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*Secondary students in two former mining communities: possibilities for the self*

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**Secondary Students in Two Former Mining  
Communities:  
Possibilities for the Self**

Sandra Winifred Kidd

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
of Sheffield Hallam University for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy

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## **Abstract**

This thesis was prompted by student working class underachievement in GCSE examinations at two secondary schools in two former mining communities, located in North East Derbyshire and North Nottinghamshire during the period 1995-2002. Reid's analysis of social class in Britain, (1998), whilst acknowledging a connection between educational achievement and individual ability, states, 'Educational experience and achievement are clearly related to social class' (page187). I propose that a particular working class culture was the all encompassing meaning making framework in locally produced identities, masculinities and femininities.

The sense of self/identity of the research participants, notably that of the students, framed by the lived experience of class (the socio-economic, cultural, emotional, psychic reality of a particular class experience) maintained by resilient and powerful local language/discourse, at particular temporal and spatial points, is central to my exploration of the opening up of possibilities for the self in the life chances of the students.

The study compares and contrasts the experiences of majority working class students to minority working class students and middle class students via an examination of the inter-relationship between sense of self/identity and local perspectives upon time, space and personal narrativity. The thesis argues that students who combined immersion in local productions of self/identity, such as localised definitions of masculinity and femininity, with a predominantly episodic relationship to schooling/education time and a predominantly territorial relationship to space, the majority working class view, points to both a lack of educational engagement and academic success at GCSE, and thence to the closing down of life chances.

The conceptual framework for this thesis is provided by postmodern and feminist thought which foregrounds our existential reality as crucial to understanding our way of being in the world. Bourdieu's concept of the habitus is utilised to demonstrate how, when a particular habitus interacts with a particular relationship to time and space, possibilities for the self are opened up or closed down. Since being and becoming in time and space are a central focus of this research, much ethnographic data is drawn on; the methodology used is therefore almost wholly qualitative.

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# **Introduction**

## **0.1 Opening remarks**

The purpose of this introductory chapter is twofold: firstly I offer a purely discursive account of my personal experiences of schooling, which offers insights into how I began to think about this thesis. I point up how issues such as class and gender as well as the influence of family and peer groups led me to open up possibilities for my self and life career trajectory other than those inscribed in local texts of class and femininity. I draw on my personal experiences as a student, teacher, parent and mature student, which led me to reflect upon how social class/cultural status of school communities, families and peer groups permeate students' sense of self/identity and are implicated in their chances of achieving academic success.

The second purpose of the chapter is to introduce the thesis via a discussion of the key research question and an outline of each chapter.

## **0.2 A personal narrative**

### **0.2.1 As a student**

This is a purely discursive account of my personal experiences of school as a student, teacher and parent. It offers some of the reasons which led to this present study. As such, it consists wholly of my opinions, beliefs and ideas. Two fundamental issues underlie those experiences: class and gender.

I recall what it meant to be female and from a working class family when I started junior school, where I was placed in the higher of two streams. As a child who always came in the top ten in assessment tests, and who had a positive attitude towards school, I was devastated when the eleven plus results came through and I was assessed as a borderline case. A boy in a similar position was granted the remaining place at the local grammar school. I was informed that this was because boys mature later and that he was therefore more likely to go on to university. Further, he was more likely to receive parental support because he was from a middle class home.

I was fortunate to be offered a governor's place at a comprehensive school within reasonable travelling distance of my home. I was placed in one of the top two streams

and made steady progress. I found the lessons rather boring, however, because the teaching style was very didactic. My reports often read ‘a very hard-working girl but of average ability’. After gaining good ‘O’ level examination results, I determined to follow the example set by two close friends, who had decided that they (as had I) wanted to break away from their working-class backgrounds, and use academic success in order to achieve this ambition. I gained a place at university, the first in my family to do so, as were a female friend who gained a place at Oxford, and a male friend who went to a Welsh university. The fathers of these friends were both mineworkers. In retrospect, the major influences on the formation of my attitudes towards secondary school were primarily my friends, rather than teachers or parents.

### **0.2.2 Beginning teaching**

When I took up my first teaching post in September 1975, in a mixed comprehensive school in central Rotherham, I found that little had changed since my school days. The curriculum content and teaching and learning styles were very similar to my own school-day experiences. I soon realised that at this school, peer group culture seemed to be a much more important influence upon the formation of student attitudes than were teacher and parent attitudes. In an attempt to improve student attitude and raise some students’ achievements, I gave priority to the process rather than the content in my teaching. I found that relating to the students as fellow subjects rather than imparting knowledge of my subject disciplines did much to improve their attitudes towards me as a teacher, but not necessarily towards schooling or education.

I was also concerned about the assessment system used both in this Rotherham school and in a school where I taught more recently. In both schools, students in mixed ability groups were placed in rank order and a normal distribution curve was worked out for each group. Obviously, this system was unfair and unsound for such small samples. In the second school I refer to, the headteacher was adamant that the school should use that method of assessment, despite its intrinsic unfairness and the objections of some staff. Any teachers who were strongly opposed to such procedures (as I was) faced disciplinary action. Ultimately, staff either agreed to operate the system, or they sought employment elsewhere. I experienced great difficulty attempting to explain and justify to some students why they had gained a final grade different to that which their overall class performance had indicated. I believe that there is no sound reason for assessing

children in this way; I think it is highly possible that it could have negative effects upon student attitudes and self-esteem.

When working in Rotherham and in schools elsewhere, I have become aware of a significant number of students, usually boys, who become disaffected and adopt negative attitudes towards schooling because they perceive that they are unable to achieve success. They feel also that the subjects they are studying have little relevance to their lives. For some teachers the priority is often to cover the curriculum content at the expense of other factors, such as developing good interpersonal relationships with students, and developing more meaningful systems of assessment.

I have a great deal of sympathy with some students, particularly those of average and below average attainment, who can see little point in studying to pass formal academic examinations. Such negative attitudes are reinforced by a number of factors. Primarily, peer group pressure can be a very powerful force. Secondly, parental experiences of schooling can shape attitudes. My father's own unfortunate school experiences prevented him from understanding why I should wish to stay on at school for further study after the completion of my 'O' levels. He felt that working in Woolworths would be more beneficial to my future career. Thirdly, teacher stereotypes of students, students' siblings and their families can affect teacher and student attitudes. Finally, misguided and unfair assessment policies, both in school and nationally, can have deleterious effects upon student self-confidence and self-esteem.

### **0.2.3 Experiencing school as a parent**

How some of those factors can affect student attitude was reinforced in me when I became a parent. My son quite enjoyed school at the outset, but in his second year of infant school he was taught by a teacher who used "humour" to establish good relationships with her students. Some of this included name-calling and mockery. My son did not share the same sense of humour and had to be forced physically into her classroom. A year of anguish followed. Another school was considered. My son insisted that he would rather suffer the teacher than be separated from his school friends. In Year 9 at secondary school his particular choice of GCSE subjects was strongly determined by teacher attitude towards him and by his enjoyment of the subject content. A final consideration has been what friends have chosen.

#### **0.2.4 Returning to teaching after the 1988 Education Reform Act**

I returned to teaching a few years after the birth of my son. Since then, I have worked in several Derbyshire schools at both primary and secondary levels. A number of reforms were introduced during this period, notably those entailed by the terms of the 1988 Education Reform Act. In addition, GCSEs replaced ‘O’ levels and CSEs; and some vocational qualifications and the TVEI initiative were introduced. Through records of achievement, students became more involved in assessing their own progress. Although those innovations were intended to improve upon what had gone before, there are still serious concerns about student achievement, disaffected students (including exclusions), the precise nature of curriculum content, and the social and moral purposes of education. I share those concerns, and I felt that the school where I was working from April 1996, could be a rich research resource, from which I could explore further some of the issues I raised when studying for an MA in Communication.

My final dissertation for my MA was entitled “Perceptions of Secondary School.” It examined the effects of students’ perceptions of secondary (and primary) school upon their attitudes towards secondary schooling, which drew on findings from a local primary school where I had worked as a supply teacher, and from a local comprehensive school, where I had also worked. My conceptual framework was informed by postmodern philosophy theories, particularly the works of Foucault.

#### **0.2.5 The genesis of this thesis**

The beginnings of this thesis date from the time when I began to work at the Academy\*, in the spring term of 1996, in Burnside\* (a staunchly working class community), as well as reflect upon the findings from my MA dissertation. The Academy was regarded locally as a “tough” and “challenging” school, with a great many de-motivated and underachieving students. Whilst I was aware of these negative labels I was also aware that there were many “able” and “creative” students, whose interest in schooling (and education) began to wane, usually from Year 9 onwards. I gained a post at Prioryfields\*, in Graftby\*, in January 2000; as I had discovered when working at the Academy, I soon realised that students who lived in Boyston\*, (another staunchly

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\* Pseudonyms were used for my two study schools and their associated communities.

working class community), and who comprised a substantial segment of the school population, received similar negative labellings as their peers at the Academy.

The “official” discourses at the two schools accounted for the lack of examination success by reference to the predominantly working class catchment areas. However, my experiences as a student, teacher and researcher informed me that an exploration and understanding of the lived experiences of the students as well as that of their significant others, could offer a more rational explanation for why these two particular schools and their students were perceived as academic “failures.”

### **0.2.6 Reflecting and being reflexive**

When I reflected upon my personal history I realised that it was at some point in my secondary school career that I became predisposed to open up possibilities for my future life career; I chose to de-align from a way of being in the world, specifically that imposed upon me as a result of the social space which I occupied as well as the schooling processes which I encountered. The social space I occupied was laden with class markers, lack of economic capital, lack of linguistic capital, lack of cultural capital, which weighed against me (and others) in the process of schooling.

I have reflected upon my personal history of schooling and I have been reflexive over the years in my teaching career, which began in 1975, in my attempts to meet with students on an existential level; my attempts that is to understand some aspects of their lived experience, viewing them as fellow subjects and not simply objects of knowledge. My reflections and my reflexivity with the students whom I have encountered have led me to question what the purpose of schooling can be when the school site becomes the locus for the opening up and closing off of positions, the location in which hopes are offered up to realise a future career trajectory for some, but ultimately a space in which the effects of class and gender operate to exclude from the inside. Bourdieu has termed those excluded individuals ‘outcasts on the inside’ (Bourdieu, 1999, page 425).

## **0.3 Introduction to the thesis**

### **0.3.1 The key research questions**

This thesis is concerned with how a particular relationship to temporality and spatiality affects our understanding and way of being in the world as well as pointing to a sense of self/identity framed by social class/culture. In my two case study schools I explore how being immersed in resilient male dominated former mining communities, which retained powerful notions of masculine and feminine identity, permeated the two school communities and interacted with schooling processes there to open up different possibilities for the self in the lives of some students.

I therefore centralise social class/culture as integral to understanding sense of self/identity, especially local masculinities and femininities. I examine how they interacted with a particular relationship to time and space through the lives of the students and their families. The key questions were therefore:

*To what extent does a former mining culture, resilient in time and space, influence sense of self/identity in the lives of both working class and middle class students (and their families)?*

*How far is it true that a particular relationship to schooling and education time, and space, framed by class/culture, interacting with sense of self/identity is implicated in differing career trajectories for majority working class students compared to minority working class students and their middle class peers?*

### **0.3.2 Chapter outlines**

The first chapter establishes the contextual framework of the thesis, that of two former mining communities. It comprises ethnographic data, autobiographical accounts and my observations. The impact of crucial historical events (national and local) as well as powerful local language/discourses, reveal a localised sense of self/identity. A first view of the two study schools along with my reflections and reflexions closes the chapter. This discussion establishes both the context and base for the theorising that follows.

Chapter two examines the theoretical debates relating to class, class/culture and self/identity. I outline why the issue of class is still important and pertinent to an

understanding of academic success and failure. Whilst I acknowledge the debates relating to the relationship between class structure and culture, my discussion centres on class as a cultural phenomenon by drawing on works from the tradition of cultural studies, such as those of Williams (1977), Hall (1990) and Rutherford (1990). I examine the nature of self/identity through its representation from within particular histories, culture and language. Here I incorporate the ideas of postmodern thinkers such as Foucault (1977), and postmodern feminists, such as Weiner (1994). Attempts to define postmodernism have led to much debate in academic circles (see Usher and Edwards, 1994, page 6). Usher and Edwards (1994, page 6 and following) argue that a definition in the case of 'postmodernism' is 'neither entirely possible nor entirely desirable' because postmodernism, by its very nature, is complex and multiform, defying attempts at simplistic and reductive explanations. I view postmodernism as a broad term encompassing cultural discourse, social practices and attitudes as well as a mode of analysis. It was therefore entirely appropriate in assisting my analyses of a complex social "reality" as was my utilisation of Bourdieu's works, for example, (1977), (1984), (1990), (1992) and (1993), which bring structure and agency together into a unified model of classed self/identity.

In chapter three I give an account of my research methodology, founded in the contextual and theoretical framework and outlined in the preceding chapters, which permeates this whole thesis. I offer an explanation for my choice of a predominantly qualitative research methodology and how I applied this type of research methodology to my thesis. I also discuss case study design and the incorporation of ethnographic data as well as my reflections and reflexions leading to my hopes for social justice.

The research methods discussed in chapter four reflect the orientation of the preceding chapters. This chapter reflects upon my desire to achieve conscious reflexivity in a research practice that became a spiritual exercise because of its protracted nature and some misunderstandings at the Academy between the Headteacher and myself regarding my role as researcher. A first meeting with the interview participants is included in tabular form.

Chapters five to nine present the research analysis. Chapter five introduces and explains a key contention of this thesis: time associated with schooling and education viewed as

either linear or episodic. This contention draws on Foucauldian concepts (1974) such as ‘epistemes’ and ‘field histories’ to compare and contrast the majority middle class and minority working class relationship to school related time as linear with the majority working class view of school related time as episodic interacting with student sense of self/identity to explore the notion of opening up of life chances. Chapter five examines this contention specifically through time related to schooling and education.

In chapter six my contention is explored further via student relationships towards out of school time. I draw on Bourdieu’s concept (1977) of the habitus to illustrate how a combination of sense of self/identity and a particular relationship to schooling and education time act to constrain or support the opening up of life chances. A discussion of student socialisation time points to how the majority working class view of time associated with schooling and education as episodic, combines with submersion in local masculinities and femininities to close down possibilities for the self.

By adopting the thinking of Foucault and Bourdieu I draw on seemingly different theoretical perspectives: Foucault for his attention to “free-floating” discourses and Bourdieu for his more immediate engagement with the materially grounded conditions of existence. However, Foucault’s major thinking; his analyses of the emergence of asylums, hospitals and prisons (1970, 1979, 1981, 1982) examines the materially grounded discursive conditions of their possibility as well as how relationships within social formations are infected by the power/knowledge nexus which in modern forms of governance, at the macro and micro-levels of society, leads to the re-inscription of more symbolic (as opposed to actual) acts of violence via normalisation, regulation and surveillance. Bourdieu’s thinking is also relational (Bourdieu, 2001); central to his philosophy is the two-way relationship between objective structures (those of social fields) and incorporated structures (those of the habitus) and the constitution of social difference constituted within their interaction. Bourdieu argues that since social agents are situated in a site of social space defined relative to other spaces (for example, above, below) and by the distance separating it (space) from them (agents), a hierarchical society is produced in which social distances are disguised by the ‘naturalization effect’ (Bourdieu, 1999, page 124). Social space is thus inscribed in physical space, reflecting the material conditions of existence (for example, type of

house, geographical location) and affirming the oppositions that give rise to a symbolic system of distinction where power is asserted and exercised as symbolic violence.

Chapters seven and eight explore the second key contention of this thesis: space viewed as transference or territoriality. I argue that the majority middle class view and minority working class view of space as transference, combined with a linear relationship towards schooling time as well as student attempts to supplant local masculinities and femininities, is likely to open up life chances. In contrast I argue that the majority working class relationship to space as territoriality combined with an episodic relationship towards schooling time and submersion in local masculinities and femininities acts to close down life chances.

Chapter seven introduces and discusses the notion of the geography of class through a rationalisation of space as co-presently objective and subjective. A description of the two geographic locations is given prior to an examination of the social spaces encompassed therein. Acts of surveillance and powerful local discourses merge to form hierarchies of place/space, distinction and difference in place/space culminating in shrinking spatial horizons for the majority working class students.

Chapter eight concentrates on relationships to the space for education. I outline local “readings” of the education space, including staff discourses which point up distinction and difference associated with place/space discussed in the preceding chapter as well as serving as indicators of support for schooling and education. The final part of the chapter examines the masculinisation of school space and how that space is experienced from different positions, for example, from being female and as a result of membership of a particular grouping such as peer group.

In chapter nine I utilise personal narratives as an analytic tool to afford further insights into the students’ relationships to schooling time and place/space interacting with sense of self/identity. Selected student narratives are recounted to demonstrate the impact of personal, intimate, local and national histories as well as social context functioning as real presence and presents in narratives to constitute sense of self/selves in being and becoming, in time and space.

Chapter ten concludes this study in the form of my revisiting the preceding writings. I reflect upon the reasons for this research and make some comments upon the histories of the Academy and Prioryfields following my departure after reviewing my epistemological framework and the analyses which contain my claims to knowledge. The chapter ends by highlighting the utility of re-theorising class via ethnography, some suggestions for further research pointing to the class rules that seem to operate in schooling today and my plea for social justice in schooling and education.

# **Chapter 1: Culture and Context**

## **1.1 Establishing the context of the thesis**

### **1.1.1 Opening remarks**

This chapter provides the foundation for the theoretical debates and claims to knowledge which follow it. It draws on ethnographic data, intimate, personal and autobiographical accounts as well as my observations to lend some insights into the “worlds” of two former mining communities and the two associated research schools. It foregrounds a particular working class mining culture sustained and validated through time and space via powerful and resilient forms of local language, discourse and other symbolic practices to impact upon sense of self/identity in providing a meaning-making framework for lived experience. For many of my research participants this culture was the very ground of being and base for becoming.

### **1.1.2 The rationality of mining culture**

The towns of Burnside and Graftby, especially Boyston, still retained the characteristics of a former mining culture. My interview data and data from commentators such as Dubberley (1988) and Massey (1994) describe mining as a harsh, demanding and dangerous job based on a clear division of labour. Men had to be tough to withstand the physical demands of mining; there was risk to life and the shared risks contributed to a particular form of male solidarity and the endowment of male manual labour with the attributes of masculinity and virility, often exemplified in fighting and drunkenness by some male members of the communities, including certain male students.

The shared dangers and camaraderie at work led to shared interests between men outside work; a shared pit language, shared pubs and clubs, a shared interest in union and political matters as well as in leisure activities. Women were disallowed entry to these male-shared places and spaces of work and non-work. The male wages were the single source of money. Whilst miners were oppressed by their working conditions, they were not oppressed at home; they were masters there and in many areas of social and economic life.

When new jobs arrived on the industrial and trading estates many women, and young unemployed males were a likely target as a source of cheap labour. Some men

perceived these new jobs as a threat to male patriarchy; there was a discourse in Burnside and Boyston which called for “proper jobs” and “real investment” in the community. Thus some men, whether employed or unemployed, still refused to take responsibility for helping in the house and bringing up their children, because it was counter to established patriarchal practices, as well as an affront to male dignity. In this way, a highly patriarchal past in which men were positioned as the primary breadwinners and women as homemakers was extended into the present. Since local cultural and discursive practices positioned women in the home, for some families education posed a serious threat to a way of life in which women were expected to provide the next generation who would maintain this culture.

The close knit co-operative culture of miners at work was expressed outside work in the way families stayed in the local area and socialised together, as well as in the politics of the local community. In Bourdieu’s terms (1984) the cultures of Burnside and Boyston reflected the orientations of their particular habitus whose predispositions were really prejudgements about their culture and social spaces. Their habitus was the unreflexive and routinised background practices of the ‘judgements of taste’ (Bourdieu, 1984) which were the very essence of cultural and social life in an immediate and proximate spatial sense.

### **1.1.3 The impact of the 1984 miners’ strike**

Local narratives, both oral and written, have recounted the miners’ strike (Hayes and Hemmings, 1985, Beynon, Hudson and Sadler, 1991). The resulting pit closures brought some communities closer together, particularly in Burnside. When smaller neighbouring pits closed, those miners came to work at Burnside colliery; they also brought with them their own identity in the form of distinctive words and phrases.

The miners’ strike also brought some sections of the local communities and some families together as a more cohesive whole; there was a new role for women, running soup kitchens and holding protest marches. Several narratives tell of the independence, the “fighting spirit” of the miners and their families, the fierce pride felt by the children who supported their fathers’ actions in the strike. Those experiences and emotions were captured in some of the poetry written by students at the time.

“I’m innocent,” my father said,  
It’s proved I did no wrong,  
But yes he had, he’d been on strike,  
On strike for far too long.  
They’ve sacked my Dad you know,  
But I’m proud of him (Hoyle and Hemmings, 1985, page 49).

However, despite the support given to the strike by some miners’ wives there were no women’s names mentioned in the mining history books, which glorified the “fighting miner.” The traditional roles of wives and daughters, that of waiting on their husbands, fathers and brothers, soon superseded the temporary roles, which they had occupied during the strike period.

#### **1.1.4 The material imprints of the miners’ strike**

As a result of pit closures following the miners’ strike, there was high unemployment along with its associated social problems, particularly in Burnside and Boyston. A high proportion of former mineworkers was unable to work due to limiting long-term illness; this was experienced by a proportionately higher number of males than females. Many men did jobs “on the side,” they had “lost the will to work.” According to my data many women had to take part-time work and consequently had less time to help their children to learn to read and write and fathers did not perceive this as part of their role.

A significant number of fathers tended to support their sons who refused to work at school because it was perceived as being “pointless” since they were going to be unemployed after leaving school. Such perceptions resulted in some students leaving both schools with few qualifications and a serious lack of skills. Figures compiled for the Learning and Skills Council show that the Graftby work force has significant skills shortages. This means that the area, which also suffers unacceptably high levels of unemployment, cannot supply workers for jobs being created in the district (extract from the Graftby Courier, 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2001). Thus a significant proportion of students at both schools were experiencing social and economic deprivation.

There were indications that some students were experimenting with drugs as a means of escaping what was a bleak social reality for them; this was particularly prevalent on parts of the Boyston estate.

A roomful of ex-miners and their families sat in tears this week as a neighbour haltingly described the latest agony to befall Britain's former coalfields. Five young people have died from a "modern plague" of heroin abuse in the string of villages round Graftby whose names, such as Boyston, recall the lost battles of the 1984-1985 coal strike (extract from a national newspaper, 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2002).

Boyston (as well as Burnside) was especially affected both materially and immaterially because the local community could perceive no logical reason for the closure; the coal reserves were good as was the ability to extract coal, and the rail system to the power stations also worked efficiently.

### **1.1.5 The immaterial imprints of the miners' strike**

The personal narratives, poetry, local histories and archival material, which informed of the material imprints of the miners' strike, were taken up in the individual and collective consciousness of the local community to leave their immaterial imprints. The consciousness of historical events was transmitted through successive generations such that encounters with it impacted directly upon lived day-to-day existence, the ordering of reality and sense of self/identity.

Some former miners, certain of them fathers of the students in my study groups, recalled the days when they were guaranteed a well paid job down the pit after leaving school. They did not expect that after leaving school their children would have to undertake further training before they could expect a decent wage. They compared their situation to that of their sons. Men and women in both Burnside and Boyston recalled the days when employment for both sexes was easy to gain, a job was guaranteed to them on leaving school. Many parents at both my study schools left school and went straight into work; males in the coal mines and females in the local hosiery factories. In the past whole families had worked in the coalmines and local hosiery factories. This meant not only the expectation of a job but working with family members and/or relatives after leaving school. Such "structures of feeling" inhabited the consciousness of some students, particularly the boys; it had also become rationalised in discourse (see chapters following).

### **1.1.6 Classed places and spaces**

In Burnside and areas of Graftby such as Boyston, the consciousness of the past, which inhabited the present, resulted in local communities composed of homogeneous, white working class families, many of whom had lived there for generations and were related to each other. When this combined with the geographical isolation of Burnside and the social insularity of Boyston, classed places and spaces resulted.

These places bore distinct classed features: scars of former pit workings (on the site of which industrial units were located), former pit houses, council estates, terraced rows, some old stone cottages, very few new modern private housing, as well as the effects of socio-economic deprivation such as graffiti, litter, vandalism.

These places were the sites of multiple identities (classed, gendered, sexed), in which individuals and groups were constituted and from which they constituted themselves. Identities were received, recreated, occasionally contested and rejected. Cotterrell's findings (1996) resonate with mine:

Preference for others similar to oneself may also be actively fostered by particular communities and families, so that the racial, ethnic, and class values and beliefs of one generation are maintained by the next (Cotterrell, 1996, page 59).

It was in the fusion of geographical location, the social arenas thus encompassed and particular localised formations, such as discourses and cultural practices, that the symbolic and emotional spaces existent within the two sites were revealed. Those sites were the products of the lived material conditions of a particular geographical, social and historical location as well as the of local discourses which were infused with those particular power/knowledge formations so readily associated with local (and national) "truths" relating to demonised communities and their associated schools as well as local class cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity.

### **1.1.7 Demonised schools? The historical legacy of the two study schools**

By association with the communities which they served as well as their lowly position in national league tables, both study schools had received some "demonisation," especially the Academy. The historical legacy of the two schools, embedded and

embodied in local families and certain long standing staff members, revealed dissonances between their schooling experiences (pre-comprehensivisation as well as more recent changes consequent upon the 1988 Education Reform Act) and their present experiences, since their positive memories of schooling combined with positive identities formerly generated by the two schools had been overlaid with negative images as well as perceptions of discrepancies between the needs of the students and the schooling processes available to them.

### **1.1.8 The Academy**

The Academy had occupied two sites; buildings for the first two years were located in the town centre with the upper three years and the sixth form housed in the present buildings, located on a high ridge on the outskirts of town. When the students' parents had attended the school it had a good reputation locally as a successful grammar school, drawing students from a wider geographical area than in the present; students from a nearby small town and further outlying villages attended the school.

In the local reorganisation of schools in the 1970s and the 1990s, the Academy became a comprehensive and then a community school; it lost its sixth form. Further, the loss of former grammar school students to nearby and more distant schools also meant a loss of status for the Academy; this was a source of disappointment and disapproval for some Burnside parents since they had been proud of the education which they had received at the Academy with the option to stay on in the sixth form.

The loss of the sixth form and the acquisition of comprehensive status resulted in a local discourse which ascribed negative qualities to the Academy. The new "comp" soon established a "bad" reputation, which is still maintained. Further, since becoming a comprehensive there had been very few former students who had gone onto higher education. The Panda (Performance and Attainment) Index for 1998 revealed that there were 3% of adults with a higher education qualification living in the Academy's catchment area. Students who aspired to study 'A' levels had to journey to other towns where there were colleges or sixth forms; discourses relating to cost of travel as well as the loss of income from possible work related earnings and local definitions of identity then operated as material and immaterial barriers, which served to close down opportunities. Although a few Burnside families were able to support their children's

aspirations to go onto college and university, they recognised that this was not a realistic aspiration for some students because of the lack of economic resources. For people receiving state benefits, allowing their children to study 'A' levels was not a viable option.

The negative connotations which had become associated with the Academy over time had been taken up by staff, some of whom had not chosen to work at the Academy; in the local reorganisation of Derbyshire schools in the early 1990s, when staff had been redeployed from other local schools, being redeployed to the Academy was perceived as drawing the short straw for many. Other staff, some of whom had chosen to work at the Academy, soon became aware of the history of the local area, as well as that of the school; this led to negative perceptions and short stays for some staff especially when combined with low GCSE results and what they perceived to be negative aspirations amongst many students. Some Academy staff were expecting an academic institution and were disappointed when they found this was not so.

Yet, paradoxically, despite changes in status, the school remained a physical and emotional symbol of Burnside's identity. It was a tangible link with past times and contemporary reality because it was the site of shared meanings within the local community. Some Burnside parents believed that the school played a large part in local community affairs; they saw it as a link between the young and the old.

### **1.1.9 Prioryfields**

The connectedness of the past with the present as embodied within the school was also found when I reviewed the history of Prioryfields. In the 1960s there were two schools for students aged between five and fourteen on the Prioryfields site. This provided education for local children.

In 1962 Prioryfields began as a grammar school; students came from a wide area to attend. In 1965 a secondary modern school, Manvers, was opened in separate buildings behind the grammar school and backing onto the Boyston estate. In 1970 the two were combined to form the present comprehensive school. On amalgamation the headteacher of the grammar school became the new head. The grammar school teachers invariably took up the academic posts and the secondary modern staff were appointed to the

pastoral jobs. Further, physical boundaries were drawn up to mark the catchment area of Prioryfields as well as the other two local comprehensive schools which had been built.

It was at this point in the school's history that staff and those parents who had attended Prioryfields as a grammar school detected a change in both the physical appearance of the school buildings as well as the ethos. It was felt that there was a change in attitude towards schooling; in the Manvers building grammar school students (now parents) felt frightened because of a different "atmosphere" as well as the presence of graffiti.

As in the case of the Academy when it became comprehensive, negative connotations were attached to Prioryfields. Parents who had attended Prioryfields as a grammar school felt the school had changed, not themselves; they talked about "culture shock."

Prioryfields and Manvers had both served their respective communities well; before the school boundaries had been redrawn, children from a wide geographical area had attended Prioryfields grammar. The mines had served as an incentive to those Manvers students who had left school to work in the mines but who also attended technical college two days a week to be trained as surveyors.

As well as effects upon the student population in terms of increased numbers the new comprehensive Prioryfields affected the perceptions of the staff; both ex grammar and ex secondary staff had to adjust to the different paces at which students worked in a comprehensive school. The negative perceptions, which staff associated with Prioryfields as a comprehensive school, were reinforced when the new headteacher instituted a regime of standardised testing. In the mid 1970s the standard test scores were well below average. The mathematics scores were in the region of 92, which was a significant difference from the norm of 100. To be assessed as a "normal" school a range of 98-100 was expected; the "poor" intake from those early days of comprehensivisation was still maintained.

As in the case of the Academy the identity associated with the school, which had been grounded in the history of the school and its associated communities, when combined with low academic achievement at GCSE and a limited history of higher education in the local community (the Panda Index, 2000, stated that Prioryfields catchment area had

14% of adults with a higher education qualification), impacted upon staff turnover in a deleterious way as well as upon those middle class parents who chose to send their children to other schools, some of which were private institutions.

### **1.1.10 A first view of my two research study schools**

#### 1.1.10.1 The Academy

The empirical findings which inform this thesis were gained from two comprehensive schools, where I worked as a Humanities teacher and Head of RE, during the period April 1996 to July 2002. My primary source of data, in chronological terms, came from the Academy, Burnside, where I worked from April 1996 to December 1999. A profile of the school and its environs now follows.

The town near which the Academy is situated is a small market town in Derbyshire situated close to the border with Nottinghamshire. Geographically the town is quite isolated in that no major roads pass through it. Therefore, anyone visiting the town is probably journeying there with specific intent.

The school is a mixed community school for pupils in the 11-16 age range. It lost its sixth form in the local reorganisation of schools, which took place in 1991. There are approximately 800 pupils with about thirty more boys than girls. During the time period under consideration there were no ethnic minority pupils. The school takes its pupils from the town and adjacent colliery communities. In 1993 the town's colliery, the only major employer within the school's catchment area, closed down. Since then social deprivation has risen within the local community. The unemployment rate in 1995 of more than 50% was significantly higher than the national average.

Approximately 33% of students were eligible for free school meals, a figure well above the national average. Sixty pupils had statements of educational need, almost 8% of those on roll. This figure is more than double the local education authority average. In 1995 there were 62 instances of temporary exclusions. Two pupils were permanently excluded. The attainment of students on entry to the school was well below the national average: Key Stage 2 test results for pupils who entered school in 1995 indicated that a large majority attained standards well below the national average. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' test scores were well below the national average in English,

Mathematics and Science. Ofsted inspectors who visited the school in November 1996 noted that in these three subjects at Key Stage 4 attainment was ‘unsatisfactory in most lessons’ and ‘in almost half of these it was poor.’

Since the reorganisation of the school, the GCSE results have risen steadily. However, the proportion of students who obtained five or more A-C grades at 14.6 % in 1995 was well below the national average. In terms of A-C grades gained, girls achieved better results than boys in most subjects. The Ofsted inspectors noted that this gender difference was greater than in most other schools inspected. The GCSE results for 1996 showed a slight improvement with 17.3 % of students gaining five or more A-C grades. Again, girls achieved a much higher proportion of higher-grade passes than the boys did: 21.3% compared to 13.9%. The total number of students gaining five A-G passes was 78.9%, but with the boys (83.3%) gaining more than the girls (73.8%). GCSE results in 1997 were lower than those of the previous year. The five or more A-C figure was 16.6%, achieved by equal numbers of boys and girls. The five A-G pass figure was 73.4%. In general terms, the girls achieved slightly better results than the boys. In 1998, the GCSE results showed the biggest improvement since 1990, when data collection had begun. 26% of students gained five or more A-C passes, and 82% of students gained five or more grades A-G. Girls outperformed boys again. In 1999, the year in which my study group of 51 students sat their examinations, GCSE results (of higher grade passes) had dropped again. 16% of students gained five or more A-C passes, and 89% gained five or more A-G passes. (The results for my group of interview students are to be found in the Appendix).

When consideration is given to the low percentage pass rate in the higher levels of GCSE it is perhaps not surprising that the proportion of students staying on in post 16 education is much lower than the national average. In general, few Academy students gain high enough ‘A’ level passes to allow them to continue their education to university level.

At the interview for my post at the Academy, I was given the impression that the school was a challenging one in which to work. The students were lively, with limited concentration spans, but they were willing workers when given the right encouragement. Since the school had the highest proportion of students with learning

difficulties in Derbyshire, I was not to expect academic excellence in many students. However, on the plus side I would be rewarded with positive and warm relationships with the youngsters.

I found that the impressions I was given at my interview were largely true. The children were demanding, some with little confidence and self-esteem. Lessons needed to be carefully planned to account for the wide range of ability within any one class. A significant number of students, particularly at Key Stage 4 and amongst the boys, had low expectations of themselves. Although relationships were rewarding, some of the behaviour exhibited by the students was very challenging on occasions.

This was evident amongst the boys, but increasingly so amongst some of the girls. Although, individually and as a group, boys were often more disruptive in lessons, some girls were becoming increasingly outspoken. They began to dominate some classroom interactions. They felt empowered to dominate because they perceived that they were more mature than boys, physically, emotionally and mentally (academically). In some classes, particularly one year group (Year 9 in 1997) there was a small group of girls (about ten students) who intimidated their peers and teachers. The Headteacher described them as 'delinquent'. Yet, there was some ambiguity here. Although girls were becoming more dominant and were achieving some good results at GCSE, they did not envisage their role outside school as continuing to achieve academically or having a successful career. I had spoken to some of the girls in my form (Year 11 at the time of my starting to write this thesis) who had realised that they had the potential to go on to university, yet they chose to leave school at 16 and sought employment locally. One had talked of not wanting to get behind her peers economically and argued that she could always resume studies at a later date, at evening classes perhaps.

The power structures within school and outside school (for example, in the home) did not provide girls with positive role models. On the whole, initially at least, I found that it was much easier to establish discipline and gain respect at the Academy if one was male. When I discussed this with students their response was that they felt compelled to respect some male staff because they shouted louder, they were physically stronger and they had more authority. One senior member of staff had the habit of positioning himself very close to students when shouting at them. The girls in one form found this

both distressing and humiliating when insults referring to their femininity also were meted out. The female form tutor who challenged that male member of staff about his disciplinary methods found herself intimidated verbally and physically (in the sense that she had to remind him to step back from her physical space). The female member of staff to whom I refer left the school after a year. During my time at the Academy there was a high turnover of staff, with 22 colleagues leaving.

In his ethnographic study, Ball (1981) offered two reasons for high staff turn over, one related to poor interpersonal relationships, and the other to stressful working conditions. My perceptions were that both my study schools were stressful places in which to work. At the Academy I was aware personally how whole classes or the majority of students in them had to be “won over.” However, for some colleagues, certain students had taken control of the classroom on their own terms. The Academy, though, did offer an in school support service, at least at Key Stage 3, for those students who were behaviour problems and/or needed help with their studies.

Students also associated certain areas of the curriculum as being male or female, along with associated stereotypes in those areas. Most of the science staff at the Academy were men (although, unusually, the head of science was female), most of the mathematics staff were men, as was the Head of Mathematics. In fact, positions of power within the Academy were generally occupied by men: the Headteacher, two Deputy Headteachers, and curriculum heads (with the exception of science). The manager of the school farm was a man, as were the caretakers; the cleaners were women. Dinner, canteen staff and the non-teaching assistants were women. It was therefore reasonable to conclude that the students were receiving messages about who had authority and power within school, and what sort of perceptions and behaviour were acceptable within the parameters of that definition.

I conjectured that some perceptions and behaviours already present in some students, particularly boys, were reinforced by the power structures and masculinities within school. I outline one incident that I witnessed in my form room involving two of my form members. One of the girls had her personal diary snatched from her desk by a boy (this particular student being over six feet tall and well built). When she attempted to reclaim the diary, the boy struck her a blow to the head, which resulted in her falling to

the floor. The head subsequently spoke to the boy but no further action was taken because in his opinion the girl should not have attempted to reclaim her diary. Although the girl was shaken, there were fortunately no serious injuries to her head. Since then that student and his friend (also a tall well-built young man) continued to intimidate both male and female students within my form, in classes and during break and lunchtimes. Some staff, especially female members and dinner supervisors, found their behaviour particularly challenging.

My initial perception was that there seemed to be a self-perpetuating culture at the Academy amongst some staff. The nearby town is isolated geographically, as are the small former mining communities which serve it. The community outside the school was therefore believed by some staff to be rather insular: the world of some of the children and their families was defined in parochial terms. Thus, a field trip to the “big city” of Sheffield was a major cultural experience for those students. Unfortunately, the students who could most benefit from such learning experiences were denied the opportunity either because of lack of money or refusal of their parents to grant permission. Within the school student population there were numerous instances of children who were related to each other; this compounded the insular image which some staff had of the school and its community. I found that some but not all students were intolerant of areas outside the immediate environment of their community, of other races, and of sexualities which were not the expected heterosexual masculinities and femininities.

When some students and their families claimed to derive meaning and value from the past and present within their community certain staff perceived that the “mindset” of previous generations had continued into the present. It seemed that there was an acceptance amongst such staff that the perceptions, behaviours and achievements of the students were unlikely to change a great deal because they had a long history. The historical foundations for the perceptions to which I refer those staff dated to the end of the nineteenth century when navvies came to the area to build the railways and work in the local pit. Any men not thus employed they maintained were most likely to be found in some sort of agricultural occupation. Hence, according to some staff, a culture had been established in which the men worked hard at their jobs and then spent their leisure time drinking, fighting or poaching. The women were left with the responsibility of

running the home and possibly providing some basic education (literacy skills) for their children. The men, they stated, defined their parental responsibilities in terms of what they perceived their gender role to be. That was of the hard-working, aggressive male who held real power within the family because of his physical and economic dominance. Some boys perceived their father's role as such, and as the person who was there to help them with their wider interests which reflected the male culture, for example, tinkering with the car, going fishing or "lamping" (a local expression for a type of poaching).

For some female students their role models were clearly defined in terms of the role models provided by their mothers: organising the household, helping younger siblings learn to read and write, working in local light industry. Boys who were seen to be good at "feminine" skills were classed as "square bears" by their peers (including girls sometimes).

Some staff actually accounted for the local culture, perceptions and achievements of the students by referring to the genetic legacy of the navvies. They were using biological factors to explain some of the ethos of the Academy. Although such comments were said tongue in cheek, my perception was that they were said both too readily and too frequently to be dismissed as meaningless remarks. It had, I believe, become an example of a self-fulfilling prophecy. As such, it was all too easy to reinforce such attitudes and behaviours in some students, especially boys who were perhaps more susceptible to such teacher perceptions.

I believe that the Academy's poor achievements in national tests and examinations were caused substantially by psychosocial factors (for example, class and gender). The school was a "working class" school and always had been, yet when it was a grammar school it had a reputation for academic excellence. Since it ceased being a grammar school in the 1970s and amalgamated with the surrounding secondary modern schools, success in terms of academic achievement declined. The loss of the sixth form in the early 1990s compounded the working-class low achieving image.

Yet, many students, particularly in the lower school (years 7 to 9), had positive attitudes towards school and were achieving well. Some students who were in my form (Year 11

in 1998) had stated that they would remain at school if the Academy had a sixth form. The Ofsted inspectors noted, in 1996, a 'keenness to learn', 'a general attentiveness' and 'a high interest shown in work.' It is odd that in the Academy, as in other schools, some students in Year 7 enter school enthusiastically on a positive note, but by Year 8 and certainly by Year 9 negativity, disaffection and boredom have set in.

Further, it also seems strange that the attainment of some students has decreased by Key Stage 3 and 4. The students like those in Year 11 who "disappeared" or failed to attend for final examinations, some because they would rather go potato-picking, were a cause for concern. The problem of low attendance and students arriving late to lessons were both areas of concern. At Key Stage 4 year tutor meetings, issues relating to student attendance and lateness as well as student behaviour were always high on the agenda. The significant percentage of students who gained no GCSE qualifications at all raises doubts about the usefulness of aspects of the current body of knowledge in the National Curriculum and its methods of assessment, but also about the influence of the local culture and embedded perceptions towards the value of schooling and education.

#### 1.1.10.2 Prioryfields

I now relate some of my experiences from my second study school, Prioryfields in Graftby, where I worked from January 2000-July 2002. Prioryfields, an 11-18, mixed sex comprehensive school, was situated on a large attractive campus, adjacent to another 11-18 mixed comprehensive, on the southern edge of the town of Graftby. The school was about ten miles distant from the Academy and at first glance occupied a much pleasanter location. It was fringed by open country. The main entrance was approached via a pleasant tree-lined road, with large owner-occupied houses on either side. This side of the school would not have looked out of place in a leafy suburb of an affluent Surrey town.

However, the other side of the school, the "back end," faced the large and infamous council estate of Boyston. Close to this estate was the former pit village of Boyston. It, like Burnside, had a negative reputation, being a site of drug taking, drinking, violence, as well as being an area of high unemployment and many single parent families. It was the thirty-second most deprived area in the country. The majority of the Prioryfields students lived in Boyston. Thus, the area from which the students came was very

diverse in terms of housing and socio-economic factors. Its student population was almost predominantly white. Prioryfields was almost like two schools. In fact, it had once been two separate schools. The “front end,” which bordered on the affluent, middle class side, had once been a grammar school. It had combined with the secondary modern school, located on the Boyston side, when it became one comprehensive school, on the same site in the early 1970s.

The town of Graftby was located astride major road routes, with motorway routes easily accessible. About a mile away from Prioryfields was a private school. There were preparatory schools in nearby towns. Graftby also had a college of further education. The major industry of Graftby, and Boyston, had been coal mining and its associated industries. Other employment had been found in hosiery and agriculture. As in Burnside, the pit had closed following the miners’ strike of 1984. Industries such as food processing and packaging had replaced the mining industry as a significant source of local employment. Unemployment levels were high and the workforce had significant skills shortages.

Prioryfields had approximately 730 students on roll, 30% of whom were eligible to receive free school meals (a figure above the national average), and 20% were classed as having special educational needs. A quarter of these students received help from outside specialists. Key stage national curriculum tests (SATs) were well below the national average for both sexes, for similar schools. (The SATs results for my study sample are in the Appendix.) GCSE examination results of five or more A-C passes were below the national average. GCSE examination results of five or more A-G passes were also well below the national average. However, A/AS level results were above the national average (school PANDA).

The school’s GCSE results were similar to those of the Academy: for 2000: 27% A-C passes, 73% A-G passes, and for 2001, 28% A-C passes, 73% A-G passes. The results for the year of my study group of students, 2002 were 23% A-C passes, 64% A-G passes. (The results of my interview sample are in the Appendix.)

The most recent Ofsted inspection, March 1998, noted that “attitudes and behaviour” were better in Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4, but that they were best in the sixth form.

Also, in the previous year, there had been fifty-two fixed period exclusions and four permanent exclusions. Some recent data came from the results of the Keele university questionnaire survey of 2001-2002. The majority of students had a negative view of school and they were not satisfied with their experience of school life. The majority of students had a low self-image, as far as their ability was concerned. Negative peer group influence was significant, i.e. being influenced to truant, to disrupt lessons, to mock those who worked hard. A majority of students had truanted. In fact, the attendance rate was very low, below 90%, in all year groups, but a major concern in years 9, 10 and 11 (school PANDA). During my time at Prioryfields, attendance continued to be an area of major concern, with the Headteacher describing it as 'significantly lower than the national and county average' (Head's memorandum, 8<sup>th</sup> May, 2001). On the 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2001, the Head issued another memorandum, which stated,

the school's unauthorised absence is now significantly higher than all other schools in Burghside and Winthorpe and probably the county.

As at the Academy, male members of staff held senior positions in school. The Headteacher was a male, as was one of the two Deputy Heads. The Assistant Headteacher was a male, as were the heads of the following faculties: English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities, SEN, Modern Foreign Languages (though this post was vacated by a female who left in 2001), IT and CDT. The Heads of Art, Music, Drama, Food Technology and Post 16 education were female. The budget and site managers were male. The librarian, learning support assistants, secretarial staff, reprographics staff, dinner supervisors, canteen staff, cleaners, with the exception of one middle-aged male, were female. The three caretakers were male. Like the Academy, there was also a high turnover of staff at Prioryfields; twenty-four teachers left during my stay.

I found Prioryfields a less challenging school in which to work. I did not need to "win over" whole classes. There were, though, a significant number of challenging students, both male and female, who were capable of causing severe disruption both in and outside the classroom. In fact the female deputy head once described the behaviour of some of the more "extreme" students as 'bizarre'. In my teaching career I had never

experienced two male students try to jump out of my classroom window when they became angry. Nor had I experienced one boy try to kill himself, one of several failed attempts, by launching himself over the balcony of the assembly hall.

#### **1.1.11 Reflections and reflexions upon my time at the study schools**

I enjoyed working at both schools. I experienced positive interpersonal relationships with the majority of students and staff at both schools. However, I found the management system at Prioryfields far less intimidating than at the Academy. At the Academy, it was customary for senior colleagues to observe lessons. I also became accustomed to receiving memos from senior staff questioning how I was planning to raise the performance of my examination groups. I was aware from colleagues that some of them were intimidated by some senior staff. Some staff felt that they were not supported in matters of student discipline.

The less intimidating atmosphere of Prioryfields, as far as colleagues were concerned, was reflected in the school motto, “Achievement in a Caring Environment.” In fact, I believe that the motto could equally well have read “Caring in an Achieving Environment.” The staff, generally, appeared to me to be more caring about each other and the students. I did not hear staff at Prioryfields say anything insulting about the students, as staff at the Academy had, apart from one comment from the Head of Food Technology, who once stated, ‘some of our students are like animals’. They were aware of the need to try to raise the achievements of the students, but the senior staff realised and accepted that this was a shared problem. The lack of bells at lesson change time reflected less surveillance and less regulation for staff and students, at Prioryfields.

