

Why On Earth Do You Want to Teach *Those* Kids?

Insight into the Initial and Continuing  
Motivation of Teachers of Children  
With EBD

Margo Allison Shuttleworth  
Doctorate of Education  
Department of Educational Studies  
University Of Sheffield  
August 2005

**MARGO ALLISON SHUTTLEWORTH**  
**WHY ON EARTH WOULD YOU WANT TO TEACH THOSE KIDS?: INSIGHT**  
**INTO THE INITIAL AND CONTINUING MOTIVATION OF TEACHERS OF**  
**CHILDREN WITH EBD**

**ABSTRACT**

This thesis aims to gain insight into the lives of teachers of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). Through collecting a sample of teachers' life stories and analysing these stories in relation to the society in which they are placed, I set out to provide some 'real life' examples of why teachers embark upon a career involving 'problem pupils'.

The research I undertook centred around three key questions:

- a. How does the image a person constructs an EBD teacher as having, affect their motivation to teach?
- b. How have experiences of educational/ pedagogical challenges shaped their practice?
- c. How does their view of what it means to have EBD relate to the security, risk and challenge they associate with their work?

Answering these questions through the interviews and analysis of these interviews, the life stories told were able to give a personal and subjective flavour to my research. It is through people telling their stories that we are able to gain personal insight into *why* people chose to focus on EBD education. A certain type of personality seems to fit the image of an EBD teacher, but it is interesting to note how this personality is shaped by the policies and practices it comes into contact with.

Through the interview process and the transcription and analysis of these life stories, the impact of narrative research on both the researcher and the researched was recognised. The self-reflection which is promoted through this research allowed the storytellers and myself to look inwards in gaining a better understanding of our motivation and our true selves.

The study provided me with a unique opportunity to give voice to teachers within an EBD environment. These voices shed light on the mysterious motivation and appreciation they have concerning the world of EBD education.

## Table of Contents

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION - <i>Why do you teach?</i> .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2: THE POSTMODERN STORIES OF THE EBD WORLD - A LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>16</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	16
2.2 The Importance of Self Reflection in a Postmodern Study.....	19
2.3 The Culture and Image of EBD Schools .....	22
2.31 <i>'The Way Things Are'</i> .....	22
2.32 <i>The Image of an EBD School</i> .....	25
2.33 <i>The 'Ethos' Environment</i> .....	28
2.4 A Postmodern Spin on EBD Provision.....	30
2.5 Policies and Pay that Drive EBD Education.....	33
2.51 <i>The Learning Society and Inclusion</i> .....	33
2.52 <i>The Government's Excellence for All and Code of Practice</i> .....	37
2.53 <i>The Needs of the Teachers - The Financial Incentives of EBD Teaching</i> .....	41
2.6 The Perception of What Makes an EBD Child .....	43
2.7 The Image of Teacher .....	46
2.71 <i>Why did you become a teacher?</i> .....	49
2.72 <i>What do you see as characteristics of being a teacher and how do you fit in this picture?</i> .....	51
2.73 <i>How does an EBD Teacher Fit into the Professional Image of Special Education?</i> .....	54
2.74 <i>Why do people choose to focus on the education of 'problem children'?</i> .....	58
2.75 <i>Where do you see power and control residing in the classroom?</i> .....	59
2.8 From the Outside Looking In to the Inside Looking Out - the value of exploring life stories of teachers .....	62
<b>CHAPTER 3: AN INTRODUCTION TO METHODOLOGY AND METHODS EMPLOYED .....</b>	<b>64</b>

<b>CHAPTER 4: THE HOWS AND WHYS OF LIFE HI/STORIES - METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>66</b>
4.1 The Development and Definitions of Life History Work .....	66
4.11 <i>The Past and Present of Research Involving Life Stories ..</i>	66
4.12 <i>The Humble Beginnings of Life History Research .....</i>	67
4.13 <i>Life Histories Seen Today .....</i>	72
4.13a <i>Tony Parker .....</i>	72
4.13b <i>Nancy Scheper-Hughes .....</i>	73
4.13c <i>Harry F. Wolcott .....</i>	75
4.13d <i>Concluding Thoughts.....</i>	76
4.14 <i>Life History or Life Story? .....</i>	76
4.2 The Post Modern Epistemology of Life Histories .....	79
4.21 <i>Truth in the Post Modern World .....</i>	80
4.3 The Role of the Researcher .....	82
4.4 How Will I Justify My Method and Position as Researcher? .....	84
<b>CHAPTER 5: DEALING WITH THE LIVES OF OTHERS – METHODS EMPLOYED .....</b>	<b>87</b>
5.1 Introduction .....	87
5.2 Issue of Context .....	88
5.21 <i>Physical and Social Context of the Research .....</i>	89
5.22 <i>Personal Context of the Researcher: the influence         of becoming an inside researcher .....</i>	90
5.23 <i>Contexts of the Participants .....</i>	93
5.3 Keeping the Research on Track .....	95
5.4 Participant Search .....	98
5.5 Interview Preparation and Procedures .....	101
5.51 <i>Timelines .....</i>	101
5.52 <i>Personal Intuition and Relational Issues .....</i>	103
5.53 <i>Timing of the Interviews .....</i>	106
5.6 The Storytellers .....	108
5.61 <i>Sonia .....</i>	109
5.62 <i>Martin .....</i>	110
5.63 <i>Pauline .....</i>	111
5.64 <i>Cathleen .....</i>	113
5.65 <i>Alfred .....</i>	114
5.7 How to Deal with the Information Gathered .....	116



5.71	<i>Interpreting the Interview</i> .....	116
5.72	<i>How were the stories composed?</i> .....	119
5.8	Ethical Issues involved in Life Story Research .....	121
5.81	<i>Personal Values and Roles</i> .....	122
5.82	<i>Informed Consent and Confidentiality</i> .....	124
5.83	<i>Ownership and Honesty</i> .....	125
5.84	<i>Epistemological Standpoint</i> .....	127
5.85	<i>The 'Reflexive Reflectiveness'</i> .....	128
5.9	Why Analyse? .....	129
 <b>CHAPTER 6: THE LIFE STORIES</b> .....		<b>131</b>
6.1	Introduction .....	131
6.2	Sonia's Life Story .....	132
6.3	Martin's Life Story .....	142
6.4	Pauline's Life Story .....	151
6.5	Cathleen's Life Story .....	162
6.6	Alfred's Life Story .....	174
 <b>CHAPTER 7: WHAT CAN WE GAIN FROM THESE STORIES - ANALYTICAL CONNECTIONS</b> .....		<b>187</b>
7.1	Introduction .....	187
7.2	The Importance of Analysis in Life Stories .....	190
7.21	<i>Maintaining Ownership</i> .....	191
7.22	<i>Explaining and Validating</i> .....	192
7.23	<i>Data Analysis and Trustworthiness</i> .....	193
7.24	<i>Recognising Subjectivity</i> .....	195
7.25	<i>Acknowledging the Self-Reflectivity</i> .....	197
7.3	The Recurring and Predominant Themes .....	198
7.31	<i>Failure/ Success</i> .....	199
7.32	<i>Acceptance/ Individuality</i> .....	201
7.33	<i>Self/Social Identity</i> .....	202
7.34	<i>Image of Teacher</i> .....	204
7.35	<i>Image of EBD Children</i> .....	206
7.36	<i>Security/ Risk and Challenge</i> .....	208
7.4	Tying it all together to answer the research questions .....	210

7.41	<i>How does the image a person constructs an EBD teacher as having, affect their motivation to teach?</i> .....	210
7.42	<i>How have experiences of educational/ pedagogical challenges shaped their practice?</i> .....	211
7.43	<i>How does their view of what it means to have EBD relate to the security, risk and challenge they associate with their work?</i> .....	213
7.5	To Sum Up ... ..	215
<b>CHAPTER 8: CRITICAL COMMENTARY OF THE ANALYSIS</b> .....		<b>216</b>
8.1	What do these themes tell about the storytellers? .....	216
8.11	<i>Why focus on personal or professionals attributes?</i> .....	216
8.12	<i>Where does power fit in the image of teacher?</i> .....	218
8.13	<i>How does the image of failure reflect upon the storyteller?</i> .....	219
8.14	<i>Is being seen as different a means for acceptance?</i> .....	220
8.15	<i>Where do the children fit into the picture?</i> .....	222
8.16	<i>Are we getting a picture of who a person truly is or rather how he or she wants to be seen?</i> .....	223
8.2	What do these themes tell about the researcher? .....	225
8.3	Relating It Back to My Theoretical Foundations .....	228
8.31	<i>Postmodernism and Subjectivity</i> .....	228
8.32	<i>Postmodernism and Reflectivity</i> .....	229
8.33	<i>Postmodernism and Empowerment</i> .....	230
8.4	Concluding Thoughts - How do these stories and this analysis contribute to the research question? .....	232
<b>CHAPTER 9: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....		<b>236</b>
9.1	Introduction .....	236
9.2	Evaluating the Postmodern Stance .....	236
9.3	Evaluating the Life Hi/story Approach .....	239
9.4	Revisiting the Analytical Themes .....	242
9.5	Policy and Practice: implications and applications .....	247
9.6	So, where do we go from here? .....	248

**APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Invitation to enter research .....	252
Appendix 2: Consent form .....	253
Appendix 3: Timeline Letter and Guidance .....	254
Appendix 4: Interview arrangement .....	256
Appendix 5: Considerations for interviews .....	257

<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>258</b>
--	------------

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a great number of people that I am grateful to in helping and supporting me through the completion of this research project and doctoral thesis. I owe them all greatly (and I am sure there will be a number of drinks bought) for their support, time and enthusiasm given to me in order to make everything work and come together.

