures*  
*BPA(1997 p8)*

Following this guideline, I disagree with Morse in that I believe consent should be sought from teachers and parents wherever children are directly involved in research. What is important to note here, is that schools inevitably have their own ethical responsibilities, and the Head of Department would not have given his permission for me to involve children without having formally sought the consent of parents. Therefore, all were informed of the purposes of the research and offered access to any final materials produced.

Inevitably, however, the issue of exactly what is meant by the phrase 'informed consent' needs to be addressed. As already implied, the meaning of this term is somewhat nebulous, rendering it, in practice, rather variable. In terms of the current research, the information given to the child, teacher and parent/guardian, I feel, required differentiation. I shall focus here initially however, on the nature of informed consent as directly concerns the child.

Whilst the phrase 'informed consent' does not have a specific nature, as Diener and Randall (1978p34) state, it does include several 'key elements':

- a) subjects learn that the research is voluntary*
  - b) they are informed about aspects of the research that might influence their decision to participate*
  - c) they exercise a continuous free choice to participate that lasts throughout the study*
- (See also Field and Morse 1994 p44, BSA 1996 pp2,3)*

Of paramount importance here is that all explanations are perspicuous to the child and that they are left with no doubt as to their right to genuinely exercise free will:

*...researchers who wish to retain ethical integrity will need to take positive steps to ensure, as far as possible, that pupils are not only formally free to decline to participate but feel free to say no*

*Denscombe and Aubrook (1992 p 130)*

In this section, I shall initially address issues associated with the information that is given to children in order that they might adequately consider their decision to become involved, before considering issues of the initial and continued voluntary involvement. The first difficulty here lies in the concept that the decision as to which aspects of the research are likely to shape a child's decision as to whether to participate is actually made by the researcher themselves. Essentially then, in order to be ethically sound and be seen to be so, it may appear that the researcher should perhaps inform potential subjects of all elements of the study, regardless of whether they would have deemed them significant.

However, this raises the question of to what extent the child will be able to understand or indeed, be interested in, or even confused by, all aspects of the research. The BPA (1997, 3.1 p8) suggest that as a safeguard the investigator should normally explain all other aspects of the research 'about which the participants enquire'. This would mean that the essential elements as perceived by the researcher are explained with those interested children being given the opportunity to receive an expansion of those basic elements where they request it, thus theoretically ensuring that sufficient, but not confusing, information is distributed.

In practice, I outlined the fact that I was a student from 'the institute' (a term colloquially used by the children to describe University College, Chichester), conducting a study on children's experiences of physical education. I emphasised the fact that I was really interested in the opinions of children rather than adults as often happens when we look at what goes on in school. Whilst children responded positively to the concept that they were going to be listened to, my first difficulty arose in describing what the research was actually be used for. I was afraid that the idea of working towards a doctorate had very little meaning to the students; indeed, at least initially, the research had to be conducted 'one step at a time' and may not have been used in that capacity. The best comparison I could make was to liken the research to doing a project for school, but for adults, which children did appear to find acceptable.

My second difficulty was that, since children were accustomed to meeting students from 'the institute' in a teacher training capacity, many found some difficulty in differentiating me from trainee teachers, particularly since I initially described myself as a 'student'. This was an issue to which I had not become alerted in my preliminary investigations in the four other secondary schools during the first phase of the research. However, prior to the third phase of the research one

child asked me when I would be teaching her and it became apparent that I needed to clarify the situation. I therefore adopted what I had anticipated might have been a rather formal term of 'researcher' to describe 'who' I was. What this chapter illustrated to me was that children's interpretation of what was and was not formal and potentially threatening, differed from mine.

Further to the concept that it may not be appropriate to detail the research in full to all participants would be the fact that in certain instances, this could be damaging to the child in itself. In particular, within my research, I had concerns regarding the selection procedures. Diener and Crandall (1978 p38) suggest that 'It is usually valuable to tell people how they were selected'. However, in the current study it was deemed inappropriate to explain the sampling procedure in full, particularly in the final stage of the research where I sought to interview children who represented a range of popularity. Therefore, for some children, knowledge here would have been potentially damaging to self-esteem.

In practice, I followed Denscombe and Aubrook's (1992) notion of obtaining 'adequate consent':

*The notion of 'adequate consent' reflects the fact that social researchers frequently deal with situations where full and whole-hearted consent may not be obtainable in practice (Denscombe and Aubrook 1992 p128)*

Additionally, I felt that I could not guarantee children's understanding, even where processes had been explained, since children's interpretations will vary, rendering it nonsensical to claim that full consent can have been achieved. Ellie was a year 8 student who was committed to her participation in the study, always keeping up to date with her diary and always attending group sessions. However, I am somewhat sceptical of a large part of her contribution, since underpinning many of her diary entries were indications that she was producing what she believed I was 'looking for' throughout her entries. Ellie used the language that might be seen in school reports on a child's performance. Expressions such as 'All though Ellie lost every game she showed good sportsmanship' (18<sup>th</sup> September 1998) and 'she did very well but could have tried harder' (21<sup>st</sup> October 1998) were commonplace. The nature of Ellie's entries will be discussed further in Chapter Eight, but from an ethical perspective, although she had expressed understanding of the purposes of the study, she possibly felt that there may have been ulterior intentions. I feel that this is a particular hazard with research that is seeking to ascertain children's personal opinions due to its historical rarity and I suggest it is to be anticipated that children remain sceptical of adults in such contexts.

In my study, once permission had been obtained from the gatekeepers within the school, written permission was sought from parents/guardians for the involvement of those children asked to keep diaries and/or be interviewed. However, parental consent would not be sought if the children themselves were not interested in becoming involved in the research. The key here was to ascertain

as far as possible (and not simply obtain), the consent and enthusiasm of the child without which the exercise would necessarily be rendered futile. Evidently certain misconceptions of a small number of children did not come to light until the research was already under way.

Whilst this consent was obtained from those involved in the study in a relatively active sense, the issue of informed consent as regards those simply forming part of class observations was more complex. The BPA (1997) recommend that:

*9.1 Studies based upon observation must respect the privacy and psychological well-being of the individuals studied. Unless those observed give their consent to being observed, observational research is only acceptable in situations where those observed would expect to be observed by strangers*  
BPA (1997 p10)

It would have been rather impractical for individual consent to be obtained for each child observed at any point. Therefore, in this case, permission from the teacher involved was deemed to suffice since conditions were such that classes were largely accustomed to being observed and the nature of the work here was deemed to be unintrusive and non-threatening. This was not however, to deny responsibility to all children within an observed setting; the researcher is believed to have had an implied contract as to the welfare of the children and sought to maintain integrity with regard to all those directly and indirectly involved.

In whatever form is best achievable, gaining 'informed consent' specifically with children ensures the following:

- 1) That the child is taking part in the research on a genuinely voluntary basis
- 2) That those children who believe they may find participation in the study distressing or damaging in any way may refuse to participate
- 3) The professionalism of the researcher is upheld

It must also be acknowledged, that failure to use informed consent has further implications for the validity of the study since involvement under any kind of duress will not produce data true to the child's feelings.

### **The 'right to refuse'**

Despite efforts to clarify details of the study in order that children might make an informed choice as to their participation, it is still extremely difficult for the researcher to genuinely detach themselves from their own instilled perceptions of social hierarchy. It is very often the case that, as

adults, we still implicitly anticipate that children will do as we want them to, even where we formally give them the option not to do so. As Denscombe and Aubrook (1992) acknowledge, in their case:

*The tenor of the responses from all schools was that it was taken for granted by the pupils that they would co-operate and refusal to co-operate was not an option that sprang readily to mind. The participation, it seemed, was 'assumed'.  
Denscombe and Aubrook (1992 p 125)*

One central feature of informed consent being genuinely informed is that the child must *know* they have choices as to whether to take part (Greig and Taylor 1999 p149). This raises the question of to what extent the child may feel at liberty to decline to participate and includes issues of the subject's ability to refuse participation to any degree, including simply a partial sense, for example in not answering specific questions, at any stage. Embarking on a project does not necessarily imply it will be followed through to fruition.

As has been established, the potentially hierarchical relationship between teacher and child and researcher and child is problematic and therefore requires that informed consent is sought; however, the fact that much educational research takes place within the school itself compounds this structure. Essential here is the awareness that 'in the school context, young people are something of a captive audience. They rarely feel at liberty to say 'no' to requests for involvement in research' (Denscombe and Aubrook 1992 p129). It may be very difficult for the child, in situations where the researcher has obtained consent from the teacher, to subsequently exercise a choice not to participate.

In the study here, any participation that were to take place disguising a reluctance to be a true part of the research would surely be counter-productive. Information given may be mendacious and ultimately neither subject nor researcher would benefit. Therefore, every attempt was made to ensure that the children took part on a truly voluntary basis. It was the researcher, and not the teacher who informally invited the individual child or group of children to become involved (although the initial meeting was, in some cases, arranged by the teacher). Interviews were held in areas of the school where teaching did not take place, and wherever children expressed a reluctance to continue participating I did not attempt to convince them otherwise. Additionally, although researchers may normally seek to actively elicit answers from their subjects in all cases, where the child appeared uncomfortable with a question, I moved the interview onto another subject. This was particularly an issue where I was discussing significant peers with the child, and especially, those with whom they said they would rather not work. In some cases, children had difficulty in articulating their answers, or simply preferred to withdraw from the possibility of such discussion by stating that they didn't want to 'be horrible or anything' (Calvin, Year 8 individual interview 10<sup>th</sup> October 1999). In such instances the issue was not pursued.



This highlights the issue already identified: informed consent needs here to be extended throughout the study and recognised as having an 'evolving nature' (Payne 1987 p53) and may need to be re-obtained at various stages of the work:

*I (v) ...it may be necessary for consent to be regarded, not as a once-and-for-all...event, but as a process, subject to renegotiation over time  
BSA (1996p2)*

With the study here, as new phases of the research were entered on, consent was sought, not only formally but informally, in that I would analyse the nature of children's contribution and seek to identify any indication of reluctance or misunderstanding.

It was essential that the children should feel free to withdraw from the research at any time (Field and Morse 1994 p46). This does, however, need to be made clear from the outset, following BPA (1997) guidelines:

*6.1 At the onset of the investigation investigators should make plain to participants their right to withdraw from the research at any time, irrespective of whether or not payment or other inducement had been offered. It is recognised that this may be difficult in certain observational or organizational settings, but nevertheless the investigator must attempt to ensure that participants (including children) know of their right to withdraw. When testing children, avoidance of the testing situation may be taken as evidence of failure to consent to the procedure and should be acknowledged  
BPA (1997 p9)*

If children expressed a wish to withdraw from the study at any stage, they were not questioned. Similarly, if a child simply failed to turn up to a meeting, although I would enquire after them as part of an established relationship, this would be taken as sufficient to indicate that consent to participate had been withdrawn. Indeed, the way in which children withdrew was indicative that there was still a degree of difficulty experienced by the child in withdrawing from a situation set up by an adult. Diener and Crandall's (1978) comments apply not only at the commencement of the study, but throughout:

*...Children will usually be willing to participate if the research does not seem threatening and is described by a friendly researcher. However, a child's reluctance to participate should be respected, even if his fears seem groundless to the experimenter.  
Diener and Crandall ( p 47)*

This leads to further consideration that the child should be free also to limit their participation at any stage. Diener and Crandall took 'a willingness to answer the questions' as 'adequate assurance of informed consent on survey or questionnaire studies', but stated that people should be informed that they may choose not to answer sensitive questions...if these are included in the survey (Diener and Crandall 1978 p 38). I suggest that where interviews take place, such issues are sensitised since children are in a context directly facing the researcher and the ease with which they might 'refuse'

may be compromised. Therefore, it is necessary, as I have already indicated, for the researcher to be sensible to the way in which answers are constructed, identifying and empathising with any awkwardness, moving the interview on where necessary. Thus, the child may participate in a partial sense and retain a degree of control over the research process, as recommended by Morse, in order to build trust between researcher and researched (Morse 1994p78).

Even at the completion of the research, subjects should have the opportunity to withdraw their participation retrospectively:

*6.2 In the light of experience of the investigation, or as a result of debriefing, the participant has the right to withdraw retrospectively any consent given, and to require that their own data, including recordings, be destroyed  
BPA (1997 p9)*

Essentially, data remain the property of those from whom they originate (Morse 1994p78). In practice, no children requested that their information should not be used. It is my hope that this was because they were happy for their data to form part of the study. However, I do acknowledge that the children may have had great difficulty in withdrawing their contribution at this point—something that would appear far more dramatic than simply withdrawing from the study as it progressed.

Related to this, however, is the further consideration that, as researchers deepen their relationship with subjects, reaching a certain state of trust, the subjects may almost ‘forget’ that they are involved in a piece of research. Subsequently they may disclose information that, in practice, they would not wish to be included in a study. The researcher here has to heighten sensitivities to become aware of the cues that precede such disclosure. Field and Morse (1994 p46) have suggested that precursors such as ‘Between you and me...’ must be taken to indicate that the informant does not consider that the information to follow is being proffered with implied consent. In the current study, such occasions led to enhancing the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher but material was not included directly in any report unless specific permission was given to do so. On other occasions, statements were made that appeared more open, despite being made outside of what the child would have believed to be the immediate research context. In these cases, they were used within the research only where the child was actively involved in the study and explicitly aware of why I was attending the school.

### **Anonymity**

Further to the concept of ‘informed consent’ there is general agreement among researchers that subjects should retain anonymity (Diener and Crandall 1978, Clandinin and Connelly 1994, Woods 1990, Waring 1995, Stern 1985, Payne 1987). BSA (1996) guidelines suggest that:

*3.b)The identities and research records of those participating in research should be kept confidential whether or not an explicit pledge of confidentiality has been given (BSA 1996 p2)*

Similarly, BPA (1997) directives state:

*7.1 Subject to the requirements of legislation, including the Data Protection Act, information obtained about a participant during an investigation is confidential unless otherwise agreed in advance  
BPA (1997 p10)*

In my study explicit assurance was given that all participants in the study would retain confidentiality. This was much to the chagrin of Mike, year 7, who was rather disappointed that he would not be identified. However, neither schools nor individuals would be named nor information shared where subsequent identification of or inferences about the individual or school could be made. As the BPA (1997) warn:

*8.4 In research involving children, great caution should be exercised when discussing the results with parents, teachers or others in loco parentis, since evaluative statements may carry unintended weight  
BPA (1997p10)*

Difficulty does arise however, when considering the concept of confidentiality as regards group interviews. Whilst the researcher can assure anonymity outside of the immediate research context as far as they personally are concerned, there are limitations to doing so as regards what others in the group may disclose:

*Confidentiality is an issue which needs to be thought through when considering group interviews. It is clearly more difficult, if not impossible, for the confidentiality of a child's remarks to be respected if these are made in a group, rather than an individual interview (Lewis 1992 p418)*

Emphasis may well be placed by the researcher on the necessity for the subjects to keep all discussion that takes place in the group interview context 'to themselves'. It was possible in the current research to create an ethos of being part of a special 'club' focussing on the exclusivity to be maintained by not disclosing what went on within our meetings. It may also be assumed however, that the children were unlikely in this context to disclose any information where disclosure beyond the immediate vicinity might be potentially damaging.

### **Incentive, motivation and obligation**

Ethics concerning the involvement of individuals as research subjects can be further complicated by the introduction of incentives. Obviously, to be involved in research, an individual must be motivated in some sense and continued motivation to participate needs to be maintained by the researcher where children are involved over a period of time. Diener and Crandall (1978 p49) state

that 'incentives to participate ought not be too strong' but acknowledge that in turn, this raises the issue of what kind of incentive might be deemed as 'too strong'. For the purposes of the study, 'too strong' was deemed to be any motivation that takes such a form as to compromise the child's right to withdraw from the study.

As detailed in Chapter Five, I sought to create a kind of 'club' atmosphere in the second phase of the research where children would come along to talk about their experiences of physical education whilst sharing soft drinks and doughnuts. Herein it was hoped that the children might feel some kind of privilege in taking part, and be rewarded, albeit in a small way. However, the appearance to me of doughnuts and drink being fairly innocuous may have been a greater incentive to children than I had anticipated. Mike, year 7, for example commented to me that his main reason for coming was for the food and drink. This was evidently not a particular problem as we established an essentially symbiotic relationship; however, it did raise questions as to what the children, particularly the younger ones, might sacrifice in coming. However, since there were some children who did choose to withdraw from the study, I argue that the incentives here did not compromise the child's contribution.

In addition, as Woods (1977 and 1990) has indicated, if under the conception that the teacher would particularly approve of their involvement, children will attempt to use the fact that they contributed to the study as a lever with teachers. It is therefore possible that there is some cost to the teachers whose pupils are involved in educational research. However, with my work, although teachers would have been aware of which children had been invited to take part in the study, they were not made aware of exactly who had chosen to actually do so. Therefore, unless the child directly sought to 'use' their involvement, it was unlikely that they would be able to do so. Additionally, since teachers were not those who had invited children to take part, such an association is unlikely to have been made. Ultimately I feel however, that there would be a certain naïvety in suggesting that the particular teachers at Hansford Park would be manipulated in this way.

### **Being reflective**

Although I took as many precautions as feasible prior to the research, as I have already indicated, certain issues did not arise until the research was already underway. As I progressed through the research, certain ethical issues that I had not been able to anticipate arose. In particular there was the supply of supplementary information, offered by staff, regarding the personal disposition of some of the children concerned. This was of particular concern where family conditions may have been disclosed. Whether this involved children who were directly contributing to the research, or those who were incidentally involved due to their participation in an observed lesson, there was a degree of doubt as to the way this information might be ethically admissible to the study.

Such information was inevitably 'useful' to me in interpreting behaviour or comment, and in understanding the nature of the groups I was working with, as well as some of the difficulties faced in their daily teaching by teachers. However, the child could not be made aware that I knew of this information and therefore could not be deemed to have given consent for its use. Since such information was also of a sensitive nature, it might also have been likely that consent to use it would not be given. Additionally, any disclosure as to the source of details would potentially damage the child's relationship with the teacher, even where the specific teacher was not identified. Such information was therefore used to improve my awareness of the social issues concerning the children and teachers but not directly quoted in my findings.

Yet ethical considerations here are necessarily similar to the situation where children would disclose information in 'asides' as already discussed. Whilst here it is clearly not the child who offered the material about themselves and therefore in ethical terms it should necessarily be discounted from the study, once I had heard it, it would inevitably colour my interpretation of 'events'. Therefore, in recognition of the tension here, I acknowledge that such information would have been incorporated in an interpretive capacity, but no direct reference will be made to any such comment. What this situation did highlight was the need for me to constantly review the ethical approach that I was taking. In many instances it may be the case that approaches need to be reviewed and amended in order to safeguard subjects of the study from all perspectives:

*2.1 ...The essential principle is that the investigation should be considered from the standpoint of all participants; foreseeable threats to their psychological well-being, health, values or dignity should be eliminated.*  
*BPA(1997 p7)*

The issues that were raised particularly here, in practice, were those of the impact that the child's involvement may have had upon those others who would inevitably be discussed during proceedings. Specifically, there was potential for the teachers to feel particularly vulnerable. Although teachers clearly understood that there was an absolute need for confidentiality for the children, the fact that data was not disclosed to them meant that they were exposed in a way unusually outside of their direct control.

Inevitably, therefore, permission granted by teachers, and in particular the Head of Department for me to involve children in this way was necessarily with this knowledge. With the relative uniqueness of such a situation, there was inevitably a degree of curiosity admitted to by the teachers. In many circumstances, there would be a danger here that pressure might be placed on the children to disclose the content of their diaries, our meetings and interviews. To my knowledge this did not occur, and neither did the teachers place any pressure on me to similarly disclose information. I remain in the teachers' debt for their demonstration of such a degree of professionalism.

In terms of the direct involvement of teachers as 'informants' in this study, through their permission for me to observe and interview them, standard ethical procedures were followed here. In addition to those followed with the children, teachers were sent copies of their transcripts and invited to comment on them, withdrawing their contribution or any aspect should they have desired to do so. The department was also sent copies of published material so that they were aware of how the research was developing.

In general, throughout the research I sought to be true to the guidelines above following a path of constant self-criticism, using not only my own perceptions but information provided by the subjects themselves. My aim was, as far as possible, to ensure that all subjects participated in research on a genuinely free basis, as far as possible without compromising any personal values or beliefs.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### FINDINGS

In this chapter, I shall consider the issues raised by the children in diaries that informed this research. Beginning with comments that children made echoing the findings of other research, I move on to discuss the foundations of such contributions that arose as the study progressed, not so much from 'physical education' in the abstract, but physical education as a highly social phenomenon.

My analysis commences by raising general issues concerning the nature of the research. I then move on to outline the general categories of information proffered by the children, which it is possible to align with other research in physical education. Themes followed in comments referred to competition, the sex-typing of activities and behaviour, the relationship with the teacher, and the child's perceptions of their own abilities in relation to the perception others have of them. However, underpinning all of these issues is the basis of the nature of comments referring to inter-peer relationships. It is this aspect of physical education, that, for children involved in this study, predominated in determining their 'experience' of the subject. This therefore, provides the foundation of my final analysis here and in the following chapter.

I have chosen quotes from the various diaries and interviews to represent contributions made by the children as a whole. I seek to be as true to the intentions of the 'speaker' as possible, retaining their original wording. However, words alone may misrepresent comments as it is the contextual basis that is indicative of meaning. Therefore, I build into my analysis the external context within which comments were made; both situational and as regards the child as I knew them. Inevitably, then my analysis will contain certain biases because, as discussed in Chapters Five and Six, it is impossible to extricate my 'self' from my work. Again, this is an inherent feature of research and as such is unavoidable within the context of this particular study.

All references use pseudonyms with initials indicating 'who' is speaking. 'SG' refers to myself, and the first letter of the chosen pseudonym, to the child or teacher. Quotes taken from interviews and diaries are direct, with no amendments to spelling or grammar.

#### **The nature of the research findings**

Within the research as a whole, all year groups were represented. However, because of the restrictions as to when I might attend the school, imposed by my own circumstances, not all years were involved in all aspects of the research. However, both key stages were represented in each stage.

I commence here, by acknowledging what I term the duality of the research as a whole, and in particular, the method of diary keeping. As I have already detailed, when the children were keeping their diaries, they were writing of their experiences in the vernacular. However, what was perhaps inevitable, was that the children were formatting diaries in order to pass on certain messages to me. In the first instance they were writing about incidents within physical education that were extant in affecting their experience of the subject; however, I, as a reader and researcher was involved as the third person. Therefore, several different forms of relationship between diary keeper and myself can be seen. For example, children may have looked to me to alter their situation, which at times took the form of a direct note to me:

*P.S. Can't we have more exciting apparatus!  
(Alison, year 8, diary entry, 17<sup>th</sup> September 1998)*

This entry appeared to be a little tongue-in-cheek- perhaps seeking my indulgence and hoping I might pass on the message to teachers. Other entries, because of the nature of the child making them, were, I feel, expressed with a greater degree of intent: to make me aware of situations that the child may have felt were obscured to me. In the following instance, Andrew almost directly invites me to observe the environment as he perceives it:

*Is it just me or is Mr Mitchell byast to the girls?  
(Andrew, year 8, diary entry, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1998)*

There was, therefore, a kind of plurality in the nature of what the children said in that they wrote both for themselves and me. This was something that I needed to bear in mind when analysing the comments made by all children; what was important was not simply what was being said, and how it was being expressed, but also to whom it was actually being directed.

Even though I existed as an interpreter of the children's views, it was clear that, in most cases, children felt able to use their own language as I had assured they would be. Sally's first entry may have been to shock, but contained an element of trust that was subsequently maintained in her entries:

*Well it is ok but I don't like the teacher or some of the people in the team, Some of the People gives me shit and I don't play right as I have to put up with the shit from them  
(Sally, year 11, diary entry, 24<sup>th</sup> September 1998)*

Children's freedom of expression was not, however, limited only to language and often alternative means of communicating within their diaries was adopted.

On occasion, children may have used the opportunity to discuss certain matters using a manner that they would not normally be 'legitimately' allowed to adopt:



*Today we used apparatus...My group went on the same one twice we had to go round and make our own balances up when the blomnin teacher kept stopping us ever 5 mins.  
(Nicky, year 7, diary entry, 11<sup>th</sup> March 1999)*

Nicky uses this informal language applied to her teacher after two months of having been involved in the research. Therefore, since this is also the first occasion on which she used it I might assume that she has taken this time to build trust in me. Additionally, her 'expletive' is relatively mild, and would perhaps not cause great offence if observed outside of our relationship. Neither might it be conceived as potentially damaging to my perception of Nicky as she would have cultivated it in our meetings.

Although this use of language was appreciated as a best form of expression for the child, on occasion, even free narration did not suffice to articulate thought adequately for them. Whilst the children initially involved in the research were keeping written diaries, it soon emerged that they would not confine their thoughts to text alone. In practice, many of the pupils used what I shall term 'metanarratives' of doodles, combinations of capital letters and differently coloured pens to emphasise certain elements of experience.

### **Metanarratives**

The manipulation of writing style in terms of use of capital letters and highlighter pens along with pictorial representations indicated the presence of things not said. Although within this study language was used as the main symbol of communication, there were occasions on which the child apparently felt words alone inadequate for what they were trying to express, or, indeed the child could not access.

Some metanarratives took the simple form of use of capitalisation:

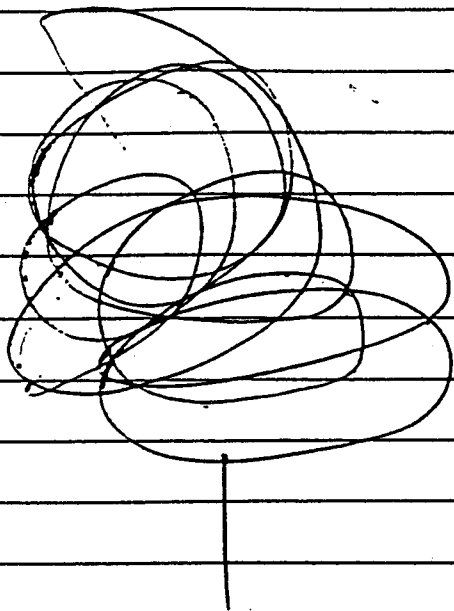
*I know we have to do warm ups but I find that Mr Mitchell (especially when I do hockey)  
or any other teacher goes a little bit Over the Top  
(Alison, year 8, diary entry, 7<sup>th</sup> October 1998)*

*..in our recent gym lesson all we did was put a sequence together and make it look so  
called GRACEFUL FOR GODS SAKE!  
(Julie, year 7, diary entry, 27<sup>th</sup> January 1999)*

Others utilised coloured highlighter pens in combination with this:

*I hatE Mr MITCHELL  
(Becky, year 7, diary entry, 27th January 1999, written in yellow highlighter)*

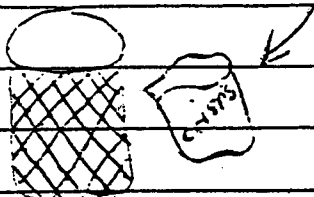
Alternatively pictorial illustrations played their part:



a picture of -  
What I think of  
Our dance

*(Jane, year 8, diary entry, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1998)*

Many of these entries, served to straightforwardly draw my attention to particular issues that the child considered significant and aided expression where words were not easily accessed. Other similar entries carried greater significance, giving insight into emotion that was clearly not expressed anywhere else. Ellie (year 8) expressed her feelings about PE in the following manner:



A wasteless time of an hour.

*(Ellie, year 8, diary entry, 11<sup>th</sup> November 1998)*

It is my interpretation, that Ellie felt unable to articulate any genuine thought in words. Most of her entries appeared to incorporate some expression of conformance to what she perhaps perceived to be the expectation of teachers, despite having received assurances that the diary would remain confidential. What can be seen in Ellie's diary is repeated reflection of the ethos promulgated by the department and with only two exceptions entries concurred with the following pattern:

*Badminton is one of Ellies favourite games she thoroughly enjoys . All though Ellie lost every game she showed good sportmanship  
(Ellie, year 8, diary entry, 18<sup>th</sup> September 1998)*

Ellie would begin by stating one point regarding the game that took place in the lesson and then make one evaluative comment using what I would call the language of 'reports'. She often 'showed good sportmanship' as above, or 'could have tried harder' or had indeed, 'tried (her) very best'. This inevitably raises issues of the validity of her contribution, and the fact that, for whatever reason, Ellie could not quite expose her true feelings in all entries. It may have been that her contributions were formed in this way because she had opted to write in the third person, and had therefore adopted the role of the teacher here as the most likely third person to be assessing her performance. This does, however, place even greater value on those points at which she did seem to allow her 'guard' to fall. The use of metanarrative was one way in which Ellie evidently felt comfortable doing so.

The majority of metanarratives were, however, used by children in years 7 and 8 and rarely by boys. Although some girls in year 11 used doodles in their work, no boys did so. Where doodles were incorporated they were far rarer than with younger years and generally used as an illustration of what had been said in the main text rather than to represent part or all of the main text. Children of all years did include doodles that were unrelated to their main text, but served to personalise their diaries.

As would be anticipated, there were other patterns of differentiation in the nature of contributions made by children according to their age. Children were grouped according to their year of schooling for the research since this is reflective of the way children are taught, and therefore experience, physical education. Whilst year groups are clearly not homogenous, there were some emergent patterns of differences between ages. The nature of reporting altered in a general sense as pupils progressed through the school. This is evidently the result of the impact that schooling and schooling within physical education has upon children as well as the 'natural' maturation process.

### **Variations subject to age**

The first point to note is that children in the lower school tended to be more egocentric than in the upper school. When asked what changes they might seek to make to the PE curriculum as they experienced it, conversation often took the following form:

*SG: If you were to take over the PE department; would you change anything about it?  
H: Yeah, I'd make everything what I wanted.  
(Helen and Jane, year 7, pair interview, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1999)*

In years 7,8 and 9 pupils tended to suggest that they would either always get their own way or accede to the demands of others; rarely did they show any instances of negotiation occurring. However, by year 11 some of the children appear more ready to rationalise situations and have developed the concept of sharing and exchanging ideas:

*SG: Do people like listening to your ideas?  
G: Yeah they do and then if they have an idea then we mix. Like we all put ideas in...  
(Gill, year 11, interview, 26<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

Nevertheless, it is still clear that not all pupils are prepared to engage in interchange and will still pursue the defence of their own will. Gill continues:

*G: ...some groups find it difficult because someone always like to be in charge.  
SG: Are you not tempted to do that?  
G: I do have a tendency to, you know, take control but I was with Carrie and she does as well, but we would like compete now and again but one of us would step back and say well, my idea's not as good.  
(Gill, year 11, interview, 26<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

Younger children also had a tendency to refer to the most recent past in order to formulate their perceptions as they could not draw on long term experience:

*SG...do you choose who you work with?  
M: Not normally, no. Not today we didn't.  
(Nicky and Michelle, year 7, pair interview, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1999)*

By the end of the second term in year 7 the students had experienced a variety of groupings both of their choice and allocated by the teacher or being arrived at through constrained choice. However, Michelle here applies the most recent situation to her concept of the 'norm' and is not subsequently contradicted by Nicky. Nicky used what happened that morning to illustrate a broader point. However, because the children experience a whole variety of ways in which working groups are arrived at, I infer that most recent occurrences dominate her recollection as a whole. Therefore, some of the situations described by younger children perhaps referred to more transient situations than the older children, who would rationalise a similar situation in more enduring terms since there had been occasion for the modification of particular perceptions.

Indeed, the proclivity to generalise from limited experience, from an egocentric perspective, carried over into the way younger children would rationalise a hypothetical issue, that would, in practice have wide reaching implications. Here, children displayed a tendency to think of themselves or

groups they associated with first and foremost and in some cases as a sole consideration. For Mike, the interests of his largest reference group, 'boys' took precedence when asked how he might alter the content of the PE curriculum:

*M: I'd have girls as like netball and boys; they've got a choice; either the weights room or hockey or basketball or badminton.  
(Mike, year 7, individual interview, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1999)*

By year 9, a slightly more sophisticated presentation of personal interest can be seen since pupils present their own desires as being potentially for the common good:

*S: I think that you should not have to do like something... some teachers like push you really hard so that you get really good but some people just can't do stuff and you just shouldn't have to be made to do it really well...  
SG: How would you change PE then, to help out in that way?  
S: Try and...because the good ones always play against the good ones, try and mix it a bit and get the good ones to play against the slightly weaker ones to help them and not just to win...  
..you pick someone that...like your friend and you play with them because you're like the same level. But your friend might be really rubbish like you are and you're just hitting it and it's landing on the floor all the time  
(Claire, year 9, individual interview, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1999)*

Since younger children remain ostensibly powerless, by virtue of their age and status, when compared with those who might make curriculum decisions, it may be argued that the concept of changing the physical education programme was fantastic, and when posed as a possibility it deserved a fantastic response. Additionally, older children were expected by the teachers to display a more responsible attitude towards the welfare of others. Therefore, Claire gives an answer conformant to what might be expected. However, it is clear that Claire does not consider herself an able player and, therefore, a degree of self-concern is still seen although in modified form. Essentially, what children appear to learn in their presentation is not to appear selfish in their intention; a factor that is exposed openly by younger children. Therefore, what appears to occur as children aged, is not so much a change in intention, but a change in presentation.

## **Competition**

The apparent retention of central issues across age groups that is differentiated largely through the way in which issues are articulated, is evident in children's representation of 'competition'. 'Competition' has been a recurrent theme in the analysis of physical education, focussing on questions as to whether it might be inherently pejorative or constructive. In the study I found that concepts of competition were expressed as significant at both key stages but the nature of expression here differed. With Key Stage three, comments tended to literally report the winning or losing of games, detailing both the score and particularly whether the writer was the successful scorer:

*What we done in pe is I played netball and me and two girls played these other girls and we beat Them 8-0 I scored 5 and they scored the rest  
(Mike, year 7, diary entry, 25<sup>th</sup> February 1999)*

*We were the reds and we were brill. We drew twice and won once in which I scored a goal so that ended the day well  
(Sarah, year 8, diary entry, 18<sup>th</sup> September 1998)*

Older children tended to note competition not in terms of whether they had won or lost, but where it was organised by the teacher, more in terms of the co-operation that it fostered between individuals when working as part of a team:

*We communicate well in PE as a group eg calling for the ball when fielding etc  
(Alan, year 11, diary entry, 17<sup>th</sup> September 1998)*

Indeed, children would create competitive situations even where they do not ‘naturally’ occur:

*I chose the weights room because I like competing against my mate  
(Alan, year 11, diary entry, 24<sup>th</sup> September 1998)*

What is clear, however, is that competition is perceived positively where the child is able to control the environment where it occurs; Alan continues:

*...the other choice was basketball which I hate because of the way it is played, speed, noise etc  
(Alan, year 11, diary entry, 24<sup>th</sup> September 1998)*

Therefore, the notion of ‘competition’ does not exist in an abstract sense, since its nature is determined by the context within which it is presented rather than any inherent characteristics.

Indeed, a similar scenario occurs when considering the views that the children expressed regarding particular activities in that it was often the contextual presentation in term of physical and social environment that presented the determining factors of like or dislike for the child.

### **Aspects of physical education activity**

Whilst children would discuss issues of ‘physical education’, their comments would often refer to incidents using the specifics of a particular activity. On occasion, the activity presented the context for conveying a particular incident, on others they would be used to distinguish between different aspects of physical education:

*PE is crap! but dance and net ball are cool  
(Julie, year 7, diary entry, 15<sup>th</sup> January 1999)*

Although I shall later argue that it is not an activity per se that is the greatest determinant of a child's experience, there are certain factors that children associate with particular activities that affect their disposition towards 'PE'.

Many of the positive and negative comments expressed regarding particular activities within physical education focus more on issues associated with that activity rather than the activity itself. For example, Rebecca dislikes hockey as an activity in part because of the weather:

*...I hated it because it was cold...*  
(Rebecca, year 11, individual interview, 10<sup>th</sup> December 1999)

One way in which the current study's findings concurred with those of Williams (1999) was in the suggestion that some children disliked activities such as dance because of the outdated music that is used in schools. At Hansford Park the situation was reversed; all of the music that they incorporated into their lessons, observed in years 7 and 8 only, was either current or recent chart music, and children made positive comments regarding this:

*Dance is good because in one old school did old fasion music and didn't do very good music*  
(Belinda, year 7, diary entry, 21<sup>st</sup> January 1999)

*I thought dance was going to be awful but I really enjoyed it, it was cool! And we got to dance to one of my best bands STEPS:5,6,7,8*  
(Julie, year 7, diary entry, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1999)

In fact, in practice, the dance often took precedence in the children's mind over the physical activity involved itself:

*On Monday I thought dance was ok but some of the bits were quite boring I like the band Steps 5,6,7,8*  
(Felix, year 7, diary entry, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1999)

*On Thursday dance was quite cool because the songs were brilliant*  
(Felix, year 7, diary entry, 12<sup>th</sup> February 1999)

In fact, all positive comments made regarding dance referenced the music or the fact, that ultimately, on completion of the dance, the children were allowed to bring in clothes to 'dress up' and perform their dance to the rest of the class in:

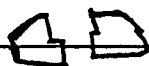
*D: I like dancing.. you can dress up*  
*J: Oh yes.. But in trampolining it's quite good ...you can do somersaults*  
*D: In our dance we're doing something about boxing and I've got boxing gloves but nobody else has and I can't put them on...but I would like to but... I don't know*  
*J: I'm bringing a towel and bottle...a white bottle*  
(David and John, year 7, pair interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1999)

Other children indicated the importance of dressing up by making it the whole focus of their comment:

~~4~~

Thursday

its the morning before  
dance I'm in my room  
and I've decided to  
wear my peddle pushers  
Small top and socks



*(Jane, year 8, diary entry, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1998)*

Whilst the fact that the contextual basis of dance appeared to take precedence over the physicality of dance as an activity, the presentation of the activity in this school, was highly successful. The only remotely negative comment regarding dance related to embarrassment in performing the dance, having to work with the opposite sex (as I shall discuss later in this chapter) or being unsatisfied with the quality of their work and striving to improve it.

Perhaps it is arguable that the exploitation of popular music in the manner it was used at Hansford Park might actually constrain the creativity of the children. There may be, and indeed in some cases was, a tendency to copy the movement portrayed on television. However, the whole success



of dance appeared to lie in the school's ability to 'tap into' the cultural basis of the children's lives outside of the lesson in areas where they are able to exercise choice. Nevertheless, in some activities, it was necessary to contravene many of the cultural biases, particularly those over, as I shall discuss, roles of the sexes that exist in the children's group culture. Within dance, however, these were positively exploited.

Whilst the current predominance of dance bands in chart music facilitates the presentation of dance in this way, it is, by the same phenomenon rendered somewhat vulnerable to the whims of the popular music 'scene'. In this sense then, the dance lesson provides a creative outlet for the children albeit within the framework of their own cultural constraints. However, what is of significance here, is the recognition not only of the power of culture in reaching children, but also the need to give them freedom of expression within their own youth culture that is so often trivialised and devalued by the formalities of education.

Additionally, because the department managed to tap into 'youth culture' they managed to reach an 'audience' of boys not perhaps traditionally associated with enjoying dance in school:

*In second period we changed from basketball to Really enjoyable dance I really don't think anyone even the boys were thinking if I have to show something and screw up every one will be watching me  
(Helen, year 7, diary entry, 1<sup>st</sup> February 1999)*

### **Sex stereotyping and activities**

However, in other activities, there was clearly a division in the children's perspective created by the association of one or other sex with a particular sport or activity that existed at school:

*SG There must be a reason why you like basketball..  
M: It's just like ...I dunno, I just likes it 'cos it's just like a boys' game sort of thing innit?  
Gymnastics is like a girls' like thing  
SG: So you don't like gym?  
M: No, not much  
SG: You were good in gym this morning though..  
M: (Laughs) Don't make me laugh (looks embarrassed)  
SG: Why? When you were doing balances 'squashed' under all those people...(both laughing)  
M: Yeah, I was like that (demonstrates and laughs)  
SG: Didn't you enjoy doing that though?  
M: Yeah, I enjoyed doing that, yeah.  
SG: Is that different then, to gym you've done with apparatus then?  
M: Yeah..I don't like that sort of gym.  
SG: Why don't you like it?  
M: Cos it's girls' like...it's a girls' like thing  
SG: Why do you think it's a girls' thing?  
M: Cos like they're good at gymnastics  
SG: So, you think girls are better at it?  
M: Yeah  
SG: Oh right...  
(Mike, year 7, individual interview, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1999)*

Here Mike explains a like and dislike of certain activities by distinguishing them according to which sex he believes they are most appropriate. However, his comments contradict the experience he had of gymnastics earlier that day. Mike, therefore, needs to redefine what he means by 'gymnastics' to support his argument. However, despite his argument, Mike is an active participant in the activity he suggests he does not enjoy. The origins of this child's desired association with 'boys' sports' and active disassociation with 'girls' sports' appear to be embedded in his being perceived by others in a highly macho role; in particular his involvement in boxing training outside of school underpinned his reputation:

*N: When we first started (at the school) he was like all secret and stuff but then... 'cos he writ this poem and Miss Field (English teacher) was really surprised at it because it was about boxing and stuff and I think that's why he started to come out, you know (Nicky and Michelle, year 7, pair interview, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1999)*

Still awaiting his first fight because of his age, Mike's involvement in boxing perhaps remained as yet 'unproven' but was sufficient to impress upon his peers his machismo, which demanded reinforcement through his generalised behaviour and attitude.

In Mike's case, as far as he is concerned his attitude remains relatively innocuous, since it did not appear to have as yet impacted upon his actual participation, other than a general need to maintain overt display of a particular attitude. However, what are of concern are those instances of sexist opinion that result in the exclusion of others from direct learning contexts. Mike's opinions are not really a problem in practice for himself, but they are a genuine problem for others. The key is that such attitudes are often seen by children to interfere with the way in which they interact:

*M: In basketball most of the boys think they're really good and they don't give the girls a chance to get the ball or shoot or anything; you know.*

*N: They say it's a boys' game.*

*(Nicky and Michelle, year 7, pair interview, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1999)*

Therefore, the belief that girls are unable to adequately take part in a particular sport effectively concludes in their being unable to do so because they are physically excluded. Access to space and equipment becomes highly restricted, limiting the practice that 'girls' have and therefore their development. Thus a self-perpetuating situation is constructed. Such attitudes appeared to form part of a broader youth culture within which children tended to rationalise opinions. Nicky and Michelle go on to state:

*M: They think it's a boys' game cos they see it on t.v. and they never see no girls do it.*

...

*N: You don't see any girls play football and you don't see any boys play netball.*

*SG: Do you think that's what makes a difference then; whether they see it on t.v. or not?*

*M and N: Yeah*

*(Michelle and Nicky, year 7, pair interview, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1999)*

Whether Nicky was referring to televised sport or sport generally, it is clear that the girls do not feel exposed to any participation that challenges sex stereotypes. Similarly, this also appeared to be the situation for the boys. The way however, that this school differs is that physical education is taught in mixed sex groups and therefore, in this way, children will ultimately be exposed to similar physical education activities that may serve to combat these stereotypical attitudes seen in year 7.

For others, their attitude is so deeply embedded that they remain unable to articulate why they feel as they do:

*Felix explained he liked football because boys are 'good at it'. Asked if girls could be good at it, he said 'No' because 'it's a boys' game'. Asked why he thought it was a boys' game but he could not articulate an answer other than 'it just is'.  
(Year 7, group interview notes, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1999)*

Within the department staff sought to combat such stereotypical attitude, and in the lower school all lessons were taught in mixed-sex groups. There were therefore no forthcoming complaints regarding girls or boys being able to participate in non-sex typical activities of the like that have been seen in other studies (Williams and Bedward 1999). However, there was no shortage of complaints regarding the way in which girls and boys participated. What occurred at Hansford Park was illustrative of access to an activity alone being insufficient to counter stereotypical attitudes and behaviour.

### **Sex stereotyping and behaviour**

Interestingly, children of both sexes were in agreement on several issues regarding boys' and girls' behaviour in physical education. These factors concerned boys' tendency to 'muck about', girls' tendency to work on task and girls' tendency to 'boss'. Nicky's comment illustrates all three issues:

*Last Wednesday we had P.E it was dance. We had to get into mixed groups it was horrible, but we only had two boys. We were making a dance up to music given to us. We didn't do very well because boys were mucking about, but me and a friend took charge and we eventually got there.  
(Nicky, year 7, diary entry, 13<sup>th</sup> January 1999)*

What also became clear was that boys felt compelled to join in the behaviour they were associated with:

*M: ...I like working with girls cos the boys always muck around  
SG: If you're in a boys' group, is it the other boys that muck around?  
M: Yeah  
SG: What do you do when they muck around?  
M: I join in.  
(Mike, year 7, individual interview, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1999)*

I should not necessarily expect Mike to concede that it might be he who would lead any mucking around. Indeed I should not seek to suggest he would necessarily do so since in a group of children off task, it would be very difficult to allocate blame to one particular instigator. Suffice to say that Mike would inevitably have joined in any mucking about that took place within a group he was working with.

There was subsequently some relief on the part of the girls when they were not in a situation where boys might dominate them:

*It's been dance again and its better We've been split up from the boys my group and my friend Jane group only! Now all the boy from our groups are together and all the girls and guess what We're getting work done and next week we can bring in clothes to perform in!  
(Jane, year 7, diary entry, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1999)*

However, despite the immediate dislike of mixed groupings, girls were able to acknowledge their value in terms of creativity and the boys in terms of the fact that they knew it kept them 'on task':

*Girls do not like being grouped with boys because they mess around – boys like to be grouped with girls because it makes them work 'properly' - will only work with opposite sex if grouped that way by teacher- boys say the girls boss them around- feel that more ideas are created in mixed groups.  
(Notes, year 7, group interview, 11<sup>th</sup> February 1999)*

In particular, the impact that boys' perceptions had was that they very often subsequently excluded girls from the game through physically dominating the environment, for example, in not passing them the ball. The term used by the children to describe this was a 'ball hog'; all 'ball hogs' discussed in this study were actually boys and the term itself was only adopted by girls:

*We got into groups...I ended up with two ball hogs  
(Sarah, year 8, diary entry, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1998)*

Such comments are fairly typical and have been identified in many studies across the curriculum. However, what was interesting at Hansford Park was the fact that the need to combat sex stereotypical attitudes within physical education was recognised by the children themselves. In particular, girls working towards the end of Key Stage four were able to identify and positively rationalise instances where they felt they were treated by their peers in a non-'sex stereotypical' way.

*I think that 'rounders' group is quite good. I think it is really good the way that the boys never make smart comments. They don't say 'Oh, your crap' etc. they encourage us by saying 'Well done', 'Good try' etc which helps with the group participation. If they didn't constantly say things then people wouldn't bother playing.  
(Susan, year 11, diary entry, 1<sup>st</sup> October 1999)*

This recognition of the way in which boys are able to overcome stereotypical attitudes to girls within physical education is a positive step on two levels. Firstly, the fact that the boys are behaving in this way and secondly that this is appreciated. One might, therefore, assume that this situation has arisen through a conscious drive by the department rather than natural evolution. However, underpinning Susan's statement is evidence that boys might be expected to verbally abuse girls in PE, thus undermining their participation. Additionally, it is still the boys who ultimately dominate the learning environment. It is they who choose whether to comment positively on the girls' performance and subsequently affect their participation. There is even the suggestion that, were boys to withdraw their positive comments, the girls would not even feel motivated to play.

Of particular interest was that the boys felt able to immediately assume the 'right' to make such evaluative comments:

*Before we even got onto the pitch, Peter said that if I was on his team then I could bowl because I was really good. When he said this, I thought it was really nice because he never had to say that. It shows that the boys really look at us as sports people and the way in which we play the sport instead of just believing we can't or won't be able to do it. (Claire, year 11, diary entry, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1998)*

In this instance, Peter is actively involving a girl in the game and his actions present a complete contrast to the 'ball hogs' described by the girls in the lower school, a label totally absent from the comments made by girls in years 10 and 11. However, there is also a degree of ambiguity in the meaning of what Susan says. Peter necessarily assumes the 'authority' to direct Claire as to her role in the game; his suggestion takes place before the children have even entered the formal context of the lesson so no allocation of decision-making role can have been made. Claire's response also reinforces his superior role since she is evidently flattered by Peter's statement. However, what she does confirm is an acknowledgement of the fact that Peter is acting contrary to the children's culture in a broader sense which gives his comments a positive significance for her. It may be arguable that Peter assumed his directive role because of his ability; however, whenever students are mentioned in such a capacity, they are always male.

Boys assume, and are allocated by implicit concession by the girls, power to determine their experience of the game. Indeed, Susan goes on to indicate that where they wished to, the boys would destroy the learning situation for the girls:

*So the boys were messing around trying there hardest to relax. They had decided that the game was going to be rubbish therefore they just messed around, and didn't try. I found it easier on the courts and if the boys had bothered trying then there could have been a good game considering the conditions. (Susan, year 11, diary entry, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1999)*

Nevertheless, it is clear that, within the physical education environment, there is behaviour that contra-indicates what are possibly more widely held cultural values for this group of children; a phenomenon that the department holds as an overt objective of their work.

The complexity of achieving such an aim is great. If I refer back to Felix's (year 7) comment regarding his perception of some sports being inherently more suitable for boys or girls, I suggested that this inability to articulate how he felt is an indication of the cultural depth that this belief has. The feeling forms such an ingrained aspect of his disposition that it is impossible for him to dissect and articulate why he holds it. Therefore, the issue of combating sexist belief in the physical education context means that the department is working against an intangible phenomenon. The most concrete issue that can be addressed in this context is that of the experiences that children have whilst in their care.

For the large part, due to the greater disadvantage at which girls are perceived to be placed, the battle here takes place through the problematisation of girls' participation:

*I get a good feel for year 7. I feel they work together extremely well. I think it is...definitely at the start you have to make this conscious...it isn't a decision, but you have to make this conscious idea of, in many ways, bringing the girls out of themselves, because they come from an experience which boys play team games and the girls tend to watch, apart from one or two who play netball.*

*(Mr Mitchell, interview, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2000)*

The department therefore, creates its own opportunities in non-sex typical sports, and specifically aims to prioritise the participation of girls in 'sport' per se. As I have already stated the nature of comments emanating from the diaries of younger children as compared to older is reflective of the success that the department has striven for and enjoyed. What is of additional interest, is the fact that the girls in year 11 present the nature of participation in physical education as a cultural issue and articulate the fact that the boys are acting outside of what might be culturally normative behaviour. Further to this, however, no boys articulate this as an issue in any way. By year 11, the boys have ceased to actively comment upon the nature of girls' and boys' participation. The difference in girls' and boys' contributions here, may be due to a variance in the level of sophistication of analysis of the particular children that were involved in the study. However, my suggestion here, is that this situation arises from the very fact that, even where they contravene social norms, the boys still retain a dominant role and therefore, the issue of girl's participation is not an issue for them. However, for the girls, the fact that they identify the potential 'threat' of the boys' behaviour give it the status of being problematic and therefore an 'issue'.

However, in a general sense, what is created within the school is a situation wherein it is 'cool' to be good at physical education, regardless of sex:

*...doing well and being good at a range of things is still seen by the kids as being cool. There are some...there are little sub-groups in that who think that perhaps that doing well is um...doing things badly, bucking the system and all that but um...doing well in PE still definitely gives you a lot of status. One of the things that's clear now is that...well has become clear over a number of years now seems ...is actually doing well for girls in PE has become a status thing as well. Some of the coolest girls are you know...I was walking out with some of the lads to play football one night here and one of them said 'Oh, we've got the best looking hockey team' and it actually does reflect...you know, I had to laugh because it's quite amusing but the thing is there is definitely a sort of...that sort of thing is quite cool now, so the girls are getting a bit of it.  
(Mr Handley, interview, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2000)*

Therefore, success within physical education is a means through which status within groups is attained; children who are perceived by their peers as being unsuccessful at the subject rarely enjoy the status of their successful contemporaries:

*S: Most of the people that aren't good at PE are usually not very popular...  
(Helen, year 9, individual interview, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1999)*

The status enjoyed by children's success within physical education is evidently recognised by the teachers and inevitably has a part to play in creating the opportunities for that success, both within the physical education lessons and in extra-curricular time spent with the children. Indeed, as might be anticipated, the teachers themselves often featured significantly in the diary entries of children, and it is to the way that they are perceived that I now turn.

### **Representations of 'The Teacher'**

As a recurrent figure significantly affecting the child's experience, I see it as some wonder that this relationship has not formed the focus of more studies within physical education. I shall later argue that the key to understanding children's experience of physical education lies in similarly understanding the relationship that they have with their peers. However, it is often the teacher who plays the greatest part in setting the scene and determining the environment within which physical education takes place.

Before entering into discussion here, I raise some issues regarding the presentation of teachers in the current study. As a whole, the teachers involved in the study were viewed positively when considering the whole pupil cohort:

*SG: If you were going to sum up your experience of PE here, how would you describe it?  
S: Very enjoyable, the teachers are brilliant, I really like them...  
(Clive, year 11, interview, 26<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

Some teachers received greater attention than others in comments that were made. On occasion this was due simply to the numbers of children involved in the study from a particular class at a particular time. In other instances, it was evidently due to the nature of involvement of the teacher with the children. It appeared to me that where teachers were more willing to give of themselves,

they attracted greatest attention because they stimulated a personal response in the child. Additionally, some teachers taught all years involved in the study, which inevitably facilitated continuity and development of perception of different year groups. In this section, I shall not specify which teachers' students were more or less involved in the study. I shall, however, focus more on some teachers than others because the comments made by children here serve best to aid understanding of the nature of their relationships with teachers.

Due to the potential sensitivity of this topic, I should also reiterate a particular point of procedure that has been adopted in this study. In this analysis I do not intend to discuss teacher intentions from their own perspectives. This study has been designed to focus on the child's view, since, as I have discussed at length, it is this that forms the child's emotional and behavioural response. The evidence presented will therefore portray a weighted argument.

Within the diaries as a whole, there was no child involved who did not mention 'the teacher' in some capacity. What was of particular interest to me, was the contextualisation of that representation. Essentially, references may be categorised in either personal or professional contexts. However, children frequently presented comments as an amalgam of the two.

In certain instances, the teacher is making a pedagogical choice as regards the organisation of the group. However, the consequences that arise from that choice do not necessarily concur with the educational intent and are subsequently represented in personal terms by the child:

*Today was crap. Mr Mitchell made us be in teams with different abilitys and loads of boys so I never get the basketball so basically I hate Mr Mitchell  
(Hannah, year 7, diary entry, 27<sup>th</sup> January 1999)*

Indeed, the negative impact that some teacher decisions have, results in the child perceiving a problem in their personal relationship with the member of staff. This can be sufficiently powerful as to be carried with them throughout their physical education experience. Rebecca begins with a description of a particular incident that took place early in her career at the school:

*SG: Why don't you like hockey?  
R: Because in year 7 or 8 somebody whacked a hockey ball at me and it hit me on the ankle really hard; it really hurt....and because Mr Mitchell just kept screaming at me all the time during hockey.  
(Rebecca, year 11, individual interview, 10<sup>th</sup> December 1999)*

she later continues:

*SG: Could a teacher get you to do something that you didn't want to do?  
R: Some of them could yes.  
SG: Who could?*



*R: Mr Handley could cos he'd like, he'd laugh at me. Miss Blackwood might I don't know, but Mr Mitchell couldn't cos I hate him.*

*(Rebecca, year 11, interview, 10<sup>th</sup> December 1999)*

The transformation of perception that takes place as children age, as discussed earlier, did not take place with Rebecca and she remains angry, almost on behalf of that younger child, and this feeling has continued to affect her perception of the teacher ever since.