The students at Prioryfields did not inhabit nor create their own distinctive sub-culture, as the Academy students had done. In an Academy lesson I was accustomed to constant verbal exchanges between students, often interspersed with swearing and their distinctive use of “local” language. The main topics of conversation were always related to their social, particularly sexual, lives. I also tolerated the customary jibes directed to me as a woman, from some of the male students. However, many students at both schools seemed to need to develop close personal relationships with staff.

I considered whether the more “civilised” atmosphere of the Prioryfields classes was partially explained by the presence of some middle-class students. I was unaccustomed to teaching students whose parents were doctors, consultants and other professionals. The Prioryfields students also were allowed their own student council. However, some students were quick to point out that the majority of members elected were the “snobs,” that was the middle class students and the working class students who had accepted the norms and values of the school.

Since I had started my teaching career, I had always been concerned why some staff constructed certain working class students as problematic. This became a matter of some concern to me during my stays at the Academy and at Prioryfields, particularly when staff left both schools in significant numbers. Often the negative attitudes and poor behaviour of the students were cited as the primary causes. I had not been at Prioryfields very long when the frustration of the staff was brought to head. An unofficial staff meeting was called during lunchtime on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2000.

I attended that meeting and I made some notes about the staff’s central grievances. Comments were made about the lack of discipline amongst the students, and the lack of respect which the students had for the staff. These issues were felt to be so severe that the Head of Science commented that if Ofsted came in the school would be put into special measures. The perception was that the senior managers were not dealing effectively with “problem” students. The Head of CDT stated that the amount of swearing from students was worse than when he had worked at Boyston pit.

The following week at a staff meeting the Headteacher responded to those concerns. He said that during the autumn term of 2000 he had excluded 35 students. Further, members of the senior management team had been called out to assist in lessons 88 times in one week. He also commented that the surnames, which were appearing in the school punishment book, were the same ones over the previous 25 year period; he thereby seemed to be pathologizing certain families.

I reflected upon this, and questioned why there was a breakdown of communication between some staff and students. Some of the same self-fulfilling prophecies were expressed about the Boyston students as I had heard at the Academy. I was particularly

saddened to learn of the permanent exclusion of one Boyston boy, when he was a year 10, in February 2002. I had taught Billy, and his friend Rhiannon, also from Boyston and permanently excluded, in Year 9. He was labelled “bright” and “able” by the staff. He was regarded as very disruptive by some staff and he was capable of dominating classroom interactions.

I came to know Billy quite well. He told me that he could only “get on” with me, and a few other teachers. He explained to me why he behaved badly in certain lessons, mine included sometimes! ‘It’s hard to be clever when your family are thick cunts.’ He described how his siblings and cousins were regular drug takers. There was no-one at home who was able to help him, they were ‘not bothered.’ ‘I’m like a stain on the carpet,’ he said.

Billy was in a “no win” situation. He was regarded as clever. However, his family were unable to support him in any ambitions he might have had to succeed academically. He also was a heterosexual male who lived in Boyston. He was therefore expected to behave in accordance with the local Boyston culture. He stated, ‘I’m from Boyston, I’ve got to act bad, otherwise I’ll get slagged.’ School offered him an opportunity to “break out” of the Boyston image and achieve something in his life other than what seem predestined for him. He said, ‘School’s the only thing that’s keeping me right.’

Billy, and other working class students like him, had made me reflexive; they caused me to reflect upon how myself and other teachers construct an image of students through informal and formal assessment procedures, that is, teachers’ assessments of students’ “abilities” in relationship to a curriculum which many of them found ‘irrelevant’ and ‘a waste of time,’ as well as through our “knowledge” of the school and the community which it served. The words ‘negative attitude’ was a phrase that came readily to the lips of many colleagues, throughout the years, when accounting for the poor behaviour and lack of academic success of some students.

Throughout the period of this research, the images that the students constructed of themselves, and those constructed about them, as well as numerous comments made by the research participants relating to the local class culture necessitate an examination of the theoretical debates relating to class, culture and self/identity.

## Chapter 2: Class Matters

### 2.1 Class, class culture and self/identity

#### 2.1.1 Opening remarks

Research charting the connection between educational performance and a child's background and social class has a long history: Burt, 1937, 1943, Lawton, 1968, Reeves, 1978, Rutter et al, 1979, Abraham, 1995, Reid, 1998, Plummer, 2000, Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody, 2001. Recent debates have centred on the validity of league tables, their publication and the implied relationship between educational performance and class status of school populations (Gillborn and Youdell, 2000). When overall educational achievements were rising sharply in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the inequalities between the social classes increased.

It is clear that social class remains a hugely important factor associated with significant and increasing inequalities of achievement (Gillborn and Youdell, 2000, page 40).

In the face of such findings the Blair government's claim that we all live in a classless society is a source of some concern and cannot therefore remain unchallenged. This chapter argues that class still matters by drawing on Reid's (1998) and Savage's (2000) analysis of class in Britain. I then offer a model of class as a cultural phenomenon, based on Medhurst's (2000) work, which was prefigured by Hoggart (1957), Williams (1977) and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS, 1982). This forms the basis for my rationalisation of the concept of self/identity, which, as representational and processual, utilises the work of Williams (1977), Rutherford (1990) and Hall (1990).

I acknowledge that class is a contested concept and that attempts to offer an understanding of self/identity grounded in the lived experience of class/culture must recognise the dynamic interplay between class, culture and agency. To facilitate this understanding I make reference to the work of postmodern thinkers such as Foucault (1977) as well as postmodernist feminists such as Weiner (1994) to draw attention to the workings of power/knowledge formations in schools and local communities to subordinate certain groups, notably the working class and females. The ideas of Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1990, 1992, 1993) usefully combine notions of structure and

agency to demonstrate the effects of class/culture interacting in particular fields to either open up or close down student life chances.

### **2.1.2 Why class is still important**

Class matters because people think it matters. So long as it is salient, class should be a matter of interest, whatever problems there may be in providing a satisfactory deductive concept of class (Savage, 2000, page 23).

Both Savage's (2000) and Reid's (1998) analysis of class in Britain demonstrates that social class does matter not simply to social scientists and political commentators as a utilitarian device for organising different groups of people in relation to each other according to lifestyle, occupation, family, money and education but because people use it to refer to themselves; in addition a person's class informs of life opportunities.

According to Reid (1998) there is ample research evidence which suggests that the term "social class" has a good deal of currency amongst a large proportion of the population and that they are prepared to use it of themselves. Further such responses have continuity over time and appear to be little affected by social and political change (ibid, pages 31 and following). Young (1992) reported that a majority of his respondents (58%) claimed they felt 'very close' or 'fairly close' to other people of the same class background (ibid, page 32). Reid found that several researchers had made similar comments on patterned conceptions of social class, including in young people, aged between fifteen and twenty one years old. This suggests that social class recognition occurs at an early age in Britain. These young people were classed according to their parents' or head of households' definition and thereby recognised "their" class through involvement by association.

Skeggs (1997), however, offers an alternative viewpoint in her contention that people do not always self-identify with class because individual subjects are products of different positions made available in discourse. She argues that since to be working class is pathologized, with negative connotations, some individuals (notably the working class women in her study) chose to disidentify with their working classness. The women in Skeggs's study, in order to improve upon their working class lives, chose to establish distinctions to differentiate themselves from those women who did not or

could not improve upon their life chances. Whilst Skeggs argues that class formation is therefore only partial because of constant change, she still concedes that class nevertheless informs the production of subjectivity. On the basis of his research Savage (2000) argues that class identification is itself classed because the notion of class has persisted in time and spatially (within national boundaries) we are all in this sense “pre-classed.” It is from within such pre-class/ification that class identification is internalised as subjectivity. With specific reference to working class identity Skeggs claims

Class becomes internalised as an intimate form of subjectivity experienced as knowledge of always not being “right” (ibid, 1997, page 90).

Young’s research (1992) recounts how in Britain a person’s class affects their life opportunities, with between two thirds and three quarters of respondents claiming ‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’ (ibid, page 32). Class divisions then have not yet been eroded, despite continuing changes in employment, such as the contraction of manual labour.

Despite great changes in the patterns of work and the continuing contraction of manual employment, the expectation that class divisions would thereby be eroded has yet to be fulfilled (Young, 1992, page 32).

Empirical findings therefore demonstrate that social class is a conspicuous feature of social science research; it differentiates groups of people as well as being utilised by people to identify themselves within socio-economic and cultural groups. Social class then provides a central framework to examine the construction of social identities.

...class is by far the most common and seemingly the most salient frame of reference in the construction of social identities (Reid, 1998, page 35, with reference to Marshal et al’s empirical research, 1988).

### **2.1.3 Social class as a cultural phenomenon**

A compelling feature of my two study schools and their associated communities is their working class identity grounded in a former mining culture. Analysis and debate such as that of Savage (2000) and more recently by Devine et al (2004) has centred on how far class as a materially based economic category shapes the culture of a group, as well

as the relationship between class structure and culture. The economic conditions of class, for example arising from unemployment consequent upon pit closures, such as socio-economic deprivation and ill health have real material effects within local communities and impact upon some families in a most dramatic and drastic way. I acknowledge the importance of this but I intend to foreground a particular mining culture albeit grounded in particular material conditions at specific temporal and spatial points as a framework for conceptualising identity by proposing a model of social class/identity conceived as a cultural phenomenon; I draw on the work of Medhurst (2000) in the tradition of Hoggart (1957), Williams (1977) and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS, 1982).

Medhurst (2000) argues for a return to understanding how class and culture coalesce by adopting a commitment to the value of autobiography, utilising experiential literacy as well as drawing upon the insights of conceptual thought (ibid, page 33). Such a conceptualisation was prefigured in the work of Hoggart (1957) and Williams (1961) who both wrote autobiographically about their childhood in working class families between the wars. Hoggart's (1957) work was grounded in the concrete and local to produce a feeling of 'groupness' and identity with 'an all pervading culture' (ibid, page 32). Williams (1961), like Hoggart, emphasised the close bonds and ties, which were characteristic of what they saw as working class communities. They focussed on values rather than beliefs, which they argued were embedded in quite distinctive working class forms of sociability in the everyday "fabric of life." This is what Williams calls 'structures of feeling' (ibid, page 22), which emphasise the emotional and intuitive elements of social solidarity. Whilst values and beliefs are highlighted they do not exclude rational thought since, Williams argues, through a process of feelings becoming thoughts and thoughts reconvening as feelings, emotions are cognitive.

We are talking about ...not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought (ibid, page 23).

The works of Hoggart and Williams, which point up the emotional cum cognitive dimensions to life, are particularly pertinent to the study of the geographically isolated and insular social spaces of which I write.

The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS,1982) was founded at Birmingham University in 1964. It adopted, constructed and formalized the term “cultural studies” for its own unique project. Accounts of such projects in British cultural studies begin with Hoggart (1957), Williams (1958, 1961) and Thompson (1963). Through complex negotiations with Marxism, semiotics and with various sociological and ethnographic traditions, the work of the Centre culminated in several large bodies of work in: subcultural theory (for example, Willis, 1977), media studies, popular culture, poststructuralism, postmodernism, feminist influences as well as the way in which identity is experienced, articulated and deployed (for example, Rutherford, 1990). Cultural studies are interpretative and evaluative in methodology, arguing that all forms of cultural production need to be studied in relation to other cultural practices as well as to socio-historical structures. Williams (1958) argues that cultural studies identify and articulate the relations between culture and society, ‘specifically interrogating the symbolic and material domains of culture’ (Williams, 1958, page 295). Or as Hall expresses it, a central aspect of culture means

...the actual grounded terrain of practices, representations, languages and customs of any specific historical society (Hall, 1986, page 26).

The early work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (1982) built on the work of Hoggart and Williams by viewing class cultures as ‘historical residues’ (ibid, page 46). Savage (2000) describes these cultures as memories, as ‘ghostly figures whose decline helped to place contemporary forms in relief’ (ibid, page 33). Similarly, Bourdieu (1993) argues that dispositions grounded in material conditions outlast those conditions. He describes dispositions as permanent, ‘a durable manner of standing, speaking and thereby of feeling and thinking’ (ibid, 1977, pages 93-94). This resonates with the work of the social historian Thompson (1963) who advocated a study of working class history from “the bottom up” insisting on the active role of the working class in producing their own life. Key ethnographic studies by Willis (1977), Wolpe (1988) and McRobbie (1991) demonstrated that working class boys and girls rejected school culture because of their own cultural heritage; they were creative in their opposition to schooling replacing the ideology of school with their informal culture. Thus, class is viewed as a historically specific cultural process incorporating cultural creativity.

The work of Medhurst et al (2000), which I draw on, therefore proposes a model of class/culture fusing together and from that fusion a notion of class/cultural identity may be explored via a combined study of the creative activity of individuals and groups as well as the culture they have helped to create. Class/culture is rationalised as a process in which meanings are produced, exchanged and contested; it is through class/culture that people make sense of their lives. Sense of self/identity is framed through a combination of material and personal lived experience as well as available language/discourse inscribed and inscribing via particular class/cultures. In foregrounding a particular working class former mining culture constituted in lived material conditions and through symbolic practices such as local discourses I am highlighting the tension that existed in the daily experiences of the research participants between material conditions and localised cultural discourses. This tension surfaces throughout my analyses because it reflects the “reality” of the participants’ “world”; it remained a tension that was evident both in the participants’ lives and in my analyses.

## **2.2 The nature of self /identity**

### **2.2.1 Opening remarks**

In this discussion I explore the nature of self/identity grounded in culture and particular histories, both collective and personal. I draw on the work of Rutherford (1990) and Hall (1990) to examine how self/identity is represented from within a particular history, culture and language. The role of language and discourse is highlighted in ascribing and inscribing self/identity by reference to the ideas of Williams (1961) as well as postmodernist thinkers such as Foucault (1977) and Lacan (1970). I also refer to the work of Gilligan (1982) to chart identity development in adolescence including the identification of differences between male and female sense of self/identity. This conceptualisation of the nature of self/identity results in a processual model in which individuals have the capacity to make choices. Whilst I recognise that some tensions are implied here, between postmodern ideas of discourse as free floating at the same time as being materially grounded, as well as debates relating to encompassing structure versus agency, I propose some resolution in the discussions following.

### **2.2.2 Self/identity grounded in culture**

‘It surrounds and nurtures us, even when we can’t see it’ (Finnan and Levin, 2000, page 88). This points up the centrality and all encompassing nature of culture; by which I mean conventions, traditions, expressions, signs, symbols and values that give coherence to particular ways of living, both actively created and passively received, which embraces us and gives meaning to our lives. It is constantly constructed through our interactions with others and it helps us to reflect upon what we know. At a personal level, culture provides a framework for making sense of the world and shaping our interactions with people within it. Cultural practices which inform everyday experiences of different social groups may be seen as having a significant impact and play a crucial role in framing identities. Culture reminds us that reality is constructed by representations and thus there are multiple perspectives of it. Representations become reality, so reality is always represented to us. However, representation is not neutral because the act of representation is discursively bound up with values and meaning, which operate within language and power systems. Thus, the subject, a cultural, social, historical construct, is inscribed within the meaning system of language, and by discourses. Therefore, we are all subjects within language, discourse, texts, within particular cultural, social and historical frameworks. Both postmodernism and feminism recognise the multiplicity of local contingent truths, which are provided by those frameworks. Rationality then has many different forms, validated through a variety of different cultural and social practices.

Hall’s (1990) conceptualisation of identity highlights the effects of culture, history and power/knowledge. ‘Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories’ (ibid, page 225). However, Hall does not intend “fixation” in the past but identity in process. In this sense, identity refers to the different ways individual(s) are positioned and position themselves from within narratives of the past. Histories (personal and collective) have real, material and symbolic effects, which are in a process of construction via narrative and memory. Cultural (and class/cultural) identity is therefore a point of identification, which is made within discourses of culture and history that are formulated out of specific, concrete circumstances. It is a positioning.

Dominant regimes of representation exert their cultural power and normalising effects to construct identity. For instance, middle class regimes of representation position the

working class subject as different. The dominant white middle class culture embedded in National Curriculum texts is alien to many working class students whose sense of self/identity is framed by their particular class/culture. Hall's notion of points of similarity as well as differences constituting 'what we really are' (ibid, page 225) and 'what we have become' (ibid, page 225), due to the intervention of history, resonates with Bourdieu's (1984) concept of 'distinction' via 'judgements of taste' (ibid, pages 499-500), whereby class/cultural groups distinguish themselves in terms of the volume of capital (cultural, economic, social) they have accrued, which, in turn, symbolises possession of the material and symbolic means to maintain distinct and different lifestyles. It is in this sense that the notion of self/identity is a positioning and constituted from within representation (Hall, 1990, page 236).

### **2.2.3 The centrality of language and discourse**

Rutherford (1990) argues that the self/identity, as well as being rooted in particular histories and culture, is also rooted in language. He highlights language/discourse as central to identity formation. Similarly, Lacan (1970) maintains that language is inseparable from the meaning of existence; the subject is fashioned by language. For Lacan, in its social and familial relationships, language performs an equivalent function to that of culture.

Everything which has meaning for man (sic) is inscribed in him in the very archives of the unconscious by language, understood in the full extent of its semantic, rhetorical and formal structures (Lacan, translated by Lemaire, 1970, page 18).

In Lacan there is therefore a link between the order of language and the order of culture; in his view reason is 'carried, harboured and manifested by language' (ibid, page 20). Thus, bodily expressions and affectivity always pass through language since they are always inscribed in its semantic networks and its metaphorical and metonymic structures. Lacan's analysis highlights how socio-cultural and linguistic symbolisms impose themselves, with their structures as orders which have already been constituted before the subject enters into them; the subject is fashioned by the structure of language and culture. Language is the precondition for the act of becoming self aware as a distinct reality, it is the vehicle of a socially given, a culture and a discourse. On this analysis the subject can articulate only that which language, from within the pre-

existing socio-cultural and symbolic order, allows. Thus, when the child enters the symbolic order of language, which is the vehicle for her/his socio-cultural world, s/he is fashioned by it and will be “marked” by it.

Therefore, difference/distinction is already invested with meanings ascribed to it via the cultural and discursive context into which a child is born. The self/selves speak and write from particular places and times, from specific histories and cultures. Dominant discourses within dominant regimes of representation, formed via the operation of power/knowledge, construct the “other.” Bernstein (1977) observed that the structure of social relationships determines the principles of communication and so shapes forms of consciousness. Equally, principles of communication such as pedagogic communication frame the structure of social relationships and thence forms of consciousness. Within schools he noted that social and pedagogical relationships are hierarchical; it is through pedagogical communication that class relationships are transmitted.

Pedagogic communication in the school...is the relay for class relations, the relay for gender relations... Pedagogic communication is a relay for patterns of dominance external to itself (Bernstein, 1990, page 168).

Whilst the child is localised in time and space, it is possible for her/him to simultaneously recognise ontogenesis and sociogenesis, her/his cognitive synthesis of experience is made from within a culture, which has already thought for her/him; but because of the variety of its members there is a certain margin of creativity left for the individual.

#### **2.2.4 Foucault, the social construction of identity and “technologies” of the self**

Foucault’s (1977) analysis of modern capillary power and its association with surveillance and regulation directs attention to discursive formations, which serve to subordinate and oppress individuals and groups. Similarly, postmodern feminists such as Weiner (1994) point up both the impact of local contingent truths as well as the local exercise of power, in which females are positioned in discourses that subordinate them.

Fundamental to Foucauldian thinking is the social construction of identity via powerful discourses. Foucault appeals to the historical, socio-cultural and ontological origins of the self/selves grounded in practical, local understandings to identify issues such as

social identity and self-categorisation. For Foucault the individual self is constructed within the everyday material and immaterial conditions of existence, in the local, mundane features of daily life. Meaning therefore originates from within a particular class/culture and history made possible by language/discourse and cultural sign systems which are consequent upon socio-economic and material structures of society. Language is rationalised as a form of social activity, it is the medium through which social relationships are developed and maintained. Ordinary, everyday communication is centralised in the production of social identity such that identity is produced through and embedded in daily forms of language use. This points up the importance of localised, shared meanings and shared understandings; it is in everyday interactions that inter-subjective understandings are maintained. In specific contexts such as my study schools and their associated communities the invention and usage of phrases and sayings characterised certain aspects of local material conditions (“Rastafarian pit rat” denoting being poor) as well as interpersonal relationships, for example, those informing of masculine power and male dominance (such as “top man”), to produce a sense of self/identity. Identity is woven into the “fabric” of social interaction; practical, everyday cultural and local knowledge, which is taken for granted, informs daily exchanges.

Commentators such as Widdicombe and Wooffit (1995) have utilised Foucault’s thinking to highlight the role of personal narratives as discursive attributions, which are social products arranged for specific interpersonal ends. (See also chapter nine, Personal Narratives). On this analysis social identities are therefore fluid, variable and context specific because the form identity takes is contextually relevant and contingent upon interpersonal concerns. Consequently ontology is fore-grounded; personal biographies and personal narratives are centralised. A sense of self/identity being ascribed and inscribed according to the ways in which persons are positioned and embodied in everyday language/discourse draws attention to the operation of power/knowledge upon individuals.

Discourses are thus conceived as systems of meanings, which reflect real power relations and which in turn are a consequence of the material and economic infrastructure of society (Widdicombe and Wooffit, 1995, page 60).

Discourses then reflect real relationships that arise out of actual social, economic and material structures that exist in society. Foucault was suspicious of another reality behind language since what languages and thereby discourses “mean” depends upon each culture’s system of interpretation made possible by underlying material conditions. According to Foucault then such things as gestures, objects and nature also “speak” (Foucault, 1970, page 33). Discourses serve as a linguistic “bridge” between the immaterial and material conditions of existence; similarly Widdicombe and Wooffit (ibid) maintain that sense of self/identity is formed and embodied in a variety of practical activities such as language and labour. It is for this reason that Foucault foregrounds the human body, in a physical and psychic sense, as the site of power operations, which enables us to become human subjects in relation to other subjects. This means thinking about the body and the self as a production out of the many ways in which bodies and selves are managed and regulated by others.

In Foucauldian thinking power is inseparable from knowledge, which is not objective or neutral but always bound up with specific historical and cultural locations. It is within those locations that particular discourses relating to masculine and feminine identity, as well as those relating to “able” students, emerge and function as truths. It is through power/knowledge processes of surveying, naming, classifying and coding that the classed, gendered and “able” body/self gains meaning. At the same time the self plays a part in taking up, negotiating and resisting classifications imposed upon it from “outside” since for Foucault where there is power there is also resistance. The notion of resistance points up the properties of actual, dynamic language in a specific context to produce discursive identities.

The discussion following utilises insights from the work of Williams (1961) and psychologists such as Gilligan (1982) to chart the acquisition of identity development in adolescence, which incorporates the notions of creativity and a feminine sense of self/identity.

### **2.2.5 Acquiring a sense of self/identity and “structures of feeling”**

Williams (1961) locates the acquisition of a sense of self/identity at the point where subjects confront a dominant culture whose language/discourse does not allow them to fully articulate their experiences. (For example, at my two study schools, heterosexual

males and females who were identified as “able”.) Williams uses the term ‘structures of feeling’ (ibid, page 22) to refer to the subjects who are caught between experience and language. Within the structures he stresses the importance of emotions and feelings but because of the theoretical discourses, which our society has inherited, which are also gendered in nature, emotions and feelings have become subordinated to rationality. (This point also reflects the rationalist discourse of the National Curriculum in which affective elements are marginalized). Williams insists that when we confront this polarity we recognise that emotions are cognitive and are thereby integral to our sense of self/identity.

Williams’ ideas have resonances with the work of Gilligan (1982); she demonstrates the close links in female thinking between conceptions of the self and of morality. Key words in her conception are care, responsibility, interconnection and inclusion. This capacity, expressed by those words, evolves through a coherent sequence of feelings and thoughts. In Gilligan’s study (1982) female identity is defined in connection with a relationship, for example, mother, wife. In contrast, for males in their self-descriptions they include people and attachments, but no particular person or relationship is mentioned. The adjectives they use for self-description are ones of separation, for example, logical, intelligent. By the time females reach mid-life they have both a different psychological history and social reality to men, with different possibilities for work and relationships. Female development and sense of self/identity is realised through interdependence and taking care.

As a result of Gilligan’s work, the female experience has been incorporated into developmental understanding to include a new perspective on relationships that changes the basic constructs of interpretation. The assumption that there is a single mode of social experience and interpretation is now discarded since truths which affect men and women are carried by different modes of language and thought. The concept of self/identity now includes the experience of interconnection. In this conceptualisation, a sense of self/identity is gained through knowing as a process of human relationships; this again points up the contextual nature of developmental truths. Hey’s ethnographic study (1997) of girls’ friendship groups in two mixed London comprehensive schools illustrates Gilligan’s theorising; the intimate, personal relationships of the girls,

centralised as cultural agents and defined in terms of reciprocity, commitment, trust and sharing, are crucial in understanding how they make sense of their own identity.

It is between and amongst girls as friends that identities are variously practised, appropriated, resisted, negotiated (Hey, 1997, page 30).

Interpersonal relationships at school, at home, within the local community provide bases of affiliation from where individuals make sense of each other and their preferred forms of identity. Identification with others involves commitment to lifestyle and ideology such that experiences and outcomes of individuals are interconnected. Sense of self/identity is therefore framed through a combination of available discourses as well as through personal and material experiences. The focus on language as the self in interaction with others emphasises the situated relevance of identity, inter-subjectivity and conversational affiliation embedded in socio-cultural life. The notion of conversational action accomplished via language/discourse implies agency; it can be a site for accomplishing resistance. A sense of self/identity is formed and embodied in language/discourse and social interaction, which addresses the historical, socio-cultural and ontological origins of the self.

Instead of trying to explain the behaviour of young people by utilising intuitive ways of accounting for behaviour, it seems more appropriate to begin with the examination of how these common sense accounts inform the discursive actions produced by young people themselves, for it is in this domain that such accounts have a crucial significance (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995, pages 226-227).

### **2.2.6 How the work of Bourdieu informs of classed self/identity**

I now allude to the work of Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1990, 1992, 1993), who usefully combines structure and agency in one unified model of self/identity to inform of a classed notion of self/identity, notably in relationship to gender and sexuality and how that impacts upon educational engagement and achievement.

Bourdieu has argued that the ideology of class is an arbitrarily imposed definition with social effects. Social class, according to Bourdieu, is structured and organised through the distribution of four different forms of capital: economic, cultural, social, symbolic and their properties. Those capitals are capable of conferring strength, power and

profits to the holder. How individuals interact with the social structure they inhabit is provided by Bourdieu's concept of the habitus.

Bourdieu utilises the concept of the habitus as a method, a way of understanding the social world and its everyday practices, as constitutive of social difference. It uncovers social inequalities in such a way that both structure and agency are kept simultaneously in focus. It recognises diversity within social groupings and highlights the importance of context in which actions take place. The habitus is 'a structured and structuring structure' which functions as a bridge between the 'objective' realm of social structures and the 'subjective' realm of individual experience and action (Bourdieu, 1984, page 171). Bourdieu refers to the habitus as the social 'game' (1990, page 63) and internalised as 'second nature' (ibid).

The habitus then is a concept which refers both to a mental and physical attitude. Mental attitudes encompass perceptions, feelings, emotions, and ways of speaking. Physical attitudes encompass how the body expresses itself in standing, walking and posture. Key aspects of culture are embodied. Bourdieu describes the dispositions (such as different ways of talking, eating, walking, exercising) that make up the habitus as a 'meaning-made body' (Bourdieu, 1990, page 43). As one commentator, Reay, argues his use of the habitus demonstrates,

...the ways in which, not only is the body in the social world, but the ways in which the social world is in the body (Reay, 1995, page 354).

An individual's choices are circumscribed both by an internalised framework and external outcomes; everyday experiences emanate from a complex internalised core, which is the source of daily practices. The habitus is capable of producing action but since it confines possibilities to those ascribed by the social groups to which individuals belong, then it is likely that those actions will have a tendency to be reproductive rather than transformative. Dispositions are thus reflective of the social context in which they are acquired.

However, Bourdieu's concept of the habitus does not argue that life outcome is pre-determined because there is a dialectic interaction between habitus and 'a field' (the

external circumstances in which individuals are located). Conceptualising the social world in terms of 'fields' involves thinking relationally (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, page 228). A 'field' is rationalised as a network of power relations, which comprises

...the relations of force that obtain between the social positions which guarantee their occupant a quantum of social force, or of capital, such that they are able to enter struggles over the monopoly of power (ibid, pages 229-230).

The focus then is on 'fields' as a position and a process since 'fields' are characterised by 'struggle and dialectic' as 'dominated agents' resist the power of 'dominant agents' to use the field for their own advantage (Bourdieu, 1993, page 88). In the dialectic some are advantaged and others are disadvantaged according to their stocks of the four 'capitals.'

In a field, agents and institutions are engaged in a struggle, with unequal strengths, and in accordance with the rules constituting that field of play, to appropriate the specific profits at stake in that game (Bourdieu, 1993, page 88).

Location in a 'field' shapes the dispositions of the habitus in so far as dispositions are products of independent conditions. Bourdieu describes a wide repertoire of possible actions, which simultaneously enable an individual to draw on transformative and constraining courses of action. Constraints and demands can impose themselves on people such that habitus allows for individual agency and predisposes individuals towards certain ways of behaving. In practice habitus is not defined in predictable, regular modes of behaviour but in vagueness and indeterminacy. Ultimately however the operation of the habitus excludes certain practices, such as those that are unfamiliar to socio-cultural groups. The habitus is therefore a class habitus within which the choices inscribed are limited.

...dispositions (within a habitus) are reflective of the social context in which they are acquired (Bourdieu, 1990, page 116).

The habitus can thus be seen as playing a central role in the reproduction of social relations; it is

...a product of history (which) produces individual and collective practices, more history in accordance with the schemes generated by history (Bourdieu, 1990, page 54).

Since the habitus is a product of social conditionings it is also a product of history; the habitus is a product of early childhood experiences and especially socialisation within the family. It is then continually modified by individuals' encounters with the "outside" world such as schooling processes. Individuals contain within themselves their past and present position in the social structure 'at all times and in all places, in the forms of dispositions which are so many marks of social position' (Bourdieu 1990, page 82). Individual histories are therefore vital to understanding the concept of habitus.

This seems to present a deterministic view of social action; however Bourdieu insists that the features or 'structures' of the habitus, although 'products of historical practices' are 'constantly reproduced and transformed by historical practices' (Bourdieu, 1977, page 83). Whilst the habitus disposes people to act in certain ways, it does not totally constrain them for practices, which reflect dispositions generated by the habitus, are also shaped by individual biographies and circumstances. Bourdieu acknowledges difference and diversity between members of the same cultural grouping as well as the singularity of individual habitus. The concept of the habitus allows for individual agency as well as individual predisposition to behave in certain ways; whilst the habitus functions below the level of consciousness and language, embedding values automatically, at the same time the social world, predefined by broad relationships such as those of class, gender and race, is an act of construction, implementing schemes of thought and expressions. Between the conditions of existence and practices (or representations) there intervenes what Bourdieu terms

...the structuring activity of agents' responses to a world whose meaning they've helped to produce (Bourdieu, page 1984, page 467).

The habitus therefore allows for the simultaneous analysis of the experiences of social agents and of the objective structures (such as class and gender) which make those experiences possible. It is an analytic device, which keeps structure and agency simultaneously in focus; it and the thinking outlined in this chapter provide the conceptual framework for the analysis of my findings.

### **2.2.7 Summary**

I have discussed the nature of self/identity by incorporating concepts from cultural studies and postmodern philosophy in order to highlight the socially constructed nature of self/identity grounded in particular histories, class cultures, languages/discourses as well as the operation of dominant regimes of representation to produce the classed, gendered self. I have included insights from those thinkers who point up alternative readings, which draw attention to creativity and female understandings of self/identity.

The discussion has considered the roles of both structure and agency in examining the nature of self/identity. The structure, which informs this thesis, is that of class, as well as the schooling processes at two particular comprehensive schools. Bourdieu's concept of the habitus highlights the socialized body that has incorporated those immanent structures of the world (or a sector of the world - a field) which then structures the perception of that world as well as action in that world. How a sense of self/identity grounded in a particular class culture interacting with a particular habitus influences relationships to time and space, and thence informs of educational engagement and life chances, is crucial to my argument, discussed in chapters five to nine.

## **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Why qualitative research methodology?**

#### **3.1.1 Opening remarks**

This chapter explains why I have chosen a methodology defined predominantly in qualitative rather than quantitative terms. Banister et al (1994) describe qualitative research as the

interpretative study of a specified issue or problem in which the researcher is central to the sense that is made (page 2).

Within that methodological framework I outline which research paradigms I use to explore the key questions. Cohen and Manion (1994) define research as ‘systematic, controlled, empirical and self-correcting’ (page 4). On this definition it is a combination of both reasoning and experience, and as far as the natural sciences are concerned must be regarded ‘as the most successful approach to the discovery of truth’ (page 5). However, there is some debate whether in the field of social science it is possible to elicit the truth from whatever type of methodology is used.

#### **3.1.2 An anti-positivist stance**

It seemed logical that the research methodology that I chose should be anti-positivist. The positivist tradition, derived from Comte, which attempts to study humans scientifically and which applies scientific procedures, such as experiment, to social phenomena, is inadequate for the focus of this research. This piece of research is focused on understanding how a sense of self/identity framed by social class affects educational engagement and achievement. Positivists emphasise the need for valid research in the form of objectivity, the separation of what is known from the knower (Stanley, 1990, page 11). They argue that this objective knowledge is nearer the truth because it is independent from the personal. They claim, for example, that the interviewee has not been influenced by the interviewer, or the observer has not been too involved with his/her subjects. However, women, black people, lesbians and other oppressed groups provide a critique of such claims because they each offer their own authentic perspective, experience and knowledge. It seems morally unjustifiable to claim that people are objects to be researched on and then to deny the truth and validity of their experiences.

Teaching is essentially a personal activity. It is about the lived daily experiences, relationships and interactions of its participants. Qualitative research methodology lends itself to a deeper analysis of the multifarious factors, which might affect sense of self/identity (Stanley and Wise, 1983, Stanley, 1990). Stanley and Wise claim that structural accounts of “reality” are ‘generalized’ and ‘abstract’, ‘they go beyond people’ (ibid, page 85) and are therefore difficult to evaluate on a personal level. Although one could argue that quantitative analyses could reveal the complexities of everyday life in the form of statistical data, which has the appearance of being inviolate and unquestionable, there is a strong possibility that some important information could have been glossed over or omitted which interviews for example could reveal. It should always be the concern of any researcher that when quantitative methods are used, vital and relevant explorations of the lived, complex, sometimes irrational, nuances of everyday relationships and activities are omitted; this overlooks the fact that human nature, being complex, contradictory and multi-dimensional is not readily quantifiable (see also Stanley and Wise, 1983, Schratz and Walker, 1995).

The epistemological and ontological framework which I have adopted marginalizes quantitative methodology because of its positivist background. Positivism does not allow for the consciousness of individuals; within the individual consciousness many and different experiences are recognised rather than one single rationality (Stanley and Wise, 1983, page 130). The central tenet of anti-positivism argues that social science is a subjective undertaking in which human behaviour can best be understood by the researcher sharing the same frame of reference as the researched. The researcher tries to understand individuals’ interpretations from the inside, not the outside. In interpretative research the researcher is not an “objectified”, unimplicated narrator (Schratz and Walker, 1995, page 168). The research is a democratic process with descriptive data leading to theorising that reflects the experiences of the research community; it is contextualised and historical, representing local “truths.” I seek to use a methodology which allows me to probe further where necessary, and to recognise changing moods, feelings, and failings of both the researcher and researched upon. Whichever methodology is used, the researcher is not immune from those variables. Further, all types of research to some degree involve interaction, whether the researched be other people or other data.

### **3.2 A feminist and postmodern conceptual framework**

My conceptual framework draws on feminist (for example, Stanley and Wise, 1983, Stanley, 1990, Reinharz, 1992, Weiner, 1994, Griffiths, 1995) and postmodern (Foucault, 1970, 1974, 1979, 1980, 1981, Usher and Edwards, 1994) thought; it denies the existence of a single, universal and absolute reality. Griffiths (1995) argues that educational researchers can take account of the insights derived from feminism and postmodernism in their research without having to subscribe wholly to either perspective. Both feminism and postmodernism challenge traditional conceptions of epistemology, the tradition rooted in Descartes, Hume and Kant which sought for certain and firm foundations. Feminism and postmodernism highlight the deep connections between knowledge and power. Postmodernism denies “master” narratives and unifying theories; feminisms point up how facts are not value free, the self and subjectivity, consciousness and positions in discourse are central in any attempts to elicit the “truth”. I am committed to social justice, as are feminists, and in so far as postmodernism supports those ethical and political values associated with social justice, it is a valuable ally.

Where once the concern was with scientific method and generalisation, research now looks more to political considerations, to local change and to understanding issues (Schatz and Walker, 1995, page 166).

Feminism and postmodernism both offer illumination in qualitative analyses. Feminism emphasises that the researched are subjects within their own right. They produce their own theories and understandings of their independent experiences. It recognises that research is itself a social interaction in its own right also.

#### **3.2.1 The influence of feminist research praxis**

Feminism challenges Cartesian dualisms that separate the knower and what/who is known; ignoring the act of knowing and how the research findings came to be known glosses over contextually specific meanings. Stanley (1990) states that the resultant knowledge is alienated:

...it is, no more and no less, as much an alienated commodity produced within patriarchal capitalism as any other alienated capitalist commodity (Stanley, 1990, page 11).

Feminism insists on the crucial need for useful knowledge, on committed understanding as a form of praxis. Any knowledge gained, it argues, should be unalienated: when the researcher is grounded as an actual person in a concrete setting, then understanding and theorising are located and treated as material activities. In this way, the act of knowing is examined as the chief determiner of what is actually known. Feminists (such as Stanley and Wise, 1983) emphasise the personal in the research process, the analytic use of feeling, emotion and experience is an examination of the personal. This is vital since research is a process which occurs through the medium of a person: the researcher is inevitably present in the research. “Knowledge” is thus grounded in practical, material conditions of lived experience.

Feminists use the term “consciousness” to describe a state which offers an interpretation of the “facticity” of the social and material world.

Our state of consciousness provides us with an ontological system for acting within the social world, in the sense of involving a set of assumptions about the nature of being or existence (Roberts, 1976, page 6, quoted in Stanley and Wise, 1983, page 130.)

Consequently, different states of consciousness lead to the construction of different social worlds. Social worlds here refers therefore to the “worlds of reality”, which we encounter and create through our interactions with family, friends, peers, colleagues, as well as our experiences of social institutions such as the workplace, school.

There is the recognition that people make sense of their world through shared meanings. Language, both oral and written, is crucial in the conveyance of meaning. Cohen and Mannion (1994) have utilised Bernstein’s argument to contend that individuals negotiate meanings within ‘structured’ interactions and that such particular activities presuppose a wider backdrop of ‘structured’ meanings. They argue that there exist in the background relationships within situations and sets of situations (ibid, page 35). Therefore, although individuals are active in their interrelationships, they are also passive, in so far as they are participants or “actors” within a wider structured social setting. Other “actors” have the power to impose their definitions upon participants. For example, within schools a social structure exists which contains inequalities of

power, and this reflects the wider social structure of inequality, which exists outside school (Mac An Ghail, 1994). Thus, dominant individuals and groups have the power to impose their own definitions of situations upon participants.

In methodological terms, the observation, description and analyses of daily interactions are therefore important (Schatz and Walker, 1995). Social reality is a consequence of the ways in which participants perceive social situations. Individuals and groups are seen as actively involved in constructing and negotiating, not just passively enacting. Within the context of a particular classroom or within a group of students within a class, teachers and students are continually bargaining, adjusting, acting, changing their interactions.

Within the world of everyday life, feminism acknowledges that there are multiple “realities” which are different “realities” for different groups, for example, the working class, women. The validity of all these differing experiences is recognised, whilst at the same time not denying the existence of a common reality through which we all negotiate our daily, lived experiences. “Reality” then is complex, multi-dimensional and contradictory; feminism believes therefore that social structures and systems are best understood and explored through the experiences and relationships of everyday life (Stanley and Wise, 1983).

In attempting to understand how people construct and describe reality, feminists are anxious to point up the contextually grounded and specific nature of competing social realities co-existing. Existence in daily life is dependent upon continued interaction and communication with others; we are aware that our world has a commonality, and that there is an ongoing correspondence with my meanings and the meanings of others in the world. We all share a common sense about the world’s reality.

Reality is socially defined. But the definitions are always embodied, that is concrete individuals and groups of individuals serve as definers of reality (Berger and Luckman, 1966, page 134).

At the same time, though, we have different perspectives upon our common shared world, which are neither identical nor identifiable with others. When one particular definition of reality comes to be attached to a concrete power interest and ideological

dimensions, such as of class, are formed then different realities co-exist in the same “world”. For instance, working class children inhabit a different “world” from that of middle class children not simply because of the way in which they have constructed/been constructed by their sense of self/identity within the family and, through them, within the community, but also because of their different economic and materially grounded “world” (Berger and Luckman, 1966, page 172).

### **3.2.2 The influence of postmodern thought**

Postmodern thought can also illuminate such qualitative analyses in research because it is characterised by a fragmentation of perspectives and an ambiguity of meanings. Postmodernists claim that there is no single foundational knowledge, which is true for everyone (Griffiths, 1995). Similarly, there is no foundational narrative because all human ideas are situated. Since there is no neutral, universal reason, which can arbitrate truth or knowledge then there can be no empirical, knowable object called the self, waiting to be discovered or observed. The self is therefore best understood as a subjectivity produced within the discourses in which it is positioned and positions itself. Educational practice and the people within it are subject to discourse, which includes the discourse of education. That discourse can be deconstructed and reconstructed using postmodern analysis. On such an analysis there is the recognition of the importance of listening to several voices: individuals and groupings (for example, according to class, gender). It is useful to consider how individuals position themselves in discourse and how those positions change. The ideas and methods which are a central feature of both postmodernism and feminism readily lend themselves as analytic tools. In particular, research analysing discourses, deconstructing “traditional” readings of texts, and focusing on the local and micro-structures.

## **3.3 The application of qualitative research methodology to this thesis**

### **3.3.1 An account of my reasons**

My reasons for using a predominantly qualitative type of analysis are two-fold. On philosophical grounds, I oppose the epistemology and ontology which have become enshrined within the education system. On ethical grounds, my choice reflects a desire to recognise the need to bring about some form of social justice for working-class students, particularly working-class girls. Accusations of a failure to be impartial are

understandable at this point, especially in view of my own working class origins. However, a primary reason for becoming involved in research was my experiences, some of which were as a student. Having experiences which were compatible with the research project, whilst at the same time being reflexive about the nature of the relationship between the experience and research process, falls within the research paradigm which I have utilised. I make no apologies for attempting to achieve a degree of rapport with my research subjects; this validates me the researcher as a human being.

Despite “moving up” a class I still feel a strong emotional tie to the working class and female cause. I acknowledge that the mention of emotions and feelings hints at irrationality and issues of bias surface again, however, emotions can be rationalised (see comments in this chapter relating to feminist thought as well as those in chapter two relating to “structures of feeling”); researchers need to be part of their own research either with or without emotional ties. Schratz and Walker (1995) argue that the self in research can be “validated” by referring to issues of meaning, value, relevance and personal commitment. Researchers, they suggest, should develop an awareness and understanding of their own voices in the socio-cultural context as well as all the relationships (researcher, researched, supervisors) involved in the research process because their histories, biographies and social context all mediate the construction of knowledge. The outward observations of others ultimately means directing the gaze inwards to the emotional/rational self.

If our concern is with research in the context of social change, we must also wear the coats we weave for others (Schratz and Walker, 1995, page 139).

The requirement not to transgress that central tenet of research, the concept of “objectivity”, by the inclusion of the self and its possible emotions has been challenged by researchers (such as Schratz and Walker, 1995, as well as feminist researchers such as Stanley, 1990, Weiner, 1994) because of the claim pertaining to “objective knowledge” as being value free. This claim to value free knowledge rests upon the value we place upon precision, testability and empirical content which is arguably not value free. For instance, in the fields of Science and Technology there are conflicts over “objective knowledge”: what is defined as “objective knowledge” is often defined by

powerful interests in research communities who are of course tainted by particular political and value systems.

### **3.3.2 The advantages of a local study**

The epistemological premise shared by many policy makers, school managers and teachers fails to acknowledge that students are active (and hidden) curriculum makers themselves (see, for example, Hargreaves, 1967, Mac An Ghail, 1994). Teachers and students both make lessons. Students can make a major contribution to the social construction of classroom knowledge. Students bring into schools their own cultural knowledges, understandings, values and feelings (Dubberley, 1988). Schools can therefore be viewed as important cultural sites. Within peer group cultures, students make their own individual and collective meanings. Different social groups experience the curriculum differently (Ball, 1981). What is happening at the micro-level of the school may well differ from educational theorising about what is happening inside schools. Thus, both methodologically and theoretically, school micro-cultures are useful for examining the interplay between schooling and class/gender identities, and how that impacts upon student sense of self.

A locally focused study highlights the concrete, material conditions of the research participants in which their social, cultural and discursive practices are played out. Qualitative research methods are appropriate for analysing mediated socio-cultural reality. They disclose a sensitivity to subject meanings and values, and an ability to represent and interpret symbolic practices, language, discourse and forms of cultural reproduction (see also Mac An Ghail, 1994, Hey, 1997). By understanding the context of the lives of the students, their families and teachers, it is possible to infer meanings.

The strength of qualitative work with a focus on located meanings is that it facilitates the development of key areas of the research process and also the ongoing development of research study design. At the same time, being aware of the power relations which operate within the research process and also the conditions in which situated knowledges are produced also helps to focus upon the boundaries set by any specific enquiry (Mac An Ghail, 1994).

Contemporary pedagogy still tends to be over-rationalist, employing a positivist epistemology. It assumes an *a priori* superiority; that “facts” are more adequate explanations of class/gender relations than the logic which is provided by feelings and emotions, particularly in relation to gender and sexual differences. Schools provide a setting in which “structures of feeling,” emotional responses and irrationality are absent (see also Mac An Ghail, 1994). Feminist praxis, which I draw on, offers an alternative reading of pedagogy from a theoretical position, which combines ‘analysis and practice, structure and subjectivity, rationalism and empiricism’ (Mac An Ghail, 1994, page 157).

Qualitative methodology puts the researcher in a central position with respect to the sense that is being made (Stanley, 1990, Banister et al, 1994). Qualitative researchers accept that they are subjectively and centrally engaged with the research focus and the questions asked; subjectivity offers disciplinary uniqueness.

Social science has only recently come to realise that ‘subjectivity’, rather than threatening claims to scientific status, actually marks claim to disciplinary uniqueness (Schatz and Walker, 1995, page 60).

The task of research, Schatz and Walker (1995) argue, is to invoke an exploration of the subjective nature of knowing and the charting of “reality” as others experience it. By utilising the collective narratives of particular communities and groups, which are expressed in specific social contexts, the development of the self in its socio-cultural location can be explored without the separation of the self from its social “world”.

Interpretative methodology reminds the reader that research about people is also conducted by people who have much in common with those they study (Schatz and Walker, 1995). Interpretative research does not offer fixed truth: it offers debate. It is an attempt to capture the sense that lies within. It explores and elaborates the significance of an identified phenomenon, specified issue or problem (Banister et al, 1994).