I need to thank my storytellers - the people who took the time and made the effort to talk me through their lives. Without them there would be no paper. I was privileged to be allowed into their lives. It can be difficult to find people to help out in research projects and I was lucky to have colleagues who were interested enough to help. I must also thank my school and local educational authority for providing me with the financial support assisting in the funding of my degree.

A great big thank you needs to be given to my supervisor, Dan Goodley, for putting up with the endless queries and questions that come from working with me. His encouragement, advice and helpful feedback were part of the driving force that kept me going when things seemed to be going nowhere. The support and guidance that he gave me allowed me to focus my efforts and kept me on track when I started to drift!

There are many colleagues and friends whose support and friendship meant a great deal. I am particularly thankful to Andrew Azzopardi, my Maltese rock! If it weren't for him, I do not think I would have considered beginning any form of doctorate study. I am lucky to have a friend like Andrew who has been able to bolster my confidence and reassure me in my efforts.

Finally, and most importantly, I must thank my husband, Dave. For continuing on with work on the house while I holed myself in the office to get my thesis work done. For always believing I could, when I thought I couldn't; and always being there when I needed a shoulder to lean on. Without his support and patience (or the proof reading skills provided by him and his mate) my work would not have been possible.



**ABBREVIATIONS**

DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EBD	Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
EP	Educational Psychologist
LEA	Local Educational Authority
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
SEBD	Social Emotional Behavioural Difficulties
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCo	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SCUTREA	Standing Conference on University Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults
SENTC	Special Educational Needs Training Consortium
TTA	Teacher Training Agency

**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION*****Why do you teach?***

This is a question I have reflected on since my career beginnings as a teacher. It is a question that has become more enigmatic since entering into the profession of special education - focusing on children with behavioural problems. I do not think it's a question people give much thought to. We always assume that teachers are altruistic individuals with caring values, who see children as an important part of the world today. We do not want to believe or hear about teachers who are attracted to the job by other factors and/or discover that helping children may not even be a part of a teacher's life picture.

My journey in becoming a teacher was not a straightforward one, nor was it a life choice that had always been apparent to me. In truth, when deciding what career path to embark upon, teaching had never been at the top of my list. The choice of becoming a teacher only became clear through events that changed my perspective on life. Now that my career has lead me into the area of special education, I wonder how it is that I have arrived here and, further still, what has motivated me to stay.

I always wanted to help children, to make a difference in their lives. Now working with children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD), I can aspire to do so, but is this self-justification for my actions or am I truly making a difference in these children's lives? This is the altruistic reasoning people like to associate with teachers, however, I have come to realise that the pay for teaching children with EBD is above and beyond what could be expected to earn from working in a mainstream environment. This is a realisation that although appeals to the more mercenary side, I am sure plays a part in people's rationale for teaching. I do not think, however, it is

enough to keep *me* in a job that I did not enjoy in some other dimension. But what is it that brings such enjoyment and do others feel differently?

Teachers whom I have worked with in EBD education have difficulty explaining their work to other teachers.

Teachers who work in the field of SEN [Special Educational Needs] have been regarded, like the children they interact with, as 'different' ... most teachers working in SEN recognise the powerful relationship between special education and issues of equity, fairness and social justice (Garner et al, 1995, p.3)

This *different* SEN teacher is one that I can truly understand and relate to. Within my institution of a special school for children with EBD, most of the people I work with are indeed different, if not strange in their own particular way. "Teachers constitute a separate species. A species that is to some degree apart and unknown to other mortals" (Goodson, 1992, p.2), this separate species is even more unique in 'EBD education'. Is it this mysterious difference that constitutes what I means to be an EBD teacher?

Being a teacher demands an intense level of patience and perseverance which is not often seen in many other jobs. This patience and perseverance can be even more in demand if you are working with children who are 'different' to the norm. I realise that many people, within my social circles, cannot understand how I manage to keep smiling given the adverse working conditions within which I perform. Teachers within a mainstream environment often will counterbalance these sometimes stressful working conditions, with the rewards gained through seeing children learn and thrive within the learning environment. When you work with children with EBD, however, this success is a rare occurrence. Though rare, are these the genuine reasons that people have for being a teacher? Have they have come into their position to provide

equity, fairness and social justice for the good of the children they teach or are there other motivations to their actions?

Children with emotional and behavioural difficulties are a population within special education who have poor coping strategies for mainstream environments. These children are often violent towards fellow pupils and staff, making learning situations difficult. They do not always habitually know how to be grateful to teachers and in many cases, attack staff with both verbal and physical abuse, making teacher's lives dissimilar to any stereotypical life one sees a teacher as having. Within a school specific in its intent to educate children with EBD, teachers will be faced daily with children who make the learning environment a difficult and sometimes dangerous place. To come back to this hazardous environment day after day can involve some great motivational tactics.

With the current teacher shortage in England, it is interesting to examine the reasons teachers have come to be where they are, particularly those within jobs that many view as torture. Within my institution, there have been a great number of teachers who have attempted to teach children with EBD, many have failed. Those who have succeeded continue to work against odds in "a job which can be described as 'taking up a lot of time and energy, a lot of which does seem pointless'" (Garner et al, 1995, p12). What has brought these people to where they are and what keeps them there?

The people who continue to thrive in an 'EBD environment' arrive with a variety of life stories. Do these stories share common threads? What is it that makes an EBD teacher? Are teachers in this profession for the love of children or the love of money?



Researchers ha[ve] not confronted the complexity of the school teacher as an active agent making his or her own history. Researchers, even when they stopped treating the teacher as numerical aggregate, historical footnote or unproblematic role incumbent still treated teachers as interchangeable types unchanged by circumstance or time (Goodson, 1992, p.4).

Teachers all have a particular philosophy that they hold towards their jobs. This philosophy is shaped by previous experiences and encounters within the education system on both sides of the desk. What is it that motivates teachers of children with EBD?

I know from my current position and dealings with other teachers of children with EBD, there are a great variety of answers to the question posed above. How do the varying answers affect a person's perception of themselves as teachers and the children they teach as pupils? Is the initial drive that brought teachers into their profession the same one that is keeping them there? This is a study that will examine and hopefully find some plausible answers to these questions.

In order to gain some clarity in the matter of what it is that motivates teachers of children with EBD to continue with their work, I will engage with a small sample of teachers providing their life story. This will in no way give generalisations to the entire population of 'EBD teachers', but it will enable me to give insight into several perspectives of how teachers feel about their teaching and how they see themselves having arrived where they are today. I hope this study will give even greater insight and understanding to the people who choose to participate, as well as, those who read it.

Telling one's story can be a way of becoming who one really is. It can be a way of owning once and for all the values and attitudes that have been acquired over a lifetime from family or elsewhere. Telling a life story the way one sees it can be one of the most emphatic answers to the question "Who am I?" For some, in telling a life story, both self-image and self-esteem can gain in clarity and

strength, whereas for others, the story they tell may only partially or temporarily answer this larger question (Atkinson, 1998, p. 12).

This self-enlightenment afforded to the teachers involved will hopefully strengthen their position within the institution of education, giving them a voice to justify their sometimes misunderstood occupation.

The exchange of life stories may impact greatly on all participants involved. Through sharing our stories, both the participants and myself may revisit and revise how we once viewed our pasts.

Within our consciousness, the past is malleable and flexible, constantly changing as our recollection reinterprets and re-explains what has happened. Thus we have as many lives as we have points of view. We keep reinterpreting our biography very much as the Stalinists keep rewriting the Soviet Encyclopaedia, calling forth some events into decisive importance as others are banished to ignominious oblivion (Berger, 1966, p.68).

When we look back and examine our past, we often realise that our views have changed over time. How we felt about particular instances in our lives may be influenced by how we view ourselves at the time we tell our story.

With this focus of research, it is important to not only consider how teachers came to work in an EBD environment, but also how events have brought the children into this environment and how they have been labelled as 'EBD'. There are many answers to why children are labelled with EBD and why they have such difficulties with all aspects of education. Their emotional and behavioural responses to both learning and social environments cause them to be ostracised from mainstream schooling. This is one possible answer to root of problems associated with EBD, but how do teachers view these 'problem pupils'?

Do schools individualize problems surrounding pedagogy and a child called disabled and construct the issues as a personal trouble

deriving from that child, or do they see it as a public curriculum issue? (Fulcher, 1999, p.25).

Why is this an important area of study? Is it an appropriate subject to devote a great deal of time and effort to? I experience teaching children with EBD as my chosen career and, as mentioned, it is difficult for people to understand why. Allowing these teachers' voices to be heard and recognised may provide a sense of solidarity to them. It may help to provide clarity and strength to their feelings and views.

Telling these stories and framing them within a life history approach can act as a powerful force for change in the teller, the researcher as listener-writer, and eventually the reader. As a consequence, life history work has the potential to help individuals view themselves and the occupation of teaching in a new and emancipatory ways (Sparkes, 1994, p.179).

My study will therefore involve listening to teachers' subjective life stories and then analysing them in relation to the influences around them. This will give me insight into their perceptions of what it means to be a teacher and what has brought them into the profession. Through this study I hope to open up the mysterious world of EBD education. I often think that children with the label of 'EBD' are tagged as the 'rotten apples' of the classrooms. It is difficult for people to understand how or why people choose to teach them and through listening to teachers' stories I hope to shed some light on this mystery and gain insight into my research questions:

- a. How does the image a person constructs an EBD teacher as having affect their motivation to teach?
- b. How have experiences of educational/ pedagogical challenges shaped their practice?
- c. How does their view of what it means to have EBD relate to the security, risk and challenge they associate with their work?