Nevertheless, many comments made regarding Mr Mitchell, were far from negative. However, almost all included some allusion to a reputation that may have arisen from experiences such as those illustrated above:

*SG: How would you describe Mr Mitchell?*

*L: He's a really good teacher, I like having him as a teacher. He's not like a strict teacher, he's not he...if you do something wrong, well he'll tell you the consequences but he won't be nasty about it he's a good teacher, I like to go with him.*

*(Lewis, year 9, individual interview, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

Indeed, often Mr Mitchell's reputation goes before him and therefore, where he does not necessarily meet children's expectations, there is some ambiguity in the way that children rationalise their perception of him:

*SG: Mr Mitchell's your teacher isn't he? How would you describe Mr Mitchell?*

*M: Strict. Funny. He's strict in a funny way. He's very concerned about uniform and doing things in the proper way and doing stuff properly, but he can be nice to talk to and I'm not really used to him cos this is like the first year I've had him, I've had other teachers. I've had Mr Handley since I came here and I'm only just getting used to Mr Mitchell, in a way. People would tell me how nasty he is and I said 'Oh no, don't say that, I've got him now'.*

*(Michelle, year 10, interview, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

Here, Michelle acknowledges the fact that she is building her own perception of Mr Mitchell. She identifies her early impressions of him and qualifies her assessment by suggesting she does not yet know him and that other people's perceptions are very different to her own. The contradictory nature of her comment that he is 'strict in a funny way' shows that she believes there is a polarisation in the potential for his final evaluation, which may draw towards one element or the other or remain in juxtaposition. What she clearly shows is that she was initially cautioned but has reformed her opinion and is aware that her opinion may be further defined.

Indeed, many children perceive this particular teacher very positively. In an unprompted comment made to me by a student directly involved in the research, Sarah (year 8) presents the positive 'side' of Mr Mitchell:

*Mr Handley... when he tells you something's good, he just says good, but Mr Mitchell, when you do something good he says that's really good. He talks to you in detail.*

*(Sarah, year 8, informal communication, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1998)*

What these illustrations represent, is that the child's experiences of their physical education teacher, and therefore the subject itself will vary greatly. However, there are certain common features identified as affecting their relationship with 'the teacher' and it is to these that I now turn.

In many instances, the point of departure from which a relationship between the child and the teacher is established lies in the belief, held by both parties, that it is the teacher's 'job' to ensure that children learn, and that they hold the authority to ensure that they do so. Essentially, this forms the basis for an orderly learning environment. Whilst some children may rebel against this 'order', it nevertheless exists in some format as part of the belief of the majority of those involved in the learning/teaching process. This is a very simplistic representation and one which, I believe, is constantly challenged. 'Authority' may be something that the teacher has allocated to them as a basis for the relationship, but it is not adequate to sustain that relationship. Inevitably, there will be other factors that combine to provide continued support for this 'authority'.

Despite the fact that authority is a phenomenon that may be constantly challenged and reinforced, I shall begin by illustrating how younger children involved in the study in particular, would identify this as a factor giving teachers power over them. When asked if a positively significant friend would be able to persuade her to do something that the teacher did not want her to do, Maria said that the teacher would have greater influence over her:

*M: Because there's a difference between a teacher asking you and a pupil asking you isn't there?*

*SG: Why is it different?*

*M: I dunno really, I just think it is (Laughs)...because they're in charge kind of, of what you're doing in that lesson...and like...children aren't.*

*(Maria, year 10, individual interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1999)*

Children thinking in these contexts tend towards compliance where their relationship with the teacher is concerned. Indeed, in all cases where children discussed situations where a dispute within physical education between peers could not be resolved, the intervention of the teacher would ultimately be sought.

Although, for some children, rationalising exactly why teachers have greater 'influence' over them was problematic, others would articulate their interpretation as being founded in a trust of someone whom they considered to have 'superior' knowledge. This was a constant in both key stages of the study, and for both sexes:

*SG: What would you do if Francis wanted you to do something and the teacher wanted you to do something different?*

*L: I'd have to do what the teacher wanted me to do because obviously...they're not more important, but they have more authority.*

*SG: How do they have more authority?*

*L: Well, they're here to teach us and Francis's just my friend, and if they're trying to get me to do something because they think that I need to, then like obviously I'm gonna do it because they know best.*

*(Lewis, year 9, individual interview, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

*SG: Why would a teacher be able to persuade you?*

*G: I suppose it's a confidence thing; if a teacher wants you to do something then you'd push yourself to do it, but if a friend wants you to do something then it's not quite the same thing. A teacher's older, and you know, past experiences, I think that's why.*

*(Gill, year 11, individual interview, 26<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

This knowledge, in conjunction with the applied authority that the teacher holds, enables the teacher to guide the child in their learning. The teacher also inevitably believes in their own experience-derived knowledge that enables them to judge the ability of children, even where they need to contradict the children's perceptions of their own ability:

*Some kids just love it when they achieve something, they're just coming back for more and more and other kids can sometimes get quite sort of, not stressed by it, but can get quite annoyed by the fact that you're saying they can do it and they can't, but they can really.*

*(Mr Mitchell, interview, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2000)*

What this 'knowledge', and belief in its existence, enables teachers to do is to place certain demands upon the child that the child will seek to meet. Mr Mitchell was one teacher in particular who was identified as being able to place such 'pressure' on his pupils.

*SG: Can you describe Mr Mitchell for me?*

*M: He can sometimes be moody, but I think overall he's quite a good teacher...very good at badminton, and when I had him for football in year 9 he was good as well.*

*SG: What makes him a good teacher?*

*M: He pushes you to do things. If you can't do it then he pushes you to do it.*

*SG: And how does that make you feel, when he pushes you?*

*M: If you can't do the thing it makes you feel that he's pushing you to do something that you can't do, but if you can handle it and you know you can do it, it's a good thing that he pushes you to do it.*

*(Martin, year 10, individual interview, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

In order to sustain his ability to 'push' children in this way, children need to be able to place a degree of trust in the teacher. Therefore, in situations where the teacher has placed a demand on the child that they feel is outside their ability, success must be assured:

*... certainly within our own lessons we would consistently ask and demand certain things of kids. They don't come not knowing what we expect of them... so... we are consistently saying to kids 'You are here to push yourselves' 'You are here to achieve' and hand in hand with that we have to be putting them in a situation that can be achieved*

*(Mr Mitchell, interview, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2000)*

For some children, though, perhaps that trust still needs to be established and until it is- if it is- the child will adopt some kinds of strategy to cope with the predicament they believe themselves to be in:

*SG: If he's trying to get you to do something that you think is outside of your ability, and you think 'I'm not going to do this', does it change how you try to do it?*

*M: Yeah, I try harder really I suppose....I think I would actually try to get out of it.*

*SG: How would you try to get out of it?*

*M: Say I needed the toilet (laughs) to try and get out of it.*

*SG: Would you use any other strategies to do the same thing?*

*M: I'd either go for it or make it like definitely look like I can't do it so he won't try and push me hard.*

*(Martin, year 10, interview, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

What must be noted here, however, is that Martin essentially presents two options, one of which is to actually try harder. Although he appears to opt for suggesting he would withdraw from the situation in a legitimate way, it appears that this would not be an automatic choice for him. What is also notable is the fact that he would not directly challenge the authority of the teacher.

The reluctance to challenge the teacher was clear in all children's comments. In some cases, this reluctance would emanate from a fundamental desire to please, in others, the threat of retribution appeared to loom large.

*Gymnastics have to be absolutly fabulas or you get told off and thats not nice  
(Nicky, year 7, diary entry, 4<sup>th</sup> February 1999)*

It is apparent here, that children will suggest that the teachers 'push' them, whereas the teacher stresses the need for children to 'push themselves'. Indeed, the allocation of responsibility within the learning context here is an interesting one. In year 9 we can see Michelle allocating the responsibility for her own learning to the teacher:

*S: Well, he explains what you need to do...he explains and he understands...if you get something wrong he'll make you learn.*

*(Michelle, year 9, individual interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1999)*

In year 11, Lisa believes the responsibility to lie with her:

*There isn't much pressure in our lessons, but we have to make ourselves try because we've already been taught that if we want the marks we've got to do it for ourselves Not rely on the teachers to tell us everything*

*(Lisa, year 11, diary entry, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1998)*

This is not to suggest that the responsibility does lie purely with the students. It is inevitably the teacher's responsibility to seek to ensure that the children learn. What has happened here, is that in manipulating the environment and the way in which they react with their students, the teachers

have taught the students a degree of self-reliance which stimulates the assimilation of subject content. The teachers have created a collaborative learning environment in which the student believes they own certain responsibilities. Hence, the teachers have fulfilled their responsibility to ensure that children learn through creating the belief in them that it is they who are ultimately in control. The control that the teachers retain however, is alluded to by Lisa, since the teachers have the ultimate sanction regarding the behaviours of the students:

*As we're in year 11 now we're treated more grown up by the staff. They don't shout at us unless they have to*  
(Lisa, year 11, diary entry 8<sup>th</sup> October 1998)

This final comment concurs with this belief that the teacher has ultimate authority and, therefore, ultimate responsibility. I specifically use the term ultimately here, because many situations will be created within a context where the children work together in order to learn. The teachers hold what is perceived, but not presented as, absolute authority. In the child's perception the teacher relinquishes overt control over the child's learning. However, the teacher ultimately reclaims that control by shouting, 'if they have to'.

The juxtaposition between children and teachers taking responsibility for learning evidently forms part of the intention on behalf of the department. Contexts within which the child is given the opportunity to make certain decisions, are deliberately constructed by the teacher:

*But it's I mean you can see it frequently in gymnastics lessons particularly because it's the most obvious; in things like basketball, you might have a group on one court doing a full lay up shot and another group...I mean Mark's group he'll say 'If you know you can do this thing, then you ought to be here' and trying to work at it fast or whatever, if you're in the middle court then you're doing it at a walk, if you're on the bottom court then you might be doing it over benches um...and he'll set it up and he'll let the groups, individuals go on whichever one they like so you'll have a differentiation with the task; in tennis it happens a lot.*  
(Mr Handley, interview, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2000)

Focusing on the decision-making aspect of this type of task setting structure, the child learns to take some responsibility for their learning:

*SG: What do you think the kids gain from working in that way?*  
*H: Well, they think they're taking some responsibility for their own learning for a start, you know, it's just as important for the overconfident kid as it is for the timid kid, and also it allows teachers the opportunity to assess it you know to say 'Don't you think you ought to try that?' 'Don't you think you should be in that group?' and you're not always having to be the directive.*  
(Mr Handley, interview, 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2000)

What is implicit in Mr Handley's comment was explicit in lessons where the teacher felt the child to have made the wrong choice. In such a situation, of those lessons observed, the teacher would, in fact, redirect the child to the group or activity that they deemed appropriate for them. Therefore,

whilst teachers would not always have to give direction, they would do so where they thought appropriate. Mr Handley would rationalise this apparent contradiction as a means of leading children to understand the decisions that the teachers were making where the situation was explained to the child:

*H: Um, tasks are set quite often and youngsters will choose at what level they are going to attempt the task and ...you're working with kids' autonomy to sort of work up to the level that they want to work at, but you're also pushing kids forward all the time so that once they have chosen you're also going around saying 'You know, you ought to be trying...' and nudging them forward all the time.*

*SG: So you can involve them in a decision which in fact you're actually directing them?*

*H: What happens is that you're allowing them to see why you're making that decision...you know, if you want to play a game well, you've got to understand the game. You know, they're playing a game aren't they? And the game is, you know, what level should I be at and in the game you're saying to them well really I think you should be in that one.*

*(Mr Handley, interview, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2000)*

Therefore, the child ultimately takes 'responsibility' for their own learning where the teacher agrees with the decision that the child makes. This relates to the earlier suggestion that the teacher will retain authority and shout where they deem it necessary; the child similarly may be permitted to direct their own learning having displayed behavioural characteristics to the teacher's approval. I do not make this comment as a criticism; it is the teacher who needs to control the learning situation to the child's benefit, if only on the basis that the teacher is deemed to categorically retain responsibility for it. Whilst the degree to which the child genuinely assumes independence in such a sense may be a subject for discussion, what I wish to focus on here is the fact that children believe themselves to be responsible and respond to that belief accordingly.

The sensation of having control over situations carried particular significance for the children and it is one factor that they identified as being of importance to them, often 'wishing' that they might choose what they did in physical education. However, the direction that teachers have over the children's participation in the lesson was also appreciated, since it could facilitate performance:

*SG: And how does that make you feel, when he pushes you?*

*M: If you can't do the thing it makes you feel that he's pushing you to do something that you can't do, but if you can handle it and you know you can do it, it's a good thing that he pushes you to do it.*

*(Martin, year 10, individual interview, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

Here, Martin identifies that on condition that he feels able to cope with demands, the pressure from the teacher is a positive factor in his experience. This leads me to discuss the nature of the teacher's expectations, and the impact that these have upon the child.

What provides a key to the way in which the teachers of this department conduct their lessons is the belief that certain expectations to which the children can aspire must be made of them. I have

already mentioned the setting of achievable goals to establish trust; what also occurs is the setting of goals to inspire children to their own potential:

*I want kids to move on ...from wherever they are to somewhere else, so whatever they're doing I want them to improve. Um...I want them to recognise that people improve at different rates, that people learn at different speeds and to be sympathetic to the fact that not everyone is...learns as quickly as maybe they do, or is ...finds things as easy as they do (Mr Mitchell, interview, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2000)*

Many children perceived this intention and appreciated what the teachers were trying to do for them:

*SG: How does that make you feel when he's teaching you then?*

*M: It makes me quite proud that he wants to take a notice in all his pupils to try and do their best and everything, but he works on it a lot and I think he gets a good buzz out of it that he's actually got the pupils through it and everything to get pupils through it.*

*SG: Does that affect what you do then?*

*M: I think he does. I think he's able to put an effect on you that he wants you to work hard as you can to get you to where you want to be in PE and I think he's quite a good teacher after all.*

*(Michelle, year 10, individual interview, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

From Michelle's comments the intention here is actualised. What is notable here, is that the child sees the teacher's actions as part of his own means of deriving satisfaction from his work.

However, with some children, their experience of such expectations is perceived differently, suggesting that the teacher discussed above:

*...doesn't know about not being good  
(Andrew, year 8, diary entry, 9<sup>th</sup> December 1998)*

This comment inevitably contradicts the intention of Mr Mitchell, assuming he would wish to display that same empathy which he seeks to draw from the pupils.

However, seeking to facilitate children to success remains a declared intention of the department:

*H:...Kids ...if you were being realistic about it, um...kids always achieve and they always fail. If you put ...if your criteria for achievement is, I'm not as quick as Linford Christie, then I always fail. That sounds like a highfaluting argument, but our kids, it's one of the ways that we try to get our kids to understand what achievement is...progression...and that example is an example that I would use. I would say to kids that well look if I'm doing something I don't compare myself to Linford Christie, because if I compare myself to Linford Christie then I can never achieve, if you compare yourself...in my badminton lesson that I've just had, if you compare yourself to Lucie Emerson who's a national badminton player, and some of these examples that we were using in that lesson, she was annihilating me to the point where I couldn't even see the shuttle, and that...being able to be that honest and open with youngsters is even hard for some personalities as teachers.  
(Mr Handley, interview, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2000)*

The danger, here, is that there will be some children whom the teacher cannot motivate to achieve, resulting in a failure to adequately participate and progress. I have already stated that the teacher may impose expectations upon the child as a result of the legitimate authority that they hold; however, essential authority will not suffice to sustain the ability to 'push' children to their potential. The concept of 'pushing', used by both teachers and children, requires the child to work beyond their existing level of performance: to progress. As regards the teacher pushing the child, this means they need to create some kind of 'force' external to the child, that is internalised by the child meaning that they take themselves to a degree of application beyond the norm.

Whilst certain means of coercion exist, it was evident in this study that the main factors that facilitated the teacher's ability to 'get the best' out of their students concerned the way in which they were perceived by the children as characters. Generally, what this in turn involved, was the perception of teachers as 'human beings' rather than teachers in the abstract.

The motivation and control of children at Hansford Park in physical education was not conducted through the offer of a merit at the beginning of the lesson if children performed or behaved well, nor were potential punishments outlined should they not do so. However, the children knew that both existed, and they inevitably formed part of the behavioural control within the programme. As is the case with most 'useful' threats and promises, the two were meted out sparingly, not playing an explicit role in classroom management and largely associated with exceptional behaviour and/or achievement.

Whilst I do not deny the valuable role that 'punishment and reward' played, I do not wish to focus on the way in which teachers may deal with what may be deemed potentially deviant behaviour through their use. The teacher may use the threat of rebuking a child, or the promise of giving them a merit, to constrain behaviour to a particular path. However, it is my contention that the ability to convince a child to behave in a certain way lies more in the subtleties of the relationship that the teacher has with the child, rather than its formalities.

Conformity and relative achievement is largely established through a fundamental desire to please the teacher. The way in which the teachers successfully achieved this at Hansford Park, was through what may be deemed the 'humanisation' of their self-presentation as teacher. Essentially, this humanity was achieved through the expression of humour and vulnerability. Formal situations are necessarily characterised by an absence of humour; therefore, the presence of some kind of humour necessarily makes a situation informal to the child. In these two ways, particularly for the less able children in the case of the latter, the teacher, and therefore task and environment, appeared much less threatening to the child than it might otherwise have been. Very often, direct comparison was made between the nature of the PE teachers and other teachers within the school:



*SG: How does she make the lesson enjoyable for you?*

*N: Well, she's friendly to you and funny... Like some teachers just tell you to sit down and be quiet; she's more relaxed.*

*(Nicola, year 11, interview, 10<sup>th</sup> December 1999)*

Indeed, the ability to 'have a laugh' is often a quality that can overcome a child's negative perception of an activity:

*H: Oh, she's um...how do I put it? She's a good teacher at trampolining, I have a laugh, messing around and stuff. Trampolining doesn't really appeal to me, but Miss Blackwood, she's a good laugh.*

*(Harry, year 9, interview, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

Whilst Harry inevitably still feels that perhaps trampolining is not an activity which he particularly likes, he is no doubt more disposed to react positively towards it in the context of it being part of Miss Blackwood's lesson. It is clear here then, that the nature of the teacher can perhaps be more significant to the child than the activity itself.

What is of interest is the varying nature of 'being a laugh' identified in teachers. That which received most comment, as with that above, is of being not 'too' serious:

*SG: That makes sense. Miss Blackwood is your teacher at the moment. How would you describe Miss Blackwood?*

*C: Um, outgoing, funny, quite good to be taught by her, she's alright, quite funny.*

*SG: How is she funny?*

*C: She'll have a laugh; she's not too serious.*

*(Clive, year 11, interview, 26<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

The teacher here evidently has a relaxed manner with the children which works to her advantage. She is not, however, so 'funny' that the 'business' sense of the lesson is lost. In his comment, Clive indicates that there would, indeed, be a limit to the extent to which a teacher may acceptably be a 'good laugh'.

A further way in which humour is used is in establishing a commonality between the teacher and pupil. As Nicky (year 7) reports:

*SG: What's good about the teachers here?*

*N: They're funny...if you do something wrong they don't tell you off for doing it wrong; they help you to get on with it and they laugh...you know, they make you laugh*

*M: Especially Miss Harrison; I like Miss Harrison*

*N: Cos when we were playing Haywood school they're really posh and we lost and she went 'Oh, look at all those stuck up people!'*

*(Nicky and Michelle, year 7, pair interview, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1999)*

Miss Harrison's statement is one with which the children can agree and identify. When more than one individual shares in humour, there is confirmation of personal intimacy denied to those who are

not invited to participate thus enhancing the relationship between those who are 'in' on the joke. This may be particularly effective where this attends to existing prejudices.

In other instances, humour is configured into joke telling, wherein the teacher 'entertains' the children perhaps detracting from the seriousness of the work but not the work itself:

*L: I like to go with Mr Handley as well because he's funny. I think they're both funny (referring to Mr Mitchell and Mr Handley).*

*SG: How would you describe his character then?*

*L: He's one of these people that likes to get on and teach you but he doesn't want to make it so it's like a chore he makes it so it's fun.*

*SG: How does he make it fun?*

*L: Well, he tries to put jokes into it...*

*(Lewis, year 9, interview, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

With this last form of humour, the 'laugh' is separated from the teacher in that joke telling does not necessarily form part of the teacher's personality. Where the teacher shares a point of 'micky-taking' out of another group, they are revealing an aspect of their opinion: of their 'selves'. The same applies to a teacher 'having a laugh'; in this context this was more a consistent characteristic than a specific tool.

Whilst humour of whatever kind was identified as a powerful tool in cultivating relationships between teacher and pupil, I must acknowledge that on occasion, what may have been intended as humour by the teacher, was in practice perceived in a more sinister light by the child. Just as humour may act as a means of unification, it may similarly serve to alienate; in particular, this occurred where it took the form of sarcasm:

*The only thing that puts me off slightly about fielding is that if you muck up or make a shoddy catch Mr Mitchell makes a sarcastic remark.*

*(Lisa, year 11, diary entry, 24th September 1998)*

What emerged in the study was that the teacher who used 'joke' humour was also 'feared' for his strictness. He was able to make a transition between shouting and telling a joke without there being confusion on the part of the child as to what was being expected of them. However, where the teacher was ready to expose personal characteristics to the children, the enduring nature of this would make the acting in any contrary way more difficult for the teacher.

This is not to say that the teacher has any less control or influence over the children, more that, in the child's perception, they are categorised as having a particular personality. If the teacher were then to influence the child, it would have to be done within the child's perception of the context of that personality.

Indeed, the vulnerability of the teacher was deemed a real asset by some of the children involved in the research and was not deemed a negative trait by any child involved. In certain cases, this vulnerability lies in the ability to be open and laugh about mistakes, showing a personality that lacks self-indulgence:

*SG: How would you describe Miss Blackwood?*

*K: 'In with the crowd'.*

*SG: Can you elaborate on that and tell me a bit more?*

*K: She's cool.*

*SG: You think she's cool. What makes her cool?*

*K: She's not moany she tries to get you to do everything...um...she's just cool.*

*SG: What's cool about her personality?*

*K: She's funny.*

*SG: In what way?*

*K: In PE last Thursday she tried to score and she couldn't do it...she does netball...and she couldn't do it and she laughed.*

*(Kim, year 9, interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1999)*

Such actions contravene the tendency for teachers to seek to appear somewhat infallible and as a result can make the teacher appear more approachable to a child. Such self-presentation on behalf of the teacher can avert the possibility of some children reacting negatively towards physical education, but give the opportunity for them to be proactive in their own learning by giving them the confidence to talk to the teacher:

*SG: Who teaches you PE at the moment?*

*B: Miss Blackwood.*

*SG: For trampolining and netball?*

*B: She's nice.*

*SG: Can you explain what you mean by 'nice'?*

*B: I don't know...she'll help you with what you're doing, you can ask her stuff.*

*(Bryony, year 9, interview, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

The approachability of teachers is, perhaps, inevitably defined as friendliness by children. This is perhaps because where children are able to initiate an interaction, they perhaps redress, albeit more in the child's perception than in actuality, the difference in power between being 'a teacher' and 'a pupil'. Therefore, children may infer that they are actually taking part in a collaborative effort on equal footing with their teacher. When talking about Mr Mitchell, Alan states:

*I see him more as a mate than a teacher in PE because of his participation in the lesson and the communication between Mr Mitchell and myself*  
*(Alan, year 11, diary entry, 24<sup>th</sup> September 1998)*

However, with children as a group, as I have already identified, the ultimate authority of the teacher tends to be retained. Therefore, what also results from the fallibility of teachers is a conception in the child that their difficulties in doing things or knowing things are not a phenomenon to which the 'less able' alone are prone:

*R: She's nice, she's very friendly isn't she? I don't know, she's just full of bounce. And the fact that she admits that she doesn't know everything about it all, you know, sort of makes you feel that you're not too thick!*  
(Rebecca, year 11, interview, 10<sup>th</sup> December 1999)

In context with her comment regarding incidents with Mr Mitchell, Rebecca shows consistency in her need to feel that she is not 'stupid'. Here it is clear that one asset she sees in Miss Blackwood is that she does not make her students feel inferior either to herself or other students.

What is evident from the formulation of the comments that children make about their teachers, and, indeed, teacher's comments regarding their ethos, is that 'success' can be found where the child is given the opportunity to feel self-worth. In many of their comments assessing the value of their teachers, children would speak directly in terms of how they were made to feel by them:

*Like I said, Mr Mitchell makes smarmy comments, this kind of makes me feel paranoid about how I'm carrying out the task on the equipment. I want to feel relaxed when I'm working out but it's bad.*  
(Jessica, year 11, diary entry, 24<sup>th</sup> September 1998)

When asked if she would change anything about the physical education programme she had experienced at Hansford Park, Rebecca, year 11, explained:

*R: Doing hockey; I hate it so much; that is the one thing I am determined never to do again...never ever...I hated it because it was cold, because Mr Mitchell was teaching it, because I didn't know anything about it because people were whacking hockey balls at me and I'm like Ahhh!! So, no, I wouldn't have done it because it made me feel very self-conscious every time I get near a hockey pitch I'm like Ohh!*

*SG: Why did you feel self-conscious?*

*R: Because I seemed to be the only one who didn't actually know what I was doing and because Mr Mitchell kept pointing me out and yelling at me it just made me feel very self-conscious and I don't like that sort of thing.*

*(Rebecca, year 11, individual interview, 10<sup>th</sup> December)*

Yet the same teacher can arouse a very different response in a different context:

*SG: What makes him a good teacher then?*

*M: Um...he's nice... 'ish' (laughs) he's nice-ish. Um...what else about him? He's concerned about each one of you. He doesn't see you as a big group he sees you as individuals which I think is a nice thing...because most teachers don't, they just teach... they just see you as a class and they just get the teaching over and done with and then they just leave, they don't care about you. But he'll care after school and make sure you do after school activities and if you don't understand or anything to make sure he'll come and talk to you and make sure you understand.*

*(Michelle, year 10, interview, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

Michelle does not simply feel valued as a student, but valued as an individual, and it is this evocation of self-worth that appears to determine the child's disposition as regards the physical

education lesson. Comments are often made as regards the child's progress according to their own ability in accordance with the declared ethos of the department:

*C: Well, um he kind of makes you feel good even if you've done just like a tiny little thing say...Because I'm really rubbish at athletics and cos we're throwing shot put and things I'm kind of really weak in the arms but I've got stronger legs so I kind of throw it over to like a little tiny distance like a metre and everyone else is throwing it miles, but he still makes you feel say...if you've thrown a metre and then like if you throw a metre and a half then he'll make you feel good about it cos you've thrown that bit extra.  
(Claire, year 9, interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1999)*

Additionally, however, teachers will also make comments noting a child's return from absence. What may be deemed a relatively insignificant acknowledgement may have great impact upon the child:

*Girl returned from absence – Mr Mitchell commented to her 'You were away last week weren't you? ....Nice to see you back. Child answered question and turned away smiling.  
(Observation note, September 24<sup>th</sup> 1998)*

I cannot assess the direct effect that this comment had upon the child, but the fact that it was made forms part of the wider ethos of the department to 'make' each child feel valued:

*H: ...when kids come in to year 7 they're made to feel that they're valued. I mean we get to know them. It's little things, you do...there's lots of little tactics that are used around here that people don't even know is happening. You know, like the kid who's not very good at football is often the one that you say hello to when he comes along the corridor. I've had senior teachers in and the Deputy Head said to me. 'How come all these kids like you?' and the reality is that the kids who are good at sport are going to like you anyway because they're getting lots of things from you but they like PE and they're gonna achieve in it...it's the other people that you have to focus on. It's the little timid kid um...or the sort of recalcitrant girl or whatever, it doesn't matter what you want to call them, and but you don't do that...one you don't do it accidentally, you actually have to mean to do it and you don't do it always in a formal way.  
(Mr Handley, interview, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2000)*

Whilst comments are made regarding children's attendance, efforts and performance, in direct relation to 'physical education', or as a conscious effort on behalf of the teacher to establish a relationship with the child, on many occasions, these comments are internalised as the basis of personal meaning. Therefore, for the child, the 'pay off' for trying their best in the subject, is the way it makes them feel about their very 'selves'.

The theme of self-worth for the child was not, however, determined solely by the actions and comments of the teacher. As I illustrated earlier, often the teacher was viewed as the individual who carried ultimate authority in the learning situation. What this meant, however, was that, for a large part of the lesson, it was not the direct relationship between the teacher and the child that had greatest effect upon the child's experience of physical education. Although still related to self-perception, far more significant was the relationship that the child had with their peers.

## Ability

Perhaps the outcome of factors including the child's relationship with the teacher, is their perception of their own ability. As Claire, year 9, indicated, there was an appreciation by the children that individuals do work at different levels, and this could be both acknowledged and respected by the teacher.

As part of the programme, children would be required to work with others of different abilities as a means of challenging the less able through encouraging them to 'raise' their game, and also the more able by placing them in positions of responsibility within that context:

*H: ... kids are pulled along by other kids in the group as well...that's because we've got mixed groups. If you've got more experience in a game for instance of hockey or whatever, if you've got more experienced players in there, they tend to spread the game out a bit more. People will naturally follow; you know, if you play people of a higher standard than yourself, then you play to their level, so you play to raise your game to whatever level they are.*

*SG: Is that why you mix ability in almost everything that you do?*

*H: Yeah, because in every activity that we do there are some experienced kids in school, you can always guarantee that somebody within your group or two or three people within your group will be experienced dancers or will be experienced gymnasts or hockey players or basketball players...*

*SG: ...what benefit do the more able kids get from working in a mixed ability group?*

*H: They, they probably get more benefit...I mean they get the benefit of...we can give them specific targets. Quite often we can say right 'Your job within the team', or 'Your job within this game is to make sure the whole court is used' or 'to make sure the team knows what they're doing' so almost act a little bit more as a coach so they're starting to analyse the game a little bit more. Again, help with officiating, specific skills, so they're starting to maybe not practice their own skills so much but start to actually think about the game or the activity a bit more as a coach. Their benefit for their skills doesn't take place in lessons then. Once they've got to a certain standard, their lessons won't necessarily involve them in improving their skills, they'll do that in the extra-curricular clubs.*

*(Mr Handley, interview, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2000)*

Both the children who considered themselves more able and those who felt they were less able, understood this rationale for the school focusing mostly on mixing ability but each extreme felt that they would prefer to play against someone of similar ability to their own:

*D: I usually don't like something when I'm playing against a good person because I ...they always get the ball off me cos I'm not very good. And they just get it and I never hardly get it at all.*

*SG: So, you feel as though you don't take part as much as you could?*

*D: Yeah*

*SG: What do you think should happen then when that's the case?*

*D: I reckon some of the ...well, all the good people should play with the good people and some of the not very good people should play with the not very good people.*

*(David, year 7, pair interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1999)*

Ultimately, mixing ability was seen to be detrimental to the child's participation. For the less able, this meant exclusion, as above, and for the more able, restriction:

*Why couldn't Mr Handley get all the good ones to play so it would be a good game!  
(Graham, year 7, diary entry, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1998)*

Therefore, ultimately, the intention behind mixing abilities was not necessarily realised as the children's 'baser' instinct to play took over.

The reasons for this 'failure' was not rationalised as a result of children not actually following an activity in the way that the teacher had intended them to, but simply externalised as the teacher's 'fault'.

Nevertheless, the teachers sought to supply such an opportunity to the children where they felt appropriate and they did, in fact, vary groupings to also give children experience of playing others of like ability:

*...Um I'd... you know...you know you get abilities, I would probably put the best people in one formal group...they do that to a certain extent now but I think they should do it more.  
(Michelle, year 9, interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1999)*

Although the teacher would seek to provide the opportunity for children of mixed ability to work together, they are unable to ultimately control what goes on in the child's own perception.

Therefore, once the activity has begun and they cease to directly supervise that particular pupil, the perceptions of the children themselves take over once more:

*I mean that's likely to happen more in sort of team game situations it can happen whereby kids don't...not don't play, but just, just disappear, even in small sided games, people think well, instead of playing 11 a-side, play a 3 a-side game and invariably you must be involved but that isn't always the case. Even in a three a-side game you can end up with two people playing and somebody not doing it because they feel that they're not good enough.  
(Mr Mitchell, interview, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2000)*

Mr Mitchell rationalises the failure of a child to take part in terms of their self-perception; however, what I have also illustrated is the fact that, in many cases, the child's lack of confidence is compounded by the lack of confidence that others show in their ability. Therefore, even in instances of teaching, where a teacher may encourage a pupil in successfully executing a new skill, without a change in perception of that child and those with whom they are working the problem still remains even in a modified form.

However, it is inevitably the teacher's 'job' to build confidence through success and those at Hansford Park overtly expressed this intention in their philosophy even where they had to actively challenge a child's perception of what they are capable of:

*I think kids can react in a number of ways that depends on your relationship with them. What they're like. Some kids just love it when they achieve something, they're just coming back for more and more and other kids can sometimes get quite sort of, not stressed by it, but can get quite annoyed by the fact that you're saying they can do it and they can't, but they can really.*

*(Mr Mitchell, interview, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2000)*

Where the teacher successfully 'takes' a child to a particular physical performance, then they will inevitably be perceived as having overcome those psychological barriers that they were persuaded to cross. Nevertheless, as Mr Mitchell acknowledged, not all children are conformant. In interviews with pupils, I was interested in the power relationship that may have occurred where the teacher required the child to do something that they did not want to do. As has already been established, children would accede to the teacher's wishes wherever straightforwardly possible, and therefore, in many cases, this issue was interpreted by the children as being a situation wherein they were being required to do something that they felt beyond their capabilities.

Many children felt very able to judge their own ability and would repeatedly seek to work to a level they felt comfortable with. Therefore, when asked to work outside of this, they would seek to remove themselves from the situation by legitimate means:

*SG: How would you feel if the teacher is trying to persuade you to do something that you didn't think you could do?*

*C: If it was something that I definitely can't do then I'd feel embarrassed; I wouldn't feel that good about doing it. But if it was something that I could do but I didn't have that much confidence in myself then I'd still try and do it. I'd give it a go.*

*SG: What if it's the first time of trying something and you feel that you're not going to succeed at it, would you try it or try and get out of doing it?*

*C: I'd try it and then if I didn't succeed then I probably wouldn't try it again. I'd stand back a bit.*

*SG: Would you refuse to try again?*

*C: I find another way of getting out of it.*

*SG: How would you do that?*

*C: I'd stand back a bit and say 'You go, I'll go later' sort of thing and just hope that the we'd run out of time.*

*(Clive, year 11, interview, 26<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

Taking Clive's comments, what he conveys is not simply a desire to avoid being asked to do something he feels too difficult for him, but that the basis of this lies in the avoidance of 'embarrassment' that he discusses. Whilst he does not explicitly state whom he feels embarrassed in front of, whether it be the teacher or peer, ultimately, it is the fact that he might fail in front of his contemporaries that is the issue here.

Indeed, the concept of peer relationships carried greatest emphasis in determining the child's liking or disliking of an activity and it is this that forms the basis of analysis. I shall begin by discussing the nature of the relationships that children perceive that they have with the teacher before considering the impact of those that are experienced between peers.



## Inter-peer relationships

Many of the findings in the early stages of this study supported suggestions made by other research in terms of the above issues. However, what was apparent in the comments made by all students was that underpinning their feelings towards the subject of physical education was the relationship that they had with their peers within it. Interpersonal relationships is an area that has been largely neglected within physical education and in particular there is a dearth of information on the impact of peers on one another's experiences. Yet, for the children involved in this study, it was central to them.

In this section I shall explore the issues raised regarding inter-pupil relationships by the children involved in this study. I will initially consider the nature of comments made in diaries, before exploring the nature of the children's relationships with peers, firstly as 'collectives' and then individuals.

I begin with an account of the nature of physical education and the significance this has in emphasising the importance of inter-pupil relationships perhaps more than other school subjects. In order to understand the experience that children have in physical education, it is necessary to consider the perception that they have of it as 'a subject'.

In analysis that immediately follows, I present a series of comments that I feel are representative of children's responses when given the opportunity to define physical education. In all of the data here I digress from my original approach of embedding questions only within issues raised by children themselves. I do this as I feel it to be a useful tool in establishing some kind of indication of what might be an attitude towards the concept 'physical education' as it exists outside of experience. Whilst the child's experiences may affect the way in which they define the subject, the question is asked so that the ideas become somewhat abstract. Therefore, the views presented here provide supplementary information to contextualise analysis of peer relationships.

The first, and most notable factor in perceptions of physical education 'per se', was that younger children tended to define the subject purely in its own terms. I shall use the comments of Helen and Jane to illustrate the perceptions of students at Key Stage three:

*SG: If PE was taken away, what would that mean?*

*H: It would be boring...you wouldn't be able to do any sports 'cos say like, sports come out as sports and sports keep you fit and if you're not fit you're not fit. And you need to keep fit so you need to be fit to keep fit.*

*(Helen and Jane, year 7, pair interview, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1999)*

Indeed, children also found defining the intrinsic value of physical education a somewhat obscure task:

*SG: What do you think the whole point of PE is?*

*J: To learn new things*

*SG: What kind of things?*

*H: Well, if you didn't do PE you'd be rubbish at it wouldn't you?*

*SG: Why do you want to be good at PE then?*

*H: Well, I think, like PE is just a thing that you do and it tires you out*

*J: If you didn't do PE you wouldn't get as much exercise.*

*SG: What do you need exercise for?*

*H: Dunno...*

*J: Cos if you didn't you'd be...dunno!*

*(Helen and Jane, year 7, pair interview, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1999)*

Although children identified the value of, for example, the manipulation of social groups within physical education, they did not appear to acknowledge any transference to other contexts; transference would only take place within 'sport' which children identify as being the same as physical education:

*SG: Is PE important for anything you do outside of school?*

*H: No. I don't think so; I think it helps us in school. But it does help you do things outside of school if you were doing like sports or something, but if you were doing something and it wasn't in your job or something it would still help you with the sport that you're trying to do.*

*(Helen and Jane, year 7, pair interview, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1999)*

What is alluded to here is that there is value placed in something where it is directly related to a profession. This kind of approach was also identified by Nicky, year 7:

*It's good for your cv, cos GCSE's look good*

*(Nicky, year 7, group interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1999)*

However, the value here is not in physical education but in the formal qualification that might be achieved as a result of studying the subject area since following a GCSE programme here was compulsory in this school.

In many cases, the language used to define physical education focussed primarily on what it was not; and presented it as the antithesis to academic 'work':

*SG: How does PE compare to other subjects?*

*L: I don't know; you're like 'Ooh! No work, no work!'*

*(Leanne and Julie, year 7, pair interview, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1999)*

'Work' itself was normally associated with traditionally high status study forms of writing:

*SG: So, is it a subject that you generally enjoy?*

*C: Yeah- No writing!*

*(Claire, year 9, interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1999)*

This particular theme was also evident in the comments by those students at Key Stage four:

*I don't usually think 'Oh my God, I've got PE' but I do sometimes. It most definitely isn't my best subject. I can't say I ever look forward to PE, but it does relax the academic part of the brain.*

*(Susan, year 11, diary entry, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1999)*

As the antithesis to other subjects, Leanne summarises physical education in this way:

*L: It's play basically.*

*(Leanne and Julie, year 7, pair interview, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1999)*

Perhaps as a result of PE being perceived in such a way, some children, like Ellie as discussed earlier, who perhaps did not benefit from a sense of enjoyment experienced by some children in physical education, remained unable to see any purpose in the subject. Therefore, the combination of being non-serious and not enjoyable does not provide the subject even as an antithesis to something less pleasing and therefore, more insidiously it is rendered a waste of time.

Young (1971 pp37,38) found that subjects with writing as a central activity enjoyed high status knowledge. If this were the case in the children's perceptions here, their comments would suggest that physical education has low status as a subject. However, within Hansford Park there appears to be a certain status within the culture of children to being successful in physical education; as I have already discussed, there is the suggestion that if pupils are not good at PE then they are unlikely to enjoy popularity within their group.

Making GCSE is compulsory at the school was a decision described by the Head of Department as one taken to ensure that it was not automatically chosen by the less able children who might see it as a 'soft option'. Therefore, it is evident that even where the subject was formally assessed as an academic phenomenon, there was still some difficulty in combating a perception that it was relatively low value. As I stated earlier, however, children only discussed the practical elements of physical education and evidently viewed these as constituting the subject.

Whilst there may be certain homologies in existence between physical education and other curriculum areas as viewed by 'the school', there are certain aspects of this subject as presented in schools that allocate a certain uniqueness of experience within classes here. Borrowing from Bernstein (1971), my evidence suggests that physical education is strongly classified from the perspective of the child; in other words it is clearly distinguished from other subjects.

Bernstein's (1971 p49) 'Classification' refers to the differentiation between contents of one subject and another. 'Where classification is strong, contents are well insulated from each other by strong boundaries'. Within the English education system there has always existed a strong differentiation between different 'content' and different 'types' of learning have generally taken place within

subject specific contexts. This is certainly true of PE due to its primarily physical nature. Perhaps the physicality of physical education is akin to that that might be experienced in for example, drama, but this is not a connection that children make; neither do they articulate the cross-curricular relevance of any other skill or social learning.

What is also the case with this subject is the geographical specificity of the teaching environment that serves to 'insulate' it from other subject areas. The physical education teaching and learning environment is generally physically removed from most other areas of the school. Within Hansford Park, the locality was shared only by music and drama whilst sports specific facilities remained purely the domain of physical education. Common sense perhaps dictates that the teaching environment of these 'non-academic' subjects is removed from other curriculum areas because of the space required to successfully complete the curriculum and perhaps the resultant noise of curriculum pursuit.

However, these factors ultimately indicate that the resultant nature of interaction within the lesson will differ broadly from other areas and it is this differentiation in logistics within the subject that provides the basis for a great deal of subject specific comment made by the children. What the logistics of the subject did, was to change the nature of the interaction that children experienced with their peers.

As I have just illustrated, the emphasis in children's definition of physical education lies in the physical nature of the subject and its antithetic basis to general concepts of 'work' and in particular, the business of writing. Young (1971) discussed the idea that, as a solitary activity occupying a large part of the curriculum, writing encourages individualism; certainly, the practicality of writing affords the opportunity for the child to work alone. Conversely the craft of physical education, other than formal GCSE lessons that did not form part of my study, is never one carried out in isolation. Whilst it might encourage individualism in the sense that one might be a more or less able performer, performance can never happen alone. It is always done within a team, group, pair, or singly in front of an audience; in my two and a half years of fieldwork, physical education was never anything other than a public business.

*SG: How about Russell, can you recall working with him?*

*L: Yeah, I always work with him.*

*SG: How do you feel about that?*

*L: I feel glad because that way it's not just a PE lesson, it's a time like where we can get on and talk to each other and things.*

*(Lewis, year 10, individual interview, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

What Lewis overtly highlights, is the emphasis that physical education places upon relationships by focussing on the positive relationship he has with one other group member. The indication is that

this can be exploited in these circumstances enhancing his experience of 'physical education' by introducing a new dimension to a lesson. Conversely, however, the emphasis that is placed on relationships, raises the question of what happens when a pupil has negative feelings towards features in this experience. The situation is still not 'just' a PE lesson, but the relationship involved actually detracts from that lesson. This is evident from the underpinning basis of the majority of comments made by the children in their diaries and in informal group interviews in the early stages of the study, and formed the basis of later work.

Inevitably, the fact that children are required to work with others means that sometimes physical education can contribute to the very establishment of friendships:

*SG: ...what do you like about team games?*

*N: In hockey we used to work on threes but with my group. I had um...Mike, someone else, someone else and after every time we scored a goal we were like...we'd get in a huddle and that and it was like really good because you don't usually you know, work with these people; usually when you finish that's it you're not friends anymore.*

*SG: So, as soon as you scored a goal you were mates?*

*N: Yeah.*

*(Nicky and Michelle, year 7, pair interview, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1999)*

The indication here is that there was a change in the basis of the relationship between individuals within groups as a result of working together in physical education. The nature of physical education in this case in terms of having the spacial freedom to 'huddle' together is significant here. This uniqueness of the subject enhances the significance of personal relationships. In academic subjects, a degree of isolation may be afforded the child by physically restricting their movement and therefore interaction.

Very often, the strategies of children employed in dealing with physical education are based upon the degree of exposure they experience when interacting with others.

*SG: Why do you think you're put in groups?*

*H: I don't know, maybe it's to make sure you work with other people.*

*SG: Do you think that's a good thing that you work with other people?*

*J: Yeah*

*SG: If you were allowed to choose who you worked with who would you choose?*

*H: The same old people all the time.*

*(Helen and Jane, year 7, pair interview, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1999)*

Children understand the significance of being asked to work with individuals other than their friends, even if in practice they do not actively embrace this idea. Whilst physical education teachers are required to provide children with the opportunity to do just this (NCPE), there is no real assurance that objectives will be achieved. Nicky and Michelle illustrate the difficulty here with this penitent comment:

*N: I think the good thing about being put with people you don't usually work with is 'cos then you learn to work with them.*

*SG: Do you think that's a valuable thing to be able to do?*

*N: Yeah.*

*M: Cos none of us like working with Alison or Julia.*

*SG: Why do you think that's a problem?*

*N: Well, Julia's a bit different and that **and we're wrong to make fun of them** (Nicky and Michelle, year 7, pair interview, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1999, my emphasis)*

Evidently, the two girls not only recognise the 'need' to work with others, but others that may not be popular within the class. However, it is clear that interacting positively with Alison and Julia is likely to be restricted to this contrived situation since an ongoing situation within the class is that these girls are made fun of, even though those making fun of them realise that this is 'wrong'. Additionally, this raises the question of how Alison and Julia experience physical education when having to work with people that ridicule them. The variety of groupings necessarily experienced within physical education inevitably impact upon the experiences of the child.

It must also be recognised that the physical education environment extends beyond the teaching area into such physical space as store cupboards and changing rooms. Generally speaking, to respect children's privacy, the changing rooms at Hansford Park remained the sole domain of the children and therefore did not provide the security of adult supervision. In some instances, the nature of this organisation was clearly threatening to the child:

*SG: If you were to change one thing about PE, what would you change?*

*R: The changing rooms.*

*SG: How would you change them?*

*R: They're intimidating.*

*SG: How are they intimidating?*

*R: Right, there are sort of gangs of boys and um...on one side right...there's a sort of school tradition that on your birthday they chuck you in the showers....and they make things up and they come over to you and they irritate you ...so you have to stay in a group, you know, your own little group otherwise you're in trouble, you can't be on your own.. (Richard, year 10, individual interview, 19<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

Therefore, the existence of one dominant group compounds the need for all children to belong to a group.

Many children made comments in their diaries that alluded to the importance of others on a comparatively superficial level; working with others is fun; it can be non-serious and a good opportunity to work as a 'team':

*I enjoy rounders because it is a team game and I like being part of a team... (Alan, year 11, diary entry, 17<sup>th</sup> September 1998)*

Yet judging from the comments of some students, working as a team can sometimes give the opportunity to some individuals to dominate the activity. The term 'teamwork' is often overused

and misused in a positive sense since its implications in practice are often otherwise. In my observations, in certain cases, 'teamwork' really depends upon the group dynamic which in physical education remains highly sensitive:

*Basketball Year 11 Miss Blackwood (Week A)*

*Some of rounders group joined with usual basketball group.*

*New arrivals dominated group with 'consent' of existing players; appear more able than usual group; seems to be respected. Penny hardly featured – usually 'key' player – tendency to run up and down court without receiving ball. Penny receiving ball and not playing for a layup as usual – seems very excluded from the game.*

*Ball passed so hard to Carrie three times in a row that she could not possibly have caught it (neither probably could have throwers). This was followed by complaints to her. Ended up in tears at side at end of particular game and then did not join in when her team played again*

*Eventually joined another team in order to take part.*

*No notable difference in Clive's playing. Bridie played well under these conditions*

*Others continued attempts – esp. Nicola - great deal of application*

*(Observation note, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

The impact that particular students can have on a group as a whole is often commented on; a not unfamiliar comment would pertain to a particular year 11 group who were so pleasant when 'Gareth Foxbridge' was not there. For the teachers, therefore, the group dynamic is logically perceived as a whole class phenomenon within the pragmatic daily business of teaching. The presence of new individuals in the situation above however, had a varying impact upon the different pupils in the class. For some, such as Penny, they became completely excluded from the game, even in instances where they usually fulfilled a dominant role; for others there was little change in their normal play, and for Bridie, there was a clear improvement. Therefore, the presence of the new students (all boys) had different personal meanings for the different individuals present, and it is the personal meanings that result from interaction within the group that I feel has greatest impact upon the experience of children.

*I like doing weights cos it takes the stress out of me. Also certain others in the group were not there which is good cos worked a whole lot harder  
(Sally, year 11, diary entry, 1<sup>st</sup> October 1998)*

The reason why most students identify an enjoyment of physical education is that the subject gives them the opportunity for the consolidation and pursuit of personal relationships. If I refer again to Alan's comment (year 11), he continues:

*I enjoy rounders because it is a team game and I like being part of a team, we have a laugh at each other.  
(Alan, year 11, diary entry, 17<sup>th</sup> September 1998)*

Indeed, 'having a laugh' at each other was a recurrent theme in children's diaries across ages and for both sexes. In many cases, the shared laughter served to strengthen the identification of children with small groups within the class:

*Me and my friends were teasing each other and making each other laugh  
(Nicky, year 7, diary entry, 27<sup>th</sup> January 1999)*

This group identification is subsequently used to differentiate one group from another:

*We also did dance which was really fun me and my friends were just laughing at the boys  
in our group  
(Nicky, year 7, diary entry, 27<sup>th</sup> January 1999)*

The intention of such laughter was often innocuous on the part of those children 'administering' it. In particular the boy/girl division appears to be a socially acceptable phenomenon and not personalised. However, for the recipient, in some instances, a lack of communication along such lines is highly problematic :

*D: If it's got to be like that I'd rather have three boys and three girls.  
SG: Why would you rather have it evenly split like that?  
D: Umm I dunno... if you've got all girls, you can't really decide together or whatever, but  
if you've got a boy you can ask their idea...some people, like me, I don't like ...I don't....  
SG: Go on  
D: I don't like some people...I like to go with my friends.  
(David and John, year 7, pair interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1999)*

What appears to happen is that children may initially identify certain groups that they personally see as problematic, where actually, they are referring to more specific individuals:

*SG: What about working with boys, cos you were put in mixed groups?  
M: It's alright cos we get along with most of the boys.  
N: It depends which boys.  
M: If you've got Craig, Graham or somebody like that it's not very good.  
SG: When you say 'get along with' do you mean in terms of what you have to do, or in  
terms of friendship anyway?  
N: We're just not friends with them are we?  
(Nicky and Michelle, year 7, pair interview, break time 14<sup>th</sup> April 1999)*

For some children, being unable to work with whom they wish results in an air of resignation and remains comparatively unthreatening:

*Last Friday we had gym with Miss Harrison. As first she made me work with Nicola in  
gym. I wanted to work with someone else Miss Harrison makes gym so boring  
(Lucy, year 7, diary entry, 4<sup>th</sup> March 1999)*

Whilst Miss Harrison would surely not have intended to 'make gym boring', the result is probably that Lucy disliked that particular lesson but is left with limited residual resentment.



For Nicky, year 7, a relationship issue completely monopolises her attention in some lessons:

*The teacher we had kept using my X for demenstrations because he wasn't listening proply (Nicky, year 7, diary entry, 15<sup>th</sup> January 1999)*

*I did netball which was 'fun'. I kept avoiding my boyfriend who's now dump (Nicky, year 7, diary entry, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1999)*

Presumably, however, Nicky's preoccupation with her 'X' would ultimately diminish and it did not seem to detract too greatly from her enjoyment of the subject. Indeed, for other students in Key Stage three, the attraction to a particular individuals appeared to provide almost an additional interest to the child, and as an adult reading a child's thoughts it would perhaps be easy to trivialise their feelings. Reading the following entry brought a smile, both at the content and the implied shared 'conspiracy' between Sarah and myself:

*We got into groups (I wanted to go with Andrew he is great) but I ended up with two ball hogs. Great!  
We drewed once and won twice I scored 2 goals huRRY! (Don't tell Andrew I told you this but I was watching him play and I was in defence and the other team scored whoops!).  
(Sarah, year 8, diary entry, 29<sup>th</sup> October 1998)*

Sarah had a strong sense of humour and often used this in her diary entries relaying stories in the 'light hearted' manner illustrated above. However, her 'affection' for Andrew was genuine, even if (to my knowledge) unreciprocated and did appear to impact on her participation in the way described.

However, for others, ongoing relationships within the group have a long-term impact on their attitude towards physical education. If I refer back to a diary entry made by Sally, it is evident that for her there is an enduring issue here:

*Well it is ok but I don't like the teacher or some of the people in the team, Some of the People gives me shit and I don't play right as I have to put up with the shit from them (Sally, year 11, diary entry, 24<sup>th</sup> September 1998)*

The potential impact upon the individual of the actions of others is evidently variable, as is the intention of those who have that impact. On occasion, children may actively seek to affect another's performance:

*This week I was pissed off with James, and he trod on my foot & bogged me out and it did affect my game, but everyone else was fine. After the lesson through, he said it was a good game & I played well  
(Susan, year 11, diary entry, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1999)*

In this example, James' actions are temporary and not carried outside of the lesson; in fact, he actively seeks to ensure that they are not.

*I really enjoyed to day –everyone was really friendly and worked as a team and no one got stressed if anybody mucked up which is good news for me because I'm not exactly brilliant at this game  
(Claire, year 11, diary entry, 24<sup>th</sup> September 1998)*

Claire's comment would imply that ordinarily, she may have been prone to ridicule from the group and evidently saw this as a threat; the relief she feels at the response of others is evident. The threat of the reaction of others to individuals also occurred to others, in Susan's case meaning that she felt pupils should be allowed to work with 'a friend' almost as a means of protection:

*Although rounders is a team sport, at the end of the day only one person can bat so when he puts the teams together I think he should put us with a friend. It doesn't bother me but some people feel very self-conscious on their own and intimidated so by just having a friend it might make them feel more comfortable  
(Susan, year 11, diary entry, 24<sup>th</sup> September 1999)*

Yet again, here the evidence of a belief that team sports are good because of their interactive nature emerges. Whilst I have already discussed issues of PE activities earlier in this chapter, I should like to reconsider these issues from the perspective of child relationships. Again, there is evidence that it is not the activity that is of importance to the children, but the relationships existing within it:

*M: ...there are some PE things that I hate doing and I just don't want to go near them.  
SG: Like what?  
M: Trampolining. I used to love it...I like it when I'm on my own or with my friends but when you're in a big group you feel so self-conscious because you're on your own. I mean I don't mind doing it and ...then things like running, I hate running but I'll happily do it but I just don't like it because it's just you've got to do it all by yourself and it makes me feel so bad about myself.  
SG: Oh, no! Why do you feel bad about yourself?  
M: I don't know, I just, I mean, I just don't feel right. I mean everybody else is so perfect, they're all thin and then there's me.  
(Michelle, year 10, interview, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

The implications of Michelle's use of language here particularly interests me. She begins by stating that she used to like trampolining, implying that she no longer does so. Yet she immediately states that in fact she does like it, but only when alone or with friends- in an environment that cannot be, or is unlikely to be provided within physical education. By 'on her own' here, Michelle does not mean alone, but rather 'not in front of' particular others. Indeed, she abandons her talk of trampolining in preference for her theme of the difficulty she has working in front of those who are not her friends. She does not, in fact, have to work all by herself 'per se', but in the company of others with whom she does not feel comfortable, and it is this that is the issue.

This is obviously of great significance to Michelle, and emerges even in contradiction to her earlier statement that she liked working in a group, because therein she does not feel singled out. However, for Michelle, in some team situations, isolation can occur. When talking about netball, she states:

*M:.. none of the girls pass to me, cos it's all the ones that don't like me, they never pass to me ...  
(Michelle, year 10, interview, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

This brings me back to consider the concept that 'team' situations are necessarily positive; what is the case in practice is that they are good for as long as the team is structured in a positive way as far as the individual is concerned.

What Michelle highlights is the importance of the definition of individuals by their group; this is not to say that individuals are not without agency but to illustrate the power that others may have over their experiences. This is a theme that I shall develop. Indeed, the nature of children's comments highlighted the fact that any element of physical education is defined, not in terms of what it 'is' but in terms of children's reaction to it.