### **3.3.3 Issues of interpretation and validity**

Interpretative researchers recognise that it is in the nature of interpretation to be contradictory and for there always to be surplus meaning. Additional things could be said that cannot be limited or controlled. Interpretation is a process, which provides a

gap between the world and representations of it, but that process continues as relationships of the researcher to the researched keep changing. Thus there will always be a gap between what the researcher tries to understand and accounts of what the world is like. Interpretative research aims for specificity and reliability. It recognises the importance of language and the rights of the researched to speak (Banister et al, 1994).

The results of interpretative research are provisional, and changes in the demands of the research setting, as well as the researcher and the researched, place a moral responsibility on the researcher to allow the readers of the report to offer different interpretations (Banister et al, 1994). This opens up the research to a reflexive survey of the assumptions that have guided it. The nearest the researcher can get to an objective account of a particular phenomenon in question is through an exploration of the ways in which the subjectivity of the researcher has structured the way it is defined in the first place. Research has to be carried out from a particular standpoint and any pretence to neutrality is therefore disingenuous. A reflexive analysis which respects the different meanings brought to the study by the researcher and the researched is an ethical undertaking, and the characteristics of people or situations should be treated as valued resources.

Critics of this type of study often raise the issue of validity. An effective response is given by Banister et al, (ibid) who argue that since interpretative research is

...theory generating, inductive, aiming to gain valid knowledge and understanding by representing and illuminating the nature and quality of people's experiences (page 143).

then the concept of consistency is more appropriate than validity because it recognises the complexity and dynamism of the social world and its multiple realities.

The research is not a linear progression of understanding because ongoing work is likely to involve several issues, for instance, the theoretical framework is likely to be informed by the data generated, its subsequent analysis and the ongoing discussions with the research participants. The theory that arises from the material gained must then

guide to a certain extent later collection of material, which in turn must refine ideas and develop theory.

Three groups of research participants were involved in assisting in the collection of data: students, their parents and teachers. Such use of triangulation allows illumination from multiple standpoints, reflecting a commitment to thoroughness, flexibility and differences of experience. There is a need to recognise that all researchers, perspectives and methods are value-laden, biased, limited as well as illuminated by their frameworks, interests and blind spots. Triangulation makes use of a combination of methods (for example: participant observation, diary/field notes, interview data) and perspectives. Banister et al (1994) claim that triangulation facilitates 'richer and potentially more valid interpretations' (page 145).

#### **3.3.4 Reflexivity**

The personal and social nature of interpretative research affords more opportunity to be reflexive: reflexivity is its most distinctive feature. It is an attempt to make explicit the process by which the material and analysis are produced. It is about acknowledging the central position of the researcher in the construction of knowledge, and that all findings are constructions and personal views of reality which are open to change and reconstruction (Stanley, 1990, Banister et al, 1994, Schratz and Walker, 1995). Its purpose is to make explicit how our understandings are formed. A reflexive account allows readers to re-analyse the material, and to develop alternative interpretations and explanations.

Within the research process, the researcher must be aware of the ethical implications for both researchers and researched. The aim must be to access and represent the research phenomena, to ensure responsible action and engagement in effective practices in the search for constructive and illuminating ways to construct reality. At the same time, there must be an acknowledgement that all research is constructed: that no knowledge is certain whatever its claims, but it is rather a particular understanding in an interpretative process and that different understandings and different ways of knowing exist (Banister et al 1994, pages 172-173).

### **3.4 Case study design**

My research was conducted at one North East Derbyshire school and one North Nottinghamshire school. The approach I employ is best described as case study, combined with ethnographic data, influenced by ideas from feminist and postmodern methodology. The case study rests within the feminist and postmodern research paradigms, as it is multi-method and anti-positivist. It aims to be interactive and reciprocal, attentive to subjectivities, descriptive and flexible. It offers the researcher the chance to engage in ‘conscious reflexivity’ to make the case study a focus of reflection and self-reflection (Weiner, 1994). Feminist praxis suggests since personhood cannot be omitted in the research process, then a case study is ideal for fully exploring the personhood of individuals and groups. My case study made use of multiple data sources.

Case studies have proved valuable in the field of educational research because they typically observe the characteristics of an individual “unit”, for example, a class, school or child. They offer an intensive analysis of the various phenomena which comprise the make-up of a particular “unit”. Classrooms and schools are composed of people, who are essentially meaningful. They inhabit subjectively structured worlds, which possess particular meanings for their inhabitants. Thus, there are clear advantages in an interactive type approach, which case study offers.

Participant observation fitted my research paradigm better than surveys and experiments since it was more “natural” (Cohen and Manion, 1994). I observed my research participants from the viewpoint of teacher/researcher, as a visitor to the homes of the students and their families, as a guest at a wedding of a former Academy student. At both study schools, I have shared my experiences with colleagues. I was able to discern ongoing behaviour as it occurred and I made notes about salient features. Since case studies take place over an extended period of time, researchers can develop more intimate and informal relationships with the researched in a more natural setting than in an experiment.

Following the guidelines of a chief exponent of case study design, Yinn (1988), I began by identifying a “problem” at my study schools: one of underachievement. The issue to

be explored was how far sense of self/identity (of students, parents, teachers) affected achievement. Yinn suggests that the required skills for this sort of study are the ability to ask good questions and to interpret the answers. Also, he continues, the ability to be a good listener and have a firm grasp of the issues being studied are necessary prerequisites. Within that process there is a strong possibility of the researched being put in a vulnerable position towards the researcher: he/she may “open up” and speak in a way to the researcher that they have not done previously.

I stated previously the desire to achieve rapport between researcher and researched as a reasonable goal. This may be regarded as a means of avoiding non-exploitation of the researched. If rapport is not achieved then researchers should aim for a relationship based on respect, shared information and clarity of communication. However, there is an ethical issue to be faced here, because it reflects the power relations, which operate within the research process. I was a teacher at both study schools; this entailed my direct involvement with some of the student research participants as their teacher as well as their form tutor. Although it is impossible to remove those power relations, the recognition of the personal in both the researcher and the researched, and the vulnerability of both parties, can help to mitigate some of the power imbalance.

Yinn’s design framework for the case study suggests that evidence should come from six sources: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artefacts. Documents are important because they may corroborate and augment evidence from other sources. Archival records may also be useful with the recognition that many will have been produced for a specific audience and for a specific purpose. Interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artefacts evidence the historical, socio-cultural contextual grounding of the research project. I made use of semi-structured interviews, field/diary notes and official documentation from meetings. In addition, I also used questionnaires in the early stages of the research. These gave me a “feel” for the perceptions of the participants towards school and education. Also, it gave me an overview of student life outside school in respect to family, leisure time. Layder (1993) advocates such a multi-strategy approach.

### **3.4.1 Time in case study research**

A major strength of case study research is that it allows an investigation to trace events over time. A research project has its own history, which should be distinguished from the conventional notion of history, as a narrative of a succession of significant events through the course of time. During the course of the timing of this research I considered the “immediate” history of the social phenomenon being researched and the “distant”, long-term history, such as the effects of the local pit closures and the miners’ strike of 1984. These two histories were distinguished by the differing organising principles of the two processes; schools, classrooms and inter-relationships within them have their own histories and their own time scales, but they also share in the much wider narrative of events denoted by the conventional notion of history. My research project was located at specific temporal and spatial points, so both the internal history of the study and the narrative events of conventional history affected the eventual outcome of the research findings (see also chapter one).

### **3.4.2 The value of reflective research in case studies**

Case studies are embedded in “action” and can thus locate the importance of educational research in everyday practice. They afford an opportunity for reflection and reflective practice; my aim is to improve practice as well as produce knowledge. In this process theoretical abstraction plays a subordinate role in the development of practical insights gained from the reflective experiences of concrete cases. Reflective educational research implies the study of educational structures from a committed position to effect worthwhile change. It recognises how teaching is shaped by such structures, which are evident in the selection and organisation of curriculum content, in programmes of study which govern how content is handled, in the ways students are socially organised, and in how time, space and resources are allocated and distributed in relation to learning tasks.

Reflective research involves a process which embodies the values of openness, shared critical responsibility and rational autonomy. However, those values clash with the values which seem to regulate school life: hierarchy, territoriality and privacy. Thus, it may be difficult to obtain data if colleagues are unwilling to participate or Heads are obstinate. At the Academy, the interview with the Headteacher was interrupted several times; uncharacteristically he spoke indistinctly at times. Despite agreeing to be

interviewed on three occasions, the Headteacher at Prioryfields eventually declined because of “pressure.”

Ethical issues of confidentiality and “insider” information occur. Also, there may be the need to protect individuals from possible misrepresentation or misuse of sensitive data, by researcher and audience. During the course of this research I have constantly reflected upon and aimed to be reflexive, with regard to the handling of data. My aims have been: impartiality, sensitivity and authenticity.

### **3.4.3 The inclusion of ethnographic data**

In conclusion, it is necessary to comment upon the inclusion of ethnographic data which also informed the research process. Layder (1993) has termed ethnographic data the ‘cultural anthropology’ (page 38) of the classroom. Such data seeks to tune into the subjective understandings of the research subjects. It is also essential for understanding the following: social activities taking place inside and outside school, the personal narratives of the families and teachers, the local histories of the schools, the socio-economic and cultural histories of the localities, the recollections of key figures from the local communities which the schools served. Furthermore, an ethnographic approach insists on the epistemological and ontological validity of all interpretations of “reality.” By locating the construction of reality within the events and experiences of everyday life, it implies that all of us are involved in our own oppression and emancipation.

Some studies have afforded me an insight into the uses of ethnographic data, which also reflect an interest in class, gender and schooling. They are: “Learning to Labour”, Paul Willis, 1977, “Beachside Comprehensive. A Case-Study of Secondary Schooling”, Stephen J Ball, 1981, “The Making of Men. Masculinities, Sexualities and Schooling”, Mairtin Mac An Ghail, 1994, and “The Company She Keeps. An Ethnography of Girls’ Friendship”, Valerie Hey, 1997. I have a large volume of data, collected over the period between April 1996 and July 2002. I wished to report upon a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context. I have connected to the personal experiences of the researched within the social structures, which they inhabited. This required the recognition of a particular ontology and a particular epistemology. Therefore, I described the participants’ experiences and then offered analysis and interpretation.

An ethnographic approach to the data allowed me to emphasise the personal and social nature of this research. I have been, I am part of the researched situation(s). I am therefore accountable. I am aware of my personal history but also that of other “I”s. Bourdieu refers to this closeness as a ‘spiritual exercise’ and ‘intellectual love’ (Bourdieu, 1999, page 641). At the same time, as a researcher and writer I was distanced from the researched and I tried to give a disinterested perception. I could only do this by taking up a privileged viewpoint, by having placed myself “within”, in order to take in all possible points of view.

I have stated how feminist and postmodern theory has been important in asking questions about knowledge and power, when critiquing traditional universal truth claims and the power structures of modern society. Feminist praxis, which defines itself as a dialectical relationship between thinking and action, is of personal relevance, because it emphasises practice, politics and value systems. In the school where I now work and those schools in which I have worked, my personal, professional and micro-political relationships with students, colleagues, the curriculum and the school itself have all been a focus of reflection, self-reflection and reflexivity. Within feminism “reflexivity” lies critical praxis, because it enables the critical practitioner to develop a practice which embraces their own political and social values and beliefs in the demand for change. My reflexivity as a researcher was essential; the emphasis was on the importance of subjectivity and personal involvement in the research process.

Since ontology and epistemology were given equal consideration, my being as a researcher in terms of gender and class, affected what was found within the research process. Thus, engagement with social justice and injustice must occur. I ally with those feminists who are committed to changing the world, specifically for the working class children, and particularly the girls, whom I encounter daily at work. It is a praxis, which is rooted in everyday practice, derived from experience and subject to revision because of lived daily experiences.

Case study, which utilises ethnographic data, rests comfortably within a feminist research paradigm, because it is multi-method, anti-positivist, interactive, reciprocal, descriptive, flexible and attentive to subjectivities. Since its value position is in

opposition to those embodied in recent educational reforms, it offers the possibility to explore issues of social justice and equality, at micro (and macro) political levels. It challenges present circumstances and demands change in recognition of the complexities of human experience.

... it offers a form of praxis which engages with social justice and injustice from a vantage point which might be viewed as more illuminating than other vantage points (Weiner, 1992b, page 6, quoted in Weiner, 1994, page 23).

## **Chapter 4: Research Methods**

### **4.1 Conscious reflexivity**

#### **4.1.1 Introduction**

The research methods I employed are grounded in the concepts and values outlined in the preceding chapters. My desire to “connect with” the research resulted in a physical and spiritual closeness; that is some sense of shared subjectivity, to the research communities, of which I was a member. My hopes of social justice for the research participants, not least the working class students and their families, meant that this research was a ‘spiritual exercise’ (Bourdieu, see previous chapter); it represents my attempts to enter into the personal narratives of the “Is”, the need for conscious reflexivity was therefore paramount. How best though to be consciously reflexive?

Following the lead of Schratz and Walker (1995) I decided to treat the research methods as a ‘practice’ so that it is ‘critically recursive’ whilst avoiding ‘infinite regression’ (ibid, page 13) and ‘retrospective reconstruction’ (ibid, page 14). I aimed therefore to make the text embodied, demonstrating a commitment to autobiographical and cultural anthropological narratives connecting the self/selves to their temporal and spatial contexts via a critical reflex reflexivity.

The critical ontology of ourselves has to be considered...as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits imposed on us and the experiment in going beyond them (Foucault, 1984, page 50, cited in Schratz and Walker, 1995, page 39).

#### **4.1.2 Getting started: mapping the research journey**

The “seeds” of this thesis had been “planted” during the research/writing of my MA dissertation with my concerns relating to those students who failed to fulfil their primary school “potential” and who “underachieved” at secondary school. When I arrived at the Academy I was already thinking of a research project in general terms of attitude, assessment and achievement. I re-iterate that once I began working at the Academy, the issue of a classed and gendered sense of self/identity and its relationship to educational achievement became conspicuous. In terms of attainment at GCSE the Academy was labelled a failure and it was stigmatised because it occupied a particular physical, social and emotional space, a relatively isolated former mining community, which still bore the

scars of the 1984 miners' strike. I soon became concerned about the lack of achievement not only in boys, currently in vogue, but girls also. It appeared that the identities of the students were clearly bound up in the local male dominated culture, (one male colleague referred to man as "God", denoting male dominance and female subservience), as well as the micro-politics of the Academy itself.

The actual research practice began when I began background reading as well as when I started to keep a diary, which covered the period April 1996 to December 1999. (On arrival at Prioryfields, in January 2000, I started to keep a diary there also.) The diaries contained write-ups of notes taken in the field and recorded in my teachers' planners: this included observations, informal conversations with colleagues, documentation (with my annotations) from curriculum, pastoral and staff meetings, Ofsted inspection reports as well as my feelings, thoughts, reflections and reflexions. The diaries provided a rich source of descriptive data, particularly ethnographic; they identified critical events during the research period as well as facilitating critical reflection and reflexivity throughout the research practice. (Excerpts from the diaries are to be found in the Appendix.)

My husband and I attended a wedding ceremony and wedding reception of one of my former female Academy students. Whilst working at Prioryfields we also attended an amateur dramatic production as guests of one of my middle class students, in which she starred. At both study schools as a teacher of Humanities, when organising local fieldwork and "trips" I learnt about the histories and cultures of the local villages and their associated communities from residents, parish clergy and the chaplain (at the Academy). I also made contact with and visited feeder primary schools, residential homes, local shops and businesses when supervising Year 10 students on their work experience placements in Burnside and Graftby.

From the summer term of 1996 I began to immerse myself in literature relating to assessment and achievement, especially postmodern and feminist deconstructions of education policy since the 1988 Education Reform Act. This background reading combined with the early stages of the research practice (see sections following) helped to keep my focus upon student achievement. However, the issues of assessment and postmodern and feminist deconstructions of the National Curriculum were well

documented whilst my initial writings relating to attitude, which I rationalised as a mental and physical aspect of being, promised to be a more fruitful base from which to explore student achievement. I therefore started to familiarise myself with Bourdieu's concept of habitus, which seemed to share some common ground with my notions of attitude, as well as his other works and those of his leading commentators. I did not abandon my postmodern/feminist epistemological framework but moved the thesis in the direction of the relationship between class/cultural sense of self/identity and student achievement via the writings associated with Bourdieu.

During the autumn term of 1999 when I decided to enrich the research project by gathering data from another school, problems arose with supervision. From that autumn onwards no meetings took place between my supervisor and myself. I kept the project alive by maintaining my focus upon class/culture, identity and achievement as well as repeating the research practice from when I joined my second case study school, Priorsfields in January 2000. By the time my new supervisory team were established in January 2001 I had gathered a wealth of data; I was eager to discuss with them the route of the research journey which I chart chronologically in the sections following.

#### **4.1.3 The quantitative phase of the research**

The formal phase of the research began with the issuing of questionnaires; I wanted to gain a general impression of the lives of the research participants and I believe that resorting to quantitative methods was justifiable for several reasons. The questionnaires played a minor but essential role in providing background information for the qualitative research to follow; they were an efficient way of accessing data in a short period of time; they gave me a "snapshot" view, revealing generalisations and patterns as well as rendering possible insights into past behaviours and future intentions. As Bourdieu states (1999) all empirical research in whatever its form involves a social relationship; quantitative methods are also based on interactions.

The positivist dream of an epistemological state of perfect innocence papers over the fact that the crucial difference is not between a science that effects a construction and one that does not, but between a science that does this without knowing it and one that, being aware of the work of construction, strives to discover and master as completely as possible the nature of its inevitable acts of construction and the equally inevitable effects those effects produce (ibid, page 608).

The quantitative phase also demanded that I engage in conscious reflexivity or as Bourdieu expresses it 'a reflex reflexivity' (ibid, page 608).

According to Davidson (1970) an ideal self-completion questionnaire should possess the same properties as a good law in that it is uniformly workable, with in-built minimisation of errors from the respondents and, since it is voluntary, it should be engaging and encourage truthful answers. I therefore avoided questions which were "leading", complex and open-ended in nature. The 'ideal' questionnaire then is 'clear', 'unambiguous', 'encouraging their (the respondents') co-operation, and eliciting answers as close as possible to the truth' (Davidson, 1970, quoted in Cohen and Manion, 1994, page 93).

I issued self-completion questionnaires to students, parents and teachers at both study schools. All of these three groups of participants were informed that I was undertaking a research project into student underachievement at their particular school. I informed the students and teachers directly (verbally); the parents were contacted via explanatory letters which accompanied the questionnaires taken home by the students. At the Academy I chose two mixed ability tutor groups; these were students whom I taught and whose tutors were co-operative with the research. One group consisted of 13 boys and 12 girls; the other group consisted of 11 boys and 15 girls; there were 13 students identified as having special educational needs. This figure comprised 8 boys and 5 girls. The questionnaires were issued in the summer and autumn terms of 1997 during tutor periods, when the students were Year 9 going into Year 10. I received 51 responses. The questionnaires to the parents of the students in those tutor groups were also issued in the autumn term of 1997. They were taken home for parental completion; I received 43 responses. I issued the teacher questionnaires via pigeon-holes in the staff room, during the spring term of 1999; after promptings from myself and once from the Headteacher at morning staff briefings, I received 40 responses.

At Prioryfields because of the vertical tutor system I decided it would be simpler and easier to issue the student questionnaires to two mixed ability classes whom I taught and the majority of whom I had taught for two terms in year 9. One group consisted of 28

students, 15 males and 13 females. There were 3 boys identified as having special educational needs in this group. The other group consisted of 22 students, with equal numbers of each sex. I issued the questionnaires in the autumn term of 2000 at the start of lessons; there were 50 respondents. I also issued the questionnaires to the parents of those students in the autumn term of 2000. They were taken home for parental completion; there were 30 respondents. I issued the teacher questionnaires at the start of a staff meeting (with the Headteacher's permission) during the autumn term of 2001; there were 41 respondents.

There was a focus in each set of questionnaires. For the students, the focus concerned their feelings about school, family involvement in school, family and out of school activities. The parental focus sought their perspective upon their child's life at school, and the extent of their involvement in school life. The teachers' questionnaire asked about their teaching career and their present role, their perceptions of student attitude, attainment, parental involvement and the local culture.

I converted my written analyses of each question of all the questionnaires into graphs to facilitate identification of some key patterns; at both study schools the presence of friends made lessons "alright" for the students. A majority of both student samples made affirmations that teachers were "doing their heads in". Whilst there were many areas of agreement in the parental responses and allowing for the difference in total responses (41 at the Academy compared to 30 at Prioryfields), 15 Prioryfields parents believed school played an important role in determining their child's career compared to 31 at the Academy. The findings from the teachers' questionnaires revealed an overwhelming majority responding positively to the impact of local culture resulting in negative student attitudes. At both schools the majority of staff had experienced difficult relationships and stress with students as well as staff: at the Academy 32 staff and at Prioryfields 37 staff had experienced difficult relationships with students, at the Academy 30 staff and at Prioryfields 33 staff had experienced stress. 11 staff at the Academy and 16 staff at Prioryfields reported difficult relationships with colleagues, and 19 Academy staff and 14 Prioryfields staff had also experienced stress with colleagues. Regarding staff/parent relationships: 7 Academy staff compared to 21 Prioryfields staff reported difficult relationships with parents, and 5 Academy staff compared to 20 Prioryfields staff had felt stress with parents. I decided that in the follow

up interviews I would need to probe deeper into the nature of the underlying relationships between the three groups of research participants in order to learn more about negative perceptions especially those framed by the local cultures of the two schools and their communities. (The questionnaires and sample analyses are to be found in the Appendix).

#### **4.1.4 The qualitative phase of the research**

Since the patterns which emerged from my analyses of the questionnaires corresponded to the findings from my other observations recorded in my diary/field notes I felt confident in moving on to the next phase of the research: the semi-structured interviews. However charges of potential bias surface at this point because of issues involving my identification with the interviewees. My responses to those charges emanate from feminist praxis and Bourdieu. Feminist praxis insists on the crucial need for 'unalienated' knowledge (Stanley, 1990, page 11); the most 'pertinent dimensions of unalienated knowledge' (ibid) occur when the researcher is grounded as an actual person in a concrete setting. Understanding and theorising are then located in and treated as material activities rather than being regarded as 'unanalysable metaphysical transcendent' ones different from 'mere' people (ibid). Similarly, Bourdieu (1999, page 614) stresses that understanding the interviewees and explaining should be one; this is more possible if the researcher possesses some knowledge of the subject. The interviews represent *a privileged moment* in this knowledge and as privileges they were treated with respect, without bias.

##### 4.1.4.1 The semi-structured interviews: an outline

These interviews were conducted after I had completed my analyses of the questionnaires. When I had decided which participants to interview I spoke to each student and staff member in turn to ask if, in principle, they would agree to a taped interview. (The parents were contacted via their children). When all the participants had consented to be interviewed I then met with each participant individually to arrange an appropriate time and place. The parental interview venues and times were again arranged via their children.

The interview questions, which were general in nature (see the Appendix), were based on findings from the questionnaires, informal conversations between myself, students,

parents and staff, my diary/field notes, documentation from meetings and the general “knowledge” which became part of my “being” in the two study schools. I wanted to learn from the students how the local culture, significant others and school contributed to their sense of self/identity. I interviewed 40 students: 20 from each school, each group of 20 comprised 10 girls and 10 boys. I enquired about their perceptions relating to the subjects they were studying, including their attitudes towards homework and their expectations of school. I also wished to learn of key influences in their lives, such as relationships with friends, peers and teachers as well as out of school activities.

I interviewed 17 parents of the students I had chosen for interview: from the Academy I interviewed 7 sets of parents, 3 of whom were couples, from Prioryfields, I interviewed 10 sets of parents, 3 of whom were couples. I discovered that some parents whom I interviewed had attended the same school as their child(ren). How far had their school experiences, and those of their parents, constituted their identities? What contribution had the parents made to their child’s sense of self/identity? I asked about their understanding of the influence of friends, family and the local culture upon their child’s attitude towards school and education. Did they think that, by the end of Year 11, school would have a significant impact upon their child’s achievements in terms of their personal development?

My teacher interview sample in both schools consisted of 3 male colleagues and 3 female colleagues, plus the Headteacher (at the Academy, a male) and a Deputy Headteacher (at Prioryfields, also a male). I tried to learn my colleagues’ reasons for becoming teachers. I asked for their explanations of student attitude and achievement. What were their understandings of the local culture and its effects upon student attitude? I asked for descriptions of the school’s management style. Also, how far did their sense of self/identity, in terms of personal achievements as a teacher, relate to their perceptions of student identity, in terms of their personal and group achievements?

At the Academy, I began the student interviews in April 1998 and completed them by the end of June 1998. The parent interviews, which were conducted in school as well as in parental homes, were held between October 1998 and March 1999. The teacher interviews were completed between May and July 1999. At Prioryfields, the student interviews were held between late May and July 2001. The parental interviews were

held prior to the student interviews because of the timing of work experience and other “fixtures” in the school calendar; they began in early March and were completed by early May 2001. The teacher interviews commenced in February 2002 and were completed in July 2002.

All the 20 student interviews took place in my teaching room either at lunchtime or after the end of school; they lasted between 30 minutes and 1 hour. I was conscious of the power relations here that existed in the teacher/student relationship; it is inevitable that students seeing me in my teacher role will have impacted upon the data to a certain extent. For instance, in the case of Liam (the Academy) whom I did not teach, my relationship with him was less familiar than with some of the other student interviewees, his answers were very curt and always completed with ‘yes Miss’ and ‘no Miss’. However, in the main, the other interviewees adopted a relaxed posture, some of them engaging in a degree of self-analysis and with my prior knowledge of their “realities” facilitating their disclosure. Having gained the permission of the interviewees I was conscious of entering their private world that was to become for some of them a public expression of the self, as a personal/professional teacher cum researcher, I strived to avoid instances of symbolic violence.

The majority of the parent interviews took place after school in my teaching room; 3 interviews with Academy parents took place in parental homes (2 in Burnside and 1 in a nearby village); 1 interview with a Prioryfields grandparent took place in her home in Boyston. On average these interviews lasted between 1 and 2 hours. Parents who declined to be interviewed completed written responses to the interview questions which had been taken home by their children. All the parents responded with the exception of one Prioryfields couple living on the Leespark estate. At the Academy 6 staff, the Headteacher and a school governor were interviewed. The Headteacher’s interview took place in his office; the remaining interviews were conducted in my teaching room after school, at lunchtime and during non-contact time. At Prioryfields 6 staff, a Deputy Headteacher and retired teacher were interviewed. The Deputy Headteacher’s interview took place in his office; the remaining interviews took place in my teaching room after school. These interviews varied in length between 40 and 90 minutes. I talked to a female governor of the Academy, who also had many years’ experience as a youth worker in Burnside and North East Derbyshire. She had gained a degree as a mature

student, unable to do so as a young woman growing up in Burnside. All the interviews were recorded on audio-tape and transcribed verbatim.

#### 4.1.4.2 The interviewees

##### *4.1.4.2.1 The students*

It was from the four student groups who completed the questionnaires that I chose the interview sample; from each of the four groups, 5 males and 5 females were chosen thus making a total sample of 40 students. At the Academy (see figure 1) I selected students from a range of “ability” and background, for example, children of unemployed former mineworkers as well as students whose families managed their own businesses. At Prioryfields (see figure 2) I used the same principles to select students but with the inclusion of students from middle class families. The term middle class distinguishes such students and their families from the majority of working class students and families who feature in this research. Following Reid’s analysis (1998) of class in Britain I use the term working class to refer to skilled manual, partly skilled and unskilled workers; I use the term middle class to refer to skilled non-manual and professional occupations.

Figure 1: The Academy student sample

Name	Personal Details
Alexis	Working class, single parent father unemployed former miner, older unemployed brother at home, council house Burnside, "able".
Alison	Working class: lived with parents and older sister. Mother was head of department at local hosiery factory, father worked at the same factory, Burnside. "Average ability".
Diane	Working class, single parent mother, lived in a flat, Burnside, "able".
Janet	Working class, single parent mother, owned and managed a shop in Burnside, former member of the local parish council. "Able"
Kirsty	Working class, lived with parents (both working), older sister at home, Burnside, believed to be one of the "most able" students in the year group.
Lauren	Working class, lived with parents in a nearby village, parents owned a business on a local industrial estate, had an older married brother not at home, also regarded as one of the "most able" students in the year group.
Leanne	Working class, lived with mother, stepfather, 4 siblings and stepsiblings, Burnside, regarded as "able".
Mary	Working class, lived with parents and 4 siblings, (2 older sisters, a younger sister and a younger brother), father unemployed and unable to work due to mining injury, Burnside, described as "special needs".
Una	Working class, lived with parents and older sister, father a road sweeper, Burnside, "average ability".
Valerie	Working class, father and mother separated during course of research, mother left home, older brother at home, council house, Burnside, "average ability".
Andrew	Working class, lived with parents and younger sister, father unemployed former miner, mother, a housewife, lived in council house in former pit village, "below average ability".
David	Working class, lived with parents (both working), only child, Burnside, "average ability".
Edward	Working class, lived with parents who were in their early sixties, father had been a miner in Durham before working in the local pit, had an older married brother, Burnside, one of the "most able" students in the year group.
Frank	Working class, lived with mother, her partner and step-younger sibling, Burnside, father in the army, "quite able", became a non-attender during Year 11.
Harry	Working class, lived with parents, father unemployed former mineworker, unable to work because of mining injury, only child, Burnside, "very able".
John	Working class, lived with parents, father serviced gas boilers, mother was a shop assistant, Burnside, "able".
Kevin	Working class, lived with parents, father former miner, worked in his brother's local baker's shop, younger brother, "less able".
Liam	Working class, lived with parents, father unemployed former mineworker, mother, housewife, 3 brothers, Burnside, "less able".
Matt	Working class, lived with parents, father worked locally making gates, mother was a barmaid at a local social club, younger sister, terraced cottage, Burnside. One of the "most able" in the year group.
Paul	Working class, lived with mother and stepfather, former mineworker, they owned and managed a local shop, an older brother and a younger step-brother, Burnside "very able".

Figure 2: The Prioryfields student sample

Name	Personal Details
Anna	Middle class, lived with mother and her partner, younger sister, Graftby but not in Prioryfields catchment area. Mother worked at a hospital, studying part-time for a degree at a local university. "Able"
Barbara	Working class; originally lived with parents and younger sister, council house, Boyston. During Year 11 began living with partner, unemployed, in a rented flat. Became pregnant on completion of GCSEs. "Able".
Connie	Working class, lived with mother, who worked at a local factory, and older sister in Graftby. "Able".
Harriet	Middle class: lived with parents and younger brother, Leespark estate, father was a quantity surveyor, mother was a school governor. Both Harriet and her brother in Year 7 were "very able".
Joan	Middle class: lived with parents and older brother, who attended Prioryfields 6 <sup>th</sup> form, on Leespark estate. Father worked for a firm of solicitors. "Very able".
Katheryn	Working class, only child, lived with parents on Boyston council estate. Father was a long distance lorry driver, mother did secretarial work, she had been a school governor of Boyston primary. Katheryn had prolonged absences because of experiencing bullying, "quite able".
Olivia	Middle class, lived with parents on Leespark estate. Her older sister attended a non-local university. Father was a mathematics teacher at the adjacent school. "Very able".
Rita	Working class: lived with unemployed mother, younger sister and younger brother (who attended Boyston primary) on the Boyston council estate. Rita had frequent absences due to "stress," younger sister in Year 7 had suffered a stroke, also due to "stress". "Quite able".
Susie	Middle class, lived with parents and younger sister on the Leespark estate. Father was a business manager, mother was deputy headteacher of a local primary school. "Very able".
Tina	Working class, lived with parents and older sister. She had attended Prioryfields and was recently engaged to a former contemporary, both aged 18 years. Father was a nurse, mother was a switch board operator, both at the local hospital. "Very able".
Arron	Working class: lived in council house, Boyston, with grandparents, grandfather was unemployed due to a disability, Arron's father was in prison (assault), mother was described as "weird" and unable to care for Arron, no siblings. Poor attender, articulate and confident but "less able".
Brian	Middle class, lived with parents and older brother (who had just completed 6 <sup>th</sup> form at Prioryfields, about to begin university course at a non-local university) on the Leespark estate. Father was a sales manager, mother was a primary school deputy headteacher. "Very able".
Carl	Middle class, lived with parents and older brother, who attended Prioryfields 6 <sup>th</sup> form, on the Leespark estate. Father was an army officer. "Very able".
Jack	Working class, lived on council estate, Boyston with parents and two older brothers (who were both employed locally). Father was a former miner now in other manual employment, mother worked at a petrol station, sales kiosk. Excelled at sport, especially football, articulate and confident, "able".
Mark	Working class, lived with mother who worked shifts at the local sandwich factory and younger brother, next door to his mother's mother, in a council house, Boyston. Father was a builder and buying his own house in another part of Graftby. Both Mark and his younger brother in Year 7 were "very able".

Name	Personal Details
Norman	Working class, lived with parents, both employed, and younger siblings, on Boyston council estate. Younger brother in Year 9 was "very disruptive", moved to another school, later returned in Year 10, sister at local primary school, "very bright". Norman, "less able".
Ralph	Middle class, lived with parents and older brother, who attended Prioryfields 6 <sup>th</sup> form, on the Leespark estate. Father was a business manager. "Very able".
Stewart	Working class, lived with parents, both employed, and younger brother in Year 9, on Boyston council estate. "Able".
Tom	Working class, lived with parents, father retired (in his 70s), mother a housewife and three older sisters (all in their 20s) on council estate, Boyston. "Able".
Vince	Middle class, lived with parents and older brother who attended Prioryfields 6 <sup>th</sup> form, on Leespark estate. "Very able".

#### *4.1.4.2.2 The parents*

The parents I selected for interview were the parents of the forty students in my sample; at the Academy (see figure 3) I interviewed seven sets of parents: three couples, three mothers and one father. In addition I received twelve written responses: one couple, nine mothers and two fathers. At Prioryfields (see figure 4) I interviewed ten sets of parents: three couples, six mothers and one grandmother. I also received nine written responses: one couple, seven mothers and one father.

Figure 3: The Academy parent sample

Name(s)	Relationship to students and to school via attendance at parents' evenings.	Interviewed (I) or Written Response (W)
Mr Barker	Working class, unemployed former miner, Alexis' father, wife recently died of cancer, weak literacy skills. Did not attend parents' evenings.	W
Mr Brushfield	Working class, employed, John's father. Attended parents' evenings.	W
Mr and Mrs Bullock	Working class, retired, both in their early 60s, Edward's parents. Attended parents' evenings.	I
Mrs Coombes	Working class, Leanne's mother. Attended parents' evenings.	W
Mrs Cordiner	Working class, David's mother. Did not attend parents' evenings.	W
Mr and Mrs Davies	Working class, owned and managed a local business. Lauren's parents. Attended parents' evenings.	W
Mrs Doyle	Working class, part time care worker, Harry's mother. Attended parents' evenings.	W
Mr and Mrs Glossop	Working class, owned and managed a local shop, Paul's step-father and mother. Attended parents' evenings.	I
Mrs Heath	Working class, owned and managed a local shop, single parent, Janet's mother. Attended parents' evenings.	I
Mrs Lilley	Working class, Mary's mother. Housewife. Did not attend parents' evenings.	W
Mr Longman	Working class, worked in his brother's shop. Kevin's father. Attended parents' evenings.	I
Mrs Metcalfe	Working class, employed, Kirsty's mother. Attended parents' evenings.	W
Mrs Morrison	Working class, Valerie's mother. Did not attend parents' evenings.	I
Mrs Ross	Working class, Una's mother. Housewife. Attended parents' evenings.	W
Mrs Vicars	Working class, employed, single parent, Diane's mother. Attended parents' evenings.	W
Mrs Wayman	Working class, Andrew's mother. Housewife. Did not attend parents' evenings.	I
Mrs Wetton	Working class, Liam's mother. Housewife. Did not attend parents' evenings.	W
Mrs Williams	Working class, employed at a local factory, Alison's mother. Attended parents' evenings.	W
Mr and Mrs Wood	Working class, both employed, Matt's parents. Attended parents' evenings.	I

Figure 4: The Prioryfields parent sample

Name(s)	Relationship to students and to school via attendance at parents' evenings.	Interviewed (I) or Written Response (W)
Mrs Austin	Working class, employed, single parent, Connie's mother. Attended parents' evenings.	W
Mr and Mrs Baker	Middle class, Ralph's parents. Father a business manager. Attended parents' evenings.	W
Mrs Baxter	Working class, employed, Norman's mother. Attended parents' evenings.	W
Mrs Chapel	Working class, single parent, Rita's mother. Housewife. Attended parents' evenings.	I
Mrs Driver	Middle class, primary school deputy headteacher. Susie's mother. Attended parents' evenings.	I
Mrs Gray	Working class, Tom's mother. Housewife. Attended parents' evenings.	W
Mrs Grove	Middle class, employed at the local hospital. Anna's mother. Attended parents' evenings.	I
Mrs Hall	Working class, Arron's grandmother. Housewife. Did not attend parents' evenings.	I
Mrs Harris	Working class, Barbara's mother. Housewife. Did not attend parents' evenings.	W
Mrs Hepburn	Middle class, support teacher at a local secondary school, Vince's mother. Attended parents' evenings.	W
Mr and Mrs Law	Middle class, Harriet's parents. Father quantity surveyor, Mother school governor. Attended parents' evenings.	I
Mr and Mrs Laycock	Working class, both worked at the local hospital, Tina's parents. Mr Laycock described himself as middle class, despite his father being an accountant. Attended parents' evenings.	I
Mr Litton	Middle class, worked in a solicitor's office, Joan's father. Attended parents' evenings.	W
Mrs Lord	Working class, employed, Katheryn's mother. Attended parents' evenings.	I
Mr and Mrs Packer	Middle class, Olivia's parents. Father mathematics teacher. Mother a housewife. Attended parents' evenings.	I
Mrs Palling	Working class, single parent, employed in a local factory, Mark's mother. Attended parents' evenings.	I
Mrs Rawson	Working class, employed, Jack's mother. Attended parents' evenings.	I
Mrs Thetford	Middle class, Carl's mother. Housewife. Attended parents' evenings.	W
Mrs Waring	Working class, Stewart's mother. Housewife. Did not attend parents' evenings.	W

#### *4.1.4.2.3 The teachers*

At the Academy (see figure 5), I interviewed the Headteacher, three males and three female colleagues as well as a school governor, former youth worker and resident of Burnside, female. At Prioryfields (see figure 6), I interviewed a Deputy Headteacher, three males and three female colleagues and a recently retired teacher who had been employed at the school since its very early beginnings, male.

Figure 5: The Academy teacher sample

Name	Status and background information
Miss Butcher	Modern foreign languages teacher, age range 20-25, in second year of teaching, found the school very challenging, moved to another school after I left.
Mr. Crawford	Head of science, age range 40-45, divorced, then remarried, unhappy with the management of the school.
Mrs. Golding	School governor, age range 55-60, resident of Burnside, many years experience as a youth worker in Burnside and other local districts, had recently gained an Open University degree.
Mr. Groom	Head of English, age range 50-55, former resident of Burnside, long-serving staff member, married to the science laboratory technician who was French, resigned when Mrs. Anderson became headteacher.
Mr. Lomax	Mathematics teacher, age range 40-45, retrained as a mathematics teacher having lost his job as a miner in the pit closures, lived in a council house in a nearby former mining town.
Mr. Oldman	Headteacher, age range 45-50, Oxford University graduate, left the school during the course of this research to become a manager for the local education action zone.
Mrs. Thatcher	Deputy pastoral head, physical education / dance teacher, age range 30-35, married with no children
Mr. Unwin	Newly qualified teacher of design technology, age range 25-30, former architect, frequent absences due to "stress", resigned shortly after I left the school.

Figure 6: The Prioryfields teacher sample

Name	Status and background information
Mrs. Ashworth	Science teacher age range 20-25, in her second year of teaching, described herself as middle class with working class values, became pregnant during the course of this research and later left the school.
Mr. Carlisle	Newly qualified teacher of physical education, mathematics, age range 20-25, found the school challenging, planned to move on after a few years.
Mr. Hay	Head of English, age range 50-55, newly appointed, having worked as a head of English in an inner city school and suffered a nervous breakdown, saw a Prioryfields as his 'salvation'.
Mr. Overend	Deputy headteacher, age range 50-55, long-serving member of staff, taught biology, lived on the Leespark estate, resigned after I left the school.
Mrs. Rose	Modern foreign languages teacher, age range 40-45, in her third year of teaching, having been an educational sales representative, critical of senior management.
Mr. Scarsdale	Head of mathematics, age range 50-55, former computer programmer before entering teaching in 1974, found the school to be the most challenging he had worked in and he had 'very poor job satisfaction'.
Mrs. Thorne	Pastoral head, food technology teacher, age range 35-40, lived in the local area, her husband taught at the adjacent secondary school, critical of senior management's lack of support for her pastoral role.
Mr. Vidal	Recently retired bursar and mathematics teacher, former pastoral head, age range 65-70, very long-serving member of staff, worked at Prioryfields when it was a grammar school, lived locally.

(Other people referred to in this research who were not part of the samples are to be found in the Appendix.)

#### 4.1.4.3 Conducting the interviews

The interviews were informed by the results of the questionnaires; they allowed me to go deeper into the motivations of the respondents as well as look for meaningful patterns. The interview questions were organised under general headings; whilst some questions allowed simply for the transfer of information, others facilitated exploration in detail of experiences, actions, perceptions and meanings as evaluated by the research participants themselves. This enabled me to engage with personal narratives, critical life events and “turning points.”

As interviewing is a particularly personalised exercise it was essential to establish some ethical boundaries especially in view of the power imbalance in some relationships, for instance, between the students and myself as their teacher as well as between myself and the Headteacher at the Academy. I requested the consent of the interviewees, stated their right to withdraw at any time and assured them of their anonymity. Whilst I gave no indication of my working class background, no disclosure of my autobiographical details or my interest in social class culture to the interviewees, in order to reduce inequality in the power relationship, democratise the interview process and avoid exploitation I tried to locate myself in both the research issue and the participants’ “world”, I aimed for reciprocity.

Without the “safe” distance of a one-way mirror or the detached manipulator of variables, as an interviewer one is forced to confront one’s own participation within the research (Banister et al, 1994, page 51).

In attempting to make visible my interviewees’ experiences I was constantly reminded of my accountability to them.

As researchers we must not underestimate our ability to disrupt people’s lives, albeit with their permission, and to be clear to whom we consider ourselves accountable (ibid, 1994, page 157).

I listened attentively, probed a little when necessary and tried to maintain a neutral reflexivity.

#### **4.1.5 Analysing the findings**

The iterative process of listening and re-listening to all the interviews as well as re-reading their transcripts, diary/field notes and other documentation such as minutes from meetings was ongoing over the period I worked at the Academy (1995-1999) as well as during my stay at Prioryfields (2000-2002). Schratz and Walker (1995) describe 'reading to write' as a process of 'finding the songlines' (ibid, page 91); this was the process which I undertook in order to move my research study from listening to, writing down and reading transcripts to analyses. It was one of thinking/reading through the transcripts for the 'songlines' or key themes.

Each interview left its own unique imprint upon me; the voices were compelling and irrepressible. Listening to the interviews, transcribing them, re-listening to the voices of the interviewees and re-reading the transcripts over a period of years meant that the interview voices were always near the surface and ripe for instant re-play whenever my mind was drawn inwards to them. The interview voices became as it were my alter ego; they were my faithful companions, travelling with me but never moving, at work and at leisure. They had become embedded in my consciousness; they were integral to my personal narrative.

When I was working at the Academy I found that certain incidences such as an informal comment from a student or a colleague made an instant connection to the interview voices. I made a note in my planner. At home I wrote about "nagging" ideas in my diary. At Prioryfields I discovered that I was making comparisons and connections between the voices (interview and informal) there and those of the Academy. Interwoven with those conversations with my "faithful companions" were ideas that I had gleaned from my readings of relevant literature as well as instances from the everyday: a line from a novel I was reading, a snippet of conversation, comments heard on the radio. I made notes of these instances in my diary. Where was I "travelling" with those ideas? How to make sense of them all? I became more and more submerged in the transcripts; quoting from them became "second nature" to me. By the end of my stay at Prioryfields the 'songlines' began to take the shape of a "composition" and I felt confident that the analyses which had been latent in my psyche, in my waking and annoyingly in my sleeping hours sometimes, were ready to take embryonic form in four "mind maps".

The four “mind maps” were a reduction of a sheer volume of data into the most visible themes, they were: time, space, identity, power/people (see Appendix). I scrutinized the “mind maps” for critical issues which had emerged, particularly from the students’ perspectives. Those issues I defined as some crucial life ordering principles in the lives of all the research participants; they were: time and space. When I further scrutinized the two “mind maps” of those two principles it became clear that sense of self/identity informed by class culture permeated both. The thematic headings (time and space) which emerged therefore attempt to do justice both to the central elements of the key research question(s) and to the pre-occupations of the interviewees. Rigorous analysis of the data thus occurred prior to the emergence of key themes.

Keeping in mind my conceptual framework as well as methodological considerations I began a detailed analysis of data relating to time, since this formed a large proportion of my findings; it was a central factor in disclosing class differences in making sense of self/identity. Einstein’s theory of relativity and the principles of quantum physics acted as metaphors for my contention that time is relative to the observer; schooling/education time can be viewed either linearly or episodically. This informed the analysis of all my data relating to time, which is sub-divided into three areas: time related to school, non-school time and personal narratives.

Also metaphorically, using Einstein’s theories of time/space as a continuum, I then began my analysis of space by drawing again on the notion of relativity and established the general principle of space viewed as a relationship of either transference or territoriality. Further, since the concept of “space” carries different meanings it was necessary to explore both material and immaterial spaces in the lives of the research participants.

Crucial to my analysis of time and space is the centrality of locally produced discourses (and national discourses such as those impacting upon the National Curriculum), local languages and local practices, which infused the lives of the research participants and facilitated my making sense of the findings to reveal my “take” on their reality. I will contend therefore that both male and female working class students who choose to further their educational career develop a different sense of self/identity as well as a

different relationship to schooling/education time and space that is more consistent with that employed by the middle classes.

#### **4.1.6 Writing up the findings**

The write up of the findings is intended to reveal new vantage points from which to reflect upon the analysis as well as acknowledge the inevitable but necessarily arbitrary limits imposed by writing up. The key research question(s) driving the analysis offered here recognise the selection of my interpretations and the possibility of multiple interpretations; the written findings do not report absolute truth.

My prior relationships with some of the research participants (for example, certain students and staff) facilitated greater disclosure and reflexive commentary as well as constituting the pre-conditions for identifying the two key themes identified in the analysis. The inclusion of quotations from the interviewees allows them to narrate their own stories, their experiences and “evidence” alongside my interpretations. The writing is thematic; it reflects my struggles to democratise the research process and make sense of the findings.

#### **4.1.7 Ethics**

Ethics is about what ought to be done; it is the application of general considerations to more specific situations (Gaus, 2005, page 63).

Reflections upon my chosen research methodology served as reminders as to ‘what ought to be done’ (see quote above) concerning ethical issues in the research practice. Qualitative researchers, more so than quantitative researchers, are aware of the need to treat their research subjects as people rather than objects of research; it is especially important to protect the research participants interests when they are members of vulnerable groups, such as young people, without crossing the boundary between what is ethically and unethically acceptable. The reflexive quality of research means it must express a moral/political stance; difficulties ensue when striving to maintain ethical boundaries when personally involved without at the same time causing depersonalisation or deception.