**CHAPTER 2:**  
**A LITERATURE REVIEW:**  
**THE POSTMODERN STORIES OF THE EBD WORLD**

**2.1 Introduction**

People decide to become teachers for a variety of reasons, and choosing to stick with it can be both rewarding but at times can also be plagued with difficulties. My original decision to become a teacher was further enhanced when I chose to go into the field of education for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). I knew I would find my job extremely rewarding and challenging as I would be working with children who needed a teacher to get them enthused about learning. As time has passed, my perception of work has changed as I have realised that my work in the classroom is only a part of what my career involves. Though I still find it rewarding and somewhat fulfilling, there are aspects which no longer create the contentedness that I once felt in my career. I must not only be a teacher to my pupils, but I must also fit into the societal and governmental assigning of 'teacher'.

In looking at my attitudinal changes I am able to recognise aspects of my day to day occurrences that have a direct impact upon my desires to continue work within an EBD environment, within my school in particular, and my motivation to ensure that I do the best possible job that I am able. I am sure that I am not alone in the changing images and perceptions I prescribe to teaching in an EBD environment. For this reason, in constructing my literature review, I am employing the personal and self-reflective approach that is espoused by a postmodern stance.



Teaching within an EBD environment can be influenced a number of factors both within and outside of the school environment. The ethos (or culture) that exists within a school will have an impact upon a teacher's perception of his or her position within it. The image a teacher ascribes to the children that are being taught will directly influence the approach taken to teaching. The policies and practices imposed upon schools and individual teachers by 'the powers above' will oversee what is viewed as effective teaching. And, although many teachers see the money that they earn as secondary, the financial rewards associated with their jobs will influence their mind-set towards their job.

***But what exactly is EBD?***

Children labelled as EBD can find it difficult to cope with situations in a socially acceptable way. They have failed in their academic endeavours within a mainstream school and problems have manifested with their peers and teachers.

Children with EBD are labelled so due to their poor coping strategies which have been learned from living in disadvantageous positions. They cannot relate to the National Curriculum and often do not recognise the true potential of the learning environment.

There is "a prevailing tendency to characterise many pupils with problems as disaffected from learning and even oppositional to schools" (Garner, 1999, p. 25).

Depending upon to whom you speak, the source of the problems of these children can be placed upon the children themselves, the family and society in which they live, or the schooling which they receive.

The strongest influence in bringing me into EBD teaching was the ability to make a difference, to be remembered by some of my pupils as ‘the teacher who helped me to succeed’. I chose my career path in the efforts to make children’s lives better through how I viewed my ‘role as teacher’. The reasoning behind my career choice encapsulates both my image of what it means to be a teacher and the characteristics I ascribe to an EBD child.

Once in my school, my relations within my work place were another influential factor in my motivation to continue along the career path I have chosen. The support and friendship from the colleagues with whom I work, help to provide the motivation needed in what can be a very stressful job. With the unpredictability faced in the EBD classroom, it is comforting to know that there are always people around that offer help through difficult times. If there is no support within the staffroom, the challenges faced everyday in the classroom can be much more difficult to cope with. This support comes not only from individual colleagues but from the overall ethos the school promotes and the management style employed.

I am sure that there are numerous personal factors that influence a person’s motivation for teaching. Individual teachers all have a subjective story of how they view themselves in relation to the outside world and as Goodson (1981) points out, “in understanding something so intensely personal as teaching, it is critical we know about the person a teacher is” (p.69). However, this study is subjective in nature and as postmodernity emphasises the importance of self reflection, I have chosen to focus on the factors that I see as influential. I will therefore focus on:

1. the cultures and images associated with EBD schools

2. Governmental and societal policies that influence EBD education including pay structures for teachers
3. Perceptions of children with EBD
4. Images and identities of teachers and how this affects their approach to education

Though not exhaustive, these influences give a good basis for much of the motivation and retention of teachers within the EBD school culture. Overall, it must be remembered that teaching, like any other job, is approached differently depending on the individual.

Teaching is also a job: a set of tasks and human relationships that are structured in particular ways. Similarly, the school – that place where most paid teachers teach – is more than an empty shell of walls and windows; more even than a learning environment for its students. The school is also a work place for its teachers – just like the hospital is for a surgeon, the office for a clerk, and the shop floor for a factory worker. This work place is structured through resources and relationships which can make the job easier or harder, fruitful or futile, rewarding or dispiriting (Hargreaves, 1994, p.13).

Before looking in more depth at the influences that I have chosen to focus upon, I will justify the self-reflective position that I hold in this study.

## **2.2 The Importance of Self Reflection in a Postmodern Study**

In looking at the relevance of my study to the wider field of education, I realise that, as with any study, its personal impact actually adds great meaning to it. Being able to reflect personally on how the study has affected myself as an inside researcher will give as much information and advice as the actual outcome of the study. My voice, as well as the voice of the participants, has a validity which sheds light on the world of ‘EBD teaching’. As Hargreaves (1994) recognizes:

Teachers' voices have their own validity and assertiveness which can and should lead to questioning, modification and abandonment of those theories .... Teachers' words do not merely provide vivid examples of theories at work. They also pose problems and surprises for those theories (p. 4).

Postmodernity recognises the importance of self reflection in determining the subjective nature of teachers' individual voices and stories. No two people will have the same experiences in life and, therefore, it can be difficult to assign correct meaning to another person's personal account of life.

Selves become transient texts, to be read and misread, constructed and deconstructed at will. Human selves become things that people display and other people interpret, not things that have lasting and inner substance of their own. Postmodernity, therefore, sees a "suspicion of the supposed unity and transparency of the disengaged self [and] of the alleged inner sources of the expressed self" [Taylor, 1989, pp 487-88] (Hargreaves, 1994, p.70).

As there is such a great chance of misreading and misinterpreting the meaning behind a personal story, it is important to reflect on the influence that you as an interpreter will bring to your version of the story. It is important to recognise that all people bring a certain amount of bias when interpreting things that have been said to them. Past experiences and current positions will influence our presumptions of what is meant behind words. The self-reflection promoted through a postmodern stance identifies these biases and recognises that subjective interpretation of stories may shape them in order to arrive at the conclusions sought.

Postmodernity has no single inherent meaning or value. Rather it offers a new social arena in which moral and political values and commitments in education can be played out. Postmodernity offers new opportunities for these commitments to be realised and also presents new constraints (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 43).



The employment of a postmodern approach attempts to recognise that no two people will have the same underpinning knowledge of the meaning behind words.

Adopting a post-modern theoretical position involves denying the existence of foundation knowledge on the grounds that no knowable social reality exists beyond the signs of language, image and discourse. There can, therefore be no agreed way in which we can understand things we call social systems, or even other human selves, for they too have no inner essences beyond language, image and discourse. Truth, reality and reason itself are therefore unavailable to human knowledge and understanding. (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 39).

Postmodernity recognised that how I approach my subjects' stories is tainted by my own past experiences, not only within the teaching field but also my experiences with each individual. My own base of knowledge of the storyteller will create inference that I will intuitively make. My own experience and how I define their meanings will not always correlate. Through my analysis, I impose *my* meaning upon their words. This does not render the analysis inaccurate, but rather allows the bias to become transparent making meaning that much more meaningful.

It is not only the meaning behind the words that illustrates the subjective nature which is paramount to a postmodern approach. One's view of work is dependant upon the subjective approach a person takes towards it.

It [work] in terms of productivity, profit and satisfaction can be enhanced by the judicious adjustment of the temporal, spatial and interpersonal relations of the work place according to the knowledge of the subjectivity of the worker (Rose, 1989, p. xi).

Everyone approaches their work in a different way. The knowledge, experience and personality of a person will affect and shape the way they view their work and the environment that surrounds them. My attitude towards work is influenced by my underlying need to make things better. Other people may be driven by completely

differing forces. Whatever the driving force behind work, for it to be enjoyable, people must feel fulfilled.

Productive work itself can satisfy the worker; the activity of working itself can provide rewarding personal and social relations for those engaged in it; good work can be a means to self fulfilment (Rose, 1989, p. 55).

Though engaging with people who are in a similar field of employment, there is nothing to say that they have similar motivational factors. 'Good work' is particular to the individuals participating in it. What some may see as fulfilment, other may view as a burden. What is one person's pleasure is another's pain.

The postmodern approach recognises that there is great subjectivity in many aspects of story telling. The meaning behind words, how a person experiences meaning, the underlying motivation that gives meaning to what is being said and the experiences that cast light upon the interpretation of words will all collude together to create an individual and unique spin on stories told and translated. Seeing no one single truth through the ideals of postmodernity creates a fuller picture of the influence of both the storyteller's and researcher's voice in portraying a life history.

## **2.3 The Culture and Image of EBD Schools**

### **2.31 'The Way Things Are'**

A person's attitude towards their work, in any occupation, can in part be shaped by the culture they experience within the workplace. For teachers teaching children with EBD, the culture within a school can 'make or break' the approach and attitude teachers have towards fulfilling their duties to the children.

The culture of a school can be described as:

What we experience as the 'way things are' in an organisation, the written and unwritten rules that regulate behaviour, the stories and the 'myths' of what an organisation has achieved, the standards and values set for its members (Dalin, 1993, as quoted in Miller, 1996, p.93).