The significance of the relationships that children have with their peers was not only illustrated by the extent of the inclusion of this theme in the comments that children made, but also in the nature of the way that they made such comments. For some students, importance would be indicated through the language that they used; for instance, Michelle, year 10, ultimately described physical education as being 'very emotional'. However, for others who perhaps did not have access to more emotive terms it would emerge in other ways. Ellie was a year 8 student who had been making her diary entries in the third person; however, at one point she wrote the following:

*Ellie played netball and I made a mistake, so my group had to run round the court again they were not happy Chappies, I am not their friend know  
(Ellie, year 8, diary entry, 9<sup>th</sup> December 1999)*

As Ellie relays the response of her peers to the 'result' of 'her' actions, she moves into using the first person at the most emotive point of the story for her. Evidently Ellie cannot depersonalise this aspect of her experience that was of such significance to her. This serves in contrast to the conformative nature of all other written comments made by Ellie as discussed earlier.

Compounding the natural organisation of physical education in terms of varying groupings and pairing under which children are required to interact is the imposition of role playing required in order for them to fulfil the demands of the national curriculum. The particular significance of this arises from the necessity for children to fulfil roles that may distort the natural hierarchy of controls that occur within a class.

Ordinarily, as will be discussed, children existed in social groupings within which they fulfil a particular role. On occasion, these are recognised by the group as a whole:

*M: Yeah cos he's the boss of the whole class.  
(Nicky and Michelle, pair interview, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1999)*

This appears to be an uncontested issue; physically, Mike would dominate 'his' immediate physical education environment, directing others or simply performing himself and disregarding any other members of the group. On one occasion, Mike was working in a partnership set up by the teacher so that one child would perform whilst the other gave feedback. In practice, Mike performed for the duration of the allocated time whilst his partner observed; no interaction took place.

*S: ...and we new are Dance well But we need to do the end Better and Amy was moaning as usewell she thinks she the "Boss"  
(Peter, year 7, diary entry, 21<sup>st</sup> January 1999)*

In this instance, Peter does not believe that Amy is the boss and therefore as far as he's concerned she has no authority over him. However, other children are more deeply affected by the attitude of their peers:

*J: It's difficult.  
SG: What's difficult about it?  
J: It's just that some people make fun of the others or... that's why I feel embarrassed  
(David and John, year 7, pair interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1999)*

In John's case, he depersonalises an instance by making the subject of his sentence 'some people', not identifying his subject specifically. Yet presumably this issue is of concern because he has been personally affected by this- either through actually experiencing it himself or through his empathy with someone who has- but does not wish to identify specific individuals. It might, therefore, be inferred that John finds giving feedback difficult, only in certain circumstances; since 'some' people act in the way he described, presumably not 'all' people do and, therefore, there may be an instance where giving feedback is not problematic for him.

Therefore, being placed in a position to referee and assert some kind of formal authority is unsuccessful for some children. Personal relations can take precedence over the task. This is not to say that the children will not ostensibly fulfil the task, but in practice do not actually fulfil it due to the restrictions imposed by the nature of the relationship they have with the individual or people whom they are supposed to be guiding.

In Leanne's case, her concerns lie with the possible emotional response of the person with whom she is working and she therefore neutralises the situation by suggesting that she shares in the need for correction:

*L: And you don't want to say that because you think 'Oh God, it might upset them'*  
*SG: So what do you do when you think 'Oh, they could improve by doing this'?*  
*L: You wouldn't say it then...you'd like say that like um....there's some people in this group that were like a bit out of tune you know; or if it's a pair I think you'd sort of say 'I think we've both got to work on this' and act as if it's both of you.*  
*(Leanne and Julie, year 7, pair interview, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1999)*

Although there is evidently delicate balance in the pupil-pupil relationship as regards role, often the demands placed upon the child by NCPE directly jeopardises this, even where the intention is to enhance those relationships:

*I think right from year 7 a lot of kids referee, that is extremely important, that you give, you actually give them the power to do the job that an ordinary referee would do, you know, if anybody's spoiling the game...if you're sent off then you're sent off, that's the end of it. You know, people have to have respect for each other in that sense*  
*(Mr Mitchell, interview 24<sup>th</sup> March 2000)*

Children could, in fact articulate these very same intentions; Michelle and Nicky stated the following:

*SG: What do you think the point of refereeing is then?*  
*N: So that you learn it from all points of view, so if you become the referee, you learn how hard it is for the referee.*  
*SG: How does that affect what you do when you're actually playing then?*  
*M: So you don't mouth the referee off!*  
*SG: So, you get a better understanding.*  
*(Nicky and Michelle, year 7, pair interview, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1999)*

However, the question arises here as to how the children are 'given' the power to execute the task of being a referee and whether the rationalisation in allocating children in this role is actualised. I contend that whilst the teacher may empower the individual by allocating a role- something that will not be disputed by other children since, as discussed, they generally feel that the teacher has authority over them- they cannot assure power in any real sense. Physically, the teacher is unlikely to oversee the whole period of refereeing since they are required to attend to more than one group of children at any time, and therefore the children revert to the natural order of interaction that exists within their group. For example, in Jenny's case, she feels impotent in the role of referee:

*I think that in basket ball the refering is not that great because people ignore you*  
*(Jenny, year 8, diary entry, 17<sup>th</sup> September 1998)*

In Helen and Jane's case, they were challenged regarding their decisions:

*SG: What do you feel about doing refereeing?*  
*J: Well, all the players tell me it's wrong when I've actually said something and I've made a decision.*  
*SG: What do you think they should do?*

*J: I think they should just listen to the referee because that's what the referee's for.  
SG: So, how does that make you feel then?  
H: Annoyed because they're being obnoxious.  
(Helen and Jane, year 7, pair interview, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1999)*

Therefore, there are certain instances where children are placed in direct 'conflict' with others. What appears to happen is that peers collectively place a threat when they act collectively 'against' an individual. Essentially, what appears to happen is that children identify one another as worthy of fulfilling a particular role or otherwise and treat one another accordingly. This kind of stereotyping was a theme that ran throughout the basis of this research and appears to be strongly dependent upon the particular group that the individual is associated with by the class as a whole.

Earlier, I mentioned how children would use the idea of making one another laugh as a means of creating solidarity; laughing together is a means of shared identity and was one way in which a group was identified. Yet in laughing together as a group, children necessarily exclude those who are not laughing with them from that group, and humour acts as a means of differentiation. Many of the excerpts above, indicate the feelings children have when others are in a position to judge them and indicate the significance of being isolated within the class in such a context, which so frequently occurs within physical education.

Within the group, that laughter is acceptable and positive. Where it is, however, directed outside of the group, then it emphasises the division of that group from another, and at this stage becomes malignant for the child towards whom the 'laughter' is directed. Here it becomes derision. When talking about people with whom she preferred not to work, Michelle did not identify individuals, but groups of people that she typed together. Her choice in itself resulted from her understanding that these others 'typed' her:

*M: There are certain people I don't like working with like Alex Beadlsey, and Michael Simpson and Clive Mitchell, and Andrew Drake and Bryan Gibson*

*SG: Which one of those people would you least like to work with?*

*M: Um... (pause) I don't really know because to me they're all the same.*

*SG: O.K. What is it about them that makes them all the same to you?*

*M: It's not exactly that they're a bad person, it's just that they pick out certain things about what you're doing and they keep on going on and on and on. So if you do something really bad then they'll go on about it for ages and not let you live it down.*

*SG: What do you mean by 'really bad'?*

*M: Well when you're running or something and they point and laugh at you. Because I'm not exactly confident with myself or anything and it just makes it harder and they'll laugh at you and I know they don't mean it and they're just having a laugh and stuff*

*(Michelle, year 10, individual interview, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

When asked why she felt the boys acted in this way it became apparent that this was not particularly directed at her as an individual, but people who they considered to be different to themselves:

*M: Mainly people who are, you know, not like them.  
(Michelle, year 10, individual interview, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

Michelle goes on to explain her perception of the social structure of the pupil population in her school:

*Cos in our school you have the like really lower lot...the lower class people and then you have the popular lot, and I have most of the popular boys in my class and they always seem to pick out individual things about you.  
(Michelle, year 10, individual interview, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

The theme of children acting collectively 'against' others is one that ran throughout the school. Referring back to comments made by Nicky and Michelle of year 7, they discuss the fact that 'they' make fun of Alison and Julia and that they are aware that it is wrong but do it anyway because Julia is a 'bit different'.

On occasion, behaviour leads to group action 'against' an individual:

*Alison is being really nasty and bossy towards all of us and we are all getting fedup (sic) of it next time we are going to leave her out and be bossy towards her, see how she likes a taste of her own medicine!  
(Jenny, year 7, diary entry, 19<sup>th</sup> March 1999)*

However, the large majority of treatment appears to result not from the action of an individual, but from the perception that others have of them, that guides the way they are treated. In many cases, children were treated according to a particular 'group' that they were deemed to belong to. The informal groupings recognised by the children were inherent in their language and there were common titles for different children that all would recognise. The extremes of this categorisation of pupils were 'boffs' or 'geeks' which were often used interchangeably, with geeks generally being reserved more for specific sectors of the male population. At the other end of the spectrum were the 'populars'.

*SG: What is it about Brady that you like?*

*H: He's popular.*

*SG: Right...What's your definition of 'popular'?*

*H: Well, he hangs around with all the cool people (laughs).*

*SG: So, who's cool?*

*H: Graham, Colin and Francis.*

*SG: Francis is in a different PE group isn't he?*

*H: Yeah.*

*SG: Is it just in PE that they're popular?*

*H: No, they're popular everywhere because they're more handsome than any of the others.  
(Helen, year 9, individual interview, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1999)*

What is seen here, is the use of a particular adjective used to describe not only an individual but a group of people, a system of language largely adopted by girls rather than boys, although boys

were aware and familiar with their use. Labelling in this sense first became apparent in diaries in pejorative terms:

*Then the girls went and as usually Claire and Susan won it's just not fair they went last time. usually Nathalie Jones would win but she hurt her neck so she couldn't do it but if she did do it she would win because she is a bof (don't tell her I told you that ) In the end I ended up with some other people putting away the mats LIFE'S UNFAIR (sic)  
(Sarah, year 8, diary entry, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1998)*

The appellants 'boff' was used synonymously with that of 'geek' and the adjective 'geeky'.

*T: ...they're the geeky ones.*

*SG: What do you mean by geeky?*

*T: They're the boffs*

*(Tracy, year 9, individual interview, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1999)*

The issue that I inevitably wished to address was what formed the basis for such labelling. For some, dissecting the meaning of terms proved problematic. In order to gain an understanding of the basis of this categorisation I sought to elicit the children's definition of the terms used to group children. In practice, the information that children could offer was somewhat limited. Helen suggested that popular children were good looking and confident:

*H: They're more handsome than the others*

...

*H: I think it's because they're confident as well. If you're not confident, people don't like you very much do they? I don't know why they don't but they don't.*

*(Helen, year 9, individual interview, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1999)*

However, there remains a question of whether being good looking and/or confident might suffice to be 'popular'. The fact that children had greater difficulty in breaking down the meaning of being a geek or boff, or popular and frequently their attempts at explanation often lacked clarity and contained elements of apparent contradiction is perhaps indicative of the complexity of what constitutes particular 'types' of child. As seen above, Tracy, year 9, describes one 'label' with another rather than breaking terms down into accessible meanings. Helen takes a similar approach although attempts to articulate her feelings in other terms:

*SG: ... What do you mean by boffy?*

*H: Andrew Morris.*

*SG: You think of 'boffy' as Andrew Morris; what does boffy mean then?*

*H: Really clever*

*SG: Right; why don't you like working with those boys then?*

*H: Because they're just so stupid, they always mess around, they don't let you do anything and then at the end... if you're in dance say, and they ask you to show it and you haven't got anything to show because they won't listen.*

*(Helen, year 9, individual interview, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1999)*



In the above extract, Helen begins defining 'boffy' by identifying an individual whom she believes epitomises the characteristics of the term. She then proceeds to isolate one characteristic which she associates with Adam to explain what she means. However, she progresses to use an alternative illustration to explain why she does not like working with 'boffs'. Adam is described as 'clever' and since Helen moves on to suggest that he is 'stupid' she evidently believes him to be 'clever' only in one specific sense. The question therefore arises as to whether Adam is perhaps clever at academic work, but 'stupid' in physical education because he does not work on task. It would appear, therefore, that Helen regards geeks as those who do not respond positively to physical education.

There are many elements to a concept; but commonalities that may characterise concepts are not consistent with all elements of that concept (Wittgenstein 1958 p31). In the same way, characteristics of 'popular' and 'boff' both overlap and differentiate between different members of that group.

This inevitably raises the issue of what it means for me to ask children to break down the meaning of what they implicitly 'know'. In some cases my question of what was meant by such terms was met with a look of disbelief that I could not work it out for myself. The child's reluctance or inability to dissect the meaning of the argots they use does not indicate a lack of validity in the terms they are using to describe specific people. An individual may shut their eyes and describe the exact position of their body without ever being able to articulate the principles of proprioception.

I argue that once a child has been asked to fragment the meaning of a term in this context, the essence of that meaning can be lost. Perhaps this is why children differentiate themselves from others who are 'not like them' but may well be just like them in some senses. 'Being' a 'boff' is a composite phenomenon but one that cannot necessarily be divided into constituent parts. Alternatively it may be that the aspects of things that are most important for use are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity and children are simply unable to articulate an answer here.

Therefore, it is not defining concepts identified by the children here that becomes the issue, but rather gaining an understanding of what it means to be categorised and to categorise others in this manner. Essentially, what can be said with some confidence is that the concept of 'boff' exists within the consciousness of those who use the term and subsequently guides the way they perceive and act towards others. It is this perception and action that gives the term meaning.

Michelle (Year 10) noted that there were similarities between 'her' group and what she termed the 'lower class people'. Michelle perceived the whole school as being divided initially along the lines of 'lower class' people and 'popular' people with also a 'bubbly lot' and the girls 'who like getting

attention from the boys'. The lower class people were the ones who were 'picked on' by the popular people. When asked about the behaviour of the 'lower' people Michelle replied:

*They're a bit like us really, they're the ones that are just not seen as like us they're like, they talk, most of the time they'll talk about schoolwork because that's the only thing they have left in life so they have to talk about schoolwork.  
(Michelle, year 10, individual interview, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

Thus Michelle shows that it is the perceptions of children that divide others into 'groups' and that such divisions are not initially based in 'real' characteristics but in the treatment that they receive from others. Michelle was 'like' the 'lower class' people in some senses (she later alludes to the fact that she is interested in completing schoolwork well as a possible common factor) but evidently displayed some other feature that meant she was not classified with that 'type'.

This division of children had a profound effect upon the nature of participation in physical education most notably with the 'geeks/boffs/lower class', but also with those children who would perhaps not clearly be part of any group. Labelling here largely serves as a rhetorical device determining the behaviours of different groups- ultimately preserving the status of certain groups by alienating children from one another. Subsequently, where children do not redefine 'popular' and 'boff' in their own terms, there exists a certain need to associate with a particular group and a stronger need not to be associated with others. It was very important for Helen not to be associated with 'geeky people' in isolation. When asked how she felt working in an allocated group rather than one of choice she answered:

*H: I like it when I'm in a team that I like...I don't like it when I'm in a team with boys that I hate...geeks (laughs).  
SG: Why don't you like working with the boys?  
H: It's just the geeky ones.  
(Helen, year 9, individual interview, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1999)*

The discussion later continued:

*SG: How do you feel if you've got to work with someone that's 'geeky'?  
H: I don't feel that bad if one of my friends is working with one as well. If they're in a pair with a geek, I don't feel that bad.  
SG: Right.  
H: If they're in a group with Graham Merrett and I'm with Andrew Morris then that's not very good.  
SG: That's not very good...why's that? Why does it make a difference what someone else is doing?  
H: Because I fancy Graham.  
SG: If someone was working with Colin, would you feel the same?  
H: (Nods Head)  
SG: You still wouldn't like it? But if everyone was paired up with a 'geek' you ...  
H: I wouldn't mind, no.  
(Helen, year 9, individual interview 8<sup>th</sup> October 1999)*

The nature of relationships and association is evidently delicate for Helen here, and she clearly has a great dependency on what others think of her. Therefore Helen also sought to work with people who she perceived as 'popular' in order to have an association with them:

*SG: What is it about Colin that you like?*

*H: He's popular.*

*SG: Right...What's your definition of 'popular'?*

*H: Well, he hangs around with all the cool people (laughs).*

*SG: So, who's cool?*

*H: Graham, Colin and Francis.*

*SG: Francis is in a different PE group isn't he?*

*H: Yeah.*

*SG: Is it just in PE that they're popular?*

*H: No, they're popular everywhere because they're more handsome than any of the others.  
(Helen, year 9, individual interview, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1999)*

From these comments I conclude that Helen clearly considers that the children with whom individuals are associated significantly affect their status. It appears that children will necessarily treat others according to the person or persons with whom they are associated. If I refer back to a comment made by Nicky and Michelle, year 7, it is clear that Julia is the one described as being 'different', but it is she and her friend who are made fun of:

*M: Cos none of us like working with Alison or Julia.*

*SG: Why do you think that's a problem?*

*N: Well, Julia's just a bit different and that and we're wrong to make fun of them.*

*(Nicky and Michelle, year 7, pair interview, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1999)*

Children who formed what I shall term the 'core membership' of the 'populars' also disliked working with 'geeks' but appeared less threatened by them, in many cases they did not use such a term derogatively. It appears that those who held a more 'vulnerable' position within the class resorted to the use of 'geek' and 'boff' against others as a means of dissociating themselves from them. As discussed, Graham was clearly a 'popular' boy; he was chosen as the first ranking choice of both friendship and PE working options and did not feature as a significant negative choice. In his description of individuals that others considered a geek/boff his focus was on identifying a characteristic that he did not like, rather than using a label. However, he still evidently grouped people in his consciousness:

*G: Like, in my group there's some people sort of like some people that are not my ability and it's pretty boring*

*SG: You said on your sheet Susan Lewis and Teresa Kipp...*

*G: Yeah, people like that*

*(Graham, year 7, individual interview, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1999)*

Although year 11 children did not directly employ the shibboleths of classification utilised by younger years, they too associated particular people with one another, and would be aware of the possible consequences for them were they to associate with certain others:

*SG: Now, you said also that you'd prefer not to work with Sally; can you describe Sally for me?*

*N: By reputation she's horrible, fat pig. Um, and she's one of those that goes round smoking and swears a lot.*

*SG: How does that make you feel?*

*N: I don't want to be around her; I don't think my parents would be very pleased. I wouldn't want my reputation to go down.*

*(Nicola, year 11, individual interview, 26<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

The point here regarding reputation is not simply significant for parents, but teachers and peers. Essentially, others learn to respond to a reputation rather than the child themselves and this evidently presents a somewhat delicate situation. Whilst some children may alter the group with which they are associated, the majority of children seem to function within a reputation that appears to be sustainable and independent of their actions. Indeed often, where a child does not act according to the way others perceive they 'should', this provokes a heightened reaction.

### **Varying interpretations**

In practice, the concepts of 'boff/popular/geek' had double 'layered' meanings. Firstly, there was a shared meaning running across the group that was used to rationalise behaviours, and secondly, there was the meaning of the term as inferred by the individual to whom it was applied. Michelle was able to recognise both and used the fact that others regarded her as different to them to rationalise their actions towards her:

*M: ...sometimes they just laugh at me and sometimes...say they always have a go at you if you don't shoot properly or you do something wrong and they always go at you. But when their mates do it they don't say anything to them.*

*SG: Why do you think that is?*

*M: I dunno, I mean I don't really know them, but they just like picking on people really just to have a bit of fun. If they don't do anything to like wind people up they don't seem to have any fun they just have to have their little pastime to pass the time.*

*SG: Why do you think they need to do that?*

*M: I think they've got a low self-confidence really, I think they've got to show they're better and that's the only way they can do it is by picking on people.*

*(Michelle, year 10, individual interview, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

What Michelle also reinforces here, is the need for certain groups to cohere through some specific action in order to protect their own 'identity'.

Michelle goes on to indicate that individuals are labelled in group formations that are contradictory to others' perceptions of what are 'good' and 'bad' characteristics:

*SG: What makes them 'popular'?*

*M: I don't know really because none of them are exactly good looking I think it's just because they can...you know they're seen as 'hard' and they bully little people, you know, younger people than them and people they know they're gonna get to you know, people that have really (low) self confidence. They just keep on doing it and doing it and doing it*

*until you're just, you know, so down. People just....they're just popular because they're just like that. But they're not exactly popular in my eyes because they just seem really low to me; they seem lower than anything.*

*(Michelle year 10, individual interview, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999, my emphasis)*

This may be explained by the fact that Michelle redefines what it is to be 'popular' in terms that place her in a morally superior position to them. She does not, however, follow a similar dissection of the meaning that being part of the 'lower class' has. Whilst Michelle expresses some sympathy and even empathy with the group, she views the situation with a degree of inevitability as they are seen to ratify their 'position' by 'sucking up' to teachers (individual interview 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999). Thus on occasion, status is dialectically determined but behaviourally reinforced.

What is happening here is a reinterpretation and recontextualisation of meaning being applied where two differing perspectives 'meet'. Children here are grouped as a result of their treatment by others whether or not their inherent characteristics actually concur with the perceptions of those 'others'. Subsequently, the children will reinforce their own groupings by creating their own, preferred definition of the situation.

The value laden sense of the labels adopted by children creates a hierarchy of status within the school and class. The key difference in the way they are experienced, emanates from the means through which it has been communicated to them. For Helen, the use of the terms she adopts have been initiated from a group perceived (by themselves at least) to be of relative high status to which she believes herself to belong. For Michelle, the terms have been imposed on her through common usage within the school. Ultimately the two have disparate interpretations of identical terms. The meaning or signification of a word differs between user and person to whom it is being applied even where the receiver understands the meaning for the person who is acting towards them. However, within the class, and indeed, school as a whole, the abstract concept of 'boff/geek/popular' continues to exist.

Despite talking about 'the geeks' as though they form one group, what was evident here was that they actually existed in a series of small friendships. The characteristics of individuals as perceived by group members differed greatly to the perceptions that 'outsiders' held of their peers. Some friendships, on occasion appeared to emanate from a need to associate with someone else, rather than existing in the commonsense conception of what a friendship might mean. When discussing her most significant choice of working companion, Bryony, year 9, describes Susan as follows:

*SG: Now, you like working with Susan?*

*B: She's quiet. I don't know, but she is a bit bossy.*

*SG: She's bossy is she?*

*B: Yeah, you wouldn't think so but she is.*

*SG: So, she's bossy to you? How does that make you feel?*

*B: I don't know.*

*(Bryony year 9, individual interview, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

In this instance, Bryony is very eager to tell me about Susan's character because the commonly held perception of her would not be consistent with this.

*Students working well today. Most on task. Still Bryony has not communication with anyone but Susan (apart from smiles this is also case for Susan). This is second week that teacher has not communicated with either student.  
(Observation notes, 15th October 1999)*

Indeed, Bryony had very limited interaction with anyone; three weeks actually passed before the teacher commented on her performance; this was the only communication from anyone other than Susan that I had observed in that time. Susan was chosen positively by one child other than Bryony, a girl, Teresa, who was not chosen positively by any child. Therefore, did Bryony seek to work with Susan because she was one of the only students who would communicate with her?

When choosing individuals to work or spend time with, Bryony was chosen only by two people, one of which was Teresa who was not chosen positively at all by any child, and Susan. Susan took part in no action during observations that could have been considered 'bossy'; the relationship between Susan and Bryony was very closed and their perceptions of each other were therefore likely to be different to the perceptions of others around them. It is also interesting to note that Bryony does not particularly describe Susan in positive terms, which misaligns her choice from other patterns seen in the groups taking part in this part of the study. The question, therefore, arises as to whether the two are found together almost by 'default'; having few others that accept them in the group means that they are attracted to each other as remaining options. Of the two other children with whom she is 'associated' one was not chosen in a positive sense by any children at any time, but had chosen both Susan and Bryony.

What we have here is a small inter-linked group, apparently relatively dependent upon one another but who do not reciprocate one another's interest in their entirety. Therefore, in a situation where working together in physical education with people of their choice, these children may still be working with someone with whom their affinity is restricted. Significantly, Bryony and Susan have a dyadic relationship as that is the only reciprocation they enjoy.

What is clear is that the basis of groupings that children make is somewhat enigmatic and rather subject to the whims of the class as a whole. Whilst behaviours, attitudes and other factors may contribute to initial groupings, it is the way that children are perceived rather than the way that they are that determines their treatment in school. In turn, it is this treatment that determines perception:

*They sit, and they just talk most of the time. They're a bit like us really, they're the ones that are just not seen as like us they're like they'll talk...most of the time they'll talk about schoolwork because that's the only thing they have left in life so they have to talk about*

*schoolwork. Most of their time they spend in school because they don't have a social life. They seem to do that. Or they suck up to teachers. (laughs)*  
(Michelle, year 10, individual interview 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999)

What occurs, however, is that within such groupings, individuals become vulnerable. Within physical education, this is particularly significant since children are consistently placed in situations where theoretically, they share responsibility for working together. In such instances, as might be predicted, children appear to be drawn initially to working with those they deem to be their friends. This idea is perhaps not in the least surprising and therefore demands little analysis. However, what is of significance is that the main concern of children working with others is initially a basic familiarity but also, more fundamentally, they wish to work with an individual who does not pose a threat, and avoid those individuals who may devalue them or their performance.

In the following section I shall discuss the limited threat felt by those children who belong to 'popular' groups before progressing to discuss the complexities of having to preserve a sense of self and self-worth in order to genuinely take part in physical education.

### **Self-perception**

It is my feeling that there were certain instances in which a child may have felt uncomfortable in explaining why they did not wish to work with another individual. Interestingly enough, this situation seemed to be the case with those children that were more able within physical education and appeared unwilling to openly criticise other children. Sarah, year 9, was a very able student and according to the results of sociometric testing, the most chosen girl in the class in a positive capacity. Sarah was not chosen by any individual in a negative capacity. She rationalises her own negative choice thus:

*S: One of the reasons is that I don't really know her much and she goes with the shy, quiet types, which I'm not, I'm just the total opposite and I find it hard to work with.*

*(Sarah, year 9, individual interview, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

Sarah rationalises her negative choice in a relatively neutral sense suggesting that they are different 'types' of people and dismissing the issue in a fairly philosophical fashion. Similarly, the most 'popular' boy in the same physical education group, rationalised his choice in 'depersonalised' terms:

*Like, in my group there's some people that are not my ability and it's pretty boring*  
(Graham, year 9 individual interview, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1999)

However, for the majority of children, the choices made as to whom they should not like to work with were ensconced in the notion of 'threat'. Of these, threat primarily took the form of verbal retribution:

*SG: O.K. Now, you said that you'd prefer not to work with Kim Sealey.*

*M: Yes.*

*SG: Can you describe her for me?*

*M: Um,...she's a bit uh... she's a bit... verbally aggressive. She's a good player (referring to badminton) but if she wins she... like boasts about it.*

*(Michelle, year 9, individual interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1999)*

This notion of threat also applied to instances where others were seen as antithesis to the concept of acceptable behaviour held by the individuals. Awareness of such attitudes meant that some children would actually utilise such mildly anti-social behaviour to actualise their own self interests:

*SG: So, if she wanted you to do something that you didn't want to ...*

*K: She'd never say it.*

*SG: She wouldn't?*

*K: No, cos like I'm loud, when I'm outside I'm like really loud.*

*(Kim, year 9, individual interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1999)*

Kim and Michelle have a mutual aversion. Kim is fully aware of the origins of the aversion others have towards her and feels fully able to manipulate this.

Conversely, positive choices were often characterised where the individual identified core elements that they perceived, or wished to be perceived as part of their own persona:

*SG: Can you describe Andrew for me?*

*B: He's nice....*

*SG: How is he nice?*

*B: He's got a good personality.*

*SG: Anything else?*

*B: No.*

*SG: What's his personality like?*

*B: Like me.*

*(Ben, year 10, individual interview, 19<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

The perceived similarities between children are ultimately perceived to lead to empathy:

*SG: If I can just talk to you about the people that you identified on the form you filled in, ...you said that you like to work with Lee Robson.*

*M: Yes.*

*SG: Can you start off by describing what Lee's like?*

*M: He's fun; he's amusing, he likes badminton as well, so...*

*SG: What makes him fun?*

*M: Don't know really...he likes the same things that I like...he's understanding.*

*SG: He understands you?*

*M: Yeah.*

*(Martin, year 10, individual interview, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

Where there is understanding, similar approaches to work can be achieved:

*SG: Now, you said that you particularly like to work with Carrie Cooper; can you describe Carrie for me?*



*G: O.K. Well, she's always wanting to do her best and if she doesn't succeed then she gets frustrated with herself so she always tries harder and harder until she gets it right. I work with her in drama as well and she won't stop until she gets it completely right, and I'm the same so we ...if we can't get something right then we'll go over it again and again until we get it right and that's what I like about Carrie. Some people just give up if they can't do it, it's like I've been dancing so long I've been taught that you can't give up; you've got to keep going and for Carries it's exactly the same.  
(Gill, year 11, individual interview, 26<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

Although children identified certain factors in others to which they were both drawn and averse, of particular note was that, particularly with boys, there was a tendency to display similar characteristics when placed in direct confrontation with an individual of negative significance to them:

*SG: O.k. Now, you'd prefer not to work with Charles Acton.*

*H: Yeah. He gets on my nerves.*

*SG: Can you describe Charles for me?*

*H: Uh, he's quite small he's got a very annoying habit of annoying ya.*

*SG: How does he annoy you?*

*H: Like when we're playing badminton he picks up two shuttles and hits them both at ya so you have to try and hit both which is really annoying ...he just really bugs me.*

*SG: If he hits two shuttles at you, do you try and hit both?*

*H: Oh Yeah! I try, yeah.*

*(Harry, year 9, individual interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1999)*

Applying a basic adult to child assessment here, logic would suggest that were Harry not to attempt to return the shuttles, then Charles would cease to send them. However, in practice there was a collaboration to misbehave here. Additionally, Harry did not see Charles as any real threat; as the most popular boy in the class, Adam would seem to be the stronger of the two and well able to assert himself in the relationship. Indeed, in the instance of being asked whether he could persuade Charles to do something he didn't want to do, he implies physical threat:

*SG: Could you persuade him to do something he didn't want to?*

*H: Yeah.*

*SG: You could? How would you try to persuade him to do something?*

*H: I dunno...I wouldn't threaten him but I'd make him scared if you know what I mean.*

*SG: How would you do that?*

*H: Threaten him...not threaten him...I'd hurt him if you know what I mean...I wouldn't physically hurt him I'd just go 'Oh, I'll hurt you if you don't do this'.*

*SG: And then he'd do it?*

*H: Yeah.*

*(Harry, year 9, individual interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1999)*

It is difficult to ascertain here whether Harry would in fact carry out verbal threats that appear to be of physical harm. His suggestion that these would not be actualised may have been made in the belief that he could be in trouble were he to admit to physically harming another child. However, Harry does not actually specify that the 'hurt' would be of a physical nature; it is the fear that he wishes to incite in the other that would appear to serve his purposes. Initially, where a child is in receipt of a physical threat, it appears they will not return the threat in kind but seek to defuse the

situation through being impassive; and where a physical threat becomes too much to cope with, intervention from the teacher is likely to be sought:

*SG: Wouldn't even go there? Right, if Alex wanted you to do something that you didn't want to, would he be able to get you to do it?*

*R: He might be able to with some of his friends I'm sure.*

*SG: How would he go about getting you to do something that you didn't want to?*

*R: Force probably (laughs). Brute force...threaten physically.*

*SG: He'd threaten you would he? What if it was in a PE situation such as working something out in gymnastics and he wanted you to do something you didn't, what would happen?*

*R: He'd probably try to but I'd just ignore him.*

*SG: What would you do if he still wanted you to do something and you didn't?*

*R: Probably tell the teacher.*

*(Richard, year 10, individual interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1999)*

Although physical threat was a phenomenon that did exist for some children within their interactions, in most cases, confrontation was subtler:

*SG: Now, you prefer not to work with Timothy.*

*L: Cos he's too much of a person who's like, when he wins, he rubs it in your face and I hate it when people do that; he's really good at sports but he's like...we don't like each other anyway and when he rubs it in my face, it makes me really angry...he's not a very good sportsman either, he has to win, he has to be better than me.*

*SG: Right...how would you describe his character then?*

*L: Well, he's clever, he's very clever at things and he knows what to do but, if when we like are sat down together on our own; if we have to do something together, then we're O.K. but when it's something that we're doing just like PE we don't get on very much anyway and it depends...if we're both good at the sport and we're both playing well, then we'll get on with each other but if one was playing rubbish then the other one rubs it in their face. Cos if he's playing rubbish then I do do it to him as well cos we don't get on.*

*SG: Right, what would you do if you were working with him in PE and he wanted you to do something that you didn't want to do?*

*L: Well, if I didn't...if he wanted me to do it and I didn't want to do it, I wouldn't like get all stropky about it because it would ruin the PE for him, I'd just tell him that I didn't want to do it so we could do something else.*

*(Lewis, year 9 individual interview, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

In such cases, there appear to be fluxes in the relationship according to who is considered the stronger of the two at any time. Once performance deteriorates, it is a sign for the other to highlight weaknesses of their 'opponent'. Lewis perceives himself to be slightly less able within physical education than Timothy and, whilst he implicitly concedes this, he is reluctant to concede defeat to Timothy either in terms of whatever activity they might be involved in together or in the 'battle of wills' associated with their relationship.

Where there is a greater difference, in what I shall describe as the perceived strength of individuals' character, incidences arise where a child even begins to doubt their own assessment of a situation as a result of domination by another individual:

SG: O.K then. What would he do if you wanted him to do something that he didn't want to?  
 L: I don't know him really well so I can't really say but I would say that he would try to force me to do the other thing.  
 SG: How would he do that?  
 L: He's quite dominating, he's very...he likes to get his own way. I'm not being nasty but um...if I wasn't going to co-operate I expect he'd want to do something he wanted to do.  
 SG: What would he do to try and persuade you?  
 L: I don't know, he'd just talk about it and say that what I wanted to do was bad or something he'd take the mickey out of what I wanted to do.  
 SG: So, he'd devalue what you wanted to do.  
 L: Yeah, so I'd end up thinking well, maybe he's right and end up doing what he wanted to do.  
 (Lewis, year 9 individual interview, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1999)

Thus the apparently 'stronger' of the two characters seeks to gain his own way by devaluing the intentions of the other child through ridicule. The concept of 'taking the mickey' is a powerful one in the perceptions of the children involved in this research. For many children, having their performance or beliefs trivialised in this way, was a central theme in their explanations of why they did or did not like working with specific others. This perhaps arises from a feeling of ultimately doubting ones self, creating a situation of confusion for the individual.

Responses to a situation wherein another child ridicules a particular pupil often appear to embody a degree of impotency. Regardless of the 'rights' or 'wrongs', one child is left feeling that there is little they can actually do about the situation:

SG: How do you feel about working with Charles Acton?  
 A: Angry.  
 SG: How would you describe Charles?  
 A: Annoying...very annoying. I just don't like him.  
 SG: How does he annoy you?  
 A: He just...he just always says 'I'm better at everything' like that and he's noisy like that...puts you down.  
 SG: I see...and how does that make you feel?  
 A: Angry.  
 SG: And what do you do then?  
 A: I just ignore him.  
 (Adam, year 9, individual interview, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999)

Adam was very vehement in saying 'angry'; it appeared a limbic response. It was evident that his recollection of encounters with Charles aroused the emotion that he had experienced at the time they occurred. However, it appears that Adam feels unable to vent his anger but rather ignores Charles. The significance of working with Charles affected the whole nature of Adam's experience of physical education when partnered with him or against him:

SG: What if you were working with Charles?  
 A: I'd disagree with him on everything, on principle.  
 SG: Would he ever be able to get you to do something you didn't want to?  
 A: No.  
 SG: Would you ever be able to get him to do something he didn't want to?

*A: Probably not. But I'd give it a go.*

*SG: You'd try?*

*A: I'd try.*

*(Adam, year 9, individual interview, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

Adam is perhaps more concerned with the fact that he would 'give it a go' than with whether he would be successful or not. The relationship that has been established between himself and Charles dictates that he must do this; other factors outside his control may determine his success. Indeed, his words seem to indicate that he would not actually expect to dominate Charles. This perhaps explains why he would have ignored Charles rather than 'fight back' in situations where he was made to feel angry by him; there are certain behaviours that he evidently conforms to within this context. Therefore, in a working situation, the main focus of a task becomes not that set by the teacher, but the relationship between the two boys according to predetermined norms that provide a framework for interaction between them.

The method that Charles uses to rouse anger in Adam demonstrates the power that devaluing another child's beliefs or ability can have. Indeed, a great deal of peer interaction appears to be guided by the self-worth experiences of the child as a result of that relationship. To return to a comment by Michelle (year 10):

*M: ...And I hate netball, that's another thing I hate, I hate it.*

*...Yeah, I hate it because it's all the girls and none of the girls pass to me, cos it's all the ones that don't like me, they never pass to me and I'm just standing there looking like a goon...I'm like, pass to me!*

*(Michelle, year 10, individual interview, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

In this instance, it is not actually 'netball' per se which is hated but the actions of other children that occur during netball lessons. It is the organisational structure which gives the opportunity for the peers to isolate another pupil. Michelle ultimately feels she looks like a 'goon' as a result of the actions of other children in her class; since Michelle identifies that she looks like a goon, this is the role perception that she feels others have of her providing a negative self- image.

Indeed, the fear of having self-worth challenged carries greater significance for the child than any other sensation. Indeed, in many cases, this meant that positive choices were not described in necessarily positive terms but rather articulated in terms of not being a threat to an individual's value:

*SG: Why do you like working with them?*

*T: Because if you can't do anything, they don't take the mick kind of thing.*

*(Tracy, year 9, individual interview, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1999)*

For many children, self-perception is a fragile entity. Within the school system it plays a large part in the child's participation in learning. What was clear from the children in this study, was that

there were many factors playing a role in the establishment of that self-esteem: their ability, their perceived ability, the way in which they were invited to relate to the subject matter and their relationship with the teacher. However, the ultimate determinant of their actual experience was the nature of others with whom they shared their lesson at any one time. 'Physical education' is presented as a unique, environmentally determined phenomenon; the organisational basis of the subject places the child in social situations that they may not experience in other subjects. Certainly, within the physical education experienced at Hansford Park, the concept of working individually did not exist; the child was never experiencing physical education in isolation. What ultimately results is a complex nexus of potential action and response that are highly subject to the way others perceive the individual and the way the child responds to their treatment by them:

*SG: If you were to sum up your experience of PE, how would you describe it?*

*M: Mmm, enjoyable, I like doing it. Emotional, very emotional.*

*SG: How is it emotional?*

*M: It's kind of, it's kind of, you have to do it and to get the strength and get on and do it and not to care about what other people think, just get on and do it, and have fun in other words.*

*(Michelle, year 10, individual interview, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999)*

The significance of the inter-peer relationship permeates all aspects of physical education and in the following chapter I shall discuss the implications of these for the child's organisation of reality, and response to physical education. Final consideration will also be given to the way in which children responded to being part of this study and the very positive contribution that they can make to the research process.

## CHAPTER NINE

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study sought to give children voice, not only within physical education, but within the research process itself. For me, this project was working on a dual basis: primarily that which wished to gain access to the experiences of children within physical education, but also in terms of exploring the possibilities of enactively incorporating children in the evolution of methodology. Through the process of conducting this research, many parallels emerged between the responses of children and the data generated. These, are particularly significant for the way in which experience based educational research continues to be conducted.

Certain findings here echo those of earlier research with children in physical education; in particular there is a consistency with other studies concerning gender and the place of the teacher. However, the additional expression, through the use of language in the vernacular, has allowed the exposure of issues that may have been occluded by a more prescriptive methodological approach. Casting experience as narrative, through diaries, interviews and extemporaneous exchange, led to the exposition of precurrent themes that underpin the whole nature of experience in physical education for the child. Whilst there are a range of factors identified as significant, the predominance of inter-peer relations has become clear.

Essentially, this study has been a tentative exploration into the potential for increasing children's involvement in the research process. Here I shall discuss the meanings and implications of the findings presented in Chapter Eight, concentrating on the essential bases of children's experiences of physical education as ensconced in peer relationships. Consideration concerns the exercise of power, the need for children to conceptually organise their behaviour through differentiation of individuals, and the nature of relationships with significant contemporaries. I also seek to illustrate the strength of contribution that children can make to studies through discussing not only the 'findings' of this work per se, but also the lessons learned along the way through the children's response to their participation.

Perhaps there is little surprise that the concept of inter-peer relationships were such a constant in children's accounts of their experiences of physical education. In Chapter Two, I discussed the essentially social nature of physical education as a subject in terms of the demands it places on children working with and before others in various contexts. The impact that this has on the individual child is founded in three main interrelated phenomena: the direct exercise of power between individuals, the treatment of individuals as belonging to specific sub-groups as an aid to the organisation of behaviour, and the overt manifestation of internal rationalisation of such treatment.

## **Power**

In the early part of the second phase of the research, it appeared to me that the power relations between children were the main contributors to their experiences of physical education. The nature of the exercise of power and its possible sources were explored in the third phase of the research where I sought to gain an understanding of how others, identified as significant to the children, might seek to directly influence them. As a result of this phase of the study, I modified my thoughts, as 'power' appeared to account for only one area on which their relations were founded. However, this was a significant area, and one which forms an essential part of my analysis.

Certain authors (Woods 1983, Keddie 1971) have suggested that where control of children needs to be maintained or ascertained, teachers will use the devaluation of children's beliefs, ideas, or behaviour as a means of asserting their own superiority. Within my study, this was found to be a tool utilised by children themselves to gain a sense of power and to actualise power over particular peers. It appears that the rhetorical vitiation of another child's ideas serves to weaken their resistance to suggestion in a situation where one is seeking to influence the other. The process of devaluing the beliefs or ideas of others simultaneously serves to justify their own, in terms other than those that directly relate to the ideas themselves. I also tentatively venture that this justification is not purely for the benefit of the peer, but may also be for their own sake, legitimising their own thoughts.

Other instances showed children prepared to take a less subtle approach to achieving the behaviour in others that they desired them to follow. Within power theory with children in the classroom, this has been termed coercion (Gold 1968) and is associated with verbal aggression, underpinned by physical threat. In my study, 'threat' in itself appeared to be confined to verbal aggression and was not necessarily associated with potential physical manifestation. It may be that because of stigma associated with physical violence, the children would not have expressed this possibility, or would have tempered their comments when discussing such issues.

However, what was clear was that verbal attack alone could suffice to control. Indeed, it was apparent that rhetoric would suffice as a means of control between children. The fact that this was the case evidently lies more in the 'subject' of power than the child exercising it; verbal aggression appears to be most effective where it is a tool that would not be used by the recipient- where the recipient would find it anathema. The success in the exercise of such power appears to lie more in the need for one child to disengage themselves from the immediate tirade rather than avoid the threatened consequence where there is one. The most expedient way of doing this may be to accede to the demands being made.

What is clear, then, is that children effectively conspire in the exercise of power, and the subjugation of one child by another is an unlikely event. What is created is a framework of options,

with the process leading to one particular outcome being rationalised very differently by the participants with individuals being the vehicles of power as opposed to its point of application (Foucault 1982).

The corporeal immediacy of interaction within physical education is akin to Kirk's (1993 p16) note that it is the bodied person who is taught and not the disembodied intellect. It is the 'bodied child' who experiences physical education. I do not use this term to refer here to the uniquely physical nature of the subject matter for the individual as it will inevitably exist, but in terms of children relating to others. Where children are placed in situations within which they feel threatened or uncomfortable in any way, they will seek to withdraw from that situation. Initially they will seek to physically withdraw, but where this is not possible, they will do so by disengaging themselves mentally by defining the exercise, or the other individual as meaningless to them.

This is not to suggest that the exercise of power is necessarily pejorative and one from which the child might wish to withdraw. Indeed, power can ultimately be productive. In this instance persuasion, for example, to attempt a skill believed to be beyond the child's abilities can lead to new knowledge where it is successfully executed. Where power is productive, it is generally exercised by a positively significant peer, or teacher.

Other instances where knowledge may be created is where an action may be deemed to gain the approval of another child. French and Raven (1968) identified such a desire as resulting in 'referent power'. However, within this study there was no evidence of the actual exercise of this kind of power, since no child expressed the active desire to cause such behaviour, or being subject to such a desire; power is not exercised where there is no intent substantiating an action (Wrong 1979 p4). What was articulated was the desire by some to be associated with others, meaning that these 'others' exercised an influence over them without particular intention to do so. Specifically, it is my contention that power cannot be said to exist where the belief in it lies only in the 'recipient' and not the person deemed to be exercising it.

Although an identical act with the same consequence may or may not be one of power, the outcomes are the same. In particular, the meaning remains the same for the subject of that act; the difference lies only in the meaning for the protagonist. Ostensible acts of 'power' may have extraneous consequences in addition, or instead of, those which were intended. Such instances may not be defined as acts of power. It was therefore this kind of situation, where I questioned the operation of power, that led me to realise that it was not simply this phenomenon at work, but a more complex nexus of relationships that mediate experience of physical education.



### **Conceptual organisation of, and by, groups through differentiation**

Much of the discussion of power above, focuses on the rhetorical manifestation of difference, and this seems to be a key factor in the way in which children interact within physical education. The labelling that occurred within classes formed one of the most explicit ways in which this was achieved. Although some attention has been accorded to the way in which teachers label and treat children, and how they respond to this (Meyenn 1980, Beynon 1985, Carroll 1986) it was clear in this study that children themselves initiate their own systems of labelling. Essentially, children used labelling to conceptually organise their class. Through this process, children understood how to regulate their own behaviour internally, and their behaviour towards others. The identification of groups such as 'boffs' and 'populars', categorised children and indicated how they 'should' be treated by others. Dialectical controls determined 'who' was 'allowed' to behave in what way. In effect, labelling contributes to a process of cartography wherein children map out potential routes of behaviour towards particular others. As a result, many children become functionally dependent upon their perceptions of others within physical education.

Here, beliefs were substantiated by the behaviour of children in an interactive display of mutual reinforcement. Children would generally behave in the manner that was expected of them. However, whilst overt behaviour may have followed particular patterns, the nature of internalisation of socially constructed 'truth' varied in practice. In this context, whilst behaviour might appear to disclose certain realities, the way in which children rationalised the social structure was not consistent with these. Disparity occurred on two levels. In some cases, children perceived themselves as having certain characteristics normally associated with particular groups even though they were not identified by others as characterising that group. For many children, the promulgation of this dominant order functioned more through a fear of being viewed as a 'boff/popular' than a desire to be popular, yet being popular remained the ideal state for some. Either way, seeking to be associated with a certain group dominated the consciousness of some children.

'Popular' children were identified as those who were dominant in the physical education situation, both in social terms and in those of ability. It appears that this phenomenon may well intrude into other areas of school as physical education may well be one subject area which serves as a kind of 'sorting ground' for categorisation. However, it does not appear that in all cases it is physical ability that determines popularity, since children define groups by the most predominant individual(s) that they perceive within them. Therefore, association with particular individuals may lead to imputed rather than actual, ability. In some cases, it may be argued that it is not ability, but associated characteristics, that determine how a child is viewed. However, what occurs here, is a self-perpetuating situation wherein normative 'categories' of children are defined by their treatment, rather than the qualities that they possess.

Therefore, labelling is not necessarily substantiated in any 'material' sense. When labelling, or reinforcing labels, are deemed undesirable, children express what is 'missing'- the existence of things in their own lives seen as absent from the lives of others- and there is a tendency to see what is not there rather than what is. In particular, indigent attitudes to doing well at school were expressed as negative qualities. However, this need was by implication identified as one associated with written schoolwork, and not that readily associated with physical education. This, in combination with the popular positive association of ability in physical education as a 'good' thing, implies that this subject is culturally significant to children as a group.

Different children would experience different levels of risk in behaving in an unanticipated manner. It seems that the more 'popular' children felt most uncomfortable when their performance was threatened, as they were already dominant and/or confident in the particular social situation, whereas for others, performance within physical education was secondary in some circumstances. Concerns with performance could only become central where the child was wholly comfortable with whom they were working. The notion of preserving self seems imperious. Children are not just differentiated, but stratified according to that differentiation. A mix of levels immediately creates a threat to all, but in different ways. The presence of significant others has greatest impact upon the dynamic of the group as responded to by the individual.

Theoretically, children do have the agency to 'rebel' against certain expectations made of them, and in many cases there will not be a clear-cut behavioural response. However, there is clearly a tendency for there to be identifiable patterns here. What appears to be the case, is that where 'challenges' are made, an undesirable response is likely to be evoked, which appears to take the form of personal attack: of vitiating the very self of the child. Additionally, children rationalised their desire to work with particular others as much in the lack of threat that they posed as in actively positive support. Therefore, although children have been identified as actively actualising self-interest within the class environment, in this study, it seemed that within physical education, many sought primarily to protect rather than actualise the 'self'.

### **Redefining labels**

The research of the seventies, discussed in Chapter Three, presented 'disadvantaged' children as often inadvertently contributing to their own predicament. However, as I stated, such representations portrayed children as lacking consciousness of their own condition. In my study, children may ostensibly be reinforcing their own positions through their actions, but this is not through ignorance. In effect, children may manipulate their behaviour and dupe the popular into believing that they 'are' their labels. In practice, the reality for the individual concerned is far different in that they internalise some kind of superiority because of the knowledge that work within a particular social group forms part of a game playing strategy. Such children redefine labels

in their own terms and their reality is in effect taken outside of the immediate social situation to an alternative plane. Children's actions may be defined by the perceptions of others, although their perceptions may not.

The labelling of some children by others distances them from one another. It, therefore, acts as a means of securing the 'self' for those that apply the labels, even where they are redefined by those to whom they are applied. Those that actively used the terms 'boff/geek/popular' tended to display some kind of insecurity regarding their own status within the group. Those who did not form part of that group and did not aspire to do so, were able to acknowledge the existence of such terms and rationalise the way in which they were applied, but chose not to directly apply such labels in their own descriptions of others.

However, not only did those who securely formed part of the 'populars' not mention labels; but also those who recognised that they were considered 'boffs/geeks' did not do so either. Therefore, it seems that labelling necessarily becomes a means of dissociation for those whose position within the class 'hierarchy' is insecure. It is therefore also used as a rhetorical device to differentiate themselves from those with whom they are particularly afraid to be associated.

The significance of this situation is particularly pronounced due to the public nature of activities and the exposure of action and reaction that physical education creates. Here, the interaction, where not culturally popular, is highlighted as a personal deficiency. This appears to include performance in this subject. By definition then, the subject also offers the opportunity for the child to overtly work towards being associated with particular groups and in that exposed capacity the child can manipulate the way in which others associate them with particular individuals.

As I suggested, it is clear from this research that certain children are taken to epitomise specific sub-groups. Further to this, their characteristics, or rather 'characterisation', is then applied to those with whom they associate. This inevitable outcome highlights the importance for some children to control their social self-presentation and manipulate or reinforce the overt displays of belonging to a particular social group, enhanced by the public and interactive nature of physical education.

Being grouped to work with a particular individual necessitates interaction between children. In free groups, interaction is indicative of an affinity- a friendship. Therefore, when placed to interact with a child with whom they do not wish to be associated, this may be anathema to the pupil. In such situations, the interactive nature of the temporary relationship is limited by those involved. This not only means seeking to withdraw from the situation where possible, for example winning or losing more quickly than might need to be the case, but more significantly in determining the way in which an activity is played. In particular, personal communication is limited. Within physical education this communication takes place on three levels: verbal, visual clues including

eye contact, and the use of equipment to create links, such as in the passing of a ball. Inevitably, the nature of the activity determines which of these is limited, in which order and to which degree.

Decisions such as where to pass a ball may be defined as an act of power. In small group work, usually associated with highly interactive tasks such as choreography, factions may occur or children might seek to reform their groups; where possible, activities will take place with verbal communication being as limited as possible. Experience of such situations means that children will avoid working with particular others, and become anxious at the possibility of doing so.

This is not to say that all limitations in communications are conversely indicative of the result of children protecting themselves from association. From my research, for some of those children who were more able within physical education, their actions which resulted in the 'exclusion' of others appeared to come from a more basic desire to perform to their own standards than an intent to prevent another child from taking part. In such situations, other children were seen as a hindrance to their own intentions and would be excluded almost incidentally. However, as discussed, this does not necessarily lessen the impact upon the individual who is the subject of this exclusion.

In addition, it appears that, even where the child is associated with a group that they would not choose to be, they still benefit from such 'membership' and there is some advantage in that sense of belonging. However, in order to make positive that membership, children will redefine the popular definition of what it means to belong there. Essentially, the social 'truth' constructed in interaction will be reconstructed through internalised 'rhetoric'.

### **The predominance of introspective definitions**

Children locate their experiences in the meaning a particular action has when directed to them, for them, not the protagonist. Bruner (1986 p14) discusses the idea of 'landscape of consciousness', which refers to what individuals involved in action know, and do not know, feel and do not feel, and the associated differences in meaning that may be ascribed to action as a result of this. Here children's landscapes of consciousness incorporated what they believed to be the knowledge of others in many cases illustrating the empathy that they held for the 'characters' featuring in their accounts.

The type of rationalisation created to cope with such treatments extends to children feeling able to empathise with the reactions of others to them. However, this rationalisation can still conflict with the more visceral response of the particular child to a particular action. The intention behind an action can be identified but still be vastly different to the emotion it evokes in the individual. This remains true even where individuals are able to identify this disparity.

What is clear here then, is that actions of others arouse specific responses within the individual that are determined by their self-perception, rather than inherent in the action itself, or in the individual's perception of the protagonist. Intent bears very little on the response of the recipient and children appear to a certain degree 'locked into' their own self-perceptions. However, it was this capacity for children to rationalise situations, even against their instinct, that meant that they made such a valuable contribution to the research process.

### **Meaning and context**

This situation impacts most significantly upon the meanings behind the children's experience and how they are represented through narrative. Mishler (1979 p4) has suggested that:

*Meaning is always within context and contexts incorporate meaning.  
Mishler (1979 p14)*

One aspect of my study that I find of particular interest, is the way in which the later findings described above, impacted upon my analysis of diary work. I have spoken in depth about the way in which narrative gives access to the nature of reality construction, particularly where greatest 'freedom' was afforded in diary keeping. In describing events here, children involved for the full duration of the study tended to build narrative around their intent for a particular diary entry: to contextualise events to a specific purpose. Because of the nature of the responses described above, it became clear that the child derives that 'context' internally. In the presentation of language it is emotional response to events that construct that context and, therefore, meaning.

This idea is interestingly supported by the absence of what I term 'purposive stance' in the writing of those children who chose not to continue their involvement in the study for the full half-term that other 'diary keepers' did. In such cases, entries would appear as a list of facts that did not necessarily 'involve' the child themselves. This was 'Peter's (year7) second and last entry:

*We went out and had a warm up and then Played a caupel of games and then all the PeoPle with BeaBs on one team and all the other on a nother team  
(Peter, year 7, diary entry, 8<sup>th</sup> January 1999)*

What is clear from such entries, is that the child sees no purpose in what he is doing. In certain cases, this kind of commentary might be indicative that the child lacks involvement in the physical education lesson itself. However, since Peter withdrew from the study, it might be more indicative of his changed feelings towards the purpose of what I was doing, particularly in relation to other activities he could be filling his time with. Whilst there are potentially any number of explanations, what is necessarily evident, is the fact that narrative can act as its own safeguard, in that, it may be reasonably assumed that, where meaning is implied, sincerity is verified through the child's contextualisation of events. Therefore, perception is imperious to meaning, and expressed context may reveal the nature of those perceptions.

## **Children and the research process**

Just as children were able to identify differences in perception held by themselves and others within the research process, children also demonstrated the capacity to anticipate my perspective and would seek to 'put me right' in instances that they thought I would misinterpret. The fact that children did this confirms their analytical acumen. They demonstrated an awareness of different ways of viewing the world whilst prioritising their own. Perhaps this factor was heightened because I was an adult entering the field of children's worlds, wherein they may have felt the need to actively direct me, as an 'outsider' in what I was seeing. This is reflective of the ability of children to assert themselves in the research situation; they remained unafraid to present ideas that they knew would not conform to normative perceptions, as Denscombe and Aubrook (1993) similarly found when they gave children the opportunity to comment freely on their work.