The adoption of a number of sensitising devices kept me alert to ethical issues. Honest interaction between the research participants and myself helped to maintain mutual respect and confidence. All the participants were briefed before the questionnaires were issued and the interviews conducted regarding aims, consent, confidentiality and anonymity (the use of pseudonyms for example). The open-ended nature of the interviews enabled the participants to have partially shared ownership of the interviews. Acknowledging shared ownership of the participants' material prepared me for disclosure and disruption. My diary notes served as a reflective and reflexive log for potential conflicts of interest.

By locating myself within the research issue and the participants' world I sought to avoid exploitation and patronisation. Ultimately by making the participants' experiences visible I am fully accountable to them.

#### **4.1.8 Conclusion**

I have discussed the key elements of my research practice, considering critical issues in relation to the epistemology, methodology and methods I adopted. On an epistemological level, a paradigm of cultural studies is used to emphasise creative and historical agency, according experience an authenticating position in analysis. Foucault's emphasis on concrete analysis lends support to cultural studies sense of concrete historical conditions and relationships as the lived traditions and practices through which "understandings" are expressed and in which they are embodied. Feminist influence has raised awareness of consciousness, subjectivity, political commitment and power relations. Following a Foucauldian perspective, power is not conceived of as a unidimensional quality that is lacked or possessed; the research participants having given their consent were not passive participants but commentators and interveners in the research process.

Reflexive analysis realises the relative nature of social reality as well as multiple realities; it identifies the strengths and limitations of the findings. It involves thinking about the research as well as about myself; about the many "Is" in the research, all of whom are not without their values; about all participants in our shared socially constructed world. The discussion and analysis of the findings in the chapters following is therefore intended to offer some illumination into that world.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **Relationships to Time: Quality Time and Quantity Time**

#### **5.1 Time viewed as linear or episodic**

##### **5.1.1 Introduction**

When I explore the research participants' relationship to time in this thesis I am not referring to Plato's timeless realms but to our existence in time and how we "choose" to exist in time; we all live in time and our relationship to time (and space) is crucial to the possibilities of our being and becoming. It is a notion of time which relates the past and the future into the present so that temporal concepts are "built into" and "laid down" in our very way of being.

In this chapter I therefore examine the research participants' particular relationships to time, which is embedded in their particular way of being in the world and sense of self/identity. In so doing I draw on Foucauldian concepts, such as epistemological fields or 'epistemes' (1974), which he characterises as systematic relations; he developed the notion of 'field histories' (1974) to describe webs of relationships in particular neighbourhoods. This allows for the exploration of numerous small events from a temporal (and spatial) perspective. The emphasis is on local times (and spaces), with discourses produced at specific temporal (and regional) points. The discourses to which I make specific reference in this and succeeding chapters are those produced by students, parents and staff.

Foucault's notion of fields of empirical knowledge thus reveals that there is no universal, objective truth of time (and space) but the operation of systematic relations in the world (of the research participants). Therefore, knowledges and truths about time (and space) were claims which were true from the particular perspective of the research participants.

But what if the empirical knowledge, at a given time and in a given culture, did possess a well-defined regularity...(what if it) obeyed, at a given moment, the laws of a certain code of knowledge? If, in short, the history of non-formal knowledge had itself a system? (Foucault, 1970 page 1).

In my analysis I contend that locally produced knowledges concerning time (and space) consisted of informal structures based on underlying systematic relationships. In this world of interacting events, the position of the research participants and how they interacted with their reality is crucial to the notion of students opening up possibilities for the self.

One Foucault commentator, Major-Poetzl (1983), has suggested that Foucault's field theory has similarities to Einstein's field theory, which moved attention to the temporal/spatial position of the observer/speaker. Allied to this was the notion of matter/energy fields changing by a series of quantum "leaps" rather than in a continuous fashion. Quantum theory was thus a challenge to the dualism of Cartesian and Newtonian epistemology by rejecting divisions of time and space. This theorising has resonances with my research analysis in that the reality of the research participants is grounded in their interactions with particular times (and spaces), which themselves interact. On this analysis, *the notion of time as linear does not necessarily hold true; time may move in a series of episodic or quantum events*. This concept and others, such as Foucault's analysis of monastic life, are central in my analysis of the research participants' relationship to time.

In this chapter, and in chapters six and nine, I will contend that working class students who are likely to open up possibilities for themselves have a sense of self/identity which is not immersed in local definitions of masculinity and femininity and that this is revealed in their predominantly linear relationship to time associated with schooling and education which I refer to as schooling times.

## **5.2 School related time**

### **5.2.1 Getting the point of school time**

Knowledge and understanding of time is contingent upon the observers' experience of it; time is therefore relative to the position of the observer whose perspective is bounded by a *class cultural view of temporality*. I use this phrase to refer to a localised and systematic view of how school/work and non-school/work time was structured and organised, which was revealed in students' and parents' comments relating to

homework as well as parental views on the value of education, “laid down” in families through generations.

I argue that the value accorded to time associated with schooling and education in the majority of working class students and their families contrasted with the perspective of the minority working class students and their families and middle class students and their families. For middle class students and minority working class students, at some point in their school career, the value of schooling times had become integral to their being and becoming. For example, until the start of his GCSE courses, Mark’s view of schooling times was semi-linear:

7, 8, 9 was a routine. I was fed up changing lessons, but it was straight through, nothing to get in the way. But now there’s starting blocks and finishings.

Mark was describing his experiences in years 7-9 of the routinised nature of schooling times, in which he also talked about his lack of power and control over those times. This non-reflexive, seemingly directionless relationship to schooling times contrasted to his experiences of schooling times in years 10 and 11 in which Mark had perceived a unidirectionality and linearity to schooling times leading to success at GCSE, via ‘starting blocks and finishings’ (he was referring to interim assessments, modular examination results, coursework grades; the results of accumulative school time), and beyond. Mark’s perceptions helped to crystallize his predominantly linear relationship to schooling times and align him with the calendar time of teachers (see discussion later in this chapter) that was likely to open up life chances.

In the case of students who viewed schooling times as linear, they perceived the flow of those times retrospectively, directly from their earliest memories, especially from their primary school days onwards and indirectly via parental perspectives, as being integral to their future life trajectory. On the other hand, students, who viewed schooling times as episodic, perceived those times as non-linear, as in a state of punctuated equilibrium, interspersed with a series of randomised mini-episodes. Students who viewed schooling times as episodic did not connect the series of quantum events, past, present or possible future into one linear life trajectory that could lead to the opening up of life chances.

My contention is that the middle class students who attended Prioryfields had a predominantly linear relationship towards schooling time. Olivia:

You've only got five, seven years at school, so you've got to put your head down and work for it.

A minority of working class students at the Academy and Prioryfields also had a linear relationship towards schooling time. Mark: 'I've reached a point where everything is going somewhere.' Leanne: 'I've not come here for no reason.'

The majority of the working class students at both study schools maintained an episodic relationship towards schooling time. Whilst the following comments do not state this relationship explicitly, the underlying message is that schooling times (lessons, the school day and school time as a whole) were episodes, which were unconnected with other life events; they were interventions rather than integral to life trajectory. Jack: 'I just sit there waiting for that 3.30 bell. I can't wait for it'. Frank: 'We spend too much time here. I've been here too long and still another year to go'. Katheryn: 'I wish school would go, I just want it to finish'.

Whilst it could be argued that these comments also seem to suggest a linear sense of lived life, I believe that they highlight those students' perceptions of schooling time as lacking in value and directionality to their being and becoming. They are indicative of their relationship to schooling time as not serving to enhance their life careers. In fact, those students, though quite able, failed to engage with education and had achieved little academic success. Both Katheryn's and Frank's attendance at school in Year 11 was low, with Frank opting out of school for the last term, returning only to take his PE GCSE examination. Jack excelled at football and during the course of Year 11 was 'promised' a place on the youth team of a lower division professional football club. Football became his life and he failed to see beyond the temporal horizons which a career in football offered.

At the two study schools, both working class and middle class students had commented that GCSE subjects were a waste of time, for example, Barbara (working class), 'The subjects we're studying for GCSE are a waste of time'. However, middle class students

and those working class students whose view of schooling time was linear believed that GCSEs were integral to their future career trajectory. Brian:

A lot of subjects are wasting your time. They're really a stepping stone to A level.

Mr Overend had observed that a short-term relationship towards schooling time was integral to the life experiences of many students.

Our students cannot see long term. The other big problem that kids tend to have is that they all live in the present tense. They cannot see even tomorrow, even tomorrow is way in the future.

However, the parental perspectives of the minority working class and middle class parents viewed their children's time at school as integral to the linear life path, which they had been on from the earliest days of childhood. Mr and Mrs Law:

Life is set out from the beginning, you're set out on a route which you can't really change.

Mrs Packer:

I'm convinced there's a place for you in society...you can say your little mark has been made on this life path.

### **5.2.2 Home time, doing homework and time flowing**

The idea of time flowing was reflected in the following parental and student perceptions towards the completion of homework tasks in home or non-school time; the ability to organise home time linearly so that homework was prioritised was implicated in the notion of students opening up possibilities for the self. Mr and Mrs Glossop:

Paul puts a lot of hours in on homework. He always does his homework first. He was told and made to do at an early age, now he knows where he wants to be and what he's got to do. We've always made sure he's done his homework.

Mr and Mrs Glossop's views are similar to Mrs Hepburn's (middle class), relationship towards schooling time, which viewed homework as a preparation for her son's life career trajectory in which time management, controlled by the self, was indicative of being and becoming.

I feel quite strongly that homework is important not only for expanding knowledge but also for the discipline it gives to a child in working in their time. It is important to get into a good habit for later education.

Middle class and working class students (and parents) who viewed schooling time linearly regarded homework time as both quality and quantity time in that the number of hours invested in homework was embedded in their perceptions of time flowing towards a desired focal point, their chosen life career path. Homework viewed as quality rather than simply quantity time, as integral to becoming in time, was reflected in those working class students who wished to open up possibilities for themselves. Janet always completed homework because it would help her 'eventually.' Matt: 'I think it helps me in the long term.'

In contrast, students who viewed schooling time episodically, whilst they clearly had a sense of life trajectory after the completion of schooling, homework was not integral to the selves they were or wished to become. This belief was expressed most strongly by those students who, at this stage (years 10 and 11) in their schooling, had been labelled "less able" and/or perceived homework tasks as not supporting or extending their knowledge. Alexis described some homework as 'little exercises' that were not 'worth the time.' Similarly, Valerie:

...but it's stupid homework. It's not relevant, it's nothing to do with the lesson.

Anna stated, 'some homework isn't relevant at all' and that she only did homework which she regarded as 'important.'

These students tended to have an episodic or semi-episodic relationship towards schooling time, they regarded homework as an event, which took up a quantity of their home (own) time; it carried no qualitative value integral to their chosen life path.

Arron:

...general homework, no not really, I've never done it my sen. We come to school, school takes up most of our lives, so why, when school finishes, should we carry on wi' school?

The majority working class student perspective of an episodic relationship towards schooling time reveals how their classed view of temporality (as well as their close alignment with local definitions of masculinity and femininity) compromised how they organised non-school time.

This episodic working class view of schooling temporality reflected a relationship to school/work time and home time, which had become established and habituated in families. Mr Glossop:

A lot of it's down to classes; this is a working class area, mining as was. The outlook of a miner is not educated; Dad was a miner, come out of pit, go to pub, go home, kids in bed, probably wife's got jobs to do in the house, Dad has no time for children.

It was a specific and systematic relationship towards schooling/working time, which resulted in temporality becoming quite rigid and fixed. For example, in working class families such as that in which I grew up, when the working day ended, the evening meal (tea) was taken at a set time, the television was switched on and remained on until bedtime (a set time). Whilst it can be argued that middle class families and those students/families whose relationship to schooling/working time was linear also maintained a rigid temporality to non-school/work time, this time was organised hierarchically such that homework was either prioritised or allotted a central place in the temporal schema. Mr and Mrs Laycock:

Some nights she has three, four lots of homework...she has cadets two nights a week, so consequently she has to squeeze a lot in, she has a very active social life. This is Tina's motivation, she will get stuck in, get the homework done, so that she can do what she wants to do.

When homework was coursework, which counted towards attaining a GCSE grade, many students claimed to complete it. However, middle class students and those minority working class students who viewed schooling time linearly prioritised the completion of coursework in their structuring of non-school time. Tina: 'Media and English are always done as a priority.' Harriet: 'I always do coursework first 'cos it counts towards a grade.'

Further, as I argue shortly in this chapter, in many working class households, unlike their middle class contemporaries, there was a clear demarcation between school/work time and non-school/work time, which also remained inflexible.

An episodic relationship towards schooling time reflects a classed perspective on temporality that frames home time quite rigidly, restricting opportunities for study and the possibility of opening up life chances. Foucault (1977) has made links between the clock time of schools (and workplaces) and the time discipline of monastic life, exemplified by Benedictine monks. This is a view of time which is disciplined and clearly demarcated; it is accounted for, rationed and served. In schools and workplaces of industry it has been conceptualised as drawing distinct boundaries between work and leisure time. For many working class families the boundaries between school/work and non-school/work and leisure time are clearly defined. This relationship towards clock time bound many working class families to local times (and spaces). It highlighted the majority working class relationship to schooling time as episodic, which was disclosed in students' comments about the clear distinctions between school and non-school time. Barbara:

School time is school time, we come to school to do work.

This was offered as a reason for never doing homework. Similarly, Norman:

The work they set you in school should be done in school and after school is your time.

Jack:

Your homework, three quarters of people don't do it, 'cos it's your leisure time.

When an episodic relationship to schooling time combined with local discourses relating to non-school/work and leisure time (see chapter following) as well as the roles of children, particularly females, in the support of mothers undertaking household duties, time for homework is often discounted. Mary: 'I just don't do homework and that's it!'

Mary like Liam lived in households with several children; they undertook cleaning and childcare duties without question. In contrast, middle class students, such as Susie, did homework as a matter of course since her parents were professionals and she, as they, was accustomed to working at home every weekday evening; the boundaries between school/work and non-school/work were more blurred than for their working class counterparts.

### **5.2.3 It's a tradition: classed relationships towards the value of education laid down over time**

Middle class families such as Susie's were accustomed to 'bringing work home' as were those minority working class families such as the Glossops, whose lifestyle had changed as a result of their owning and managing their own business. Implied in the notion of classed relationships towards schooling time was the concept of certain types of change through successive generations as a result of traditions and/or habits, which had been established in families. This was a perspective upon schooling/working time within middle class and a minority of working class families which was linear, reflected in their valuing schooling and education as integral to opening up life chances. Mrs Driver:

There's a tradition of education in our family; Susie's father did a degree at work, an aunt has an MA. The tradition is there, education is regarded as important; we've stressed it and encouraged her. Education opens doors and offers options.

Similarly, Mr and Mrs Glossop:

You only get one crack at education; when you're younger you think you've got plenty of time, but as you get older you use up, you try to get that over to your children. I think it goes back through generations, if your parents brought you up and instilled it in you, it's as you're brought up.

The tradition of valuing education established through generations revealed a relationship towards schooling time that was flowing; it was implicated in the opening up of possibilities for the self in the life career trajectories of Susie and Paul. The different classed perspectives upon temporality, which informed of the demarcation between work and home time as well as how education was valued and therefore indicative of how home time was deployed, point up the differing relationships towards

school/work and non-school/work time grounded in a view of temporality towards schooling/working and education as either linear or episodic.

#### **5.2.4 The calendar time of teachers, fixing student ability in time and the opening up of life chances**

The majority working class perspective of schooling time as non-linear was in contrast to teachers' relationship to time, exemplified by their working lives framed by clock or school calendar time. Integral to this view of temporality was the notion of fixing student ability in time; those students who were identified as low academic ability often perceived their school time to be 'wasted' and therefore aligned themselves closely to local times (and spaces).

'Everything in its place and time', Mr Unwin, quoting Mrs Anderson and Mrs Hughes. Mr Unwin's quotation by two senior members of staff was an accurate reflection of how teachers' lives were ordered and regulated during school and non-school time. Ordering and regulation were central organising principles of time during the school year, term, week, day and lessons; this was a time which had clearly defined starting and completion points. Calendar or clock time was the defining characteristic of the school year. Adams (1995) refers to it as,

Singular clock time conception that underpins the dominant experience of school time, where bells and buzzers, clocks and calendars reign supreme (Adams, 1995, page 59).

Mr Scarsdale was not alone in describing how 'certain processes happen at certain stages in the school year'. This unidirectionality of processes leading to assessments of students (and teachers), tests, SATs, GCSEs implied a causal link between the past, present and future, 'a right time for everything' (Adams, 1995, page 66). Whilst the calendar time of teachers (and schools) characterised by rigidity and fixity seems to suggest an episodic experience of schooling/working time, I contend that its teleology and sense of progression better supports a linear perspective. For staff (and students whose view of schooling time was predominantly linear) calendar time constituted a continuous, seamless progress, culminating in a holistic whole. In contrast, for students whose perspective upon schooling time was episodic, calendar time was punctuated by a series of events, without appearing to progress beyond their confines.

At the Academy and Prioryfields a discourse operated which assumed that ability was fixed and progress as well as attainment was only possible in restricted temporal parameters. This reflects the findings of Gillborn and Youdell (2000), who at their study schools noted that organising time in this way resulted in teachers making judgements about student attainment based on key points in the past and present, which then became statements of attainment for the future. Mr Scarsdale:

We have a chronology and a hierarchy in the process, for us unless you do that work you're not going to move beyond it.

I contend that those students whose relationship towards schooling time was predominantly episodic were those students identified by staff as being unable 'to move on', as 'time wasters', in effect, both they and their ability remaining fixed in time as "less able". The discourse of fixing students and their ability in time resulted in the setting of students into different tiers of examination paper in subjects such as English, Mathematics, Science and Modern Foreign Languages. Implicit in this discourse was the labelling of students, which affected their sense of self/identity. Gillborn and Youdell (2000) have argued that the labelling of students according to the level or tier of a paper views knowledge as hierarchical and structured according to linear progression, which often resulted in those students entered for lower tier papers being predominantly working class.

Without exception, in both Mathematics and English, FSM (free school meals) pupils were more likely to be in the Foundation tier and less likely to be in the Higher tier than their more affluent peers (ibid, page 130).

### **5.2.5 Consequences of clock time: the de-personalisation of staff/student relationships and 'wasted time' in lessons.**

When staff rationalised their time as a finite commodity apportioned throughout lessons, the school day, week, term, year, with certain activities, such as assessment of student ability and monitoring of student progress, taking place at pre-determined times, I contend that relationships between staff and students suffered, especially between working class students whose episodic relationship towards schooling time

was opposed to the staff perspective of clock time. Some staff experienced difficulty trying to combine “commodified” time with “personalised” time. Mr Unwin:

Getting through a scheme of work and relationships with kids, they are such different targets...

Mrs Crawford:

...in the last few years, er um this er need to get pupils achieving has imposed itself and worked its way into my system...so I've got to get through this lesson, I've got these aims, they've got to understand this by the end. I realise I'm pushing this more and more in lessons.

I contend that more “de-personalised” time between staff and students led to a breakdown in relationships between some staff and students, particularly working class students who desired as well as needed a personalised relationship with staff. Joan:

I like it when you can see a bit of a background in teachers and you know what their lives are like so that you can relate to them a bit more.

Tina:

A good teacher is someone who relates to you as a person. A bad teacher doesn't have contact with you and doesn't know you properly...If they're not bothered about me, why should I bother getting this work in for them?

Alexis:

My time at school has been wasted with these teachers. Teachers don't know me, they don't understand how I've changed. The teachers who teach me now haven't recognised the changes since Year 7.

In some students and groups, at both study schools, when the perception of lesson time as ‘wasted’ was the norm, ‘messaging about’ in lessons occurred. Katheryn, (working class) with reference to her friend Lorna, (also working class) who ‘messed about’ in lessons:

She just sits there and nudges you like to stop working and then she says, “Oi, look at him!”

Also at both study schools, the challenging nature of some students and groups consequent upon ‘messaging about’ led to high staff absenteeism as well as high staff

turnover. However, the staff who remained then tried to compensate for the “lost time” of absent colleagues, which compounded the de-personalised effect of staff/student relationships. Mr Scarsdale:

This is a Mathematics lesson and we’re going to do Mathematics. I’m determined to stick to this, particularly through the very difficult circumstances we’ve gone through here in the last four years. I mean this year it’s far more stable for us; we’ve had less supply teachers in the department than in the last three years. Last year we stopped counting at a hundred teachers through the department. For one absence last year the maximum stay for any one person was one week, very often we had five people in a week and the record we had was two in one day, because one left at break.

Both working class and middle class students felt the effects of such incidences. Carl: ‘Supply staff set us back and sometimes they leave ripples.’ John:

...we’re always being messed about, we’ve never had a set teacher (in Science), they’re always messing you about, it gets on your nerves a bit. We’ve hardly learnt anything this module.

Arron:

We’ve had different supply teachers, work’s been lost, work’s not got marked, like in Maths it went on for almost a year. It’s not so bad for a few weeks, a month, but after a year.

I contend that the students who were more likely to suffer the effects of “lost” teacher time were those students whose classed view of temporality associated with schooling, established clear temporal boundaries between school and non-school; they were unlikely to recoup “lost” teacher time at home. Further, it was my experience at the study schools (and others where I have worked) that the students who suffered high staff absenteeism were those in lower, “less able” sets and as I argued previously and as other analysts (for example, Gillborn and Youdell, 2000) have observed, they tended to be students who were working class; in my analysis they were those students who adopted an episodic relationship towards schooling time.

At the Academy and Prioryfields the effects of ‘wasted’ lesson time were taken up in the negative identifications associated with the two study schools as well as impacting upon the students’ sense of self. I was asked by students at both study schools ‘what’s

wrong with us?’ as well as constant requests for reassurances that I was not planning to leave the schools. Some staff reported similar experiences. Mr Carlyle:

...the kids have so many different teachers, you’re a new face, they switch off straight away and they basically turn their back on you and they will not respond. They don’t trust you...kids come up to you and say, “Are you leaving Sir?”

I contend that the effects of the de-personalisation of lesson time were most seriously felt by those students whose perspective of schooling time was non-linear since their lesson experiences moved in episodes of wasted time which, when combined with negative identifications, led to a view of time filling rather than time flowing towards achievable goals such as educational success. It was unlikely that they would achieve sufficient examination success at GCSE to negate their restricted life career choices. In contrast it was likely that those students whose view of schooling time was linear would achieve examination success at GCSE, which would enable them to have freedom of choice in life career trajectory.

### **5.3 Summary**

Middle class students and a few working class students had developed a linear relationship towards schooling time, which extended from their primary school days to the present day and into the future. However, the organisation of school time according to the principles of calendar/clock time revealed dissonances between it and the majority working class student perspective of schooling time as non-linear. This was revealed in student perceptions relating to homework as well as in ‘wasted’ lesson time.

The dissonances experienced by those students whose relationship to schooling time was episodic were exacerbated by the negative labels they received consequent upon the practice of “fixing” student ability in time. I will contend in the chapter following that those students’ experiences of a sense of negativity consequent upon the dissonances between their relationship to schooling time and those which informed schooling processes led to those students immersing themselves in local definitions of masculinity and femininity, which was highlighted in their relationship to out of school time.

## **Chapter 6:**

### **Relationships to Time: Time Flowing or Time Filling?**

#### **6.1 Relationships to out of school times**

##### **6.1.1 Opening remarks**

Whilst all the students distinguished between school and out of school time in so far as school time was institutionalised, subject to surveillance by the school, choice limiting, with clearly defined beginnings and endings, I have contended that the students who distanced themselves temporally (and spatially) from school time had a predominantly episodic view of schooling time. I now link this to a sense of self/identity which was becoming more submerged in local definitions of masculinity and femininity. I compare and contrast those students (who were strongly attached to local masculinities and femininities) to those students whose perspective on schooling time was linear and whose sense of self/identity was not immersed in local identifications, via how the students organised out of school hours hierarchically to achieve a sense of self/identity contiguous with opening up life career chances.

#### **6.2 Part-time work**

##### **6.2.1 Introduction**

It is in the area of the students' perspective on part-time working that their particular habitus (and that of their families) interacting with their sense of self/identity as well as their predominant relationship to schooling time is seen to close down or open up possibilities for future selves.

From the forty students interviewed, fifteen students were involved in part-time working. Additionally five students had recently given up part-time work and nine students were involved in "work" connected with home life such as baby-sitting, caring for younger siblings and cleaning. The significant number of students who were engaged in or perceived themselves to be engaged in work pointed up the students' sense of self and the type of self they wished to be outside school time, as well as becoming selves in their future lives.

The students I make reference to were majority working class, whose relationship towards schooling time was essentially non-linear and who maintained a sense of self

defined in accordance with local definitions of masculinity and femininity. Some of these students had been unable to gain a sense of self/identity through schooling because of limited academic success or failure to achieve academic success. However, they were able to gain some sense of present and future selves through working and the feelings of responsibility that accompanied it. Some of them worked with relatives or in the family home. This meant they were closely aligned with local temporal rhythms and they were becoming immersed in local texts relating to gender roles within the local culture. Further they were able to become independent consumers as a result of the money they received. How they chose to “consume” money gave insights into their sense of self and the sort of self that they sought to reproduce or produce.

In the section following I have combined an analysis of students’ sense of self/identity defined via local discourses of masculinity and femininity with my contention of a relationship to schooling time as linear or episodic. I also use Bourdieu’s concept of the habitus to compare and contrast the life chances of the majority working class students whose relationship towards schooling time was predominantly non-linear with those of middle class and minority working class students whose relationship to schooling time was linear.

### **6.2.2 Male working class students and local masculinities**

I make comment here about a group of boys who typified many of the working class males whose sense of self was bound up with local definitions of masculinity, that of the heterosexual male. They had not experienced success through schooling in terms of academic recognition though some had in non-academic areas of the curriculum, such as in sport and design technology. Like many of the “lads” in Willis’ study (1977), they did paid work outside school hours. Willis found that this was a confidence booster for his lads as well as a means of gaining a “superior” knowledge to school and teachers.

In the context of the local communities of my study school, Burnside and a major part of the catchment of Prioryfields, Boyston, doing manual and/or non-professional work reflected the masculine “norm” inscribed in local texts relating to identity and cultural temporality. This was a way of being in the world, which exemplified present and future individual and group identities. Norman had worked since Year 9 in a bicycle shop. After work experience in Year 10 at a concrete firm he had taken up their offer of part-

time work because he could earn twenty pounds for half a day's work and it gave him a sense of responsibility. Jack was involved in selling cut-price clothes on the local Boyston estate. Tom worked Friday and Saturday nights collecting glasses in a public house. Stewart worked at Graftby market two days a week, before the start of the school day and at its end, and on Saturdays. Kevin worked on Saturdays, at his uncle's baker's shop, where his father, a former miner, worked.

These male students expressed no particular career ambitions. Their working satisfied short-term aims: to become independent consumers so that they did not need to ask their mothers for money. In working class households, the mothers retained control of spending on a daily/weekly basis, the fathers maintained overall control of how the household budget was spent. This point mirrors those comments I made in chapter one where I indicated that in the households of former miners, whilst women may have exerted some control, men exerted power. (This issue is also discussed in Massey's work, 1994.) As emergent young men, these boys would have experienced a violation of identity to ask their mother for "spending money". For example, I cite the comments made by Mrs Rawson (wife of a former miner), which when taken in conjunction with those of her son Jack reveal the patriarchal relations that were prevalent in the homes of some former mine workers in Boyston and Burnside. Mrs Rawson:

At home we actually treat ourselves and our sons as equals; if certain things happen with family we ask their opinion...

Jack:

My Mum, I feel sorry for her 'cos she's a little woman in a house with three big lads.

Jack was referring to himself and his two older brothers. He also explained how his parents did not 'force' him 'to do things' and that his Dad was 'strict' unlike his mother. Jack's comments exemplify the masculinities and femininities in which those students, whose relationship to schooling time was predominantly episodic, immersed themselves.

Being attached to local texts of masculinity resulted in time constraints for those working class males who had a semi-linear relationship towards schooling time or who wished to gain some academic success. It is within those time constraints that the effects of the habitus were seen to be at work in the lives of two working class male students at the Academy compromising the opening up of possibilities for the self. John had a paper round. He aimed to open a bank account and have ownership of his money. John:

I've already had my week's wages, just £7.50 a week. I've been looking for a job. I've always wanted a little job. Just try and get a bit of money to buy some clothes or owt I want.

John became an independent consumer without having to rely on the money which his parents gave him. He could also show how he was able to manage his non-school time, by doing homework, his paper round and socialising with his friends. However, spending time on homework compromised the "free time" which remained for work and socialisation. Clearly John was caught between the desire to gain some recognition through academic success and the desire to be seen to be an independent young man in the local community. He created a discourse about time management to show that he could organise his out of school time successfully. He talked about the previous occupant of the paper round who had managed his time to good effect.

Him who had the paper round before me, he's had it for eight years. He's passed his GCSEs, he's got a job. He's eighteen now. Once I've got up in the morning I'm alive and kicking. I just get tired in the afternoon when the day's going on.

John's talk of afternoon fatigue points up how time is constrained in some working class households, with possible effects of underachievement at GCSE. The effects of more extreme lack of economic capital (than in the case of John), the desire to become an independent consumer and the shouldering of responsibility that accompanies that desire, and the tensions over effective deployment of time, were reflected in the case of John's peer, Harry. Harry did not comply with local definitions of masculinity. He always came to school smartly dressed, he wore spectacles, he was regarded as a "square bear" (local parlance for studious), he associated with three other "square bears", two boys, one of whom was Paul, and a girl who also defied local definitions of femininity. However, he wanted a new computer for playing games so that he could be 'like everyone else'. His parents had informed him that he would have to work to buy

himself a computer because of 'the price'. Harry commented, 'I didn't argue. I went along with it and got a job'. He took a paper round which meant that he awoke at five a.m. On the days when he delivered the local free paper there was both extra weight to carry and a longer time commitment. This resulted in Harry experiencing frequent bouts of tiredness.

Tiredness is a big thing. Two days ago I was just talking to Mum, I sat down and just fell asleep. I woke up at one a.m.

This was a 'continued occurrence'. He found himself asleep, he seemed to 'blackout'. He was very tired during the school day. Harry talked of 'nearing his goal', which was the buying of the computer, some games and putting some money into a bank account. The moment of achievement was to be marked by the throwing away of the trolley, which carried the newspapers.

Harry's family had little economic capital. His father was an unemployed miner and his mother worked part-time. Bourdieu (1979) cites economic capital (for example, income, monetary assets) as one of the four components of the habitus; he argues that class forms on different and separate axes, economic as well as cultural capital. Bourdieu also argues how the habitus predisposes individuals to act in certain ways. The choices inscribed in the habitus are limited. Harry's father was unable to work because he suffered from an illness related to his work as a coal miner. His mother had a poorly paid job in care work. Their lack of economic capital resulted in Harry having to compromise how he deployed out of school time. Further, Harry's time was also constrained both in and outside school hours because of his experiencing bouts of tiredness.

Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe, (1995), have argued that working class and middle class households operate on different time (and space) budgets. Those households, such as Harry's, which have low incomes, often 'operate on time constrained budgets', (ibid, page 57). In a sense, Harry was borrowing from his own time and school time because of his parents' lack of economic capital.

This caused severe constraints for Harry: although he was concerned with establishing a sense of self as an emergent adult, he also tried to adopt a linear relationship towards schooling time in that he had some career aspirations, which meant he needed academic success at GCSE to enable him to go to Art College.

The effects of the habitus did not impose such severe time constraints upon the other male students, including John, whom I have also discussed in this section. This was because their relationship towards schooling time was either non-linear or semi-linear. They perceived schooling time as a resource to be deployed in achieving a sense of self, which reproduced local definitions of working class masculinity. Achieving this sense of self came through their expressions of independence reflected in the type of part-time work in which they engaged and the ability to consume, which accompanied it. As other researchers (for example Savage, 2000) have commented, independence and autonomy are central features of working class culture when the workers have been accustomed to working as individuals in their own environment, without supervision or in gangs of closely bonded men with little control exercised over them, as many of those boys' fathers had done when they were mine workers.

I now refer to Paul, a close friend of Harry, as an example of a male working class student whose sense of self/identity was not immersed in local masculinities and whose linear relationship towards schooling time was supported by the effects of his habitus. Paul's mother and stepfather, a former coal miner, owned and managed a local business in Burnside. Paul like Harry was aware that his sense of identity did not subscribe to the local male heterosexual norm. He had gained a sense of self as a result of his academic success and he aimed to be successful at GCSE so that he could achieve his ambition and go onto university. He had determined to become a teacher or a doctor. Further, since his parents held an independent status within the local community as owners of their own business, by association and because of their economic capital, Paul was positioned and positioned himself as "other" in relationship with the majority of his peers.

Paul did not have to take up part-time work, although he did help out in his parents' shop on some weekends, because of the economic position of his parents. However, he was aware that the economic success of his parents' business came as a result of a

considerable investment in their time. Yet present success did not necessarily mean future economic security. Paul therefore determined to utilise his out of school time hierarchically, with a priority given to homework; he planned to distance himself temporally and spatially from his local area by going to university. Paul:

I want to get me some good grades, I want to make something of myself, I don't want to be down a pit, not that there is any.

Paul's linear relationship to schooling time combined with his parents' supportive economic capital and a sense of self not immersed in local masculinities meant that he was likely to open up possibilities for himself.

### **6.2.3 Female working class students and local femininities**

Like some of their male counterparts the girls I make reference to here had not experienced success academically or had achieved limited academic success. Barbara, though regarded as quite able academically, positioned herself negatively against academic female peers who were middle class. Her sense of self was gained by virtue of her gender role within the local working class community of Boyston. The local discourse relating to that role positioned women as girlfriends, wives and mothers who worked part-time to support the family income. As other commentators (for example, Chisholm, 1995) have noted, paid work is a taken for granted necessity in working class women's lives. Barbara worked in a butcher's shop on Saturdays and during the school holidays because it gave her some economic independence and a sense of responsibility. 'I'm happy doing it. It's a bit of money for me and responsibility.'

Further, Barbara's sense of self was also bound to local times (and spaces) because of her relationship with an unemployed man, who was twelve years her senior. During the course of this research she and he began living together in a rented flat. Whilst I was interviewing Barbara at the end of the school day her boyfriend telephoned her and requested to know where she was and at what time she would be arriving home. Here was an indication that the independence and responsibility which Barbara desired was constrained because of local working class definitions of femininity and associated class cultural timings relating to the working day. Those positioned women as being subservient to the needs of men, as partners, husbands, brothers and fathers. Barbara was already predisposed to reproduce the life career of her mother, a housewife, because

of her family's lack of capital, the identity inscribed through schooling and her close alignment with local temporal rhythms, which precluded her from completing homework. I conjecture that, had Barbara been able to distance herself from those predispositions, particularly her attachment to local times (and spaces), she could have increased her chances of real academic success and the possibility of opening up her life chances. However, her lack of academic aspiration and her view of schooling time as episodic meant the self she was and wished to become had almost reached a state of accomplishment before she became pregnant on completion of her GCSE examinations. Her pregnancy ensured that the self to which she was predisposed to become, a housewife whose desires were subsumed to the needs of her partner, was virtually secured.

Mary and Una lived in households where economic capital was very limited. Neither of these girls had been able to achieve academic success. Una, though, conformed to the school's values and norms, she was regarded as 'hard-working'. Mary had been identified as 'special needs', she had not always conformed to the values and norms of the school. Both talked about the importance of their families and friends, and their roles within their respective families.

Mary distanced herself from school time. She refused to do homework, having internalised school time and home time as completely separate. She prioritised socialisation with her family and friends; her sense of self was mediated through localised texts of femininity. Her father, like Harry's, was a former miner who was unable to work because of injuries sustained whilst working in the pit. Mary supported her mother in caring for her younger siblings and helping around the house. She received 'a fiver' from her older sister for looking after her one year old daughter. Mary was closely aligned to the unchanging temporal rhythms of family and local community life. Her relationship towards schooling time was distinctly episodic; she viewed school time as a period 'to be got through' rather than to engage with. She had a vague idea that she would work in childcare when she completed her compulsory schooling.

Una's father was a road sweeper and her mother was a housewife. Una worked on Saturdays at the florist's shop in Burnside. She planned to save the money so that she could save for a holiday in Turkey. She spent some time on Sundays doing her

homework. Una expressed a desire to work in the travel industry when she left school. Clearly Una's family were financially unable to support her desire for overseas travel. In fact, it is likely that Una's income provided useful additional financial support as Una explained that her mother was unable to work because she suffered from stress.

Both Mary and Una had stated that they had not enjoyed school and wanted to get through it. As commentators such as Reay have noted, for many working class students education is something to be endured rather than engaged with.

For the majority of the working class, education is something to be got through rather than got into. (Reay, 2001, p 335)

Their particular habituses and the sense of self they gained via their out of school time resulted in them being "passengers" rather than "drivers" in the unchanging local temporal rhythms. For them time moved from one episode to the next, they seemed powerless to utilise time to unleash any potential they may have had, they were in effect "prisoners" of local temporalities and femininities. Chisholm's empirical evidence from a study of working class girls in inner London bears resonances with my findings when she discussed those girls who failed to release their potential.

Such girls had little opportunity to develop critical reflection and agency; they appeared to be passengers, almost flotsam, in the trajectory of their own lives. (Chisholm, 1995, p 38)

I contend that the chances of these girls opening up possibilities for themselves were very limited since whilst Mary and Una, like Barbara, were choosing the selves they hoped to become their choices were constrained by their particular circumstances. At the same time their choice of life trajectory should be acknowledged, as I do not intend here or in any other part of this thesis to denigrate that choice or indeed any aspect of working class culture. However, I do wish to highlight the way in which their experiences of time associated with schooling served to channel their choice passively, of the selves they desired to become.

I now examine the cases of two working class girls to illustrate how some female students who were in the 'D to C conversion' area at GCSE and were thus regarded as 'suitable cases for treatment' (Gillborn and Youdell, 2000, page 133), were unable to

capitalise on this because their semi-linear view of schooling time combined with their habitus to compromise their out of school time as well as possibilities for life chances.

Alison and Rita were both identified by staff as 'hard-working' and having the ability to achieve some success at GCSE. However, they were unable to utilise time to good effect during some lessons and consequently out of school time was perceived as compensatory time. Alison and Rita talked about their inability to understand and progress in some areas of the curriculum because of the noise and disruption in certain lessons, as well as 'bad teachers'. They worried about this; those worries were compounded because they, like other girls such as Valerie, had internalised that they could not 'do' examinations. Therefore, these girls perceived that their out of school time could compensate for 'wasted' lesson time. However, such time though compensatory did not compensate for lesson time because of the girls' close attachment to local times and the effects of their habitus, including their perceptions of gender roles within the family. This was reflected in local discourses concerning the importance of women's part-time work and their familial responsibilities.

Both Alison and Rita talked of the importance of their families (and friends); their familial responsibilities in non-school time were integral to their perception of non-school time's compensatory function. Alison worked with her sister and aunt as a waitress at weekends in a local public house. She regarded her part-time work as both enjoyable and necessary, she talked of 'needing the money'. Her father, a former coal miner, worked in a clothing factory. He earned less money than her mother, who worked in the same factory but had risen to a managerial position. Alison's family had some economic capital to support her ambitions to work in childcare, for instance, Alison had access to a personal computer at home; but she had no understanding of how to utilise it as a learning tool, so whilst not using the computer to help her with homework tasks (some of which she stated she did not understand) she was also becoming immersed in local times (and spaces) because of their perceived compensations. She was reproducing a local definition of femininity through her close association with local family temporal rhythms.

Rita shared the same worries as Alison regarding some of her school time being 'wasted' and her consequent frustrations at her powerlessness to utilise school hours

more effectively. Unlike Alison, Rita's family had very little access to economic or any other capital to support her desire to work with children. Rita's mother was a single parent who operated on a limited time budget. She supported other local single mothers caring for their children. Although Rita tried to complete her homework, her non-school hours were constrained whilst she cared for her two younger siblings and she did babysitting for neighbours. She earned between twenty and thirty pounds for this; she was saving the money for a foreign holiday.

Alison and Rita were typical of those working class girls whose relationship towards schooling time was semi-linear in that they held some ambitions to embark upon a career, albeit in childcare or as primary school teachers. However, despite their academic potential and willingness to 'try' both in and out of lesson times, their sense of self became more immersed in local definitions of femininity when they perceived the compensations of non-school time. Although their particular habituses may not have been able to offer them economic or cultural capital, and their "free" time was compromised, they were able to gain a sense of self via their supportive role within the family.

In contrast Lauren was an example of a working class girl whose sense of self/identity was not immersed in local femininities and whose linear relationship towards schooling time was supported by her habitus. She was an instance of a working class female student who was able to maintain a linear relationship towards schooling time and distance herself from local times (and spaces). I contend that she like Paul, her contemporary, was likely to open up possibilities for herself in the future. I do not think it a coincidence that she and Paul were both in strong position to make a career change from that of their families and peers since they (and their families) were already in a state of transition (to different times and spaces).

Lauren's parents, like Paul's, had set up their own business on a local industrial estate near Burnside. Lauren had positioned herself as "other" from some of her female contemporaries in that although she subscribed to local definitions of the feminine being bound up with heterosexual femininity, the predominant text she inhabited was one of being an academically able student, as a result of past and present achievements; obtaining higher grade passes at GCSE was her primary ambition.

Lauren was able to demonstrate her linear relationship to schooling time as well as a sense of self not immersed in local femininities through her management of lesson time and her organisation of out of school time hierarchically to combine homework with a considerable amount of part-time work. She had worked in two local sandwich shops at weekends, three evenings per week and during the summer holidays, making up orders. She had briefly worked for her parents. She had worked as a waitress at a public house situated in a country park quite near to her home village, before becoming a waitress at a public house in her own village. Lauren also commented that she ‘filled in’ when people were off sick.

She, like some of her contemporaries, wished to demonstrate her independence from her parents by having control of her own finances without having to ask her parents for money. She acknowledged that her parents could afford to buy her clothes yet that situation could change. She was aware, like Paul, that her peers had positioned her and her family as ‘rich,’ yet fortunes could quickly change. She explained that some of her peers did not understand this and added that her parents had to ‘lay off’ some workers for two weeks. She was also aware that if her parents were unable to work then there were no wages.

Lauren was reproducing the time management skills that her parents deployed to achieve success in their business. By demonstrating that she was able to deploy her school and non-school time effectively, and by not immersing herself in local working class discourses relating to gender roles, Lauren was indicating a self who was preparing to open up possibilities for herself in the future.

#### **6.2.4 Middle class students and part-time work**

Very few middle class students were engaged in part-time work. Brian had a paper round, which took up about three hours per week. He also did ‘stuff’ around the house. Joan worked weekends as a waitress in a hotel in Graftby. Other jobs, such as those of Tina, Susie and Anna involved babysitting and household chores. All expressed a desire to become emergent young adults and feel a sense of responsibility. Joan:

It gives me an extra bit of responsibility. It makes me feel more like an adult; I'm part of a different world outside school.

These middle class students fitted in part-time working into a hierarchy of out of school time in which homework was prioritised before work and/or socialisation. Susie:

Homework is important, I don't like doing it but it's like my Mum; she marks books from when she gets in till 11 o'clock. If you do it by yourself it's developing your skills to learn by yourself. If I find it difficult my parents help; I suppose not everyone has that parent thing.

Although they desired to be regarded as responsible young adults they were not so closely bound up in local discourse relating to gender roles as their working class peers were. They did not experience the temporal and social constraints, which were often an expression of a working class habitus; all the middle class students lived in households in which there was one other sibling only, with at least one parent (the father) in full time employment. The habitus which they occupied and its associated beneficiary "capitals" gave them a temporal space in which they could reflect upon the sense of self which it conferred. Joan described her part-time job which she did for 'responsibility', not 'extra cash.' Joan:

I don't have a problem with money as I get quite a bit from my Dad....It (her part-time job) makes me feel differently about myself in school, I see myself as more adult...

The habitus of middle class students combined with an identity bestowed upon them via scholastic labelling as a result of academic success. Joan:

I never say I'm more intelligent or more clever than you but I still get that put upon me, people just say it to me, but I've never said it to them. So I think people realise that I am, so I believe I am.

They viewed part-time working and/or socialisation out of school hours as an interim stage between school and future life, as a period for consolidation of experience and knowledge of the world, which could position them away from local times (and spaces). Joan explained how part-time working allowed her access to different experiences outside school but that it would

have to end when I start university because it will be too far to work there.

This viewpoint reflected their overall linear relationship towards schooling time and a sense of self, extending into the future, independently of local times (and spaces).

### **6.2.5 Work experience and mentoring**

By the end of Year 10 and during the course of Year 11 the students had become increasingly preoccupied with their sense of self/identity. As a result of teacher assessments upon students' ability and motivation, the students had assimilated these additional identifications alongside those locally inscribed and inscribing class culture definitions; they served to inform their sense of self. Key events such as work experience in Year 10 and mentoring of selected students during Year 11 brought the issue of present and future selves into the forefront of the lives of some students. I conjecture that those events could have been a factor in determining future life trajectory for those students whose view of schooling time was essentially non-episodic. They were an indication of which students were likely to remain bound up with local masculinities and femininities.

Many of the students at the Academy and the majority of the working class students at Prioryfields, whose view of schooling time was either episodic or partially episodic, spoke about their work experience as being more enjoyable because of the different relationship between them and the employers. The key differences were experiencing a different sense of self/identity which treated them with respect, as if they were adults, as well as the responsibilities they were given. They could have some choice in how they organised their working day. Katheryn referring to work experience,

I wish I could quit school and go and work there, 'cos they treat you like proper adults, they give you orders but give you options as well. I wish school would just go, I just want to finish.

Stewart, Prioryfields, explained how when he was working at the local market or babysitting for a relative, he was trusted and respected more than in school time by teachers. In return he regarded his employer respectfully and tried 'to do a good job for her'. She and his aunty, for whom he did babysitting, wrote him positive references for his work experience at Boyston Primary School. He was accepted there 'straightaway'

without an interview, unlike his peers. Stewart commented on the respect he received from staff and students, which even extended to the local community when he was walking in Boyston, as students and parents referred to him as ‘Mr Gower’ rather than ‘Stewart’.

When you come into school from the outside world and you’ve had this respect you think, what you shouting at me for?

Stewart was referring to a teacher who had ‘a right go at’ him that morning. He continued:

I don’t get shouted at, at home so why should I come to school to be shouted at by you?

Stewart, like some other working class boys who were regarded as academically able, held a semi-episodic relationship towards schooling time. Their involvement in part-time working and work experience gave them the opportunity for critical reflection upon it and out of school times (and spaces), and how intimately they wished those experiences to affect their sense of self and the selves they wished to become.

During the final term of Year 11, selected students at Prioryfields were mentored. These were students who were regarded as ‘underachieving’ and who could possibly raise their attainment level in some subjects from “D” to “C”. When students such as Barbara were overlooked I conjecture that this reinforced her determination to ally her future self to local femininities, times (and spaces).