This definition of culture covers many aspects of the experience of school. It looks at both the formal and informal dealings that teachers have within the school. It can almost be further described as the 'code of conduct' that the school sets for its members of staff.

All professions have a special relationship within society. Traditionally the teaching profession has a particular image to uphold within its community and, as a body, the school has many expectations to fulfil. Teachers are expected to create opportunities to better children's future.

Professions set their own standards, regulate entry into their ranks, discipline their members, and... in return the professions are expected to serve the public good and to set and enforce higher standards of conduct and discipline (Skrtic, 1991, p. 87).

Within an EBD school environment, expectations do not always fit into the traditional image of a mainstream school. Teachers, however, do have certain obligations to fulfil. A school catering for children with EBD has an obligation to the children to create a safe and secure environment for its pupils. It has an obligation to the community which, depending to whom you speak, varies greatly. Some feel that the school is keeping these 'terrors' off the streets whereas others feel the school is aiding in making these children better suited to cope with the society they live in a socially acceptable manner. The school also has obligations to its staff to create a culture that promotes comfort and satisfaction within the work place. How the teacher and school as a whole define their images in relation to themselves and the community will directly influence the provision and fulfilment of expectations held by teachers, pupils and the community.

The school system, as a whole, is constantly undergoing great changes. The inherent rights of the child have come to the forefront of education giving children more power in the classroom and more of a say in their education. Teachers are no longer expected to *teach* but rather to actively engage children in their learning. Weber and Mitchell (1995) examined the “traditional images of teaching as transmission of knowledge from all-knowing teacher into empty vessel student” (p.28), teachers were seen as all-powerful and all-knowing imparting knowledge to a ‘blank slate’. Today, however, with the more child-centred approach which is advocated, teachers no longer hold the position of absolute authority and in certain instances children hold power over the teacher.

In educational setting at the time, behavioural approaches retained a strong aura of control, perhaps by being allied to the inevitable, if sometimes unvoiced, need of school to create and maintain a degree of order among their pupils (Miller, 1996, p. 33).

Miller highlights the strong desire for control that often goes hand in hand with behaviour and discipline. This struggle for control is even more apparent in a school for children with EBD. There are children that teachers will come into contact with who have learned to manipulate the system, disempower teachers and disrupt the order sought by most schools. This can often make it difficult for teachers to remain focused on the positive significance of a child-centred approach to education. This issue of control is central to many teachers’ struggles with behaviour problems, but what a teacher must ask, is why this manipulation takes place. The struggle between teachers and pupils for control and power is often where the difficulties originate. One must ask, is it only the pupil that is manipulating power or do teachers play a role as well?



There are many parties that are involved in the lives of children with EBD. As many of the children come from deprived backgrounds, they often have dealings with specialised services including Educational Psychologists (EPs), child protection agencies and social workers to name but a few. With all this “support” it can be the case that responsibility is shifted from party to party and accountability gets lost. Children often feel they need to manipulate the system in order to move forward and it can be the basis of their struggle for control within the classroom. With the shifting in responsibility that is seen, can one say it is only the child that is manipulating? An EBD school should be a place that should aim to demystify the support. It recognises that the children are in need of help to overcome the educational and social difficulties that have arisen from behavioural and emotional issues surrounding their lives.

The recognition of an EBD school as a place for children with a form of learning difficulty acknowledges the fact that the behaviour of the children can be beyond their control. For this reason it is important that for an EBD school to be successful for both its pupils and its staff, a positive attitude towards learning must exist. I will now look at particular aspects of the image and ideal culture that should exist within EBD schools and how this affects teachers' attitude towards their work.

### **2.32 The Image of an EBD School**

When looking at how a school for children with EBD is viewed in today's society, you are able to reach a number of different opinions and views depending upon whom you ask. School means differing things to a variety of people and an EBD school has an image which can be far removed from that of a mainstream school.

Teachers, parents, pupils, communities, employers and politicians all have a perspective and these become picked up, intertwined and widely dispersed by the forceful gusts of public opinion (Miller, 1996, p.1).

A school for EBD children can be seen as a second chance for pupils who have been excluded from other educational provision. It can be viewed as a last ditch effort for these children to remain in the education system. Some people with no experience of the children within these schools see them as the sin bins of the educational society. The schools can be seen as a form of crowd control, keeping the unruly delinquent children off the street. Though these later views do hold some truth to them, they do not always take into account that children with EBD can be influenced by the “external factors [that] can be implicated not only in the definition of such difficulties but in their possible maintenance, amplification or amelioration” (Miller, 1996, p. 8). An EBD school gives children with difficulties the opportunity to succeed through smaller classes sizes and extra support.

An EBD school attempts to bring children back into the social world. Whilst in the mainstream classroom, these children detract from other children’s opportunities to learn and are unable to gain a useful education themselves. An EBD school provides a sense of community and tries to give children an understanding of the importance of education.

The goal, for better or for worse, is to help young people cope with and adapt to society, not to give them the ambition or the tools to change it. Empowerment is seen as an individualistic concept, with no suggestion of disaffected young people working together as a group in order to understand and alter the conditions which lead to social exclusion and inequalities (Merton and Parrot, 1999, p.25).

Children in an EBD school come into the school realising that the world can be a very lonely place. Though it is important to remember the individuality of each child, it is

equally important to have each child feel an important member of a community. EBD schools provide children with an atmosphere of acceptance. This acceptance allows children to experiment with the knowledge they gain, learning how to relate it to their everyday experiences.

The individual explores the constraints and opportunities of the organizational context in which she works, while the organization similarly questions the limits of the wider society in which it is located. Learning continually extends the cycle of learning (Ranson, 1998, p. 14).

EBD schools reinforce the boundaries and routines which a society sets for children.

Though to the children, these boundaries may at first feel constricting, teachers and staff within an EBD school demonstrate to children the benefits which exist. Soon the children are able to realise that boundaries and routines are there to aid in their own social and economical development.

EBD schools can be viewed as the 'sin bins' of education, or the emancipation of children with nowhere else to turn. I prefer to side with the latter stance. When children enter into an EBD school they exhibit socially unacceptable behaviour and prescribe to way of life which may not be in their own, or societies, best interest. In most cases, however, they are able to leave the school with a more positive outlook on life. They understand the importance of making a contribution to society rather than taking from it. I think it is important that this positive outlook must be the focus of an EBD school's role. It looks at social inclusion of each and every child as an important member of society.

### 2.33 The 'Ethos' Environment

Within the teaching profession, the ethos, or culture, of a school is frequently mentioned in documentation. The ethos accounts for the distinctive character and spirit felt within a school by both the pupils and staff. It relates to the support mechanisms that drive a school forward and promote contentment within. The context that the school places its teachers in will influence how they view themselves, their jobs and their feelings about their job. As Evans (1998) notes:

It is at the context specific level that teachers carry out their work. Centrally initiated conditions or, indeed, any conditions that emanate from outside the contexts in which teachers work only become real for and meaningful and relevant to teachers when they become contextualised (p.141).

The school is able to frame this context through the ethos that is practiced within its walls.

The ethos of a school affects all people who operate within its boundaries.

Teachers and pupils alike, benefit from an ethos that promotes a supportive and progressive environment with a focus on personal and professional development.

It is recognised that teachers also have certain affiliative and affective needs in respect of their colleagues 'especially in circumstances where they feel themselves to be under threat from pupils' (Miller, 1996, p. 97).

As Miller points out, teachers, within an environment that at times can be difficult and threatening, need the support of their colleagues and senior members of staff to validate and rationalise their reasons for teaching. When a teacher's day-to-day events can be plagued with oppositional and defiant behaviour, there needs to be an outlet where supportive and compliant relations exist. It is of paramount importance that there is a



staffroom which is welcoming and supportive and a managerial system which celebrates teachers' success, aiming to develop and strengthen their professionalism.

A supportive staffroom allows teachers to gain the most out of their professional and personal lives at school. This, in turn, not only benefits the teacher's performance but also the pupil's behaviour and outlook.

[It] maintains health, motivation and performance, allows stress reduction ... provides a professional network, brings ideas and synergies, builds trust, increases school effectiveness, helps schools to become more innovative and lively, creates free space within and strengths towards the outside, achieves higher satisfaction and better climate of pupils (Luzern, 1998, trans. FV).

Pupils within an EBD school need to have role models that are supportive. This support must not only be seen between the teachers and pupils but also amongst the teachers themselves. Supportive staff relations benefit each teacher through the encouragement gained from colleagues and also through the image of unity portrayed to the pupils.

It is important that teachers not only feel supported by their colleagues but also valued by their superiors. A supportive staffroom must be corroborated by a supportive management structure. "The challenge for headteachers is to value the individuality [of teachers] by trying to accommodate these varied needs as far as it is possible, without compromising the needs of the school as a whole" (Evans, 1998, p. 161). For teachers to thrive and be happy in their position within a school, the management system must recognise their talents and value their input to the school. Senior staff should find ways to maximise their fellow teachers' potential whilst recognising the pressures and demands that their work load brings. Much like the 'child-centred' approach advocated in educational circles, management must adopt a 'teacher-centred' approach to teachers' development.

The 'teacher centred' headteacher recognises the advantages and rewards of enabling rather than constraining teachers by management that responds to their needs... Teachers, like children, need recognition of their efforts... Recognition of the need for delegated responsibility, shared decision- and policy- making, and a general wider distribution of workload supports the notion of team approaches to management (Evans, 1998, pp. 161/166).