Of particular significance in the process of this study was the way in which children, of all ages involved, responded so positively to the opportunity and responsibility of taking part in the project. They displayed not only an appetite to be involved, but the maturity and reflective capacity to make an active, worthwhile contribution. Perhaps they even benefitted from the process of deconstructing and reflecting on their experience.

What emerged in the research was that, rather than necessarily feeling intimidated by an adult researcher, the children responded most positively to the opportunity to collaborate in the study. I use the term collaborate specifically, here, to illustrate the fact that I believed children understood the active contribution that they were making. Perhaps this response specifically emanated from a usual imbalance in the adult-child relationship, with the rarity of the situation enhancing the significance of what the children were doing. This was evident for example in that they would specifically address some of their communications directly to me. Diary entries would include asides to the main text, perhaps requesting that I alter a specific situation, or ensure that I keep certain information from specific individuals. This response potentially emanated from the usual imbalance in the child-adult relationship, with the rarity of the situation enhancing the significance of what the children were doing.

Whilst children might be inured with the hierarchical relationship between adult and child, this does not create impassable barriers to developing alternative relationships. Indeed, the extent to which the children were able to feel on an equal level with me became manifest in gestures such as an instance where Nicky (year 7) noted in a card that she gave to me when I finished my work with her:

*You've become a real good friend  
(Nicky, year 7, personal correspondence, 1999)*

This simultaneously substantiates the idea that we were working on an equal basis relative to most adult-child relationships and gives the assurance that I was not manipulating the child into feeling obliged to participate in the study.

However, I was there for my own purposes which were not specifically to be a friend to the children, but which were served by my befriending them. Therefore, the fact that some children may have seen me in this way could have meant they divulged information that they might not have done in a formal situation. Essentially, what this does is raise a contradiction inherent in my approach: expressed one way my presentation on a 'friendly' basis could be seen as manipulative, in another way it was a means of putting the child at ease.

However, in order to work towards giving the child 'voice' it is necessary to establish this kind of relationship with the children. As the research progressed, the children did not only come to view me in a different light to the way they perhaps viewed other adults, in particular those found within the educational context, but our relationships became closer on a reciprocal basis. As is clear from my approach to this whole project, I had confidence in the contribution that children could make to the research process and this was actualised. In particular, what Nicky couched in terms of friendship was, in fact, also mutual respect.

Indeed, the relationship that I developed with the children, particularly those who kept diaries and whom I came to know over a period of time, showed a degree of maturity that I had perhaps not anticipated. Not only was the way in which the children responded to me personally constructive, but so was the way in which they responded to their task. Of additional value was the fact that the children did not exploit assurances of confidentiality and invited them to discuss any issues that they considered of importance. Essentially, the children had 'free reign', but did not abuse this opportunity. I had particularly feared that the children might make personal attacks- particularly where teachers were discussed- without substantiating their point. However, in practice, wherever such comments were made, they were always substantiated by rationalisations.

In terms of analytical acumen, children significantly displayed the capacity to be reflective of their own experiences. This was evidenced by the fact that, as discussion took place, they would rationalise their own actions and those of others, showing the ability and willingness to express criticism even on some occasions where this meant they were exposed in an unpropitious light. What appeared to be the case, was that children were not cynical of my intentions. I suggest that this, in fact, contrasts to the way in which the adults involved in the study reacted to my presence. Although warmly welcomed, there was perhaps an inevitable wariness of my intention, demonstrated by the need, in particular, to draw my attention to specifics of particular situations

considered of significance by the teacher. Perhaps this is indicative that children have the potential to be more candid informants than adults as they are able to feel 'safer' in doing so.

### **Expression of children**

Indeed, the freedom of expression as discussed, formed the key to this research. Not only did this freedom serve to allow children to describe things as they wished, but also, the use of vernacular was inscribed with the child's personality. This inevitably aided my relationship with them and my interpretation of what they were saying. Ultimately, the nature of the particular type of narrative shaped the way in which children expressed themselves, and this variation in itself proved a useful tool in accessing slightly differing means of rationalisation. Diaries formed a direct, 'private line' between myself and the child, group interviews collaborative expression, and individual interviews specific reflection. Due to the varying nature of these tools, the capacity for children to express themselves in each narrative form may have similarly varied.

It may be that in using diaries as a research tool, certain children were disadvantaged and may have been excluded by the fact that I was asking them to actually write down their thoughts. Perhaps the more academically able would be able to articulate thoughts more readily than others. However, as I explained in Chapter Five, children from a range of academic 'abilities' were involved in the study, and use of formal English was not a requirement. Indeed, use of illustration was also made where language for the articulation of a particular thought was not easily accessible to the child. Essentially, the usefulness of contributions made by the children was subject more to the awareness that children had of themselves and their environment.

Inevitably, the level of consciousness here may vary with intelligence, but particularly with children, overt academic ability is not a sole reflection of this. In the case of my study, I feel that almost a 'streetwise' ability to assess situations was of greater value. One pattern that did emerge regarding such a capacity, however, was that younger children would have a tendency to give reasons for occurrences whereas older ones would rationalise them. This is perhaps necessarily linked to the maturation process, but what it reveals is the differences that may exist in children's motivation for becoming involved in such research.

As children grow older, their needs inevitably alter. Younger children who took the time to become involved in the research process here were perhaps extrinsically motivated. However, as I have already discussed, the presentation of meaning meant that there was more to what the children were saying. In giving reasons for events, children offered me an interpretation of 'cause and effect' which justified their actions and responses. This is indicative of their need for me to understand their story and perhaps emanates from a desire simply to be heard and understood. Older children, in offering a rationalization of events, offered me a greater depth of context that might be utilised in understanding not only the individual in the immediate setting, but also the social environment



within which they and their peers were working. Therefore, the motivation appears to be understood for the sake not simply of themselves but of broader social groups to which they belonged.

### **Arising sensitivities**

This raises the issue of the meaning that involving children in research per se has for them. Perhaps casting experience in narrative gives it form, and causes children to think more specifically about what goes on in physical education. The fact that children have been asked to 'deconstruct' and represent aspects of their experience impacts upon that experience in itself. Therefore, whilst the research process can be said to raise the consciousness of children involved, this raising of consciousness may not always be welcome.

Prior to interviews in the fourth phase of the research, convention dictated that I anticipated the fact that this area of questioning was potentially sensitive and was prepared to limit the degree to which I would pursue answers here. In discussing others, particularly those with whom the child wished not to work, the research may have been asking children to speak ill of those individuals—something that they may well have been uncomfortable doing. What I also found in practice, however, was that I became particularly sensitive here to the fact that I altered the role of the child as part of the research process. In this, I do not simply refer to the perhaps extant issues normally associated with problems of the researcher and subject, heightened where that subject is a child and the researcher an adult. Rather, I relate my feelings to the fact that reflecting upon certain instances may evoke in an individual the responses associated with those situations.

I contend that, in practice, in interviews where I was asking children to discuss their relationships with significant others, they were relating their thoughts as the person in the role that they played in the particular context they were describing. The sometimes visceral responses that I received were indicative of the mental transposition of the child away from the immediate interview itself.

### **Working consciousness**

My response to the whole process of this study is that children in fact, interact on the basis of what I shall term a 'working consciousness'. Children have different domains of consciousness within their consciousness as a whole and will attend to only some of these in any situation. There will be enduring differences according to the individuals in the potential domains that they may attend to, but in temporary situations, such as those created within physical education, these are highly sensitive to the presence or otherwise of particular others.

Children will have an entirety of experience which determines their potential consciousness, but from this will select only salient elements to which they will attend within a particular situation. Ultimately, working consciousness is dynamic, not simply in the sense that attention will vary

according to the particular situation, but also in the sense that it may be reconfigured over time. Therefore, children may be said to have a 'false' consciousness as created by a precursive belief. This occurred in Michelle's case, wherein she could not extract herself from her past experience, even when presented with new 'evidence'. It would not be until she actually experienced the innocuous intention of the comments made by others that she would be able to reconfigure her consciousness and create new potential within it.

Therefore, to return to an analogy of there being a cartographic process through which children progress, new routes to dealing with situations may be found, but only where they are openly sought. In practice, children assess the risk of accepting a new interpretation and act accordingly; in many cases that risk is too great and the consequence of error predominates the possibilities they will perceive. Essentially, children's reformation of experience is in itself subject to their working consciousness: which aspects of a situation they give most 'weight' to. Working consciousness is not developed in a linear fashion as 'experience' cannot be simplified to a series of events in this case. However, where the child does experience a new phenomenon, it will form part of the potential of the working consciousness but not its actuality. Children will identify possibilities but not act upon them.

Ultimately, working consciousness as it exists at any given point in time within the physical education lesson determines children's experience of it. The elements of experience to which children will attend are largely determined by the presence (or otherwise) of particular others. In many situations the main focus for the lesson, or parts of the lesson, will not pertain to the subject at all. This is not to say that it is a negative concept, as focusing, for example, on socialising does not necessarily detract from performance. However, in many cases, children's experience is severely limited by their need to attend to other factors extraneous to the purposes of the physical education programme.

This concept of 'working consciousness' is peculiar to physical education due to the unique configuration of dimensions along which the subject exists. I argue that the simultaneously practical, social and spatial nature of the subject, heightens the sensitivities of children. Heightened sensitivities make experience more vivid as it occurs, is reflected upon, and recalled for future reference.

### **Final Reflections**

There was a dual context for this study: the context of the events being discussed and that of the context of the research process because of the relationship between myself and the children. In practice, the use of diaries provided a 'direct line' of communication to me on a personal basis for those involved in this stage of the research. Because of the direct comments that children made in this context, in effect, a mirror was held up for me to see certain aspects of how I was perceived by

them. Consequently, this approach allowed me to monitor myself very early on in my work within Hansford Park. Therefore, there were a number of interwoven dimensions to this study, and what I offer is, in part, an account of the reflexivity of approach and generated data.

The overriding purpose of my research approach has been to give the child voice. However, the very notion of 'giving' voice in itself alludes to the fact that it is still I, as researcher, who retains control over the presentation of that voice. Perhaps the only true means through which children might be given voice would be through taking myself away as interpreter. Nevertheless, there will always be some ambiguity in language, not only in terms of the way specific statements might be interpreted by others, but even if where we offer explanations ourselves, our own interpretation of events will vary upon each reflection. Although there will inevitably be my signature on this work in terms of hermeneutics, I have sought to move towards children making a greater contribution to the research process than might usually be the case.

Just as I have argued that the use of narrative exposes the contextual basis, and therefore, meaning of experience for the child, so does building theory interweave meaning and context. Rather than extracting the laws of behaviour and decontextualising research issues as would happen in theory testing, meaning is retained through the generation of theory linking existing phenomena. As part of the grounded theory process I was, in practice, building narrative from narrative. I contend that theory generation, forms an essential part of a research process that genuinely seeks to represent the subject. What I have provided here, is the basis of an armature on which the possibilities for the involvement of children in the research process within physical education might be further explored.

**APPENDIX A**  
**LETTERS TO HEAD TEACHERS**

Date as postmark.



A College of the University of Southampton

BISHOP OTTER CAMPUS, COLLEGE LANE  
CHICHESTER, WEST SUSSEX PO19 4PE  
TEL: 01243 816000; FAX: 01243 816080

Dear (Head Teacher name),

Chichester Institute of Higher Education is currently funding a research project on children's experiences of National Curriculum Physical Education. The study is particularly concerned with how the language and rhetoric of the policy documentation relates to the practical realities of children's learning experiences. The first stage of the research involves analysing curriculum documentation from a number of schools in the south of England and meeting school physical education staff and pupils.

I have been appointed as a research student (M.Phil/PhD) to carry out the research. Having approached (Head of Department name) on an informal basis I am writing to seek approval for your school's involvement in my work.

All information collected will, of course, be treated in strictest confidence. Written reports drawing on data collected will use protective pseudonyms to ensure privacy of you, your staff, pupils and the school.

Yours sincerely,

Suzanne Groves (Miss)

Date as postmark.



A College of the University of Southampton

BISHOP OTTER CAMPUS, COLLEGE LANE  
CHICHESTER, WEST SUSSEX PO19 4PR  
TEL: 01243 816000; FAX: 01243 816080

Dear (Head Teacher name),

Chichester Institute of Higher Education is currently funding a research project on children's experiences of National Curriculum Physical Education. The study is particularly concerned with how the language and rhetoric of the policy documentation relates to the practical realities of children's learning experiences. The second phase of the research involves observing children in the physical education environment and inviting some of them to become more specifically involved in the research through keeping 'PE diaries' and being interviewed about their experiences.

I have been appointed as a research student (M.Phil/PhD) to carry out the research. Having approached Mr Handley on an informal basis, I am writing to seek approval for your school's involvement in my work.

All information collected will, of course, be treated in strictest confidence. Written reports drawing on data collected will use protective pseudonyms to ensure privacy of you, your staff, pupils and the school.

Yours sincerely,

Suzanne Groves (Miss)

**APPENDIX B**

**LETTERS TO PARENT/GUARDIAN**

Date: autumn/winter term 1998/99

Dear parent/guardian,

I am a student from Chichester Institute of Higher Education researching children's experiences of physical education and I write to seek your permission to include your child in my work.

The study aims to present the opinions of children taking part in National Curriculum Physical Education and I should very much like to involve your child in keeping a PE diary' and discussing their thoughts on the subject with me. The research has the full backing of the teaching staff involved, however, I should stress that your child's comments will be entirely confidential and their identity not revealed in any subsequent use of material obtained.

If you are happy for your child to be part of this study please complete the reply slip below for return to the physical education department at school. Many thanks,

Yours sincerely,

Suzanne Groves

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Please delete as appropriate:

I do/do not give permission for my child to take part in research considering children's experiences of National Curriculum Physical Education.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_



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Bishop Otter Campus  
College Lane Chichester  
West Sussex PO19 4PE  
T 01243 816000  
F 01243 816080

Date: autumn term 1999

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A Registered Charity

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I am a student from University College Chichester researching children's experiences of physical education and I write to seek your permission to include your child in my work.

The study aims to present the opinions of children taking part in National Curriculum Physical Education and I should very much like to interview your child on this matter. The research has the full backing of the teaching staff involved, however I should stress that your child's comments will be entirely confidential and their identity not be revealed in any subsequent use of material obtained.

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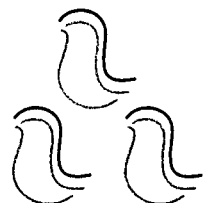
Suzanne Groves

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Please delete as appropriate:

I do/do not give permission for my child to take part in interviews considering children's experiences of National Curriculum Physical Education.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_



**APPENDIX C**  
**LETTER TO CHILDREN**

Dear (Child's name),

I am a student from Chichester Institute of Higher Education and am going to be visiting your school every Thursday this term. I'm coming because I want to try to gain an understanding of children's experiences of PE – most of the time when a subject is looked at in school, people ask the teachers what they think, but not the students who actually do the lessons! What I want to do is find out *your* opinions about *your* PE lessons by talking to you and asking you to write down what you think. I will be the only person who hears and sees what you say so you can be really honest without upsetting any of your teachers – it's O.K, they know what I'm doing and it's fine with them, so don't worry.

I'm coming in to school this week and hope to see you at lunch time to have a chat about what I want to do and let you ask any questions that you need to. Obviously, you don't have to take part if you don't want to – just say so, there's no pressure, but it would be really great to see what you think.

Anyway, please let Mr Handley, or any of your PE teachers know if you want to join in and I'll hopefully see you on Thursday,

Yours sincerely,

Suzanne Groves

**APPENDIX D**  
**INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS**  
**CHILDREN**  
**PHASE TWO**

**Mike, Year 7, Individual Interview, Phase Two, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1999**

SG: With the others we started talking about the main differences in PE now and in primary school – is there any difference in the PE you do?

M: Well, it's the same

SG: There is no difference between what you do now and what you did in primary school?

M: No.

SG: What kind of PE did you do in primary school?

M: Well, we went out and played rounders, but if it was like raining, we just stayed in and played on the apparatus.

SG: Is that the same sort of thing that you do now?

M: Yeah

SG: What do you like best about PE now?

M: I like basketball the best

SG: Why do you like basketball?

M: (Shrugs his shoulders).

SG: There must be a reason why you like basketball..

M: It's just like ...I dunno, I just likes it cos it's just like a boys' game sort of thing innit? Gymnastics is like a girls' like thing

SG: So you don't like gym?

M: No, Not much

SG: You were good in gym this morning though...

M: (Laughs) Don't make me laugh (looks embarrassed whilst continuing to laugh).

SG: Why? When you were doing balances 'squashed' under all those people...(both laughing)

M: Yeah, I was like that (demonstrates and laughs).

SG: Didn't you enjoy doing that though?

M: Yeah, I enjoyed doing that, yeah.

SG: Is that different then, to gym you've done with apparatus then?

M: Yeah...I don't like that sort of gym.

SG: Why don't you like it?

M: Cos it's girls' like...it's a girls like thing.

SG: Why do you think it's a girls' thing?

M: Cos like they're good at gymnastics.

SG: So, you think girls are better at it?

M: Yeah.

SG: Oh right...

M: Boys are better at basketball.

SG: So, when you play basketball, do you like it cos you're better than the girls?

M: Yeah.

SG: Are you better than the other boys as well?

M: Some of them, yeah. We warm up and then I enjoy like playing some of the games. I like playing games- that's what I like most.

SG: Which part of playing games do you enjoy?

M: Scoring.

SG: Scoring?

M: Yeah.

SG: So, does that mean you like competition?

M: Yeah.

SG: You do? Tell me how the basketball's organised.

M: How do you mean?

SG: Well, what sort of games or practices do you play? Who do you play against? Stuff like that

M: Well, it depends on how many's there. If there's say twenty we get into like teams of five, or three and like that. If there's like thirty odd we get in teams of three.

SG: And then do you play small games?

M: Yeah, we play other people.

SG: Do you do any skills practices as well?

M: Yeah, dribbling.

SG: Do you do that first, or in the middle...

M: We do it first.

SG: Right. Do you choose which people you play with?

M: Sometimes we can, sometimes we don't.

SG: If you're able to choose, who do you work with and play against?

M: We play against boys.

SG: Why boys rather than girls?

M: Cos they're like more challenging than girls.

SG: Is part of what you like about basketball the fact that you've got to test your own ability?

M: Yeah.

SG: Do you usually win when you play basketball?

M: Yeah.

SG: You play netball as well don't you? Does basketball help with playing netball?

M: Yeah, it does.

SG: Who's better at netball, boys or girls?

M: Girls.

SG: So, do they usually beat you?

M: Yeah.

SG: Why do you think girls are better at netball?

M: Cos it's like a girls' game sort of thing isn't it?

SG: Why is it a girls' game?

M: Cos they've played it before.

SG: Have you played any sports other than basketball before?

M: Yeah, hockey sometimes.

SG: What's your favourite sport overall?

M: Boxing.

SG: You do boxing as well? You didn't write that on your activity sheet? (referring to an assessment sheet children had completed documenting their participation in physical activity outside of school hours) Let me think... tell me if I'm wrong; you wrote walking the dog, running and football!

M: (laughs).

SG: Why didn't you write boxing down?

M: Dunno (laughing)

SG: Tell me about your boxing.

M: Well, I started about three years ago cos my brother started going.

SG: Is he older than you?

M: Yeah, He's nineteen; he's had twelve fights and won ten. I train on Mondays and run every day – I should get my first fight next year.

SG: And you do your football as well?

M: Yeah.

SG: Would you do boxing in PE if you were allowed to?

M: Yeah.

SG: If you were to take over the running of the PE department- instead of Mr Handley in charge, it's Mike- what would you have done in PE?

M: I'd have girls as like netball and boys; they've got a choice; either the weights room or hockey or basketball or badminton.

SG: So, the girls get netball and boys can choose between the weights room, hockey, basketball and badminton?

M: Well, the girls could have a choice of hockey and the weights room.

SG: Why would you only give the girls a choice of those things?

M: I dunno, it's just, I dunno.

SG: What would you do about gymnastics.

M: Wouldn't do it.

SG: What about dance?

M: Scrap it.

SG: For girls and boys?

M: Yeah, I don't like it.

SG: You don't like it? When you did your group dance, you said in your diary that you were laughing so you couldn't do it properly and when we talked about it afterwards the girls said 'Yeah, that's exactly what he did'. Why were you laughing so much?

M: I was embarrassed (again laughing)

SG: Why?

M: Cos it was like a weird dance.

SG: Was it the particular dance that was a problem, or just the fact that you were dancing?

M: The dance.

SG: The dance that you were doing? What was wrong with it?

M: (laughing) It was silly.

SG: Why was it silly?

M: We were just going like that (demonstrates).

SG: Oh yeah, it was to the 'Saturday Night Fever' music.

M: Yeah.

SG: If you had done a different dance, would you have been O.K. with it?

M: Yeah.

SG: Did you do another dance that I didn't see?

M: No.

SG: If you had dance again, would it be a problem for you?

M: No, I'd like it if there was like decent music and stuff.

SG: What sort of music would you choose?

M: What was in the charts...Robbie Williams.

SG: And what kind of moves would you do?

M: Any.

SG: Would group work still be O.K.



M: Yeah.

SG: Do you like working in a group?

M: Yeah; I like working with girls cos the boys always muck around.

SG: If you're in a boys group, is it the other boys that muck around?

M: Yeah.

SG: What do you do when they muck around?

M: I join in.

SG: Is it better then for you to work with girls because you'll get on with something?

M: Yeah. I'm alright with David and Andrew; just not Paul.

SG: If you could choose who you worked with, what would you do?

M: I'd go with the girls.

SG: You wouldn't feel under any pressure to work with the boys?

M: No.

SG: One of the other ways you work with other people is doing refereeing- have you done any refereeing?

M: Yeah, sometimes in basketball.

SG: So, you've not done it in any other sports?

M: Yeah, hockey.

SG: Why do you think it is that you're asked to referee?

M: Because I'm good.

SG: What makes you good at it?

M: I dunno....

SG: Is it because you know the rules or...

M: I know how to play and that...

SG: Do you like doing that?

M: Yeah, I like blowing the whistle.

SG: Is there anything else you like about it?

M: I just like giving fouls as well.

SG: What is it about giving fouls that you like?

M: It's funny.

SG: Why is it funny?

M: Cos every time I blows the whistle they looks round and goes 'What?' (laughing).

SG: Do you only blow the whistle when you should do?

M: I don't blow it when I shouldn't but I do blow it when I should.

SG: Do you like being in control?

M: Yeah.

SG: Do you like being in control in a game too?

M: No, I likes passing it and giving it to other people.

SG: Do you like scoring as well?

M: Yeah.

SG: When you do PE, you get some situations- particularly in gym where say you're working with a partner and then you've got to give them feedback about what they're doing so you're kind of like a coach then. How do you feel about doing that?

M: I like showing them how to do it.

SG: What makes you feel good about doing that?

M: If they can achieve it

SG: Taking the idea of achieving- do you think that you learn a lot in PE?

M: Yeah.

(Inaudible)

SG: What's your favourite subject in school?

M: PE.

SG: What is it that you like about PE?

M: It's fun.

SG: What's fun about it?

M: Well, like, you could be doing dance and then you muck it up and it's funny.

SG: Does it matter if you muck it up?

M: No.

SG: Why do you need a teacher to tell you how you're performing?

M: Cos if we like, do something wrong all the time, you don't know how to play it.

SG: What's the best thing for you, about PE?

M: Basketball.

**Nicky and Michelle, Year 7, Pair Interview, Phase two, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1999**

SG: If we start off then, by you telling me the difference between PE now and the sort of PE you did in primary school

M: It's just that sort of like; in the old school you never did trampolining and things; at this school you do and it's fun.

SG: Do you do trampolining in lessons or is it as part of a club?

N and M: Club.

SG: What about in the actual lessons?

N: Oh, lessons.

SG: Is it better in lessons or not as good?

N: I suppose it is, because when you were little you wanted to do stuff because you saw other people do it; and now you can do it and you feel like ...

M: Yeah, you can do it.

SG: What weren't you allowed to do in PE before?

N: You saw that stuff we were doing in PE; we weren't even allowed to do that; we just did roley poleys and things really.

SG: Why do you think that was?

M: They didn't trust us.

N: I mean, they sort of showed us videos and stuff of other people doing it but they never really let us do it.

SG: So they just said 'Look this is what you could do but we won't let you!'

N and M: Yeah

M: You can do clubs after school, like I do netball, but in the junior school we never went to tournaments and now I do tournaments

SG: So, it's a lot better now in your lessons as well because you're allowed to do more?

N: Yeah, you're sort of doing what you want to do.

SG: If we take gymnastics- your teacher will give you a task to do and then in your groups you'll answer it...when you do those lifts like you were doing today; they were great weren't they? How do you feel when you're doing them?

N: You feel proud that you've actually done things.

M: Yeah.

SG: Do you like it because you have people watching you or do you like the feeling of actually doing it?

N: I like the feeling of actually doing it.

M: And I like both of it because I like the feeling of other people appreciating what I've done.

SG: You do a lot of watching each other's stuff don't you? Do you think that you're set more challenges now?

N: Yeah- it's like you work yourself up to something and once you've conquered that you work up to something else.

SG: Do you ever come away from a PE lesson thinking that you didn't really learn anything there?

M: I don't really anymore.

N: No, not anymore.

SG: So, every single PE lesson...

N: You've actually learnt something.

M: The teachers are quite nice as well cos in our old school they were pretty boring.

SG: What's good about the teachers here?

N: They're funny... if you do something wrong they don't tell you off for doing it wrong- they help you to get on with it and they laugh...you know, make you laugh

M: Especially Miss Harrison; I like Miss Harrison.

N: Cos when we were playing at Haywood school they're really posh and we lost and she went 'Oh, look at all those stuck up people!'

SG: So, she understands what you're 'about'.

N and M: Yeah.

SG: Is it like they're friends with you then?

M: Yeah- Miss Harrison just makes fun of everybody.

SG: A lot of the stuff that you're doing at the moment; particularly in gymnastics is group work based- how does that work for you? How do you feel about working in a group?

N: In gymnastics like, you get to do more things because there's a big group. When you're on your own you don't do many things. Like in our old school, we did everything on our own, we never worked in groups so you could only do a certain number of balances, but when you're in a group ...you can get different balances and you can do loads of different things.

SG: So, it gives you more stuff that you can actually achieve.

M and N: Yeah.

SG: What about the people that you work with in your groups; do you choose who you work with.

M: Not normally no. Not today we didn't.

N: No, we were just told to sit on the mats and we had to work with who we were put with.

SG: Right; is that good or bad?

M: Most of us get along really well together apart from the geeky people (laughs).

SG: What's your definition of a 'geeky' person?

M: (Boy's name from class)!!! No, really....they don't muck about or anything they don't have fun; you know. They don't laugh or anything. They laugh at stupid things like say you're trying to do a balance and you get there and then it falls down and they start laughing it's like (pulls a disapproving face).

SG: So, what about your group that you had today?

M: Our group was O.K except I didn't trust Mike and John.

SG: But you ended up doing with Mike, a balance where he was holding everybody up at one stage; there was one person on his hands and someone else on his feet...do you think you started trusting them then?

M: I don't trust John or David cos they're just... I dunno.

N: I think the good thing about being put with people you don't usually work with is cos then you learn to work with them.

SG: Do you think that's a valuable thing to be able to do?

N: Yeah.

M: Cos none of us like working with Alison or Julia.

SG: Why do you think that's a problem?

N: Well, Julia's just a bit different and that and we're wrong to make fun of them.

SG: I see. What about working with boys, because you were put in mixed groups.

M: It's alright cos we get along with most of the boys.

N: It depends which boys.

M: If you've got Craig, Graham or somebody like that it's not very good.

SG: When you say 'get along with' do you mean in terms of what you have to do, or is it in terms of friendship anyway?

N: We're just not friends with them are we?

M: Yeah.

SG: So, is working in PE sometimes difficult?

M: It's O.K just sometimes we get into little arguments. And when we make up names for each other.

SG: Why do you do that?

M: Well, when we first came Miss Harrison made up names for us like I was called \_\_\_\_\_ because it was Christmas and Stephen was called \_\_\_\_\_

SG: I've seen you do gymnastics and we saw some dance; what other subjects have you done?

M: Basketball.

N: Netball we used to do. Hockey at the beginning.

M: We liked hockey didn't we?

N: I didn't, I kept getting hit with the hockey stick.

SG: So, you've done some team games as well; what did you like about team games?

M: Cos you worked as a team; you worked as a group.

N: In hockey we used to work on three on threes but with my group, I had um...Mike, someone else, someone else and after every time we scored a goal we were like...we'd get in a huddle and that and it was like really good because you don't usually you know, work with these people; usually when you finish that's it you're not friends anymore.

SG: So, as soon as you scored a goal you were mates.

N: Yeah.

M: In basketball most of the boys think they're really good and they don't give the girls a chance to get the ball or shoot or anything, you know.

N: They say it's a boys' game.

SG: Is that what they say?

M: They think it's a boys game cos they see it on t.v. and they never see no girls do it. I'm good at basketball because I'm good at netball; I'm good at shooting far.

N: You don't see any girls play football and you don't see any boys play netball.

SG: Do you think that's what makes a difference then; whether they see it on t.v or not?

M and N: Yeah.

SG: Do you think that as well?

N: Mike's really rough at basketball and ...

M: He fouls everyone.

N: He fouls everyone.

SG: So, if you had a good referee he'd be fouled off wouldn't he?

N: Yeah, but our referees are useless.

SG: You referee as well don't you? I remember you saying in your diary that you'd done some refereeing. What do you feel about refereeing?

N: You're in charge and they have to listen to you.

M: But most of the time they don't listen to you.

N: If they don't listen to you, you just go up to them and blow the whistle in their ear.

SG: Do you enjoy doing that?

M: I'd rather play basketball.

SG: What do you think the point of refereeing is then?

N: So that you learn it from all points of view, so if you become the referee, you learn how hard it is for the referee.

SG: How does that affect what you do when you're actually playing then?

M: So you don't mouth the referee off!

SG: So, you get a better understanding.

N: Yeah, and well, Mike hasn't been a referee yet.

M: He always plays the games.

SG: Aren't you supposed to take it in turns?

M: Yeah, but I think he likes playing because he just likes fouling people!

SG: Do you think he enjoys fouling people?

M: Yeah cos he's the boss of the whole class.

N: When we first started he was like all secret and stuff but then...cos he writ this poem and Miss Samson (English teacher) was really surprised at it because it was about boxing and stuff and I think that's why he started to come out you know.

SG: So now he just likes pushing people around. Do you think that's just Mike or are other people like that too?

M and N: It's Mike.

SG: It's just his character?

N: I used to be really bossy but I've changed (laughs).

SG: If we continue talking about the different things you do in PE; you all take on the role of performer and most of you have had a go at refereeing; sometimes as well, when I've watched your lessons, particularly in gymnastics, you've done some work with a partner and you've had to tell them what is good about their performance and what isn't so you've been almost like a coach yeah? What do you feel about telling someone how well they're performing?

N: I feel a bit you know, nervous right cos say they are doing it right but you're telling them it's wrong it's sort of stupid.

SG: Who would know?

N: The teacher would come along and they'd show them and the teacher would say 'What aren't you coaching them?' or something.

SG: Do you enjoy giving someone feedback?

N: It depends how bad they are.

M: Cos like our friends...

N: If you have to tell them what's wrong you feel really bad about saying it.

**Helen and Jane, Year 7, Pair Interview, Phase Two, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1999**

SG: How does the PE that you're doing now compare to the PE you did in primary school?

H: Well, it's a lot more advanced cos they've got a lot more equipment.

(Inaudible)

SG: What do you mean by competition?

H: Well, in gym we do competition; we're going to have one in July...not in the actual gymnastics lessons.

SG: Is it very different within the actual lesson time itself?

J: In lessons you have to do odd things that aren't supposed to be for the competition.

SG: How did you expect PE to be when you first came here?

H: Well, I thought it might have been really different because there was that bigger sports hall.

J: Well, I thought it would be like more exciting because my brother came here and he said PE was exciting.

SG: What did he say was exciting about it?

J: He said there were loads of apparatus and stuff but we don't use them and it's not exciting at all.

SG: Do you think you might use those later though?

H: We just do hockey and stuff, we should do something inside.

SG: Why do you think it's organised like that?

J: I don't know...because everything's outside.

SG: Do you think that might change when you change your activities?

J and H: Yeah.

SG: What's the thing you like best about PE?

H: Trampolining.

J: Trampolining yeah...we love that.

SG: Do you do that in lesson time or club time?

H: Well, we sometimes do it in lesson time as like a treat but with the tutor group every Wednesday.

SG: What about gymnastics in the lesson?

(Inaudible)

J: We enjoy that but it's not exactly as fun as it would be if you could choose it.

SG: Why do you think you're put in groups?

H: I don't know, maybe it's to make sure you work with other people.

SG: Do you think that's a good thing that you work with other people?

J: Yeah



SG: If you were allowed to choose who you worked with, who would you choose?

H: The same old people all the time.

SG: Do you work in mixed groups?

J: Sometimes we do cos there's not enough boys to go round.

SG: Have you ever been in a group that you didn't want to work with?

J and H: Yes.

H: In dance we had to work with Nicky- she's really annoying.

J: She doesn't really give you any ideas.

SG: Is that a problem?

H: Yeah, she doesn't really think of ideas, she just copies everyone else so we have to come up with the ideas

J: When we done dance the first time we had Stephen, Adam and me and they weren't being too co-operative because they kept on going too fast and everything and it was all their ideas, they wouldn't let us put any in.

H: They kept rejecting all our ideas...everything I thought of, saying 'No, that's rubbish, you have to use our ideas instead'.

SG: So how did you feel when they did that?

H: Frustrated because they kept on doing it.

J: Well, I just kept on saying why did you reject it?

SG: How do you feel about the dance you're doing now?

J: It's hard.

SG: You're working in your three aren't you. Is that working O.K.?

H and J: Yeah.

H: It's alright but it's a bit difficult because there are much bigger groups so they've got more parts so it's easier. They've got better things to do because we've got like children's games and it's hard.

SG: Were you given that or did you choose it?

H: We chose it because it was all that was left. I was thinking of all the childhood games that I could remember cos you're not a child anymore.

J: We've got to think of some childhood games...maybe bring some skipping ropes in. We'll have to dress up as little schoolgirls.

SG: When you do your performance? How do you feel about doing your performances?

J: When I was in my primary school I was really nervous but I'm not any more ...

H: I don't like being videoed.

J: I do, I love it.

H: It's annoying because I don't like being tape recorded because of the way my voice comes out

SG: Why don't you like being videoed?

H: Cos I don't like seeing myself.

J: In case you mess up or something. I don't like seeing myself just doing something. If it's not being video recorded it's just forgotten about but if you're videoed, there's a record of you doing it. You can just play it back anytime and see me muck up.

SG: Do you think that alters the way that you perform?

H: Yes, it makes me nervous because I think I'm gonna muck up. It makes me get really nervous and then I do muck up.

SG: Oh...does it have the same effect with you Jane?

J: No, I was alright because I didn't get video taped.

SG: Do you like performing?

H: I like performing but I don't like being videoed. I don't mind being like tape recorded like now, but when I hear my own voice it is a bit eugh! But if it's just my voice you don't know who it actually is whereas if you can actually see it you can see who it is.

SG: When you work in your group you said that sometimes you can come up with ideas and lead the group. Sometimes as well you need to decide what goes on if you need to do some refereeing. Have you done any refereeing in your lessons?

H and J: Yes.

SG: What do you feel about doing refereeing?

H: Well, all the players tell me it's wrong when I've actually said something and I've made a decision.

SG: What do you think they should do?

H: I think they should just listen to the referee because that's what the referee's for.

SG: So, how does that make you feel then?

H: Annoyed because they're being obnoxious.

SG: What about you Jane?

J: Well, it's alright...but yeah, they always moan at you. Unless it's a group of girls that you're refereeing because girls've got more idea than boys because boys, they just play football.

SG: Are you saying there's a difference to refereeing depending on whether there are girls or boys playing?

H: Yeah, cos girls, they'll like listen to you and they like care and they'll try to listen to what you say but boys are just like obnoxious and ignore you.

SG: Why do you think that is?

H: Cos they want their own way all the time.

J: And if they can't get their own way they go and sulk.

SG: Is that just in PE?

H: No, it's everywhere. Normally it means they sulk, which means we can't carry on with what we're trying to do until they stop sulking and so you have to let them do what they want to do.

SG: What happens when they have to referee then?

J: They go 'No, that's wrong, no, that's wrong, no, that's wrong'

H: And we're just getting on with it so we say 'Sorry, but it's *not* wrong and we're having our way because you're refereeing the wrong way so we'll do it our way.

SG: So, do you like to keep control?

H: Yeah I like keeping control of the boys

SG: What about when you do your gymnastics for example, and quite often you'll work in pairs or groups and you watch each other and give feedback on their performance- it's like you're a coach isn't it? How do you feel about doing that?

H: Well, I try to tell people the truth, and if they don't like it I just say 'Sorry but that's the truth and I can't exactly tell you a lie'.

(Interrupted by bell. End of part 1 of interview – girls agreed to return at lunch time to continue)

Return:

SG: What do you think the whole point of PE is?

J: To learn new things

SG: What kind of things?

H: Well, if you didn't do PE you'd be rubbish at it wouldn't you?

SG: Why do you want to be good at PE then?

H: Well, I think, like PE is just a thing that you do and it tires you out

J: If you didn't do PE you wouldn't get as much exercise.

SG: What do you need exercise for?

H: Dunno.

J: Cos if you didn't you'd be....dunno!

SG: If PE was taken away, what would that mean?

H: It would be boring...you wouldn't be able to do any sports cos say like, sports come out as sports and sports keep you fit and if you're not fit you're not fit. And you need to keep fit so you need to be fit to keep fit

SG: What do you do to keep fit then?

J: If you weren't fit and you were in a race you'd be like tired out in two seconds and it would be really embarrassing for everyone to run past you.

SG: Is PE important for anything you do outside of school?

H: No. I don't think so; I think it helps us in school. But it does help you do things outside of school if you were doing like sports or something, but if you were doing something and it wasn't in your job or something it would still help you with the sport that you're trying to do.

SG: Do you think it helps you in any way other than actually performing a sport?

J: Well, it helps you be physical cos it's physical education. In other things it's like you write stuff down and you don't do anything physical so if you're told to do something like referee...

H: Cos this; it isn't like brain work like you do in all your other subjects, you're actually doing physical work...

SG: Do you need to use your brain at all when you're doing PE?

H: Yeah, you have to sometimes, but it's not exactly brain *work* when you have to think of something like in maths where you have to think out sums.

SG: What sort of thinking do you do in PE then?

J: You have to think up routines and stuff like that.

SG: What do you think your PE teachers think is important in PE?

H: They want you to work with people.

SG: What's the value of working in a group?

H: Um... getting to know people and making sure that you can actually work with people because sometimes, um people don't like working with other people so they don't work very well. You don't have a choice, you have to work with other people but you can sometimes choose...but sometimes you're put with people you don't want to work with but you have to just get on with it.

SG: Is that valuable then?

H: Sort of. Well, say there was a fire or something you could run; and you'd be able to run and not slow down because you weren't fit ...

SG: If you were to take over the PE department; would you change anything about it?

H: Yeah, I'd make everything what I wanted.

J: I wouldn't.

H: I would cos everyone's used to things and I'd just keep it like that.

J: I'd changed it every now and again so they didn't always do the same thing

H: It does get boring doing the same old thing all the time.

SG: So, you'd like more variety. Would you change anything about the lessons themselves?

H: I'd make there be about three a week cos there's only two a week now.

SG: So, you'd like a bit more time. How much time do you get for other subjects such as geography?

J: About an hour isn't it?

H: In PE it gets cut down because there's changing time...changing in and changing out.

**Lucy, Year 7, Individual interview, Phase Two, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1999**

NB: there was noise disturbance during this interview.

SG: Because you're in year 7, you've come from primary school; was PE different to what you'd expected when you first came here?

L: Um, it's not all that different.

SG: Is that a good or a bad thing?

L: A bad thing

(inaudible)

SG: Had you wanted to make your own up right from the start?

L: Sort of ...I wouldn't really (inaudible)

SG ...Dance

L: I prefer it to most things

SG: So, that's your favourite thing. What other activities have you done so far?

(inaudible)

L: And I like contact sports.

SG: So, you like things to be more physical?

L: Yeah

SG: So, within the sort of thing you do in PE, what's your least favourite type of activity?

(Inaudible)

SG: Why is it that you don't think it's exciting?

(Inaudible)

SG: So, how is gym different then, when you do it in club as compared to during lesson time?

L: Well, during the lesson you're always told to do something; in the lunchtime you can do what you want.

(Inaudible)

SG: So, you're given a theme and you do what you want to around that?

L: Yeah

SG: Say you're given a theme of for example rolling or balancing...what kind of sequence might you work out if you were free then to do what you wanted?

(Inaudible)

SG: Is there anything different you'd do if you were to work on apparatus?

(Inaudible)

SG: Obviously you like being physical in your activities...

(Inaudible)

SG: So, let's imagine you take over PE...How would you do gymnastics differently

(Inaudible)

SG: What do you think the value is in watching each other's performance?

(Inaudible)

SG: In some of your lessons I've seen you have a situation where one person works and the other watches- have you done that?

L: I have in dance.

SG: So, you've taken on the role of the coach, or being like a teacher haven't you?

L: Yeah.

SG: How do you feel about taking on that role?

*Something along the lines of helping the performer*

SG: How do you feel when you're being the 'performer'?

(Inaudible)

SG: So, do you feel it's a good way of learning how to tell people what to do in the correct manner

L: Yes.

SG: Do you think that's valuable; are you glad you're learning that?

L: Yeah, I think it's good.

SG: If you didn't do that, what do you think you'd miss out on

(Inaudible)

SG: So, you can actually use it as a performer. Do you think that if you're telling someone what to do or someone else is telling you what to do; do you think the performer actually appreciates what you're telling them

L: Yeah; I think so...

SG: Have you ever had a real problem with that?

(Inaudible)

SG: When you're put in a group and everyone's got their ideas and you've got an idea; do you say what it is?

L: No, I keep quiet 'cos if they don't like it (inaudible)

I like practising, but when it comes to performing I get really embarrassed

*Something along lines of being in front of friends*

SG: If you were to perform in front of people that you didn't know; would you feel more comfortable about it?

L: Yeah; it's 'cos the Gina G dance we did (inaudible)

**Clarification of her dance**

SG: How did you feel about being videod?

L: Well, I didn't realise at first but then I looked over (inaudible)

SG: So, did it make you lose concentration so you didn't do it as well as you could?

L: Yes

SG: I thought your dance was really good. Did it make you feel special to be videoed?

L: Yeah, it does make you feel special.

SG: What do you hope to do in PE later on when you're at school?

L: Well, I was actually hoping that they'd do swimming here but they don't ...

SG: You swim yourself on a Thursday don't you?

L: Yeah; I was hoping they'd do it here.

SG: Of the activities that you think you will do; what are you most looking forward to

(Inaudible)

L: Yeah; I don't mind that; I'm not looking forward to badminton

**Explains can't play it**

SG: You never know; you might end up really liking badminton if you find that you're able to play it

**End of conversation**

**Leanne and Julie, Year 7, Pair Interview, Phase Two, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1999**

SG: You're in year 7 now; you've been here about half a year so you know what goes on here. Is PE at this school what you expected?

L: No, not at all

SG: How is it different?

J: Well, our old school, like... we have like dance, and you know we have gym...well at our old school it was like an added bonus if you got to do PE; we were like really lucky and it was really like extra fun.

SG: So, do you feel that you missed out on PE before?

J: Well, we did it, but like, sometimes you had it like every week but like, if someone else had decided like they wanted the hall and the teacher used to just say 'Oh fine then, we won't do it'

SG: Why do you think that was?

L: It was lack of space; we had too many people in our school...And it was all a bit jumbly ... all the PE lessons, we had like small things we did, you know, but it was like quite interesting for us because we never did PE that often.

SG: So, what sort of thing did you do?

J: Well, at our school we...all the girls had to go to the girls' toilet to get changed.

SG: Oh... does that mean that you didn't like PE?

J: Well, PE was alright, but they never told us whether we had it outdoors or indoors and you didn't know whether to bring your outdoor kit or your indoor kit...

L: Yeah, and also we had a room; a changing room that went from... well, about there to over there (indicates a distance). We had about a hundred people in our year group and we had to fit like, most of us in there...you couldn't breathe you were like getting like changed in this tiny space.

SG: So did that affect how you felt about doing PE then?

L: Yeah you just dreaded it and like you'd like get chucked out in the corridor with like nothing on sort of thing with like half your clothes on...you get chucked out as a joke. And you'd like chuck people out and it was like really embarrassing.

SG: How does it compare, then, to what's going on now?

J: Well, cos you have it every week ...it's quite fun isn't it (looking at Leanne)?

L: It was good first of all but then...

J: Yeah, but now we feel we're just doing the same thing...and I think 'Oh no, my PE kit I can't fit everything in

L: Yes, you can't fit everything and like we should have like a week where, a whole week where you're doing gym and a whole week where you're doing dance so that you can know what to bring like....

SG: Because you're on a two week timetable aren't you. Why do you think things are organised that way?

L: To make it difficult for us (laughs) I don't know- probably to fit in with other people.

SG: How does PE compare to other subjects?

L: I don't know; you're like 'Ooh! No work, no work!'

SG: Ahh!. Is that what it is?



J: Well, there's drama too cos drama's work as well.

L: Yeah. Cos like um first lesson, cos normally we have it first thing and it kind of gets to your head because you just got dressed and then you have to get dressed again and undressed and all the rest of it, you know...I wish we could just like, come to school in our clothes.

SG: In your PE kit already?

L: Yes.

SG: When you say there's no 'work', how do you regard 'work'?

J: Where you have to do writing and you have to use brain power, but you know, not as much because like, you're having fun and...

L: It's play basically.

SG: So...you said you have to use 'brain power'; how do you use 'brain power' in your PE lessons?

L: Because you have to like think of dances.

SG: So, you think of different dances....where else do you use your brain power?

(Long pause)

SG: Do you use it any other time in PE?

J: Well, you sort of have to do maths to work out the beats in verses and that.

L: It's like; you know on that Gina G one that had 32 beats in the chorus and that ...

SG: So, you have to remember how to count in?

L: Yes; and remember all the different beats.

J: You have to learn all the different beats and all your dance.

L: Cos on the first dance; the first dance that they recorded..

SG: The one that was recorded on video?

L: Yeah.

SG: Did you like that?

L: Yeah, but I think I should have been in the middle because there was like all these tall people and then he goes down and there's me! I look pretty weird on the video; I should have been in the middle to sort of go 'up'.

SG: Do you think you learnt something from seeing yourselves on video?

L: Yeah, I look stupid (laughs)!

J: I had a bad, bad hair day that day.

L: I had these trousers that my friend let me borrow cos...well, I didn't know we had to do it that day; I thought it was the next week and I had to; you know those draw strings.. I had to tie it around my waist twice- that' how big they were!

SG: Cos you were wearing tracksuit bottoms weren't you?

L: Yes, Puma tracksuit bottoms; they went like twice round.

SG: Did that affect the way you performed your dance?

L: Yeah cos I had to keep going like that and pull them up.

SG: Do you enjoy doing your dances?

J: Yeah, I like doing dance.

L: In the diaries, I wrote in it that once we had to do our dance three times because first we did it and it was all nearly to perfection and then Jane decided she was going to leave, so I thought 'O.K. we'll do it again and then Miss Merrett took over and said that we had to take these two extra people which means we had to do it for the third time and we just went to pieces. And then Miss Harrison came along and said 'You don't want to do this do you?' and we said 'No' and she said 'O.K. don't do it'

SG: Oh dear, so you didn't do it! Your group changed a lot didn't it; do you like working in a group?

L: Well, it depends cos everyone tries to cram their ideas in and nobody can get an idea sometimes. But sometimes it's quite good.

J: It's good when you've got all your friends with you.

L: I prefer it in smaller groups that we have now; the threes cos in like fives and fours and that you just can't get a word in edge ways.

SG: How does it make you feel about what you're doing if you're in say a group of five?

J: nobody agrees.

SG: What happens when everyone disagrees?

L: We get into big fights, split up and, you know. I mean they say like, have mixed groups; it's O.K. having mixed groups but like, we had this group that had two boys in it and we just said like, O.K. bring your ideas in and they said...cos they were saying 'Oh, you're not fair; you're not letting us have any ideas' so we say 'O.K.' and then they turn round and say, 'No, we don't want to' and walk off. So it's like how can you win?

SG: So, at the end of the day, what happens to your dance?

L: It just falls to pieces.

SG: So you're happier now when you've got your groups of three and your theme of basketball; when you do group work do you usually choose who you work with?

L: They normally say like you have to have boys in it.

J: The trouble with us is um, we normally have quite a small group.. It's always our groups that Miss Merrett puts extra people in.

L: Well we're always in a small group and...I think it's a lot of the time we get our dance up together and like we get it quite well done and then we show the teacher and they say 'Oh, they need a group'.

SG: So, do you think it's almost because you do so well at dance that that happens?

L: Well, we're not that good because I think...it's just misfortune really, I just think it's unlucky yeah. Things just happen to us. First we had Miss Merrett and we got someone put in our dance, and then like 'cos somebody else hadn't (inaudible) with Miss Harrison, she didn't know, so she put somebody else in our group.

SG: Oh, so it's cos you have different teachers and they've missed what's gone on before.

L: We don't mind having boys in our group; we're not sexist or anything it's just that when they don't like help and they moan like that they're not anything to do with the dance; you try and help them and they just like walk off and like you know....

SG: So, do you think that's what boys tend to be like?

J: Yeah.

L: Yeah, I think you could say they're...cos they'd rather be in football they've just decided that they're not gonna be, you know, um...

J: They probably could do but they just don't like talking to girls.

SG: Do you think they'd work better if they worked in 'boys only' groups?

L: Yeah because say a groups....Simon's group; they did it really well and they actually did it right to the end and that and they were all boys and they managed to talk to each other. I think it's also cos they're a bit embarrassed about dancing.

J: I think it's cos if they're in a group of girls then...they think all their ideas the girls will think are so stupid.

L: And they get embarrassed and when we show our ideas they like go 'Oh, we don't want to do that cos they're too embarrassed to tell us theirs.

SG: So they won't share those ideas. Cos quite often, within the activities that you do in PE you have to take on different sorts of roles, don't you? You've done some gymnastics as well haven't you? And I think sometimes you work in pairs in gymnastics and you need to give feedback on each other's performance- how do you feel when you need to give someone feedback on what they're doing?

J: Sometimes you have to say things aren't right.

L: And you don't want to say that because you think 'Oh God, it might upset them'

SG: So what do you do when you think 'Oh, they could improve by doing this'?

L: You wouldn't say it then...you'd like say that like um....there's some people in this group that were like a bit out of tune you know- or if it's a pair I think you'd sort of say 'I think we've both got to work on this' and act as if it's both of you.

SG: I saw one group... not yours... where they were practising a forward roll and giving each other feedback...did you do that when you were in gym?

L and J: Yeah.

SG: How do you feel in that situation?

L: Well, it is quite a bit easier because ...but again we got pushed...someone else who was away got pushed into work with us...it's just harder like that.

J: And when we got put into a group like that everyone was...arguing over which apparatus to use and saying 'But I've got a really good idea for it' and you say 'Well what?' and they say 'I can't show you'.

SG: Which piece of apparatus was it?

L: It was like the wall bits where you swing you know...

J: And in our group it was like this horse thing with these two handles.

SG: Why do you think it is that everyone goes for the same piece of apparatus?

L: I think it's cos it's exciting cos if there's like a bench to walk across it's just like so *easy*- you walk across it and hop across it and things like that and it's boring.

SG: Do you prefer it when PE's more difficult?

L: Yeah because you get more to do but when like we get dumped with this it's like boring you know.

J: And then another group says 'Oh we've got this'.

L: Yeah and they go like 'Huh, you're gutted, we've got this one'.

SG: How do you feel then if you get to go on the exciting piece of apparatus?

J: If you can go high and if it like um...if it's interesting.

SG: What makes something interesting?

L: If you can like do something.

J: Go flying.

L: Yeah you can like climb it and hang on it and like you can do all sorts.

SG: How does it make you feel when you're doing those things?

L: Like *yes* you can't do it (laughs)!!

J: It's basically fun.

SG: Do you like it when a teacher gives you feedback on your performance or do you prefer it when your peer group gives you feedback?

J: I like it when the teacher does cos the pupils (inaudible).

SG: So it's difficult to do it as well as you might do because you know the person?

L: Yeah.

SG: So you sort of act like a coach don't you? Another thing you have to do is be a referee when you're doing team games...

J: I don't really like that.

SG: You don't like it...what don't you like about it?

J: Um you think, well the thing I don't like about it is, one the whistles got germs all over it because loads of people use it, but the other thing is, when you're in a group, if you're not a very good referee (which I'm not) all the people in the group say 'No, that was this and that was that' and you know, they go 'You should've said that' and we're like 'Sorry, but I didn't quite realise' cos I'm not all that good at like that like sport.

SG: How do you feel about being asked to do it then?

J: Well, if I get asked I just say 'No, I'm not doing it'.

L: I don't always get all the rules of the game and that.

J: Yeah. When I referee they like all like stop and look at me.

SG: When you referee, do you think you learn from it though?

J: No, I don't learn anything. I just think I don't want to be referee.

SG: Do you think it teaches you anything for when you go and actually play a game?

L: Well, it makes you think more, like cos a lot of people in the groups scream at the referee saying 'That's not how you do it you should be doing this' and you think I've just been referee and that was like it so you try to sort it out a bit'

J: Yeah – I just think 'Don't be horrible to the referee'.

L: Yeah.

**David and John, Year 7, Pair Interview, Phase Two, 22<sup>nd</sup> April**

SG: So, you're both in year 7, so you've been at this school for about half a year. Does your PE now, differ from when you were in primary school?

D: You do a lot more things here like music and dancing

J: And in primary school we just used the apparatus and the teachers just put on a tape – put it on and we'd just have to dance.

SG: So do you think it was less structured?

J and D: Yeah.

SG: Is it better now?

J and D: Yeah.

J: Much better.

SG: What's the best thing about PE at the moment?

D: Don't really know.

SG: Do you like PE?

J: Yeah

D: It's O.K.

SG: What do you like about it?

D: Football.

J: Yeah I used to like football, but we don't do it anymore now.

D: Badminton is O.K.

J: Apart from I can't hit it.

SG: What don't you like about PE?

D: Um hockey.

SG: What don't you like about hockey?

J: It really does get on my nerves.

SG: Why?

J: I have the ball, and somebody always trips me up with their stick.

D: I usually don't like something when I'm playing against a good person because I ...they always get the ball off me cos I'm not very good. And they just get it and I never hardly get it at all.

SG: So you feel as though you don't take part as much as you could?

D: Yeah.

SG: What do you think should happen then when that's the case?

D: I reckon some of the ...well, all the good people should play with the good people and some of the not very good people should play with the not very good people.

J: Yeah.

SG: Why do you think it's arranged as it is then?

D: Um...Dunno... to make you work harder or something.

SG: It would make things more difficult wouldn't it? What about other types of activity? What about dance, do you like dance?

D: Well I like doing dance apart from when you go with a group of girls they always say things and they might like it, but when we was doing things the girls said do, you look stupid.

SG: Do you feel like that because of the ideas that the girls have or...

D and J: Yeah.

SG: So what do you do when that happens?

D: Um...dunno, you just have to stick with it. Cos you can't...there's no way out of it otherwise.

SG: Do you come up with your own ideas as well?

D and J: Yeah.

D: Sometimes. But mostly the girls don't like our ideas and then they ...(long pause).

SG: Are the girls a bit bossy then?

D: Yeah, some are.

SG: Is it just in dance when you're working in groups that the girls are like this?

D: Yeah it was dance and...yeah it was just dance.

SG: Do you do group work in any other subjects?

J: We just work with partners in I.T.

D: I don't like being partners in I.T. cos he always hogs it all the time.

J: Matthew? Yeah Matthew.

D: I want to swap persons.

SG: Do you like working in a group generally?