### **6.3 Time for socialisation**

How the students chose to spend their part-time earnings, how far socialisation and recreation, and the type of recreation, was prioritised in out of school hours, also informs of the students’ sense of self and possible future selves. These factors interacted with students’ relationship towards schooling time and their degree of immersion in local masculinities and femininities as well as the choices inscribed within their habitus. In this section I discuss how the students spent their time in socialisation and recreation. I will contend that this was a crucial period in which the majority of working class students whose relationship to schooling time was predominantly episodic re/created the

selves, which were inscribed in local class cultural discourses and thus closed down possibilities for themselves.

### **6.3.1 Re/creation: submerging or supplanting the self ?**

#### 6.3.1.1 Working class students

For those students whose relationship towards schooling time was essentially episodic, socialisation with friends and family, and time for recreation, was the central feature separating school and non-school hours. This was demonstrated by the way in which these students ordered their non-school time in accordance with a regular temporal pattern, such that they cycled, 'hung out' with friends, went drinking, shopping. Money earned from part-time working was generally used to meet short-term needs and goals, such as a buying a foreign holiday, a play station type computer, clothes, and on social activities such as drinking with friends, visiting the cinema. Mary talked about 'knocking about with me mates', in her local village. Similarly, Frank said, 'We just stand around talking in town'. Also, Liam commented, 'I just mess about, play football, tennis with my mates'.

The timings of these events had fluid beginnings and endings, and were often subject to unchanging local temporal rhythms. They were not subject to surveillance by significant others, such as adult authority figures. This was time filling, it was a temporal space in which individual and group identities were recreated, such that the self was submerged in local texts of class, masculinity and femininity. For some students social activities were utilised as a coping device for times of stress in school, as well as conferring a sense of self/identity, which they had failed to gain via academic recognition in school. Valerie:

Mm, I know this sounds sad, but I do bowling. I bowl for the county, both counties, the higher league. Only men are supposed to play in it. It takes all the pressure out on me. When I'm angry I can just chuck the work and stress. But when I'm all right, I can just enjoy it, it just takes the stress out on me.

Valerie lived in a council house with her parents and older brother; her mother left home during the course of this research. Valerie's habitus and lack of any sort of capital meant

that her choice of hobby, and opportunity for socialisation, was restricted to local times and spaces.\*

Valerie's contemporary, Kevin, also found that his running ability in his out of school hours conferred a status on him, which he had been unable to achieve in school. He had represented a county running club. Kevin's habitus, his attachment to local times (and spaces) and his sporting skills in running and swimming fuelled his ambition to be a lifeguard at the local leisure centre.

Those working class students whose view of schooling time was episodic tended to be involved in social activities, which allied them to local times (and spaces) and local group identities couched in terms of local class cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity. In contrast, working class students who had a linear, or predominantly linear, relationship towards schooling time had positioned themselves differently to the "normal" local class cultural definitions regarding gender roles; they tended to engage in solitary activities or socialise with a few close friends, and family. For example, Harry and his friend, Paul, met occasionally 'for a walk in the park.' Their social life and recreation was fitted into their non-school time after homework and part-time working, where applicable. They did not ally this time closely with local times (and spaces); they aimed to supplant the identity that was inscribed for them in local class cultural discourses. They were supplanting local class culture definitions rather than becoming submerged in them.

#### 6.3.1.2 Middle class students

The middle class students, all Prioryfields, who had a linear relationship towards schooling time, managed their socialisation (and recreational time) so that it helped to partially fulfil future life ambitions. Further, although their out of school hours followed a regular and ordered temporal pattern, it was a temporal space in which they were subject to public surveillance and regulation by others. Tina, Ralph, and Carl attended the local branch of the RAF cadets as well as RAF events nationally. They intended

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\* To be successful in what was regarded as a predominantly male sport could have resulted in a conflict with local class definitions of femininity, especially as Valerie was expected to care for the family after the departure of her mother. I suggest that the increasing demands of household duties upon Valerie were likely to impose temporal (and spatial) restraints upon how she managed non-school time such that she became more immersed in local femininities.

either a career in the RAF or one associated with aviation after sixth form and university. Susie was involved in a swimming club three or four times per week. This included some teaching and travel nationally and internationally during weekends and holidays. Olivia, Harriet and Brian were involved in musical activities, some of which were connected with the school, as well as playing in the county band. Brian was also bass player in a local band. Olivia attended guides and Harriet performed in local amateur dramatic productions.

I mention these students to point up the differences in the way out of school time was perceived and managed by those students whose relationship to schooling time was linear compared to those students whose relationship to schooling time was episodic. Although both groups out of school hours followed temporal patterns, the majority of working class students did not subject themselves to public surveillance and regulation by adult authority figures. They perceived this time as significant in so far as it moved from one episode to the next rather than as a temporality that was significant within the total flow of life trajectory.

I think these differences are drawn out in a comparison between how Alexis, a working class student, and Harriet, a middle class student, deployed their out of school hours. Since those differences are disclosed in their personal narratives I defer a detailed discussion to a short case study of these two students in chapter nine. However at this point I wish to state that an examination of how Alexis and the other students related to schooling time through recreational activities reveals the self they chose to re/create from their relationship towards schooling time as episodic or linear. It illustrates how working class students who have an episodic view of schooling time utilise time spent on recreational activities as a counter balance to the time they perceived was ‘wasted’ in school. It is a balance in which the “temporal pendulum” swings more on time recreating selves associated with local class definitions of masculinity and femininity.

### **6.3.2 Recreational time: recreating or creating the self to close down or open up possible life chances**

All the students regarded recreational pursuits as leisure tools, a demarcation between school/work time and leisure time. The students’ chosen leisure activities were very similar to those found by Willis (1990) when he surveyed the leisure activities of young

people aged between eleven and twenty-five years old, in the Midlands, London and North East England. His ethnographic data was drawn mainly from the experiences of the working class.

Much recreational time was centred around home-based activities, such as watching television, particularly soaps, hiring videos, playing games on the computer. (Only one student at the Academy, Paul, used the computer as a work tool, whereas twelve students at Prioryfields used the computer as a work tool.) Reading of books, fiction and non-fiction, as well as magazines, varied from reading 'very few' per year (Tom) to 'all the time' (Susie). Magazines such as "Bliss", "Sugar" and "Nineteen" were popular reading materials for several girls at both schools. For example, Barbara, described herself as reading magazines 'all the time'. Activities based within the local community included the pursuit of hobbies, 'hanging around' with friends and going to the pub. Some hobbies indicated clear class cultural preferences, such as shooting, poaching and fishing particularly with some of the working class boys from the Academy. A minority of students from Prioryfields visited Sheffield to attend the theatre, cinema or football matches. One middle class girl student from Prioryfields attended rugby matches in Yorkshire and the North East of England.

The students whose relationship towards schooling time was essentially linear aimed to ensure that the balance of their out of school time was not outweighed by leisure pursuits. They rationed how much time they were prepared to apportion to recreation as they sought to create a sense of self, which was compatible with their future aspirations. For instance, they did not need to watch television to pass the time since their out of school hours were organised in a hierarchy and proportionately to their future life trajectory. Mark explained that if he chose to do so, which he did not, he could spend every evening watching television. 'I could spend all night watching tv.' Similarly, Tina believed that she watched 'less television than most teenagers'. Also, Joan commented that she did not 'actively watch tv'.

In contrast, the students whose relationship towards schooling time was essentially episodic, such as Alexis, positioned recreational pursuits highly as a means of passing time as they moved from one local episode to the next. For example, watching television

soaps was a popular leisure activity with most of the working class students because they reflected events in their life experiences. Janet:

The same sort of things happen in them, that happens here, I can relate to them.

However, the working class students who were predisposed to open up possibilities for themselves, such as Janet, were able to keep “real” time in focus, as integral to the meaning making process affecting their future trajectory. In contrast, for students such as Alexis, watching soaps became a means of suspending “real” time for lengthy periods to avoid boredom.

#### 6.3.2.1 Symbolic re/creation

On a superficial level, watching soaps and other television programmes were a temporal resource for providing relaxation and enjoyment. On a deeper level, those temporal “escapes” from reality were symbols through which individuals derived a sense of identity and meaning. I suggest that it was those students who had an episodic relationship towards schooling time who used recreational activities such as watching soaps and reading teenage magazines as symbolic frameworks in which to recreate local class identities. Willis (1990) argues that it is within the teenage and early adult years that people are formed most ‘self consciously through their own symbolic and other activities’ (Willis, 1990, page 7). The recreational activities to which I have alluded Willis describes as ‘symbolic moulds’ (page 7); it is through these symbolic acts that some students understood themselves and their possibilities for the rest of their lives.

The importance of such symbolic creativity was demonstrated in the time given by some working class girls to the reading of several teenage magazines weekly. Seven out of ten Academy female students and three of the working class female students at Prioryfields talked about reading magazines for advice on relationships and make-up. These magazines were one temporal marker within a temporal structure provided by early years girls’ magazines through to women’s magazines, which positioned women in a variety of roles. Specifically, for my research students they provided a temporal space in which the girls could represent themselves as future partners, wives and mothers. Those who were most closely allied to local temporal times (and spaces), such as Barbara, did precisely that.

McRobbie's analysis, (1991), of teenage girls' magazines supports my contention. Her findings illustrated how the magazines of girls and women shape their world from early childhood through to middle age. In particular, magazines such as "Nineteen" and "Honey" which were popular with the female students at my study schools mark the progression through time of girls from adolescent romantics through to sexually active women. Thus, when the reading of teenage magazines was mediated through the context of class culture, some girls perceived that this was their becoming in the next stage of their life cycle.

This review of recreational activities exemplifies how some students chose to recreate identities along class cultural lines, and bounded by traditional definitions of femininity and masculinity within the family and local community. There were examples of class preferences, expressed in middle class students' interests in concerts, the theatre compared to working class interests in fishing, shooting. Both classes shared interests in socialising with friends, watching television. The crucial differences were between how the students balanced recreational activities with other activities, within their temporal schema, and how far the students utilised recreational time to create a self not prescribed within the boundaries of local class definitions of femininity and masculinity. For example, Olivia had positioned herself differently from traditional definitions of femininity inscribed within the predominant discourse of the local community.

I'm not really a girlie girl, I can't be doing with fashion magazines, I can't be doing with reading problem pages.

Olivia used her recreational time to actively create a self not inscribed within local texts of femininity. Her choice of being a supporter of a rugby union club (as opposed to a rugby league club) reflected her middle classness as well as symbolic creativity of the self; a different definition of self, not 'a girlie girl' but independent of male support, through time (and space).

## **6.4 Summary**

The middle class students and the working class students who were likely to open up possibilities for themselves maintained a linear relationship towards schooling time revealed in the way in which they structured out of school hours hierarchically. This was

time flowing rather than time filling since they had rationalised out of school hours as integral to the process of becoming selves which were not subsumed in local class cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity. Further, their habitus did not impose time constraints upon their overall relationship to schooling time. A crucial factor in the self/identity they sought to create was the self which was embedded in personal narratives. In chapter nine I examine how the personal narratives of the students and significant others served to organise past, present and future selves into a meaningful whole. I will contend that those students who viewed their personal narratives as linear were most likely to open up possibilities for themselves in the future. Since narratives provide a system for interpreting and making sense of being in time and space, the two chapters following explore the research participants' relationship to space.

## **Chapter 7:**

### **Relationships to Space: the Geography of Class**

#### **7.1 Opening remarks**

Space is powerfully constitutive of children's understandings of the world and their place within it (Reay, 2000, page 157).

The discussion of space which follows seeks to examine the research participants' relationship to two particular spaces, that is to two specific geographical locations or places, Burnside and Graftby/Boyston. My analysis reveals the "reality" of two particular places viewed from geographical, socio-cultural, symbolic and emotional spaces. I therefore conceptualise space as a physical and mental aspect of being, co-existing at the same time; as classed spaces those particular geographical locations informed of the lived material conditions of the research subjects as well as the discursively produced and producing subjects, which were embedded in the local texts that occupied the emotional, psychic spaces of the research participants to inform of sense of self. This chapter therefore relates to an exploration of the geographical localities in which the two study schools were located and the social spaces encompassed within their boundaries.

The framework for the analysis which follows, therefore, has an objective and subjective view of space. It points up geographical location and within that particular locale examines the communal spaces, such as families, classrooms, schools and local community areas, in which social interactions took place. I am referring to those particular geographical and social spaces which were the sites of specific group/personal narratives and local histories that permeated the research participants' understanding of self and their place in the local community, discussed in the previous chapters. Thus, both space and time are perceived as social phenomena, which are constituted out of social relations.

Space-time is viewed as a configuration of social relations within which the spatial is dynamic simultaneity (Massey, 1994, page 3).

The identity associated with place points up a particular identity discursively produced as negative in this case by those who lived outside its geographical boundaries as well as by those in positions of power (for example, staff, middle class families) who sought to regulate a particular way of being in the world, from within the schools and the local communities. (Additionally, working class identities, especially feminine and homosexual, were symbolically and discursively produced as less than because of the predominant patriarchal relations of those places. I discuss the implications of this in the next chapter).

It was in the fusion of geographical location, the social arenas thus encompassed and particular localised cultural formations that the symbolic and emotional spaces embodied within the two sites were revealed. Those sites were the products of the lived material conditions of particular geographical (and historical) location as well as of local discourses infused with those particular power/knowledge formations that are so frequently associated with local (and national) “truths” relating to “demonised” schools and their associated communities as well.

My findings reveal the “reality” of particular places viewed from different spaces; commentators such as Massey (1994) have also argued for multiple readings of the concept of space. As I conceptualise that space is both objective and subjective, and that it and time are dynamically simultaneous, I will contend that those students whose relationship towards school related time was linear combined this with a relationship to space as transference to open up possibilities for future life trajectory. I will compare and contrast the students whose sense of self/identity was consumed by local spaces and who maintained an episodic view of school related time to those students who were selective consumers of local spaces and who maintained a linear view of school related time to show how the opening up of life chances was more likely in the latter group.

Some commentators such as Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001) have commented how class can be ‘spotted a mile off’, (page 212) in the way that it inscribes subjects and the way in which they inscribe themselves in a particular place. I refer to this as the geography of class because it describes how classed districts and communities are concentrated in specific geographical locations or places; they operate as a place in which subjects are inscribed and from where they actively inscribe themselves.

This notion of geographical place being the place of identities became apparent to me when I began to work at the Academy. I was teaching a group of Year 9 boys and commented that at my previous school in Derby some of the boys wore their hair in pony tails, whilst the majority of the boys at the Academy wore their hair cut short. One of the boys responded immediately, ‘We don’t do that round *here!*’ This statement informed of the powerful association between notions of self, a place of identity and geographical location.

Class is at once profoundly social and profoundly emotional and lived in its specificity in particular cultural and geographical locations (Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody, 2001, page 53).

In the section following I discuss how the material and immaterial effects of the geography of class were inextricably woven into the two schools and their associated communities to “immobilise” the majority of working class students in place and space.

## **7.2 The two locations**

Places form a reservoir of meanings which people can draw upon to tell stories about themselves and thereby define themselves (Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody, 2001, page 37, citing Thrift, 1997, page 160).

Burnside and its associated former mining villages from which the Academy drew its students were geographically isolated since there were no major roads connecting them to centres of population in Derby, Nottingham or Sheffield. The surrounding countryside was quite pleasant; in places it bore the scars of former pit workings, on some of these sites industrial units were located. The housing was predominantly that of former pit houses, council estates, terraced rows, old stone cottages and very few new modern private housing. The type of housing that was thus available, and the geographical isolation of Burnside, served to exclude those families who could afford choice of housing in locations which also facilitated ease of travel. As Massey (1995) has commented, geographical location fuses powerfully with the type of housing available to produce a “geography of exclusion”. Therefore, the population of Burnside, and by association the Academy, was composed of a homogeneous group of white working class families, many of whom had lived there for generations and were related

to each other. For certain families this resulted in a territorial relationship to place and social space, which contributed to the inward looking gaze of the local community.

The geographical isolation of Burnside and the local discursive formations transmitted therein, which were socially, culturally and historically specific, communicated a local understanding of place and space that “sifted out” the type of people that composed the Burnside community. This sifting mechanism, which distinguishes the type of people we are from who we are not, was even more obvious in the Prioryfields community, a mixed social catchment of working class and middle class families, with a tiny minority of non-white families, because it distinguished between different races as well as different classes.

Graftby was located at the crossroads of three major A roads and it was within commuting distance of Sheffield, Chesterfield and Nottingham because of its proximity to the M1 motorway, as well as the A1. The type of housing available was much more variable than in Burnside; there were terraced rows, council housing, rented accommodation and well established private houses and bungalows, with some new detached and expensive housing being built in the school’s catchment area during the course of this research.

To the eastern side of Graftby was the large and notorious Boyston council estate; it took its name from the former mining village of Boyston. Despite the closure of Boyston colliery several years previously, local road signs were still marked “Boyston colliery”. Like Burnside, the type of housing and geographical location of Boyston, as a distinct community separate from other areas of Graftby, resulted in a homogeneity of families in that particular area, many of whom were related to each other; they had grown up there and they lived there when they married.

The more varied type of housing available in Graftby and the ease of travel to and from it resulted in a heterogeneous school community. So, for example, in my form group I tutored the children of consultants and business managers as well as children of workers at the sandwich factory and those of unemployed former mine workers. However, the predominant culture of Prioryfields was that of the Boyston community since the students who predominated lived in Boyston; freedom of travel and a wider

choice of housing meant that some middle class families chose to send their children to “better” local secondary schools or private schools.

### **7.3 Social spaces: the local communities**

When I organised Humanities visits to places such as Derby and Sheffield I was surprised by how few students had visited these places and/or travelled very far from their homes at all. The limits of travel for many students extended to fruit and vegetable picking in Lincolnshire and summer holidays taken in Skegness. For those families who could afford foreign travel, a package holiday, where English was spoken, was the norm. Mr Lomax:

Burnside is geographically isolated, it’s like a mining community and then some. This village is on the road to and from no bloody where at all. They think a fortnight in Lanzarote is world travelling, some have never been to Sheffield for God’s sake.

The lack of travel reflected a lack of money in some families as well as a lack of intention to travel away from the immediate area because of their social, cultural and emotional attachments to the safe space of Burnside as well as an awareness of the sort of place it was; this was a place of a specific sort of identity, allowing movement to those places, which were “for the likes of us”, that bore resonances with their local culture, a place where they would feel “comfortable.”

Jack lived in Boyston and perceived no value in the study of Geography.

You know where’t countries are and t’planet, that’s all you need to know.\*

I now examine the social relations, which were informed by the geography of class culture, ‘stretched out’ (Massey, 1994, page 2) across the spatial: the communities, families and schools. These were the particular sets of social relationships that interacted spatially and temporally; since space (and time) are social constructions they further inform of locally produced definitions of class and gender identity.

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\* It is what Bourdieu (1984, page 471) describes as, ‘That’s not for the likes of us’, effect when agents who feel dominated assess the value of their position and express the values associated with that position into ‘objective laws’, (page 471).

A particular form of working class culture (that of two former coal mining communities) still infused the local communal spaces of contemporary Burnside, Boyston and the two study schools. It was within those communal spaces that a particular form of working class masculinity and femininity was produced; therefore classed identity and associated implications for gender and sexuality is pointed up. The particular form of working class culture was resilient, powerful and compelling; it was the cohesive “gel” that bound the communities of Burnside and Boyston. Despite some differences still remaining between certain families as a result of the 1984 miners’ strike, families nevertheless remained loyal to these places and spaces.

The former mining culture was a central component of the social and symbolic lived experiences of the students and their families, as well as certain staff who lived or had lived within the local communities. The perspective of parents and staff upon local community spaces is considered first since it imparts the students’ relationship to local communal spaces, primarily their experiences of school (examined in the following chapter).

The mining culture, which I discussed in chapter one, was maintained through time and space in the cohesive nature of the local community, the family unit as well as the extended family, which maintained the importance of the home and relationships within it as well as in the way in which the family and extended family socialised together. Mrs Golding, Burnside:

If you go in the pubs you’ll see the family, Mums, Dads, grandparents, daughters, sons-in-law, grandchildren, the extended family, it has pride in itself.

The solidly working class communities of Burnside and Boyston were rarely penetrated by “outsiders”, thus their identity remained “untarnished”. Mrs Heath also explained,

Yes it is a community and it is a strange community. You’re either in or you’re out. They’ll accept outsiders on a slow, steady base. If they slotted in, it could take a short time, but if they were upper class it would take forever.

Mrs Heath was pointing up the particular form of working classness that epitomised Burnside. She continued,

If you don't fly the red flag you've shot it! I move in a wide field and when I tell people that I live in Arthur Scargill and Dennis Skinner country, people immediately recognise a type of area. We are set on our ways, one of the big problems in the local council is that it is very orientated towards its own clientele, they tend to belong to the parish council and they seem to take the majority of places on other committees, for example, school governors. They're inflexible in their ideas.

Some of the "outsiders" who had been accepted into the Burnside community were certain teachers, who themselves had been members of the working class. They recognised Burnside to be a safe, secure and supportive space but mono-cultural and unchanging. Mr Groom had lived in Burnside before his marriage. He described it as a safe and friendly place to live, particularly for a single man because he was able to enjoy and exploit the masculine culture. However, when he married, he had to move away because it then became an inappropriate place for his wife (and potential family) to live, since its unchanging traditions and parochiality were then positioned negatively, and his wife was French, an "outsider." Mr Groom:

Ooh God, it's steeped in the tradition of male domination, mining, drink and violence, failure and almost a desire to fail, inward looking, parochial and no horizons. I've lived here and despite the occasional violence it's very cosy when you get to know them. It's very friendly, very safe and once accepted in the pub or the street you know you won't come to any harm from outsiders, it's almost like being in a womb.

He continued,

I thoroughly enjoyed living here, I felt quite important, people bought me drinks. When I married I had to leave, my wife wouldn't tolerate it, quite rightly.

The unchanging nature of the community, its timelessness, which gave it security and continuity, and made it a positively safe social space (for "insiders") worked against the notion of dynamism, movement and transference to different spaces. Mr Groom:

People don't go, people don't come; it's like being in a time warp.

One consequence of being in a time warp was that certain families had a distrust of education and were unsupportive of the Academy.

The loyalty and co-operation that had been vital necessities when miners had been working down the pit had extended into the local communities and their families; the same families stayed in the area, “new” families tended not to move in. Mr Oldman observed,

There is one type of house, not much variety, sameness. There are no other ethnic groups.

Standing up for yourself, for each other and the local community were values that were most forcefully espoused when outsiders threatened the community, for example, during the miners’ strike, and possibly when new members were being elected to local bodies, such as school governors and the parish council; a refusal to support each other was seen as a threat to everyone. Drinking and fighting reflected the masculinity and virility, the integral attributes, which personified this “stand up for yourself” culture.

#### **7.4 “Staying put”**

Many of the families who lived in Boyston identified themselves with that particular place rather than with Graftby. Large numbers of Boyston and Burnside families “stayed put”; for example, Mrs Palling lived in the council house next door to the one in which she grew up. Like their counterparts in Burnside their “geographical gaze” was inwards. Mr Overend:

People stay in Boyston. They consider themselves from Boyston, not from Graftby. The interesting thing here is when you’re coming into Graftby there are signs for Boyston. The only part of Graftby that has a road sign is the one going to Boyston. When you pick up the local newspaper on Friday if someone is in court for something or someone has committed some offence, it might say from Graftby if they live at wherever, but it says Boyston.

Thus, despite the closure of the colliery, some Boyston families regarded themselves as distinct, socially and culturally from the other Prioryfields families, especially those who lived on the Leespark estate. Mr Overend:

Boyston is considered a village, it’s considered to be separate, yet it has no means whatsoever. There’s now a social centre, a community centre there, just starting to be used. The shops are scant, there’s the chippy, a post office, that’s about it. There’s no supermarket there, there’s two pubs but they still feel that’s Boyston. I

think it's insecurity. You ride round there on a nice day, a sunny day at weekends or of an evening, folks are just sat on street corners.

Mrs Rose, teacher of French, Prioryfields, talked of the difficulties of trying to motivate students as well as contemplate visiting France.

I find Graftby to be very insular, a lot of them don't go to Sheffield, Nottingham, so the chances of them going to France are minus... They don't see beyond the horizon of Graftby.

Miss Butcher, teacher of French at the Academy, also talked about the students' negative perceptions of the need to learn French.

They can't see out of Burnside, it's in the middle of nowhere anyway. Some pupils haven't been to Chesterfield, if it's not Skegness they go on holiday to, they can't see the use of doing French. I'm not going to France!

All the students at the Academy studied French unless they were identified as "less able". The pass rate in French at the Academy in my case study year was disappointingly low and it was lower than the national pass rate, with only 17.5% of Academy students gaining a higher A-C grade pass. Out of a year group of approximately 160 students, 36 did not sit the French examination and two failed to gain a grade. Mary:

There's no point in doing French because when you leave school you might never use that language again.

Mrs Wayman:

What does French and German do for 'em? They're no good for 'em, especially round here.

Mr Longman:

I can't see what they want to do French for, why have we imposed French onto 'em?

The comments of Mary, Mrs Wayman and Mr Longman were expressing their attachment to the place of their identities; their economic, social, cultural, physical,

emotional and psychic needs were all satisfied within their particular locality. Being and becoming involved consumption of as well as by local spaces. Burnside was the central and dominant space in their way of life, other spaces were of “influence” only in so far as they impinged upon their being (and becoming).

In contrast, Edward, encouraged by his parents, chose German as a GSCE option because German was ‘a new world’. Edward planned to travel to Germany either during university or afterwards. His parents described how they had encouraged Edward to take German because they perceived that Edward’s career trajectory could transfer him to other places and spaces. Mr Bullock:

We definitely wanted him to do German ‘cos he enjoys it, he’s good at it. It’s a good language to learn and it will be useful to him when he’s older.

Very few working class students expressed a desire to move out of the local area, certainly no more than an hour’s travelling time, to gain suitable employment. Una stated that she wanted a job locally or in a nearby town. Norman stated, ‘I want a job where I’m working around Graftby’. Arron planned to work locally for a friend of his grandfather and possibly in the army after that.

The armed forces were quite a popular career option for some working class boys, whether they were academically successful or not; this offered the opportunity to transfer themselves into the same socio-cultural spaces as their fathers, brothers and friends, in that sense it was really exchanging one form of territoriality for another.

John:

I could do like my older brother and join the RAF in Lincolnshire.

Similarly, Frank:

I’ve wanted to join the army since the age of six, I don’t want to go to Sandhurst or to be an army officer, but start from scratch and work my way up. Dad was in the army... When I leave Burnside I can visit Mum as I know she might miss me.

Since Frank and John would probably join a local regiment, which would be composed of others from a similar socio-cultural background as well as relatives, wherever they travelled, nationally and internationally, they would remain in the same familiar spaces. Therefore, they could safely return home without feeling out of place and space.

For many working class students the physical and emotional attachment they experienced in relationship to their particular locality in terms of familiarity, security and legitimacy constrained them to local places and spaces when planning future career trajectory. Kevin:

I want to stay local, where I grew up. I would feel weird in a different area, like up in Leeds or a little town near Leeds. I would feel weird, I wouldn't know anybody or anything.

Many of Kevin's male and female contemporaries wanted to remain in close contact with family, relatives and friends, despite the economic disadvantages via reduced employment opportunities from staying locally. Working class students who aspired to leave home and go to university, such as Matt, sought those universities, which were likely to attract students from a similar socio-cultural mix to themselves; they did not aspire to go to "blue ribbon" universities. Attendance at university might be for an interim period only before returning to familiar territory; it seems that the gravitational "pull" of home would inevitably draw some students back to local spaces and places. Matt:

I'd leave the area to go to college and university but I'd end up coming back after I'd finished the courses. I would want to come back to see my family and 'cos I know my way round here don't I, 'cos I've been brought up here really.

Some staff positioned territoriality to space negatively maintaining and accentuating the gap between familiar spaces and other spaces. Lauren and Kirsty were regarded as academically able and potential university material but they had developed 'bad feelings' towards certain staff, especially Mr Steane. Lauren described how Mr Steane had 'kept moaning' at her 'for ages', and this had also happened to Kirsty. Mr Steane had made Kirsty stand outside his classroom, in an open courtyard, without a coat during the winter-time. Lauren explained,

He made her stand outside for ages and she was freezing. He called her; he insulted her. I know some teachers can mess about saying, “You stupid girl!” Things like that, but he insulted her seriously. He said, “You’re stupid, you’ll never get on, you’ll still be in Burnside when everyone else is working abroad.” He was calling\* her properly and not just saying stuff.

Mr Steane was well aware that it was very unlikely that many Academy students would be working out of the country, let alone any distance from Burnside but by making that comparison he was highlighting the stark contrast between Kirsty’s (and Lauren’s) ability and attachment to local places and spaces; he feared that this attachment would confine her in local spaces. Staff at both study schools were unable to offer an alternative discourse which could reconcile a way of being in the world associated with local place/space and transfer to different places and spaces.

### **7.5 Graftby: surveillance from a different place and space**

Within Graftby the two communities had produced a discourse which identified the place of Boyston as inferior to Leespark as well as certain students (and their families) from Boyston being positioned negatively. I contend that the process of viewing place in this way began when the school became a comprehensive and students from the two places began to interact in social settings. Mr and Mrs Packer explained how they had ‘found a great divide’ when they came to live in Graftby eighteen years previously. Mrs Packer:

...like Boyston was down there, we had to find our level. I don’t like it like this, but you can’t change people’s attitudes. Mark (Palling) lives down there, but people who live down there think we’re different in some way. But I’ve taken Mark home, I’ve been on that estate and I don’t think people who live in those houses have a different way of dealing with things to the way we do. Some of them are beautifully kept, they have nice front gardens, they are tidy; they are organised.

Despite Mrs Packer stating that the residents of the two places shared their humanity, the message in the underlying discourse clearly positioned Boyston residents as different; the use of the word ‘down’ to locate Boyston geographically, (in fact it was not located below Leespark but on the other side of Graftby), had negative connotations. Further, the perception that only certain gardens (and by association

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\* “Calling” is local parlance for insulting.

houses and homes) were well kept and that “attitudes” (a physical and mental position) were entrenched and therefore passively accepted and unchanging, combined in a powerful discourse, which identified Boyston as counter to Leespark. This discourse had infiltrated the school as well as being embedded and embodied in the local community.

Boyston had a very negative image\*, including a serious drugs problem. Mrs Chapel:

There’s all druggies round my end; some young ones at this school would take ‘em. I’ve seen one of the lads at this school, the parents have seen ‘em, they’re not bothered.

Mr and Mrs Rawson tried to prevent Jack from socialising with particular families in Boyston because certain families and areas were associated with drugs. Mrs Rawson:

Some of Jack’s friends are undesirable in our eyes; two hang about with a big crowd who are known troublemakers, they hang about near the flats at the top of Boyston, where drugs are prolific. We don’t want him mixing with that type of people.†

Boyston, like Burnside, was the place of specific identities, which for students was an identity, in the absence of any others, which they actively chose for themselves. For certain boys, this embraced drinking, fighting and smoking. For certain girls, to have an identity meant being sexually attractive and potentially available to the opposite sex. Further, by participating in the smoking, drinking culture these young people were symbolically if not materially entering adulthood.

Some Boyston students and their parents believed that teachers positioned them negatively because they lived in Boyston. Rita commented that some teachers ‘treated Boyston students differently to Leespark.’ Mrs Lord talked about teachers who ‘weren’t bothered with Katheryn ‘cos she’s from Boyston.’ She continued,

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\* Similarly several parents, and staff, testified to the ‘bad name’ of Burnside; I was aware of this negative reputation before I worked at the school. Mr and Mrs Buxton stated ‘Burnside’s always had a bad name. It is probably trying to live up to its name. I dare you to go out into Burnside on a Saturday evening, I wouldn’t’ (Mr Buxton). ‘There’s always fighting at pubs, always. We go out of town on Saturday night, we have a meal, he has orange and lemonade, ‘cos he won’t drink and drive. We come back here and have a drink in the house’(Mrs Buxton).

† Drugs were also a problem in Burnside, as Mr Wood commented: ‘There’s the Thursday night disco at the Welfare for kids, but they’ve had drugs on the go there and windows got smashed up’.

It's totally wrong, whether they're from Boyston or off Leespark, if they want to do it they should let 'em do it. Fair enough I know there's some from Boyston who don't give a damn, but there's some from Boyston who do care. It's a divided community, it's as clear as one side to the other. I'm a hundred percent sure, probably not with the kiddies, the odd percentage of children. I know of boys from Leespark who mix with Boyston girls, but parents, no way.

Mrs Lord's comments highlight how the Leespark perception of Boyston and its inhabitants was derived directly from local discourses, which had been produced both spatially and historically within the community. Further, whilst some students developed social relationships with those positioned as "other" it was most unlikely that the parents of those students would ever meet socially, unless in the "neutral" social space of the teacher/parent relationship.

The residents of Boyston, as in Burnside, were fiercely defensive of their place; paradoxically they were the only ones who could simultaneously praise and criticise it. Mrs Lord again:

There are odd parts of Boyston that are a bit rough, but it's not like parts of Glasgow, what do they call it, the Gables? (I assume that she was referring to the Gorbals) A few years ago it did used to be a bit rough, there was vandalism, fights, drunkenness, but you get that all over, a scruffy house on Boyston. I've seen scruffy houses on Leespark, I've seen it with my own eyes, I've helped Katheryn deliver papers and I think "look at that round this area!" But I've got to give 'em their due round Boyston, it's a close knit community round Boyston, if they need help, they'll give it to you.

Mrs Lord's comments inform how it was rare for the residents of the "other" community to actually visit Boyston or Leespark. Their physical contacts with those places were fleeting visits, such as helping their children with newspaper deliveries or taking children home after a social event. They point up how the inhabitants surveyed each other at a distance and positioned each other as a result of their participation in locally produced discourses.

The act of surveillance from a distance meant the two communities were often misrepresented to each other and the staff of Prioryfields; Boyston especially (as in Burnside) and its associated primary schools had become almost synonymous with "bad" families. Mr and Mrs Laycock, who lived neither in Boyston or Leespark,

described how they had moved into the Graftby area six years previously from Sheffield. They explained that although their estate was quite middle class, the junior school which they had chosen for Tina was regarded as being “rough”. Mr Laycock, ‘Rough doesn’t mean bad, some middle class parents are very snobby.’ Mr Laycock talked about the ‘snobbish element’ from some parents,

Oh God, there’s definitely that. Oh God, I wouldn’t like my child to go to Prioryfields.

More middle class parents, from Leespark particularly, would have moved their children from Prioryfields had they not had personal associations with the school, or had they not been supportive of comprehensive education, some of them working in such schools themselves. However, whilst they expressed support for the school community, any interest in the Boyston community was always expressed from a distance. Mr and Mrs Law:

We don’t know a lot about the Boyston side, though Harriet had a Boyston boyfriend who had a different attitude towards work. Boyston must have changed since the closure of the pit. I don’t know what the men do, work in the sandwich factory maybe? (Mr Law).

A more negative evaluation was given by Mr Packer, a Mathematics teacher at the adjacent secondary school, when he described how, in his opinion, Boyston parents viewed school.

It’s a means to an end, they get rid of their children at half past eight and they don’t see them again until four o’clock. I can get a lot done in that time, I can go out and work, do what I want to do. When the children come home, I’m not sure how they communicate with them at home, how much is actually spoken at home about what went on at school? Olivia always tells us what’s happened at school, we reciprocate and sort out problems.

The Leespark families were positioned as “snobs” by some Boyston families and some teachers. Ralph explained,

You get the occasional insult, the one that really annoys is getting insulted ‘cos of where you live, that’s the biggest one. ‘Cos I live on Leespark people think I’m better than them; you’re rich. In actual fact I’m not, it’s just people say it.

Ralph was referring to insults from certain students, notably those who lived in Boyston.

Similarly, Joan:

It can be bad sometimes; some areas of Graftby er um, people aren't very nice to me, they don't accept you because they call you er posh, stuff like that.

Vince commented how he was labelled by teachers because of where he lived, he was articulating his possession of socio-economic and symbolic capital, which I suggest, some staff may have felt threatened by since it was superior to theirs.

Oh, you're from Leespark, you're snobby. There's obviously going to be some of that, but it doesn't affect me.

Some of the female students, were especially sensitive at being labelled as a result of the place where they lived, as well as other labels/identities they had "collected" from staff, such as those relating to their ability. Susie:

When I was in years 7, 8 and 9, I was one of what the Boystoners call the "posh snobs" from Leespark. So I got labelled an A\* or an A, so if I didn't get an A\* or an A, they went on "Oh, Susie's not got an A, blooming eck!" And I didn't like that, sometimes I have an off day, and sometimes I can't do well in some subjects, but people go "You're from Leespark, you're meant to get an A". I've got teased all the way through school, you shouldn't get teased 'cos of where you live.

Thus, a discourse operated in school which in part equated ability with where a student lived; Boyston students were expected to be of lower ability than Leespark students. This was an expectation of students and some staff. Thus, many Prioryfields students felt it was safer to be like the majority Boyston students. As Gordon, Holland and Lahelma (2000) found, being the same as the majority of other students was a safe space to occupy.

In the official school being "average" was a safe position to be in. In the informal school being "same as others" provided protection (page 131).

The middle class students and the more able students experienced some marginalisation; positioning individuals and groups on the margins as “other” extended to students who had been born out of the locality. Carl had been born in Germany (as a result of his father’s army posting there) and had been positioned as other by some Boyston and Leespark students.

I’ve been called a German, a Nazi...to start with it affected me ‘cos they’re like racist, saying, “you’re an outsider we don’t want you.” Now I just stay with my friends and laugh at them.

Margins were positions to be avoided since they were

...a constant presence as potential positions and locations to be avoided at all costs for a majority (Gordon, Holland, Lahelma,2000, page 128).

Thus, Leespark students were discursively produced as counter to Boyston students because of where they lived and the associated implications of their possession of greater economic capital as well as their possessing advantageous educational and cultural capital also. At the same time, certain Boyston students actively produced themselves as negative others to Leespark students, because of the identity of place and the identities, which had been discursively produced locally.

Students such as Susie, Ralph, Vince and Carl perceived that they could transfer themselves to other places and spaces. This combined with their linear relationship towards time meant that they would open up possibilities for themselves. However, negative labelling as a result of living in Boyston meant that certain students, whose relationship towards place and space was predominantly territorial, combined with an episodic relationship towards time, found it difficult to open up possibilities for themselves.

## **7.6 Concluding remarks**

Location and place have a central role to play in understanding class and life trajectories of students. Work from the tradition of cultural geography has demonstrated that class is located spatially. The neighbourhood and the house are marked on the body (Walkerline, Lucy and Melody, 2001, page 37).

The notion of the geography of class points up the centrality of physical and emotional attachments to place and the social spaces therein. The majority of the Burnside and Boyston students' and their families' view of space as simultaneously objective and subjective led to a territorial relationship to space and a sense of self becoming immersed in the identity of place and the place of identity as disclosed in their relationships to travel, study/work, regulation and surveillance. Association with and attachment to familiar places (and social spaces) was the safest position to take up; this is highlighted further in an examination of the social spaces of the two study schools and the local communities, which are the foci of the next chapter.

## **Chapter 8:**

### **Relationships to Space: the Space for Education**

#### **8.1 Opening remarks**

This chapter focuses on educational places and spaces; it takes up the discussion in the preceding chapter relating to the discursively produced identities of Burnside and Boyston to determine how supportive those two communities were in making a space for education. I first explore parental and staff perceptions of education in the Prioryfields community before concentrating specifically on different “readings” of local communal views of school and education. The resilient and dominant presence of the effects of local class/culture along with associated language and discourse is highlighted as a barrier to opening up space for education in the lives of some individual students, student groups and their families.

#### **8.2 Local “readings” of the educational space**

##### **8.2.1 Difference and distinction**

In the previous chapter I discussed the demonisation associated with the geographical places and social spaces of Boyston (and Burnside); such perceptions and attitudes were reflected in the context of educational spaces. In Prioryfields, the mixed catchment provides contrast, highlighting differences in perceptions and attitudes towards education and schooling. The close proximity of Leespark and Boyston on the site of Prioryfields school and the social interactions which took place there served to point up the difference and distinction between the two communities. Certain Leespark families supported the school, in so far as they sent their children to it, because they reasoned that the social mix which their children were experiencing would prepare them for possible future career and life experiences. Mrs Hepburn:

The Prioryfields community is a wide one, which covers a large variety of people and a wide variety of social problems. I feel that if children can reach their full potential at Prioryfields they will also have been taught valuable lessons for life by mixing with all types of people.

However, Mrs Hepburn’s comments were not typical of the majority Leespark view of Prioryfields, which blamed indiscipline and poor examination results upon Boyston; if this was not voiced explicitly the underlying message was clear. Mr and Mrs Baker:

There are two types of community at Prioryfields: ones that care about their children and supports them and ones that couldn't care less.

The discursive positioning of Boyston families and students as uncaring about education and school was also demonstrated in Mr and Mrs Law's comments relating to the social group "Friends of Prioryfields", in which the members comprised themselves, Mrs Driver and Mr Overend, who all lived on the Leespark estate. Mrs Law bemoaned the collapse of this group because certain members of the school community, the Boyston families, were unwilling to be involved in school based social activities. Mrs Law:

What do these people want? It's the same people who are willing to support school based communal activities, not the Boyston lot.

As a result of socio-cultural difference as well as geographical distance some Leespark residents had pathologised Boyston, or certain families, as negative others, uncaring about school and their children's education. Bourdieu (1999) observes that social structures such as class easily become converted into mental structures when high concentrations of "negative" (Boyston) and "positive" (Leespark) homes and classes are spatially objectified in a particular geographical area.

Because social space is inscribed at once in spatial structures and in the mental structures that are partly produced by the incorporation of these structures, space is one of the sites where power is asserted and exercised, and no doubt in its subtlest form, as symbolic violence that goes unperceived as violence (Bourdieu, 1999, page126).

The majority view of Leespark residents was that the culture of Boyston was to be avoided, including the meeting and mixing of students socially within school spaces. Some Leespark parents actively chose to send their children to "better" secondary schools, or they removed their children after or during the course of Year 7. Some Leespark children were students at Prioryfields for historical reasons (their parents had been former students) or for social reasons (their friends were students or they knew a Prioryfields teacher). Mr Overend:

There's a paranoia from those parents of the infection of Boyston. They really do believe and this was articulated on Wednesday night last week at the Year 6 parents' evening, with parents I know, I know them socially outside school. They actually have real fears, real genuine fears that er their kids are going to come

home with Wayne and Waynetta slob and er actually suddenly start talking Boyston and saying “eh up Dad,” they really have that fear. There’s a couple of the parents sending their kids here because they trust me, my kids have been here and they hope that something will rub off on theirs as well. Er mm, it really is quite worrying.

The predominant discourse amongst Leespark parents and many staff was that Boyston families did not support the school because, amongst other factors, they were not a socially mobile community and therefore were unreceptive to the value of education because they would find work in the community, through relatives. Further, the school buildings which faced Boyston were those that suffered the most vandalism. Thus, physically and symbolically, the least attractive and least welcoming side of Prioryfields, and therefore least receptive to schooling and education, was the site/sight facing Boyston. Mr Overend:

The culture from the Boyston side is that school is this sort of big body there that is against us. The back of Prioryfields school faces Boyston, the front faces the leafy lane and to get to Prioryfields school from Boyston you’ve got to walk along an unlit path, into the back of school, through a security fence, rather than the welcoming front drive, ‘cos you think you’re going to a public school when you come in at the front. And so all the wrong messages have been given to people. Many of the parents of our children from Boyston came here because it’s not a mobile community, unlike the other side where people move jobs.

However, there were simply the practical lived conditions of their daily lives, which masked their support for school and education. For example, Mrs Chapel a single mother, was typical of some of the single mothers who lived in Boyston and who supported each other in child rearing activities. Mrs Chapel was the mother of three children and had left school with few qualifications; she had little time either to improve upon her own education or support her daughter. Mrs Chapel:

Most (residents of her particular area of Boyston) are single parents at home, looking after children, young ones with children housekeeping, they’ve no time to get involved in school.

In order to earn sufficient income to support their families, some Boyston residents worked unsociable hours and/or worked at more than one job; their non-working hours were constrained. Mrs Thorne:

Many children don’t see their parents ‘cos they work unsociable hours, they’re holding down more than one job to make ends meet.

The real lack of time difficulties that arose as a result of the working practices of some Boyston families had been taken up by some Leespark families and translated into “a not caring and lack of support” discourse (for example, by Mr Packer, see previously in ‘the geography of class’).

### **8.2.2 Staff discourses about schooling and education**

The “official” staff discourse of the Academy and Priorsfields (echoed by the middle class Leespark parents) was that many working class families lacked support for school and by implication, education also; to illustrate this contention they referred to a lack of support for parents’ evenings particularly by parents of “problem” (underachieving, demotivated) children. Mr Groom:

Parents’ evenings fall off from Key Stage 3 to 4. You don’t see the parents who you need to see. The kids are like how they are ‘cos parents aren’t bothered. They weren’t educated and don’t see the point of it.

The official explanation for this “lack” was that working class parents were anxious about coming into school because they associated “school spaces” (the buildings, relationships with staff, other parents) with their own unhappy and unsatisfactory schooldays. Mr Overend:

Parental attitudes to school are not good because many of our parents have bad experiences themselves. They don’t know it’s any different; they assume the school’s the same as it was, the relationships are the same as they were.

These “official” explanations appeared to be supported by some researchers, for example, Walkerdine, Lucy and Melody.

For many parents the anxieties, frustration and sense of powerlessness they expressed about the discursively produced space of the school had deep and profound roots in their own schooldays (2001, page 126).

Whilst that contention may have been an explanation or a partial explanation, I offer an alternative reading of the discursively produced space of school.

My research and that of others, for example, Crozier (2000), suggests that the apparent lack of support for school and education on the part of certain working class parents was multifaceted. I have previously referred to the lived material conditions of many

working class families in Boyston and Burnside, which were different to the lived experiences of middle class families, including staff. I contend that this masked the support for school and education that did exist amongst some working class families; I wish to highlight here that the act of surveillance and the attempted regulation of communal places and spaces such as Boyston and Burnside from a “safe space” resulted in the pathologisation of individual students, their families as well as their associated communal areas. This was a compelling factor in the reluctance of some working class parents to enter the social spaces of school.

Many working class parents perceived school spaces as middle class social areas exemplified by a different way of being, different knowledge, different language (see also Crozier, 2000). Mrs Morrison:

Parents feel intimidated; it’s like a teachers’ club...where they stick together.

Similarly, Mr Longman, ‘I think parents feel unwelcome’. Mrs Lord believed that intimidation and being made to feel unwelcome was preventing some parents becoming involved in school life.

You’re not made welcome, er, at odd times when I’ve come into school, it’s all bad news. It’s definitely them and us.

However, the majority of my research parents had positive memories of their schooldays; a central explanation was because they had shared and enjoyed the social spaces of school with staff. For instance, Mrs Palling, Mrs Chapel, Mrs Lord reminisced enthusiastically about the after school activities, activity weekends, activities in the summer holidays as well as the swimming baths being open in non-school hours. Further, some parents felt that as students they had been able to relate to staff on equal terms. Mr Longman:

I thought we had some decent teachers who I could talk to. People that don’t look down on you. I feel that some teachers look down on pupils and parents, which I don’t like.

However, the staff discourse implied that the intimidation felt by some working class parents was consequent upon their lack of education and therefore they lacked support for education. Mr Groom:

They feel inadequate, they can't cope, they can't speak to people properly, they feel insecure, they haven't had an education themselves.