This team approach not only helps to make the teachers feel valued, but also allows the headteacher to share the great burden which they are responsible for.

The importance of a positive school ethos is an essential part of any school.

Within an EBD environment, however, the need for support, recognition and professional development are even more important due to the hostile forces that can exist within the classroom. Whereas in a mainstream environment, a teacher can balance out difficult staff relations through supportive parental networks and enthusiastic children within their class, this is a rare case in an EBD environment. It is important that both written and unwritten policies at all levels, support and recognise the contributions of teachers dealing with children and families of difficult emotional and behavioural backgrounds. It is also important that these policies foster an inclusive environment for the children involved.

#### **2.4 A Postmodern Spin on EBD Provision**

Postmodernity places an emphasis on a multiplicity of truths existing within society with "reality [being] socially rather than naturally constructed" (Macionis and Plummer, 2002, p. 663). Before moving any further with my study, I must make clear my subjective notion of what an EBD school is about.

My assertion of an EBD school as a second chance for EBD children to thrive, where teachers are there to help them overcome their difficulties bringing them into the social world is an optimistic one. I am able to justify my reasoning through my own personal experience; however does my reality suit the needs of everyone? Can I claim that I hold the absolute truth?

Postmodernists may argue that the notion of EBD is a term used to justify a person's role within education:

The official label 'sebd' developed out of official obligations to accommodate professional and administrative demands to respond to the educational needs of children who were 'in trouble' at school (Padfield, 1997).

Padfield recognises that much of the labelling of 'problem children' results from the power struggles that exist within the classroom. Are children labelled EBD as they are a threat to the power a teacher sees him/herself as holding? By labelling a child, the power is taken away from the pupil. It is not the lack of control nor the poor classroom management skills that is the problem. The label provides an excuse to negate any responsibility of the teacher. It maintains a position of power and authority to teachers and recognising a culture and way of life which are completely pervaded by power, control and domination. As Foucault advocates all knowledge is constituted and socially constructed under conditions of power (Foucault, 1977a). Through this postmodern approach, the label of EBD and the provision afforded to these children is constructed to maintain the roles and power within the education system.

In contrasting my views with those of Padfield and/or Foucault, it is clear that not all people have the same view of EBD schools. Those from 'the outside' may attach negative images to the children that attend and therefore see control and containment as

key features. Some people involved within the system may come from backgrounds that insist on control and submission as key in maintaining order and discipline within a school. There may even be those children who cannot accept the view that these schools are there to help. They may feel that they are another aspect of society created to enforce more rules in order to control and dominate them. Though these views are different to the ones that I hold, I cannot discount them as untrue.

Postmodernists argue..... for respecting the existence of a plurality of perspectives, as against the notion that there is one single truth from a privileged perspective (Stones, 1996 as quoted in Macionis and Plummer, 2002, p. 32).

Postmodernity allows for the multiplicity of truths to exist. Though I have my own reasoning behind my judgements, it does not discount other's judgements as untrue. My view of an EBD school is that view of a teacher within the profession who enjoys what she does. Other teachers will have different opinions which add to diverse nature of the profession.

If the changes facing teachers seem confusing and disconnected, this is often because what is driving them, the context from which they spring, is unclear... The context itself is also deeply a confusing one. The postmodern condition is complex, paradoxical and contested (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 83).

I think one of the central issues surrounding EBD through a postmodern eye is the contestation in defining what it is and how people fit into roles associated with it. My reasoning has been influenced by the society I find myself in now as well as the society in which I was raised. Other societies will have equally valid reasoning behind their stances which are equally relevant and valid. My subjective approach to defining the purpose of an EBD school makes claims of help, support and trust. Though this cannot



be considered an absolute definition, it will be used in fuelling much of my analysis and discussion.

## **2.5 Policies and Pay that Drive EBD Education**

The ideals of social and educational inclusion can be seen as the fundamentals of the child-centred approach to EBD education. The government strives for 'Excellence for all Children' (1997), recognising that 'Every Child Matters' (2004). The government has instituted policies relating to the education and well being of every child which contribute to the base for EBD education. It is then up to the school to create a whole school approach that fosters an inclusive way of thinking with a recognition of the values of learning amongst its staff and pupils. It must balance the needs of the children with the needs of the teachers.

### **2.51 The Learning Society and Inclusion**

EBD schools play an important role in the learning society. The learning society can be seen as an:

Investment in skills and ideas, together with the development of a culture of lifelong learning for all... [this is] 'essential' to continue to compete, to generate new wealth, and to equip individuals and organisations to cope with enormous economic and social change (Parry and Fry, 1999, p. 95).

The learning society sees individual gain in relation to the larger society and what it produces. Children who attend EBD schools have often become social outcasts of society. As the learning society has a pledge towards an inclusive society, EBD schools works towards keeping children included in the education system and provide these

children with support in building relations within the greater society. In doing so, EBD schools provide children with social and educational opportunities which they have previously been excluded from.

Children who attend EBD schools have all experienced forms of social exclusion. They have been expelled from their mainstream environment and some of these exclusions have involved long periods of time. As Corbett notes “unless they are highly resilient, they are likely to absorb these negative images of themselves and take on the roles of passive victim or social outsider (Corbett, 1999, p. 181). EBD schools take on the important role of giving their pupils a sense of social inclusion. An EBD school provides children with a safe environment where they are able to work alongside their peers, giving each child a sense of importance within its society. It gives pupils a sense of security, allowing them to regain their confidence in their academic and social ability.

Some people find it difficult to understand that pupils within an EBD school need to feel secure and safe, after all it was their ‘unsafe’ behaviour which got them there in the first place. Many people see these schools as ‘sin bins’ where ‘deviant children’ are banished. Though this is a crude and primitive interpretation, there is some truth to it which cannot be ignored. Children within EBD schools are there, in part, due to their inability to conform to societal norms. They often do not understand what acceptable behaviour is. Their violent or unacceptable reactions to social and educational situations have been negatively reinforced through the attention gained and poor role models they have been exposed to. Though it is negative attention, for some children it is the only attention they are able to achieve, which is better than being ignored. With an EBD school, teachers must address problems as a consequence of the children’s lack of

exposure to socially acceptable behaviour, rather than purposively deviant. The children are made responsible for their behaviour to themselves and others in their peer group.

Reshaping children's behaviour can sometimes be difficult due to the influence these children are exposed to within their homes. Children's inability to cope with mainstream schooling often stems from difficult home lives, with parents who exhibit similar unacceptable behaviour. EBD schools are faced with the role of not only teaching children skills for both in and outside of the classroom, but also the battle of external forces which combat against the school in its quest to teach children. EBD schools need to give their pupils the opportunity to succeed, and in order to succeed children must learn to act in a successful way.

Children within an EBD school have already been denied the right to a mainstream education. In some cases, children's emotional and behaviour problems are compounded by learning difficulties they encounter within a mainstream classroom, whilst others' learning capacity may be above and beyond that of his or her peers. In either scenario, an EBD school must make learning relevant to each individual child. The knowledge they gain should make a personal impact upon their lives, therefore showing the children the importance of learning. As Johnston points out:

an approach to social inclusion which involves collective and pro-active learning with an explicit focus on the development of 'really useful knowledge'...[is] geared specifically towards influencing and changing our everyday lives (Johnston, 2000, p. 5).

Social inclusion, in the long term, equates to inclusion within the labour market. Children within an EBD school often have limited options of work force participation. "The cost to society more widely of failure to tackle these problems is higher still, both in

terms of reduced economic contribution in adult life and, for some, of criminal activity and prison” (DfEE, 1997, p. 78). Teachers within the school must employ a multidisciplinary approach, working together with outside agencies to re-expand children’s options and choices. Children need to feel that they are valued and able to work to contribute to society in a way that benefits them as well as society. They should be given a sense of ownership about their work.

Society has realised that in order for a learning society to flourish, the foundations must be laid through broad and well-balanced educational opportunities for its entire young people. Educationally, children with EBD need to understand the importance of learning. EBD schools allow “pupils to have control over their own learning process, and ownership of the knowledge produced, which is relevant to their concerns” (Cocklin and Davis, 1996). Before entering the world of ‘really useful knowledge’, children must be taught how to use the knowledge they are imparted with. An EBD school contributes to the aim of keeping children included socially and educationally. It must encourage its pupils to actively engage in their learning by making it useful to them. Children must learn how to learn:

To learn, then, is to develop understandings which lead into, and grow out of, action: to discover a sense of agency that enables us, not only to define and make ourselves, but to do so by actively participating in the creation of a world in which, inescapably we live together (Ranson, 1998, p.20).

Learning to learn allows children to make decisions about their future. Schools give them the knowledge to make choices about what they want to be, where they want to go, and how they want to do things. It defines people as individuals and their role within



society. EBD schools provide their pupils with choices about the future that may not have been open to them before.

### 2.52 The Government's Excellence for All and Code of Practice

The government has aimed to keep children in mainstream school, therefore *including* them in the education process. In the 1997 Green Paper Excellence for All Children: Special Educational Needs (DfEE) the government asserted

There is strong educational, as well as social and moral, grounds for education children with SEN [including behavioural] with their peers. We aim to increase the level and quality of inclusion within mainstream schools.... We need to find ways of tackling their difficulties early, before they lead to under-achievement, disaffection and, in too many cases, exclusion from mainstream education (pp. 43, 77).

They do realise, however, that it is not always to the benefit of all to include children with EBD in a mainstream setting

Where children's difficulties are severe, they may need – at least for a time – to be educated outside mainstream schools, in some cases residential provision, both in their own interests and in the interests of other children (DfEE, 1997, p. 85).