J: I don't mind.

D: I don't mind either.

SG: Do you work in groups when you do gymnastics?

J: No.

D: Yes – we work in twos or whatever doing moves; doing like um balance.

SG: What happens then?

D: We've usually got to perform it in front of the whole class.

SG: How does working in a group happen then- do you use your ideas in gymnastics?

D: Yeah, we just ... I dunno, decide (laughs)

SG: Do you usually choose who you work with?

D and J: Yeah.

SG: If you choose who you work with do you work with boys or girls?

J: Mostly boys.

D: Usually boys, yeah.

SG: Why do you choose to work with boys?

J: Mostly because I...I'm not going to be embarrassed by a lot of girls, if I'm the only one from the boys.

SG: It would be embarrassing would it?

J: Yeah.

SG: Can you explain why?

J: I dunno- just will. – six girls and one boy – it would be better with six boys and one girl.

SG: Why that way round?

J: I dunno...

D: If it's got to be like that I'd rather have three boys and three girls.

SG: Why would you rather have it evenly split like that?

D: Umm I dunno... if you've got all girls, you can't really decide together or whatever, but if you've got a boy you can ask their idea...some people, like me, I don't like ...I don't....

SG: Go on.

D: I don't like some people...I like to go with my friends.

SG: You feel more comfortable like that do you?

D: Yeah.

SG: When you do gymnastics you do partner work don't you and you've watched each other do a performance, and you comment on each other's performance. How do you feel when you have to do that?

D: Umm dunno.

J: Embarrassed.

SG: Embarrassed?

D: Some things I always say...forgotten what I was going to say now.

J: He was saying... this morning in the first group of dance he wasn't doing that well.

D: What was that...

J: In the first dance group?

D: What was that?

J: In the dance group... When you were working with James.

D: Oh yeah...James kept on mucking about though. He just kept on jumping up in the air and doing roley poleys all over the place and acting stupid.

SG: So what did that mean happened to your dance?

D: Well it went all weird because me and Craig did one thing there and Miss Merrett said 'Oh you can go off and do your own one' and then about two minutes later everybody else started coming in...except Miss Merrett said it and it got all weird. Me and Craig had already got a good dance and we had to perform in front of them, and they could learn it but they didn't like it and we had to do another one all over again.

SG: So you had to start all over again?

D: Yeah.

SG: How did that make you feel?

D: Annoyed.

SG: You said you feel embarrassed when you have to look at other people's performance and tell them how well or otherwise they're doing; why do you feel that way?

J: It's difficult.

SG: What's difficult about it?

J: It's just that some people make fun of the others or...that's why I feel embarrassed

SG: Why do you think it is that you're asked to watch each other and then give feedback?

D: To get ideas.

J: Yeah.

D: To get some good ideas so you know what to do.

SG: If you're asked to watch someone as you're group did, when they were performing a forward roll...how do you feel about correcting someone on the technicalities of a forward roll?

D: I wasn't there.

J: I was.

SG: How did you feel then?

J: It's quite easy really ...it's quite easy to do a forward roll...it's a bit difficult to do a back roll because your back gets bent.

SG: When you had to tell someone how well they were doing on their forward rolls, was it easy to see how they could improve?

J: Yeah.

SG: And was it easy to tell them?

J: Yeah.

SG: Do you quite enjoy that then?

J: Yeah.

SG: What's good about it?

J: I dunno- it just helps other people to get some more ideas. I like gymnastics better than dance.

SG: So you prefer this subject anyway?

J: Yeah cos you can do it on apparatus.

SG: So what's good about apparatus then?



J: You can do anything; you can just uhh...

D: I like dancing... you can dress up.

J: Oh yes... But in trampolining it's quite good ...you can do somersaults.

D: In our dance we're doing something about boxing and I've got boxing gloves but nobody else has and I can't put them on...but I would like to but... I don't know.

J: I'm bringing a towel and bottle...a white bottle.

SG: When you do somersaults on the trampoline- what's good about it?

J: You can just go high...and you can just bounce on your back or head and you can't do that elsewhere.

SG: I see...and when you do other sports you have to do things other than perform don't you? When you do something like hockey; do you have to referee as well?

J and D: Yeah.

SG: So you've both had the experience of being a referee?

J and D: Yeah.

SG: Did you like being a referee?

D and J: No.

D: I prefer to play.

SG: Why's that.

D: I dunno...you're more in it where when you referee you're just walking about blowing the whistle.

SG: Is there anything else you don't like about refereeing?

J: Well if they do something that is wrong... for example in football, umm Mr Handley's...I saw a hand ball and Mr Handley didn't blow the whistle...and one of the defenders fouled the other player and Mr Handley didn't give a penalty for it.

SG: So do you like to referee then to point those things out?

J: Yeah.

SG: Do you have any problems refereeing?

D: Well, sometimes I struggle to see whose side it is or what's happened. If they both tackle each other and they both fall down or whatever then one says 'I have that' and the other says 'I have that' and you don't know what one to let have it.

SG: What do you do if that happens?

J: I just see...

D: I'd give them a drop ball.

J: Yeah, you can do it like that... I can't remember what I did.

SG: What happens if you make a decision that the people playing disagree with?

D: I dunno.

D: I just ...say you can't argue and you just carry on.

SG: Why do you think it is that you're asked to referee as well as play?

J: Because sometimes some people forget their kit or whatever and they have to be referee and sometimes if they want a referee on one pitch he'll just pick you out of what team...he'll just say, 'Right, you're the referee' and that's it. I don't like that cos I'd rather be playing.

SG: If you were to become the head of the PE department and take charge of PE would you change anything about it?

D: Sides...well make it fair and um.... I dunno.. I would change lessons as well, I'd have ...I don't know what I would have...

J: Football, badminton, hockey.

D: Yeah.

SG: But you do all those things don't you?

D: Well, we don't do football now and we don't do badminton and we don't do basketball.

J: Or hockey.

SG: But you've done them though haven't you?

D and J: Yeah we have done them.

J: But I prefer basketball.

D: I feel embarrassed because in dance I'm not very good and in gymnastics I'm not very good, I'm not very good at that either and I always feel embarrassed.

SG: So, you'd rather do something else that you feel more confident in?

D: Yeah.

SG: Do you think you gain anything from doing things you don't feel very confident doing?

D: No.

SG: Do you come away thinking 'That was a waste of time' or do you come away thinking 'Oh, I didn't think I could do that but I can?'

D: Dunno...I just don't like it.

J: We just like doing things that we like. If I was to do it I'd just choose football.

SG: What do you think would happen if everyone was to choose what they did.

J: It'd be alright.

D: No, cos some of the girls might want to do dance and some of the other girls something else. In my old school, every Friday I think it was, we used to go down the sports centre on the bus and we used to do one ...I think it was football or something like that and the other week it was something else...some days it was running, when they didn't have the equipment when a different year was using it

SG: Did you enjoy that?

D: Yeah.

J: And in my school, every Thursday we used to go swimming.

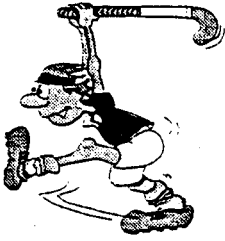
D: Yeah, we had swimming once in year five but I've got something wrong with my ear and then I had a little hole in my ear drum and I couldn't go swimming and I can't go swimming now but I will...(laughs).

SG: Do you enjoy swimming?

D: Yeah.

J: I don't. I go in the deep end but I always drown.

**APPENDIX E**  
**SOCIOMETRIC QUESTIONNAIRES**



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Tutor Group: \_\_\_\_\_

1. When you are playing team games in P.E., which people from your group would you like to have on your side?

1<sup>st</sup> choice. \_\_\_\_\_ 2<sup>nd</sup> choice \_\_\_\_\_

3<sup>rd</sup> choice . \_\_\_\_\_

In the same situation, which people would you prefer *not* to be on your team?

1<sup>st</sup> choice. \_\_\_\_\_ 2<sup>nd</sup> choice \_\_\_\_\_

3<sup>rd</sup> choice . \_\_\_\_\_

2. When you are working in small groups in P.E., which people from your group would you like to work with?

1<sup>st</sup> choice. \_\_\_\_\_ 2<sup>nd</sup> choice \_\_\_\_\_

3<sup>rd</sup> choice . \_\_\_\_\_

In the same situation, which people would you prefer *not* to work with?

1<sup>st</sup> choice. \_\_\_\_\_ 2<sup>nd</sup> choice \_\_\_\_\_

3<sup>rd</sup> choice . \_\_\_\_\_

3. When you are working with a partner in P.E, which people from your group would you like to work with?

1<sup>st</sup> choice. \_\_\_\_\_ 2<sup>nd</sup> choice \_\_\_\_\_

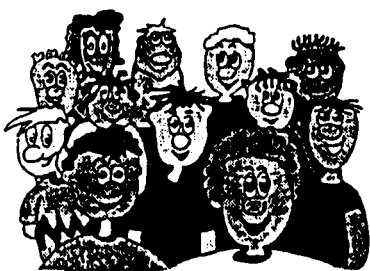
3<sup>rd</sup> choice . \_\_\_\_\_

In the same situation, which people would you prefer *not* to work with?

1<sup>st</sup> choice. \_\_\_\_\_ 2<sup>nd</sup> choice \_\_\_\_\_

3<sup>rd</sup> choice . \_\_\_\_\_





Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Tutor Group: \_\_\_\_\_

**1. If you were to go on a school trip, which people from your P.E. group would you like to sit next to?**

1<sup>st</sup> choice. \_\_\_\_\_ 2<sup>nd</sup> choice \_\_\_\_\_

3<sup>rd</sup> choice . \_\_\_\_\_

In the same situation, which people would you prefer *not* to sit with?

1<sup>st</sup> choice. \_\_\_\_\_ 2<sup>nd</sup> choice \_\_\_\_\_

3<sup>rd</sup> choice . \_\_\_\_\_

**2. During breaks in the school day, which people from your P.E. group would you like to spend time with?**

1<sup>st</sup> choice. \_\_\_\_\_ 2<sup>nd</sup> choice \_\_\_\_\_

3<sup>rd</sup> choice . \_\_\_\_\_

In the same situation, which people would you prefer *not* to spend time with?

1<sup>st</sup> choice. \_\_\_\_\_ 2<sup>nd</sup> choice \_\_\_\_\_

3<sup>rd</sup> choice . \_\_\_\_\_

**3. If you were to change tutor group, which people from your P.E. group would you like to change with you?**

1<sup>st</sup> choice. \_\_\_\_\_ 2<sup>nd</sup> choice \_\_\_\_\_

3<sup>rd</sup> choice . \_\_\_\_\_

In the same situation, which people would you prefer *not* to change with you?

1<sup>st</sup> choice. \_\_\_\_\_ 2<sup>nd</sup> choice \_\_\_\_\_

3<sup>rd</sup> choice . \_\_\_\_\_

## SOCIOMETRIC MATRICES

(Introduction to Appendices F – I)

Adapted from Northway and Weld (1966).

Children making a choice are listed in column one. Those with the potential to be chosen are listed along row one.

Children make three possible choices to answer each question or 'criterion' on a sociometric questionnaire (Appendix E). Where children exercise a choice, a number is entered in the corresponding child's column indicating the order of preference. For example, if a child chooses another first in all instances described, then the cross referenced entry box will read '1 1 1'.

Where a child's choice is reciprocated by another fully, for example child A chooses child B as first option in all categories and vice versa, then the letter 'R' is noted by the side of the numerical entry. If a choice is reciprocated partially, such as where child A may choose child B first in all cases but child B chooses child A only twice, or three times in a lesser capacity, then the letter 'P' is entered. Where a child's choice was absent for the test and reciprocation is therefore unknown, a question mark is noted.

Where one child chooses another in some capacity more than once, then they will be said to be of 'significance' to them. These entries are written in bold type. Where significant choices are unreciprocated, these entries are written in italics.

Totals for the choices made are entered in the end column indicating their 'social range'. Totals for those being chosen are entered in the lower three rows indicating the degree to which they have been chosen by others. Criterion choice totals are not 'weighted' as statistically, identifying choices as first second or third has very limited impact upon outcomes.

Where children have chosen not to exercise a choice, their row(s) have been left blank. Where children were absent for the administration of the questionnaire, their rows have been shaded.

Whilst ordinarily, sociometric tests utilise results in terms of whole group dynamics, for the purposes of this research, information regarding significant choices forms the main focus of analysis. For the purposes of the interviews in phase four, generally, one significant choice (the most significant) was discussed.

**APPENDIX F**  
**SOCIOMETRIC MATRICES**  
**YEAR 9 (A)**



Year 9 (A) PE Positive choices	GIRLS										BOYS															
	Bryony	Claire	Debbie	Helen	Michelle	Sarah	Susan	Tracy	Teresa	Brian	Colin	Ewan	Felix	Graham	James	Kevin	Lewis	Richard	Simon	William	Number Chosen					
GIRLS																										
Bryony		133		011	300		222				003	002									4					
Claire			111	030	300	220															6					
Debbie		111				200											020				3					
Helen		002			033	111		020			200			300							6					
Michelle								111						222							3					
Sarah		002		111	003						230	333		320							3					
Susan	211	122		333																	5					
Tracy		022			111	033	222				300			200							3					
Teresa	333	111																			5					
BOYS																					3					
Brian											030	120		300				201	010	002	6					
Colin												333		111				222			3					
Ewan						010								130		200	002		021		5					
Felix																111			222		2					
Gillian											111	333						222			3					
James										200										111	2					
Kevin						001					110	220		330					002		5					
Lewis											320	100		230		002			011	003	6					
Richard											222	330		111						003	4					
Simon		030			003	020					300	012		200		101					7					
William						012						200		100	030			303	023		6					
Totals each criterion	222	467	111	243	324	364	222	121		100	863	875		1273		323	011	424	155	114						
Combined Number	6	17	3	9	9	13	6	4		1	17	20		22		8	2	10	11	6						
Choosing	2	8	1	4	6	8	2	2		1	10	10		12		5	2	4	6	4						

Year 9 (A) PE Negative choices	GIRLS	Bryony	Claire	Debbie	Helen	Michelle	Sarah	Susan	Tracy	Teresa	BOYS								Number Chosen			
<b>GIRLS</b>																						
Bryony				111															3			
Claire												032						321	5			
Debbie									010			300	002	011	003	200		020	8			
Helen										200		010	002		001	133		320	6			
Michelle																			1			
Sarah		300								200						111			4			
Susan													122						3			
Tracy														011			100		2			
Teresa													111P		222				2			
<b>BOYS</b>																			2			
Brian									003	002									4			
Colin																	010					
Ewan															010				2			
Felix													222					333	2			
Graham																			2			
James																		111	2			
Kevin																			1			
Lewis												200							5			
Richard																			7			
Simon		003						002									020		3			
William																						
<b>Totals each criterion</b>		101	101	223		100		001	122	423		432	335	133	012	335	452	221	453	222	231	100
<b>Combined</b>		2	2	7		1		1	5	9		9	11	7	3	11	11	5	12	6	6	1
<b>Number Choosing</b>		2	1	3		1		1	3	5		6	5	3	3	5	6	3	6	2	3	1

Year 9 (A) Friendship Positive choices	GIRLS										BOYS										Number Chosen						
	Bryony	Claire	Debbie	Helen	Michelle	Sarah	Susan	Tracy	Teresa																		
<b>GIRLS</b>																											
Bryony				333	121		212																			3	
Claire			111R	333P		222																				3	
Debbie		111R																								1	
Helen		302			023	111R		200																		4	
Michelle								111R													222					3	
Sarah				112R	221			333P																		3	
Susan	111R	233		322																						3	
Tracy	111	033	322		111R	200	222																			6	
Teresa	111	333					222																			3	
<b>BOYS</b>																											
Brian																											
Colin																					111	030	220			3	
Ewan																					033	121R				3	
Felix																						111R	222R			3	
Graham																										3	
James																					111R	222R				2	
Kevin																										3	
Lewis																										2	
Richard																										3	
Simon																										2	
William																										1	
																										6	
<b>Totals each criterion</b>	333	546	222	444	344	422	333	322																			6
<b>Combined Number Choosing</b>	9	15	6	12	11	8	9	7																			8
	3	6	2	4	4	4	3	3																			3

Year 9 (A) Friendship Negative choices	GIRLS										BOYS										Number Chosen									
	Bryony	Claire	Debbie	Helen	Michelle	Sarah	Susan	Tracy	Teresa	BOYS	Brian	Colin	Ewan	Colin	Ewan	Felix	Graham	James	Kevin	Lewis	Richard	Simon	William	Number Chosen						
<b>GIRLS</b>																														
Bryony			111																						3					
Claire																									2					
Debbie																									3					
Helen																									2					
Michelle																									1					
Sarah																									3					
Susan																									3					
Tracy																									3					
Teresa																									3					
<b>BOYS</b>																														
Brian																									3					
Colin																														
Ewan																									2					
Felix																									2					
Graham																														
James																									1					
Kevin																									1					
Lewis																									4					
Richard																									6					
Simon																									4					
William																														
<b>Totals each criterion</b>	001		333				111	211	433		211	655	443		443	243	322	444	100	332	112		110							
<b>Combined Number</b>	1		9			3	4	10		4	16	11	11		9	7	12	12	1	8	4		2							
<b>Choosing</b>	1		3			1	2	4		2	6	4	4		4	3	5	5	1	3	2		2							

**APPENDIX G**  
**SOCIOMETRIC MATRICES**  
**YEAR 9 (B)**



Year 9 (B) PE Positive choices	GIRLS										BOYS										Number Chosen				
	Claire	Deborah	Felicity	Gillian	Kim	Michelle	Maria	Rachel	Sarah	BOYS	Adam	Barry	Brady	Ben	Charles	Francis	Harry	Hector	Lewis	Peter	Timothy	Number Chosen			
GIRLS				202	101	323P		010														4			
Claire																						4			
Deborah																									
Felicity		333?			222P				111P													3			
Gillian	032				200	111R	003					200		300								6			
Kim		001	303R				012		130P								220					5			
Michelle	020	302		211R								030					100				103	5			
Maria			012		201R			300													020	5			
Rachel	111P				222				333P													5			
Sarah			110R		001			002									200					3			
BOYS																						4			
Adam												222	111P									2			
Barry													322						233R			3			
Brady					110R	020								200								3			
Ben																									
Charles												200			112			021				3			
Francis																									
Harry								320									003				111R	4			
Hector														211		122					303	3			
Lewis															111	233						3			
Peter															201						110	2			
Timothy																	111R	333P		222P		3			
Totals each criterion	132	213	222	212	525	222	012	221	332		110	343	432	311	434	644	122	111	111	111	433				
Combined Number	6	6	6	5	12	6	3	5	8		2	10	9	5	11	14	5	3	3	3	10				
Choosing	3	3	3	2	6	2	2	4	3		1	4	5	3	4	7	2	1	1	1	5				

Year 9 (B) PE Negative choices	GIRLS										BOYS										Number Chosen			
	Claire	Deborah	Felicity	Gillian	Kim	Michelle	Maria	Rachel	Sarah	Adam	Barry	Brady	Ben	Charles	Francis	Harry	Hector	Lewis	Peter	Timothy				
GIRLS																								
Claire																								1
Deborah																								
Felicity				111		222P																		3
Gillian								020 - 200									310	100						5
Kim								300		200								032						5
Michelle			002		101			200																3
Maria																								
Rachel																								
Sarah																								
BOYS					110P																			3
Adam																								
Barry																								3
Brady																222								2
Ben																								1
Charles										200														
Francis																								
Harry										022		200												5
Hector																								4
Lewis																								3
Peter																								
Timothy																								
Totals each criterion	111	001	301	221	301	111	000	210	111	322	211	345	465	121	110	645	222	111	222	111	111	012	013	6
Combined	3	1	4	5	4	3		3	3	7	4	12	15	4	2	15	6	3	6	3	2	7	3	2
Number Choosing	1	1	4	2	3	1		3	2	4	2	5	6	2	1	7	3	2	3	2	3	7	3	2

Year 9 (B) Friendship Positive choices	GIRLS										BOYS										Number Chosen				
	Claire	Deborah	Felicity	Gillian	Kim	Michelle	Maria	Rachel	Sarah	BOYS	Adam	Barry	Brady	Ben	Charles	Francis	Harry	Hector	Lewis	Peter	Timothy				
GIRLS				222P				111R																	
Claire					222R			111R																	2
Felicity		333			300	111R		111R																	3
Gillian	230	100	020				200		021																4
Kim		100	312R						300			002													4
Michelle	230	020	111R					010			003						200								6
Maria					100																				3
Rachel	111R		320		222																				3
Sarah	020	300	112R		231P																				4
BOYS																									
Adam												200	110R												2
Barry													233					322R							3
Brady										110R															2
Charles															220			110P							2
Francis																220P	320R		101R						4
Harry																333P									3
Hector											020						310								3
Lewis																111P									3
Peter																									3
Timothy													011			202									3
Totals each criterion	341	321	453	111	533	111	100	232	111		111	232	233		420	544	431	322	101	101	202				312
Combined Number	8	6	12	3	11	3	1	4	6		3	7	8	0	6	13	8	4	2	2	2				6
Choosing	4	4	5	1	5	1	1	2	3		2	4	4	0	4	5	4	2	1	1	1				3



Year 9 (B) Friendship Negative choices	GIRLS	Claire	Deborah	Felicity	Gillian	Kim	Michelle	Maria	Rachel	Sarah	BOYS	Adam	Barry	Brady	Ben	Charles	Francis	Harry	Hector	Lewis	Peter	Timothy	Number Chosen	
GIRLS																								
Claire																				111				2
Deborah																								0
Felicity			111				222P																	3
Gillian									200	020			300			010				100				5
Kim			113						002					320	200					031				5
Michelle				020		111										033				200				4
Maria																								0
Rachel													333P											3
Sarah				011		002						100								222				5
BOYS																								
Adam																								3
Barry									020									202				233		2
Brady																								0
Ben																								0
Charles																						100	010	3
Francis																								0
Harry		020							010			102												4
Hector																					110			1
Lewis																								0
Peter																								0
Timothy												303		112										3
Totals each criterion	010	011	010	010	223	111	111	000	121	010		302	211	221	100	243	544	111	000	654	211	010		
Combined	1	2	1	1	7	3	3		4	1		5	4	5	1	9	13	3		15	4	1		
Number Choosing	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	0	4	1		3	2	2	1	5	5	2		7	2	1		

Children making no choice: Francis, Peter, Maria, Brady, Lewis.

**APPENDIX H**  
**SOCIOMETRIC MATRICES**  
**YEAR 10**

Year 10, PE Positive choices	Helen	Katie	Michelle	Nicola	Susan	Simone	BOYS	Alex	Andrew	Ben	Andrew	Ben	Bryan	Clive	Frank	Harry	Hector	Harrison	Leo	Michael	Martin	Nicholas	Richard	Simon	Samuel	Stuart	Timothy	William	Number Chosen
GIRLS																													
Helen		333				111R												222P											3
Katie																													3
Michelle				111R	332									223															3
Nicola			111R		233									322								020			303	202R			3
Susan										031R				110															5
Simone		111R						333										222R											3
BOYS																													
Alex																			111			222							2
Andrew									110?													002							3
Ben										111?											333								3
Frank																										111P			1
Harry																		030	222R	301	113P								4
Hector																333		221R		112R									3
Harrison																													2
Leo																													3
Micheal																													2
Martin																													3
Nicholas																													1
Richard														100															7
Simon											020																		3
Samuel																													3
Stuart										200								110					020						5
Timothy																													1
William																													
Totals each criterion	011	222	111	111	454	222	222	121	111	120	432	001	665	433	453	444	534	544	011	010	111	213	212					001	
Combined Total	5	3	3	3	13	6	6	4	3	3	9	1	17	10	9	15	9	16	2	1	3	6	5					1	
Number Choosing	1	2	1	1	5	2	2	2	2	2	4	1	7	4	5	4	5	5	2	1	1	3	2					1	

Year 10 PE Negative choices	GIRLS	Helen	Katie	Michelle	Nicola	Susan	Simone	BOYS	Alex	Andrew	Ben	Bryan	Clive	Frank	Harry	Hector	Harrison	Leo	Michael	Martin	Nicholas	Richard	Simon	Samuel	Stuart	Timothy	William	Number Chosen
GIRLS										101			002			003												3
Helen																												
Katie																												
Michelle									222							100	321											3
Nicola									112			333?				221												3
Susan																												
Simone																222							333					3
BOYS																												
Alex														111			222											2
Andrew																				100								1
Ben									222			333?				111												3
Frank																												
Harry									222					111			333											3
Hector														111					222									3
Harrison																												
Leo									120					330			011								200			4
Michael									222																			2
Martin														200			111											2
Nicholas																												
Richard									200		300	010						100			020		030					7
Simon												333?									222		111					3
Samuel																									100			5
Stuart									020		202			022	300								030	303				5
Timothy																						111						1
William										110														200				2
Totals each criterion			212						775	211	322	343		665	100	445	455	100	111	100	232		021	433	100	100	111	
Combined Total			5						19	4	7	10		17	1	13	14	1	3	1	7		3	10	1	1	3	
Number Choosing			3						8	2	3	4		7	1	5	5	1	1	1	3		3	5	1	1	1	



Year 10 Friendship Positive choices	Helen	Katie	Michelle	Nicola	Susan	Simone	BOYS	Alex	Andrew	Ben	Bryan	Clive	Frank	Harry	Hector	Harrison	Leo	Michael	Martin	Nicholas	Richard	Simon	Samuel	Stuart	Timothy	William	Number Chosen
GIRLS			232			311R										122											3
Helen																											
Katie																											
Michelle				111R	202					303											020					030	5
Nicola			111R		233					322																	3
Susan										112													003	221			3
Simone		111R						333								222P											3
BOYS																											
Alex																	111		222								2
Andrew										010	100																2
Ben									111P																		1
Bryan																											
Clive																											
Frank																								110			1
Harry																	121P	200	312P								3
Hector														333			111P		222P								3
Harrison						110R																					1
Leo																											3
Michael										001	002						220		330								5
Martin																	111R										3
Nicholas										110												111P			002		1
Richard																											6
Simon										001																	2
Samuel											300										100						5
Stuart													132P		011									020			1
Timothy																											2
William																	020		110								2
Total each Criterion	111	222	111	413	221	221		111	111	122	201	434	111	543	232	222	564	100	663	110	111	001	221	011	010		
Total	3	6	3	8	5	5		3	3	5	3	11	3	12	7	6	15	1	15	2	3	.1	5	2	1		
Number choosing	1	2	1	4	2	2		1	1	4	3	4	1	6	4	2	6	1	6	2	1	1	2	2	1		

Year 10 Friendship Negative choices	GIRLS	Helen	Kate	Michelle	Nicola	Susan	Simone	BOYS	Alex	Andrew	Ben	Bryan	Clive	Frank	Harry	Hector	Harrison	Leo	Michael	Martin	Nicholas	Richard	Simon	Samuel	Stuart	Timothy	William	Number Chosen
GIRLS																												
Helen										200						100												2
Katie																												0
Michelle									222								111											2
Nicola									111		232					322												3
Susan																												0
Simone																222							333					3
BOYS																												
Alex																	222											2
Andrew												100					311	200		010								1
Ben																												3
Bryan																												
Clive																												
Frank																		333										
Harry										222																		3
Hector																					222							3
Harrison																												0
Leo																		100										2
Michael																												5
Richard																												3
Simon																												0
Samuel																												6
Stuart																												0
Timothy											232													300	023			4
William																												2
Total each criterion				221					322	443	211	321			222	332	434	411		121	101		100	122	001	021	111	
Total									7	8	4	6			6	8	7	12	6	4	2		1	5	1	3	3	
Number choosing				2					3	2	4			2	3	3	5	4	2	2	2		1	2	1	3	1	

**APPENDIX I**  
**SOCIOMETRIC TESTS**  
**YEAR 11**

Year 11 PE Positive Choices	Bridie	Carrie	Gill	Lucy	Nicola	Penny	Rebecca	Rachel	Sarah	Susan	Clive	Freddie	Peter	Number Chosen
Bridie									111		222			2
Carrie								222		111	333			3
Gill		111						020						2
Lucy					121			232			313			3
Nicola				111				002						2
Penny										011				1
Rebecca			022	230	111								303	4
Rachel		031	112								223		300	4
Sarah	111	300	033								222			4
Susan			200			111								2
Clive	322		110					011	233					4
Freddie														
Peter			022	003				200			111			4
Total each criterion	222	222	354	222	222	111		344	222	122	666		201	
Combined totals	6	6	10	6	6	3		11	6	5	18		3	
Number choosing	2	3	6	3	2	1		6	2	2	6		2	

N.B. Penny stated that she would wish to work with 'my friends' or 'people I know'



Year 11 PE Negative choices	Bridie	Carrie	Gill	Lucy	Nicola	Penny	Rebecca	Rachel	Sarah	Susan	Clive	Freddie	Peter	Number chosen
Bridie										222		111		3
Carrie					300									1
Gill						111								1
Lucy						111								1
Nicola						222				111				2
Penny														
Rebecca						222				111				2
Rachel				111		222								2
Sarah														
Susan														
Clive														
Freddie														
Peter				111					023	202				3
Total each criterion			222	100	555				011	434		111		
Combined totals			6	1	15				2	11		3		
Number choosing			2	1	5				1	4		1		

Year 11 Friendship Positive choices	Bridie	Carrie	Gill	Lucy	Nicola	Penny	Rebecca	Rachel	Sarah	Susan	Clive	Freddie	Peter	Number chosen
Bridie								111			222			2
Carrie							223		111		332			3
Gill		110									001			2
Lucy					131		222				313			3
Nicola				111			200				023		032	4
Penny									111					1
Rebecca					111									1
Rachel		102	211								023			3
Sarah	111	333									222			3
Susan			220			111								2
Clive	012		220				133	301						4
Freddie														
Peter			120	310		003	031				202			5
Total each criterion	122	322	441	221	222	112	444	212	222	222	568		011	
Combined totals	5	7	9	5	6	4	12	5	6	6	19		2	
Number choosing	2	3	4	2	2	2	5	2	2	2	8		1	

Year 11 Friendship Negative choices	Bridie	Carrie	Gill	Lucy	Nicola	Penny	Rebecca	Rachel	Sarah	Susan	Clive	Freddie	Peter	Number chosen
Bridie														0
Carrie									201			112		2
Gill						111								1
Lucy						111			222					2
Nicola						222			111					2
Penny														0
Rebecca										111				1
Rachel				211		102								2
Sarah														
Susan														
Clive														0
Freddie														0
Peter						122				211				2
Total each criterion				111		545				545			111	
Combined totals				3		14				14			3	
Number choosing				1		5				5			1	

N.B. Susan stated 'no boys'.

**APPENDIX J**  
**INTERVIEW ISSUES**  
**CHILDREN**  
**PHASE FOUR**

## Individual Interviews Autumn Term 1999

Child:                      Year and Class:                      Date:                      Time:                      Location:

Positively significant other (s)

Negatively significant other (s)

### Interview Issues

Activities in physical education – current (favoured/not)

→ nature of the above (competitive/exploratory)

→ nature (social organisation)

Perceived role in physical education

Perceived role in relation to ‘significant others’ (i) positive (ii) negative

(Significance of opting not to exercise specific choices)

(Significance of opting not to exercise choice)

Characteristics of significant others

Potential resources held by significant others:

→ what’s desired that can be given

→ what is acting as an active threat

→ what might be taken away/restricted

→ what is desired where benefit will be perceived only by recipient

→ where does negotiation exist resulting in mutual benefit/otherwise

Behavioural responses to action/inaction significant others

Emotional responses to action/inaction significant others

Emotional response in situation where intention of significant other conflicts with values/belief self

Emotional response in situation where intention of significant other conflicts with teacher

Emotional response in situation where intention of significant other and teacher conflicts with self

Emotional response where ‘self’ conflicts with perceived teacher intention

Behavioural responses in above conflict situations

Resultant anticipated and actual ‘experience’ of PE in specific situations

**APPENDIX K**  
**INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS**  
**CHILDREN**  
**PHASE FOUR**

**Helen, Year 9 (A), Interview, Phase Four, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1999**

SG: What are you doing in PE at the moment, apart from trampolining?

H: Netball.

SG: Which do you prefer?

H: Trampolining.

SG: Do you? What do you like about trampolining?

H: I'm just good at it (laughs).

SG: Yeah? What makes you good at trampolining?

H: I don't know...because I used to go to gymnastics...since I was three I've been going to gymnastics and now I've quit and now I'm good at trampolining.

SG: Are you working with the people that you talked about when you filled in the form for me?

H: Yeah.

SG: Cos you particularly like working with Sarah don't you?

H: Yeah.

SG: What is it about working with Sarah that you like?

H: She's just my friend - she's in my tutor.

SG: Is there anyone you like working with in PE that you're not necessarily friends with?

H: Oh, Michelle - I like working with her but she's not in my tutor group, I just know her.

SG: If you were working with Sarah in PE and Sarah wanted you to do something but the teacher wanted you to do something different, what would you do?

H: What the teacher said probably. I'd just tell her to shut up (laughs).

SG: Is there anyone in your group that could make you do something that you didn't want to?

H: Um...Probably the boy I probably fancied (laughs)...Graham.

SG: Which Graham?

H: Graham Merrett.

SG: So he could persuade you to do something you didn't want to. Have you ever worked with him in PE?

H: No.

SG: Can you think why he would be able to get you to do something you didn't want to?

H: Probably to impress him or something (laughs).

SG: Don't worry I'm not going to tell him... Generally speaking, do you think you do well in PE?

H: Mmm yeah.

SG: Do you like the netball that you play?

H: I like it when I'm in a team that I like...I don't like it when I'm in a team with boys that I hate... 'geeks' (laughs).

SG: Why don't you like working with the boys?

H: It's just the 'geeky' ones.

SG: What's your definition of 'geeky'?

H: Glasses...really tiny and skinny and really 'boffy'...

SG: 'Boffy'? What do you mean by 'boffy'?

H: Andrew Morris.<sup>1</sup>

SG: You think of 'boffy' as Andrew Morris. What does boffy mean then?

H: Really clever.

SG: Right; why don't you like working with those boys then?

S: Because they're just so stupid, they always mess around, they don't let you do anything and then at the end... if you're in dance say, and they ask you to show it and you haven't got anything to show because they won't listen.

SG: So are you finding they don't listen to you.

H: Not usually.

SG: So, what would happen if...because you've obviously been in that situation...if you can cast your mind back a bit and think about the time when you were working with them in dance...what happened in that situation?

H: Well, there ...if they haven't got very many friends just like perhaps they've just got one friend in the group they always mess around with them and then if there's another girl and she's just sort of like standing there and those two are like messing around doing cartwheels all over the hall.

SG: What do you do in that sort of situation then if you know that you want to do the dance that you've been set?

H: Well, tell the teacher, and then they make one for us...well, they help us ...because they listen to the teacher cos otherwise they get told off.

SG: Do you try and persuade them to listen to you first of all?

H: Yeah.

SG: And do they?

H: (Shakes head)

SG: Why don't they listen do you think?

H: I don't know.

SG: Can try to think really hard why they don't listen?

H: They don't like the girls.

SG: Oh, do you think it's a boy/girl thing?

H: Yeah.

SG: Is it just the 'geeky' ones that are like that?

H: (Nods head).

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Morris was in Helen's tutor group, but not her P.E class.



SG: So, you would like to work with Graham wouldn't you? Who else did you write down on the sheet?... You'd like to work with Sarah and Colin as well... did you identify Colin cos you fancy him?

H: He's O.K.... I don't really fancy him.

SG: What is it about Colin that you like?

H: He's popular.

SG: Right... What do you mean by 'popular'?

H: Well, he hangs around with all the cool people (laughs).

SG: So, who's cool?

H: Graham, Colin and Francis.

SG: Francis is in a different PE group isn't he?

H: Yeah.

SG: Is it just in PE that they're popular?

H: No, they're popular everywhere because they're more handsome than any of the others... I think it's because they're confident as well. If you're not confident, people don't like you very much do they? I don't know why they don't but they don't.

SG: Is there anyone in your group that you think would fall in that category then, of not being confident and therefore not very popular?

H: Just Andrew Morris. What, in the PE group?

SG: Yeah, in your PE group.

H: I can't think of his name- um... Richard.

SG: He was working on the other trampoline from you wasn't he?

H: Yeah... And Simon Itchen.

SG: Who's Simon Itchen?

H: He's that shaved head boy who's really stupid all the time and doesn't shut up.

SG: Do you think people hate it when other people are stupid in lessons?

H: ... If they're not popular they don't like it but if ... like Colin and Graham, they're always stupid in lessons but they still like them.

SG: What's the difference?

H: Um... (shrugs shoulders and shakes head)

SG: You don't know?

H: No.

SG: How do you feel if you've got to work with someone that's 'geeky'?

H: I don't feel that bad if one of my friends is working with one as well. If they're in a pair with a 'geek', I don't feel that bad.

SG: Right.

H: If they're in a group with Graham Merrett and I'm with Andrew Morris then that's not very good.

SG: That's not very good...why's that? Why does it make a difference what someone else is doing?

H: Because I fancy Graham.

SG: If someone was working with Colin, would you feel the same?

H: (Nods head)

SG: You still wouldn't like it? But if everyone was paired up with a 'geek' you ...

H: I wouldn't mind, no.

SG: If you're in a pair like that...with someone you don't really want to work with, does your partner listen to you?

H: No...I think it's because boys... I think it's the same because if one of his friends is with a girl, well one of the girls is really unpopular so I feel they don't mind listening then because they're with a girl as well.

SG: So, it's that same...it's almost like...do you think it's like...it's fair?

H: Yeah (laughs). It'd be more comfortable.

SG: So as long as everybody thinks it's fair, then you're comfortable and can work well?

H: But if I wasn't very good at PE I'd probably feel uncomfortable. It depends if the other person's good at PE they get really stressed if you can't do something cos they want to make their dance good or something and then they ...I can't do it and they'll get stressed or something. I think it'd be different then.

SG: How does that make you feel?

H: Pretty useless really. You feel stupid.

SG: Does it affect how you feel about going to PE?

H: Yeah.

SG: Do you usually get to choose who you work with?

H: No, you're usually paired up with boy/girl (pulls a face).

SG: You don't like that?

H: No.

SG: How would you feel if you were working with James Peterson because you named him on your form?

H: He's that small ginger nut with glasses and he's just ...I just don't like him.

SG: Why don't you like him?

H: Nobody likes him...cos he's so annoying. He talks so poshly and you can't get anything through to his stupid little head.

SG: So, he doesn't listen to you at all.

H: No.

SG: Why do you think he doesn't listen?

H: He maybe thinks it's stupid listening to a girl or something. I don't know, cos he listens to his mates.

SG: Who are boys?

H: Yeah.

SG: But he won't listen to you?

H: No.

SG: Who generally gets to make the decisions if you've got boys and girls working together?

H: The teacher.

SG: The teacher?

H: Yeah. I think if you fancy one of the boys you'll do what they say anyway but if one of them, I think if a person that is probably more popular than the other person will tell that person what to do.

SG: Do you think these things always depend on who's popular?

H: Yeah.

SG: Do you think ever, like it depends on how good your ideas are or something like that?

H: No, I think it's definitely who's more popular or gorgeous or something like that.

SG: Is there anyone who's popular but isn't any good at P.E?

H: Most of the people that aren't good at P.E are usually not very popular...because they're usually fat or something.

SG: Do you think it's the same for girls and boys?

H: Yeah.

SG: What do you like best about all the PE that you've done since being at Hansford Park?

H: When you get to do the choosing, when they don't tell you what...when they don't put you in categories when you have to swap round between trampolining and netball, then badminton and basketball or something. When you, on the days when like it's a day off or something when you get to choose cos ...so that you choose between the fitness room and trampolining and that sort of thing; I like then best.

SG: Right. Why do you dislike having to do everything?

H: Because if you want to be good at something you can't get good at something if you're not doing it.

SG: So, you have too short a time?

H: Yeah.

SG: Do you play in any of the sports clubs before or after school?

H: I used to play hockey but I got fed up with that...I'd play it if it was after school but I have to get up so early in the morning to come to it because there's one early in the morning isn't there? I don't like that. I want to play netball but my mum can't pick me up because my brother, he's nought and he can't ...if he's in bed she doesn't really like getting him up just to come and pick me up. And my next-door neighbour and all the people that are around where I live have young children so there's no-one to sit in with John while she goes and picks me up so it's a bit difficult. But I've got a massive field that we all run around in and play rounders together in.

SG: Oh right, so you can play at home anyway- that's cool. If we talk about the teachers that you have...

H: I like Miss Merrett.

SG: Why do you like Miss Merrett?

H: I think because she's young; I don't really like the old fuddy duddy teachers. Mr Handley, I like cos he's my tutor, but I don't think I'd like him if he wasn't my tutor.

SG: Because?

H: He's old

SG: What's he like in PE?

H: I did have him for basketball and he like pushes you so hard...Me and Kevin had white tongues

SG: How does it make you feel when he pushes you really hard?

H: Like you're not doing your best but you are and then it makes you feel like you're not doing your best.

SG: Do you come out of your lessons feeling like you've achieved anything?

H: I come out feeling absolutely knackered.

SG: What about Miss Blackwood?

H: Who's Miss Blackwood?

SG: She teaches you trampolining.

H: She's too bossy.

SG: In what way is she bossy?

H: Umm, she just is. If, if, if you just leave the trampoline for one second she has a go at you and even if there's a good reason she doesn't let you explain why you left it. When we do lessons with Miss Merrett, she actually lets us do somersaults and we're not allowed to do somersaults with Miss Blackwood.

SG: Why do you think that is?

H: Well, it means we're never going to get to practice anything because they're never going to get to the same level as us because if we go to clubs we're just going to get higher and higher and higher and they're just not going to get as high as us.

**Sarah, Year 9 (A), Interview, Phase Four, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1999**

SG: Can we begin by talking about what part of PE do you like best?

S: Um, I like doing indoor stuff ...like trampolining and dancing and all that

SG: You particularly like working with Helen in PE don't you?

S: Yeah.

SG: What is it about Helen that makes you like to work with her?

S: Well, she is quite good at sports and she's one of my best friends.

SG: So, both of those reasons; which of them is more important?

S: Umm... A mixture really.

SG: O.K. Why do you like to work with someone else who's good at PE?

S: Well, they get you better marks and stuff. And then they're easy to work with because they know more things and you don't have to keep on telling them what to do all the time.

SG: If you're working with someone who's weaker at P.E than you are, how does that make you feel?

S: Well, it kind of makes it harder and stuff so you have to explain how to do it and go over it more times.

SG: So, is that what you find yourself doing, if you're working with someone that isn't as good as you; that you have to take charge?

S: Well, yeah.

SG: What happens if you're working with Helen then?

S: Well, she knows basically most stuff what I know, cos we do a lot together, so we know how each other works as well so it's easier that way.

SG: If for example, you are working a dance out together, do you share all your ideas or does one of you listen to the other more?

S: Well, it's a mixture really.

SG: Do you like leading people in what they're doing?

S: I do, but I feel sometimes that I'm telling everybody what to do and I don't really like that, I like to let other people take a turn.

SG: Why do you think it is that people might rely on you for ideas?

S: I don't really know.

SG: You didn't want to work with James Peterson...what is it about James that makes you not want to work with him?

S: Well, one time...well, he's never really here so he misses half of it and then ...well I have never got on with him; that's one of the other reasons.

SG: Why do you think you don't get on with him?

S: Well, just little things. We're not friends.

SG: So, you're generally not friends with him, so you wouldn't want to work with him in P.E?

S: Yeah.

SG: Also, you identified Teresa ...why wouldn't you want to work with her?

S: She's too quiet.

SG: Right.

S: If you're working with someone that's too quiet, what happens to the work that you're doing?

S: Well, you find it like kind of goes down and gets sedative if you know what I mean. They don't put in...well they do put effort into it, but they don't make it lively if you know what I mean.

SG: And you like 'lively'?

S: Yeah.

SG: What about Lewis?

S: He's just always got on my nerves and stuff. He's ...not being horrible or anything, but he's not as good at PE as other people.

SG (Reminder of confidentiality) The last person you put down was Bryony.

S: One of the reasons is that I don't really know her much and she goes with the shy, quiet types, which I'm not, I'm just the total opposite and I find it hard to work with.

**Claire, Year 9 (A), Interview, Phase Four, 15<sup>th</sup> October**

SG: What are you doing in PE at the moment?

C: Trampolining and netball.

SG: Trampolining and netball..which one do you prefer?

C: Trampolining.

SG: Why's that?

C: Because I'm better at it (laughs) and because netball's boring.

SG: How is netball boring?

C: Because it is.

SG: Can you explain why?

C: It's just throwing a ball around; you can't really do much more than throw a ball around; in trampolining you can do all the different things like...and you can learn more things because in netball you're just throwing and passing a ball and shooting and in trampolining you can do front drops and seat drops and somi's.

SG: So, you have a greater variety of things to do in trampolining?

C: Yeah.

SG: Can you think of the best thing that has happened to you in PE?

C: Doing trampolining in year 9 because in year 7 and 8...because most of the other groups got to do it once or twice but we always ended up doing something else.

SG: So you really wanted to do trampolining?

C: Yeah.

SG: Is there anything that has happened to you in PE that you think was really bad?

C: No, not really.

SG: So, is it a subject that you generally enjoy?

C: Yeah- no writing!

SG: Is there any other reason why you particularly like PE?

C: Not really,... um, the teachers are a bit nicer.

SG: How are they nicer?

C: Because they're not as strict.

SG: Who teaches you PE at the moment?

C: Miss Blackwood.

SG: Just Miss Blackwood?

C: Yeah.

SG: How would you describe Miss Blackwood?

C: Quite nice (laughs).

SG: Anything else?

C: No, not really.

SG: You think she's a nice teacher?

C: Yeah.

SG: Moving on to talk about your friends, and who you like working with, how would you describe Debbie?

C: Um, she can be a bit annoying (laughs) and a bit like 'I can do everything', especially in trampolining, she's like up here and she flies all over the place.

SG: She does? What is it about Debbie then, that makes you want to work with her in PE.

C: She's in our tutor and I kind of know her a bit more than everyone else.

SG: So you feel more comfortable working with someone that you know.

C: Yeah.

SG: Can you think of an instance where you have actually been working with Lisa?

C: No, because we haven't actually had to work in pairs...Oh except for when we had to do the trusting in trampolining.

SG: And did you work with her then?

C: Yeah.

SG: What is it then, in team games that makes you not want to work with Kevin Knapp?

C: It's because the boys can be stupid (laughs) and they muck around and you can't really trust them with much (laughs).

SG: So, how does that make you feel when you're working?

C: It makes you kind of uneasy because they're like mucking around and everything and you're trying to do something and you can't do it because they're mucking around.

SG: How would you describe Kevin then?

C: Well, he's alright when he's not kind of ...when you don't *have* to work with him but it's when you have to work with him and you're put like that ...and then the teacher says you have to do something and he goes around trying to muck around with his mates who are working with someone else. He doesn't concentrate on what you're actually doing.

SG: Can you think of a specific time when you were working with him?

C: No.

SG: What about James- how would you describe him?

C: He's not at school (laughs). He's never here. He just doesn't turn up to school.

SG: So is that why you said you wouldn't like to work with him?

C: Yeah. Because if you had to do something; if you did it once then you wouldn't be able to do it again because he wouldn't be here (laughs).

SG: How about Simon? How would you describe him?

C: Um...He kind of...I don't know, he's kind of ...I don't know, I just don't really like him much.



SG: Can you explain why you don't like him.

C: No.

SG: If we consider the people we've just talked about, what would you do in PE if Lisa wanted you to do something that you didn't want to do?

C: Tell her I didn't want to do it (laughs).

SG: And what would happen as a result of that?

C: I'd end up doing what I wanted cos I usually get my own way (laughs).

SG: How do you feel if there's any conflict between the two of you about what you wanted to do.

C: I'd try and compromise.

SG: What would you do if you couldn't compromise?

C: I'd say that I couldn't compromise and tell the teacher that you can't do it because you want two completely different things.

SG: So, you'd want to work separately in that case?

C: Yes.

SG: What do you generally do if the teacher wants you to do something that you don't want to do?

C: Do it because otherwise they'll have a go at you (laughs).

SG: Because you'll be in trouble if you don't do it?

C: Yeah.

SG: How do you feel if a teacher wants you to do something that you don't want to do?

C: I just do it because you have to ... because ...

SG: How do you feel?

C: I just feel like I have to do something...I just get on with it because the quicker you do it the less you have to do it and the better...because if you have to do something then the quicker and the better you do it then you're not going to have to do it much.

SG: Can you think of a particular instance when that has happened?

C: No.

SG: What would you do in an instance that Lisa wanted you to do one thing and the teacher wanted you to do another?

C: I'd do what the teacher said.

SG: What would you do if say Kevin wanted you to do something that you didn't want to do?

C: It would depend what it was. It would depend if I didn't like it. Cos if it was perfectly good; say it was something that was really good then I'd do it. Even if it wasn't *that* good then I'd still do it if I couldn't think of anything or if it was a good idea.

SG: What if it was not what you wanted to do.

C: If it was a good idea then I'd still do it.

SG: O.k. What about James?

C: He wouldn't have any ideas (laughs). He's like that, he doesn't think *ever*.

SG: Really?

C: I'd just go 'James, you're doing this' and he'd do it. He'd kind of go 'Whaaaa' (pulls face) in his little daze that he does and he'd do it. (laughs). Whenever a teacher (inaudible)

SG: Is that what he'd like?

C: Yeah.

SG: What about Felix Simpson?

C: Uhh...(laughs) I don't know.

SG: If he wanted you to do something and you wanted to do something different what would you do?

C: I'd probably try and do what I wanted to do.

SG: Do you think he'd listen to you?

C: I expect he would because he'd kind of respect other people's opinions.

SG: Do you think he'd have ideas?

C: Yeah, I think he would (laughs). They may be a bit strange.

SG: Why would they be strange?

C: Because he *is* strange...to me anyway.

SG: That's O.K. – remember we're talking about your opinion.. Can you explain the sort of ideas he'd have that might be different to other people's making them strange?

C: Well like he'd do something like, I suppose I could do more kind of girly type things and flexible things and he can't so he'd make it simple whereas I'd try and do something a bit more...that would take me to my best ability.

SG: When you said he might have *strange* ideas, what sort of ideas would he have?

C: (laughs) Well, he'd try and do simple things and do like a jump and (laughs) kind of a step; I find that strange. I'd do a *huge* jump and everything.

SG: Does he have different ideas to the other boys or would you say they were 'boys' ideas'?

C: Some of the boys are alright but some of them aren't.

SG: How does it make you feel then, when you have to work with someone that you don't really want to?

C: Uhh, it doesn't make you feel happy. I kind of like makes me feel like there's a job to do. Cos if it's with one of your friends then you kind of muck around a bit but you're still doing it. But if you're with someone like that it's like you *have* to do it because you feel more under pressure.

SG: How do you feel when you *have* to do things?

C: Not very happy because you just do it.

SG: How do you feel when you're working with Lisa then?

C: I feel more comfortable, except for when she's on the trampoline.

SG: Because?

C: She'll fly (laughs).

SG: Now, you're year 9, Miss Blackwood is your teacher now; who else has been your teacher for PE?

C: Mr Handley.

SG: How would you describe Miss Blackwood?

C: She makes PE kind of fun, but it can't be fun all the time because of the trust thing and things because someone could get hurt.

SG: How about Mr Handley?

C: Well, um he kind of makes you feel good even if you've done just like a tiny little thing say... Because I'm really rubbish at athletics and cos we're throwing shot put and things I'm kind of really weak in the arms but I've got stronger legs so I kind of throw it over to like a little tiny distance like a meter and everyone else is throwing it miles but he still makes you feel say...if you've thrown a meter and then like if you throw a meter and a half then he'll make you feel good about it cos you've thrown that bit extra.

SG: Right ...How would you describe your experience of PE?

C: It would be a variety of stuff because you get to try different things rather than just doing like trampolining cos that's my favourite I get to do something that I wouldn't usually do but I kind of enjoy, like badminton cos I don't really enjoy it but I'm quite good at it so it makes me feel a bit better.

SG: If there were anything that you could change about the PE that you do here, what would it be?

C: (laughs) I'd like to do more trampolining (laughs again). Um the boys seem to get a lot more sports but it...kind of girls do like trampolining and dance and stuff, but they're hardly ever on but badminton and basketball and football, they're always on.

SG: Is that outside of the lesson?

C: Yeah.

SG: What would you change about what you do inside the lesson aswell?

C: Uhh... I think that you should not have to do like something; some teachers like push you really hard so that you get really good but some people just can't do stuff and you just shouldn't have to be made to do it really well. Cos if you're playing like a game of badminton against someone that's really better than you then they try and beat you but they should be trying to help you by placing it somewhere that you can hit it.

SG: How would you change PE then, to help out in that way?

C: Try and...because the good ones always play against the good ones, try and mix it a bit and get the good ones to play against the slightly weaker ones to help them not to just win.

SG: Do you think that's what the stronger players do?

C: Sometimes (laughs). It depends because they say 'Who do you want to work with?' and so you pick someone that ...like your friend and you play with them because you're like the same level. But your friend might be really rubbish like you are and you're just hitting it and it's landing on the floor all the time.

SG: So, you don't get much of a game?

C: Yeah, and you get bored.

SG: So, do you ever play against people that are better than you?

C: When we played with Mr Handley, he put us against people who were better than you so you could like have a better game and it was better than playing against your mate cos it was like more fun cos you could hit the shuttlecock over and it was actually like going over the net.

SG: So, if you were allowed to choose who you were going to work with, would you choose someone who was a bit better than you or would you choose a mate?

C: I don't know cos I'd like to work with Casey but she's in a different group and she's good; I'm quite good, she's better than me so it would be more fun than working with Debbie. She's better and she's one of my friends.

SG: So, if you could combine both you'd be happier?

C: Yeah.

SG: What if you had to choose between working with your mate or someone that was better than you what would you do?

C: I'd change each lesson.

**Tracey, Year 9 (A), Interview, Phase Four, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1999**

SG: The people that you like working with are Claire, Michelle, Sarah, Colin and Graham.

T: Yeah.

SG: Why do you like working with them?

T: Because if you can't do anything, they don't take the mick kind of thing.

SG: Right, can we talk about each one in particular, starting with Claire what is it about her that makes you like working with her.

T: She helps you.

SG: Any other reason you like working with her?

T: No.

SG: What about Vicky?

T: Cos we're like both the same level.

SG: So, you can work together the same. How do you feel about working with someone who's not as good as you?

T: What do you mean?

SG: If you're working with someone who's not as good at PE as you, how do you find it?

T: Easier.

SG: Do you prefer that?

T: (Nods)

SG: What about Sarah?

T: The same as Claire.

SG: What about Colin and Graham?

T: They just know what to do with everything so...(pause)

SG: Do you also like working with them because they're your mates?

T: Yeah, most of them.

SG: So, they're your mates as well?

T: Yeah.

SG: Does that help?

T: Yeah.

SG: Why don't you like working with Lewis?

T: I don't know, he's just, ...I don't know...He's just a weirdo. I just wouldn't want to work with him.

SG: Can you explain why?

T: I don't know.

SG: What do you mean by weird?

T: Well, no...he just criticises other people if they can't do things but then if they do it to him he cries .

SG: Right. How about Debbie, do you like working with her?

T: Yeah (but has named Lisa as someone she did not like working with).

SG: Anybody else other than you named that you don't like working with?

T: I don't know their names but they're the geeky ones.

SG: What do you mean by geeky?

T: They're the boffs.

SG: Is there anyone you like working with that you didn't identify on the sheets you filled in?

T: Helen's alright...that's about all

SG: Which part of PE do you like best?

T: I like badminton, tennis and trampolining but not running.

SG: So, you like the trampolining that you're doing?

T: Yeah, and discus and all that lot.

SG: What about hockey?

T: Yeah, I like that.

SG: Do you like stuff where you're competitive or do you like things like dance where you're working stuff out?

T: I don't mind really. I just don't like running.

**Bryony, Year 9 (A), Interview, Phase Four, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1999**

SG: What activities are you doing at the moment in PE?

B: Trampolining and netball.

SG: Which do you prefer?

B: Trampolining.