My contention is that there were signs of increasing support for school and education, but education that was located in social spaces outside school.

### **8.2.3 Signs of support for schooling and education?**

Some men in Burnside and Boyston were considering taking degree courses or training to be nurses. A few women, particularly those divorced or separated from their husbands/partners, were studying on degree courses. Further, certain Boyston and Burnside families had begun to utilise local community spaces that offered adult education classes. A number of the working class parents whom I interviewed reported attending "classes" at the local community centres. These ranged from cake making to computing; it was the perception of these parents that those courses were well supported, particularly computing. Mrs Rawson:

A lot of people gather at the community centre, there's quite a lot of bits and bobs going on there. I really enjoy the computer course. There was a good response 'cos there was a waiting list to get on the computer course; people in their thirties, forties and seventies, a varied age group there. I didn't want to feel ignorant when children and grandchildren can use computers. It could be the same for the others too.

However, attendance at the safe social spaces of community centres, which did not identify or label individuals and groups, was a different experience to coming into school where ownership of space was contested and judgements were made by "outside" authority figures. Mrs Bordby:

The people of Boyston would not want school involved in community projects; they see that as different to going to cake making and computing.

The difference was that within local community spaces they were closer socially and culturally to other learners; they were not discursively produced as "other" by people in positions of power who did not share the same ways of being in the world. The

different values, attitudes and perceptions associated with community and adult education classes had led some parents themselves to seek out education long after they had left school. For instance, Mr Laycock had found as an adult when training to be a nurse he no longer 'struggled' with education because the way in which the learning environment was organised was less restrictive.

A lot of adults don't like this environment. At my old school we had sloping desks in a row, we filled pieces of paper from the inkwells. It was very restrictive, but as a student nurse it was a wonderful system, there were no desks we sat round openly in a circle. We had a table, a chair, we studied, we learned. God, I thought, this is so more relaxed. It helped me through my struggles with education. I wouldn't like the school system as it is now, it's a deterrent to parental involvement.

Mr Laycock then went on to talk about the 'snobbish element' being a deterrent also.

The restrictions to which Mr Laycock referred were the physical and symbolic barriers, which resulted from the way in which schools were organised spatially: the formal arrangement of tables/desks, the power invested in certain groups, and the discursive production of "others" (that is labelling and pathologising families and students because of their social class background and/or ability) that restricted their movements inside and outside school spaces.

There were also the other real physical and psychological barriers which acted as a deterrent to genuine engagement and support for education and schooling: the lack of investment in the local communities of Burnside and Boyston as well as the feelings of negativity, which some parents experienced when they met with staff. These feelings had been rationalised on the basis of the different ways in which they related to school spaces.

'Stuck in a rut' was a phrase used by some staff and parents to describe the inertia on the part of some Boyston and Burnside families to improve the conditions of their existence. They believed that certain working class families were unsupportive of schooling and education because they were unwilling to improve their own lives; it was therefore expected that their children would be unable to improve upon the lived conditions of their parents. Mrs Ashworth:

There is a difference between the two communities; the parents on the Leespark side are more concerned about their children. I think the parents from that side (Boyston), don't imagine how their children could get better; better themselves, they just get stuck in a rut. For someone from Boyston to come to school is an achievement. I've heard children say, "I'll just be working with Dad" or "well, it doesn't matter, I'll go on the dole, my Dad's been on the dole so many years".

Comments from Mrs Lord appeared to support this belief.

Sometimes a lot of parents aren't bothered about education; we got that in the juniors a lot, a lot of parents were just glad to get their kids out of the way. If parents have been on the dole all their life, kids follow suit, they see nowt wrong in it, they've learnt it from their parents. They've got to get people off the dole; there's people round Boyston who know how to milk the system; they know every fiddle to get all the benefits, that's why it's not worth them getting jobs.

Families in Burnside and Boyston were accustomed to supporting each other economically so that for certain students there was no incentive to gain academic qualifications. Mrs Heath:

Some parents were never pushed themselves, money was so easy in this village. Everybody got plenty, from father to son, to the next generation; they knew they'd get a windfall at Christmas, birthdays, to take on holiday. Families helped each other when money was plentiful. Many families are related to each other; wherever they go in Burnside, they'll see somebody they know.

Such shared familial and communal assumptions have resonances with Bourdieu's (1984) notion of the judgements of 'taste communities', which are not really judgements but habits and practices operating according to routine. Education and academic qualifications did not open up possibilities for those who were immersed in such practices; rather they threatened a way of life. Mrs Rose:

People in Graftby\* don't see education as a way out; because of this parochial attitude it's very much "well my uncle's a carpenter, I'm gonna work with him". What they don't seem to realise is that by the time they leave school, their uncle or brother-in-law...there may not be a business there. Um...'cos all sorts of things can happen, so there's this parochial attitude whereby they're gonna work with someone in the family, there is no thought in their head that they're gonna travel to Sheffield or Nottingham to work. So if they know they're gonna be working with Uncle Fred why do they need GCSEs anyway? This is to do with

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\* When Mrs Rose was referring to close family relationships in socio-cultural spaces and geographical places being implicated in future career trajectory, she was referring to those students who lived in Boyston.

their location and personal history. I mean the people in Graftby are so inter-related. That's my cousin. (Laughs.)

Education, in the form of GCSEs and other academic achievements, threatened the routinised and non-reflexive way of life, which was familiar to many Burnside and Boyston families. The comments following from Mrs Golding reflect those experiences.

If children go to university, they don't get the hoped for grandchildren. They see it as ripping apart a culture; they don't know anyone in their social circle who has got a job after studying.

Whilst Mrs Golding was not describing her attitude towards education her comments were based on her experiences, some of which were personal; she was therefore ideally positioned to comment upon the perceptions and values of many Burnside families, including those of her relatives and friends. I believe those same perceptions and values were mirrored in many Boyston families; whilst I am not denigrating the local cultures of Burnside (and Boyston) nor the values enshrined therein, I wish to highlight that opening up a space for education was therefore difficult for some families to negotiate especially when certain families and local communities had been positioned negatively and those cultural values prevailed. It was clear that certain staff and some parents believed that the social mix within school spaces was responsible for low academic achievement because they did hold negative perceptions of the cultural values of some families. For instance, Mrs Grove:

It might be the local community because this school has certain catchment areas and this sounds really bad, the way I'm saying it, where do the pupils come from? It may possibly come from the community where they live. This all boils down to the parents and families.

Mrs Grove may well have been directing her comments at certain students (and their families) here, those Boyston students whom her daughter Anna had befriended. She was questioning Anna's choice of friends; this doubt provided the foundation for her beliefs relating to the 'atmosphere' in school affecting her daughter's attitude towards school and hence her 'future development.'

## **8.3 The masculinisation of space**

### **8.3.1 Experiencing space from different positions**

The social spaces inside the two schools were experienced differently and interpreted differently as a consequence of students occupying different positions in school and that position was dependent upon identity associated with class, gender, “ability,” “attitude”. As a result spaces were multiple and contested; when different spaces interacted conflicts sometimes occurred and differences were pointed up; for example, in gendered spaces, when heterosexual boys interacted with pro-school and therefore “unfeminine” girls, those particular girls felt threatened and marginalized.

In both study schools the spatial boundaries were porous, allowing the flow of socio-cultural ideas, values, ways of being, between the spaces inside and outside school. It was therefore the juxtaposition and co-presence of a particular set of social inter-relationships, between students/students, between students/staff, which created spaces in school. Within those social inter-relationships patriarchal relationships predominated, most notably at the Academy; the resulting spaces were imbued with power and symbolism, which Massey refers to as ‘a complex web of domination, subordination of solidarity and co-operation’ (Massey, 1994, page 265).

I refer to my field notes from the two study schools to draw a social/spatial “map” of the ways in which students consumed space. Although I draw directly on staff observations and comments, I regard these as an indirect “route” into the students’ experiences of school spaces. The observations and comments acknowledge that both working class and middle class cultures are deeply heterosexist and oppressive to females, but the particular way this was experienced in the Academy and Prioryfields highlights the powerful and persuasive influence of local working class socio-cultural relationships. Integral to those relationships was contestation of the “official” curriculum. Also, as I argued previously, Burnside and Boyston were already discursively produced as lacking as well as being perceived as distinctly “other” by staff and parents.

The predominant masculine, working class culture of the local community spaces of the two study schools, which was imported into school by some students, was a central

feature informing the social relationships of student life within the two schools. It was a striking aspect of certain class groups and classrooms (at Prioryfields and the Academy, in lower sets and at Prioryfields in some classrooms, those which faced Boyston). At the Academy particularly, it was the central factor that was implicated in the way in which space was consumed by many male students and some of their female, anti-school contemporaries. In his ethnographic study, Ball (1981) found many more students brought their local socio-cultural experiences into school, than other ethnographic researchers, notably Hargreaves (1967) and Lacey (1970) had noted.

The way that space, particularly physical space, was utilised in school was standardised and normalised by those who were in positions of power (for example, staff) to make judgements about the normal and abnormal consumption of space. Thus the ways in which physical spaces were utilised by certain students as well as the way in which they socialised inside school, especially in Key Stage 4, was a cause of concern to staff since it was rationalised as ‘abnormal’ and ‘bizarre’; students who consumed space in this way were pathologised, as were their families.

However, there were no physical spaces set aside in school where students could meet socially and unsupervised by staff. Further, the fabric of the school buildings at both the Academy and Prioryfields, particularly the ‘Boyston side’, made working conditions unpleasant at times for both staff and students. I conjecture that this may have added to the “lack” discourse, which certain students felt, that was associated with the two communities in that it equated lack of financial investment in the buildings with lack of interest and concern for the students. My field notes for both study schools relate how staff, students and parents commented on the ‘shabby’ state of the buildings, which were often either too cold or too hot, leaking water through roofs, windows and generally in need of some considerable repair and renovation. ‘There are few social areas inside school, which are pleasant’, Mr Bishop, field notes, January, 1999.

The physical fabric of the school buildings was utilised by certain male working class students, as a space on which to vent their frustrations; I suggest that this was consequent upon their negative schooling experiences, which included unsatisfactory working conditions. My field notes, for November, 1999, the Academy, note that at a Key Stage 4 form tutors meeting, staff expressed concern at the aggressive behaviour of

certain Year 10 boys, one of whom was caught on video camera smashing school windows and threatening a Year 7 student to extort money from him. Mr Bishop commented that some Year 10 boys ‘come into school with a different agenda’, since they had no bags, books or writing equipment. I interpret that they were living the identities that were associated with local places and spaces as well as negative labelling consequent upon lack of academic success. A similar scenario was found to operate at Prioryfields, with boys in particular monopolising space inside classrooms and on corridors, throwing paper, pens, running around school and damaging the building. In July 2001, a Year 9 boy “trashed” the gym; he was excluded from school and referred to an educational psychologist.

The headteachers of both the Academy and Prioryfields accounted for this negative and aggressive behaviour as a result of the ‘tough’ behaviour in the communities outside school. At the same time, certain staff at both schools blamed the ‘bad behaviour’ on certain families who did not ‘know how to behave’ and stated that it was ‘to be expected’. Miss Crawford:

The impressions I get from parents and people who have dealings with parents, local people is that boys should misbehave, they shouldn’t be angels, they shouldn’t work too hard at school, they should be well ‘er just kicking a ball about with mates. It is not a problem for parents if boys are disruptive in school.

As Mac An Ghaill’s research (1994) shows, students enter schools already as sexual and gendered subjects; schools do not help boys to understand their sexuality because the dominant ideologies are actually structured through schooling, which transmit heterosexuality, procreation, the traditional role relationships between men and women.

Thus, the way in which some students utilised school spaces in a negative way came to represent the socio-cultural life of the two communities of Burnside and Boyston as well as defining social relationships within school. Some staff made pre-judgements about certain students and their families; they actively reinforced the masculine macho culture, particularly some male teachers at the Academy who shared in certain aspects of the male culture, such as shouting, swearing and being “physical” with certain male students. In both study schools, but particularly the Academy, the stereotyped local masculine culture came to be accepted as the defining “norm” which distinguished

social relationships between certain students as well as between certain students and some staff. As a result female students and female staff found their spaces (physical and symbolic) marginalized in school.

The predominant language of student discourse at the Academy (and in Burnside) centred upon patriarchal relations within the local community and education perceived as being a resource for 'square bears' and not for potential working wives and mothers. The personal narratives of female parents within the local community testified to how the power of language positioned them as subservient to male members of the community. Mrs Golding, Burnside:

Women grow up thinking they're second class 'cos they're known as "spit arses", they have no penises and they are therefore deficient. Boys are favoured; everything is done for them, even their tea is stirred.

Thus, the predominant discourse as well as the experience of space implicit in the experiences of some male students, was one of male domination and power. Mrs Golding again:

This is typical boy talk to girls: "Your tits are little", and "I've fingered her". Even if it's untrue, the act of speaking it quietens girls.

### **8.3.2 The female experience of school spaces**

The student micro-culture within school spaces in which social and discursive practices operated both exemplified and validated local definitions of masculine heterosexual identities. In physical and symbolic terms, school presented a more spacious environment for male students and some male staff. Boys dominated physical space both inside and outside classrooms; they tended to dominate classroom interactions. Other researchers, (Askew and Ross, 1988, Bailey, 1996, Gordon, 1996) report similar findings; Askew and Ross argued that the ability of girls to acquire mechanical, physical and three dimensional skills was compromised as a result of boys monopolising classroom activities. Gordon commented that boys consumed more physical space, including resources such as computers, compared to girls.

My field notes for the academic year, 1997 to 1998 at the Academy, based on informal conversations with my Year 11 tutor group, show that female students felt that certain spaces in school were especially male dominated, such as the Design and Technology areas, because this was a male subject and it was taught by male staff.

Many girls at the Academy and Prioryfields deferred to the boys' behaviour, with the exception of "macho" working class girls and those girls who dared to challenge on an individual basis, such as Alexis. Girls who challenged for physical and symbolic spaces were vulnerable to criticism from their peers as well as from staff since they were exhibiting male type behaviour. However, students such as Alexis were even more vulnerable to censure from peers than her macho girl contemporaries since they also presented themselves as sexually active and available; this fulfilled local class cultural definitions of femininity; whereas, students such as Alexis, who tried to be pro-school and who were willing to challenge for space, were vulnerable because they had separated themselves from the safe spaces of student culture but exposed themselves to censure from staff for behaving boyishly.

Local discursive practices had positioned females as sex objects; to have an identity a woman had to be actively heterosexual rather than be intelligent. Girls who did not position themselves in this way suffered taunts from female peers and some male students. Further, male students made fun of girls who were menstruating as well as making insulting comments about their appearance. As Whitehead's findings (1994) reveal, the most important factor determining the success of schoolgirls at aged sixteen years, and thence their future life trajectory, was their attitude towards sex roles. Thus, the male gaze was ever present in female spaces, including the emotional spaces of their hearts and minds.

Some female students sought the safe spaces of toilets or sent letters to each other (see also Hey, 1997); the macho girls penetrated these spaces also. Further, at Prioryfields, the physical and symbolic spaces of the non-macho working class girls were regulated by: male peers, macho girls (the "ladettes" as a male colleague called them) and middle class girls; they were 'frightened' of being 'put down' by both male and female students (field notes, Prioryfields, 2000 onwards).

Some male teachers also occupied the emotional spaces in girls' heads; the girls always wore trousers because they felt intimidated by some male staff (as well as by male peers) because of the way they were looked at; particularly if they were in a male space, such as a Design and Technology area (field notes, the Academy, April 1996 onwards): wearing a skirt would have made the girls even more vulnerable to male (physical and verbal) attacks.

Masculinity and patriarchal relations formed the central spatial framework in which staff and students experienced school life. Many girls, certain female staff and non-heterosexual boys were marginalized; the predominant masculine discourse was integral to maintaining females on the margins of space. Female students, such as Una, found male staff frightening because they responded angrily and shouted when a question was answered incorrectly or they were ridiculed. Una explained how her Geography teacher, a male, frightened her.

He makes you speak out in class, when I get a question wrong, I feel embarrassed. I don't think he knows I'm embarrassed.

Una also mentioned a male Science teacher who, 'shouts at you for no reason'. Una and certain other female students believed that such male verbal aggression affected their attitude towards certain subjects and certain staff to the point of hatred (field notes, the Academy, April 1996 onwards).

I contend that by reproducing the local male macho culture, certain male staff were actively reinforcing the negative aspects of that culture, which positioned females as subservient to men and as being sexual objects. The consequences for students such as Una (both female and male) who experienced marginalization of school spaces was the possible compromising of learning with subsequent implications for educational success and life career trajectory. Diane:

When he's supposed to be talking to the whole class, he just talks to a few individuals...It could stop me getting a good grade.

Also, Harry:

Mr James makes a fool of you when you answer wrong because he jumps up and down and starts shouting at you. I find the subject (foreign languages) very hard; I don't feel very capable and Mr James doesn't make it any better.

The positioning of females as subservient to men was also reflected in the social relations between female staff and male students as well as with male colleagues. Female staff experienced more difficulty in challenging the aggressive physical and verbal behaviour of certain male students; they could not respond as some male staff did by being "one of the lads".

The lack of physical and symbolic power of some female staff was equated with lack of knowledge and expertise when compared to male colleagues. For instance, certain male staff at both study schools believed that their subject knowledge was superior to that of female colleagues. Mrs Ashworth:

...getting questioned over my knowledge, they don't think I know my knowledge and at the end of the day I've got a good qualification, it doesn't seem to matter compared to particular Science teachers.

Thus, certain classes and classrooms were perceived as male spaces. When female staff such as myself challenged for control of physical and emotional space with male students, particularly older boys, those male staff who unwittingly "came to the rescue", were reinforcing the dominant masculine culture of school spaces.

Further, informal comments of female students (field notes, the Academy, April 1996) revealed that certain female staff "flirted" with some male students in order to establish discipline; another aspect of the way in which local sexual and discursive practices were reproduced and reinforced in the social spaces of school; they served to legitimise the life trajectories of certain students who were inscribed and who inscribed themselves in locally produced definitions of masculinity and femininity.

The male voice came to dominate school spaces because the dominant mode of experience inside (and outside) school was mediated via the predominant masculine discourse. This points up the importance of discourse and language to shape lived experience, which in the former mining communities of Burnside and Boyston centralised males; women were positioned as subservient to men, they were girlfriends,

wives, mothers and grandmothers who were expected to care for the males and the household.

I suggest that many females at my study schools and their associated communities experienced difficulty in attempting to articulate their reading of reality, when the dominant mode of experience was mediated via the predominant masculine discourse, typified by domination and aggression; a discourse which I have argued served to centralise male learning and marginalize female learning in certain school spaces.

Valerie:

Mr Fanshaw, he's always dealing with other people. When we ask him to help us, he'll ignore me and go straight to rest of 'em. I just get fed up on it. I feel like not bothering.

The female staff who established discipline readily were those few women in positions of authority, such as Deputy Headteachers and Senior teachers. These were more mature women in senior positions who tended to exhibit masculine traits, such as aggression and domination, in their relationships with certain staff as well as with students. Yet there is a "double bind" here as those female staff were at the same time reinforcing the "norm" (the aggressive, male macho culture), which I suggest was especially damaging for female working class students since it was their predominant experience of space. Although certain students described them as "good" teachers because of their strong discipline, student perceptions of the "best" and most successful teachers were male and female staff who demonstrated sound subject knowledge and firm discipline *combined* with respect for students; crucial to the effectiveness of such relationships was a willingness by staff to care about and "be in touch" with students' lived experience. I contend that it was in the relatively "safe" spaces of classrooms managed by the "best" and "good" teachers that students were able to maximize their chances of educational success and thence open up possibilities for themselves. Arron described how he perceived a "good" teacher should be

...being alright wi' yer like. Some teachers just stand there and shout and shout and shout or some teachers will just shout at yer, "shut up!" like that and you just say, "no! You shut up!" ...'cos I've wagged it like most people have and that's the main reason why yer wag it, the reason why people don't like their lessons 'cos o' teachers.

### **8.3.3 Social spaces mediated via class/form groupings and peer/friendship groups**

By dividing students into spatial units (form groups, teaching class groups, sets, classrooms), teachers sometimes divided students spatially along class lines. For example, lower sets tended to be predominantly working class or certain types of working class students. (See also, Gillborn and Youdell, 2000, who found a disproportionate number of students from working class and Black backgrounds in 'second-rate teaching and examination groups' page 132). Such acts of spatial control sent messages to students about individual/group identity as well as positioning in the hierarchy of space.

Students who were positioned low in the hierarchy of space because of judgements made by staff and peers, relating to class, gender, "ability," "attitude," tended to identify with the predominant masculine working class culture of the two schools; they actively explored their identity/ies within its manifestations in school spaces. Students who identified themselves with the predominant working class culture, prevalent at both study schools, may have been negotiating a sense of identity and status in the absence of any other: for example, because of possible limited examination success in the future, being faced with limited employment opportunities (see also Cotterrell, 1996). They therefore aligned themselves with the familiarity and legitimacy offered by local spaces.

Previous research by myself (1995) and others (Dowling, 1980, Hargreaves and Jennings, 1981, Walton, 1983, Measor and Woods, 1984, Barber and Graham, 1994, Hofkins, 1994) has shown that some students, notably boys, experienced difficulties in making the transition from primary to secondary school; in some boys the effects lasted all the way through their secondary school years. In the student interviews many students commented upon the impersonal and less intimate spaces of secondary school when compared to primary school; Harry described transfer to secondary school 'like moving to another country'.

I lost touch with a lot of my primary friends when they went to a different secondary school, I found this very upsetting. I had to change everything to make friends with people; I'm still learning about the history of my new friends. I still find it unsettling, even as a Year 10, I find my friends at the Academy much

different to my primary school. At the Academy, it's considered normal to irritate people, call them names; at primary school that wasn't the thing to do. It was like a person going to another country with a lot of different religions; people of other religions find it off putting if you didn't learn their ways. So I did and blended in.

Harry's comments highlight the depth of the distinction between the Academy and certain primary schools such that transferring to secondary school demanded the loosening of a former way of life and gaining aspects of a new way of life, much like moving to another country.

Certain students were never able to adjust to the different spaces of secondary school; the most vulnerable were those such as Harry: pro-school, academically able students whose family culture and primary school culture was different to the predominant culture of secondary school. They had to make some ontological adjustment to "blend in" with the new culture at the same time as they were aspiring to make a career adjustment in future life trajectory. Thus, Harry's choice of friendship group was crucial to enable him to open up his life chances; he chose to socialise with two other boys and one girl who were pro-school and who were also not closely aligned to local socio-cultural spaces.

In contrast, Anna tended to socialise with friends from Boyston, some of who were not particularly pro-school and who were closely aligned to the local socio-cultural spaces of Boyston. Anna lived outside the school's catchment area, her mother noted a more positive "attitude" from Anna when she was away from her school friendship and peer groups. Mrs Grove:

Anna has a better attitude when she is at home, like in the holidays and away from her school friends. I just don't think she's in the right environment and students that she's with 'er bring that out.

Interview data from other students illustrates that although some students enjoyed the wider social "mix" of secondary school, many of them remained within the same socio-cultural groups, some of which were a continuation of primary school groupings; this was most likely to reflect the way of being in the world to which they were accustomed. Middle class students such as Susie and Joan remained secure in the same social spaces throughout their secondary school careers; they had attended a predominantly middle

class, high achieving primary school; they arrived at secondary school “pre-settled” on the basis of the identity gained from attending a “good” primary school. Susie:

I preferred secondary school when we were settled because often I was with people from my old school.

Susie then went on to explain that the friends from her old school lived on the Leespark estate; they were a ‘good influence’ on her because they kept her away from the ‘negative influences lower down school’. In his empirical study, Ball (1981) noted that students tended to choose for friends those people with whom they had had most contact and whom they knew best. The resulting friendship groups were held together by common values; they developed norms, which defined acceptable behaviour of group members.

Whilst most students stated that socialising with friends made school an acceptable experience, those students whose relationship to space was predominantly one of transference chose not to spend lesson time submerging themselves in the culture of local spaces. For instance, compare Alison’s comments with those of Stewart. Alison:

The reason I want to come most times is because my friends are here. Once I’m here I can get on with what I’m supposed to be getting on with.

She was referring to ‘getting on with’ studying.

Stewart:

If I came to school everyday and just sat down I think I’d be bored; I think school is a place where you can come and socialise as well, if you sit with friends you’ve got to expect to be talking, you can’t just sit there and ignore each other.

Stewart compromised studying time by viewing lessons as social spaces. Brian, a middle class student recognised that informal knowledge from friends needed supplementing with formal school knowledge to enable him to transfer himself to other spaces (and places).

I have a wide circle of friends, but I need school to put this knowledge of the outside world into context, outside knowledge can’t give me qualifications.

Having friends (of the right sort, for example, of similar socio-economic and cultural status), passing examinations and being able to transfer those experiences to different spaces were the desired experiences of school for those students who were likely to open up possibilities for themselves. An American study by Caldas and Bankston III (1997) found a relationship between socio-economic status of peers and individual academic achievement. They argued, as I have done, that students created their own socio-cultural spaces, which may be independent of a student's own socio-cultural background; the choice by individual students of which peer group to join is thus a strong influence upon individual academic achievement. They contended that going to school with students from a relatively higher familial social status (which was the experience for some Prioryfields students) made a strong and significant contribution to academic achievement, which was independent of family socio-economic status.

Bourdieu (1977) has documented how the ability to activate certain sorts of capital, such as that of "high culture" is linked to academic achievement. Living in rural areas such as Burnside constrained the chances of acquiring "high" cultural capital because those families simply lacked access to it. In contrast, the students (and parents) of Leespark possessed and were activating their cultural (and social) capital such that those students were experiencing a diversity of socio-cultural spaces from which they could readily transfer themselves into other spaces. Olivia:

I am more up to date with the world, how it's forming, to go out into the world and not be scared of what people are thinking.

The importance of school groupings, friendship groups and the socio-cultural spaces, which they created within and outside school is a crucial space from which students contextualise their way of being in the world, which also allowed them to explore and negotiate the type of identity they wished to maintain or attain. At both study schools, the students' social groupings were quite distinct; they acted as spatial boundaries, which served as "buffer" zones between them and other social groups. Being a member of a particular social group defined the limits of each member's social relationships; social groups were the secure spaces from which exchanges with other students and staff took place; they possessed distinctive identities, which reflected student relationships to space (and time).

At the Academy, the majority of male students were members of macho, heterosexual male groups; there were also about ten girls (in the year group of my study sample) who were members of the macho heterosexual girls set. These students had a territorial relationship to local socio-cultural spaces and place; they consumed large amounts of physical and symbolic space around school and in classrooms. Their relationship to time was predominantly episodic.

There were also small groups of male students who were less aggressively heterosexual, who although attached to local spaces and place, maintained a less territorial relationship to it; some of them also had a non-episodic relationship to time. The majority of girls maintained a close relationship to local spaces (and times), they presented themselves as heterosexual females; however, some of them also attempted to balance this identity with that of the “able,” “clever” and “achieving” student. Male and female students who were not members of any particular social groups, for example, homosexual males who were known as “queers” and girl students who were not outwardly heterosexual, tended to make alliances with small, intimate groups of the opposite sex. At both study schools mixed sex membership of the major social groupings was rare; “breaking out” of these groupings occurred when male and female students formed a couple and started “seeing each other”.

Similar student social groupings operated at Prioryfields but with the addition of two additional groups: small groups of middle class boys and small groups of middle class girls. Non-macho working class males who had a loose attachment to local spaces and place and pro school working class females who were not obviously heterosexual tended to socialise with the middle class girl groupings.

The working class students who were most likely to open up possibilities for themselves were those who were members of small, intimate groups who did not align themselves closely to the local working class culture. In the case of some Prioryfields students, small numbers of working class students joined with small groups of middle class students.

## 8.4 Concluding remarks

The concept of space operated on two levels in the lived experience of the research participants: the physical/social and the symbolic/psychic. The physical places and social spaces were the site of those signifying processes, local socio-cultural, discursive practices, which served to identify and position individual and group bodies and minds with particular communities and schools. Those communities and schools were classed places and spaces in which clear spatial boundaries had been constructed and maintained. In this way classed places and spaces ‘hold people in space so that others can move’ (Skeggs, quoted in Reay and Lucey, 2001, page 8).

The occupation of a particular position in place and space in terms of class, gender, academic ability and the interaction of habitus within a social field served to construct a hierarchy of space, which constrained or opened up choices for the self. When individuals sought to move through the hierarchy of spaces into unfamiliar territory, ownership of capitals - educational, cultural, social, economic - within the local communities and their schools was necessary to facilitate the move. This was the case for those few individual working class students who viewed space non-territorially; they had gained some academic success, their families were positioned highly in local places and spaces as a result of their occupation, social networking and family history.

However, for many working class students contemplating a move into unfamiliar places and spaces resulted in feelings of unease at being away from home and out of “one’s element”:

...often the norm is for such children to remain, geographically and socially close to home (Reay and Lucey, 2001, page 20).

Further, when certain staff and parents conceptualised and positioned local places and spaces negatively they were at the same time positioning individuals and groups negatively. Such practices affected sense of self/identity; these were acts of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1977), which served to “fix” some students in familiar spaces and close down opportunities for the self. Since space acts as a receptacle of temporality, “fixation” was perceived to act upon time also. The notion of fixation in space/time and

the chances of opening up possibilities for the self is examined further in the chapter following which explores the concept of narrativity and personal narratives.

## **Chapter 9: Personal Narratives**

### **9.1 Relationships to time and space: personal narratives as linear or episodic**

#### **9.1.1 Opening remarks**

The purpose of this chapter is to utilise personal narratives as an analytic tool for gaining further insights into the students' relationship towards time and space. Whilst I acknowledge that personal narratives can be factual and fictional, the study of narrativity is grounded in theory (see Ricoeur, 1983, 1985, 1990). The personal narratives drew me immediately, as researcher, into the lived experiences of the research participants. Ricoeur (1990) argues that narrative draws us to the narrator who purposefully organises experience in a particular way. He maintains that the temporal distance separating us from past events is not 'a dead interval but a transmission that is generative of meaning' (ibid, page 221).

On a daily, superficial level, personal narratives operated as a medium of exchange, as a key channel of communication through which conscious and unconscious links with other times and spaces were maintained. They were a space (temporal and social) in which actions, thoughts, values, emotions could be engaged with, reflected upon and understood. They also acknowledge a universal feature of existence: time and its passage. In this way time can be experienced naturally, retrospectively and reflectively.

Integral to the students' narratives were those of significant others: family, friends and teachers. As a result they were an indirect source of present and past local community narratives as well as the narratives of the wider sweep of history. Temporal and socio/spatial experiences engage with pre-existent narrative texts as essential features of being conscious in the world. Events are analysed by making them a narrative; narratives are given meaning in a form of continuity which separates past from future but is experienced as reflection and pre-figuration. Therefore, narratives were a means by which the students were able to locate themselves, temporally and within the social spaces, wherein the narratives were transmitted. It is this deeper level of the characteristics of narratives that I draw on as an analytic tool, since it is at this level that the students' relationships to their own narratives, as episodic or linear, emerges, as well as informing how personal narratives impact upon their perceptions of personal

and corporate identity and thence to the students' sense of self. It is at this level that personal narratives were implied in how the students made sense of their lived experiences and through which they negotiated a sense of self/identity. Ricoeur (1985) states,

...telling a story is the most permanent act of societies...in telling stories cultures create themselves (page 7).

Everyday life is composed of narratives through which time and social context are experienced. Such narratives place coherence on past, present and future being, which constitutes reasons for actions, thoughts, feelings. Ricoeur (1985) suggests that narrativity is a solution to the aporias of time. It is from within narrative structures that life experiences, knowledge, understanding, feelings as well as language are transmitted. Individuals and groups engaged with and reciprocated locally produced discursive meanings and concepts through which they lived. Commentators of Bernstein such as Dickinson and Erben (1995) have drawn attention to his concern with narrativity, the way in which we translate ourselves into our surroundings when we join in the stories of others that comprise our social arena. According to these commentators Bernstein observed that different groups share narratives in which the world 'looks permeable to their influence' (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, page 259). Since language and discourse are central in narrative engagement, insights into the underlying structures of the local communities (and their schools) were revealed, particularly relations of power and domination bound up with notions of class and gender.

## **9.2 Personal narratives and the social context: real presence and presents**

Personal narratives constituted a real presence and present in the students' lives. They were the continual rehearsal of presents, present times now pasts, and presents as possible futures. They were a device for organising actions and events into a meaningful whole. At a deep level they organise human experience of temporality, they are a continuous thread linking past, present and future.

Narrative - public and private, real and fictional - continuously links the past with the present and the future thus rendering the present meaningful in terms of what

went before and what will probably come after (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, page 255).

It is in this sense that one time “owes” another; actions, events, thoughts, feelings from different times penetrate into narratives co-presently, retrospectively and pre-figuratively. For instance, the students’ accounts relating to school and out of school times.

The students’ relationship to schooling time was organised and structured within the narrative form in which they were the narrating selves as well as the subjects of narration. This narrative model of the self/selves connects the individual self with the social context; stories of selves are embedded in narratives that use frameworks and conventions of a particular social (and historical) environment. Thus narrative involves a particular way of thinking about the self expressed in specific, localised, social contexts. The key social contexts in this study are those of class and gender. Relationships within those contexts were communicated via the social arenas of family, friends, school and the local communities.

The telling of personal narrative illustrates how it is within those temporal interstices, provided by individual narratives and those of significant others, that the students’ consciousness of being temporal and social subjects, who were located as subject and object of narrative, were revealed.

Time is inscribed in personality. Personality is constituted by memory and animated by self-consciousness...The personality narrates to itself stories selected from its history and past (Schatz and Walker, 1995, page 61).

Personal narratives serve to inform of students’ sense of self by locating individuals in life sequencing events, which were attached to the immediate temporal context as well as more distant temporal contexts. Thus, here I am stating both a distinction and connection between construction of the self through individual narrative histories and construction of the self through history on a larger scale. Both narrative histories, history as the wider sweep of events and the “own” time of individual and group histories, left their imprint upon the students’ sense of self; but it was within individual and local group histories that time was recorded in terms of locally created meanings

which were formed around present encounters, which in narrative form became a series of ever present encounters.

The local created meanings to which I refer specifically were those which involved direct encounters with the social context, itself a fusion of past and present experiences which resulted in the present lived material conditions of daily experiences, such as unemployment arising from pit closures, as well as local class discourses relating to gender roles and individual/group identities within the local communities of the two schools.

In the sections following I draw on and recount selected student personal narratives to exemplify how a predominantly linear relationship to schooling times revealed in personal narratives was implicated in future life chances. A short case study of Alexis and Harriet, which draws on their relationship to out of school times, exemplifies how contrasting personal narratives (non-linear and linear) served to open up or close down possibilities for the self.

### **9.2.1 A short case study of Alexis and Harriet**

Alexis lived in a council house with her parents and her older brother, aged eighteen years, who was unemployed. Her father, a former coal miner, was also unemployed, and her mother, a housewife, died of cancer during the course of this research. Her parents did not wish to be interviewed either in school or at their home. Her father did write some responses to my interview questions; they showed weak literacy skills. Harriet lived on the small private housing estate near school. Her father was a quantity surveyor and her mother was a school governor. Her younger brother, who also attended Prioryfields, was regarded as academically very able. Both her parents came into school to be interviewed.

I have chosen to compare and contrast these two girls because I came to know them both quite well as a teacher and in the role of interviewer. Although their habituses were completely different, they were both expected to gain higher grade passes at GCSE. They particularly enjoyed and were more successful in subjects like English, Media and Drama. They were selective in the completion of homework tasks. They were both outspoken in their beliefs and did not conform to local definitions of the

“submissive female”; both were capable of challenging and suppressing verbal onslaughts from their male peers.

However, indications of future life trajectory were revealed in their differing GCSE examination results. Alexis gained only 1 C grade, the remainder were level D and one E. Harriet gained 4 A\*s, 1 A, 2 Bs, 2 Cs and 2 Ds. Thus, it was likely that their expected career trajectories would remain aligned to those of their parents. Whilst Harriet’s success could be ascribed to the predispositions inscribed in her habitus as well as the economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital which it conferred, I conjecture that it was the impact of Harriet’s and Alexis’ relationship towards time which was a crucial factor in ensuring that possibilities for the self opened up for Harriet but closed down for Alex.

Harriet had a linear relationship towards schooling time. She aspired to go onto sixth-form college and thence to university, specialising in performing arts. Her out of school hours were organised in accordance with her temporal regime, into which local family temporal rhythms, usually her mother’s, fitted. Harriet:

I don’t class myself as normal, I’m different. There can’t be many fourteen year olds who do as much stuff as me. In my diary this month I’ve got big stars, either I’ve been to see a production or there’s a concert.

Harriet’s diary was full of engagements revolving around her performing with local drama groups, playing in the County Band, attending the theatre and concerts. She commented that she had ‘no time’ for a part-time job or for watching television. She explained that she had to manage her non-school time carefully so that she could maintain a balance between non-school and school activities. Her parents were a necessary support in this since they were willing to adjust their temporal schema; their local temporal rhythms were not unchanging, like those of many working class families, such as Alexis’.

Harriet explained how her family influenced her ‘loads’, particularly her mother whose personal narrative was bound closely with Harriet’s own. Harriet explained that her mother did her art homework for her when she ‘couldn’t be bothered’.

‘Cos I think it was like her being at school, she came here, both my parents came here. My Mum is a brill singer, but she’s at home and that’s what she wants to do, but I think she pushes me rather than she pushes herself. I think she’s trying to live in me what she always wanted. She’s like pushing me to do what I want to do ‘cos she never got what she wanted to do.

Harriet then talked about her father’s family. His mother was a singer who died when Harriet was aged about one year old.

I know it sounds really stupid and spooky but I can hear her singing to me, like I was a child. I wish I’d got to know her, so I try to live up to her standard ‘cos my Mum’s always talking about her with my singing teacher. Also I was named after my aunty Harriet, she was brilliant, not singing or anything but really kind and gentle.

Harriet’s narrative illustrates how certain events from the past acquire a particular subjective significance as well as embedding her as self within a particular social framework. Such rememberings constitute a relevant trace in the construction of the self. Schratz and Walker (1995) have argued that such memories though not direct ‘quotations’ (page 41) of experience are continually reprocessed in identity formation and are therefore of significance. Within identity formation individuals are passively caught up in the socialisation process, via the effects of the habitus interacting within a particular field, but also carry the potential to transform lives, via linear personal narratives.

The personal narratives of Harriet’s parents served as a constant real presence and present in the daily, lived experiences of Harriet. Both her parents had attended Prioryfields when it had been a grammar school and during its transition to a comprehensive school. Neither of her parents had been particularly successful as a result of the schooling they experienced, although two of Harriet’s aunts (who also had attended Prioryfields) had gained university places. However, both parents had become successful in the intervening years, Harriet’s mother as a school governor and indirectly through Harriet. Harriet’s father having ‘messed A levels’ had gone to work for the coal board but had studied part-time for a BSc and then an MSc.

Communication, which takes place in social arenas such as Harriet’s family, has been described as pedagogic by such commentators as Dickinson and Erben (1995) because of its regulatory function. Pedagogic discourses they argue are ‘imagining moments’

(page 260) because what is learned in such discourses is life experiences, through a continuous process of recontextualising the self on an interpersonal level. It is within this recontextualisation that the individual can accept or change the self. It is the state to which Lacan (1970) referred when he described the individual being pulled between anxiety and harmony. Harriet's narrative and the social context in which it was transmitted was pulling her to a state of harmony.

Alexis had a non-linear relationship towards schooling time; she was closely attached to local cultural times and spaces. She talked of watching soaps as 'a way to pass the time'. She found that the storylines in soaps sometimes echoed the episodic nature of her life.

If I go into a pub all I can hear is swearing, but you don't get that in soaps. They make time go faster, then there's no time to do homework. They're not boring.

Alexis was often dissatisfied with her life both inside and outside school. Yet she expressed no plans for the future. She was caught up in a cycle of patterned behaviour in school time and outside school hours, which emerged from her location in the wider sweep of historical time; national events such as the miners' strike of 1984 and its after effects impacting upon the local times in which Alexis lived. The cyclic nature and temporal as well as spatial location of Alexis' experiences had taught her one reality; the watching of soaps revealed the possibility of other realities. They took her "out of" her present temporality and hence time moved quickly. However, when Alexis talked of experiencing a different temporality and spatially from her real time, for example, moving to a different school, opportunities closed down on her because of events in real time. Specifically, key staff leaving school, her Drama teacher particularly, the death of her mother and her family's lack of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital.

As Chisholm (1995) found in her empirical study, if educationally successful working class girls are to capitalise upon their achievements they need to draw upon personal and social resources within their life situation, such as familial traditions, supportive significant others, for example, chosen role models, and a highly individualised orientation to life (Chisholm, 1995, page 45). Whilst Alexis and Harriet both had an individualised orientation to life, Alexis unlike Harriet, could not draw upon the support of family traditions and/or significant others. Further, many working class girls are

often sensitive to negative schooling experiences (Chisholm, 1995, page 45, talked of the ‘hypersensitivity’ of the working class girls in her study); Alexis was particularly sensitive to what she perceived were negative schooling experiences. She had developed a discourse of her misfortunes, which she blamed on ‘poor teachers’, key teachers leaving, her peers, home life, especially the death of her mother, such that ‘...it feels like I’m moaning all the time’. It was unlikely that many of those working class girls at my two case study schools would be able to draw on the support of familial resources, especially in terms of educational capital.

The case studies of Alexis and Harriet, demonstrate how the self’s awareness of present being is grounded in the past as well as casting a shadow upon becoming in the future. I suggest that their personal narratives and the history of the local communities were serving as either an oppressive or emancipatory resource in the lives of these two girls and their contemporaries; a linear personal narrative perceived as “going somewhere” acted as an incentive to achieve life aspirations whereas a personal narrative perceived as episodic, “going nowhere” acted as a disincentive to achieve life aspirations. It was unlikely that Alexis, despite her ability and talent, would open up possibilities for herself because the self that she wished to become, an “able” student, attending a “good school” out of Burnside, moving on to sixth form and university, perceived events through the lens of her own personal narrativity and those of significant others within the local community. Within those narratives there were no successful role models from the past or present on whom she could base her future self. Further, Alexis’ close attachment to local times and her lack of access to any form of capital served to limit the possibilities of Alexis experiencing the different reality for which she hoped.

In contrast the students such as Harriet whose personal narratives revealed a linear relationship to schooling times were demonstrating an awareness of the sequencing of certain significant life events through time in a deliberate way. Such narratives were utilised as a device, which served to contextualise and recontextualise the self within the social arena. As a result, when combined with the effects of the habitus, they offered insights into the life trajectories of those students.

## **9.2.2 Narratives of some middle class students**

Middle class students such as Harriet as well as Olivia, Susie, Brian and Carl constituted themselves and were constituted within narratives in which life trajectory was grounded in discourses relating to present and former achievements gained through the possession of academic credentials and continued investment in expansion of knowledge and experience. These middle class students recounted narratives in which significant others within their family group occupied their present social position as a result of their investment of time in education and training, if not during compulsory schooling, then in the intervening period. It was a discourse which emphasised the opening up of possibilities for the self through time dedicated to academic achievement.

### 9.2.2.1 The narratives of Olivia and Susie

Olivia recounted how she talked to her grandmother ‘a lot’ and how she had ‘not got much out of education.’

She left school at fourteen, and she says, “grasp it with both hands, you’re lucky to have it now. If you were around at my time you’d be cleaning the toilets now”.

Olivia realised that although her grandmother had been unable to take advantage of what education could offer in her day, Olivia’s parents had shown since how acquisition of academic skills and continued investment in knowledge had penetrated the lives of Olivia and her older sister, who was studying at university. Olivia’s father was a ‘big influence’ upon her; after working for the coal board he had retrained as a mathematics teacher. Olivia’s mother commented, ‘Olivia spends all her time trying to keep up with Sophie’.

Susie’s narrative told a similar story to that of Olivia, in that her family’s social position was grounded in her parents’ investment of time at grammar school and then college, in the case of her mother, and further training later in life in the case of her father.

### 9.2.2.2 The narratives of Brian and Carl

Brian had been accustomed to hearing of the importance of “doing well” from an early age from his parents. His father was a sales representative and his mother a primary

school teacher. He equated “doing well” with academic success and he aspired to the material rewards it brought as well as social position.

I’ve seen the way we live, in a nice house, we’ve gone on good holidays and I want to be like that, I don’t want to be struggling for money. They’ve sort of put it into me from a young age that you should do well.

Brian was able to see a possible future for himself because of the success which was inscribed in his narrative, that of his parents and his older brother, who was about to begin a university course.

The importance of education discourse was centrally implicated in Carl’s narrative because of his parents’ relatively limited education. His parents had ‘always’ spoken to him about ‘education being very important’.

They always make me do all my homework as much as possible. If I do something wrong they’ll always discipline me, so that I know for next time. They want me to do better than them ‘cos my Dad joined the army when he was fifteen, he didn’t have an education so he wants me to learn and be the best that I can.

Carl’s parents lived on the small private housing estate in Graftby. They had married at eighteen after Carl’s mother had passed her A level examinations. Their personal narratives were a significant presence/present in the lives of Carl and his older brother since they had achieved success socially without investing time in further education, but for their sons to be assured of future success, they had utilised their personal narratives and established a discourse relating to the importance of education. Carl’s older brother was studying A levels in the lower sixth and he aimed to go on to university. Carl’s aspirations were the same.

I try to aspire to his grades because I want to try and beat him at everything.

### **9.2.3 Narratives of some working class students**

Establishing a positive discourse relating to personal successes within narratives allowed a temporal space for reflection upon the past and present as well as contemplation of possible futures. This was evident in the narratives of the middle class students I have discussed and those of working class students whose relationship towards schooling time was linear.

### 9.2.3.1 The narratives of Mark and Paul

Mark lived on the Boyston council estate with his mother and younger brother. His parents were divorced and neither of them

did well at school, they didn't get very good marks. Mum had no faith in herself.

However, Mark's narrative was linear and it had both positive and innovatory aspects. Although his parents had not achieved academic success, Mark accounted for this in his mother's case, not because of her lack of ability but because of her lack of faith in her ability. He regarded his father as successful because he had moved away from Boyston and was buying a house in Graftby. Both Mark and his younger brother were regarded as being academically successful students, and a cousin of Mark's had recently gained a university place.

Nobody's been to university in the family except a cousin who's just gone. In a sense I was a bit disappointed 'cos I wanted to be the first to go.

Heidegger (1927/1980) has argued we do not simply exist in time, we are time and temporality is the "ground of our being" in the world. For Paul the ground of his being in the world was his sense of self mediated through academic success, and his personal narrative grounded in a community suffering the after effects of pit closures, which had resonated in his family when his step-father became redundant. Since then, he and Paul's mother had bought and were managing a local shop. I have previously mentioned Paul's awareness of the fluctuations of the local economy in relation to his parents' business and how Paul sought to distance himself from the local area. He also related the story of his uncle, a successful manager with BP, who lived in Wales but travelled a lot. Paul commented that his uncle had 'the best idea', living in Wales by the coast and travelling too. Paul expressed a desire to move away from Burnside but not to Wales. Otherwise he would need to 'learn Wales' and 'it was bad enough with French'. Drawing on the personal narratives of significant others, Paul aimed for GCSE success so that he could adjust his future trajectory.