For this reason Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) have been established to accommodate those pupils who need short term support in dealing with their behaviour problems. There are, however, still those pupils that are in need of long term support as Garner (1999) notes:

The group most commonly associated with the need to maintain separate schools and units are pupils whose educational difficulties relate to their perceived emotional and behavioural difficulties (p.51).

EBD schools, though not necessarily viewed favourably in the scope of inclusion, are still an important resource for supporting pupils with severe behaviour problems when short term provision is not successful. Before dismissing EBD schools and their

contribution to educational inclusion, people should think about where some of these troubled pupils would find themselves if they were not in existence.

All children who attend EBD schools have been assigned a statement of special education needs organised by the Local Education Authority (LEA). A statement is issued “when it is considered that the special educational provision necessary to meet the child’s needs cannot reasonably be provided within the resources normally available to mainstream schools” (DFES, 2001, 8:2). Statements are arrived at only after various stages of support have been organised through The Code of Practice (2001).

The Code of Practice (2001) recognises the key to early identification and intervention to prevent problems before they become too extreme. They look at providing support for the children through observation and assessment of the pupil’s progress. If it is felt that the child is not progressing at an appropriate pace with strategies developed to cater to the rest of the class, the school should consider the first stage of support for this child – *School Action*. Through *School Action* the class teacher remains responsible for the support given to the child, however:

the deployment of extra staff to enable one-to-one tuition ... different learning materials or special equipment; group or individual support; extra adult time in devising the nature of planned intervention and to monitoring its effectiveness; undertaking staff development and training to introduce more effective strategies (DFES, 2001, 5:49).

If this is not successful, outside agencies are then consulted and the child is then moved onto *School Action Plus*. It is here that “external specialists may act in an advisory capacity, or provide additional specialist assessment or be involved in teaching the child directly” (DFES, 2001, 5:58). If this additional external support is unsuccessful and the child demonstrates significant cause for concern, request for statutory assessment will be

made by the school. It is through this assessment that a child receives a statement of special educational needs.

Statutory assessments are costly and are not always granted. It is in the economic interest of the LEA to keep the number of children with statement to a minimum. With the overall aim of inclusion the LEA will want all children to remain in mainstream schools

Pupils with special educational needs but without statements must be treated as fairly as all other applicants for admissions" (DFES, 1:33),

**HOWEVER:**

pupils with a statement of special educational needs should only be refused in the small minority of cases where the child's inclusion would be incompatible with the efficient education of other children (1:35).

It can be difficult for class teachers to deal with children with statements. When there is an entire class with differentiated learning styles and patterns that need to be considered, some may inadvertently contribute to the poor behaviour patterns of some pupils.

teachers are less likely to acquire knowledge, skills and confidence that might be of help to them in their work with slightly less challenging pupils who none the less stretch their professional capabilities. And in some ways, by not acquiring expertise for those levels of problems, the pattern is able to repeat itself, with the less practiced professional response being available for the next graduation of lesser seriousness, and so on (Miller, 1996, p. 6).

Teachers in a mainstream environment already have the responsibility of differentiating work for the pupils within their class. The added pressures that can be associated with statements of emotional and behavioural difficulties can become exaggerated in classrooms with teachers of less experience.

Children and young people who demonstrate features of emotional and behavioural difficulties, who are withdrawn or isolated, disruptive and

disturbing, hyperactive and lack concentration; those with immature social skills; and those presenting challenging behaviours arising from other complex needs (DFES, 2001, 7:60).

Though unintentional, children's behaviour difficulties can manifest due to the inability of the system to cater for pupils in need of that extra attention within a larger class environment.

In saying this, it is not easy to gain admission to EBD schools. They are extremely costly to maintain and the government, therefore, ensures that only those children who are in need of severe and intensive support are eligible. However, once in a school dedicated to provision of support for children with EBD either residential or day based, the schools need to enforce policies which promote consistency and secure boundaries showing the children that everyone is working together for the best interest of the child.

Recently the government has introduced the Green Paper, Every Child Matters (2004), which backs up the supportive policies that are seen in successful EBD schools.

This paper:

aims to ensure that every child and young person has the opportunity to fulfil their potential, and no child slips through the net. The Green Paper sets out five outcomes which services should work towards, based on consultation with children and young people: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and economic well being (DfES, 2004, p. 5).

Every Child Matters has a focus on all agencies working collaboratively together to promote the well being of each child. Children's well being is at the heart of its policies and it aims to involve children in decision making that will shape their future. "Children and young people want to feel listened to and respected. They want services that adapt to their needs, talents and circumstances" (DfES, 2004, p. 26). The



underpinning of this policy is what 'good' teachers within an EBD environment should base their educational philosophy upon. In order for children to thrive when much of their experience has been tainted with failure, exclusion and rejection, they must feel listened to and respected. They have failed in an environment which was too generic and need a programme which is suited to their individual characteristics and personalities. In order for this ideal to be reached, teachers need to be enthused about their pupils learning. In order to recruit this teacher population, the government and individual schools implement attractive pay packages to entice teachers into working within a difficult learning environment.

### 2.53 The Needs of the Teachers- The Financial Incentives of EBD Teaching

In recent years, the government have put into place numerous incentives to attract people into the teaching profession. The Teacher Training Agency (TTA) has created opportunities for people to train as teachers offering cash bonuses as incentives. These initiatives range from:

1. The Secondary Shortage Subject Scheme (SSSS). This is a hardship fund and your college or university will assess whether you are eligible. If you are under 25, you could receive up to £5,000 and those who are 25 and over could receive up to £7,500.
2. Eligible postgraduate initial teacher training (ITT) students are entitled to a £6,000 bursary while they train. It is a tax-free grant that is the equivalent of £150 a week.
3. a taxable £4,000 'Golden Hello'

(Teacher Training Agency, 2004)

These financial incentives are all geared at the recruitment of new teachers; however, there are also retention and progression salary points to keep teachers teaching.

Teachers' pay is adjusted according to differing pay scales. Teachers within mainstream schools are paid according to the Common Pay Spine (CPS) and additional points can be awarded for management responsibility or recruitment and retention. Special education has even further financial incentives for teachers. On top of the standard pay scale with the management and recruitment/retention points that usually accompany a standard position, teachers are awarded additional pay points due to the specialist knowledge needed to work with children with particular educational needs. At the time of compiling this paper, the special needs allowance ranged from £1,674 to £3,312 per year (<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/paydoc>). Teachers within a residential setting are rewarded even further due to the extra commitment needed for their off school duties however the exact amount is at the discretion of the LEA.

Within both residential and day EBD school environments, the financial rewards given to teachers come frequently and freely. It is difficult to attract teachers into such a hostile teaching environment, therefore it is important to keep the teachers that they already have. There is not much literature that I could find that specifically outlined the financial perks that can be associated with teaching within an EBD environment, however from experience and discussion with teachers from my field I am aware that special schools, in particular special schools which cater to children with EBD usually offer attractive pay packages to attract and retain teachers. The teachers who do come to work in an EBD environment cannot deny that there is a financial incentive involved, however, the teachers that make a difference usually have a different view of what it means to be EBD than that which is often commonly ascribed.

## **2.6 The Perception of What Makes an EBD Child**

Children within an EBD environment have a social disability. They are unable to cope with situations in a socially acceptable way. Their emotional and behavioural responses to both learning and social environments cause them to be ostracised from mainstream schooling. However, who contributes to this disability?

Do schools individualise problems surrounding pedagogy and a child called disabled and construct the issues as a personal trouble deriving from that child, or do they see it as a public curriculum issue? (Fulcher, 1999, p.25).

There are a number of views about EBD children depending upon to whom you speak.

There are many people who assign blame to the children themselves. They are problem children. The children are tagged as lazy, involved in criminal activities, or are seen as creating planned disruptions to get out of school. These people view these children as having no hope in the field of education as they have already decided to opt out. Colley (2001) quotes a woman interviewed as stating:

[The government] are saying about tackling social exclusion... it's too late. These people, they've experienced so much exclusion throughout.... They don't stand a chance (Colley, 2001, p. 8).

The blame is taken away from society and placed solely with the individual child. The view expressed above is one that gives no hope to these children. It is mentioned that 'they don't stand a chance': are these the feelings of the children or society's feelings imposed upon them?

Others will see problems as being outside of a child's control, stemming from poverty, family difficulties, academic failure, emotional and psychological problems and other learning difficulties. There is a great difference in the placement of responsibility

for these problems. Deviant children (those who are lazy, criminal or disruptive) are solely responsible for the excluded situation they find themselves in, whereas those children who are in deficit (victims of poverty, family difficulties etc.) are seen as a product of their environment (Colley, 2001). The deviant model places individual responsibility on the child. The deficit model calls upon all of society in helping these children in difficult situations.

Wherever the difficulties originate, the focus should be the problems the children are faced with. They are unable to cope with a curriculum which supposedly 'caters to suit all needs'. Children with EBD are often threatened by learning situations. They come from disadvantaged backgrounds which make learning difficult.

The demands of the National Curriculum can require the presentation of materials which pupils with behaviour and learning difficulties find difficult or threatening (e.g. creative writing) or irrelevant (some aspects of modern foreign languages) While expert teaching will find ways around these pupil perceptions, difficulties are likely to remain in many classrooms, where perhaps teachers are underconfident in dealing with pupils with special educational needs (Cole, 1998, p.114).