SG: Why is that?

B: Because I've done it for a little while. So I feel more confident.

SG: Can you think of anything that's happened in PE that you thought was really good?

B: (Shakes head)...No

SG: Is there anything that's happened in PE that's been really bad for you?

B: No.

SG: Who teaches you PE at the moment?

B: Miss Blackwood.

SG: For trampolining and netball?

B: She's nice.

SG: Can you explain what you mean by 'nice'.

B: I don't know...she'll help you with what you're doing, you can ask her stuff.

SG: So, you feel comfortable with her?

B: Yes.

SG: Now, you like working with Susan.

B: She's quiet. I don't know, but she is a bit bossy.

SG: She's bossy is she?

B: Yeah, you wouldn't think so but she is.

SG: So, she's bossy to you? How does that make you feel?

B: I don't know.

SG: If you were working with Lindsay and she wanted you to do something that you didn't want to, would she be able to get you to do it?

B: She probably would.

SG: How would she do it?

B: Um, she'd keep on about it.

SG: And what would make you do it in the end?

B: If it wasn't that bad then I'd do it, but if it was, then I wouldn't.

SG: What if Susan wanted you to do something that the teacher didn't want you to do?

B: It depends what it was. If it was really bad then I wouldn't.

SG: Would you be able to persuade Susan to do something that she didn't want to do?

B: No, I don't think so.

SG: Now, you said that you weren't too keen on working with Debbie.

B: Yeah.

SG: How would you describe Debbie?

B: She just pushes me around.

SG: What do you mean by 'pushes'?

B: She just pushes past me and she shouts at people a lot.

SG: Would she be able to get you to do something that you didn't want to?

B: I don't think so.

SG: Would you be able to persuade her to do something that she didn't want to?

B: I don't think so.

SG: Can you think of a time when you were working with her?

B: Not other than when we're on the trampoline.

SG: Can you think of a time when you were working with Susan?

B: In netball.

SG: And how did you feel when you were working with her?

B: O.K.

SG: If you could change PE... what would you change?

B: That we could choose what we wanted to do instead of being told.

SG: And what would you choose to do?

B: Dance and hockey and trampolining.

SG: If you were to sum up your experience of PE here; how would you describe it?

B: Good but not when the teacher makes you do things.

SG: How do you feel then?

B: Angry.

SG: And do you do anything about it then?

B: No.

SG: Why not?

B: Um, because of the teachers.

SG: What might the teachers do?

B: Give you a detention.



Colin, Year 9 (A), Interview, Phase Four, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1999

(Inaudible outset)

SG: You like working with Graham Merrett and Richard Dibson and Ewan Morris?

C: Ewan Morris, yeah.

SG: Who do you most like working with out of that group?

C: Graham Merrett.

SG: Why?

C: Because he's to my ability.

SG: Why do you like working with Richard and Ewan?

C: Cos they're my ability at sport. It's a good game then.

SG: Do you like that then, to have someone that you can compete with?

C: Yeah.

SG: If you had a choice then, between working with someone who is better than you, or someone who isn't as good as you, which would you choose?

C: Someone who's better than me.

SG: Because?

C: It's more of a challenge.

SG: O.K, right. Do you like working with any of the girls?

C: Um, not really, just people of my ability.

SG: O.K. so the reason you haven't chosen any girls is because they're not of your ability.

C: Yeah.

SG: Now, you didn't express any people that you don't like working with did you? Why didn't you choose anyone in particular?

C: ... Cos I don't want to be horrible or nothing.

SG: What type of person would you prefer not to work with in PE?

C: Someone who mucks about and just can't be bothered to do stuff.

SG: O.K.

Graham, Year 9 (A), Interview, Phase Four, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1999

SG: You like working with Colin and Ewan and Richard... What is it about them that makes you want to work with them?

G: Because they're like, my standard sort of thing like...it's like we're all together so it's easy.

SG: So, do you like the challenge of working with someone of your level?

G: Yeah.

SG: So, if you're working with a partner, is it the same thing that follows then?

G: Yeah, because it's like, because if I was to work with someone who's not as good as me then it would be easy.

SG: How would you feel if you were working with someone that was better than you?

G: What, if I was with someone that was better than me?

SG: Yes

G: It'd be good cos like it's harder for me.

SG: So you want to work with someone who's as good as you or better so you can work harder.

G: Yeah.

SG: If you're working with Ewan and you're working in pairs, doing gymnastics or dance or something where you need to work stuff out, who tends to come up with the ideas?

G: Most probably me (laughs).

SG: Do you like to lead in that way?

G: Yeah.

SG: What happens if you want Mark to do something and he doesn't want to do it?

G: (Laughs) I dunno.

SG: Does he usually just do what you want?

G: Not all the time cos he's not like that but I tend to tell him to do it.

SG: What about working with Colin?

G: Oh yeah, he's alright yeah.

SG: Would you use your ideas then as well?

G: Yeah.

SG: So, you have the ideas and they do as you tell them?

G: Yeah.

SG: What about people you don't like working with?

G: Like, in my group there's some people sort of like some people that are not my ability and it's pretty boring.

SG: You said, Susan and Theresa.

G: Yeah, people like that.

SG: And William.

G: Yeah.

SG: So, those three are the main ones you wouldn't want to work with?

G: Yeah.

SG: Is it just ability that means you don't want to work with them?

G: Yeah.

SG: Say you were partnered up with Susan, how would you feel?

G: I'd feel a bit bad but I'd still try sort of thing.

SG: How would you relate to her?

G: I'd just ask her what she wanted to do and then ... (long pause)

SG: Would you help her with what she was doing?

G: Yeah.

SG: What aspect of PE do you prefer doing to any other?

G: Active sort of things.

SG: So, for example...?

G: Football or something like that.

SG: How do you feel then, when you do trampolining?

G: Yeah, that is fun because it's different than doing what I usually do.

SG: Mmm, cos you were doing really well last week weren't you because you were learning a front drop.

G: Yeah.

SG: Is there anything about anybody that they do in PE that really annoys you?

G: No, ...only if they muck around in the lesson.

SG: Can you give an example of when people muck around?

G: If they start shouting and that and the teacher says 'everyone sit down' and you have to wait.

SG: What if they're mucking about when you're working in groups; in a small group for example?

G: Tell 'em to go and find another group (laughs).

SG: Would you?

G: Yeah.

SG: Would that be your first reaction, to tell them to go to another group?

G: Well, I'd try and get them to change and then if not... (pause).

SG: What would happen if you couldn't get them to go and work with another group?

G: I'd tell them to first and then if they didn't I'd tell the teacher.

SG: So, you 'd tell the teacher?

G: Yeah.

SG: Does that generally work?

G: Yeah (laughs).

SG: What do you think it is about teacher intervention that means they can sort them out when you couldn't?

G: Umm..I dunno (laughs)

SG: Is it because you're scared of being shouted at?

G: Yeah, I suppose.

SG: So, that works. Do you play football for the school as well?

G: Yeah

SG: Do you think that helps with what you do in PE?

G: Yeah, because the more times you do it the more practice you get?

SG: Do you feel sorry for people that can't do PE?

G: Yeah because it's like a bit out of order on them because they can't do it.

SG: If Colin, Ewan and Richard weren't as good at PE, do you still think you'd like them because of their personality anyway or is it purely because of their level?

G: Level's basically it.

SG: Do you ever find that you're excluded from PE, for example, if someone's dominating a game?

G: All the time I just try and keep up.

Kim, Year 9 (B), Interview, Phase Four, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1999

SG: What activities are you doing in PE at the moment?

K: Netball and badminton.

SG: Netball and badminton...which do you prefer?

K: Badminton cos it's inside (laughs).

SG: So, you prefer playing inside than out...why don't you like playing outside?

K: I do in the summer.

SG: What don't you like about it in the winter?

K: It's too cold. I do like netball, and I do go to netball club but I haven't been going lately 'cos we always lose the match.

SG: Does that make you not want to play it?

K: We're a rubbish team.

SG: If you took the weather factor out of it would you prefer netball or badminton?

K: Probably netball because I've been doing that...it's only this year that I've done badminton. I'd probably choose netball because I've been doing it for about seven years.

SG: Right. So, does that make you better at it?

K: No, I'm better at badminton.

SG: Can you explain what it is that you like about netball?

K: Running around (laughs).

SG: Who's your PE teacher?

K: It's supposed to be Miss Harrison but I've had Miss Blackwood and Mr. Mitchell.

SG: How would you describe Miss Blackwood?

K: 'In with the crowd'.

SG: Can you elaborate on that and tell me a bit more?

K: She's cool.

SG: You think she's cool. What makes her cool?

K: She's not moany she tries to get you to do everything...um...she's just cool.

SG: What's cool about her personality?

K: She's funny.

SG: In what way?

K: In PE last Thursday she tried to score and she couldn't do it...she does netball...and she couldn't do it and she laughed.

SG: How would you describe Mr Mitchell?

K: Strict, but...since I started hockey I've like got to know him a bit more and he ain't as strict as people say he is. He's a good teacher.

SG: What makes him a good teacher?

K: ... Where he shouts a lot people just listen to what he says, so he's just able to do the lesson and if anyone's interrupted he just slings 'em out. He'll just get on with the lesson and make you better at it.

SG: Is there any teacher that doesn't do that?

K: Miss Blackwood. She shouts at them but then just carries on.

SG: How does that affect what you learn in PE then?

K: It doesn't...I just pick sports up easy.

SG: So, it doesn't actually affect you very much?

K: No.

SG: When you work with other people in PE, you said you would like to work with Felicity Cooke; how would you describe Felicity?

K: ... I dunno...I hang round with her all the time ..we're good friends. She can be funny, and when I'm playing with her in badminton she goes like that (mimicks a poor badminton shot) and then she misses it and she's like really funny the way she does it.

SG: If you were say, working with Felicity in a pair or group and she wanted you to do something that you didn't want to do, would you do it?

K: No, I'd tell her to get on horseback .

SG: Would you be able to get her to do something she didn't want to do?

K: No, I'm not like that.

SG: What if Miss Blackwood wanted you to do something you didn't want to do?

K: I dunno...it depends what it is. I'd probably do it because she's a teacher. I dunno...it depends, it depends what it is.

SG: Can you think of an example of when you might not do something?

K: I dunno cos she's never asked me to.

SG: She's never asked you to do something you really don't want to do?

K: No.

SG: But it would depend on what it was as to whether you'd do it or not?

K: Yeah.

SG: How about Claire Morris, how would you describe her?

K: Boring. She's not into sports, and she's not a laugh, she's boring.

SG: What do you mean by 'boring'?

K: She's not quick and when I do PE I likes to be fast at it. She's not quick, she's too slow.

SG: So, if she wanted you to do something that you didn't want to ...

K: She'd never say it.

SG: She wouldn't?

K: No, cos like I'm loud, when I'm outside I'm like really loud.

SG: Could you get her to do something she didn't want to?

K: No, I wouldn't have thought so.

SG: What if you were working in a pair doing a dance for example?

K: If we was doing dance I would tell her to do very little steps.

SG: Would she do it?

K: It would depend...it would depend if she wanted to do the dance. If she wanted to do the same dance then I'd listen to her and then she'd listen to my ideas.

SG: What if she didn't want to do what you wanted to do?

K: Tell 'er to get out' the dance. Say 'bye'!

SG: Would you get someone else to work with?

K: Yeah.

SG: If a teacher wanted you to do something that you're not too keen on, how does that make you feel?

K: What in lessons?

SG: Yeah.

K: I just have to do it don't I?

SG: Why do you think that?

K: Cos it's the teacher and they're in charge.

SG: How do you feel if that happens in PE?

K: Just, I dunno, I have to do everything. Cos I may not have done something before but I might have heard about it and then in the end I might like it. Like this term I got to do badminton.

SG: So, you think it's worth giving things a go?

K: Yeah.

SG: If you were going to change something about the PE you do in school, what would you change about it?

K: Have hockey during lessons. Cos now we've only got like three hours in two weeks we're not allowed to do hockey. Cos last year we had hockey but I never done that cos I only come here at Christmas and I'd change that there should be hockey cos I like hockey now.

SG: You've decided you like it now. Is there anything else you'd change about PE?

K: I think we should have a longer hour in PE. We only like end up with forty five minutes including getting all the equipment out; in netball we end up with like twenty minutes, it's not long enough, we need longer.

SG: I understand that. How would you sum up your whole experience of PE?

K: Brilliant.

SG: Really?

K: Yeah, it's brilliant.

SG: Can you start by explaining what part of PE you most like – if there is a part you like?

M: um, its when ...its more active things, when I'm more involved in it...I don't really know, I don't like dancing...I don't like that at all, I don't know why...

SG: You don't know why?

M: No...

SG: Now, you're doing badminton at the moment...do you like badminton?

M: Yes.

SG: What is it that you like about badminton?

M: It's like, you play with another person.

SG: Now, Mr Mitchell teaches you at the moment, how would you describe Mr Mitchell?

M: He's very good.

SG: What makes him very good?

M: Well, he explains what you need to do...he explains and he understands...if you get something wrong he'll make you learn.

SG: O.K...and what about Miss Harrison

M: Miss Harrison (long pause) wants to help you ....

SG: Don't worry, remember, what you tell me is confidential.

M: Basically they know what you want.

SG: Now, you said you particularly like working with Gillian...can you describe Gillian's personality for me?

M: Well, she's my best friend in and out of school.

SG: Right.

M: She always wants to do her best, so she's determined and...I just like to be with her.

SG: If you were working in PE and Gillian wanted to get you to do something that you didn't want to, would she be able to get you to do it?

M: What sort of thing?

SG: Well, for example, if in trampolining there was a difficult thing to do?

M: She's doing that at the moment actually, she's trying to get me to do a somersault.

SG: Right, how is she helping you with that then?

M: She's explaining to me how she can do it and she's encouraging me...you know, step by step.

SG: If it was the other way around and you were trying to get her to do something, would you be able to get her to do it?

M: Yeah, I would.

SG: How would you get her to do it?



M: Um, I'd tell her it's not that bad and how I enjoyed it and maybe help her.

SG: Physically?

M: Yes.

SG: O.K. Now, you said that you'd prefer not to work with Kim Sealey.

M: Yes.

SG: Can you describe her for me?

M: Um,...she's a bit uh... she's a bit... verbally aggressive. She's a good player (referring to badminton) but if she wins she... like, boasts about it.

SG: O.K. Would she be able to get you to do something you didn't want to, would she be able to?

M: I don't know, ... but if it was something that I wasn't interested in then she couldn't.

SG: So, I fit was something that you wanted to do really, then she could persuade you, but if not, she couldn't?

M: Yeah.

SG: What if it were the other way around; would you be able to persuade her to do something?

M: Well, I would help her if she asked me to...but I...would help her but she probably wouldn't want me to.

SG: Now, if you could change one thing about PE, what would you change?

M:..Um I'd... you know...you know you get abilities, I would probably put the best people in one formal group...they do that to a certain extent now but I think they should do it more.

SG: So, you'd split the abilities up so that people of the same abilities played against each other?

M: Yeah.

SG: Why do you think that would be a good thing to do?

M: Because...for instance, if I was playing badminton and I was a person who was better than me or worse than me I wouldn't enjoy it because either I would be winning all the time or losing.

SG:If you were to sum up your experience of PE here – how would you describe it?

M: It's very good. It enables you to do different things. Um yeah, they change it round a lot.

SG: So, there's good variety/ of teachers and activity and people?

M: Exactly.

**Maria, Year 9 (B), Interview, Phase Four, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1999**

SG: Now, at the moment you're doing basketball and trampolining aren't you?

M: Yeah.

SG: Can you tell me which of those do you prefer?

M: Trampolining, cos I do it as a hobby.

SG: So, you do it outside of school as well?

M: Yeah

SG: What's your favourite part of PE? Of all the activities you ever do in PE?

M: Trampolining.

SG: Who teaches you trampolining at the moment?

M Miss Blackwood.

SG: How would you describe Miss Blackwood?

M: She's a good teacher.

SG: What makes her a good teacher?

M: She explains things to you.

SG: So you understand what you have to do?

M: Yeah.

SG: Now, you like working with Kim; can you describe Kim's personality to me?

M: Well, she's just like kind of open and she's funny. She gets on with her work and helps you if you need help.

SG: Right...If Kim wanted you to do something in PE that you weren't too keen on doing would she be able to get you to do it?

M: Doubt it.

SG: would she try?

M: probably, but I don't know if I would do what I don't want to do.

SG: What about the other way around; would you be able to get her to do something?

M: I don't know, cos she's got quite (Inaudible) I don't think she'd do what she don't want to do.

SG: So, you wouldn't try to persuade her?

M: I'd try but I don't think it'd work.

SG: How would you try and persuade her?

M: Try to say how she'd like it or something.

SG: So, you'd explain to her...

M: Yeah.

SG: Right, if one of your teachers wanted you to do something that you didn't want to do, would you do it?

M: Yeah, probably.

SG: Why.

M: Because there's a difference between a teacher asking you and a pupil asking you isn't there?

SG: Why is it different?

M: I dunno really, I just think it is (laughs)...because they're in charge kind of, of what you're doing in that lesson...and like...children aren't.

SG: So, they've kind of got the right to tell you what to do?

M: Yeah!

SG: O.K. Now, you didn't identify anybody when you were asked who you'd prefer not to work with...is that because there's no-one in your group...

M: There are some that I wouldn't like to work with but perhaps I don't really know them that well.

SG: is there anyone at all that maybe you'd just prefer not to work with?

M: Yeah, Gillian.

SG: Can you describe what Gillian's like?

M: She's just like ... I think it's just that our personalities clash cos like workwise and that she has different rules and that she just like gives me different advice and stuff like that.

SG: Can you give an example?

M: Well, if I was playing badminton...and it landed on the line it would be her count that mattered not mine.

SG: Right, O.K. then...so she sort of get her own way when working with you?

M: Yeah.

SG: If she was to persuade you to do something that you didn't want to do, would she be able to get you to do it?

M: No.

SG: Would you be able to get her to do it.

M: Doubt it.

SG: If you could change one thing about the PE that you're doing now, or have ever done at Hansford Park, what would you change?

M: Perhaps...um I don't really know cos I like PE, it's my favourite subject...

SG: So, you wouldn't change anything?

M: No.

SG: If you were to describe then your experience of PE here, how would you describe it?

M: I enjoy it I'm quite a sporty person so I like sort of do it sort of out of school and everything so it's like a bit of fun and everything.

SG: So, you think it's very positive and everything?

M: Yeah.

Harry, Year 9 (B), Interview, Phase Four, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1999

SG: Can you begin by telling me what you most like about PE?

H: What I most like about PE ...I like um badminton...and going up in the fitness room, it's interesting but the other things like trampolining it's a bit boring cos all you do is bounce which I find a bit boring.

SG: So you think trampolining's a bit boring but you like...

H: Yeah, where it makes...where you like make sweat in other words...where you work hard.

SG: O.K. Is it just trampolining that you don't like?

H: I don't like trampolining and I don't like some parts of athletics like discus, but I like running.

SG: So, you like working mostly with Timothy...

H: Yeah, yeah.

SG: Can you begin by describing what he's like for me?

H: How do you mean? His personality?

SG: Yes.

H: Um, he's tallish, chubby and he's good at sport, he likes doing sport, that's why I like playing with him...he's not rubbish- he can actually play.

SG: So you like that challenge?

H: Yeah.

SG: What's his personality like?

H: Uh, very...he messes about quite a lot but he does work.

SG: Right. O.K. Now, if you were working with Timothy, and he wanted you to do something that you didn't want to do, would he be able to get you to do it?

H: Uh...Probably not; it depends what it was.

SG: How would he tried to get you to do it?

H: He'd try and persuade me...he'd probably say 'Oh, I'll give you something to do it'.

SG: So, kind of bribery?

H: Yeah.

SG: What about the other way round; would you be able to get him to do something?

H: Probably not.

SG: Would you try?

H: Yeah, I'd try but it wouldn't work.

SG: Who teaches you PE at the moment?

H: Mr Mitchell.

SG: Anybody else?

H: Miss Blackwood.

SG: Right. If Mr Mitchell wanted to get you to do something you didn't want to, would he be able to get you to do it?

H: Well, Yes cos he's a teacher...well, if I know I can't do it, I won't do it, but if I had to push myself that little bit harder, yeah, I'd probably do it.

SG: You would?

H: Yeah.

SG: So, if Mr Mitchell said 'You haven't tried this Harry...'

H: Yeah, I'd try it; if I hadn't tried it before I'd do it.

SG: What if you then couldn't do it.

H: If I couldn't do it and he asked me to do it again...I'd try it three or four times and if I knew it was impossible for me to do it I wouldn't do it.

SG: Would you refuse to do it?

H: Yeah. It may get me in trouble but I'd refuse.

SG: O.K. Now, you'd prefer not to work with Charles.

H: Yeah. He gets on my nerves.

SG: Can you describe Charles for me?

H: Uh, he's quite small he's got a very annoying habit of annoying ya...

SG: How does he annoy you?

H: Like when we're playing badminton he picks up two shuttles and hits them both at ya so you have to try and hit both which is really annoying ...he just really bugs me.

SG: If he hits two shuttles at you, do you try and hit both?

H: Oh Yeah! (emphatically). I try, yeah.

SG: Could Charles ever persuade you to do anything you didn't want to?

H: No.

SG: Could you persuade him to do something he didn't want to?

H: Yeah.

SG: You could? How would you try to persuade him to do something?

H: I dunno...I wouldn't threaten him but I'd make him scared if you know what I mean.

SG: How would you do that?

H: Threaten him...not threaten him...I'd hurt him if you know what I mean...I wouldn't physically hurt him I'd just go 'Oh, I'll hurt you if you don't do this'.

SG: And then he'd do it?

H: Yeah.

SG: O.K. We've spoken about Timothy and Charles and Mr Mitchell...what about Miss Blackwood; how would you describe her?

H: Oh, she's um...how do I put it? She's a good teacher at trampolining, I have a laugh, messing around and stuff. Trampolining doesn't really appeal to me, but Miss Blackwood, she's a good laugh.

SG: If you're doing trampolining, could Miss Blackwood get you to do something you didn't want to?

H: Yeah, she'd get me to do it.

SG: How would she get you to do it?

H: Well, she'd ...she goes 'Harry, you have a go' and I just agree.

SG: Right. How would you describe Mr Mitchell?

H: He gets annoyed very easy; he always jumps to conclusions like... Peter to day, he was just hitting the shuttle and he told him to get out and come up here or something I dunno...He gets very angry but sometimes he's alright.

SG: If you could change one thing about PE, is there anything you would change.

H: Yeah, a double lesson in PE so you've got longer to do it.

SG: So that you'd have longer to do it?

H: Yeah.

SG: Because you have two lessons a week at the moment..

H: Two lessons one week and one the other.

SG: So, would you like to join those two or would you want more time for PE?

H: More time for PE.

SG: If you were to sum up your experience of PE here, how would you describe it?

H: Good...most of it's good.

SG: What's good about it?

H: Well, the equipment, they've got very good facilities.

SG: O.K. So the facilities are good?

H: Yeah.

Lewis, Year 9 (B), Interview, Phase Four, 5<sup>th</sup> November

SG: What activities are you doing in PE at the moment?

L: We're doing badminton and we're doing football.

SG: Which of those do you prefer?

L: Badminton.

SG: Why's that?

L: Cos I'm better at it.

SG: Any other reason why you like badminton?

L: I dunno I just like it – it's a really good sport and I'm quite good at it as well and most sports I'm not very good at cos I don't do it.

SG: So, you like it because you know how to play it and so are confident in it?

L: And I know everything about it as well, well, I know most things about it.

SG: Can you think of a particularly good thing that has ever happened to you in PE?

L: Um...Oh, I got a merit when we were doing um, oh, I can't think what it is now...athletics, cos I don't like athletics very much, so to get a merit in it was really good because it was, you know, something that I wasn't expecting.

SG: What specifically did you get your merit for?

L: I dunno, I think it was that I had run really slow, well it wasn't slow for me but then I ran a lot faster and I got it for that.

SG: So, you got it for a 'personal best'?

L: Yeah.

SG: Now, you like working with Francis don't you? How would you describe Francis?

L: Well, we get along great cos we're in the same tutor group and um, he's a good sportsmanship; if he loses, he doesn't mind, he doesn't you know, get all stroppy- I don't either. I like working with him because when we're talking we're like laughing and it's alright whereas other people in the group that I don't know I get up tight when they laugh at me but I don't mind with him because he's my friend.

SG: Right, so that's why you like working with him in PE?

L: Yeah.

SG: What would you do if Russell wanted you to do something in PE that you didn't want to do?

L: Well, if it was something that I really didn't like then I'd just tell him and ask him if ...whether he would do it with someone else cos I'm not going to do something that I don't want to do because then there's not much point in doing PE.

SG: If it were the other way round, what would he do if you wanted him to do something that he didn't want to?

L: He wouldn't...I don't think he'd do it either; he'd tell me, he'd talk to me, rather than just like saying it in a bad manner...he'd talk to me about it.

SG: If you were working together, say working out a routine in dance or something; and you disagreed on something, what would you do to resolve that situation?

L: We'd just pick something else because, otherwise...I don't want to fall out with my friends, so I'd just decide to do something totally different so that we don't get into an argument.

SG: So, you 'd find something else to do?

L: Yeah.

SG: What would you do if Francis wanted you to do something and the teacher wanted you to do something different?

L: I'd have to do what the teacher wanted me to do because obviously...they're not more important, but they have more authority.

SG: How do they have more authority?

L: Well, they're here to teach us and Francis is just my friend, and if they're trying to get me to do something because they think that I need to then like obviously I'm gonna do it because they know best.

SG: Now, you prefer not to work with Timothy.

L: Cos he's too much of a person who's like, when he wins, he rubs it in your face and I hate it when people do that; he's really good at sports but he's like...we don't like each other anyway and when he rubs it in my face, it makes me really angry...he's not a very good sportsman either, he has to win he has to be better than me.

SG: Right...how would you describe his character then?

L: Well, he's clever, he's very clever at things and he knows what to do but, if when we like are sat down together on our own; if we have to do something together, then we're O.K but when it's something that we're doing just like PE we don't get on very much anyway and it depends...if we're both good at the sport and we're both playing well, then we'll get on with each other but if one was playing rubbish then the other one rubs it in their face. Cos if he's playing rubbish then I do, do it to him as well cos we don't get on.

SG: Right, what would you do if you were working with him in PE and he wanted you to do something that you didn't want to do?

L: Well, if I didn't...if he wanted me to do it and I didn't want to do it, I wouldn't like get all stropky about it because it would ruin the PE for him, I'd just tell him that I didn't want to do it so we could do something else.

SG: What if he didn't want to do something else?

L: Then I'd obviously try and work with someone else cos he wasn't co-operating.

SG: O.K then. What would he do if you wanted him to do something that he didn't want to?

L: I don't know him really well so I can't really say but I would say that he would try to force me to do the other thing.

SG: How would he do that?

L: He's quite dominating, he's very...he likes to get his own way. I'm not being nasty but um...if I wasn't going to co-operate I expect he'd want to do something he wanted to do.

SG: What would he do to try and persuade you?

L: I don't know, he'd just talk about it and say that what I wanted to do was bad or something he'd take the mickey out of what I wanted to do.

SG: So, he'd devalue what you wanted to do.

L: Yeah, so I'd end up thinking well, maybe he's right and end up doing what he wanted to do.

SG: How would you feel in that situation?



L: Well, if I ended up starting to think like that ...if I found myself working with someone I didn't want to I'd work with someone else.

SG: Can you think of a particular time when you have been working with Timothy?

L: Um, I don't think I have, I think this is the first time I've worked with him.

SG: So, you've just worked with him in badminton?

L: Yeah, I don't mind working with him in badminton, it's a challenge for me cos he's really good. Sometimes I beat him and sometimes I don't.

SG: How about Francis, can you recall working with him?

L: Yeah, I always work with him.

SG: How do you feel about that?

L: I feel glad because that way it's not just a PE lesson, it's a time like where we can get on and talk to each other and things.

SG: Mr Mitchell teaches you badminton doesn't he; who teaches you football?

L: Um...Mr Mitchell too.

SG: How would you describe Mr Mitchell?

L: He's a really good teacher, I like having him as a teacher. He's not like a strict teacher, *he's not* he...if you do something wrong, well he'll tell you the consequences but he won't be nasty about it, he's a good teacher, I like to go with him. I like to go with Mr Handley as well because he's funny. I think they're both funny.

SG: How would you describe his character then?

L: He's one of these people that likes to get on and teach you but he doesn't want to make it so it's like a chore he makes it so it's fun.

SG: How does he make it fun?

L: Well, he tries to put jokes into it and if we ask to something and we can't do it that lesson, then we'll do it the next lesson; he tries to do what we want.

SG: So he listens to your ideas and helps you with your ideas.

L: Yes.

SG: If you could change anything about PE, what would you change?

L: Um, I think rather having a decision of like football and netball, that you should do half o fit as one and half the other because otherwise, most boys ...it's more like girls do netball and boys do football; it's more like boys don't learn how to play netball to do anything else, we should have a chance to do something else.

SG: So, you'd rather do more different things?

L: Yes, cos last year I didn't do ...it'd trying to put more subjects in.

SG: O.K. If you had to sum up your experience of PE at this school, how would you describe it?

L: I think it's really good, they teach quite a lot of subjects already, I learn quite a lot from it and well, I just, I really like it in this school. It's different to my old school because they like did one subject and didn't do very much we have lots of competitions here in this school. I really like PE. I wasn't a very sporty type before I came here and I like sports in this school.

**Francis, Year 9 (B), Interview, Phase Four, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1999**

SG: What are the activities that you're doing at the moment in PE?

F: Badminton and football.

SG: Which of those two do you prefer?

F: Football.

SG: Why do you prefer football?

F: I don't know, it's just more running about in it and I prefer team sports.

SG: Why do you prefer team sports?

F: Well, like if you win something you don't all share like the fun of it.

SG: I see. Can you think of an incident in PE that has been really good for you?

F: I just like any team sports. I like athletics, I won the 200m in the school sports but I prefer like the relays.

SG: Has there ever been an incident that has been really bad for you in PE?

F: Um, I was playing a sport and I hurt my ankle, I went to the doctor's and I had arthritis and I couldn't play for four weeks.

SG: Oh no!

F: So getting back to sport has been really good fun.

SG: Mr Mitchell teaches you badminton doesn't he? Who teaches you football?

F: Mr Mitchell does.

SG: How would you describe Mr Mitchell?

F: He wants to help you move on; he wants to put you to the best of your ability.

SG: How does he do that?

F: He like, if you say, make a mistake he'll show you how to correct it and stuff.

SG: Is there anyone in PE that you really like working with?

F: Um, Lewis.

SG: How would you describe Lewis?

F: He mucks about, but he can be a sensible person.

SG: How do you feel when you're working with him?

F: Good, cos any challenge that we're set we can like do it together.

SG: If Lewis wanted you to do something that you didn't want to do; what would happen?

F: I'd just say 'no'. I'd talk to him about it though first.

SG: How would you feel in that situation?

F: I'd feel like I'd got to tell him and I'd say why.

SG: What would you say if he wanted you to do something that the teacher didn't want you to do?

F: It like depends what it is. If it's like something really bad you can't do that so I'd say 'You can't do that' and he'd just have to do it by himself. But if he wanted to do something that wasn't like, that bad, then I might go and do it.

SG: So would he be able to persuade you?

F: Well, he wouldn't be able to persuade me, it would be like my own decision.

SG: Is there anybody in your group that you would prefer not to work with?

F: Not really.

SG: There isn't anyone?

F: I don't mind who I work with really.

SG: You don't mind? If you could change something about the PE that you do, what would you change?

F: I'd change it round a bit more I'd have...like at the moment every two weeks we've only got one football lesson I'd like to do more stuff outside to do team games.

SG: If you were to sum up your experience of PE at this school, how would you describe it?

F: It's exciting.

SG: How is it exciting?

F: Well, it's like I hadn't tried badminton before this school and now I've like learnt it um...I wasn't very good at (inaudible) at my old school but I've improved here.

**Adam, Year 9 (B), Interview, Phase Four, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999**

SG: What activities are you involved in at the moment in PE?

A: I do football and badminton.

SG: Which one of those two do you prefer?

A: Badminton.

SG: Why's that?

A: I just don't like football that much – I'm not really into football.

SG: Can you explain why you don't like football?

A: I'm not interested in football that much so...I dunno.

SG: Do you like badminton though?

A: Yes, badminton's alright.

SG: What's the best thing that's happened to you in PE?

A: ... I don't mind playing hockey.

SG: Why do you like hockey?

A: I played it when I was in juniors so...yeah...

SG: So, you know the game?

A: Yeah I know the game, I'm alright at hockey.

SG: So, that's why you like it?

A: Yeah.

SG: Is there one particular incident that happened in PE that was really good?

A: High jump I'm good at, that's one thing I can do.

SG: Did you do it in the school sports?

A: I didn't do it, I don't know why, I think they'd already chosen somebody.

SG: That's a shame. But you enjoy doing high jump.

A: Yeah cos I can get up high.

SG: Is there anything that you think is bad about PE?

A: Sometimes it depends who you work with 'cos some people I don't like that much.

SG: How do you feel when you need to work with those people?

A: Annoyed, just annoyed.

SG: But you like working with Brady Simpson.

A: Yeah.

SG: Can you describe what Brady's like?

A: Well, I hang around with him and all his friends at break and I've got to know them a lot since I've been here. Yeah. I do know the rest, but not as well if you see what I mean.

SG: So, you feel more comfortable?

A: Yeah.

SG: What is it about working with Brady in PE that's good?

A: I dunno.

SG: What's Brady's character like?

A: Normal (laughs).

SG: What's 'normal'?

A: Not over the top if you see what I mean.

SG: Explain what you mean by 'over the top'.

A: ... Doesn't scream and shout.

SG: So, he's quite calm?

A: Yeah.

SG: How do you feel about working with Charles?

A: Angry.

SG: How would you describe Charles?

A: Annoying...very annoying. I just don't like him.

SG: How does he annoy you?

A: He just...he just always says 'I'm better at everything' like that and he's noisy like that...puts you down.

SG: I see...and how does that make you feel?

A: Angry.

SG: And what do you do then?

A: I just ignore him.

SG: Can you think of a time when you were working with him in PE?

A: Sometimes in badminton when you all have to move along the lines. And I've had to play with Charles in football a lot.

SG: How do you feel when you have to play against him in badminton then?

A: Annoyed. He just winds me up.

SG: He winds you up. Which is worse, playing with Charles in badminton, or playing with Charles in football?

A: Badminton.

SG: Because?

A: Because there's only two of you and in football you're spread out and you don't have to talk.

SG: So, you don't have to directly communicate with him. If you were doing something in PE...

A: Yeah.

SG: ...and the teacher asks you to do something and you don't really want to do it, what do you do?

A: I'd probably do it...it depends on what it would be.

SG: Can you think of anything that you wouldn't do?

A: No.

SG: So, you'd always do it. Why would you always do what the teacher asked you?

A: Well, I dunno it's just he'd tell me to do it and so ...I can give it a go.

SG: What if Brady asked you to do something you didn't want to do?

A: I'd say 'no'.

SG: So, could he ever get you to do something you didn't want to?

A: No.

SG: Could you get him to do something he didn't want to?

A: Probably not (laughs).

SG: What do you think you would do if you were working with Brady in dance or gymnastics for example where you had to work things out together, what would you do if you disagreed on what you were doing?

A: I'd go with him.

SG: You'd go with him?

A: Yeah.

SG: How would he be able to get you to do what he wanted to do?

A: I dunno, he's just kind.

SG: What if you were working with Charles?

A: I'd disagree with him on everything, on principal.

SG: Would he ever be able to get you to do something you didn't want to?

A: No

SG: Would you ever be able to get him to do something he didn't want to?

A: Probably not. But I'd give it a go.

SG: You'd try?

A: I'd try.

SG: Would anybody be able to persuade you to do something that the teacher didn't want you to do?

A: Well, I suppose not in class like in PE.

SG: Why do you do what the teachers ask?

A: You get told off...you don't know what the consequences would be.

SG: You don't know what the consequences would be?

A: No.

SG: If you could change PE, in any way, what would you change?

A: ... I dunno really. PE's alright I suppose. ...I'd change my group because there's only about, say about three or four people in our group I know really well, which isn't that many.

SG: So you'd feel happier if there were more of your mates in your group?

A: Yeah.

SG: Overall, how would you describe your experience of PE at this school?

A: I don't know...I just do it.

SG: What's your favourite subject?

A: Art. I won a Christmas competition.

SG: Oh well done...what did you do for that?

A: I did a reindeer with the antlers saying happy Christmas.

SG: Wow!... How does PE rate in terms of your favoured subjects?

A: It's middling.

Michelle, Year 10, Interview, Phase Four, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999

SG: You're doing badminton in PE at the moment aren't you?

M: Yes, but we'll do other things.

SG: What's your favourite activity that you've done in PE?

M: Probably basketball.

SG: What do you like about basketball?

M: It's challenging, cos you run about and everything, and I like playing in groups; I'm able to see what I can get out of it.

SG: What is it about groups that you like?

M: They enable you to work out things and you can involve everybody in it, cos you feel singled out when you're on your own and I hate that cos you feel that everybody's staring at you but when you're in a big group it doesn't seem too bad. I like working with people.

SG: Now you really like to work with Nicola. How would you describe Nicola?

M: Bubbly, she's a laugh, she doesn't care what people think of her, she just gets on and does it, and you feel really like O.K. when you're with her...there's like *her* and then there's everyone who's with her, it doesn't matter what everybody else is doing or pointing or anything, it just feels really nice to work with her. I like working with other people but Jenny out of badminton I would like to work with.

SG: If Jenny were to want you to do something that you didn't really want to do, would she be able to get you to do it?

M: She'd probably persuade me to do it (laughs).

SG: How would she persuade you to do it?

M: She'd say 'Go on Michelle, you can do it, everybody else does it' and I would in the end because I'd feel like I'd missed out on something, cos like at fairgrounds she's getting me going on all these rides.

SG: So, you joined in?

M: I joined in cos she made me.

SG: If she wanted you to do something that the teacher didn't want you to do, would she be able to persuade you then?

M: I don't know, I'd have to ask the teacher why the teacher didn't want me to do it ...to see what was wrong with the activity I was going to do but after I'd probably listen to Nicola more than the teacher.

SG: Could you persuade Nicola to do something that she didn't want to do?

M: Um, after a while probably, she does everything, she's mad, she does anything and everything; nothing scares her, she's just a laugh, she's just mad, we're all mad (laughs).

SG: If you were to choose someone that you'd really rather not work with, who would you choose?

M: I don't hate anyone, there are certain people I don't like working with like Alex, and Michael and Clive, and Andrew and Bryan.

SG: Which one of those would you least like to work with?

M: Um... I don't really know because to me they're all the same.

SG: O.K. What is it about then that makes them all the same to you?



M: It's not exactly that they're a bad person, it's that they just pick out certain things about what you're doing and they keep on going on and on and on and on. So if you do something really bad then they'll go on for ages and not let you live it down.

SG: What do you mean by 'really bad'?

M: Well when you're running or something and they point and laugh at you. Because I'm not exactly confident with myself or anything and it just makes it harder and they'll laugh at you and I know they don't mean it and they're just having a laugh and stuff.

SG: But it's not something bad that you've done wrong.

M: No...sometimes they just laugh at me and sometimes...say they always have a go at you if you don't shoot properly or you do something wrong and they always go at you. But when their mates do it they don't say anything to them.

SG: Why do you think that is?

M: I dunno, I mean I don't really know them, but they just like picking on people really just to have a bit of fun. If they don't do anything to like wind people up they don't seem to have any fun they just have to have their little pastime to pass the time.

SG: Why do you think they need to do that?

M: I think they've got a low self confidence really I think they've got to show they're better and that's the only way they can do it is by picking on people.

SG: What sort of people do they pick on?

M: Mainly people who are, you know, not like them. Cos in our school you have the like really lower lot...the lower class people and then you have the popular lot, and I have most of the popular boys in my class, and they always seem to pick out individual things about you. It's not as if there's something wrong with it, but they just like pick it out and make it like a bigger problem and they let everybody else know.

SG: What makes them 'popular'?

M: I don't know really because none of them are exactly good looking I think it's just because they can...you know they're seen as 'hard' and they bully little people, you know, younger people than them and people they know they're gonna get to you know, people that have really low self-confidence. They just keep on doing it and doing it until you're just, you know, so down. People just ...they're just popular because they're just like that. But they're not exactly popular in my eyes because they just seem really low to me; they seem lower than anything.

SG: When you were describing your group you said you had the 'lower' people and then the 'popular' people. How would you describe the 'lower' people?

M: Um, the lower people...they're the ones that have got picked on so much by the popular lot that they're just so...they're O.K to talk to you but they don't talk to you very much they won't talk to you. And then you've got like me, all my friend who are just so bubbly, we don't care, we're just mad. And then you've got the people who the girls like getting attention from blokes and then you get the 'populars'.

SG: So you think you're class is divided into groups?

M: Yeah, little groups.

SG: Does that work across the school do you think?

M: Yeah, I think it does because for example in my tutor there are like the bubbly lot in one place, then the girls who are mad about boys and then the popular lot over like in the corner and we're all separated.

SG: What do the 'popular' people do in that situation?

M: Well, they try and get people's attention, throw things out the top window, especially pencil cases. There's one boy in my tutor and my PE group who thinks it's so funny to put our bags in the tutor's cupboard and hide our bags from us. Before we come to tutor, we always put our bags in the room and he puts them in

the little cupboard and he hides them from us and we say 'Where have you put our bags this time?' and he thinks it's funny. He thinks it's hilarious to watch us run around trying to find our things. So I think 'Oh, you're pathetic, go away'.

SG: So, they muck around, you gas to your friends, and what do the 'lower' people do?

M: They sit, and they just talk most of the time. They're a bit like us really, they're the ones that are just not seen as like us they're like they'll talk...most of the time they'll talk about schoolwork because that's the only thing they have left in life so they have to talk about schoolwork. Most of their time they spend in school because they don't have a social life. They seem to do that. Or they suck up to teachers (laughs).

SG: How do they suck up to teachers?

M: Running after them, and like offer to do things. There's nothing wrong with it it's just that they see, see it as that. People pick up on that as well which makes it even worse and worse and worse.

SG: So they go down a spiral?

M: Yes. They don't get anywhere.

SG: Mr Mitchell's your teacher isn't he? How would you describe Mr Mitchell?

M: Strict. Funny. He's strict in a funny way. He's very concerned about uniform and doing things in the proper way and doing stuff properly, but he can be nice to talk to and I'm not really used to him 'cos this is like the first year I've had him, I've had other teachers. I've had Mr Handley since I came here and I'm only just getting used to Mr Mitchell, in a way. People would tell me how nasty he is and I said 'Oh no, don't say that, I've got him now'.

SG: Is he as nasty as you'd thought he would be?

M: No, he'd not too bad, he's just... he just seems to... he wants you to just look your best and do your best at everything you do. He just wants you to do your best.

SG: Why do you think he wants you to do your best?

M: Able to play sports to the best ability you can, you've just got to be able to.

SG: How does that make you feel when he's teaching you then?

M: It makes me quite proud that he wants to take a notice in all his pupils to try and do their best and everything, but he works on it a lot and I think he gets a good buzz out of it that he's actually got the pupils through it and everything to get pupils through it.

SG: Does that affect what you do then?

M: I think he does. I think he's able to put an effect on you that he wants you to work hard as you can to get you to where you want to be in PE and I think he's quite a good teacher after all.

SG: What makes him a good teacher then?

M: Um...he's nice... 'ish' (laughs) he's nice-ish. Um...what else about him? He's concerned about each one of you. He doesn't see you as a big group he sees you as individuals which I think is a nice thing...because most teachers don't they just teach... they just see you as a class and they just get the teaching over and done with and then they just leave, they don't care about you. But he'll care after school and make sure you do after school activities and if you don't understand or anything to make sure he'll come and talk to you and make sure you understand.

SG: That's good isn't it? ...If you could change anything about PE though, what would you change?

M: Probably the uniform (laughs).

SG: What would you change it to?

M: I wouldn't have shorts, I'd have trousers. We try to wear trousers, but he just never lets us. He lets us outside. Maybe some PE things, because there are some PE things that I hate doing and I just don't want to go near them.

SG: Like what?

M: Trampolining. I used to love it...I like it when I'm on my own or with my friends but when you're in a big group you feel so self-conscious because you're on your own. I mean I don't mind doing it and ...then things like running, I hate running but I'll happily do it but I just don't like it because it's just you've got to do it all by yourself and it makes me feel so bad about myself.

SG: Oh, no...Why do you feel bad about yourself?

M: I don't know, I just, I mean, I just don't feel right. I mean everybody else is perfect, they're all thin and then there's me.(laughs).

SG: I can't believe you're saying that!

M: But that's how I see it. But I don't mind doing it, after I've got used to it; after a while it's fine. It's just doing that. And I hate netball, that's another thing I hate, I hate it.

SG: Do you?

M: Yeah I hate it because it's all girls and none of the girls pass to me, cos it's all the ones that don't like me, they never pass to me and I'm just standing there looking like a goon...I'm like, *please* pass to me (laughs).

SG: Is it because you're not mates?

M: Yeah, I think it's just that. Cos they think I'm clumsy they think that I can't do anything they think I can only do written work and I can't do anything else.

SG: Do you do well in your written work?

M: Um, not terribly well, I was dyslexic for a while, I still am, I'm coping with it but I do find it hard but I seem to get on with my work I don't want to muck about. I'll have fun whilst I'm doing my work and I'll chat and everything but I want to get it done, and over with and I'll make sure I'll understand it. But people see that as a 'swat' and they think you're you know, like a boff and stuff but you get called that and you're like 'Yeah, so what?'. And I wipe that off easily because I'm happy to do my work and pass all my grades because then I can show that I'm better than them in a way, that I can do better than them.

SG: If you were to sum up your experience of PE, how would you describe it?

M: Mmm, enjoyable, I like doing it. Emotional, *very* emotional.

SG: How is it emotional?

M: It's kind of, it's kind of, you have to do it and to get the strength and get on and do it and not to care about what other people think, just get on and do it, and have fun in other words. It's nice to learn new things but usually I know it from years seven and eight. But I like doing new sports cos we get to go to canoeing and stuff. But I haven't done that yet.

SG: Are you going to do it?

M: Yeah, if I get the chance. I think it's good to do things like canoeing.

SG: Why do you think it's a good idea to do new things?

M: Because if you do the same things over and over again, you just get to know it and you can improve it, yes, but you just get so bored with it. It's like badminton, I've done it every year since I've been here. And my brother, he's mad about badminton and I spent all summer playing badminton outside with him. I get so bored with it.

SG: So, it's generally good and emotional. Do you find it emotional every lesson?

M: Sometimes, after you get over the main gist of it, I'm O.K. with it. Most people find it like that and they've got to just get over the first couple of weeks. Our group doesn't socialise that well. Unless they want to copy my homework that's the only time they talk to you but I won't let them.

SG: Now, you're doing badminton in PE at the moment; if you consider all the activities that you've done in PE, which is the best for you?

T: Um....badminton.

SG: Badminton? Why do you like badminton?

T: ... I dunno...I dunno why I like it, I just like playing it.

SG: You enjoy it?

T: Yeah.

SG: O.K Now, remember you filled in a form for me identifying who you would and would not like to work with in PE...

T: Yeah.

SG: You said that you'd particularly like to work with Harry- can you begin by just describing what Harry's like for me?

T: Well he's better than me and I like to copy what he does.

SG: So, you think that working with him improves your game?

T: Yeah.

SG: Could you describe his character for me?

T: ... I dunno.....I don't think I can.

SG: You can't? If you were doing PE and you were working with Harry, would he be able to get you to do it?

T: No.

SG: Absolutely not. Would you be able to get him to do something?

T: Yes.

SG: You would? How would you be able to get him to do it?

T: I dunno, I just know I could.

SG: Now, you said you'd prefer not to work with Nicolas Gregory; can you describe Nicolas for me?

T: I don't know he's, he's a bit slow; I dunno he's just uh, someone I don't like really.

SG: So, if you were working with him, how would you feel?

T: I definitely wouldn't get the work done properly.

SG: So, he stops you from achieving what you could?

T: Yes.

SG: If you were working with him and he wanted you to do something you didn't want to, would he be able to get you to do it?

T: No.

SG: What about the other way round?

T: Yes.

SG: You could get him to do it?

T: Yes.

SG: What if a teacher wanted you to do something you didn't want to, would you do it?

T: No.

SG: Would you refuse to do it?

T: I'd flatly refuse.

SG: O.K, who's your teacher at the moment?

T: Mr Mitchell.

SG: How would you describe Mr. Mitchell?

T: I dunno, He's a bit strict and shouts a lot.

SG: So how do you feel (interruption) So, he's quite strict. Anything else?

T: No, not really.

SG: Which of the teachers you have had do you prefer?

T: Mr Handley.

SG: How would you describe Mr Handley?

T: I dunno ....he's funny....he makes fun of people in a funny way. He makes you get on with work.

SG: So, he makes work enjoyable?

T: Yeah.

SG: If you were to change something about the PE that you do, what would you change about it?

T: I dunno...um...

SG: Would you change anything?

T: I don't think so.

SG: You're quite happy with it?

T: Yeah.

SG: So, if you were to sum up your whole experience of PE at this school, how would you describe it?

T: Uh...um...(telephone interruption). Sorry about that...how would you describe your experience of PE?

T: Um...(laughs)

SG: It's quite a difficult question to answer isn't it?

T: Yeah...um...I dunno really.

SG: Is good, bad...alright?

T:...Uh...most of it's been good.

**Ben, Year 10, Individual Interview Phase Four, 19<sup>th</sup> November 1999**

SG: Can you explain to me what you are doing in PE at the moment?

B: Badminton.

SG: Anything else?

B: No.

SG: Who teaches you badminton?

B: Mr Mitchell.

SG: Can you describe Mr Mitchell for me?...What's he like?

B:...Nice...he's good at stuff. I've had him before.

SG: Have you? What else has he taught you before?

B: Last year I dunno what.

SG: Right. Now, when you filled in the questionnaire for me, you said that you like to work with Andrew?

B: Yeah.

SG: Can you describe Andrew for me?

B: He's nice....

SG: How is he nice?

B: He's got a good personality.

SG: Anything else?

B: No.

SG: What's his personality like?

B: Like me.

SG: What are you like?

B: He likes the same sort of things as me.

SG: So, he has the same kind of interests as you do.

B: Yeah.

SG: If you were working in PE, and he wanted you to do something that you didn't want to do, would he be able to get you to do it?

B: Probably.

SG: How would he get you to do it?

B: He'd talk me into it.

SG: How would he talk you into it?

B: He'd persuade me it was a good idea.

SG: If the teacher wanted you to do something, and he wanted you to do something else, who would be most likely to be able to persuade you to do what they wanted?

B: Daniel.

SG: Daniel would, would he? You also said that someone who you'd prefer not to work with is Hector, how would you describe Hector?

B: He talks a lot. He doesn't concentrate.

SG: He doesn't concentrate? Any other way in which you'd describe him?

B: No.

SG: If he wanted you to do something that you didn't, would he be able to persuade you to do it?

B: No.

SG: Why wouldn't he be able to persuade you to do something?

B: Don't like him.

SG: You don't like him? Is there any reason other than he talks a lot that means you don't like him?

B: He talks a lot so he irritates me.

SG: O.K. What aspect of PE do you like best?

B: I like badminton and I like football.

SG: Which of the two do you prefer?

B: Badminton.

SG: Why badminton?

B: (Shakes head and shrugs shoulders) ...It's inside.

SG: You prefer to work inside?

B: Yeah.

SG: But you like football as well, which it outside; what is it about football that you like?

B: The action: running.

SG: If you could change anything about PE, what would you change?

B: I'd make it indoors.

SG: If you were to sum up your whole experience of PE, how would you describe it?

B: It's alright.

SG: It's alright? What's your favourite subject?

B: German.

SG: Do you prefer classroom subjects to PE?

B: No, PE.



**Martin, Year 10, Interview, Phase Four, 10<sup>th</sup> December 1999**

SG: What activities are you doing in PE at the moment?

M: Just badminton.

SG: What's your favourite sport?

M: Uhh...badminton I think.

SG: Why do you like badminton?

M: Well, one thing because I'm good at it and...that's about it really. Well, I enjoy it because I like playing against other people- it's fun.

SG: Have you played it before?

M: Yeah, I played it in year 7 and again in year 8 and again in year 9.

SG: If I can just talk to you about the people that you identified on the form you filled in ...you said that you like to work with Leo.

M: Yes.

SG: Can you start off by describing what Leo's like?

M: He's fun, he's amusing, he likes badminton as well, so...

SG: What makes him fun?

M: Don't know really...he likes the same things that I like...he's understanding.

SG: He understands you?

M: Yeah.

SG: IF he wanted to persuade you to do something that you didn't want to do; would he be able to do that?

M: It depends what it is I suppose.

SG: How would he go about persuading you to do something do you think?

M: Dunno...he's a weird person but...I don't think he could persuade me no...if I didn't want to do it then I wouldn't do it but, he could try.

SG: Could you persuade him to do something?

M: No, he'd be the same as me; if he didn't want to do it then I couldn't really get him to do it.

SG: What if the teacher had asked you to do something and he was trying to get you to do something else?

M: It was a bit like that because the teacher wanted him to do football because he used to play lots of football and I used to play lots of football but I don't really like to do it anymore and Mr Mitchell advised him to do football but he enjoys badminton more now so that's why we both play badminton.

SG: So, you guys chose to play badminton rather than what the teacher wanted you to?

M: Yeah.

SG: Now, you said you'd prefer not to work with Harrison,

M: Yeah.

SG: Can you start again by explaining what Harrison's like?

M: He doesn't really like me and I don't really like him. He can be really annoying at times.

SG: How is he annoying?

M: He throws things at you and then says he doesn't do it.

SG: Really?

M: Yeah; stuff like that and he just really annoys me really.

SG: So, it's not just in PE that you prefer not to be with him?

M: No.

SG: Would he ever try and persuade you to do something that you didn't want to do?

M: Not really cos I don't really talk to him much.

SG: If you were working with him say playing against him in badminton when you're given a partner, how do you feel about working with him?

M: Just have to get on and play it really...get it over with. I'd rather play with Leo, but if I had to play with him then I'd just get on and do it.

SG: Would it change how you played at all?

M: I think I'd try harder just to get it over with; either better or worse just to get it done with.

SG: O.K. How do you feel when you're working with Harrison then?

M: I do the best I can, he does the best he can.

SG: So, do you change the game at all with him to try and make it longer?

M: No, we just play.

SG: Presumably, your only teacher at the moment is Mr Mitchell?

M: Yeah.

SG: Can you describe Mr Mitchell for me?

M: He can sometimes be moody, but I think overall he's quite a good teacher...very good at badminton, and when I had him for football in year 9 he was good as well.

SG: What makes him a good teacher?

M: He pushes you to do things. If you can't do it then he pushes you to do it.

SG: And how does that make you feel when he pushes you?

M: If you can't do the thing it makes you feel that he's pushing you to do something that you can't do, but if you can handle it and you know you can do it, it's a good thing that he pushes you to do it.

SG: If he's trying to get you to do something that you think is outside of your ability, and you think 'I'm not going to do this', does it change how you try to do it?

M: Yeah, I try harder really I suppose....I think I would actually try to get out of it.

SG: How would you try to get out of it?

M: Say I needed the toilet (laughs) to try and get out of it.

SG: Would you use any other strategies to do the same thing?

M: I'd either go for it or make it like definitely look like I can't do it so he won't try and push me hard.

SG: O.K If you could change anything about PE, what would you change.

M: I'd like to think there'd be more variety because like every year there's like weight training and badminton and football, every year but it gets a bit boring really.

SG: What kind of activities would you like to do?

M: Uhh...more of the field events, all through the year I think, cos I like field events.

SG: What type of activity do you mean by field events?

M: I like doing shot put, I like running which we don't do...in winter we do like badminton...we don't do running things.

SG: If you were to sum up over all your experience of PE here, how would you describe it?

M: Good, fun I enjoy it.

SG: Anything else?

M: Not really, it's just a good fun thing to do.