### 9.2.3.2 The narratives of Tina and her father

Tina was accustomed to being told ‘stories’ from an early age; these were not simply the story books from which her parents read to her, they were the stories about her parent’s school lives, especially that of her father. Tina’s father also talked at length about his school days and the social arena in which they took place. By translating social events into narrative form, Tina’s father was trying to make sense of temporality and causality. He was explaining how he and his wife owed a time debt to Tina and her older sister, Judy.

Mr Laycock, Tina’s father, had not enjoyed school ‘at all’. Although he was a high achiever at primary school on transfer to secondary school he soon became disruptive. He blamed school for ‘the way I went’. However, he managed to settle down to work in his third year such that at the annual speech day held in the City Hall, Sheffield, he won the prize for the most improved student. The problems began again when he had to choose options and the school ‘made me take French’.

That was the beginning of the end. I said, “Hold it mate, I don’t want to do this”. So I started rebelling. I stopped going to school, I played truant. (This was at the start of what is now Year 10.) It was sort of thumbs up to the system. It was something I didn’t want to do. I used to go to the woods near school, after going in to get my mark or I’d go in late.

He used his timetable to decide which lessons to attend. He began to attend school on a regular basis for the last three months of school when a new Deputy Head arrived and discovered his absences. He left school with CSE grade ones.

Mr Laycock described himself as working class; he was one of four children, one of whom was a severely handicapped sister. His mother was a housewife and his father an accountant. Mr Laycock had been a mechanic and milkman, in recent years he had trained to become a nurse. He explained how his parents had always had aspirations for him; in contrast Mrs Laycock’s parents had been protective of her and did not encourage her to achieve. Now Mr and Mrs Laycock were determined that Tina and her older sister, Judy, would not repeat their mistakes. Mr Laycock:

We were always keen on a good education for her, because we didn’t do well at school, we’re keen for them both to do well.

Mr Laycock described how he regarded school as a 'tool' to be used. He commented,

Tina knows just what she wants and where she's going. Her motivation is just like mine was, except mine was negative.

This was the narrative, which Tina related to me; she emphasised what a strong influence her family were upon her, especially her father. Tina:

My Dad never went to school, his Mum went to parents' evening and the teachers thought that he'd left! He's been telling stories to me since I was young. "Look where it got me, I've had to work really hard for the past ten years to get where I am." Dad had to do courses and stuff to catch up on lost time at school. I don't want to do that.

Tina aimed to go on to university after A levels. She added that she had been inspired to do well by her parents from an early age. Tina described her older sister as 'really clever' and Tina 'was expected to follow her'. However, Judy had not achieved the expected high grades at GCSE because

...she slacked off in Year 11. That taught me quite a good lesson as well.

As narrators of their narratives as well as those being narrated about, Tina's and her father's stories have to be understood in relationship to other individuals and groups as well as the social milieu in which the wider sweep of history had left traces.

### **9.3 Summary**

The times in which the research participants, as well as the schools and their local communities, lived were uncertain, fragmented and unstable. At both schools there was a high degree of staff absenteeism and turnover. The experiences of many working class students were interwoven with high levels of unemployment, social and economic deprivation and lack of financial investment in youth training and work opportunities.

Telling narratives, stories and histories offered a response to the uncertainties of this time. The narratives gave a meaning to the lives of the research participants because they formed a continuity, which separated the past and present but which were continually experienced as ever present encounters through reflection and prefiguration.

As temporal subjects we are all situated selves in which subjective reality cannot be disassociated from its social milieu. The narratives were the temporal thread, which organised uncertain times and a fragmented social reality into a meaningful whole. Narrativity was a means through which the narrators composed and were composed within the social spaces, which they inhabited. They were a real presence and present in the lives of the students; they were an enabling device by which they and their parents were able to make sense of time's passage. They gave them a purchase on existence.

## Chapter 10: Conclusion

### 10.1 Introduction

In daily life, we assume as certain many things which, on a closer scrutiny, are found to be so full of apparent contradictions that only a great amount of thought enables us to know what it is that we really may believe (Russell, 1912, page 1).

This conclusion articulates the difficulties which I encountered in trying to describe and think about my two study schools and their associated communities. It is a commentary on the production of this thesis: my personal experiences (as a student, parent and teacher), my reasons for undertaking it, my encounters with significant others (key thinkers such as Foucault and Bourdieu, analysts, researchers and commentators) the research participants and how to write it up/down (see Schratz and Walker, 1995, page 74). It highlights the problems I experienced in giving a ‘great amount of thought’ (see quote above) to the “realities” of particular social “worlds” (the researched, mine) in which there were/are inconsistencies, contradictions and tensions infusing the relationship between issues of class and class identity, and educational engagement and academic achievement. Those tensions emerged in myself as a student; they pre-figured the experiences of certain other students I have met since then. The same issues, which I faced as a student, have been re-figured in my teaching career in different times and spaces.

I have refused and refuse to subscribe to that custom which permeated staff discourse at my two study schools equating low academic achievement with certain sorts of classed communities as the ‘norm’ and ‘to be expected’. The issues discussed in this thesis therefore challenge the ‘tyranny of custom’ (see quote following) and those discourses that necessarily equate low academic achievement with being a certain sort of class.

Philosophy, though unable to tell us with certainty what is the true answer to the doubts which it raises, is able to suggest many possibilities which enlarge our thoughts and free them from the tyranny of custom (Russell, 1912, page 91).

I acknowledge that the conceptualisations of class and classed identities proposed in this thesis contain a degree of theoretical tension; I suggest that such tension is not resolvable because it mirrors the “real” tensions and contradictions that permeated the

social “worlds” of the researched. I am also aware of the tensions revolving around my emotional closeness to this study; I have aimed throughout the entire research process to continuously confront the representations of the experiences and reflections of the researched and through what Bourdieu terms ‘a reflex reflexivity’ (1999, page 608), challenge accusations of bias as well as the power imbalance evident between my self and the students, some of whom were in “my” form and/or were my students.

I argued in Chapters three and four that all types of research are based on interactions because all research is dependent upon a social relationship. I accept therefore that what I have written in this thesis is, as it were, a point of view on a point of view which was only possible by my taking up a privileged viewpoint in particular social spaces at particular temporal points. I have aimed to situate the reader at those points from which the research participants’ views emanated and became a *necessary articulation*. Equally I have endeavoured to keep a safe distance from the researched by exerting control over my views, my self-imposed censorship.

## **10.2 On being classed**

### **10.2.1 Significant distinctions**

A class is defined as much as by its being perceived as by its being...(Bourdieu, 1984, page 483).

I have made class and the effects of class upon educational achievement the focus of this study since over the previous years concerns with the effects of gender and race upon academic achievement have drawn attention away from the fundamental inequalities associated with class. At the same time I also claim an interest with the effects of inequalities upon working class girls. Researchers and commentators such as Plummer (2000) and Walkerdine, Lucy and Melody (2001) remind us how educational success at GCSE as well as AS/A level tends to be confined to middle class girls. The emotions and traumas attached to being a heterosexual female of whatever class are experienced and rationalised differently along a class axis. For working class girls there are the expectations and indeed responsibilities associated with local femininities, perhaps the most passionate of emotions being felt by those hybrid females who are both “able” and working class. Walkerdine, Lucy and Melody (2001) have contrasted

the mothering practices in working and middle class households to point up how working class mothers allow space for emotions to be expressed whilst middle class mothers close down those spaces by rationalising their daughters' emotional responses. Further, as I have indicated (for example, in the case of Harriet), middle class mothers often put in a lot of 'invisible work' (page 174) on behalf of their daughters, which I suggest serves to soften the effects of this often anxious period in the lives of schoolgirls when there are 'great emotional costs of success' (ibid, page 163) particularly if you are female and working class.

My analysis of class therefore argued that class is a real phenomenon (see also Reid, 1998, Savage, 2000). As Reid (1997) argued, it is a basic form of social stratification providing a context for inequality when combined with other forms of social stratification, for example, being female. However, whilst Savage (2000) argued for a new approach in class analysis away from its roots in 'a collectivity' (page 101) and also maintaining the lack of class consciousness in British society (page 40), I have argued strongly for consciousness of classed cultural identity/ies grounded in local contexts, from which awareness of different and distinct modes of being are mediated via local discourses that are firmly grounded in the local and lived experiences. For instance both Mr Lomax and Mrs Ashworth *classed themselves* without any prompting from me. Mr Lomax stated 'I am an artisan' and Mrs Ashworth:

I come from a middle class family but I've always had working class values. I've always been down to earth. I never look down on anybody.

Interestingly, Savage (2000) did concede that individuals are not completely free of class identities because of a process of 'complex interweaving and identity' (page 101). He also acknowledged that when he interviewed people in the Manchester area, though they emphasised their 'ordinariness' they still registered their awareness of class (page 113). Similarly, in a Personal, Health and Social Education (PSHE) lesson some Year 10 Boyston students identified themselves as 'normal people', meaning working class.

A recent re-thinking of class by Devine et al (2004) suggests that debates concerning class have been crucially affected by wider intellectual developments, particularly the 'cultural turn' (page 186), with an increasing emphasis on the significance of cultural factors superseding the economic or material, in sociological explanations of class

formations. These analysts welcome the strengthening theoretical tendency to take culture and consciousness more seriously, since it reorients class analysis and moves it on in new directions. A significant reorientation is research into studies of identity, which become viewed as 'claims for recognition' (page 191) rather than 'reflections of position' (page 191). Despite some reservations (regarding the study of structured social inequality), Devine et al view these recent theoretical forays positively in so far as they open up new and neglected issues. In particular, Savage and Devine argue that Bourdieu's theoretical work offers

...a distinctive new approach to issues of class, culture and identity which focuses on the complex interplay between habitus, reflexivity and identity (page 15).

My use of postmodern analyses and insights gained from cultural studies revealed how class/culture and sense of self/identity is a dynamic social phenomenon formed in specific temporal and spatial circumstances. The inclusion of culture in this analysis highlights collective action and meaning in everyday lived experience. Members of "collectivities" I suggest make sense of their "world" via difference and distinction, for example in relationship to particular times and spaces. Bourdieu denies the actual existence of social classes through his preference of describing class as social space.

Social classes do not exist (even if political work, armed with Marx's theory, had in some cases contributed to making them at least exist through instances of mobilization and proxies). What exists is a social space, a space of differences, in which classes exist in some sense in a state of virtuality, not as something given but as *something to be done* (2001, page 12).

By highlighting a social world with divisions in which social agents have 'to do, to construct, individually and especially *collectively*' (ibid), Bourdieu is drawing attention to "collectivities" in co-operation and conflict, in discrete social spaces. For Bourdieu then 'the first and last reality' is social space because 'it commands the representations that social agents can have of it' (ibid, page 13).

I have therefore argued that sense of self/identity is constructed out of inherited material resources as well as specific historical, socio-cultural practices underpinned by available language and discourses. Kant (1781) as well as more recent analysts such as Hall (1990), Rutherford (1990), Widdicombe and Wooffit (1995), Hey (1997) and Morley (1997) all point to the centrality of language in organising our subjectivity. Our

experience of the world is through subjectivity; how subjectivity is organised (for instance, through class and gender) is crucial to our understanding of how “subjects” construct the “reality” of their world.

Foucault’s concept of discourses (1977) rationalises them as socio-cultural products, systems of meanings which reflect the power relations grounded in the material and economic conditions of society. Hey (1997) picked up on this point when she stated that selves

...constructed out of history and culture are made from conditions of material and social inequity (page 143).

However, as Foucault (1981) observed, individual and collective histories, personal experiences, socio-cultural and linguistic determinants result in a paradox of identity in that it is a possession, which also possesses individuals. Whilst identity is inscribed in discourse it also ascribes identity; because of the effects of capillary power associating with modes of surveillance the operation of discursive practices can result in agents having power as well as power working through them.

It is at this point in the discussion that Lacan’s (1970) idea of the self as both subject and object of language, also mirrored more recently in Schostak’s (2000) thinking, draws attention to how language/discourse acts to impose identity upon individual/s to exclude aspects of individual/s experience as “wrong”. This feeling of “wrongness” highlights the impact of the power and resilience of local (and national) discourses, such as those relating to class, gender and “ability” to directly impact upon the very heart of being and becoming.

Whilst class identity is marked on the body in discourse, vernacular, accent, it is experienced under the skin (Hey, 1997, page 143).

Sense of self/identity associated with individual/s, groups and local spaces was therefore the result of the *negotiated products of ongoing interactions and the ‘mundane’ everyday practices* which infused the students’ (and their families’) world with meaning, as they perceived and related to it. These are the lives that Willis (1990) describes as

...full of expressions, signs and symbols through which individuals and groups seek creatively to establish their presence, identity and meaning (page 1).

### **10.2.2 The field of ongoing interactions**

The incorporation of Bourdieu's thinking into my analysis of class/culture and identity adds weight to my contention by emphasising attention to the field of interaction, and its nature. Whilst Bourdieu's analysis has been criticised for offering an overly deterministic model of social reproduction (for example, by Savage, 2000), I have emphasised the fluid interplay between structure and agency, which, I argue, Bourdieu's analysis articulates. In particular, I have followed Bourdieu in paying attention to how individuals and groups have activated their capital in a 'field'; I have specifically focused on the socio-cultural capital of the research students and their families and its activation in specific 'fields' such as student/teacher interactions, amongst peer/friendship groups, within classrooms and the schools.

Bourdieu (1984) argues that not all cultural displays are equally valued and therefore fail to become 'legitimated' in specific 'fields' such as classrooms and schools. Thus whilst class/cultural position may affect social reproduction, it does not determine it when the *actual processes and individual strategies interacting within a particular 'field'* are analysed. My incorporation of ethnographic material which stresses the meanings of daily life facilitates a better understanding of Bourdieu's model and the analysis I have offered of class, sense of self/identity interacting with relationships to time and space as well as within personal narratives. Before commenting upon re-theorising class via ethnography I discuss my analyses of time and space, and time/space mediated via personal narrativity.

### **10.2.3 Instances of time and space**

My analysis of time and space drew on Foucault's theory of cultural systems (1974), itself modelled on field theory in modern physics, to highlight how local socio-cultural knowledge pertaining to time/space though non formal was systematic. Whilst Foucault believed that the epistemological significance of modern physics meant a re-interpretation of the concept of time following the rejection of the notion of linear time, I have emphasised the relative nature of time and space, dependent upon the position and lived experiences of the observer, such as being classed and gendered; my analysis

was therefore heavily dependent upon phenomenological interpretations of time/space. Adams (1995) argues that we should focus on the complexity of time (and space); this entails 'a fundamental recognition of embedded, interactive knowledge which is principally relative' (ibid, page 162). Relationships to time she suggests are therefore 'culturally transmitted' (ibid, page 59).

The field of empirical knowledge relating to schooling/education and time/space was characterised by a dense and tightly knit network of relations integrally bound together, seamlessly integrated into lived daily experiences and maintained through powerful discourses; it functioned as an objective law and proved difficult for some students (and their families) to resist. The notion of resistance draws attention to the virility of local empirical knowledges and the dissonances arising when one set of objective "laws" (such as those regarding schooling/education and time/space) engaged with official "laws" relating to schooling times (and spaces). It is at such instances of dissonance that the effects of systematic knowledges laid down across generations over time and across cohesive communities, highlights classed relationships to temporality and spatiality as well as informing of sense of self/identity.

At this stage in my analyses it became clear that there was a forceful connection between relationships to schooling times as well as place/space and sense of self/identity mediated via local definitions of masculinity and femininity. I am not claiming that sense of self/identity immersed in local masculinities and femininities resulted in a non-linear relationship to schooling times and a territorial relationship to place/space. However, I do contend that locally produced and producing knowledges associated with temporality and spatiality, transmitted via powerful language and discourse, were ordered, regulated and articulated along classed (and gendered) axes; they were therefore strongly connected with sense of self/identity and its degree of immersion in local masculinities and femininities.

The effects of the majority working class perspective of close alignment to local temporal rhythms was demonstrated in their non-linear relationship to schooling times and dissonances with teacher time embedded in calendar time, schooling time as it appeared almost in perpetuity, as well as the clear divisions between school/work time and home(own)/non-work time.

I have argued that space must be conceptualised integrally with time; both time and space are relational. Conceptualising space as a physical and mental aspect of being co-existing at the same time pointed up the real material conditions of living in classed places/spaces as well as at the deeper level of feelings and thoughts, which rationalised in discourse affirm in a most profound way who we are because of where we are. Massey (1994) contends that class is likely to be important in relationships to space and place. Also, she maintains that space and place are both connected with the construction of gender relations; this emerged from work on real world geographies and culturally specific definitions of gender.

In the pair space/place it is place which represents Being, and to it are attached a range of epithets and connotations: local, specific, concrete, descriptive (Massey, 1994, page 9).

In cohesive places/spaces such as Burnside and Boyston, people occupied different positions and moved in different spaces, such as women compared to men. Women's life spaces were defined by husband and family; Massey refers to this as the 'geography of gender relations' (ibid, page 181). Gender relations took on a particular powerful form in pit villages; males were supreme, their predominance was firmly established and virtually unassailable. This was the 'ideology of virility' (ibid, page 198) that was attached to mining. Massey argues strongly as I do for identity associated with place in which 'identities are always constructed by reference to the past' (ibid, page 8). Similarly, 'space provides a self grounding reality for identity' (Pile and Thrift, 1995, page 48).

The devastating consequences of socio-economic hardship, the lack of real and substantial investment in Burnside and Boyston particularly, as well as acts of surveillance and discourses positioning as well as identifying those communities, certain families and individuals negatively, served to perpetuate the prevailing territorial perspective of those places/spaces. As Pile and Thrift (1995) contend, sense of self/identity occurs in encounters with others within 'a field of encounters striated with simultaneous different power relations' (page 39). Yet within those territorial boundaries were embodied and embedded the vital life support systems for those people, especially youngsters, labelled as "thick" and "failures" who despite diminished

prospects of gainful local employment would not feel out of place or space. A sense of place and space provides what Massey terms 'the comfort of Being' (ibid, page 119) since it provides both a locus of stability and 'unproblematic identity' (ibid, page 151).

Time and space then are a condition for feelings and thoughts but for the majority working class students at my two study schools the gap between thoughts about the future and feelings about space/place, the gap between what Ricoeur terms the 'horizon of expectation' (1990, page 208) and the 'space of experience' (ibid), during Year 10 and especially by Year 11, had become too wide for many students to close. I am referring to the gap between the students' present/past experiences of schooling and what they aspired for themselves in the future; this proved to be an unbridgeable space for the students whose schooling and life experiences had identified them as "less than".

These claims have resonances with Bourdieu's (1984) arguments relating to distinction/difference between 'objective chances and subjective aspirations' which are 'risky and unstable' (ibid, page 156). Disparity between the aspirations the education system attempts to provide and the opportunities it really offers is, according to Bourdieu, a structural reality. He contends that sometimes a mismatch occurs, between the identity the school system offers and locally produced class/cultural identities. Often for the majority Burnside and Boyston students there was no mismatch between school identity and externally constructed local class/cultural identities because both were negative productions. Both mis/identifications cause dissonances and disaffection.

...for working class youngsters the transit through secondary schooling and through the ambiguous status of "student," temporarily freed from the demands of the world of work, produces misfirings of the dialectic of aspirations and probabilities which led their predecessors to accept their social destiny, almost always unquestioningly and sometimes with positive eagerness, like the miners' sons who used to identify their entry into manhood with their first descent into the mine (Bourdieu, 1984, page 144).

Reflections and reflexions upon how time and space/place were able to coalesce to open up life chances led to my exploration of personal narratives.

#### 10.2.4 Meetings with personal narratives

Utilising narratives as an analytic tool drew my attention to the nature of self/identity in social context as well as the self in relationship to present/past and present/future. Narratives are an acquisition of the interlacing of the stories of the many “Is” through successive generations, pointing to the opening up of new possibilities which, though *inherited, are still chosen*. The chosen pasts are selected rememberings, sequenced according to a hierarchy of values and meanings; they are bound by socially constituted shared knowledge and the language/discourse which imposes meanings. Transmission through time and across space is then as Ricoeur reminds us ‘generative of meaning’ (1990, page 221). Adams has described personal narratives as the ‘invisible aspects of time in education’ (1995, page 78).

Narrativity’s pre-occupation with time and how we employ it, for example, ‘waste’ it, a shared concern of the research participants, is I suggest a pre-occupation with the self in time and space. The narrative self confirms itself as the self of self-knowledge; it is through narrativity that the self is able to explain who it was, who it is and who it wishes to become. It is at this level that the cathartic effects of personal narratives are revealed. Meetings with personal narratives are therefore meetings with self/identity drawn from texts which encapsulate the intricacies and complexities relating to time/space conveyed by class/culture, telling the stories of the self/ves in being that is indicative of becoming.

The subject then appears both as a reader and the writer of its own life...the fruit of an examined life...one purged, one clarified by the cathartic effects of the narratives (Ricoeur, 1990, page 247).

Ricoeur (1990) contends that narrative identity can be applied to the individual as well as the community. The narratives of the two former mining communities were the context for this study; it was from the wealth of ethnographic material gathered from those communities and individuals that I gained an enrichment of the understanding of class. The time is now ripe to renew the debates relating to the nature of class; the preceding decades have borne witness to a somewhat fallow period in attempts to rationalise and articulate our understanding of the notion of class. This thesis may have laid some ground workings for a re-theorising of class.

### 10.2.5 Enriching our understanding class via ethnography

...the problems inherent in the resistance debate can be seen as more methodological in nature and the result of a priori theorising rather than the a posteriori theorising associated with ethnography (McFadden, 1995, page 296).

At the outset of this study during the process of data gathering and background reading I was guilty of some a priori theorising, especially after reading those texts which accounted for resistance to schooling via postmodern deconstructions of the National Curriculum (for example, Ball, 1994, Gipps and Murphy, 1994 and 1996) and feminist analyses of sexism in education (for example, Spender, 1980 and 1982, Mahony, 1992). Whilst not discounting those analyses I found that richer themes emerged during and after the process of data collection. My findings shared common ground with the a posteriori theorising integral to ethnographic texts (such as Willis, 1977, Mac An Ghail, 1994, Hey, 1997); they drew me into the immediacy of the world of the researched and the researcher. Such texts exemplify the utility of a posteriori theorising as well as instigating the need for conscious reflexivity. My final analyses contained in this thesis therefore came *after* the gathering of much ethnographic material.

The ethnographic evidence gathered offered me flexibility in my analysis. It is the study of given presents, with penetrations from the past combined with prefigurations of the future, recording the simultaneity of impressions, thoughts, feelings and memories. This is a research process which allows concentration on one aspect or theme without excluding but implicating other aspects and themes. It moves theorising away from singular explanations and master narratives.

In order to create the ethnography I had to be involved in the personal, intimate, complexities of the social lives, cultural environment and individual biographies of the research participants. Being so closely involved and making ethical claims required the compliance of the researched and a posture of *personalised professionalism* from myself. At the point when personal and ethical issues were raised, for instance, when a male student wished to discuss his sexuality or a colleague adopted confessional mode, recording ceased. In the writing up of that which I had written down I have tried to write a reflexive account that retains the past in ever presentness, moving the discussion along in such a way that the issues relating to class/culture and sense of self/identity

remain vigilant of and bring together individual and social structures that were maintained by powerful local symbolic practices such as discourse and language across time/space and through meetings with narratives.

### **10.3 Re-focusing on the context of this thesis**

#### **10.3.1 Reading class from the research schools**

##### 10.3.1.1 A change for the better?

In the final term of my working at the Academy the management structure was undergoing a change: Mr Oldman had left and had been replaced by Mrs Anderson, one of the Deputy Headteachers. Mrs Anderson's style of management exacerbated staff turnover and staff absenteeism, as well as failing to open up spaces for education (I explore the effects of this in a separate unpublished paper, "Power and People", Kidd, 2003) serving to reinforce negative feelings about the school, and by implication the local community, which I suggest acted upon the sense of self/identity of certain students and staff. The GCSE results showed no significant improvements; the results for 2003 were 19% five A\*-C grades. The recent building of some new and relatively inexpensive private housing in Burnside was unlikely to change the local geography of class; as Mrs Heath explained, people like local doctors chose not to live locally as well as choosing to send their children to non-local schools.

Many students and their families at both my study schools had to contend with the real effects of social deprivation. Analysts (for example, Beynon, Hudson, Sadler, 1991) have examined the effects of the decline of the coal and steel industries in Northern England; they have shown that when a mine closed it resulted in the 'death of a district rather than just a village' (page 106). They also draw attention to the fact that the coal industry, despite the underground conditions, had a high proportion of 'good' jobs, reasonably well paid with high skills content; this had a high "knock on" effect within the economies of the coal districts. Further, when a mine closed two jobs were needed to recreate/replace the lost mining job. Such analysts argue that the consequences of high unemployment in former mining districts is most keenly felt by the young, affecting their morale and motivation. New employment prospects are in low waged, service and leisure industries which are also quite vulnerable to changes in the international economy.

Plummer (2000) utilised data from the Joseph Rowntree foundation to highlight the significant numbers of children growing up in 'work-less households' (page 44); more than two and a half million in 1997. As well as high levels of poverty persisting in working class families, illness does also (ibid, page 197). Plummer's findings reflect those of Mr Oldman who produced a paper in April 1995, for the Burnside and District Trust entitled, 'Unemployment, Ill Health and Incomes in Burnside and District'. Unemployment was amongst the highest in Derbyshire and rising, unemployment rates of males were a conspicuous feature of the area. The area had by far the highest proportion of population affected by limiting and debilitating long-term illness, a direct consequence of the effects of the coal industry. The Index of Deprivation figures for the year 2000 (Index of Deprivation 2000 – Derbyshire Learning and Skills Council position statement, January 2004), show that of the 14 most deprived wards in North East Derbyshire, 6 were to be found in Burnside. In the Burnside and district wards, 11 were in the 10% most deprived wards in the country. These findings reflect those of Plummer (2000); they are a forcible reminder of the effects of being a certain sort of class.

Thousands still live in neighbourhoods in England where unemployment is two thirds above average, under age pregnancies are 50% higher and a quarter more adults have poor basic skills (ibid, page 198).

In their empirical study conducted in Dublin, Lynch and O'Neill (1994) chartered the indirect effects of poverty affecting the learning environment in working class homes; working class families were seriously deprived of resources relative to middle class homes. Additionally, they found it was mostly women who had to manage poverty in the home, compromising the energy and time they had to facilitate their children's education.

...the children of low income households, whatever their gender or colour are still most likely to leave school early and to perform less well in the education system (ibid, page 321)

In the year following my departure from Priorsfields, the school failed its Ofsted inspection and closed. (The GCSE results had dropped in 2003 to an all time low, 15% five A\*-C passes.) It merged with the adjacent school to form a large school of

approximately 1600 students. The two schools, whilst close geographically, had always been perceived as rivals, not least by the students and their families since the catchment of Prioryfields' neighbour drew from former pit villages in the county. Comments from some of my research participants (in both Boyston and Burnside) as well as from previous research by myself in my local area (1995) testified to the deep antagonisms experienced between members of rival collieries and their communities. I conjecture that the impacts of those feelings would be re-ignited in the new school as well as the continued effects of local socio-economic problems associated with unemployment and drug taking being strongly evident. (Graftby's and Boystons's problem of serious drug abuse was the subject of a national television documentary during the summer of 2004.) Further, I suggest that class related messages (geographical location, demeanour of students, staff attitude) would continue to be "read off" the new school, that is, its essential working classness, and they would continue to influence those parents whose capital resources allowed them to choose an alternative school. For the majority of families in Graftby, particularly Boyston, and the former mining communities like Burnside, there was no choice of school. Thus, the processes and responses which Bourdieu (1984) described in regard to differences in the 'physical order of bodies' (page 175) become elevated to the symbolic order of 'significant distinctions' (ibid, page 175). So what of the future for "demonised" schools? Where does this lead us in terms of further research?

#### **10.4 Class rules: possibilities for further research**

Lynch and O'Neill's research paper, 'The colonisation of social class in education' (1994) warns against those middle class academics, possibly once working class, who changed their identity (in social class terms) consequent upon academic success, studying the working class when there is a real need for working class voices to comment upon education. I have tried to be a working class voice at the same time as being a middle class academic: I have been a hybrid outsider on the inside. However, I believe I have touched the existence of the researched and with the vigour that is often associated with hybridism I offer some suggestions for further research.

Touching the existence of the researched and enquiring into the cultural context of staff and schools are essential in further enquiries into how space and time are experienced

differently in schools and classrooms. An understanding of the narratives of schools as well as those of local communities, groups and individuals is necessary in order to engage with the nature of existence, the lived material and immaterial conditions of daily reality, and how they are implicated in experiences of schooling. Specifically how local language/discourse interacts with staff discourses to impact upon students' sense of self/identity, and its implications for educational success. For example, the language/discourse used by staff in working class schools such as the Academy positioned local place/space negatively as well as reinforced the masculinisation of space. Both the Academy and Prioryfields suffered from high staff absenteeism and high staff turnover. The effects upon both student and staff sense of self/identity and the strategies deployed by schools, students, their families and the local communities to address those issues could be explored to ascertain whether some students really do feel they are in a different class.

How the issue of the class/cultural status of schools, the sorts of educational spaces they provide, local socio-economic conditions and geographical location interact to achieve educational success opens up another field of enquiry. For example, the status of the Academy declined when the school lost its sixth form. Geographical isolation and continued local socio-economic deprivation served to restrict opportunities for some students aspiring to sixth form and college. At Prioryfields the small sixth form was shared with the adjacent secondary school and another secondary school located in a different area of Graftby. Some potential sixth form students were deterred because of the requirement to travel as well as moving into unfamiliar spaces. The sorts of higher educational spaces that aspiring students move into, and the length of the effects of a linear relationship towards education in working class and middle class students, could be explored, contrasted and compared.

With the prospect of newly built schools at both the Academy and Prioryfields taking place in the next few years I contemplate how this will impact upon perceptions of space. The local large comprehensive school (approximately 1900 students) where my husband works opened on its new site in April 2003 near to where the old school was demolished. The old school was situated in an attractive area, in separate blocks that were interspersed with trees, shrubbery and quads. In contrast, the new school is wholly contained in one large building resembling a half bicycle wheel; movement between the

various “spokes” is therefore confined in one space. Clearly this is an easier building to survey, with the all-seeing panopticon in the central “axle”. However, there are no safe, private spaces for the students, and the Headteacher’s office and staffroom are positioned along a corridor away from the students. Since the new school’s opening, some staff believe that student behaviour has deteriorated; the GCSE results for 2004, in terms of higher grade passes, were lower than the year previously. Future research projects could investigate how hierarchies of space and surveillance of space impact upon student sense of self/identity as well as how space is organised for learning in schools. What sorts of spaces are most conducive for educational engagement and achievement?

Two key discourses in secondary schools are the contentious issues of students submitting coursework “on time” and completing homework. Coursework comprises a major component in accreditation at GCSE in several subjects, yet both staff and students at my research schools struggled to organise their time (and space) to complete effectively the quantity of coursework required in a specified period. In particular those students labelled “less able” found the prospect of completing several coursework assignments especially challenging; often they were students whose time (and space) outside school hours was severely constrained. Their struggles, sometimes failure, to complete coursework assignments and the overall effects of coursework demands upon the time/space budget in classrooms impacting upon other areas of schooling, for example, the development of social skills, teacher/student relationships, demands investigation.

The other key discourse in secondary schools is the contentious issue of students doing homework. The relationship between educational engagement, academic success and homework also merits further enquiry, despite a relatively recent review of research relating to homework (Sharp, Keys, Benefield, 2001). I believe my research indicates that both the quantity and quality of homework tasks assigned, as well as the principle of setting homework per se could seriously compromise learning time in lessons with possible implications for the breakdown of staff/student relationships.

The majority working class view of schooling time as episodic could be harnessed by teachers to enable them to interact positively with this perspective upon time. Students

who relate to schooling non-linearly and who view lessons and events within them as a series of mini-episodes mediate this perception via group loyalties. Teachers could explore the benefits for student learning strategies by incorporating group work and group assessment exercises into lesson times in place of or along side of the more instrumental learning activities which, in my experience, tend to predominate in lessons and that more readily align with a linear relationship towards schooling time.

## **10.5 Catharsis**

The research and writing of this thesis has not only been a ‘spiritual exercise’ (Bourdieu, 1999, page 614) in the sense of originating in my own experiences of education and schooling as well as a physical and spiritual closeness to many of the research participants, not least some of the working class students and their families. It has also been cathartic. When I was labelled what was in effect a failure following the 11 plus examination I felt like an ‘outcast on the inside’ (Bourdieu, 1999, page 425), not simply because of a perceived lack of “ability” but as a result of who I was (female), what I was (working class) and where I was (living on a council estate). The consequent emotional turmoil arising from this assault on my sense of self/identity has continued to trouble my conscience, especially in my role as teacher and latterly as teacher/researcher. I have reflected upon what led me to those two roles and acknowledge my gratitude to the emancipatory part which schooling and education, especially the study of Philosophy as an undergraduate, has played in my life and “saved” me from a “career” in “premature” housewifery and motherhood. So from working class student to middle class teacher cum academic, is that what I want for my students, is that what my colleagues desire?

### **10.5.1 ‘This sounds naff...’**

They always sound naff these things don’t they? When I was at school er what was then 2<sup>nd</sup> Year, Year 8, er I was failing and one particular teacher turned me round and I felt that if I could do that for other people er I don’t think at the time I was conscious of that reason er but on reflection since then that was what really fired me in wanting to teach. (Mr Overend)

Many of the staff who I interviewed recounted the emancipatory effects of schooling and education in their lives, the enjoyment and interest in their particular subject area

leading to further study at college or university, an inspirational teacher who influenced them. As teachers they desired to share those experiences with their students to change lives. Mr Lomax:

It's given to very few human beings to leave an indelible scratch on planet earth that says "I was here" and can never be rubbed off. By doing something to change a child's life, by using professional skill, an indelible scratch has been made. It's a selfish motivation, it makes me feel good, almost a sense of immortality.

As a student, I did not really connect with my colleagues' experiences; I did not meet inspirational teachers and whilst I had a preference for certain subject disciplines I did not derive much pleasure from their study. In fact several of my secondary school male teachers "flirted" with me. I realised that I was interested in others (friends, peers, teachers) as fellow subjects and though I was unable to articulate this as a school student, I wanted to know more of how we came to be, "beingness" in historical, socio-cultural context. As a teacher this began my engagement with the desire for social justice in schooling and education; my hopes, unlike those of my colleagues, are for more than the effects I may have upon individual students I encounter. My findings and those of others (for example, Reid, 1997) indicate that the successes of individual students who are disadvantaged serve to justify "the system" whilst ignoring the circumstances of many.

Education preserves structural relations between social groups but changes structural relations between individuals (Bernstein, 2000, xxiv).

It seems to me that the same educational discourse that existed when I was at school has continued to the present day, perpetuated by policy makers and teachers. The new/old jargon of changing lives through 'personalised', 'individualised' learning with special cases for "treatment" singled out: the 'special needs', the 'slow learners', the 'gifted and talented' as well as the mention of 'social justice' has eroded the old market ideology jargon in recent years. Such discourses act as masks for the continuing structural inequalities between social groups which are still perpetuated in education, albeit unwittingly (see also Gillborn and Youdell, 2000). It reminds me of Wittgenstein's warning about language bewitching our intelligence and the reason why I continue to teach and the why of this present thesis: a plea for a genuine re-focus on the achievement of social justice in schooling and education.

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## Appendix 1: The Questionnaires

### Students' Questionnaire

*Tick the box at the side of your chosen answer*

1. In Year 7 did you prefer secondary school to your primary school?

YES       NO       THE SAME       DON'T KNOW

2. Do you enjoy school more now that you are in Year 9, compared to Year 7?

YES       NO       THE SAME       DON'T KNOW

3. In general do you find lessons

INTERESTING       BORING       ALRIGHT       NOT ALRIGHT

4. What makes a lesson alright?

THE TEACHER       BEING IN THE SAME GROUP AS FRIENDS

THE SUBJECT       NONE OF THESE

5. Which do you enjoy more?

BREAKTIMES INCLUDING DINNER       LESSONS       HOMETIME

6. Do you think that school is an important part of your life?

YES       NO       NOT SURE       DON'T KNOW

7. Do you know what sort of job you want to do when you leave school?

YES       NO       NOT SURE       DON'T KNOW

8. Do you think that the GCSE subjects you have chosen will help you get a job when you leave school?

YES       NO       NOT SURE       DON'T KNOW

9. How often are you away from school in any half-term (7 weeks approx.)?

LESS THAN 3 DAYS       BETWEEN 3 AND 7 DAYS

MORE THAN 7 DAYS       DON'T KNOW

10. How do you feel when you are absent from school?

HAPPY       SAD       WORRIED       NOT BOTHERED

POORLY       NONE OF THESE       DON'T KNOW

11. Do you think homework is important?

YES       NO       SOMETIMES       DON'T KNOW

12. Do you always do your homework?

YES       NO

13. Are you involved in any out of school activities which involve the school,  
e.g. cross country running?

YES       NO       SOMETIMES

14. Did your parents come to Parents' Evening in:

Year 7:      YES       NO

Year 8:      YES       NO

Year 9:      YES       NO

15. Do you feel that your parents are happy with what you are doing at  
school?

YES       NO       SOMETIMES       NOT VERY OFTEN

OFTEN       DON'T KNOW

16. Do you feel that you have some good friends at this school?

YES       NO       NOT SURE       DON'T KNOW

17. Have you ever been bullied at this school?

YES       NO       NOT SURE       DON'T KNOW

18. Have you ever felt in the position where another pupil is 'doing your head in'?

YES           NO           NOT SURE           DON'T KNOW

19. Have you ever felt in the position where a teacher is 'doing your head in'?

YES           NO           NOT SURE           DON'T KNOW

20. Has what's happened at home affected your feelings and/or behaviour at school?

YES           NO           NOT SURE           DON'T KNOW

21. Do you think you're doing well at school?

YES           NO           NOT SURE

## Supplementary Questions: Students

22. Did you get the choice of GCSE subjects you wanted at GCSE?

Yes           No           Don't know           Not sure

23. Do you have free dinners?

Yes           No

24. Tick one box only to indicate which is your most popular spare time activity.

Homework

Watch TV

Read magazines

Read computer manuals

Read books (fiction)

Read books (fact)

Play on the computer

Play with friends

Baby sitting for family

Baby sitting for friends

Go shopping

Other

25. Do you have brothers living at home?

Yes           No

26. Do you have sisters living at home?

Yes           No

27. Do you have any other relatives or step relations living at home?

Yes           No

28. Tick one box only to indicate which is your favourite type of TV programme.

- Films
- Cartoons
- Nature programmes
- Sport
- Soaps (Coronation Street, Eastenders etc.)
- News items
- Other

## Parents' Questionnaire

Tick the box at the side of your chosen answer.

1. Were you satisfied with the education and care your child received at primary school?  
YES  NO  NOT SURE  DON'T KNOW
2. Did you attend events such as parents' evenings, sports days etc. at your child's primary school?  
YES  NO  NOT SURE  DON'T KNOW
3. When your child was at primary school did you feel that you were able to discuss any matters of concern quite easily with the headteacher and/or other members of staff?  
YES  NO  NOT SURE  DON'T KNOW
4. Have you been satisfied with the education and care your child has received since he/she transferred to secondary school?  
YES  NO  NOT SURE  DON'T KNOW
5. Do you feel that your child has made good progress in his/her lessons since starting secondary school?  
YES  NO  NOT SURE  DON'T KNOW
6. Do you feel that your child has made good progress socially (e.g. made new friends etc.) since starting secondary school?  
YES  NO  NOT SURE  DON'T KNOW
7. Do you think homework is an important part of your child's education?  
YES  NO  NOT SURE  DON'T KNOW

8. Do you think your child receives enough homework?  
YES  NO  NOT SURE  DON'T KNOW
9. Did you attend parents' evening in  
Year 7 YES  NO   
Year 8 YES  NO   
Year 9 YES  NO
10. Have you attended any other activities connected with school, e.g. sports days?  
YES  NO  NOT SURE  DON'T KNOW
11. Do you think parents are kept well informed about what is happening at school?  
YES  NO  NOT SURE  DON'T KNOW
12. Would you like to become more involved with school activities, e.g. helping children in classrooms?  
YES  NO  NOT SURE  DON'T KNOW
13. Do you feel that you can readily contact the headteacher and/or a member of staff, should a need arise?  
YES  NO  NOT SURE  DON'T KNOW
14. Do you think this school plays an important role in determining your child's career when he/she leaves at the end of Year 11?  
YES  NO  NOT SURE  DON'T KNOW
15. Do you think it is vital that your child attends school on every session and should only be absent if he/she is ill or there are exceptional circumstances?  
YES  NO  NOT SURE  DON'T KNOW

16. Do you think your own secondary school experiences have influenced your child's attitude to school?

YES  NO  NOT SURE  DON'T KNOW

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION IN COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE**

## Teachers' Questionnaire

1. How long have you been teaching?

[Please tick the appropriate box.]

1 – 5 years       5 –10 years       10-15 years   
20 – 25 years       25 years and over

2. Has teaching been the sole profession you have been involved in?

Yes       No

3. Have you worked in any educational institutions other than The Academy (Prioryfields)?

Yes       No

4. If you answered 'yes' to the above question, please state how many such institutions you have worked in, by ticking the appropriate box.

1-2       3 – 5       over 5

5. For how long have you been working in your current role?

1 – 5 years       5 –10 years       10 -15 years   
20 – 25 years       25 years and over

6. Does your present role give you job satisfaction?

Yes       No       Not sure       Don't know

If you answered 'yes' or 'no' to the above question, please explain your answer further.

7. Did you enjoy secondary school as a pupil?  
Yes  No  Not sure  Don't know
8. Do you feel that your experiences as a school pupil at secondary school affect the way you relate to pupils now?  
Yes  No  Not sure  Don't know
9. In general would you describe the attitude of the present Year 7 pupils towards school as positive?  
Yes  No  Not sure  Don't know
10. In general would you describe the attitude of the present Year 11 pupils towards school as positive?  
Yes  No  Not sure  Don't know
11. To what extent do you think that peer group pressure can affect the attitude of pupils? On a scale of 1–5, with 1 as 'a lot' and 5 as 'not at all'. Please tick the appropriate number.  
1  2  3  4  5
- 12.(a) Do you think boys have a more negative attitude towards schooling in Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4?  
Yes  No  Not sure  Don't know
- 12.(b) Do you think girls have a more negative attitude towards schooling in Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4?  
Yes  No  Not sure  Don't know
- 12.(c) Do you think boys have a more negative attitude towards schooling than girls in Key Stage 3?  
Yes  No  Not sure  Don't know

12.(d) Do you think boys have a more negative attitude towards schooling than girls in Key Stage 4?

Yes  No  Not sure  Don't know

13. Some teachers describe teaching in schools similar to this as being challenging. Would you agree?

Yes  No  Not sure  Don't know

14. In your experience do you get a positive response to homework tasks in Key Stage 3?

Yes  No  Not sure  Don't know

15. In your experience do you get a positive response to homework tasks in Key Stage 4?

Yes  No  Not sure  Don't know

16.(a) How would you describe your working relationship with pupils in Key Stage 3? On a scale of 1 – 5, with 1 as 'excellent' and 5 as 'challenging'. Please tick the appropriate number.

1  2  3  4  5

16.(b) How would you describe your working relationship with pupils in Key Stage 4? Using the same scale as in 16.(a), please tick the appropriate number.

1  2  3  4  5

17. The 1998 OFSTED report stated that "the overall quality of teaching is good at both key stages". On a day to day basis, how would you rate the majority of your lessons?

very good  good  satisfactory  less than satisfactory

18. Please choose 5 of the following statements, and rank them in order of importance of what you think makes a lesson successful, with '1' as high.

Your teaching skill.

Your understanding of the subject.

Pupil attitude.

Pupil behaviour.

Learning resources (e.g. textbooks, videos etc.).

The working environment.

Positive interpersonal relationships between staff and pupils.

Positive interpersonal relationships between pupils and pupils.

Positive interpersonal relationships between staff and staff.

19. Evidence shows that the prior attainment of the pupils on entry to school in Year 7 is low. Do you believe that when those pupils leave in Year 11, GCSE achievement is:

excellent     very good     good     satisfactory   
less than satisfactory

20. How would you rate the attendance of parents to parents' evenings on a scale of 1 – 5, with 1 as 'excellent' and 5 as 'less than satisfactory'.

Year 7      1       2       3       4       5

Year 8      1       2       3       4       5

Year 9      1       2       3       4       5

Year 10    1       2       3       4       5

Year 11    1       2       3       4       5

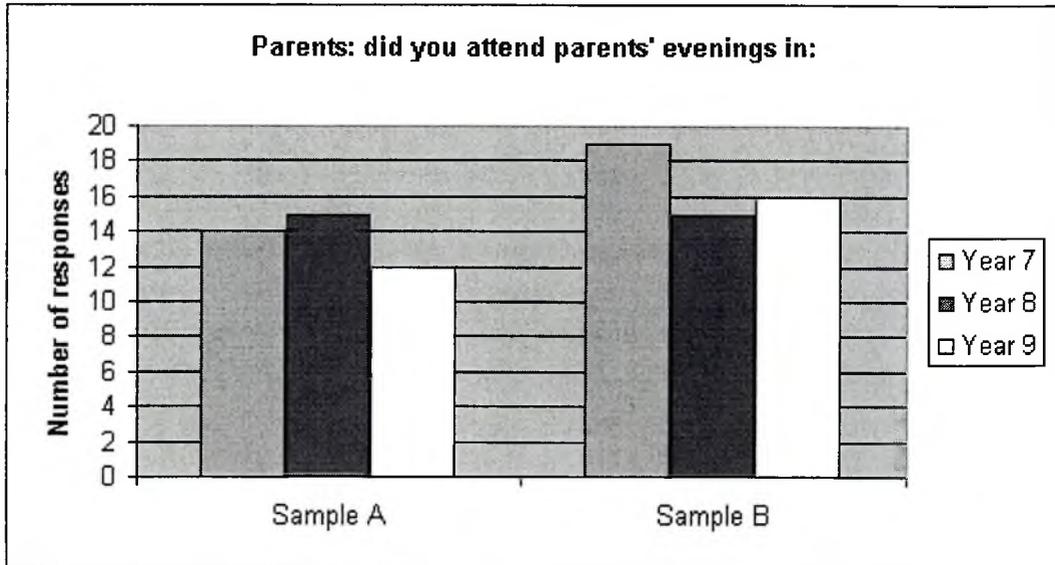
21. In general, would you like parents to become more involved in the life of the school?
- Yes       No       Not sure       Don't know
22. More specifically, do you think there is a case for parents to become more involved in school activities, for example, sitting in on lessons?
- Yes       No       Not sure       Don't know
23. To what extent do you believe that the 'local culture' has a negative effect upon the attitude of some students towards school. Please tick a number with 1 as a 'great deal' and 5 as 'not at all'.
- 1       2       3       4       5
24. Research has indicated that when relationships are difficult, people experience stress.
- (a) Have you experienced difficult relationships with:
- (i) students: Yes       No       Not sure       Don't know
- (ii) staff:      Yes       No       Not sure       Don't know
- (iii) parents: Yes       No       Not sure       Don't know
- (b) Have you experienced stress with :
- (i) students: Yes       No       Not sure       Don't know
- (ii) staff:      Yes       No       Not sure       Don't know
- (iii) parents: Yes       No       Not sure       Don't know

## Appendix 2: Sample Analysis of Questionnaires

### Parents' Questionnaire (The Academy)

Did you attend parents' evenings in:

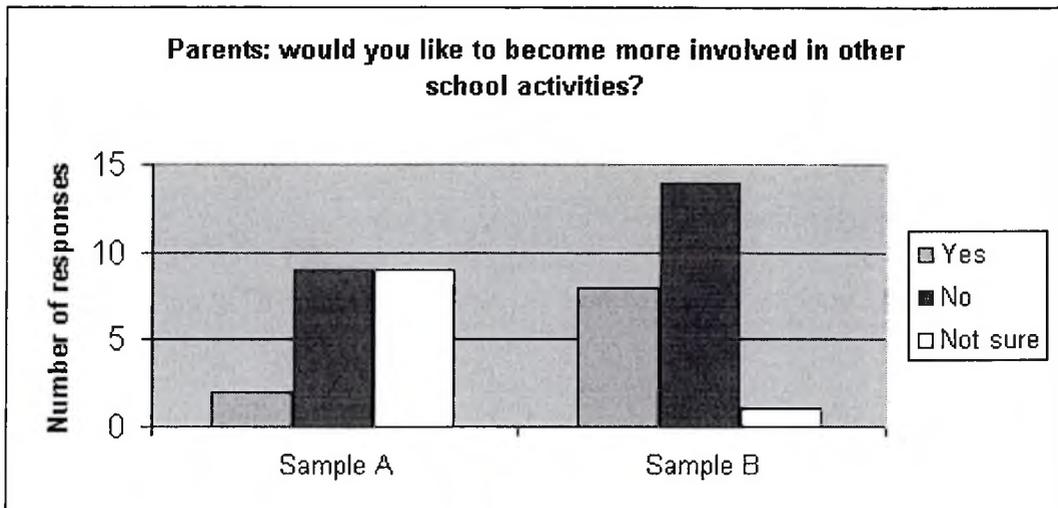
	Sample A	Sample B
Year 7	14	19
Year 8	15	15
Year 9	12	16



### Parents' Questionnaire (The Academy)

Would you like to become more involved in other school activities?