Not all teachers have the 'expertise' needed to modify the curriculum to suit the needs of some children with challenging behaviour. Unintentionally, some teachers create disabling experiences for these pupils. It is often causes outside of the child which contribute to their expulsion into an EBD environment.

Children with EBD are labelled with this disability due to their poor coping strategies in dealing with society. These children often come from poor family environments with parents who are unable to model 'socially acceptable behaviour'. Parents of children with EBD are often unable to provide a stable and nurturing



environment and it becomes society's responsibility to provide opportunities for these children to move forward in their lives.

Most children do not have a behavioural *disease* which requires specialist or medical *treatment*... good teaching is good teaching and usually fosters good behaviour... Personal qualities of commitment, empathy and organisational skills are required of staff in abundance but not mysterious and exclusive methods to teach and motivate pupils (Cole, 1998, p.114).

Children of deprived social backgrounds lack exposure to these desirable qualities. It is for the good of society and for the good of the children to have role models, such as teachers, to exhibit behaviour which in turn drives pupils to learn. This again resonates the need for truly special teachers to teach children with EBD.

Having personal experience with children with EBD, I have a great difficulty understanding the deviance model. These children are just that – children. Though they are by no means 'normal' in relation to children within a mainstream environment, they still deserve the chance to succeed. The problem is, if they remain in a mainstream environment they are ostracised and labelled in a way that will reinforce the negative situation they are in. 'Education cannot account for society' (Bernstein, 1970) and children who are socially disadvantaged will not gain any valuable knowledge by being 'thrown into a classroom' where the social norms are foreign to them. It is often the parents who create their children's problems. EBD children are often socially inept due to parents' poor modelling of 'socially acceptable behaviour'.

Families are regarded as fundamentally non-educogenic. Discussions of problematic families tend to focus on single parents, and benefit dependency, lack of parenting skills, and inadequate care and concern among parents for their children's education (Gamarnikow and Green, 1999, p.56).

EBD children often have no role models to turn to and it becomes the responsibility of society to provide opportunities for these children to move forward in their lives. If they have to rely on their parents there is often no positive feedback. Many children at EBD schools:

take the psychic functioning of their parents and relatives, or the social group they have been born into, as the norm, and as long as they do not differ from these they feel normal and without interest in observing anything (Fromm, 1957, p.166).

If a child is brought up in a disruptive family environment it is difficult for them to gain any positive definition of whom they are and what their role in life should be. Children without the social and educational encounters provided through school are denied a chance to play a more pivotal role in the creation of their society. For some of these children, there is hope provided through an EBD school. Many of the children in an EBD environment come from loveless homes therefore not experiencing love within their personal life.

I have no home. I am a member of no one's family. I know deep inside that I do not now, nor will I ever, deserve any love, attention or even recognition as a human being. I am a child called 'It' (Pelzer, 1997, pp4-5).

Teachers within an EBD environment must realise that they not only are their pupils' teacher, but in many cases their only positive role model. By choosing EBD education as their career, if they have chosen to do so for the 'right' reasons, they have created an added moral responsibility for themselves.

## **2.7 The Image of Teacher**

When asked to think of a teacher, a number of different pictures spring to mind.

As Bakhtin (1986) points out:

All words have the 'taste' of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a part, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and each word tastes of the context in which it has lived its socially charged life: all words and forms are populated by intentions (p. 293).

Through popular media, a stereotypical image of a teacher is produced. This 'stereotypical' picture of a teacher is not always what is seen. "The majority of popular images of teachers reinforce either the 'serious business' look that so many teachers adopt, or a sloppy, dowdy look that invites indifference, derision or pity" (Weber and Mitchell, 1995, p.71). Though these may be images commonly associated with teachers, there are a number of teachers who do not fit into either of these stereotypes. Through exploring the diversity of teachers' life histories we begin to see a varied population within the teaching profession.

When looking at the image teachers ascribe to being a teacher, the diversity and individuality of their responses highlights the subjective experience and insight teachers have, in particular EBD teachers. "By studying images and probing their influence, teachers could play a more conscious and effective role in shaping their own and society's perceptions of teachers and their work" (Weber and Mitchell, 1995, p.32). Though each teacher is individual and unique there must also be the realisation that though individual in person, they may share common experiences.

Knowledge of how others have come to terms with the system, coped with problems and made individual contributions might increase the prospects for personal satisfaction, and the redefinition of situations more in line with personal aspirations (Sikes et al, 1995, p.12).

This self-realisation will not only have benefits for the individual teacher, but also for the schools in which they teach and the children who are under their tuition.

Comparatively little is known about the actual process of socialisation [of a teacher] as it is experienced and takes place during preservice trainings and into the first few years of teaching; in the quest for cause and effect relationships, much of the research has seriously oversimplified the socialisation process; little attention has been given to the interactive nature of socialisation, particularly interaction among biography, beginning teachers' preconceptions about teaching, and the teaching context (Bollough et al, 1992, p.1).

A person's choice to become a teacher can rely on numerous experiences that occur throughout their lifetime. Choosing a profession is a personal decision that is influenced by experience, the image ascribed to a profession and the nature of the duties involved in such a profession.

The stories teachers have to tell shed light on the numerous subjective forces that have come to play in their decision to take on the responsibility that comes with being a teacher, in this case a teacher of children with EBD. By listening to teachers' personal recounts of how they have arrived where they are today, we are able to

Reclaim the subjective as a legitimate zone of inquiry by challenging the hegemony of the objective: substituting more organic, more holistic, metaphors for mechanistic ones: contesting the notion that the principle goal for the study of persons was the prediction of their behaviour (Thomas, 1995 , p.3).

Teachers' subjective stories allow the listener to understand how a teacher perceives him/herself in relation to society, whilst giving a teacher the opportunity for self-reflection. Teachers all have their own 'implicit theory of teaching'.

It reflects a model of what the individual believes that teaching is 'supposed' to be. It includes meanings about students and the student role, about parents and the nature of schooling, knowledge and knowing (Bullough et al, 1992, p. 10).

In listening to teachers' stories we are able to gain further understanding into why they have chosen to be a teacher, what they see the role as teacher encompassing, why they



choose to work with 'problem children' and how power fits into the relations both inside and around the school environment.

### 2.71 Why did you become a teacher?

There is growing recognition that becoming a teacher begins long before people ever enter a Faculty of Education. However, the images of schooling in everyday life outside of school are often neglected ...[as is] the significance of the culture of childhood to teacher identity and teacher education (Weber and Mitchell, 1995, p.5).

Some people are said to be 'born teachers', but what makes a born teacher? The experiences people have in life, personalities that come from within and the influence of surrounding events will all affect a person's ability to be an effective teacher: "All this contributes to well-worn and commonsensical images of the teacher's work and serves as the frame of reference for prospective teachers' self-images (Britzman quoted in Weber and Mitchell, 1995, p. 9).

Almost everyone in the western world has had personal experience with teachers. Most people have been involved in some form of education as a child and therefore most people have a stereotypical image which they attached to teachers. Teachers have been viewed as both heroes and villains in both film and literature. Films such as *Dangerous Liaisons*, *Matilda*, and *Kindergarten Cop* all portray teachers with differing images.

Society has many images of what it means to be a teacher:

Images are constructed and interpreted in attempts to make sense of human experience and to communicate that sense to others. Images in turn become part of human experience, and are thus subject to reconstructions and reinterpretations... we do not only create images, but are also shaped by them (Weber and Mitchell, 1995, p.21).

How a teacher uses these images to forge their own self-image of teacher is key in justifying their position in life.

Where people are surrounded by a plethora of images, this can create dramatic spectacles but also moral and political superficiality; aesthetic attractiveness, but also ethical emptiness. In many ways, contemporary images disguise and deflect more unseemly realities (Hargreaves, 1994, p.77).

People's experiences with the images of what a teacher should be can be a precursor to the decision of becoming a teacher. Many teachers may look back at their academic career on both sides of the desk and see the shortcomings of teachers they have come into contact with. They may remember the ideal teachers who have made an impact on their education. These experiences (both positive and negative) with exceptional teachers will inspire people to do as well as or better than the teachers they have come into contact with.

The image of teacher and the expectations a person attaches to being a teacher will often fuel a person's desire to become a teacher. Many teachers take on their line of work to make a difference by empowering their pupils. Others become teachers due to the sense of power and control they may exert over their pupils. But how do teachers decide to enter into the uncertain realms of EBD education? Is it a conscious decision or does it happen by chance?

People become teachers for both personal and social reasons. The events that surround a person personally, socially and professionally will have a direct impact on a person's chosen career. Rose recognizes that "productive work itself can satisfy the worker; the activity of working itself can provide rewarding personal and social relations for those engaged in it; good work can be a means to self fulfilment" (Rose, 1989, p.56).

Some teachers may enter into the realm of EBD education for the new demands that will be faced through working with more challenging children. They may want the added stimulation that each day will bring. Some teachers may find that they may accidentally or coincidentally fall into EBD education. There are also the few teachers that enter into EBD education with their eyes half open, assuming that less children in the class means less work. Whatever the reasoning behind a person's decision to become a teacher specialising in EBD education, whether or not they are an effective teacher will depend on their recognition of what it means to be a teacher and how they carry out these duties.

**2.72 What do you see as characteristics of teachers and where do you fit in this picture?**

Certain stereotypes pervade the image of a teacher throughout society. Teachers of EBD children do not necessarily fit into the traditional mould of the ideal teacher. "A popular perception of teachers who work with pupils with problems is that they are variously charismatic, oddball, liberal and divergent" (Garner, 1999, p. 33). Though teachers of 'pupils with problems' are not you seen as your *regular* teacher, there are certain attributes which must be seen at the core of effective and dedicated teachers. "Care ownership and control are, in any one teacher's sentiments, often combined together in a complicated and subtle mixture" (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 175). It is important to stress that these characteristics may not be found in all teachers but I would think they would be basic attributes of teachers who are good at, and enjoy, what they do.