Richard, Year 10, Interview, Phase Four, 10<sup>th</sup> December 1999

SG: Can you begin by telling me what you are doing in PE at the moment?

R: Badminton.

SG: Do you like badminton?

R: Yeah I do.

SG: What's your favourite sport?

R: Tennis.

SG: What do you like about tennis.

R: I'm quite good...I'm fairly good at it I go to tennis club. I enjoy it. I don't really like...I'm not that keen on football. You know, really physical things.

SG: Within PE, what's your favourite activity that you've done?

R: Probably badminton.

SG: Why do you like badminton?

R: Because it's in the hall and I like the way it's organised where you play to 11, then sit on the bench, then play someone else.

SG: Who's your teacher at the moment?

R: Mr Mitchell.

SG: How would you describe Mr Mitchell?

R: Well, he knows what he's talking about. And he can be grumpy.

SG: What does he do when he's grumpy?

R: Um...shouts. I don't have that much contact with him but he seems alright.

SG: Now, you said that you like to work with several people- who would you most like to work with overall in PE?

R: Probably Andrew.

SG: Can you describe Andrew for me?

R: Um, he's alright at badminton...he's not the brightest spark when it comes to English but other subjects history or maths...and I get on well with him.

SG: What is it do you think about Andrew that means you get on well with him?

R: He's of a similar level to me, you know, not being really high and sort of looking down and making bad comments you know. I'm comfortable with him.

SG: You identified several people that you'd prefer not to work with...who of those would you generally prefer not to work with.

R: Alex.

SG: O.K. How would you describe Alex?

R: Um...um... just...I don't know what it is, it's just the sort of friends he likes are just the total opposite to people I like.

SG: In what way are they opposite?

R: ... Um in the sort of things they like you know...they're not really good at subjects in school and the friends I like usually are.

SG: Right. Can you describe Andrew's personality?

R: Sort of would maybe start fighting.

SG: I someone that you liked working with wanted to persuade you to do something that you didn't want to do, would he be able to get you to do it?

R: No.

SG: Not at all?

R: No.

SG: Would he try?

R: No.

SG: Wouldn't even go there? Right, if Alex wanted you to do something that you didn't want you to, would he be able to get you to do it?

R: He might be able to with some of his friends I'm sure.

SG: How would he go about getting you to do something that you didn't want to?

R: Force probably (laughs). Brute force...threaten physically.

SG: He'd threaten you would he? What if it was in a PE situation such as working something out in, like gymnastics and he wanted you to do something you didn't, what would happen?

R: He'd probably try to but I'd just ignore him.

SG: What would you do if he still wanted you to do something and you didn't?

R: Probably tell the teacher.

SG: Would the teacher be able to get you to do something that you didn't want to?

R: If there was a good reason for it they might. It depends.

SG: So you'd like them to explain why?

R: Yes.

SG: If you were to change one thing about PE, what would you change?

R: The changing rooms.

SG: How would you change them?

R: They're intimidating.

SG: How are they intimidating?

R: Right, there are sort of gangs of boys and um...on one side right...there's a sort of school tradition that on your birthday they chuck you in the showers...and they make things up and they come over to you and they irritate you ...so you have to stay in a group, you know, your own little group, otherwise you're in trouble, you can't be on your own...

SG: I see. Who's in your group?

R: People I know really, um... Samuel McPeak; I wouldn't like to work with him but I know him um... just people I know... gentle people.

SG: They're people that you'd describe as gentle. If you were then, to sum up your experience of PE here, how would you describe it?

R: Yeah, quite good. I've enjoyed it ...the different things you do, dance, trampolining, badminton and football.

SG: So, you like that variety? How does PE compare to other subjects.

R: It is up to standard with the other subjects.

SG: What's your favourite subject?

R: History

Gill, Year 11, Interview, Phase Four, 26<sup>th</sup> November 1999

SG: At the moment, you're doing basketball in PE; are you doing any other activity in PE?

G: I have done.

SG: Of the activities you've done, which do you like best?

G: Out of the games?

SG: Of any PE activities.

G: Dance. I'm a dancer so, yeah, I like dancing.

SG: Why do you like dancing?

G: I've been doing it since I was five and when I was nine I started doing competitions and it got really competitive but...it's back stage and you meet people and they're all friendly and it's just something I find very interesting...there's always something new like different techniques...everyone's sort of into it as well, like contemporary, street dancing and that so...because I get lessons and things I can teach them new steps.

SG: Is that what happens when you do dance in PE then?

G: Yeah.

SG: Do people like listening to your ideas?

G: Yeah they do and then if they have an idea then we mix. Like we all put ideas in ...some groups find it difficult because someone always like to be in charge.

SG: Are you not tempted to do that?

G: I do have a tendency to, you know, take control but I was with Carrie and she does as well, but we would like compete now and again but one of us would step back and say well, my idea's not as good.

SG: Is that how you work out who's in charge then, by ideas?

G: Well, there were five in our group so someone would always go one way. We'd put ideas in later; it all worked out.

SG: Now, you said that you particularly like to work with Carrie- can you describe her for me?

G: O.K. Well, she's always wanting to do her best and if she doesn't succeed then she gets frustrated with herself so she always tries harder and harder until she gets it right. I work with her in drama as well and she won't stop until she gets it completely right, and I'm the same so we ...if we can't get something right then we'll go over it again and again until we get it right and that's what I like about Carrie. Some people just give up if they can't do it it'd like I've been dancing so long I've been taught that you can't give up; you've got to keep going and for Carries it's exactly the same.

SG: So, if you were to work with Carrie, you'd be able to do your work as well?

G: Yeah.

SG: If Carrie wanted to persuade you to do something in PE that you didn't want to do; would she be able to get you to do it?

G: No.

SG: Not at all?

G: No.

SG: Would a teacher be able to persuade you to do something that you didn't want to?

G: Yeah.

SG: Why would a teacher be able to persuade you?

G: I suppose it's a confidence thing; if a teacher wants you to do something then you'd push yourself to do it, but if a friend wants you to do something then it's not quite the same thing. A teacher's older, and you know-past experiences- I think that's why.

SG: Would you be able to persuade Carries to do something she didn't want to?

G: Yeah, I have done.

SG: You have done? Can you describe a time when you have for me?

G: Well, it's like we've got the Christmas show in a couple of weeks and she really wanted to do something and I said, 'Look, why don't we sing a duet?' and she said 'No, I can't, I can't', It's a confidence thing; that's what it is at the end of the day, but I've talked to some people about it and they would start to say, you know, 'You are a good singer and everything, why not?' And people telling her as well helped her build up her confidence as well and she's finally agreed to do it.

SG: So, you would help build her confidence.

G: Yeah.

SG: Is there any particular instance in PE where that has happened?

G: There was dance where we were learning steps and no matter how much she tried she just couldn't get it and she didn't want to give up but everyone was like, look if you don't want to do it we can do something else. I convinced everybody else at that time that we can't change it now because it's too late we had to get it finished and she got it in the end.

SG: Did you use the same sort of approach then?

G: Yeah; I said 'You *can* do it'. I do that to everybody.

SG: Now, as regards people you'd rather not work with, you said you'd prefer not to work with Penny Jones. Can you describe Penny for me?

G: She gives up too easily; if she can't do it first time then she won't do it at all.

SG: Right.

G: And that's not how I work; if I can't do it then I try again. If you're working with someone who gives up then you can't do anything.

SG: So, in terms of your relationship with her, you'd rather not work with her because she stops you from...

G: Trying my best really.

SG: So, if she were trying to persuade you to do something that you didn't want to, would she be likely to succeed?

G: No.

SG: Would you be able to persuade her to do something?

G: Probably not.

SG: Why don't you think you'd be able to persuade her to do something?

G: She....she's very narrow minded; she's not open to other people's point of view. She'll just do what she thinks and that'll be it whereas Carrie will accept your opinion but think on it.

SG: O.k. If you were to change one thing about PE that you do; what would you change about it.



G: Uh....(long pause) I don't really know, it used to be to let girls play football, but that's happened now, but only if you're good. If a girl wants to begin at secondary school to play football if they're not good enough to play with the boys then they can't ...I think in a way that doesn't quite work. Or, when we first started our GCSE course, there were only actually about three girls who were actually allowed to play football because they were strong enough...because it is quite...competitive isn't quite the right word...

SG: Physical?

G: Yeah. Like basketball's non-contact. Because some girls step back because they don't want to get hurt which is fair enough but, I've always wanted to play rugby because my Dad plays...my Dad doesn't let me because he says it's too rough...it's just being accepted equally...it's a big issue I know, but I don't think there's anything else I'd change.

SG: So you'd like a more equal basis for girls to participate from?

G: Yeah.

SG: If you were to sum up your experience of PE at this school, how would you describe it?

G: Good. Um...if you can't do something then they don't force you to do it. They want you to do as much as you can. Because I have a skin disease and it affect my feet and if I can't do something I'll sit out for a lesson and then try again next week.

SG: How does it make you feel about not being made to do things.

G: Well, they used to; they used to try and make me do it. It was at the lower end of the school. I'd been off school for almost a month and I had blisters all over my hands and feet and it was a really bad time for me and Mr Handley...he knew about my problem, but Mr Mitchell didn't quite believe me you know he said isn't it funny how it always coincides with athletics. We always do athletics in the summer usually and it's in the heat my skin plays up; so he thought it was a bit of a coincidence that whenever there was athletics that it would play up. Now, I would always have a go; I've danced all my life; if it was athletics I would have a go but he didn't quite believe me he snapped me and said to find some PE kit ...and Mr Handley and Miss Merrett knew and they ended up having an argument over it almost in front of me and Mr Handley grabbed my hand and said 'Look, here's proof, she has this problem, you're just gonna have to accept it and he apologised to me...it's things like that, if you, because it's such a rare thing as well, they just don't know whether to believe it or not.

SG: Why do you think they might not have believed you?

G: Oh, so many people try to bunk off PE.

SG: But you do really well in PE.

G: Yeah, I like it, like my brother.

Nicola, Year 11, Interview, Phase Four, 26<sup>th</sup> November 1999

SG: You're doing basketball at the moment in PE. What other activities have you done this year?

N: Badminton, table tennis.

SG: Which activities do you prefer in PE?

N: What, games activities?

SG: Any.

N: Games.

SG: What do you like about games?

N: I don't really like dancing.

SG: Why don't you like dancing?

N: (pause) I just don't like dancing.

SG: You just don't like it?

N: No.

SG: Now, Miss Blackwood is teaching you PE at the moment; how would you describe Miss Blackwood?

N: I don't really know her; she's new to the school. I like her; she seems alright; she's good to work with; she makes the lesson enjoyable.

SG: How does she make the lesson enjoyable for you?

N: Well, she's friendly to you and funny.. Like some teachers just tell you to sit down and be quiet- she's more relaxed.

SG: When you completed the questionnaire you said that you would like to work with Lucy. Can you describe Lucy for me?

N: What do you mean?

SG: Can you describe her personality?

N: Um she's funny at times ...when she's in a mood, she's in a mood...she's outgoing she enjoys trying new things.

SG: If you were working in PE, and she wanted you to do something that you didn't want to do, would she be able to get you to do it?

N: No.

SG: Definitely no?

N: Yeah. We've had that quite a few times and we ended up going in different directions.

SG: What actually happens in terms of going different directions?

N: If there's someone else I know in another activity that I want to do, then I'll go and do it. If there's not then I find another activity to do.

(Interruption)

SG: So, she wouldn't be able to persuade you to do something.

N: If she tried to do an activity where she didn't know anyone, I don't think she'd do it.

SG: Right, would you be able to get her to do something that she didn't want to do?

N: Don't know, I've never tried.

SG: How would you try to persuade her if a situation did arise?

N: Tell her she'd enjoy it; that it would be great fun; it's new and all that.

SG: If a teacher wanted you to do something that you didn't want to do; would they be able to get you to do it.

N: It depends on the teacher.

SG: Which teacher would be able to get you to do something?

N: Certainly not the first teacher that we had in year 7, she was horrible. I can't remember her name.

SG: What about the teachers that you come across at the moment?

N: I think the worst one is Mr Mitchell.

SG: Would he be able to get you to do something you didn't want to?

N: (long pause) He hasn't tried or anything.

SG: Would Miss Blackwood be able to get you to do something?

N: I dunno.

SG: If you could change anything about PE, what would you change?

N: Um...(long pause) I dunno... more equipment, more activities to do because we are restricted to what we have to do.

SG: You'd like a wider variety.

N: Because of this GCSE thing, you're only given about three or four activities that you can do and you might not enjoy any of them.

SG: Would you prefer not to do GCSE then?

N: If you could do any activity I'd like it.

SG: If you were to sum up your experience of PE, how would you describe it?

N: Good days and bad days.

SG: What would you describe as a bad day?

N: Bad day...the teacher's in a mood, you can't seem to get anything right, for some reason you've lost all skill. One day I can hit the ball in rounders and the next day I can't and it's really annoying.

SG: What's a good day then?

N: When you do well.

SG: Now, you said also that you'd prefer not to work with Sally ; can you describe Sally for me?

N: By reputation she's horrible, fat pig. Um, and she's one of those that goes round smoking and swears a lot.

SG: How does that make you feel?

N: I don't want to be around her; I don't think my parents would be very pleased. I wouldn't want my reputation to go down.

SG: How would you feel if you had to work with her in PE?

N: I don't know; it depends on what you had to do. It depends how good she is. In basketball she's really good.

SG: If she wanted you to do something in PE that you didn't want to, would she be able to get you to do it?

N: No.

SG: Absolutely not?

N: No, she wouldn't even try. We don't really talk to each other.

SG: Would you be able to persuade her?

N: No. We don't really talk to each other, and in PE you don't really talk to each other anyway. In PE, we know what each other's going to do.

SG: Do you avoid each other?

N: It doesn't really affect me; I'll pass to her if she's open.

SG: You're doing basketball in PE at the moment...of all the activities that you've done in PE, which do you like best?

R: Swimming, I like swimming, apart from the fact I almost fainted on the side though (laughs).

SG: What did you do?

R: I don't know. I just got really, really hot.

SG: Right, you like swimming, can you explain to me why you like swimming?

R: I think it's because my parents took me when I was younger and I loved it. Even though I wasn't particularly good at it but I worked at it and I love it...fish! (laughs).

SG: Is it just that you've been introduced to it before that makes you like it?

R: I dunno...I find the water very relaxing I love it...I should've been a water baby!

SG: Obviously!

R: I dunno...it's really relaxing, it's really nice and I just like the feel of the water really, it's really nice.

SG: O.K.

R: ...and racing my friends because I beat them!

SG: Oh! So you like competing as well cos you're better than others.

R: Well, not Carrie cos Carrie's really good.

SG: Right. Is there any activity in PE that you don't like?

R: Hockey.

SG: Why don't you like hockey?

R: Because in year 7 or 8 somebody whacked a hockey ball at me and it hit me on the ankle *really hard*; it really hurt....and because Mr Mitchell just kept screaming at me all the time during hockey.

SG: Why was he screaming at you?

R: Because I don't know anything about it; he'd tell me to run down the wing and I'm like, um, but *where* ?

SG: Oh, so you didn't understand what you were supposed to be doing.

R: And he made me run round the hockey pitch twice cos I was last in something.

SG: What were you last in?

R: Well, to warm up he makes us...he used to make us run round the hockey pitch twice to warm up and anyone who was last had to run around again and I'd forgotten my inhaler and I was really slow and he made me run round again.

SG: Oh, so that put you off! I can understand that. Now, when you identified who you would like to work with in PE, you said you particularly like working with Nicola. Can you begin by describing Nicola's character for me?

R: Well, she's quite bossy (laughs)...at times. She likes to take charge of the situation, which is alright. But also she's very nice, she's very friendly as well, she doesn't like put you off by telling you you're doing the wrong thing all the time so...I like that, it's really sweet.

SG: So, is that why you like working with her in PE then?

R: Yeah probably, she's just really easy to get on with and also I'm a bit taller than her so I can pass the ball over her head ! (laughs).

SG: If you were say working with Nicola in PE and she wanted to get you to do something that you didn't want to do, would she be able to get you to do it?

R: (pause) Dunno, I don't think she would; if I was really dead set against it I wouldn't do it...I think the only person that could get me to do it would be Ruth, she's my twin...I think the only person that could get me to do something that I really didn't want to do; she's the only one that could calm me down she's obviously known me all my life.

SG: So, Nicola wouldn't be able to then?

R: To a certain extent yes, but if I was dead set against it then she wouldn't.

SG: What about the other way around, would you be able to get her to do something?

R: No, she's too stubborn! (laughs).

SG: Could a teacher get you to do something that you didn't want to do?

R: Some of them could yes.

SG: Who could?

R: Mr Handley could cos he'd like, he'd laugh at me. Miss Blackwood might I don't know, but Mr Mitchell couldn't cos I hate him.

SG: O.K. Can you describe Miss Blackwood for me?

R: She's nice, she's very friendly isn't she? I don't know, she's just full of bounce. And the fact that she admits that she doesn't know everything about it all, you know, sort of makes you feel that you're not too thick! Knowing everything.

SG: Right. So she's good fun, and she might be able to persuade you to do something. Can you describe Mr Handley for me?

R: He's chatty too and he has a laugh with me, you know, we take the mickey out of each other, like I do with Mr Cutchence, like he used to call my sister 'St Trinians', he said he could imagine her going around with a hockey stick, hair in bunches, bashing everyone! Yeah, so he probably would, he got me to go on the trampoline and go in the harness, which I don't want to do- he got me to do that.

SG: How did he get you to do that?

R: I don't know, just by making me watch my friends I think in year 8. He was like 'Come on Rebecca, you know you want to do it' and I went 'Oh, ...O.K. then'.

SG: And how did you feel when you were about to try something that you didn't want to do?

R: Very nervous. But cos he was holding the rope it was alright, I don't think it would have if it'd been anyone else. I wouldn't have done it.

SG: So, you felt confident with him holding the rope?

R: Yeah.

SG: And how did you feel when you'd done it?

R: O.K. A bit shaky; quite sort of pleased that I'd managed to do it. When I manage to do something I don't think I'm going to I feel really proud of myself. So, yeah, I was happy.

SG: So, he kind of made you believe...

R: Yeah, made me believe I could do something. He's a good teacher.

SG: Now, on the other side of things, you prefer not to work with Susan.

R: Yeah.

SG: Can you describe Susan for me?

R: I don't know her very well, I only know her because she's been quite horrid to me in the past. She's picked on me. And...it's just something I could do without, you know, going out of the school gate a couple of months ago she, you know, called me names and in foodtech where we'd worked together I'd helped her on the computer and I dunno, I just felt it was out of order. I just don't like what I see of her. She's nice to people she likes, but to people she doesn't like she's not. I don't know what I've done to offend her but ...she doesn't like me.

SG: If you ended up working with her and she wanted you to do something..

R: I wouldn't do it.

SG: Not at all?

R: It depends, if she said that she didn't think I could do it, I might do it just to prove her wrong (laughs).

SG: Ahh! Right. So, she wouldn't be able to persuade you but you might do it for your own reasons related to her.

R: Yeah. If she didn't do it cos she said she can't, I might do it...Cos I'm nasty like that! (laughs).

SG: If it were the other way round, would you be able to persuade her to do something?

R: No, probably not. We don't speak, she doesn't see me as one of her friends so. I think Penny probably could.

SG: So, you don't really have much communication with her. Looking at all of the PE that you do at school now and have done in the past; if you could change any aspect of it, what aspect would you change?

R: Doing hockey; I hate it so much; that is the one thing I am determined never to do again...never ever...I hated it because it was cold, because Mr Mitchell was teaching it, because I didn't know anything about it because people were whacking hockey balls at me and I'm like Ahhh!! So, no, I wouldn't have done it because it made me feel very self conscious every time I get near a hockey pitch I'm like Ohh!

SG: Why did you feel self-conscious?

R: Because I seemed to be the only one who didn't actually know what I was doing and because Mr Mitchell kept pointing me out and yelling at me it just made me feel very self-conscious and I don't like that sort of thing.

SG: You've obviously had quite a mixed experience of PE- if you were to describe your whole experience of PE at the school, now that you're in year 11, how would you describe it?

R: Quite good, I would say because, there have been some bad things that I've done but then nobody likes everything that they do, but it's improved as I've gone up the years; I can choose what I'm doing it's a lot better because I've one swimming and table-tennis and basketball and they were things I really wanted to do. Whereas in year 7 you do dance and that's yuck.

SG: Why don't you like dance?

R: I'll probably have to end up doing it anyway to pass my GCSE but I'm not a dancer I gave up ballet when I was six cos I looked like a sugar-plum fairy and elephant cross.

SG: Oh! So it's not your idea of fun?

R: No.

SG: So, if you could scrap the hockey and dance it would be O.K.

R: And the gymnastics, I don't like gymnastics.

SG: You're doing basketball in PE at the moment, what other activities have you done in PE this year?

C: So far we've done badminton, um...rounders and I've forgotten the other one; actually I think that might be it.

SG: What activities do you like best?

C: Games.

SG: Games activities; what do you like about games activities?

C: Because I'm better at them; like athletics, I'm rubbish at that...and I enjoy most of them as well.

SG: That makes sense. Miss Blackwood is your teacher at the moment. How would you describe Miss Blackwood?

C: Um, outgoing, funny, quite good to be taught by her, she's alright, quite funny.

SG: How is she funny?

C: She'll have a laugh; she's not too serious.

SG: You said that you like to work with Gill Turner; how would you describe Gill?

C: Very, very outgoing and very, very loud (laughs). She's very funny and I just get on with her really well; she's who I'd like to work with. She's not too serious about anything and she's really 'laid back'.

SG: Right. Is that why you get on with her, because she's chilled out?

C: Yeah.

SG: If you were working with her in PE, and she wanted you to do something that you didn't want to do; would she be able to get you to do it?

C: Yes.

SG: How would she get you to do it?

C: She'd keep persisting, persisting and persisting because she'd know I'd just give in to her, cos she's very like that.

SG: What would she be doing to be persistent?

C: Saying 'Go on, go on' you know, and just carry on cos she knew I'd give in; within about two or three minutes she'd know I'd give in and just do it anyway.

SG: Why would you do it?

C: To stop being hassled! It wouldn't be too bad; I'd do it but I wouldn't not like it but I wouldn't exactly enjoy it a lot but it would be alright.

SG: Right. What about the other way round, would you be able to persuade her to do something?

C: Maybe, I dunno, she's a bit...if she's got something set in her mind then she'll do it. If she didn't want to do something then she wouldn't do it; but if it was something alright she'll still go for a laugh and stuff.

SG: How would you go about persuading her then?

C: Sort of persisting and asking her saying 'Go on, go on, do it' and then if she didn't want to do it then it wouldn't work.

SG: So, you might convince her but you're less likely to persuade her than she is you?



C: Yeah.

SG: What about your teacher, would she be able to persuade you to do something you didn't want to?

C: She would get me to do it because I don't have that much confidence in myself that much when it comes to PE...I'd still give it a go, but if I sort of failed I'd think uh! It wouldn't be too bad though- she'd probably still be able to get me to do it.

SG: How would you feel if the teacher is trying to persuade you to do something that you didn't think you could do?

C: If it was something that I definitely can't do then I'd feel embarrassed, I wouldn't feel that good about doing it. But if it was something that I could do but I didn't have that much confidence in myself then I'd still try and do it. I'd give it a go.

SG: What if it's the first time of trying something and you feel that you're not going to succeed at it, would you try it or try and get out of doing it.

C: I'd try it and then if I didn't succeed then I probably wouldn't try it again. I'd stand back a bit.

SG: Would you refuse to try again?

C: I find another way of getting out of it.

SG: How would you do that?

C: I'd stand back a bit and say 'You go, I'll go later' sort of thing and just hope that we'd run out of time.

SG: O.K, now you didn't identify anyone that you wouldn't like to work with- why was that?

C: Well, there's no one that I really wouldn't like to work with; there are people that I'd prefer to work with but no one that I wouldn't want to.

SG: If you could change anything about PE; what would you change?

C: ...That we could do more stuff in the lower school; like in year 10 and 11, you can choose which sport you want to do; in year 7 and 8 you have to do football and I don't like football.

SG: What do you like about football?

C: I'm not very good at it; I don't mind watching it but if you're not very good at something then you're not going to like it that much are you?

SG: No.

C: The only alternative was like netball which I didn't want to do. But in year 10 and 11 you get to choose.

SG: Can you see a reason why the opportunity to choose is not brought in earlier?

C: Not really.

SG: If you were going to sum up your experience of PE here, how would you describe it?

C: Very enjoyable, the teachers are brilliant, I really like them...um...it's really good.

SG: What makes the teachers brilliant?

C: They're really funny and really laid back and don't make it too serious they make it fun, like Miss Blackwood, they're really good.

SG: Can you think of one experience that has been really good for you?

C: Um... Doing a layup in basketball, I've never done one before and I actually did one the other week.

SG: Well done!

**APPENDIX L**  
**INTERVIEWS**  
**TEACHERS**

B: What if I give you the wrong answers?

SG: Don't worry there are no right or wrong answers, the whole point is that I get to understand your opinion on things...on your role and what you hope to achieve in P.E...things like that.

B: O.K. then.

SG: Could we start with your role then? What is your role within the department?

B: What would my role be? I only really know what my job title is only other than 'PE teacher'.

SG: Have you got an official remit of what you're responsible for and to under that title?

B: No, not really.

SG: For example, are you responsible for GCSE PE ...basically what do you do in your job during the week?

B: Oh, right. Teaching generally PE ...dance

SG: And all years?

B: All years. Yeah, mixed (referring to sex)...and mixed ability.

SG: What is...what do you see as the role of 'the teacher' in physical education as being?

B: My opinion of it is that if you can get more people carrying on with it sport after school, *especially* girls, cos it tends to be girls that don't, then you've done your job.

SG: How does that affect what you do?

B: That ...I mean.. Things like getting the girls interested in aerobics sessions and dance and individual sports cos girls tend to get into the gym as well so a lot of them, if they're gonna take on anything, it's quite hard to get them into team games unless they're a netballer which isn't very strong in this school and getting into the gym, especially a not of them carry on with gym.

SG: From using your fitness suite?

B: Yes.

SG: Does it affect how you actually teach; you obviously need to follow the national curriculum so some of it's going to have to be team games; does it affect what you do within that?

B: Um, in my approach to it?

SG: Any aspect of it.

B: In my approach...usually, if you've got something like trampolining you try and make it more social ...like trampolining, like especially with year 11 it's like mainly girls, and they are learning but you make it more casual so they are tempted to carry on with it after...I'm not saying ...I'm not sure, maybe trampolining's probably not a very good idea but it makes it more enjoyable and sociable...cos if you're going to go to a gym, most of them would take their mates with them wouldn't they?

SG: Yeah...How do you make it 'casual'?

B: There's no...I mean you set aims at the beginning of the lesson, but after that you don't sort of push people into doing things they don't want to, you set aims, if you're doing a front drop they'll pretty much stay in their groups and help coach each other and you, you know, the music side a bit<sup>1</sup> ...I don't really know how to answer it properly, because with the girls you don't find...it's all mixed, everything you do, so for a girl to go in and play basketball with a mixed group, it's not daunting to them at all. Most girls wouldn't struggle with going into a basketball match and holding their own even in year 10.

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<sup>1</sup> Like other staff, Kim allowed CDs to be played as background music during her lessons.

SG: Why is that?

B: It's because from year 7 they're mixed in everything they do.

SG: Is there anything other than just mixing them that you do, do you think, that makes them more positive towards things like the basketball and team games?

B: Not really, I don't know...not really...I'm trying to think..

SG: Take ages if you want to.

B: Things like netball, to get into girls' netball practice you just go and they chat to me. You know like if they go into Mr Mitchell's hockey, they wouldn't be sitting there really chatting to him and saying what are you doing at the weekend sort of thing...I don't ...

SG: So, that's your approach...and they'll see it and

B: And they enjoy coming to it; it's not as if they're gonna come and have drills and it's a chore for them to come because they really want to train and be brilliant. It's a social thing as well- most of the girls that come are groups of friends.

SG: What about in the lesson time?

B: You're trying to get something out of me aren't you?

SG: No...no...Obviously it's a philosophy of the department to get kids involved and I know that because that's been made clear before...

B: The main thing you try and do is the most activity level you can get out of them. It's girls have a tendency, any way they can get out of doing anything, like sitting at the side, reffing, whereas boys are like 'in there' whereas girls any way they can perhaps take a little sort of back step, but you want them to get really involved to as high a level of activity as you can...really, that's my aim...cos this'll be the only sort of exercise that they do all week. And so if you don't get straight in there...straight into a game or straight into something that's a high level of activity then that's another hour that they you know, need to do exercise in.

SG: Is there any autonomy in what they're doing...do they ever get to like make their own decisions about the way they're working?

B: Yeah, dance, especially dance...Just girls or...

SG: All of them.

B: As I say, if you set the aims at the beginning of the lesson, for example to be able to do a front drop pretty much then they work at their own levels. In dance they say right you've got to have a starting position; it's got to include ...or for gymnastics...starting position, it's got to include three rolls, two balances and a finishing position and then you'll leave them for like...depending on what year they are, like year 7 you'll tend to stop them a bit more occasions cos they're off task but...and then they'll come up to me 'Can I put another roll in?', 'Yeah' ...they're working a lot on their own there...

SG: So, you set certain parameters and then as long as they've got little targets within what they're doing then they're pretty much free...

B: In dance, people find it so hard to work in groups, sometimes the main aim in dance is just getting them so that they're learning to listen to each other and having their own ideas and listening to them without arguing...the amount of arguing in dance is just (laughing)...that's one of the hardest things in dance with year 7 in dance is...get on with each other!

SG: Which do think the kids prefer...to be in a situation whereby like in dance they're free to do what they want to, or in a more structured framework?

B: They like me setting the first part of the dance. This is the thing, I teach them a set dance and then for the rest of the, the other hal

don't; they can't handle it. It's the year 7 I'm talking about here. They do like to know what they're supposed to be doing and they worry about, you know, whether they're doing the right thing.

SG: Do you ever find that they do get into a situation whereby they can't resolve what's going on?

B: Yeah, all the time. What I'll do then...if I've set that up; they've learnt the first part of the dance and they go 'Can we have it back to the beginning?' and you'll go 'Yeah' and you'll see one group just get smaller and smaller; boys are leaning against the wall, girls are sitting there (exasperated sigh) you know, slagging each other off, you can tell, you just look round the room and you can exactly who's not getting on- who's not working. Because the boys will just go off there and the girls will go off there.

SG: Is it always a boy/girl divide?

B: Yeah.

SG: What happens then, in that situation?

B: If you see a group break up, say 'Right, just come and sit down', and they sit in their little group.

SG: Just to that little group.

B: Yeah, usually they have groups of say, four, five or six. And they'll all take little corners in the room or some are in the middle. It always tends to be a group that's in the corner as well... You say right everyone come and sit round 'What's going on?' 'Ooh, he's not listening to me, we were trying to teach you something' I say right have you...and he'll say ' Well I had no idea she didn't bother listening to me, so I didn't bother listening to her'. So, I'll say 'Right, you've got to learn to ... what's your idea?' 'My idea's this' I'll say, let's try this first...and then they go out and do it and I stick with them then to try and get it together again. 'Right now what's your idea? That can go in with that now' Right, and then you leave them and then they'll be alright.

SG: So you'll leave them and then they'll be alright.

B: Yeah.

SG: Do they ever come to you without you approaching them first?

B: Yeah, sometimes.

SG: In what situation so they come to you actively?

B: There was a boy...where was he from?... Russia.. and he couldn't speak English and the girls were getting really annoyed with him because he can understand them but he pretended he can't and they came to me 'Miss, he's not listening' and I was, you know, sort of trying to get him to work. The girls will come up to me but the boys will just stand at the side and kick the ropes.

SG: That's interesting.

B: If anyone's gonna come to me from a group if they realise it's not working then it'll be a girl.

SG: Do you think it's a male/female 'thing' in relation to you being a female teacher meaning that the girls come to you and not the boys? If, say Dave were to be teaching the lesson, would the opposite happen?

B: I don't think so, I think it would still be the girls coming. I think girls are more aware when things aren't working. Boys don't care, they just think 'Oh, I'm gonna sit out'. I don't know, it's weird. Girls are more... they see it as a problem because they want to be able to do this dance.

SG: Why do you think the boys don't care?

B: I don't know.

SG: Is it particular to dance, or is it within PE generally?

B: I think it's probably more to do with dance I would have thought.

SG: Can you guess the reasons why?

B: You can guess the reasons why because first lesson of dance you can guarantee that all the boys are last in. (sighs) like that and then straight away you've got this thing that dance is rubbish.

SG: Why do you think it is that boys have the perception that dance is rubbish?

B: I dunno. I suppose it's because what they do in primary school is just like, you know, movement to music isn't it. And straight away they come here and it's music that they know, I don't know, I don't know why.

SG: So, do you think the music makes a difference? Because the girls, presumably have had the same dance experience at school as the boys.

B: Definitely, definitely. By using 'Stayin' Alive' which is something the boys see as quite a masculine dance, 'Stayin' Alive' they've got no problems with them all doing the dance to. Mambo Sway, which is a bit more 'girly' I don't do that first deliberately.

SG: How do they respond to it when you do, do it?

B: They're awkward, really awkward about...because there's lots of hip movement I think they think 'Oh this is a bit 'girly'. If they're gonna do 'Steps' which is a bit sort of, it's not either is it? ... It's line dancing, and they can cope with that and it's all structured by me so it's not where they've got to do...use many of their own moves cos what they're mainly doing is copying and I think they find that a bit easier.

SG: So you'd make it something they can identify with and you structure it completely initially?

B: Yeah. And then you'd move on to...I mean year 7 you want them to do canon, basic things like symmetry, synchronised movement, canon basically you moving on to the mood things. You're not structuring things as much in year 8. You're giving them a start and then you're letting them go. Things like the phone numbers dance.

SG: Right- that was fairly 'in between' wasn't it? Because they chose what they wanted to do in terms of the movement, so they chose movement that they were comfortable with but then it was repeated so they didn't have to think any further.

B: Yeah. There was one boy, I forget what his name was, blond boy I had him in my teaching practice and he really could not...he can't cope with the whole dance 'thing' had to be left on his own to use his imagination to think of moves, working in a group, he really struggled with that and his mum sent me a note saying he was really embarrassed and that was the only reason he was behaving like this because he was really obnoxious because he would stand there and just ruin the whole group's dance because he was so embarrassed.

SG: Was this directed to his group or you?

B: His group and me.

SG: When you bring kids to do their dance, how do you go about actually organising it then; how do you decide who works with whom?

B: Well, I say to them 'Right, we're all going to work in groups now' and they go 'Yeah, Yeah.' So, I'll say to them 'Sit still... You've got to realise that these groups you're going to work in now, you're going to have to work with for two weeks so if you know that there are some people in this group that you can't work with sensibly or you know you're going to argue with, it's obviously not going to work with them is it?' and then they go 'Yeah!!'. And then you 'It must be mixed' 'Ahhhh!' (laughs) It's got to be mixed. I think if you didn't do it mixed, I think the boys wouldn't get on with it, they'd really struggle.

SG: Have you done it with non-mixed groups?

B: I've done it with partners, and let them go with who they want, and the boys really did...not all of them...that's a bit sort of stereotypical really. Some of them you know, are just so busy throwing themselves at the mat and just aggravating everyone else around them. Yeah, 'Rock 'n' Roll' I think that was. The very fact that two boys had to actually hold hands was like 'Oh my God! I can't believe she wants me to do this'.

SG: But what would they have done if you'd put them in mixed sex pairs then?

B: I don't know. I've never done it like that. They'd go mad I think. They'd really struggle.

SG: So, realistically, they'd go 'barmy'?

B: Yeah.

SG: When they work in groups in dance, you said that if it's not working, then you'll end up with basically the whole thing fragmenting and one group are sulking 'over there' and another 'over here'...

B: It's very rarely that they don't resolve that though. Very very rarely, they're never on the same dance enough...the maximum they have is two or three weeks depending on how they're reacting to it. And if it *really* doesn't work out what I'll tend to do is make it into smaller groups. Sometimes it 's just the amount of people you've got in the group cos five or six is really quite a large group to then, to have to work with. It depends if they really wasn't working.

SG: Do you ever get similar problems when they're working in groups in teams in other team sports?

B: You get the boys not passing to the girls in basketball. You'd think you'd get that even more but it's only usually the shier girls that don't...I mean it's quite...I think the girls are so used to working in mixed...not a lot really, I don't really teach that much basketball to say...hockey it doesn't.

SG: In hockey it makes no difference?

B: No.

SG: It's just when they're in the situation you described.

B: You know, where they've got to talk to...where in a team situation they don't actually have to talk to each other...they've actually got to discuss things in the dance group, it's really difficult.

SG: A lot of pressure...

B: Cos you'll notice that straight off in pair it's always boy-boy, girl-girl, always especially with partner balances and things like that.

SG: Why do you think that is?

B: Well they just feel a bit awkward because it's quite sort of intimate isn't it...I think, and you would want to go with your mates cos you wouldn't feel embarrassed about them grabbing your leg or if they fell on top of you or...and I wouldn't make them do mixed, because I think I wouldn't, like personally I wouldn't make them do mixed partner balances.

SG: Is there a limit on size of group that you would have where you would choose who would work in what group?

B: What do you mean?

SG: Say, in a pair you would let them choose but with a five...

B: In a five I'd do a mixture because then you've built it up then because you've done the partner bit. There's a not of getting over the embarrassment of even working with a friend if it's like they've never done anything like that before. If they have like a routine that they've got to do I make them go in mixed groups and they get on with that fine. If they have like a routine where they have like a routine like they've got to do one individual balance, two partner balances, and a group balance, even with that partner you can guarantee that the boys work with the boys and the girls work with the girls. I don't know why that is, perhaps they've just worked with them previously

SG: Do you always do pair work that is then followed up by group work?

B: Yeah always.

SG: So they've got used to having that contact.

B: Yeah, because if you think about it, it's quite...in gymnastics you've done four rolls, on your own then you do them with a partner and then you go on.



SG: And that builds up the interaction?

B: Yeah.

SG: Do you find that it's the same characters that dominate groups or do they generally share the negotiations?

B: If you looked at a group you could probably tell who would lead it because of their personalities but usually... but year 7 are quite difficult because I don't know them all that well yet, not really, but by year 8 though, you know exactly who's gonna take charge of the group.

SG: Does that always work; for example, if there's someone who's always lead their group, will that ever be challenged by the kids that they're working with?

B: Yeah, that's where I... that's where they'll stop working them because one'll say 'Do my idea' and the other will say 'No, do mine' and that's where it breaks down; someone says 'No, we're not always gonna do your ideas'. You usually get...it sounds really bad, but you usually get the popular girls and the popular boys and they're always the strong characters together so they do...they shout each other down (laughs) and you get the shyer ones who just quietly get on with it.

SG: Do the shyer ones tend to get on with it all the time?

B: Yeah. And because they get on with it, sometimes you sort of neglect them a bit which is really bad but you tend to sort of look towards the ones who are sort of having problems and you think God! They've been working all lesson and I haven't even gone over there because they've just been getting on with it.

SG: So, they don't draw your attention because there's no problem.

B: I don't know if you've met Ewan Berry yet, he's one boys who just can't cope with any contact. He just disrupts the whole lesson, any group he's in he just disrupts he's just too immature to deal with things like that.

SG: In your opinion- from the feedback that you get from kids and from watching kids and what you learn from Dave or the others- what do you think most pleases kids about PE?

B:....Usually...one of my tutor group scored two goals for the first time ever in hockey and she was just like skipping down the corridor...it is usually scoring.

SG: Scoring?

B: Scoring, or if I say 'Right, this group has worked hardest and their routine is the best they've ever done and they've got a merit' then they're usually pleased.

SG: So, extrinsic rewards work?

B: They definitely work. Even for year 11 and you think you're sixteen and you want a merit! But especially with year 7 you tend to just make sure that everyone good gets a merit.

SG: With things like goal scoring being so important, does that affect the way they organise themselves in their teams.

B: No, I don't think so...what do you actually mean, like they think 'Oh she'll score so I'll have her on my team' is that what you mean?

SG: Well, when they're actually playing, does it mean that the 'prime position' is where they can try to score goals or does it mean that they're not passing the ball.

B: A couple you'd say so.

SG: How do you deal with that?

B: Basically you want to get them doing defence, midfield, attack so you get them to rotate so everyone gets a chance to score. But they put the slow person in defence, or who they think's the slow person and so they just stand there like that (looks into space) the whole game. Or you'd introduce a rule like they've got to pass

to every member of the team before a goal's scored. Because you do get like the odd boy who plays for (town team) or girl, who then goes round everyone and shoots and that's the end of it.

SG: The end of the game.

B: Usually you're like double teaching if you're out in the hockey area then you just rotate the games so you make sure that everyone gets a touch of the ball.

SG: When you get kids that don't want to take part in any of the activities, so for example, you said that they'll put who they perceive as being the slow ones in defence and they just stand there, presumably in *part* that is their decision just to stand.

B: Yeah.

SG: When kids are not participating, what reasons do you think there are for this?

B: What reasons?

SG: Yeah.

B: They're scared of failure, a lot of the time. They'd rather not have the ball than be seen to miss it. Usually, that's one of the things like ...um...that's it.

SG: What the result of failure in this situation? For example, you said that someone might be afraid of missing the ball or not doing the 'right thing' with the ball; what would be the consequence of that?

B: Depending on who it was. There'd be a couple who would like 'Oh God!' or whatever, but most of the time I think it's sort of overlooked. Usually they know who, you know, the weak sort of team players are and they just get on with it. It's not many times I have to have words with someone for saying 'God! You're crap!' or something. There are odd occasions, but they tend to know. There's a boy in basketball, do you know Bryan? Skinny, hasn't got any trainers...

SG: Bryan Goodson?

B: And he's really, always tries really hard, whatever team he's on they just let him get on with it they pass to him and he tries and then they'll say 'What d'you do that for?' but apart from that... They're really good actually.

SG: Tolerant?

B: I think so.

SG: Does it still have any meaning for him though do you think?

B: No, I don't think so because you can't put him off, because he's always going for the ball all the time. Always wants to ref, wants to score (laughs).

SG: Are there any kid who are not like Bryan and just don't take part?

B: Yeah. In trampolining you get that because it's just the very fact that anything new that you learn has got to be learnt in front of like what 8 people? So, if you do get it wrong, everyone sees and that is really off-putting. Some of the boys, you know, in the first group, just didn't want to do it and there was a couple; there's a girl in there that really struggles and she said 'I won't do it' and I won't really push them because I can sort of see where they're coming from cos anything new they've got to learn has got to be sort of in front of everyone hasn't it?

SG: So, if they don't want to do it, what strategy do they use not to do it?

B: They won't turn up, they won't have their kit, or they get their kit and then pretend they're ill say 'I feel sick' or just try and completely avoid me and see if I notice if they've actually had a go yet- they can slip the net every time.

SG: If they...I need to think how to phrase the question... are there any situations where you know the reasons why they don't want to do it, to what extent do you try then to involve them and to what extent do you kind of think this isn't fair?

B: You know Lucy don't you?

SG: Yeah.

B: Well, we actually discussed it and obviously because of the weight issue...she's well aware...she doesn't want to be doing trampolining there's no point in putting her through that. She wouldn't get anything educational out of that either; she wouldn't be able to do more than a seatdrop and so she was then put into the basketball group. It depends on how the child goes about it, if they come up to you and say 'Miss, I've really got a serious problem with this' and if you can't then get them involved; if you can't sort of get them on the trampoline then you can always talk about putting them into another group because it's just wasting their time being made to do it. It's hard to say how you deal with it; it depends who it is, it's different to whoever the individual is. Cos some you know that secretly they want to have a go at it, they're just really scared, they don't think 'Oh no'...some you think 'Oh I could get you up there'. One girl's had a real struggle, cos she's been on there and done a tuck jump and next week I'm gonna try and get her to do a seat drop.

SG: So, presumably that's a major achievement for her.

B: Getting on the trampoline and doing *anything*. If you've got them on there, you've won half the battle, it's just getting them on there. I really dissuade them from laughing cos one thing I'll really shout about is people laughing if someone's gone wrong.

SG: Yeah. If you look at the department as a whole, what would be the general philosophy on education that the department has?

B: Sport for all, as many people taking part the better. Offer as many activities after school, during school so that you know children have really got a chance of picking up something they think 'You know, I can continue with this'. Every single lunch time there's a range of things going on. The sports hall is always being used, it's always being used. Um, after school there's something for the kids to do. Get as many people involved and offer them as much activity as you can.

SG: Is there any other philosophy that the department tries to promote.

B: Just sport for all I suppose. If any of us sees anyone who looks good in hockey in the lesson, then try and get them into the team after school. If we look at their PE (self) reports, if they're not involved in any activity either inside or outside of the school then we'd tell them they need to get themselves involved. It's so different...from lessons where you're teaching basic skills and ... going to stuff after school you can give them so much individual attention, they really do benefit. If you just see a talent there or an interest, I mean if you look at our netball team, there's much better players we could get but they show an interest so everyone plays in the game at one point. There's not a set team of the best players no matter how good or bad they are they'll get a game. Cos they've had to come to practice so you've got to.

SG: So, you include everybody.

B: And even if you know they can't catch, you just think 'Well they've turned up, I'll give them a go' (laughs). If anyone ever doesn't bring their kit; me and Jane are quite sympathetic. Dave or Mark would just absolutely go mad.

SG: Lesson-wise or for the team?

B: Lesson wise, I don't know what the ethos would be. Definitely mixed because they believe there are people you're not going to get on with in the world, and you've got to learn to work with them in all areas cos when you go to work, you can't just go to work with all females.

SG: Do you ever have conflict within the department about what you're trying to achieve?

B: Conflict? No. The way Dave sees it is that the more kids there are doing things, the better it is. As soon as Jan came back and there was two girls in the department, the amount of girls that are now taking part in our physical activities just grows. We've got basketball club on a Monday for just girls and that's gone from about five people to about twenty five. When Jane was away it was just me on my own and I couldn't do loads of clubs, so now the level of activity for girls has gone up really high.

SG: So after school, are the activities that happen always single sex.

B: Yes mostly. Netball's single sex, basketball's single sex, we've got year 7 boys' football, basketball just for the boys, hockey's mixed, it's not that we deliberately do that, it just tends to be that all girls turn up or all boys turn up.

SG: So is there no boy's basketball.

B: There is year 9.

SG: Why is that split?

B: I just think it's the league they're in, the girls can't play.

SG: So it's outside pressure really.

B: Yeah, basketball they made a girls team because they realised there was a gap for that. You know, boys had a league set up and there were some really talented girls basketball players and they didn't particularly like netball, didn't particularly like hockey and they obviously feel a need for that.

SG: Do you find that within the school, the school structure and the philosophy of the school helps with what you are trying to achieve within PE? Or does it hinder what you're doing?

B: The PE department is seen as a very strong department.

SG: What kind of support do you get?

B: The head is an ex-PE teacher and she realises the value of it. I'm not saying that she favours us but she likes competitive things, if we win things.

SG: Does she like the fact that you win affects the status of the school?

B: Yes. That's why we're applying for sports college status.

SG: Do you think that sports college status might make the school appear 'anti-academic'?

B: It could do...if we do get sports college status, we can't pick and choose who we want because they're good at sport.

SG: What will it mean for you if you get it?

B: Um. We've got to raise £50 000 and straight away we get £150 000 on top of that for facilities and for the next three years you get a set amount for outside coaches, extra equipment

SG: So, it's largely financial?

B: Yes.

SG: There's one more issue that the kids raised and that is that within groups there's a kind of hierarchy, does that show itself to you as a PE teacher?

B: Yeah.

SG: What form does it take in your eyes?

B: What form?

SG: Yeah- what's the basis of the hierarchy?

B: It's usually, in that trampolining group it's Colin, Graham, Clive. You know, the very fact that I know their names and I don't know the names of some of the others in the group shows that there is because they're always over here and it goes with their ability of sport, in PE ...if they're good at sport, no matter what your clothes are like, no matter what...you're sort of pretty much 'in' aren't you?

SG: Do you think it's confined to PE? Do you think that the hierarchy that exist within PE just exists there, or does it exist in other areas of school as it is, or exist in other areas? For example, does it exist within your tutor group?

B: No. It does I'm sure, but not on the same terms.

SG: Can you see a hierarchy existing within your tutor group?

B: I think it's harder lower down the school I think as you go up to year 9, 10 and 11 I think it's more predominant then. There is, because you've got people like in my tutor group Andrea who is both good at sport and is very intelligent. Which straight away would put her as someone to go round with and she's into lots of things and she knows ... I think in the lower school it seems to be quite equal because everyone's finding their feet and then it goes up to year 9, 10 and 11, especially year 9, that's a real turning point because everyone's finding their place and, you know, they've been in the school for a couple of years finding their feet. You pick it most in years 9, 10 and 11. In 11 you're sort of grown up a bit again.

SG: As a guess, would you say this is in all areas of the school?

B: I think it does, but I would think intelligence would creep in there as well. Because, if someone said 'Oh you're not all that sporty', they could turn around and say 'Well, you're thick at maths' or something like that.

SG: But if they've got both factors, that's like the ultimate?

B: Yeah because I remember at school, if you were into sport, you were like 'Yes!' and if you had half a brain you were alright as well. I'd have to sit in a year 9 classroom to answer that but I'm sure...because they're so confident; because they've never had to struggle physically, they'll always give it a go because they've never had to fail. And so, in class they're probably the first one to speak out, they're probably, even if they get the answer wrong because they don't care. You can guarantee Colin, Graham and Clive are bound to be causing trouble drawing negative attention to them or they're at the back of the class...

SG: How do those three perform academically?

B: Graham Merrett isn't too high, but even in my GCSE you've got Kerry, you know Kerry don't you?

SG: Yeah.

B: You've got Kerry, Karen and who else...they stand out and they play sport and you know, they're quite intelligent as well.

SG: And they're popular?

B: Yeah, definitely.

SG: Do you think it's anything other than being good at sport and intelligent? You know like a 'good looking' factor?

B: Yeah.

SG: So, to try to find an example, have you got any kid who are good at sport but aren't regarded as good looking by the other kids?

B: No, all the boys in the tutor group...no, they're all quite good looking aren't they? They become the ones to be with.

SG: I wonder if it's being good at sport that makes them appear good looking?

B: I'm trying to think...cos I don't know the hockey team that well, but I'm sure if you looked at some of the male hockey players there are some that are really talented that wouldn't look...I dunno.

SG: Can you begin by explaining how long you've been here and your current role because it's recently changed hasn't it?

H: O.K this is my second year, and I came initially just as teaching PE but wanted to, and I'd already said, I wanted to develop the outdoor ed. because that's where my interests lie anyway. So, it just happened that the teacher who was teaching outdoor ed. resigned from that particular post so it became available as a responsibility.

SG: Were they within PE?

H: No. So, um then I went...it was advertised and I applied for that post and got it. So now I've got, PE but also a responsibility point for 'Outdoor Ed'.

SG: Right. How does that affect what you're doing within PE?

H: Um, it adds to it I suppose; I mean in some ways it probably detracts a little bit from what I might do if my time was just spent here, but I've got to think about organising the other things as well. So, I do, like on a Friday, I take kids out of PE and PSE to go canoeing every week but obviously that takes me off the PE timetable.

SG: So, it might detract from the time that you spend...does it detract in any other way?

H: Um, no I don't think so because I get extra time, I haven't got a tutor group because I do that so I get extra time allowed to organise the other things and the other things, none of them at the moment have been in term time anyway; it's all extra curricular work.

SG: So, you don't feel that you have to sacrifice one thing for the other. Considering your role within the PE, what philosophy do you have about teaching?

H: Um, making sure that everybody gets the chance to do the sport, so it's the sport for all idea I suppose.

SG: Regardless of ability or...

H: Yeah, regardless of ability or gender everything really, background; whatever you might take into consideration they all come across here and once they're in this department they're all in theory equal; there's no reason why one can't participate more than another.

SG: Right. Does that conflict with the philosophy of other departments within the school or is it complemented by the work that other departments do?

H: Uh...I don't know actually, possibly some department yes, it conflicts maybe, some departments are quite...they tend to push the more able child.

SG: Without compromising yourself, are you able to say which departments do tend to focus on the more able kids?

H: Um, languages; I don't just think that's general of here, I think that is general across the board.

SG: In those subjects?

H: Yeah, I think so.

SG: What about other, more 'academic' subjects.

H: Um, English.

SG: It tends to happen there as well?

H: Mmm. But again I don't just think that's symptomatic of here, I think that is a general...from what I've seen anyway, in my experience. I might be wrong but generally it seems a lot more time is devoted to the more able.

SG: Do you think that's due to pressures that are on those departments?

H: Quite possibly. To succeed. Especially, as like you know your core subjects, there's a lot of focus on them in schools to get the results- you know these five A's to C's perhaps there's a little less pressure on us to do that even though all the kids do GCSE PE anyway.

SG: Does the structure of the school help support what you're trying to achieve within PE do get support through managerial level?

H: Definitely. I mean there's not many schools where all of the kids do GCSE PE and I think that's a benefit to us because otherwise you end up, when the kids make their options, you end up being grouped against something like a second modern language or double science so automatically your top ability kids are creamed off because they're not going to choose PE over a second language or a second science.

SG: Was that a management decision or was that something that Dave has achieved or...?

H: Well, it was one of the criteria Dave said. When the head said she wanted us to do GCSE PE, that was one of the criteria that Dave set. He said either everybody does it or nobody does it. He didn't want it blocked... cos he knew it would be because it is everywhere else because it's not seen as a priority subject it gets blocked against other things and they just automatically take off the top kids and your left and it's seen just as like a drop-out subject. You know, you can't do a second language so you might as well do PE.

SG: Do you think that's the reason why Dave insisted on that so that you didn't get seen as a 'drop out' subject?

H: So, it makes it higher priority within the school. And it benefits all the kids because then you still have the academically bright kids doing PE and that's an important thing because the theory side is quite hard and there's quite a lot involved in it, it's important to have the bright kids in there as well.

SG: So, that you can achieve everything that you can within that subject area?

H: Yeah.

SG: O.K When the kids kept their diaries, there were certain issues in PE that they thought were important. One of the things that they talked about as an area was the different groupings that they were put in. When you put kids into groups within the class, what sort of philosophy do you employ for different types of groupings?

H: It depends what I'm doing. Sometimes, I might just, for convenience, I let the kids choose their own groups; I tend to do that more often than not actually, because ...

SG: What do you mean by 'convenience'?

H: Because often you get less arguments, or I can say to them, 'Right, you've got a minute to sort yourselves into groups' and whilst they're doing that I can be figuring out what's happening next, writing something on the board while they get themselves into groups, so often it's a time thing. But it also, quite often, it leads to a nicer atmosphere say within the group anyway, because they're happy in the groups that they're in so you don't end up in a situation where as soon as you've started, they're off working and then they come back to you and say 'I don't wanna work with him' and because they've chosen the groups you get a little bit more harmony sometimes.

SG: Is that what they tend to do then, if they're in a group that they don't want to be in?

H: Not all of them, but some of them will quite often 'squinty' and ask to change groups.

SG: Are there situations where you would decide who worked with who?

H: Yeah, it depends what I want to do. I mean sometimes I might split them ability wise. So I might take off a group at either end of the spectrum to work together and leave people in the middle, or I might specifically request mixed groups or I might specifically request a certain number or you know, it depends entirely on the activity and what specifically I want them to do.

SG: If kids are unhappy with the groups that they want to be in, is there a pattern to sort of behaviours that will then ensue?

H: Yes because nothing happens. Or very little. Very little constructive work happens when kids aren't happy with who they're working with. They just tend to argue.

SG: What ultimately results from that?

H: Then I will split them up probably.

SG: Do they come to you first?

H: Generally. Generally one person...if you've got a group, it might just be one person within the group that's causing a problem they just become an outcast and you can see that they're just not doing anything. Or immediately, one person from the group will come up and say 'So and so's not helping' or 'So and so just keeps messing around'.

SG: So they'll tend to identify one person who's not doing it...

H: The kids will identify who won't work with them and then they'll come up and tell you. So you can either go and have a word with them and make them work or move them into a different group.

SG: Will they have tried to resolve it first?