	Sample A	Sample B
Yes	2	8
No	9	14
Not sure	9	1



### Appendix 3: Students' SATs and GCSE Results

*The Academy student sample*

Name	SAT Results			GCSE Results									
	Eng	Mat	Sci	A*-Gs	A*s	As	Bs	Cs	Ds	Es	Fs	Gs	A*-Cs
Alison	5	5	5	9	0	0	0	1	6	2	0	0	1
Alexis	5	5	6	9	0	0	0	1	7	1	0	0	1
Diane	5	4	5	9	0	0	0	7	2	0	0	0	7
Janet	4	5	5	9	0	0	2	5	1	1	0	0	7
Kirsty	6	5	5	8	0	0	2	4	0	2	0	0	6
Lauren	6	6	5	9	0	0	3	5	1	0	0	0	8
Leanne	5	6	5	9	0	0	0	5	4	0	0	0	5
Mary	B <sup>1</sup>	3	3	8	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	3	0
Una	5	4	4	9	0	0	0	2	3	4	0	0	2
Valerie	5	4	4	9	0	0	0	0	3	4	2	0	0
Andrew	Absent: test status <3			8	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	3	0
David	4	5	5	7	0	0	0	1	1	2	3	0	1
Edward	6	7	6	9	0	3	4	2	0	0	0	0	9
Frank	5	5	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Harry	6	5	5	9	1	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	9
John	5	4	4	8	0	1	0	3	4	0	0	0	4
Kevin	4	4	4	9	0	0	0	0	3	2	4	0	0
Liam	4	3	3	9	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	3	1
Matt	5	8	6	9	1	3	4	1	0	0	0	0	9
Paul	5	4	6	9	0	3	3	2	1	0	0	0	8

1 B means below test status.

Nine out of twenty students in my sample gained five or more higher grade passes. The GCSE results for 1999, the year of my sample, were 16.1% students gained five or more higher grade passes.

*The Prioryfields student sample*

Name	SAT Results			GCSE Results									
	Eng	Mat	Sci	A*-Gs	A*s	As	Bs	Cs	Ds	Es	Fs	Gs	A*-Cs
Anna <sup>1</sup>	5	5	5	11	0	0	1	2	4	3	0	1	3
Barbara	5	5	5	10	0	0	0	2	5	1	2	0	2
Connie	5	6	5	11	1	1	3	4	1	0	1	0	9
Tina	6	6	5	10	1	0	7	1	0	0	1	0	9
Harriet <sup>1</sup>	5	6	6	11	4	1	2	2	2	0	0	0	9
Joan <sup>1</sup>	5	6	6	10	1	3	4	1	0	0	1	0	9
Katheryn	4	4	5	9	0	0	0	0	5	4	0	0	0
Olivia <sup>1</sup>	5	7	5	11	2	5	3	0	1	0	0	0	10
Rita	5	4	3	8	0	0	0	1	3	1	2	1	1
Susie <sup>1</sup>	6	7	6	11	0	2	8	1	0	0	0	0	11
Arron	3	4	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0
Brian <sup>1</sup>	6	7	6	10	2	4	2	1	0	1	0	0	9
Carl <sup>1</sup>	5	7	5	10	0	0	8	1	0	0	1	0	9
Jack	4	5	5	9	0	0	1	0	5	2	1	0	1
Mark	5	6	5	11	1	1	5	1	3	0	0	0	8
Norman	4	3	3	5	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	0
Ralph <sup>1</sup>	5	6	6	10	0	2	3	4	0	1	0	0	9
Stewart	5	6	5	10	0	0	1	2	4	2	1	0	3
Tom	4	6	5	8	0	0	1	1	2	2	1	1	2
Vince <sup>1</sup>	5	6	5	11	0	0	4	5	2	0	0	0	9

1 denotes middle class student

Eleven, nine of whom can be described as middle class, out of twenty students in my sample gained five or more higher grade passes. The GCSE results for 2002, the year of my sample, were 23% students gained five or more higher grade passes.

## Appendix 4: Parents and Teachers Interview Samples

### *The Academy parent sample*

Name(s)	Relationship	Interviewed (I) or Written Response (W)
Mr. Barker	Alexis's father	W
Mr. Brushfield	John's father	W
Mr. and Mrs Bullock	Edward's parents	I
Mrs. Coombes	Leanne's mother	W
Mrs. Cordiner	David's mother	W
Mr. and Mrs. Davies	Lauren's parents	W
Mrs. Doyle	Harry's mother	W
Mr. and Mrs. Glossop	Paul's mother and stepfather	I
Mrs. Heath	Janet's mother	I
Mrs. Lilley	Mary's mother	W
Mr. Longman	Kevin's father	I
Mrs. Metcalfe	Kirsty's mother	W
Mrs. Morrison	Valerie's mother	I
Mrs. Ross	Una's mother	W
Mrs. Vicars	Diane's mother	W
Mrs. Wayman	Andrew's mother	I
Mrs. Wetton	Liam's mother	W
Mrs. Williams	Alison's mother	W
Mr. and Mrs. Wood	Matt's parents	I

*The Prioryfields parent sample*

<b>Name(s)</b>	<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Interviewed (I) or Written Response (W)</b>
Mrs. Austin	Connie's mother	W
Mr. and Mrs. Baker <sup>1</sup>	Ralph's parents	W
Mrs. Baxter	Norman's mother	W
Mrs. Chapel	Rita's mother	I
Mrs. Driver <sup>1</sup>	Susie's mother	I
Mrs. Gray	Tom's mother	W
Mrs. Grove <sup>1</sup>	Anna's mother	I
Mrs. Hall	Arron's grandmother	I
Mrs. Harris	Barbara's mother	W
Mrs. Hepburn <sup>1</sup>	Vince's mother	W
Mr. and Mrs. Law <sup>1</sup>	Harriet's parents	I
Mr. and Mrs Laycock	Tina's parents	I
Mr. Litton <sup>1</sup>	Joan's father	W
Mrs. Lord	Katheryn's mother	I
Mr. and Mrs. Packer <sup>1</sup>	Olivia's parents	I
Mrs. Palling	Mark's mother	I
Mrs. Rawson	Jack's mother	I
Mrs. Thetford <sup>1</sup>	Carl's mother	W
Mrs. Waring	Stewart's mother	W

1 denotes middle class parent(s)

*The Academy teacher sample*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Age range</b>
Mr. Oldman	Headteacher	45-50
Mr. Groom	Head of English	50-55
Mr. Lomax	Mathematics teacher	40-45
Mr. Unwin	Design & Technology teacher (NQT) <sup>1</sup>	25-30
Mrs. Crawford	Head of Science	40-45
Mrs. Thatcher	Pastoral Deputy, PE / Dance teacher.	30-35
Miss Butcher	Modern Foreign Languages teacher	20-25
Mrs. Golding	School governor	55-60

1 NQT denotes newly qualified teacher.

*The Prioryfields teacher sample*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Age range</b>
Mr. Overend	Deputy Headteacher (Biology teacher)	50-55
Mr. Scarsdale	Head of Mathematics	45-50
Mr. Hay	Head of English	45-50
Mr. Carlisle	PE / Mathematics teacher (NQT)	20-25
Mrs. Rose	Modern Foreign Languages teacher	40-45
Mrs. Thorne	Pastoral Head (Food Technology teacher)	35-40
Mrs. Ashworth	Science teacher	20-25
Mr. Vidal	Retired Bursar / Mathematics teacher	65-70

## **Appendix 5: Interview Questions**

### **Students' Interview Questions**

1. Tell me about your secondary school experiences. How do they compare to primary school? Which do you prefer? Do you enjoy secondary school more now than your first few years here? Do you feel that the subjects you are studying for GCSE are relevant or worthwhile? Were you happy with the choices? How would you change the choices? Will those subjects help to get you a job? Is homework important? Do you do your homework? How well do you think you're doing?
  
2. How much influence do you feel from your friends and other students, at school?  
What about friends and/or relatives at home? Have you ever been bullied? Tell me about it.
  
3. Does your family influence your attitude towards school? Explain how.
  
4. How well do teachers relate to you? Do they affect your attitude towards school? In what ways? Did you notice a change in their relationship with you in Year 10, compared to lower down in school? How do you feel when teachers leave, or are away from school? What do you think about having supply teachers?
  
5. Tell me about what you do when you're out of school. What sort of activities are you involved in? Are the activities that you are involved in pursued alone or as part of a group? Do you watch television? What are your favourite television programmes? Do you enjoy watching videos or films? Do you go to the cinema or theatre?  
Do you use the computer? How? (To play games, on the internet etc.)  
Do you ever read books or magazines?  
Do you have a part-time job?  
Do you think that these non-school activities have any effect on the way you feel about school? Are any of these activities related to school in any way?

6. What do you expect to have got out of school by the time you leave?  
What are your aspirations for the future? How much influence will school have played in your life?

## **Parents' Interview Questions**

1. Tell me about your secondary school experiences. For example, did you enjoy school? Did you find the subjects interesting? Have they helped you in your career? How well did you relate to your teachers? How much support did your parents give you? Have your parents been to college or university? What sort of career do/did they have?
2. How far does your attitude towards school influence that of your child? What are your views on the curriculum, homework, assessment, and discipline? How involved are you in your child's education?
3. How far is your child's attitude towards school influenced by significant others, for example, siblings, relatives, friends and peers? Describe your child's attitude towards school. What sort of influence do teachers have upon his/her attitude? What is the most important factor which impacts upon your child's attitude towards school?
4. What are your thoughts about the school and the local community of which it is a part? Is the local community supportive of the school? Is there a sense of communal support for education? Does a "network" of supportive parents exist? What type of community does The Academy (Prioryfields) belong to? How involved are parents in the life of the school? How involved is the school in community life? How do you feel when you visit school, welcome, intimidated? Do you think that this school will play a major role in determining your child's career path? If not, what will?
5. In your experience, and that of your child/ren, what part do good interpersonal relationships between staff and students play, in making for a sound teaching and learning environment? Are you able to make any comments upon the working environment of Prioryfields school?

6. What do you want your child to have achieved by the time they leave Prioryfields? Which is the most important, academic success, personal or social development?

## **The Academy Teachers' Interview Questions**

1. Could you explain what made you want to choose teaching as a profession?  
(Out of 40 respondents, for 18 teaching had not been their sole profession.)
  - Was it a desire to work with adolescents or an interest in your chosen curriculum area?
  - When working with adolescents, do you prioritise personal relationships or completing a scheme of work and/or GCSE course?
  - To what extent can interpersonal relationships between staff and students be used as a tool to successful learning?
  - Is there a difference between how you relate to boys and girls? (Explain how.)
  - Is there a difference in your interpersonal relationships between Key Stage 3 students and Key Stage 4 students? (Explain how.)
  
2. In your experience, do you feel that all Year 7 students start The Academy with positive attitudes towards schooling?
  - Is there a noticeable difference in attitude between boys and girls? (23 respondents felt boys had a more negative attitude than girls at Key Stage 3, 30 respondents felt boys had a more negative attitude than girls at Key Stage 4.)
  - Do you feel there is a change in attitude as the students get older?
  - As they grow older, is there a noticeable difference between boys and girls?
  - How do you account for this?
  - Describe the attitude towards schooling of the Key Stage 4 students that you teach now.
  - Have you noticed a change in those students once they reached Year 11?
  - How do you account for this?
  
3. Describe the assessment strategies you use with students in Key Stage 4.
  - Some schools use self-assessment by students. To what extent do you think that would work for you and your students?
  - How often do you set homework in Key Stage 3?

- What sort of response do you receive? (There were 26 positive responses here.)
  - How often do you set homework in Key Stage 4?
  - What sort of response do you receive? (There were 16 positive responses here.)
4. Do you find The Academy students “challenging” to teach?  
(34 respondents answered “yes” and 3 “not sure”.)
- Are there particular students who are more disruptive than others?
  - (Student behaviour was identified by 24 respondents as having some effect upon determining whether a lesson was successful or not.)
  - Describe the teaching and learning strategies which you adopt to nullify student disruption, and maximise student achievement.
  - Which do you think work best?
  - In what way do you think school disciplinary procedures assist you in dealing with disruptive students?
5. How would you describe the culture of this area?  
(34 respondents thought that the local culture had a good deal of effect upon student attitude.)
- Do you feel that the local community is supportive towards education?
  - In your experience, do you think that parents’ evenings are well attended? (In general, respondents felt that parents’ evenings had a good response in Key Stage 3, but a satisfactory or less than satisfactory response in Key Stage 4.)
  - In your experience, who usually attends parents’ evenings? Both parents, mother, father?
  - In your perception, is there a relationship between parent attendance at parents’ evening and student attitude? In the short term, in the long term, what are the effects it may have?
  - 31 respondents felt that parents should become more involved in school life, with 21 willing for parents to become directly involved in school

activities, such as sitting in on lessons. What are your thoughts about this?

- In what way will the school becoming part of an EAZ (Educational Action Zone) benefit students? parents?
  - 32 respondents have experienced difficult relationships with students, and 29 have experienced stress. How far, does this reflect your experiences with students?
  - 19 respondents have experienced difficult relationships with staff, and 19 have experienced stress. How far, does this reflect your experiences with staff?
  - 8 respondents had experienced difficult relationships with parents, and 5 have experienced stress. How far, does this reflect your experiences with parents?
  - How would you describe the predominant management style in the school?
  - Do you feel the staff work well together as a team?
  - How important do you think interpersonal relationships between staff and staff are for the well-being of the whole school?
6. When you leave this school, what do you want to have achieved in terms of personal achievements, and student achievements?
- What, if anything, is preventing you?

## Prioryfields Teachers' Interview Questions

### 1. **What made you choose teaching as a profession?**

(Out of 41 respondents, for 21, teaching has been their sole profession).

Was it a desire to “re-live” your own happy school experiences or a desire to work with young people or an interest in your own curriculum area?

What were your reasons for choosing to work at Prioryfields?

How would you assess your present role, in terms of job satisfaction?

When working with students do you prioritise positive personal relationships or is your main aim to complete a scheme of work/examination course?

How important are positive interpersonal relationships between staff and students as the key to successful teaching and learning?

Are you aware of a difference in your interpersonal relationships between Key Stage 3 students and Key Stage 4 students?

Is there a difference between how you relate to boys and girls?

### 2. **In your experience do Year 7 students start Prioryfields with positive attitudes towards schooling?**

(Only 10 respondents believed Year 7 students started Prioryfields with a positive attitude).

Is there a noticeable difference in attitude between boys and girls? (27 respondents thought boys were more negative than girls in Key Stage 3, 21 respondents thought boys were more negative than girls in Key Stage 4).

In general, is there a change in attitude in the students, as they get older?

Also, as they grow older is there a difference between boys' and girls' attitudes?

How do you account for this?

Only 9 respondents believed that Year 11 have a positive attitude towards schooling. How would you describe the attitude of the present Year 11?

Are you aware of student attitude changing during the course of a school day?

Do you think that different teaching and learning styles, for example, group work, affect student attitude?

26 respondents thought that peer group pressure has an important effect on student attitude. How far would you agree with this?

**3. How would you describe the attainment of students on entry to Prioryfields in Year 7?**

How do you assess student performance in Key Stage 3?

How do you monitor progress in Key Stage 3?

How do you assess student performance in Key Stage 4?

How do you monitor student progress in Key Stage 4?

Some schools are involving students more in self-assessment. Do you think this is a useful tool for helping students' progress and for raising attainment?

Only 14 respondents had a positive response to homework tasks in Key Stage 3.

How would you account for this? What sort of response do you get?

In Key Stage 4, only 10 respondents received positive responses to homework tasks. How would you account for this? What sort of response do you get?

17 respondents believed that GCSE attainment was satisfactory and 12 respondents believed that it was unsatisfactory, based on attainment, on entry in Year 7. What factors could have contributed to those responses being given?

**4. Do you find Prioryfields students challenging to teach?**

(38 respondents answered "yes," with 1 "no" and 1 "not sure").

How far does the student "challenge" affect the possibility of delivering a good lesson? (16 respondents thought that their lessons were generally good).

26 respondents identified student behaviour as having some effect upon determining whether a lesson was successful or not. How far does that response match your experiences in lessons?

Describe the strategies, which you employ to nullify student disruption and maximise student achievement. Which strategies do you think work best?

How far do the school disciplinary procedures help you in dealing with disruptive students?

**5. How would you describe the local culture of Prioryfields's catchment area?**

(37 respondents thought that the local culture had a good deal of effect upon student attitude).

In your experience, do you think that parents' evenings are well attended?

How does attendance in Key Stage 3 compare with Key Stage 4? (More respondents thought that Key Stage 3 was better attended).

Who usually attends parents' evenings? (Both parents, or mothers, or fathers, or other relatives, or neighbours?)

30 respondents believed that student attitude affects the success of lessons. What do you understand by the word "attitude"?

Is there a relationship between parent attendance at parents' evenings and student attitude?

Are any effects short term, long term or both?

31 respondents felt that parents should become more involved in school life, with 22 willing for parents to become directly involved in school activities, such as sitting in lessons. What are your thoughts about this?

Do you think that disappointing GCSE examination results reflect a lack of support for educational achievement, or a lack of support, for Prioryfields school, from the local community?

**6. 37 respondents have experienced difficult relationships with students, and 33 have experienced stress. How far does this reflect your experiences with students? How do you account for this?**

27 respondents have experienced difficult relationships with parents, and 20 have experienced stress. How far does this reflect your experiences with parents? How do you account for this?

16 respondents have experienced difficult relationships with staff, and 14 have experienced stress. How far does this reflect your experiences with staff? How do you account for this?

How would you describe the predominant management style in school?

Do you think that the senior management team and the staff work well together as a team?

Do you think the staff work well together as a team?

How important do you think interpersonal relationships between staff and staff are for the well being of the whole school?

**7. When you leave this school, what do you want to have achieved in terms of personal achievements, and in terms of student achievements?**

What, if anything, is likely to prevent you from succeeding in those achievements?

## **Appendix 6: Other Names Mentioned in This Research**

### **The Academy**

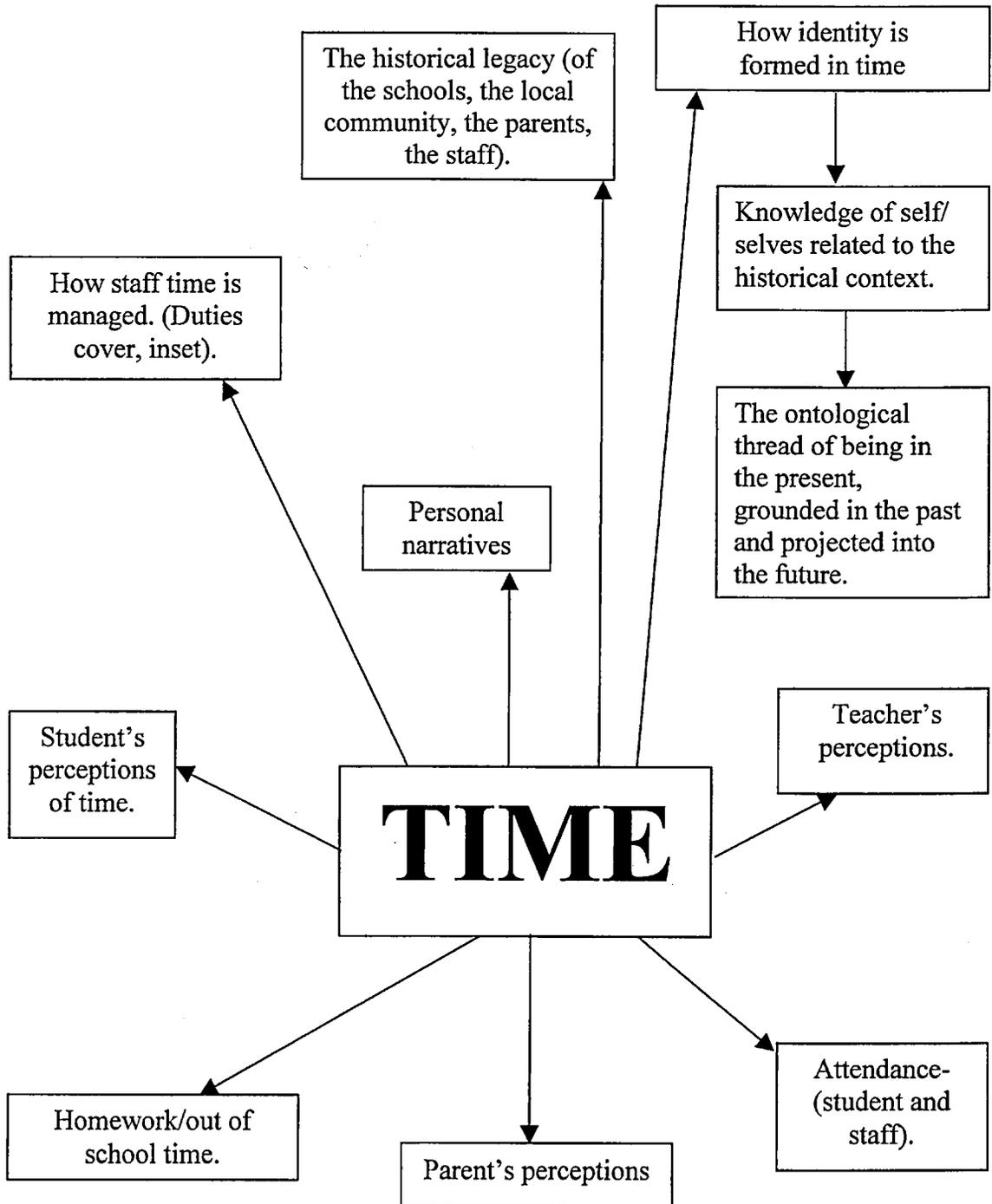
Mrs. Anderson	Deputy Headteacher
Mrs. Hughes	Senior Teacher
Mr. Bishop	Key Stage 4 Pastoral Head
Mr. James	Head of Modern Foreign Languages
Mr. Steane	Design and Technology Teacher
Mr. Fanshaw	Teacher of Science

### **Prioryfields**

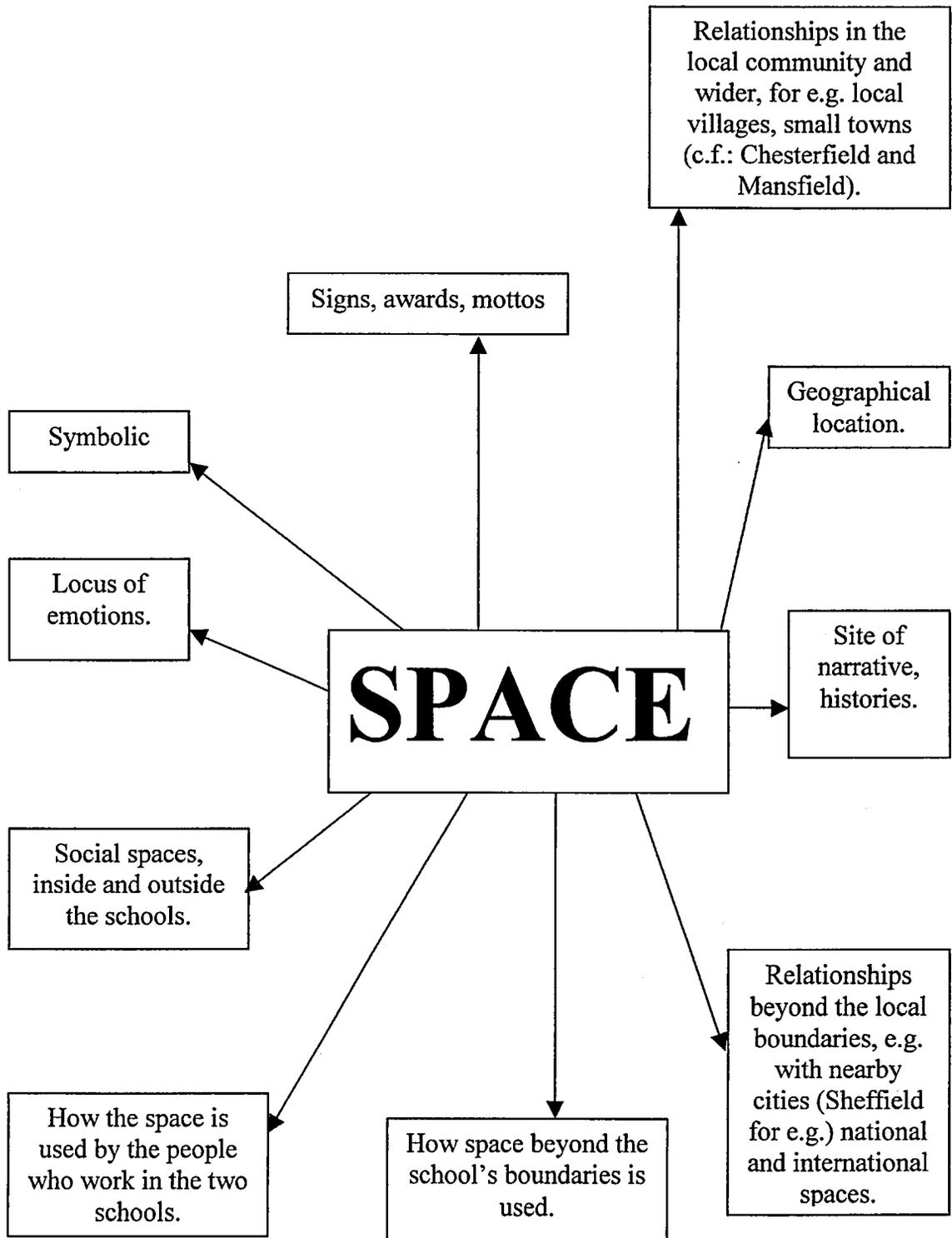
Rhiannon	Boyston student permanently excluded in Year 9 of her school career
Billy	Boyston student permanently excluded in Year 10 of his school career
Jake	Stewart's younger brother
Neil, Josh, Kyle (working class)	Stewart's friends
Barry (middle class)	
Miss Miles	Deputy Headteacher
Manvers	Secondary modern school that eventually became part of Prioryfields
Burghside and Winthorpe	District councils in North Nottinghamshire
Copperthorpe	A village in North Nottinghamshire

## Appendix 7: Mind Maps on Which My Analyses Were Based

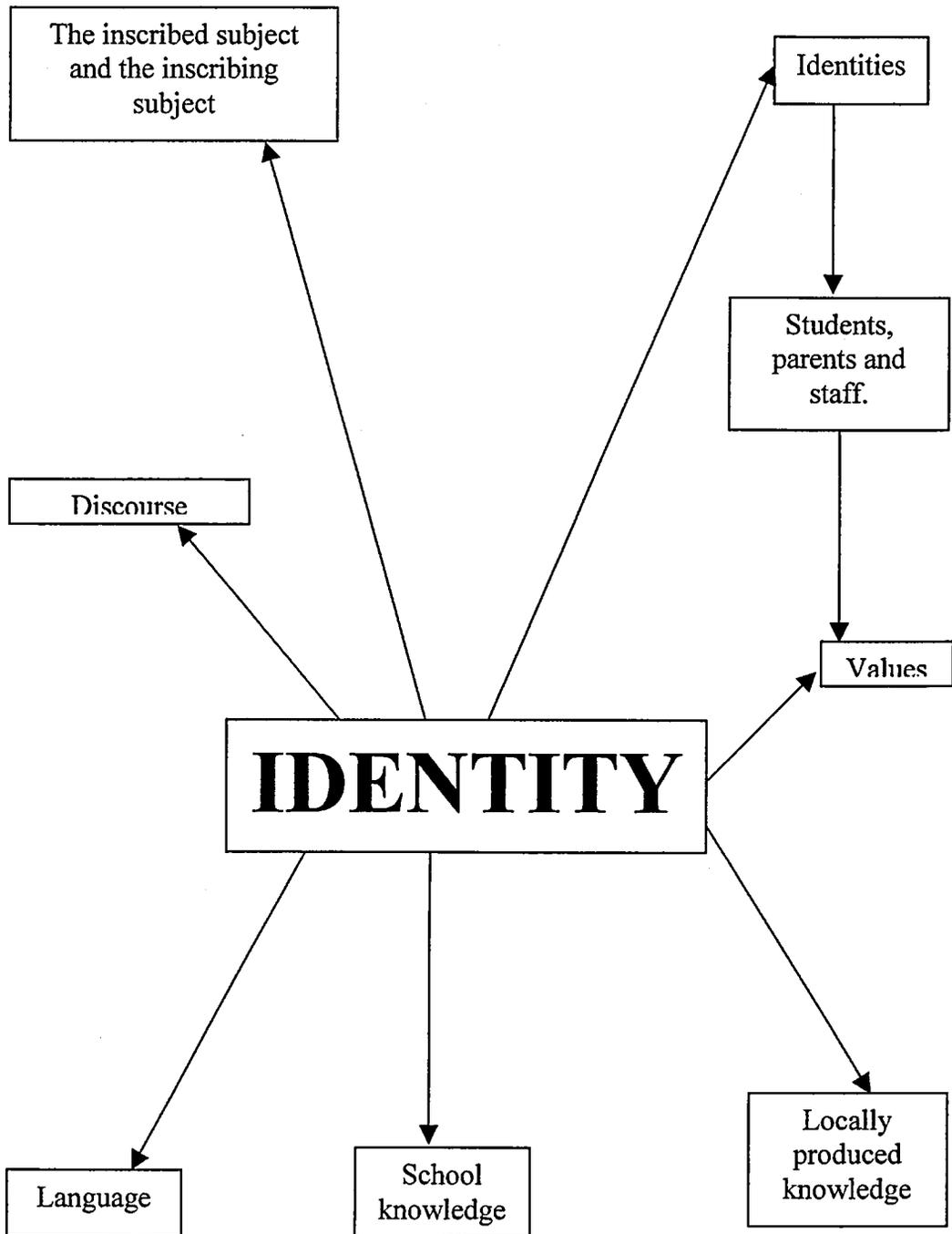
### Relationships through time



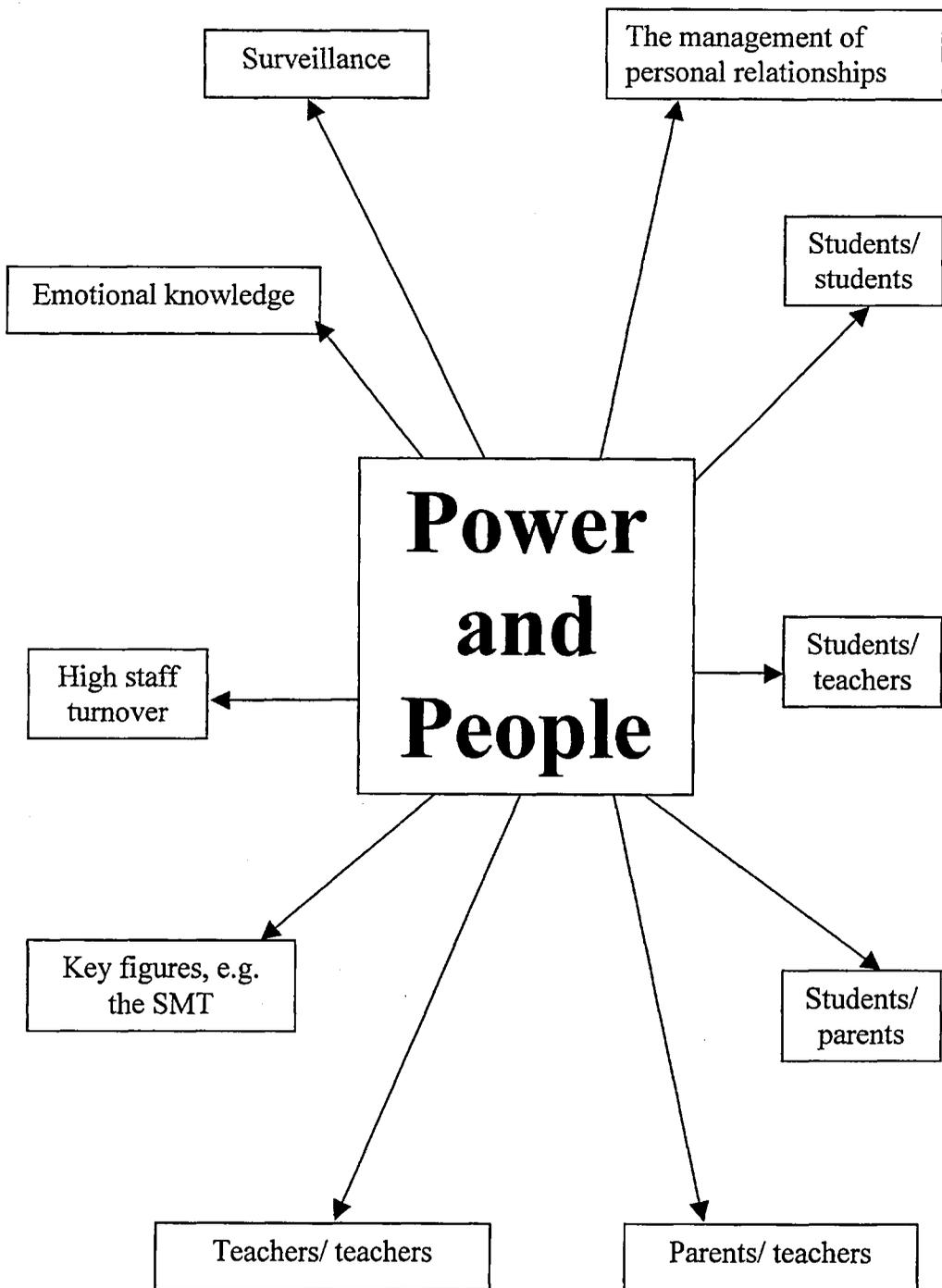
## Relationships in Space



## Relationships to Identity



## Relationships with Power and People.



## Appendix 8: Extracts from Interview Transcript

### Prioryfields: Stewart

#### *Is homework important?*

No, I think we spend too much time in school to be doing homework, 6 hours a day, 5 days a week. Your curriculum shouldn't have homework in it: it should be in lessons; you should do more things in lessons. Staying on one thing for an hour when most people are talking and then you have to do homework. When you get home you want to take a break after 6, 7 hours at school. You want a rest; you don't want to think, "Oh, I've got homework to do." I don't always do homework. If I'm going out I don't. I try to do coursework: I shouldn't let it pile up; I expect to have to do it but not the amount, essays and stuff.

#### *How well do you think you're doing?*

I think I do good in subjects that I like. I could do more coursework. I'm getting marks and test marks, but not an individual one to one in every subject. I would like individual one to one: how to revise, where I went wrong in tests.

#### *How much influence do you feel from other students/friends at school?*

Sometimes: 'cos you hang around with mates after school and they 'phone you up. If I'm doing same coursework as them and they're not doing it, if I'm not getting a mark then they're not either; so I'm not on my own. I think you should enjoy your sen when you're out of school. I think it's 50/50 what you want to do; but I think you should pass homework by. I try to do work and have a laugh: so I'm not doing all work I should be doing. At least it's better than nothing, 'cos I could sit there and talk for all lesson. It depends on the lesson, who I sit with. If I sit with someone who gets on I get my head down and get on with my work. I usually sit with friends who I talk to. I think school is a place where you can come and socialise as well: with friends you can socialise and ask for help with work.

#### *Do your family and relatives influence your attitude towards school? In what ways?*

My Mum is pretty lenient with what I do: when it comes to letters home she doesn't agree with teachers all time. When she was at school she didn't get much encouragement from her Mum and Dad; she's trying to improve on that part. She's trying to be different to how her Mum and Dad treated her when she was at school; they just let her get on with it. She's trying to influence me when I get a report say and I haven't done homework she doesn't say "You're grounded and that". She'll question me; if it's a fair point she'll accept that. If a teacher 'phones home she'll listen but she'd rather have my point of view 'cos there's two sides to every story. *So your Mum is an important influence on your life at school?* Yeah. She'll ask what the day's been like, have you got homework? Sometimes she stops me doing homework. I did more homework in Years 7 and 8 'cos I thought, "New school I'd better make an impression". I used to do loads of homework and then my Mum used to stop me from doing homework 'cos I was doing that much I wasn't going out or owt like that.

*How well do teachers relate to you? Do they affect your attitudes to school and in what ways?*

I get on with teachers if they get on with me: if I walk into a lesson and they say, "Sit down, get on with your work," I'd rather have a teacher that says, "Good morning, how are you?" That takes an interest in you, yourself, than thinking it's my job I've got to make 'em sit down. You've got to know that they're a bit higher than you but they should be more on a level.

*Do you mean respect you? Yeah. What do you call a "bad" teacher?* One who just gives orders: look at board, sit down, get on with your work, do this, do that; those who don't communicate, for example, Mr Scarsdale. With a more interesting, respectful maths teacher I would enjoy maths more. I don't do my homework sometimes just to spite him. *What do you call a "good" teacher?* My form tutor, not a lesson, he treats me with a lot of respect. Mr Hay: he's new to school, not been here very long and he knows we know where things are, what should happen, so he asks us what to do. If I walk in a bit late he'll say, "Are yer alright mate?" things like that. He asks why you're late; if you give a reasonable answer that's alright. If you've got an honest relationship with a teacher you get on well.

*Can teachers give you a negative relationship towards school?* Yeah. Like in maths: if say I had 5 maths lessons in one day, like a maths day, I wouldn't come to school. Lessons I enjoy, like art put me in a good mood. I think I'm making less progress with teachers I don't get on with. It shows in my results; like 37% in a maths test, I think that's rubbish. But in your lesson I got a right good mark. If you've got a good relationship with your teacher that affects your results: you get a better result with a better relationship, you get a worse result if you have a worse relationship.

*How do you feel when a "good" teacher leaves?* I feel like, "Oh, I really like that teacher I wish they'd not gone." Like I wish they were here, like I compare new teachers to ones who've left. Like the other RE teacher she was nice to me but she talked to the class as a whole. Like if someone misbehaved the whole class had to stay in. I don't like that; only ones who are bad should stay in. I like have first opinions of teachers when I first meet them. I try to make a good impression, but if you do good work and they just chuck it back at you without a written comment you start to go downhill. I want them to say if it's a good piece of work; I can lose respect in the relationship otherwise. Supply teachers, they don't get enough respect: I'm not an angel with supply teachers, I don't think anybody is: I don't think they get respect they deserve 'cos they are a teacher but I don't treat them like a proper teacher. *Do you think they affect your progress?* For the odd lesson, no, but having them a lot, yes 'cos they aren't qualified for some subjects they teach. It's really annoying when equipment in IT and games can't be used 'cos of unqualified supply teachers.

*What do you do when you aren't in school? Do any out of school activities influence your attitude towards school?*

I don't hang around on street corners: I think it's a bit boring, a bit sad, just sat around on kerb. I'd rather be doing something, like playing tennis, football. It's better to be doing something like that 'cos if you're sat on street corners people think you're just causing trouble, so what's the point in aggro? *Who are your mates?* People from school in Year 11: Neil, Barry, Josh, Kyle. Josh and Kyle are from Boyston: we go to each other's houses in winter or we go on a bike ride to a local village, Copperthorpe, 'cos if we ride bikes locally people think we're causing trouble. Away from here people don't really know yer so they can't really judge yer that much. People think yer cause trouble if yer from Boyston: if yer go on Leespark estate yer get right funny looks; if yer knock

on someone's door they think yer gonna mug 'em or something. If yer go and call for yer mate and knock on their door yer get people looking from other side of road. If yer riding a bike that's not a top brand new one yer like get judged on it. It's not like racist, like being black but you're being stereotyped 'cos you're from Boyston.

*Do you watch a lot of tv?* It's mainly at night when I'm doing homework; I don't like to work in silence. I spend half an hour on coursework then I go on computer. I've got to break up the night; I can't just sit and do written work. I share a bedroom with Jake; so a bedroom is just somewhere to sleep. I usually watch tv with someone and then I can talk about it with someone. *Do you read?* I don't like reading except the newspaper: I start at the back for sport then I work my way to the front of the Daily Star. I read it 'cos Dad fetches it home from work. *What about you computer?* We don't have internet connection so I use it mainly for games. *Do you have a part-time job?* I work on the market 3 days a week: 2 week days (Wednesday, Friday) and 1 weekend (Saturday), before school at quart to 7 and Saturday at 7. When stalls are set out I can go home, have dinner, go out with my mates. I have to be back for a certain time. After school I go straight down and help pack away stalls. Jake does it too. I hate always asking Mum for money: I want to be independent; I don't want to rely on Mum. I think it's good experience for when I'm older for handling my own money. I can choose what I want to spend it on, like go to Meadowhall. I got this job through Neil working at the market; I started in Year 10. *Does it affect your schoolwork?* I don't get tired; it doesn't affect my schoolwork. When I'm on the market I get treated with more respect, trusted. I would like this trust and respect in school. Like I respect her who I work for: I try to do a good job for her. She's promised me a reference; my aunty who I babysit for, she's given me a reference for work experience.

*What do you expect to get out of school by the time you leave? What are your plans?*

Teacher at primary school where I did my work experience (Boyston primary): A level, university. I'd like to go to Sheffield University where we did the outreach project. As many high grade passes at GSCE as I can get. I expect a bit of everything: you make new friends when you first come so they're there for life really. I want to remember everything in school including bad experiences: I want my kids to learn from my mistakes like I'm learning from my Mum's. *What about your Dad?* I don't talk about education with him. I heard 'cos my Dad moved house a lot he had to change school a lot. He became a self-employed plasterer: he didn't take any exams 'cos he got a job in the mine (Boyston pit) when he left school. He says, "Don't take the path I did; don't mess up, take advantage; take the opportunity you're given". I wouldn't have thought about this if my Dad hadn't said it to me; I think it's given me an attitude towards school. *What does your Mum do?* She works in a factory on Boyston Wood. *So what are the biggest influences on your life?* Family: Mum's and Dad's school and work experiences and then my experiences at school.

## **Appendix 9: Extracts from Diary/Field Notes**

### **The Academy, April 1996 to December 1999**

May, 1996. Some of the local language is very different-unique-there are some words that are totally unfamiliar. Much swearing by the students! (and some staff).

July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1998. My GCSE RE group visited Derby today. At the parents' evening several parents reported that their children had thought it "brilliant!" Andrew (in my study sample) told me that he told his mother it was "the best day of his life".

Summer term, 1998. Year 10 have started coursework tasks. Finding it very stressful. Some boys just copy out chunks from text books.

Autumn term 1998. A Year 11 female student assaulted a Year 10 female student who was then taken to intensive care.

The Head of Maths commented to me that he could take no pleasure from the birth of his second grandchild due to pressure at work.

A male Science colleague complained to me, 'I'm absolutely knackered. I've got to get out of here this year, preferably this month.'

November, 1998. The guest speaker at the 'outstanding achievement' awards evening?!! Is to be Roy Hattersley. I heard some students expressing their anger and frustration about this because of the 'same names' on the awards list.

Spring term, 1999. Each student received a questionnaire to take home to parents called 'Developing Education in Our Area' (in connection with the EAZ). No returns from my Year 11 tutor group.

Summer term, 1999. At last an atmosphere of joy starts to pervade the staff - Mrs Anderson is to be seconded to another school for the autumn term!

### **Prioryfields, January 2000-July 2002**

January 2000. Seems promising-interpersonal relationships between staff are more positive, friendly and between most staff and SMT. SMT are not threatening. Staff cover rota seems to be much fairer. Problems are less individualised - more a whole school issue. Less verbal interaction between students in lessons, less swearing!

No bells seems strange - but lateness to lessons is less of a problem than at the Academy.

Summer term, 2000. Isolation room set up for "problem" students - staff cover on a rota basis.

In a Year 9 PSHE lesson called 'Real game' I noticed the majority of students aspire to jobs that seem well below their likely attainment.

High staff turnover here too! Seems to be because of "difficult" children and an ineffective SMT - just like the Academy again.

Autumn term, 2000. In a 5 day period (Nov 6<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>) the SMT were called into lessons 88 times to deal with "problem" students!

Prioryfields is 24<sup>th</sup> in the league of top performing schools at A level but 3<sup>rd</sup> from bottom for A-C passes at GCSE, in Notts.

December 2000. Cleaners very concerned about increasing amounts of graffiti. In the Humanities block a student had written on the wall 'School is so fucking shit'.

Spring term, 2001. The cover list is growing again. Discipline is worsening in some areas of school.

February 26<sup>th</sup>-March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2001. More staff away than present.

April 2001. Sadly the Year 11 leavers' dinner has been cancelled - George Overend had no time to arrange it.

May 2001. Promising move - a student council to be formed to alert staff to student issues of concern.

July 2001. Two women speakers from the PSD team came to talk to Year 10 about family conflict. Students refused to co-operate. Team walked out after 15 mins. Students told me after that the team had a lack of respect for them. Also, comments like - 'We don't want to know about things we already know' and 'Whatever's your family is your business.' Marjorie Miles was sent to talk to students but I felt students were quite tolerant considering the PSD team had sworn at them using words like 'pissed off' and 'crap'. The students were offended - so was I.

Summer term 2002. 'What I want to do when I'm in Year 10' (Brenda Gregory, Year 9). I'm not sure what I want to do in Year 10. But I want to do all different fun things what I've never done before and interesting thing's so I learn about thing's I never knew about (sic).