H: Generally, yeah, I think so because I think generally here, kids work well together and they will try first before they give in.

SG: Have you got any idea at what stage they come to you?

H: Just when they get annoyed, when they get frustrated about the fact. You know they might just say 'Come on, do this' or 'Don't do that' or 'Stop it' it's just the point where they get frustrated and it just depends how long that takes.

SG: Is there a certain type of kid that will be the one that comes to see you?

H: Nope. Don't think there's a pattern to it really.

SG: Just somebody will be volunteered from the group to come and see you?

H: Or somebody will just take it upon themselves. They'll just get fed up and come over.

SG: Another thing related to the group idea is that within the classes there are kind of hierarchies of kids is that something that you would have noticed in PE, or is it something that doesn't come across?

H: In terms of ability, or in terms of just socially?

SG: Both.

H: Yeah, there is. But that's something I think that they put on, not something that we put on. I don't think it's something that we place on the kids. I don't think that we, certainly I don't try to, but as a department generally I don't think we, you know, push it, I don't think we make it worse. Kids come to lessons with that naturally in place I think. Especially if they're in tutor groups perhaps that's more evident if they're in tutor groups because I suspect with the younger lot that they tend to ...they have a lot of their lessons in their tutor groups and they can obviously spend the whole day together and so it becomes more obvious and it's just preconceived by the time they get here.

SG: Within the sort of hierarchies that you can see between either ability and achievement in PE and that hierarchy or are they unrelated?

H: Yeah, probably.

SG: In what way are they related?

H: There's probably a lot of the more able, academically more able kids towards the top end of the hierarchy.

SG: Yeah. Academically able at the higher end, so it's not so much the physically able.

H: Not necessarily, no.



SG: The more academically able at the top.

H: Cos you get some kids coming across who are not academically brilliant, still good in PE but might still sort of end up in the middle of the group so they're dominated more by the more able kids who can talk their way round situations.

SG: Within PE lessons, some of the kids have...they tend to identify the fact that they enjoy themselves where they believe they're working autonomously, when they're making their own decisions. To what degree do you try and give kids autonomy within what you're doing? Is it sort of a main purpose of what you're doing?

H: Yeah I think so. You try to give them a little bit of independence over things and you give them situations where they are like in basketball, obviously you want as many games going as possible and we try to keep them in games but there's only ...you can only be on one game at a time the kids have got control in terms of refereeing and officiating as well as playing and so they're left to do that.

SG: Do they respond well to that?

H: Yeah, generally.

SG: They respond positively to that?

H: You get the occasional argument obviously and you, you know, especially if you've got kids playing who are better or more experienced at the game than the person who's refereeing you get maybe you get a little conflict there but generally, the games will happen. The games very rarely stop completely because they just get on and play in the end.

SG: If you ever have a situation whereby you want a kid to do something and they don't want to do it, how do you deal with it?

H: Um, it depends I suppose, if they're in a group that they're not happy with then, depending on how it is dealt with, you know, depending on how the kid has approached it...you know if they've approached you and said 'We're really not happy working with so and so, we don't really get on outside of school anyway, is it possible that I can change groups and can I go with them' then I'm quite flexible with those sorts of things where kids approach it in the right way. If they're just messing around because they can't be bothered then I get...I take the attitude of them messing around is disturbing other people and I take the side of the other people because it's unfair on them. And if they just don't want to take part, if they just can't be bothered, they're just messing around then I'll be fairly strict and just...if you're not going to do it, you're not going to do it and you can just come back another time. At least let these people carry on with their work.

SG: So, if someone were being disruptive, then you'd remove them from that immediate situation.

H: So that the other kids can carry on. I think the priority has got to be the kids who want to do it, rather than the kids that don't.

SG: Yeah. What sort of ...of the kids that don't want to do whatever you're doing, what kinds of strategies do they employ to ensure that they don't do it?

H: They ...if a kid really doesn't want to do it, generally, and this is going to be really sexist now, generally, if it's a boy, they will just mess around or be silly. If it's a girl then they'll just stop. So, say in hockey for instance, if a girl doesn't want to play, she'll just go and stand in goal or she'll go and stand by the goal line or in the goal D and she'll just stand there and not do it.

SG: She takes on a role so she can't be in trouble.

H: Yeah, but she's not actually doing anything.

SG: Right, O.K so she's effectively removed herself while still being involved, not drawing attention, not getting in trouble but also not really doing what she's supposed to?

H: Yeah, whereas boys will go almost the opposite way. If they don't want to do it they'll stop everyone else from doing it as well they won't just stand back, they'll get 'right in', they'll just you know, push the ball away, or take somebody else's stick away or poke people or just be generally annoying to everybody else because they don't want to take part.

SG: Are there particular reasons why kids tend not to take part or does it vary?

H: It varies; some kids just don't like a particular sport, it can depend on the weather, it can depend on who they're with, I think there's all manner of reasons. Some kids have an aversion to particular activities and some kids don't like being outside, you know.

SG: Generally speaking, your main purpose is to involve everybody in what they're doing. And...regardless of their ability etcetera, etcetera, what do you think is the main thing that kids get out of PE?

H: Here?

SG: Yes.

H: Blimey. I don't know, it's hard to say isn't it? They get a lot of...there's a lot of the social element I think is quite important that they get I mean they achieve a lot...maybe that's the most important thing is that a lot of them do achieve relatively...you know, relative to their ability anyway. They do achieve you know within two or three weeks of starting an activity they can play it as a group, however you relate that, but they can play that game because they're pushed on quite quickly, I think we've got quite high expectations of them in terms of that, in terms of being able to pick up games and being able to play them.

SG: Do you think that then 'pulls them up'...if you've got high expectations then they meet them?

H: Yes. Yes, but kids are pulled along by other kids in the group as well...that's because we've got mixed groups. If you've got more experience in a game for instance of hockey or whatever, if you've got more experienced players in there, they tend to spread the game out a bit more. People will naturally follow; you know, if you play people of a higher standard than yourself, then you play to their level, so you play to raise your game to whatever level they are.

SG: Is that why you mix ability in almost everything that you do?

H: Yeah, because in every activity that we do there are some experienced kids in school, you can always guarantee that somebody within your group or two or three people within your group will be experienced dancers or will be experienced gymnasts or hockey players or basketball players.

SG: Is that because of what you've done within PE or what they do outside of school?

H: Um, it's a mix of both.

SG: With the...I'll use the term weaker kid but it's a bit questionable, but I'll use the term for the sake of argument here...if that draws up the weaker kids, what benefit do the more able kids get from working in a mixed ability group?

H: They, they probably get more benefit...I mean they get the benefit of...we can give *them* specific targets. Quite often we can say right 'Your job within the team', or 'Your job within this game is to make sure the whole court is used' or 'to make sure the team knows what they're doing' so almost act a little bit more as a coach so they're starting to analyse the game a little bit more. Again, help with officiating, specific skills, so they're starting to maybe not practice their own skills so much but start to actually think about the game or the activity a bit more as a coach. Their benefit for their skills doesn't take place in lessons then. Once they've got to a certain standard, their lessons won't necessarily involve them in improving their skills, they'll do that in the extra-curricular clubs.

SG: But they get other advantages in the class.

H: Yes.

SG: In terms of the activities themselves, you said that some kids don't like certain activities, what kind of activities tend to be more popular; are there general ones that are more popular with the kids than others?

H: Um, it's hard, hockey is popular generally, but that's possibly because of the name that the school has for it; it helps having good facilities; it helps having so many sticks and balls, you can't...there's no way you can deny that if you're sharing a ball within a four, there's no way it's as good as if you've got one to yourself, whatever you say to them you know, it's always helpful. Basketball is popular.

SG: Why is basketball popular?

H: Possibly because a lot of kids go into it at the same level. Very few of them have played it before so it's a very...it's a leveller almost. You haven't got a situation where the boys are more experienced or the girls are more experienced as you might end up with in dance. You might, you know, often in dance have girls that have bopped along to discos and everything else for the last 10 years and boys who've never danced before in their lives. Or if you've got hockey; a lot of the boys who have played football before can related to hockey well and some of the girls have never been in that situation on a field and get a bit lost. Basketball's a good leveller because not many of them have played before.

SG: In something like dance then because that's really unique within the rest of the PE that you do, or it's certainly slightly different to the other teaching that you do and you've got boys coming in presumably with less experience as you say, of dance than the girls, how do you overcome the gap between the sexes on that.

H: Um, starting off by choosing dances that are very, very simple and using popular music and using dances that regardless of whether you're male or female...like the YMCA...kids know, male or female they know YMCA they know the main part of the dance.

SG: Yeah.

H: Well, then you can add on more subtle things that in general, you know, you pick something that everybody knows.

SG: So with the music, it's familiarity that you look for.

H: Yeah so they're not faced with a situation where they're in a strange environment and having to dance but they've also got strange music as well. At least they've got something that is familiar to them, they've got a little sense of 'Oh that's comforting because I recognise that'.

SG: At the end of the day, do you think that there's any conflict between what you want to achieve and what the rest of the department want to achieve?

H: No, I don't think so, I think we're pretty well united on the fact that we're trying to get as many people involved as possible, but where the situation arises, you obviously push for success if you can.

SG: Yes. Do you think you achieve what you want to?

H: Yes, I think so, there are an awful lot of kids here who do take part in something and that's got to be seen through the criteria that we met for 'Sportsmark Gold'; part of the criteria for them is that there's a certain percentage of the kids in school who take part in some kind of extra curricular sport whether that's before school, lunchtimes or after school and it's quite a high percentage; it's well over 50% for every year for boys and girls.

SG: Because you've got the transport laid on after school as well that helps you haven't you?

H: Yeah. I don't know where the money's come from but it's a trust fund type thing that finances it...it's arrived from somewhere, I'm not sure where. But there's a lot of kids who live in the relatively local area so they've got access to it. That can make a lot of difference, the fact that most of the kids live fairly local.

SG: But there are also kids that travel a fair way aren't there?

H: Blimey yeah! There are kids that come in from (town) and places like that at half past seven in the morning to play hockey and things like that.

SG: It's great isn't it?

SG: Could you begin by outlining what you perceive your role to be as 'PE' teacher, the aims and objectives of what you do in your lessons.

M: Must be careful I s'pose...have to think about what I'm gonna say don't I?

SG: No...don't worry.

M: O.K. ... What do I want to do? I want kids to be active...I want kids to be safe...I'd *like* kids to enjoy what they're doing but I think that's...it's not a bonus, that's not the right way of putting it, you hope that as a result of what you're doing that they enjoy what they're doing and if it's secure and a safe environment, then chances are that they do. I want kids to move on ...from wherever they are to somewhere else, so whatever they're doing, I want them to improve. Um...I want them to recognise that people improve at different rates, that people learn at different speeds and to be sympathetic to the fact that not everyone is...learns as quickly as maybe they do, or is ...finds things as easy as they do. I want people that are fortunate to be good both to challenge themselves but also to be able to help other people. I want kids to experience a variety of educational settings for education through physical education if you like, and the bits that they don't see are all the things that make up what PE is all about really. It's about ...it's about being kind to people and hopefully ...we forget that occasionally, we all get upset but at the end of the day not very often.

SG: Are your objectives shared by the department as a whole?

M: I'm sure they are. I'm sure they are. I think we appoint people now in our own image, in the sense that when you walk around I think you get a feel for that. You get a feel for the fact that hopefully we show respect for kids and expect that back...expect them to show respect for one another. I mean if, at the end of the day, the sort of things we fall out with kids over tend to be things like being not very pleasant to other children, not respecting the building, not respecting the fact that they are here to do some work and not just to run around in PE etcetera etcetera.

SG: Are the values that you hold as a department valued and reinforced by the school structure and the values of the school as a whole.

M: Yes.

SG: There's no conflict at all?

M: I don't think there is a school conflict. I think as a school generally, you would get that kind of feel hopefully no matter where you went. You know, even with newer people. It's not something that's just ...the students in particular, I think you can come into an environment like that and just think 'Oh, this is dead easy' and it all seems fairly easy.

SG: By students do you mean those training to teach?

M: Yeah. It's not something that you get sort of straight away. I think it starts from a secure position, and, you know, it's easier when you've done it for a while because you're confident about what you're doing, you know where you're going to go, you know from day to day you're not going to be under any great stress particularly...you can put the effort that's required into creating the sort of atmosphere that you want.

SG: Is there anything in particular that you do within the lesson first of all, to achieve that?

M: Anything in particular, um...I try and be consistent in the things that we are asking kids to do.

SG: Within your own lessons or between the teachers in the department?

M: Between the department, but certainly within our own lessons we would consistently ask and demand certain things of kids. They don't come not knowing what we expect of them... so...we are consistently saying to kids 'You are here to push yourselves' 'You are here to achieve' and hand in hand with that we have to be putting them in a situation that can be achieved. You know, I have to say to a kid...they say to me 'I can't do this, it's impossible' and I say to them, 'Strap wings to your arms and fly up to the roof, that would be impossible, but what I'm asking you to do is not impossible for you'. And therefore you're putting them in a position where you're making a judgement about what kids can do, to a certain extent you make a judgement about how hard you can push certain kids and how you push them but at the end of the day, hopefully you're doing that to all of them even subconsciously...you're moving kids on *always* from where they are to somewhere further on.

SG: Regardless of their starting point?

M: Absolutely. It can look, it can *look* like that you're doing the same thing. People have said to me, well, I don't understand by the end of this six weeks, how these kids have got to where they are because it seems to me that you do the same thing all the time. But you don't do the same things all the time...you may *appear* to, but the degrees to which you are teaching children and pushing the kids is invariably individual. You know, they'll push themselves...you'll make comments and judgements as to what they do.

SG: This will maybe need to be a generalisation, but how do kids generally feel when you're pushing them to do better? If you take the example that you used of the kid saying what you were asking was impossible.

M: As long as you're good enough ...as long as you're doing and you're good enough at what you're doing for *them* to be able to achieve it, once you've said to somebody ...once they've said to you that they *can't* do it, and you've said to them that they can then, you have to create a situation where they do. So, it's like Dave saying to somebody ...if Dave says to somebody, 'You can do a somersault' that is the point at which they must not get off the trampoline, they have to go ahead and do it, because then, then the next time he says to them they can do something they'll say, well, you said I could last time and I can. I think kids can react in a number of ways that depends on your relationship with them. What they're like. Some kids just love it when they achieve something, they're just coming back for more and more and other kids can sometimes get quite sort of, not stressed by it, but can get quite annoyed by the fact that you're saying they can do it and they can't, but they can really.

SG: What type of reaction in terms of behaviour when you're telling them they can do it but they don't believe they can...what tends to result from that?

M: Well, a number of things can result from it. It can be... you may actually have to put them in an artificial situation so that they do, do it, so that, in a sense you win, your position... You know, I'm saying to you, you can and you *will* as opposed to 'I can't and I'm not going to'. I mean that's not an um...I mean that's happened before and I've seen that but it's very rare.

SG: So, for example, if you were doing the somersault, you'd give them so much support that they couldn't fail.

M: Yes, exactly. Sometimes, even the years I've been teaching, you put kids in a position where...I wouldn't put kids in a position that I didn't think they could cope with. But, if you take team games which is quite a good example, sometimes even *I* underestimate the depth of what you expect from kids. You know Jane Smith? In year 10?

SG: Yes I do.

M: I mean we play in the town ladies league for example, and they come and the intention was to take them along, and I'll use this as an example...to take them along and just for the experience and maybe get them on for a couple of minutes at the end, but because we've had a few...we've got a couple of people in the Olympic Development Squad now, who are not allowed to play, they've been forced into the position of playing all the time and I underestimate how nervous, and you know, really sort of involved that they get because, you know, they're playing against England ladies who are that good and I'm working on this assumption that they can do it and it doesn't even enter my train of thought that they can't do it because I know they can. But they're under...you know, if I let on *at all* that I'm even remotely concerned that they're not up to this, then the game's over. But it doesn't enter my mind that they're not cos they are. But at some times I don't bolster their confidence enough in many senses...I don't sort of say 'I know this is a really big occasion for you here, but you just do your best' because immediately you've sown some sort of seeds of doubt. I work on this assumption in a sort of laid-back way, you know, 'You're good enough, do it'.

SG: And then they do?

M: And then they do. They may think, 'Oh, he's put us on the spot' but they do.

SG: Inevitably in teaching you'll get situations where children perceive that they have failed at something...where that situation arises, what type of response do you tend to get?

M: It probably varies with the age...the older ones tend to try a little bit harder and not put themselves in that position.

SG: In the position to fail?

M: Yes.

SG: Do they avoid that position then?

M: Yes, I think kids tend to. I mean that's likely to happen more in sort of team game situations it can happen whereby kids don't...not don't play, but just, just disappear, even in small sided games, people think well, instead of playing eleven-a-side, play a three-a-side game and invariably you must be involved but that isn't always the case. Even in a three a-side game you can end up with two people playing and somebody not doing it because they feel that they're not good enough. You can't ...in that case, you just have to change it, you have to maybe say 'Well, I've made a misjudgement here' and put somebody in an easier situation. You subconsciously juggle teams around so that you're not allowing one side to dominate the other. Having said that, you're still endlessly saying to kids it's...certain things are important but at the end of the day, this notion of winning or losing is rarely important. You know, we might play three or four games in our whole school life that actually matter, and the rest really don't. You know...it's a hard notion to get over to boys ...this winning/losing thing is not...it tends to dominate sport in one area but it doesn't in schools.

SG: Do you think the kids get to the stage where they accept that?

M: Yes, girls mostly...much, much more so than boys...particularly girls...you might go to a game and they've forgotten the score by the time you've got on the bus.

SG: Really?

M: Yes, absolutely.

SG: Is that something that you develop with the kids that are here?

M: Yes...crucial, really important.

SG: What kind of time scale are you looking at to...

M: Right from year 7, from year 7. You don't want kids failing all the time. One of the reasons netball is harder to get off the ground here is that they lose *all* the time, and you *need* a bit of success. Having said that, there are kids who know that when in hockey for example, I said we would not allow them to win outrageously. It's not fair on the other teams. It's true also even in lessons. If one team appears to be stronger than the other you change it, or move the teams round a little bit more or anything so that at the end of the day, the contest is even. Even from year 7, you're doing that consciously with kids when you're saying look, some of you have played an invasion game; some of you have got a tremendous advantage, let's acknowledge that. That's not the same thing as me saying 'Well, you're not very good and they are'. That's not the same thing at all. You know, you come to this game with a big advantage of having played games like it, and others come to the game having no background whatsoever. You know, especially in hockey, I'll use that endlessly as an example, you know, girls play games which are totally and utterly different you know, so I say to kids, 'If I say to you 'Who can score?' you look at me as if to say 'What a stupid question' but if you're playing netball it isn't, because only two people can score. So if the girls say, well, where can I go? You know, it's no good laughing at them and saying 'What a stupid question' because if I said the same thing to you about netball you wouldn't know but in netball it's crucial. So, all of these things build in this notion that fairness ...of fairness if you like.

SG: In diaries and interviews with the kids, one of the things that came out was that there's a hierarchy that exists within their own culture; within their own groups; a hierarchy of status; is that something that is noticeable as a teacher or is that something that goes on subliminally between them and doesn't really affect what you're doing?

M: Do you mean status in terms of kids that are good at things, or status in terms of something else?

SG: I didn't really want to say as I wanted to just see if you had noticed anything of that nature.

M: O.K. You will ...there are *always* in any group of kids, kids who are perceived as good...always...and there are always some kids who perceive themselves as not very good and again I'm sure that in every lesson you are consciously making decisions that you are bolstering the confidence of some kids whereas you are, in a sense, almost doing the opposite to other groups. Putting them in a more difficult situation so that they recognise the fact that all the success they've had in the past isn't necessarily the be all and end all and they need to be pushing themselves. I think you almost can't get away from that. That's why sometimes the aims of lessons... I mean the last one would be a very good example really in that Steven was in quite a difficult

position, it would be much easier for him if he'd been in the other group. It's a matter of getting the balance right and getting him to do certain things in the game, otherwise he will just dominate the whole game. And yet, the corollary of that is that sometimes when he does make a mistake, he feels that the other kids are laughing at him because they'll all say 'Oh, you're not as good as you think you are', well he doesn't think he is anyway, I mean he just *is*. A very good example of that, the other day, we played Oakfield Seniors, and he said to me that he hadn't got enough seniors, if I bring all the seniors that I've got and some juniors, will you tone your team right down? So, I played all my year 9s and they never win anything, plus, I played three older ones- one at the back, one in the middle, one up front- and it was a really good game, we won about one-nil and at half time I mean Julie Richards, whom you must have met, is amazingly good. She said to me 'I'm really embarrassed' I said 'Why are you embarrassed?' She said 'Because you've said I can't score and I have to pass it all the time, and they're looking at me as if to say 'you're rubbish now'' and that can be really quite difficult.

SG: Do you create that kind of situation in the lessons as well?

M: Yeah. Sometimes.

SG: You said that there are kids who are perceived as good and there are others who don't perceive themselves as good...

M: I've used that word really selectively, because it's very much this notion of 'perceive'. Take this year 9. It is one of those year where there are lots of really involved lovely girls who are not that good and there's a big group of boys who are extremely good but they work together no problem at all because the boys are...they're more than happy to involve everybody, not to impose this ability that they have *on* people, don't use it aggressively, don't use it arrogantly etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. If you go to year 8 then there are a lot of bright girls who are really coming along extremely well, are quite able; and there's a group of boys who are incredibly arrogant, who think they are amazingly good and actually are not that good. Now, what happens, there are these kids who all of a sudden can see that these kids who are quite unpleasant to them in the playground and places like that, all of a sudden, in games situations, where they've always ruled the roost, are actually not that good. And it's amazingly good for other people's confidence.

SG: Do you think then that ...what sphere of influence do feel that PE has in terms of the rest of the school affecting the way kids behave towards one another?

M: I think that is different from year to year. The Head has frequently said...Dave would argue it all the time that um...a school with a good PE department is a happy school because the kids are involved and tend to have that much more respect for each other ...through games. But I think that can differ enormously from year to year. Very, very much so. This year 9 has a poor reputation and yet the kids in PE, on the whole, are extremely good. Very, very nice.

SG: What about the other years?

M: Year 8 is a much more peculiar year because there are...there is a good group of kids who are...the perception of them is that they are extremely good, but...and the other kids are reluctant to challenge that perception in the games, which they should be doing because that's what games are about. Not just team games, you know, whether it's badminton or any other game that we play. But it is beginning to make a difference because when the going gets really tough these kids just can't handle it so they are seen to do things like, when the football team play somebody really good they are 'unavailable' they 'can't play'. Because they're reputation...if you go and play in those games and you get stuffed all of a sudden, you can't stand and shout your mouth off. You know, when Graham Merrett and co come back and they've got hammered, so be it. They've never stood up and said 'We're the greatest football team in the world' you know, we do our best, at times we're very good. So, the other kids when they lose, don't take any notice of it, but these kids in year 8, are 'God's gift to the whole world' they can't go cos it's too cold. If you don't go, you can't be seen to be a wimp.

SG: What about year 7?

M: I get a good feel for year 7. I feel they work together extremely well. I think it is...definitely at the start you have to make this conscious...it isn't a decision, but you have to make this conscious idea of, in many ways, bringing the girls out of themselves, because they come from an experience which boys play team games and the girls tend to watch, apart from one or two who play netball.

SG: So, by the time they're in the upper school; what situation have you got then?

M: It's a really difficult...I don't think you can generalise. I think we're very lucky at the moment, this current year 11 are so incredibly pleasant that you know, in terms of...I wouldn't say that there is anything resembling in particular a hierarchy of kids...whereas last year it was completely different where you had this very, very able group of boys who were on the whole quite unpleasant and very domineering in many senses but who didn't play that many games in school. It's a difficult one.

SG: Yes. It obviously depends on the particular group. Another thing that children liked having was the perception that they are autonomous and they're able to make decisions for themselves. Where do you see children's autonomy starting and finishing in terms of the way you teach? How much freedom do you like to give?

M: I think we do that not just in terms of selecting the activities that they're doing but I think it's right from year 7, in many cases you let kids get the equipment out and get on with things right from the start; let kids go out, you know, get a stick and a ball out, let kids go to your room, and get things- fairly mundane things like that. I think right from year 7 a lot of kids referee, that is extremely important, that you give, you actually give them the power to do the job that an ordinary referee would do, you know, if anybody's spoiling the game...if you're sent off then you're sent off, that's the end of it. You know, people have to have respect for each other in that sense. There's an element that comes from that. There are...even right from year 7 when we give kids the choice of activity that they do and that becomes more important after year 9, certainly year 10 and 11. But year 9 you juggle things around and allow the odd kid who hates playing hockey to do trampolining, etcetera, etcetera. Even subconsciously you do that and then you find just how much the kids enjoyed doing that. Um, even down to things like wearing gloves and wearing the appropriate clothing outside whereas opposed to being forced to do one thing or another. So, in that sense I think it's really very good.

SG: Yes. What do you think the main positive thing that kids take away from PE is?

M: The main thing?

SG: Yes. By the time you've had them for five years and you've had the opportunity to achieve your objective, what is it that they leave with?

M: *The* most important thing...and on another day I might say something different...but the most important thing...I think kids *need* to be confident about their own ability to improve and their own ability to look after themselves and other people.

SG: So, that's the key thing?

M: I would say it's...I mean Julie Smith might say the key thing is that you've taught me to be this good and...but in many senses she's probably wrong in the sense that hopefully I've taught her lots of other things which are more important than her ability to play hockey. When she's thirty she'll probably stop playing hockey but she will still be the sort of person that she is because of hopefully the time that she's spent here.

SG: If you do get sports college status, will that affect what you do within your lessons?

M: It will, I think it will in the sense that it will give us the opportunity to um...to say to kids, what you are doing in the lessons is only a start of what you can achieve and we are only held back by the logistics of the numbers of people and the numbers of pitches and stuff like that. So, if you're teaching kids to play hockey, once a week is better than no times a week, but it's nothing like as good as four times a week, and you know, the things you can achieve by playing more often in terms of fitness, in terms of confidence in terms of independence of going to other schools, organising your own teams...things like that are astronomical and we miss so much. I might say to you that there were thirty nine kids at first year hockey now, you know, somebody might say that's brilliant at twenty to eight in the morning, it probably is and if it had been any more than thirty nine I couldn't cope, but we could have ninety nine playing. If the head said to me well I'm really chuffed with what goes on throughout the school but I want you now to focus on, just on year 7, I could *easily* have five girls teams and five boys teams.

SG: But you need other resources?

M: I need other resources, other people to help me. In many senses, I'd be better off using all my upper school kids to coach the junior school kids, and not play with them at all, because they all play in clubs outside of school anyway. But there are numerous groups of kids who would love to play, if you applied a different sort of pressure or gave them a different sort of opportunity and that's true of everything. Trampolining, we've only got two trampolines...if we had ten trampolines, we could fill the sports hall every night of the week.



SG: So you'd be able to provide that sort of opportunity.

M: Absolutely, to get more kids involved and doing things and provide more opportunities for kids.

**Dave Handley (Head of Department), Interview, 24<sup>th</sup> March**

H: They say things like 'Oh there's a mismatch between things like the heads and the deputies' and between the deputies and the other staff, between the head of department and other people in the department, stuff like that...which actually ignores the fact that those people, when it comes to PE for instance, you would assume, really actually, that I would be slightly ahead of the game.

SG: In terms of...?

H: Well, all the current information always comes to me first...and also because I'm always thinking about what direction we're actually going to go in, whereas everybody else is actually too involved in actually doing it. People in our department don't know; or haven't studied yet, all the assessment criteria that they're going to be doing at Key Stage three...they know it's happening but they haven't read all the words, so you're already moving...there's always that little...there's always a gap.

SG: Is that a problem?

H: No. It's just the way it is. But it is a problem if you're actually writing it as a mismatch ...which is what research is all about...because there's going to be...whenever you go in, there is always going to be...if it was really dramatic you'd be worried. But Head of Department saying 'These are my aims' and nobody else had any idea what they were at all, *then* you'd be worried. But there's always gonna be a little bit of mismatch.

SG: Would you limit that to factors such as you suggested, the new assessment criteria for Key Stage three?

H: Well, at the moment I have in my head, ideas about how we're going to implement the National Curriculum new units. Nobody else has, nobody else has bothered to think about it, but it's already in my mind, how we're going to do it and how we're going to assess it...what would happen if we were a sports college, because the sports college stuff is already in my mind all in my head...it's not in anybody else's head, it's not even in the Head's head...because I'm spending more time with her talking about it, she's got a fair idea of the implications for the whole school. Because one of the things that they're going to do here is quite dramatic...they're going to do away with prefects and all that, and then leadership will become, in Key Stage four in the PSE (Personal and Social Education) curriculum, a core aspect of their work so that every kid in the school will become a leader and they can do sport,

SG: How will the leadership be taught?

H: There will be a core course of leadership skills in PSE, and then, things like ...they would then do things like, they would then do the Junior Sports Leader's Award actually with us, but there'll also be things like um...the duties that prefects do now, will be leadership...there won't be a sort of notion of the old prefect duties...community service and all the rest of it will all be there to change part of the ethos of the school from whereby you have this little group who are expected to do well within the school, so everybody will be expected to.

SG: Do you think that's the sort of ethos that's existing at the moment within the school then?

H: Well, it is, but ...it's not elitist. But things like having prefects gives kids that impression; that the expectations of that group are higher than the expectations of the other kids.

SG: Do you think it gives kids the impression that elitism is a positive thing as well, in that, if you're not part of it, then you need to aspire to it?

H: Probably yeah. One of the things that's happening here is that they're saying, well look, what you've actually got to do is be in a position as a school where you give everybody the opportunity to operate in that way.

SG: Do you aim to do that now within PE?

H: Oh, yes.

SG: How does that affect what you're...if we slit it up, first in terms of your relationship with other staff in the department and then what you do as part of your teaching?

H: My relationship with my department? Do you want to do that first?

SG: Yes please.

H: O.K. In terms of um...my department, I see people in there as professional teachers who will operate in a certain role. I see my role not just as somebody who co-ordinates the department, but necessarily does lead it.

SG: How do you do that?

H: Which is a little bit of a contradiction...or it sounded like a contradiction to what I was just saying, but one of the things that's increasingly apparent in the school...up until a few years ago, I would have said that I was quite happy with the notion that I was the person who as head of department co-ordinates a lot of the things that are going on and we work together, and we discuss things, and we do them and we bumble along and the last five years I'd say that...there is so much coming down from the top...you've got to do this, you've got to do that..

SG: In terms of imposed aims and objectives?

H: Yes, plus things that you want to do for yourselves that you actually have to give some sort of direction to them, otherwise you'd just be snowed under...we'd never actually do anything, we'd be spending all our time discussing things that I find increasingly that I'm saying 'Well, look, I think we should go this way' So if we were introducing something new, I'd go away maybe...it might be me, it might not be me, but it quite often is me...I'd go away and say, right, this is what I think we should do, *then* we discuss it. So we've got some notion...well let's put it this way, we haven't got the time any more to say 'How would you like to do this?', for an awful lot of things. Obviously there are still some things where we can sit down and say, well, how are we going to do this, I mean we might, because of our, the unique set of relationship here between say the objectives of gymnastics and trampolining, within the gymnastics core, we might want to include some trampolining in it, so we might all sit down and say well, O.K. if we're doing that, what aspects of gymnastics can we cover in our trampolining course? And we'll come up with something, but we can't do that with everything any more.

SG: With the restrictions that have been placed on your time; has that come from things like assessments, or increasing teaching hours or some other factors does in emanate from?

H: There are a number of things that are going on in school. Groups are getting bigger, certainly here, you know, in a growing school. So, instead of teaching twenty four, frequently, we're now teaching thirty and there'll be a correspondingly higher level of work. You've got groups getting bigger, you've got people have got more contact time. The amount of things that they're being asked to do and asked to write down and record is increasing all the time and the bureaucracy is without a doubt, becoming more with the number of things that they're doing. Recording isn't a massive problem for us in that, you know, we've been encouraged to do it as economically as we can, but the reality is that there are more letters flying around here there and everywhere, more initiatives going on, and that's the other one- a great deal of management time is taken off for things like bidding for bits of money.

SG: Does that include you?

H: A lot, a lot. This sports college business is actually really taking up the equivalent of two day's work every week and it'll go on like that for months. The bid for the astroturf took donkeys to do. Um, that's another thing, there's things like the individual mentoring of kids that takes up a tremendous amount of time. There's more being done in schools, more being asked of people, without there being ...uh...in industry they have a notion of opportunity costs, have you heard of that term?

SG: Yes.

H: They have this notion of opportunity costs and we haven't acquired that in education yet; we don't actually realise that if you take one opportunity, you have to work out what's going to be lost in actually taking it...it's not in our psychology, it's 'Oh well, teachers can do this, teachers can do that' ...they can't.

SG: Do you think that the failure to accommodate the notion of opportunity costs comes from your own management here or does it...is it endemic in education?

H: The whole of education. Managers in education, all of us as managers from the very top to the very bottom, frequently forget that as soon as we ask somebody to do yet another thing, it means they can't do something else. I personally think that the position of the Secondary School is at a crisis point where we're having a lot of difficulties as schools are getting bigger because they are climbing up again, there's a bulge is that we don't actually spend enough time talking to the kids and it's really hard for people like me to keep up with ...and it's getting harder.

SG: When to talk about talking to kids, are you talking about informal relationships with kids?

H: Both. You know, it's harder for the staff to...if you're teaching thirty and one kid asks you about his homework at the end of the lesson, that's one kid, whereas in the past, when you had about twenty four in the class, you might actually hit a few more kids. Now you're actually finding that teachers are in a position where they're saying I'm sorry I've got to here, I've got to go there... so you're not actually getting that one kid's getting it.

SG: So that additional contact time is getting eroded as your workload goes up.

H: I mean, you see the teachers now um actually scurrying into the staff room because the work-load that they've got is so great that any spare minute that they have, they've got to go and sort of take it while it's there. Whereas in the past, when there was a little bit of slack in the system ...cos people say...managers always have that idea that you shouldn't have slack in the system...it's a work culture in this country that you work everybody to their absolute limit so that you get the most out of them because that's the way that a hierarchical structure of management. And they have that notion that you work everybody flat out and they don't realise that in things like education, that that is actually a serious disadvantage because people who are good at it have always been the people who would talk to youngsters, give a little bit extra and we don't pick up those odd things any more. It's more like here's the system, if you fit in you'll be successful and the rest of you get lost because nobody's going to actually make it slightly different for you; nobody's going to give you individual attention.

SG: Do you...think that those demands that are being placed on you actually achieve the objectives that are being set for you do you think that in the long term they might actually have a detrimental effect?

H: I think...one of the things that's happened is that those demands have changed the culture of schools, has been good um...in that there has been an improvement in some of the content of what actually goes on in lessons, so for some youngsters, that's been good, and the push towards that sort of thing you know, it's a bonus. The difficulty is that that's being done, and the opportunity cost if you like is the fact that there isn't...if you don't actually fit into that mode of working, and this is the case for a lot of youngsters, then you've got a problem because nobody else has got the time to deal with you.

SG: How does that manifest itself in- and I'll use the term advisedly - 'results'?

H: I think what's happening is, that you've got this large mass of youngsters in a school like this who achieve, feel good about themselves and all the rest of it, but you've got a bottom third who always struggle and who don't get enough support in anything they do. They don't get enough support with their literacy, their numeracy, with actually coping with being in the school. Bright kids here still do very well, the middle of the road kids are happy in school, and they're probably could achieve a little bit more, because in very big groups it's hard for teachers to get it to the middle group and the bottom kids that are not getting the support from the system at this school or, as far as I can see, anywhere else.

SG: Does the change in format of the broader picture affect what you do within your actual lesson?

H: I think, I think for me um...there is the broader format that has come down in the form of the national curriculum and stuff like that has actually been um useful cos its actually kept me within a structure and there's actually not an awful lot that I would disagree with.

SG: Does that run through with the changes as well, have you always been happy with it?

H: More or less, yes. I must admit that with the recent move back towards a less games orientated approach at Key Stage four um, I actually quite like because I think it's valuable for certain types of youngsters at that age to give them a bit more opportunity to work in areas that they have strengths in, or enjoy, and I don't think that. I think the notion that everybody likes football, cricket and netball was a farce; it's just never gonna happen in practice. I like John Major's ideas, he did a lot for PE and sport really; he was the only one who ever put it at the top of the agenda but I didn't like the way that he made it out to be just something to do 'til you leave.

SG: So, where do you place the value of PE then?

H: The value of PE? I think PE is valuable to people in lots of ways, one of the problems that anybody like me ever has is putting one way of ...one aspect of PE above another because the aspect of what's at the top would be different for different people. I think it's important to health- I think mental health as well as physical health- I think socially it's very important I think in terms of encouraging people, the whole mass of the population, because they're all experiencing an experience that they wouldn't otherwise. Um...the notion

that health and fitness are linked...I think that's pretty important. I think cognitively, the way that allows youngsters to see you actually thinking about something and then working at it in order to ...practicing it in order to do it is a lesson that goes through...is particularly clear to see in a PE context and actually develops their understanding of how they improve in things generally and ...what haven't I mentioned? Those sort of general um you know, sort of socially, in terms of the health and fitness, challenging their understanding, equipping them with the skills and all the rest of it, to be involved in their leisure is the broad context that I see that PE's all about.

SG: Do you think that the values you see in PE are general values held by other staff in your department?

H: I used to think that PE teachers probably fifteen years ago... I used to think that PE teachers were too self absorbed, too concerned about actually getting good performance to sort of tied up in skills development and not enough, not concentrating enough on un ensuring that the skills development is so that young people can actually take part, participate, be good if they want to, actually develop themselves to the level and that the focus would be on actually giving youngsters something, so less should be about teaching in such a way that you actually are constantly looking for progress and also constantly involving youngsters in what they're doing; they're valuing it planning it and choosing what they're going to do um. These days I think people are much better at actually focusing on the kid and actually making their lessons actually improving kids self esteem and improving their achievement. Differentiation helps and the big push in differentiation came from central Government. Which is because it...because teachers feel that they're under siege all the time from central Government, it's easy to say well, they didn't do anything. But the big push that they made is about achievement, you know if you look over the ten years, achievement, differentiation and ensuring that all kids were involved, and those two things, along with this idea of constantly assessing. When they talked about assessing, everybody got hung up about the recording and there were all these tick boxes and all the rest of it, and they did emphasise that the need for teachers in PE as it filtered down through the system, for teachers to be constantly observing, constantly assessing and it is...good teachers has always seen that as the key thing to actually allowing kids to progress, and those three things actually helped us all, or helped us as a mass, because lots of people were already doing it, um to push things forward.

SG: Are you saying that what that initiative did was to raise... maybe standards is the wrong term ...but to raise the level of teaching?

H: I don't think standards is the wrong term ...we talk about standards as always thinking of exam results. What it did was those things allowed kids to have a greater opportunity than they ever had before to access quality work.

SG: Do you think that was because people had to make a record of each child so there was a check on them?

H: The funny thing about the recording thing was that everybody went on about the recording thing and all the rest of it, but it wasn't the recording thing of it that made them better, it was the fact that they were continually being asked to give assessment.

SG: In being asked to do assessing...was it not the fact that they were recording it that made them do the assessing?

H: Yes, well...it was probably a way of actually making them look at individuals and I find that even people who have been teaching a long time now are much better now than they were ten years ago at setting things up and then looking. I mean I remember back to my training being told to look around and see what's going on, you know, see what individuals are doing; see what little groups are doing to see, observe.. I was taught all this business about, you do your warm up, you get into the main activity, you set something up and you always take two or three minutes out to actually think what's going on. Now, what assessment did was when you were thinking about what was going on, it made you say, well, there's 'Gavin' over there, what level is he at, what do I need to do to make this lesson better for him, and how do I make this lesson better for that group over there? And it made you look much more at what youngsters were actually doing.

SG: So it gave a structure to what you were doing?

H: Yes. And it also lead to this notion that instead of looking at groups, you know whole classes, and thinking, yeah this is alright', they're well behaved or whatever, there's lots of activity going on. It made people sort of look at individuals or small groups and think, well, 'What are they actually learning?'. What progress is taking place? Progress is a good word, we talk about achievement, standards, assessment and all the rest of it, and you...one of the things that went along with assessment was this notion of two weeks ago where were they? And where are they now? Has there been any progress? And that was a good word for teachers because it allowed them to look at kids and think, well, are they getting any better? And also, it made us actually say to youngsters 'Do you realise you're actually getting any better?' you know, because

kids come in don't they and go through this system and quite often with blocks of work that they're doing in something like um, well, any subject, but particularly in things like English and maths, they're going through lengthy blocks of work where they can't actually see that they're getting better, and nobody actually...they probably do now, but certainly when I was at school, nobody actually picked up your English book from when you were in year 7 and showed you it when you're in year 9 and said look at the difference or you know, between the start of one term and the end of another, so you never actually- it was just this sort of thing of work without anyone actually saying to you, 'Do you realise you've done this?' and 'That?', whereas in PE we've got used to doing that, to actually telling kids which is why their self esteem's so much higher.

SG: Do you think that's the core thing that kids take away from PE?

H: I think I feel that one of the things that they take away at this school is that generally speaking, if you look across the whole population of the school, we're quite good at making them feel that PE is for everybody. We don't send out masses of kids at sixteen who can't stand PE.

SG: How do you ensure that?

H: I think we're doing it by initially, when kids come in to year 7 they're made to feel that they're valued. I mean we get to know them. It's little things, you do...there's lots of little tactics that are used around here that people don't even know is happening. You know, like the kids who's not very good at football is often the one that you say hello to when he comes along the corridor. I've had senior teachers in and the deputy head said to me. 'How come all these kids like you?' and the reality is that the kids who are good at sport are going to like you anyway because they're getting lots of things from you but they like PE and they're gonna achieve in it...it's the other people that you have to focus on. It's the little timid kid um...or the sort of recalcitrant girl or whatever, it doesn't matter what you want to call them, and but you don't do that...one you don't do it accidentally, you actually have to mean to do it and you don't do it always in a formal way. Now I came along to the changing rooms today with a girl who's going off to music lesson and she's neither recalcitrant, nor um a particularly talented, she's just a normal kid and she was standing in her badminton lesson and I knew she was leaving in five minutes to go to her music lesson. And, there were four of them waiting to play, and I said to her well, why aren't you playing? You're going in five minutes... get her on. So, she went on and when she came along I said to her, you know, you're year ten, you should be more assertive, you knew you were leaving in five minutes, you should have said hang on, I've got to get on because otherwise I won't get a game. And all those sort of little things that people don't realise how much effort is it to do that. But that's one of the reasons the reasons why teaching big groups of kids and groups are getting bigger and bigger and bigger all the time and there are more and more management things happening. Those are the things that could get chucked out of the window if we're not careful. We don't focus on them as very, very important.

SG: So, presumably, your consciousness of doing that has had to increase.

H: Yes, you've got to make sure that you keep doing it. When your groups are smaller, you do it more naturally, because you know the kids better, when you're teaching *all the time* with *all* big groups coming at you, it's much, much harder. But that's a difference that's been made by assessment as well, because if you're assessing all the time you do actually know them better and know what they need more. That's another reason why this sort of notion about assessing what's going on and reviewing and reflecting all the time. I find new teachers coming out of the colleges much better at that. Because I think that in the last five years, maybe more, but certainly in the last five years, um, they seem to spend...I don't know what they're doing in colleges, that's actually making a difference, but hey do seem to spend much more time um thinking about where kids are, and reflecting on their own work. Particularly, I view it, the emphasis...the students we get for instance, there's a massive emphasis when they're looking at their file about the content of their own evaluation of what went on in lesson- not 'Oh well, your lesson was great' but their evaluations in terms of what the kids did, what was being achieved, what learning was going on...other things that have come out of OFSTED about teaching and learning had focused on those kinds of things; what learning's taking place, you know, what progress has been made, um...as well as you know, the standard things, did the teacher know the subject? Did the teacher have control, all those sorts of things...it...a lot of things...when we look at students, it's not just about their teaching any more, they're about the learning that's taking place. You can teach all day, they don't have to learn anything. But the fact that the focus is on their learning is good news.

SG: In terms of the way the kids interact with each other, one of the things that came out of my work with the kids was that within the groups a kind of hierarchy of status exists. Is that something that you are necessarily aware of or is it something that is more subliminal within the children's culture?

H: We are aware of it.

SG: What do you believe the basis of it to be?

H: I think youngsters have still, it doesn't matter how much you try and phase it out...still have in their heads a notion of the hierarchy in relation to the best people, the best at it...

SG: In PE?

H: Yes.

SG: Is it purely PE skills based?

H: There's lots of other hierarchies going on you know, who's cool and all the rest of it, and all those things.

SG: Is there a relationship between how good at PE and how cool they are at all?

H: Yeah, I mean when you look around this school as a whole you still see that like the 'cool', 'dudey' boys are still the sporty ones and you could be a pretty cool boy in this school without even being especially clever or especially trendy.

SG: ...By being good at PE?

H: By being good at sport, definitely.

SG: So, what would you consider the sphere of influence of PE to be?

H: With the pupils here, at this school?

SG: Yes.

H: Um I think that youngsters have quite a ...it differs with years obviously, but um, but I think youngster here have a wider notion of achieving than they used to and PE still plays quite a strong part in that for a lot of youngsters and surprisingly for quite a lot of girls.

SG: How would you define achievement?

H: Hm O.K, maybe that was the wrong word to use.

SG: Sorry.

H: No, that's fine. Achievement with doing well in things, I use the word in one context there, doing well and being good at a range of things is still seen by the kids as being cool. There are some...there are little sub-groups in that who think that perhaps that doing well is um...doing things badly, bucking the system and all that but um...doing well in PE still definitely gives you a lot of status. One of the things that's clear now is that...well has become clear over a number of year now seems ...is actually doing well for girls in PE has become a status thing as well. Some of the coolest girls are you know...I was walking out with some of the lads to play football one night here and one of them said 'Oh, we've got the best looking hockey team' and it actually does reflect...you know, I had to laugh because it's quite amusing, but the thing is there is definitely a sort of...that sort of thing is quite cool now, so the girls are getting a bit of it.

SG: How do you see that affecting perhaps the 'less cool' kids or the 'less able' kids?

H: It is a problem for some youngsters and ...not many...but there are some youngsters for whom it's more important...if you think of it as being a cool thing for boys to do; it always has been, sport's always been a sort of status thing for boys and I'm not going to go into the sociology of that because you could probably tell me more about that but it's increasingly also becoming the cool thing for girls here...the able girls to do. The biggest problem is that you end up with some youngsters who can actually feel that if you don't work really hard at it, feeling less included, and further removed because quite often those youngsters who are struggling in their literacy and numeracy, or in special needs classes and all the rest of it aren't very able in PE either, so it is important that when they come over here, that those youngsters...and I can rattle off a few names...um...'Peter' ...one of the things is that you can actually rattle them off...Gavin... all the kids who, or a lot of the kids, you can look at lots of kids who are all the kids that are actually getting help with their literacy and numeracy...'Andrew' in year 11, all these kids who are getting special help, when they come over here, they're not particularly able over here either so it's really strange cos you've then got to look at tactics to make sure that they realise, when they come over here that they are achieving; that they are making progress.

SG: How does their behaviour...how does it affect their behaviour?

H: I think generally speaking, if you look at the way youngsters behave over here, over their whole time of the school, I mean we have less problems than most of the school, because there is...PE teachers are actually getting really good at differentiating their work, in a way that I mean I would say that we're light years ahead of people in classrooms...in classrooms you sometimes see bright kids you know not being stretched at all, and then you see some youngster who can't write his name being asked to write two paragraphs of French or whatever and you realise that you know, in PE there's...we are much better at grouping kids, making tasks possible, breaking tasks down...we've always worked with, with the skills content we've always worked with that, we've always worked with the habit of using whole-part-whole and all of that sort of stuff...but we're quite good now at differentiating by outcome as well but you know to the top kids: it should be better than that...it should be quicker or whatever...um sort of instinctively...PE teachers are doing it...now it's become so much part of their work that even when they set up one task what their asking people to achieve at the outcome is so much ...we're better at it.

SG: Does it affect how you group kids in terms of groups that they would work with?

H: Yeah. All the time. I mean, if you look at good PE lessons and quite a lot of them here *are* good PE lessons, there is a constant...it's a conscious, 'Do I want these working in friendship groups now?' do I ...want good kids who've got lots of ability working with less able kids in this particular activity, and it's going on all the time and there's a variety of grouping arrangements going on all the time in relation to what task you're doing. Also there's a deliberate attempt to mix kids up as well so that you haven't always got the...whatever you want me to call them...the bottom set...the bottom set kids always working with bottom set kids you try to make sure it's not always like that. There's a tremendous variety in relation to the task, in relation to um age group I mean quite often with my year 10 basketballers I do work with virtually two different groups, one group that are clearly miles ahead of the other; who have played in school teams and whatever, but at that age they can cope with that much better than they can cope with it in year 7, my less able group know and can accept that that's a reality...it doesn't ...I'm sure that if you spoke to them they wouldn't think that I am useless at this because we've worked up to that point...they know more or less every week, that they're gonna come in and there's gonna be two groups because in one group I've got six foot two inch boys who can do a perfect layup shot, who can play really well and who would just dominate the game, and then the other group I've got some less able boys and four or five girls who haven't got that experience in basketball.

SG: Do the kids respond positively to that?

H: Yes, I think so. I've got one girl in the higher group, so the grouping arrangements are tailored to who you're teaching, their age group, what you're teaching, I mean quite often in racquet games there's nothing worse than being a good player as playing with somebody who can't as Mark would put it hit the rear end of a cow with a banjo...you can't um...nobody's happy. But you can't do that with year 7 kids all the time, you can't have year 7 kids with a notion that the only kids that are going to get any sort of attention are the kids who can annihilate everybody at badminton and everybody else is crap.

SG: Presumably this is also related to age in terms of potential for change?

H: There's potential for change in all of them you know, one of the girls in my year 10 basketball group has to now play with the better ones partly because she's quite tall, she's quite vigorous and um...she's got the determination that even in a game with the better ones she will involve herself so it is ...it's got to be quite fluid but you've got to realise that socially in years 7, 8, 9 you are- the opportunity to be around good performers, poor performers, girls and boys- it's important. But I'd have, and we would all have, more single sex extra curricular activities because they're clearly working. If I put on girls basketball, more of them turn up and ...it's always a debatable decision as to whether you would teach them like that.

SG: Why would you teach them differently?

H: Because socially it's important that ...as a society I think, that youngsters work with both sexes. I think it's important for the way we see gender relations generally, we've got to get ...and in PE it's very important that we've broken down some of the barriers of girls going off in little frilly skirts to their netball lessons and you know standing around for half an hour whilst netball positions are explained to them and I'm deliberately using extremes here! In any discussion you have to make generalisations...but boys who charge in and run around all lesson and never actually learn anything and we're marrying the two of them together better and it is a part of the evolution of PE generally. In the future it might change somewhat but this...at this present time it is very important to us that they're working together.



SG: If kids are left to their own devices to group themselves, is there a particular pattern that they tend to follow? For example if you set your task and they're working in groups of four or five, what pattern would they follow?

H: It would tend to be ...it does change when they get older in that when they're older, they're much more prepared to work with people of their own ability. If you do it in year 7 they will always work with their friends *always* ... regardless of ability and I know that in some of the work in the classrooms here they're doing things that ...like ...some of the English classes are boy-girl-boy-girl just to break it up a little bit. National Curriculum actually asks us to do that anyway. The national curriculum general requirements state that youngsters should be exposed to a variety of grouping arrangements, they specifically have it in the PE curriculum. Um, as they get, also again it's related to the activity by the kids themselves...if you go out to play tennis they start off with their mate and then in ten minutes they're saying I can't stand this, you can't even hit it and then they'll all change. But they are I mean some kids are very reticent to do that.

SG: You've identified kids changing in precise incidents. Will they do that a lot in the belief that you don't know what's happening? Will they try and rearrange the structure of what's going on?

H: They wouldn't do that ...to me they'd know that I'd notice; I've seen them do it to other teachers, and other teachers not noticing...but they'll try to. Particularly in team games; they'll always try to get a strong side, they can't resist it...but they wouldn't do that to Mark ...he's much, much better at it than me. They know he'd spot it right away, if one person moved he'd see it.

SG: In terms of exercising their autonomy and trying to 'get away with it' if they can, in a legitimate sense...the children have identified to me that they like to be in the belief that they are autonomous in the work that they are doing...where do you see the autonomy of kids within the PE lesson beginning and ending?

H: Um it begins and ends with whether it's successful or not! No, there's lots of times where we will give opportunities for that...in many of my gym lessons, they group themselves into groups of five or four and if it's working I'll let it go, and then after a couple of weeks I'll say oh, the groups today'll be two boys and two girls...and work like that because we like to change them around. But there are lots of opportunities...I mean we do things like...quite often in basketball and hockey or whatever, we might want even teams, but you choose the way you're going to do it, for example, if you say 'if you play a lot of hockey in the mornings, put your hands up', and put two this side and two that and then get the others to join a team. There's been some opportunity for choice. There is quite a lot of that, I mean if they go and knock up in badminton. I mean you've seen what they do... they don't come in and get lined up and all the rest of it; they go and get the stuff out and all that because that's all part about the self esteem that we were talking about earlier, about them having ...you can't make kids responsible without giving them the chance to be responsible. They get the stuff out and all that and they'll knock up with their friends. And you just have to be careful, you know, that you don't have the odd person left out.

SG: Is that the main tool through which they're given autonomy i.e. choosing who they work with or can it be done within the activity itself as well?

H: Obviously there's lots of choice of activity at Key Stage four, there is no choice of activity at Key Stage three.

SG: How about within the lesson?

H: Within the lesson...what do you mean by choice of activity?

SG: O.K. If...I guess the easiest way to illustrate it would be within gymnastics where they're set a main objective, but within that they are free to make their own decisions.

H: Um, tasks are set quite often and youngsters will choose at what level they are going to attempt the task and ...you're working with kids autonomy to sort of work up to the level that they want to work at, but you're also pushing kids forward all the time so that once they have chosen you're also going around saying 'You know, you ought to be trying...' and nudging them forward all the time. But it's I mean you can see it frequently in gymnastics lessons particularly because it's the most obvious; in things like basketball, you might have a group on one court doing a full lay up shot and another group...I mean Mark's group he'll say 'If you know you can do this thing, then you ought to be here' and trying to work at it fast or whatever, if you're in the middle court then you're doing it at a walk, if you're on the bottom court then you might be doing it over benches um...and he'll set it up and he'll let the groups, individuals go on whichever one they like so you'll have a differentiation with the task; in tennis it happens a lot.

SG: What do you think the kids gain from working in that way?

H: Well, they think they're taking some responsibility for their own learning for a start, you know, it's just as important for the overconfident kid as it is for the timid kid, and also it allow teachers the opportunity to assess it you know to say 'Don't you think you ought to try that? Don't you think you should be in that group?' and you're not always having to be the directive.

SG: So you can involve them in a decision that in fact you're actually directing them in?

H: What happens is that you're allowing them to see why you're making that decision...you know, if you want to play a game well, you've got to understand the game. You know, they're playing a game aren't they? And the game is, you know, what level should I be at and in the game you're saying to them well really I think you should be in that one.

SG: Most of the work that you do here is successful and you've said before that if kids achieve, then they become more successful albeit at whatever level that's motivational in itself...

H: That's what achievement is.

SG: How ...are there situations where kids have failed, and as a second part to that question, what has been their reaction if they have?

H:...Kids ...if you were being realistic about it, um...kids always achieve and they always fail. If you put...if your criteria for achievement is I'm not as quick as Linford Christie, then I always fail. That sounds like a highfaluting argument, but our kids, it's one of the ways that we try to get our kids to understand what achievement is...progression...and that example is an example that I would use. I would say to kids that well look if I'm doing something I don't compare myself to Linford Christie, because if I compare myself to Linford Christie then I can never achieve, if you compare yourself...in my badminton lesson that I've just had, if you compare yourself to Claire, who's a national badminton player, and some of these examples that we were using in that lesson, she was annihilating *me* to the point where I couldn't even see the shuttle, and that ...being able to be that honest and open with youngsters is even hard for some personalities as teachers.

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