"To make calculations about a population necessitates the highlighting of certain features of that population as the raw material of the coagulation, and requires

information about them (Rose, 1989, p.6). It is impossible to generalise characteristics across the entire teaching population. People come into the teaching profession with numerous agendas both personal and professional.

When you look at what makes an 'effective' teacher there is the argument between knowledge and personal attributes. It has been argued that teachers who are effective in dealing with difficult children are those who have effective classroom management skills (Garner, 1999), however are there any specific qualifications that make a more effective EBD teacher and are there skills that can be learned? SENTC (1996) outline key competencies for teachers of children with EBD which focus on the knowledge, understanding and skills relating to context; management and curriculum access and delivery, however, the knowledge, understanding and skills spoken of are "not set out [in] a definable and distinct set of professional attributes" (Garner, 1999, p. 36). Teachers who have high expectations for their pupils, who have reciprocal trust and respect between themselves and their pupils and recognise that pupils want to be challenged are characteristic of effective EBD teachers, but are these teachable attributes?

"Teacher personality should not be underestimated in managing the problematic behaviour of pupils" (Garner, 1999, p. 40). Garner (1999) asked a group of teachers to give their point of view on personal and professional characteristics which create success in teaching pupils with EBD. His findings showed that respondents were highly unspecific when rating the significance of more professional attributes, focusing on communication, listening skills and non-verbal communication with "each of the three most frequently mentioned attributes replicating much of the tone, if not the substance, of the statutory guidelines currently in place for the training of teachers" (p.43). When



speaking of personal characteristics, teachers in this study “vigorously defended the notions of interpersonal skills, relationship building and empathy (to give examples of personal characteristics) as being inherently ‘professional’” (p.47). Though teachers feel that certain attributes are professional courtesies, they are usually acquired through personal choice and disposition.

A major challenge facing teachers who work with children who present emotional and/or behavioural difficulties will be to define those characteristics of teachers which create the conditions for successful intervention: as Cole and Visser (1998) have inferred, these are as much about intuition and creativity as they are about curriculum input and classroom management (Garner, 1999, p. 49).

In recognising the personal nature in successful EBD teaching, teachers are able to forge their own personal and unique image to portray to effectively teach and maintain relations within their profession.

Teachers’ self images, however, are also influenced by how others view them as a teacher. A person knows they are a teacher, but they can only be assured that they are a good teacher by the reactions and interactions between themselves and society.

Teachers are not merely victims of society’s cultural imagery. Although they are born into powerful socializing metaphors, some of them manage to break and recreate images while making sense of their roles and forging their self-identities (Weber and Mitchell, 1995, p. 26)

Society has a powerful influence over how teachers view themselves in relation to the society in which they are situated. It is where the balance is struck between society’s image and a teacher’s own self image that teachers are able to feel comfortable with what it means to be a teacher. Teachers of difficult children do not always have the supportive views of the society with which they work. Though support may not be as easily found

from parents and some other professionals EBD teachers come into contact with, what is it that draws them into what can be a very hostile working environment?

**2.73 How does an EBD Teacher Fit into the Professional Image of Special Education?**

Behaviour is a category that has not always fit neatly into the realm of special education. People's perceptions of 'naughty children' have not always included the children under the umbrella of special educational needs. With the current thrust towards inclusive education, there is a mixed view on the need for separate special education for those children with special needs, as:

there is now an increasing emphasis on the development and modification of mainstream curricula to make them more appropriate for and accessible to, children and young people with special needs. Similarly special needs provision is no longer defined primarily in terms of special, usually segregated provision, but rather in terms of a continuum which includes both specialised and mainstream settings, with an increasing emphasis on the latter (Roaf and Bines, 1989, p. 6).

However when it comes to 'special' behavioural and emotional children, there are not many teachers who would argue against their segregation from mainstream classrooms. So one must ask, why is there often this difference of professional judgement against children with EBD and how does this difference translate into the professional opinion of EBD teachers?

Status and power of professionals in special education has traditionally been recognised and legitimated by the peculiar, supposedly 'scientific' language of their assumed 'expertise' and this is rooted in the medical model of disability and learning difficulty (Armstrong, 2003, p. 14).

Although teachers within an EBD environment rely heavily on the more personal aspects of their abilities, they still have the professional image that must be upheld. Yes,

teaching may be a vocation, however how does professional persona fit and how does this affect the children being taught? As Oliver (1996) points out “such services were, and still are, dominated by professionals who produce them, were patronising and failed to offer disabled people choice or control over their lives” (p.79). Is this dismal view of professionals in the SEN environment consistent with the image of an EBD teacher?

Teachers working within an EBD environment will often struggle with the image as professional, however they will need to contextualise their position within society.

Although they may have differing views of the children:

Professionals working with children who are experiencing difficulties within educational contexts may feel constrained to define the problem in terms of the difficulties a child presents to others despite being sensitive to the influence of wider social and political contexts (Armstrong, 1996, p. 142).

Professionally, EBD teachers will inevitably need to define and assess their pupils needs within an educational context. Therefore, though they may associate the more personal attributes to their success in EBD teaching, “whatever the interests of the child, the interest of professionals would inevitably become tied to their ability to negotiate definitions of children’s needs in terms of their own professional models” (Armstrong, 1996, p.144).

SEN teachers have a professional obligation towards inclusion. There has been a trend away from specialised schools and a movement towards including all children with special educational needs within a mainstream environment. Behavioural needs, however, are not always met with the same acceptance within a mainstream environment, and it can be interesting to look at how inclusion fits into the vision of an EBD teacher.

As Oliver (1996) states:



Teaching is teaching, regardless of the range of needs of pupils, and ... is the acquisition of a commitment on the part of all teachers to work with all children, whether they have special needs or not (p.87).

So with this professional commitment of *all* teachers, what part do 'EBD teachers' play in the quest towards inclusion?

Inclusion, as defined by Armstrong (2003) "refers to a set of principles, values and practices which involve the social transformation of education systems and communities" (p.2). Principles and values are personal, and it is from here that the practice of each individual teacher is led. Though these children have been labelled with the stigma of being behaviourally problematic, an 'EBD teacher' must try to break down the exclusionary forces of these labels.

The deterioration in children's behaviour once assessment had started... and this could reflect a belief held by children that everyone had given up on the so why should they bother. [This reflects] the process by which children internalised the labels constructed through their assessment (Armstrong, 1995, p. 109).

Teachers must try to see past the 'EBD-ness' of the child and strive to make them included in all areas of society. Much as with any special need, tolerance must be given to those who deviate from what is prescribed as normal and one must look beyond this 'abnormal behaviour' to look at the root or cause where it is based. With inclusion comes the ideal of empowerment which has often been taken away from these children through the process of labels given to them.

The disempowerment of the child in matters affecting their future is implicit in this victimisation, not only because it constructs the child's identity in ways deny legitimacy to the child's perspective. If the concept of emotional and behavioural difficulties is clinically meaningless, then it is reasonable to ask what function the label serves... [does it only] serve to legitimate the needs of others, including teachers, families and peers (Armstrong, 1995, p.110).



Upon entering into the world of EBD education, teachers to begin to break down the barriers these labels have created for the children they teach. This is not always an easy task and must sometimes begin with a redefinition these labels within their own attitudes commitments to teaching. Although this gives the picture of an altruistic teacher putting the needs of the pupils first there are

Ambiguities that characterise professional roles in today's society. In particular, these ambiguities have encouraged professionals to use the assessment procedures as a forum for negotiating within the institutions of the state over their own power to specify both the scope of their expertise and how the needs of their clients are to be met (Armstrong, 1996, p. 145)

Teachers must realise that inclusion goes beyond the quality of education a child receives, it also has "explicit connections with the functional integration of individuals into society and a relationship to citizenship rights and responsibilities" (Oliver, 1996, p.82). Though inclusion bases its argument on empowerment to the individual, there is also the power struggle that a teacher often feels the need to maintain through control and assessment of their pupils 'needs'.

The practice of teachers and other professionals in education gives order to society through the roles they assign to their pupils. Power and knowledge that teachers hold over their pupils in the assessment process,

Permeat[es] all social relations and [is] embedded in discourse.... The power embedded in professional knowledge and practices has been, and continues to be, the bedrock of special education and the processes and procedures surrounding identification, categorisation, labelling and treatment (Armstrong, 2003, p 60).

Although inclusion should be seen at the root of all teachers efforts, Foucault notes that this discourse of power and knowledge "define how one may have hold over others' bodies, not only so they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one

wishes” (Foucault, 1977b, p.138). One must therefore question the relationship to power that exists in the professional role of an EBD teacher.

### 2.74 Why do people choose to focus on the education of problem children?

Entering into the field of EBD education is a decision that is not always easily justified. Many people seem to ‘fall into the profession by accident’ with no previous training to substantiate their ability. There is not a great deal written about teachers who choose to specialise in EBD provision, but it appears that a great motivator is the challenge seen.

“Lasting commitment could be obtained only by fostering conditions that built intrinsic motivations, for when people felt that a task was inherently worthwhile they would commit themselves to it” (Rose, 1989, p. 114). Teaching children with EBD has a challenging aspect that can drive people to succeed. It is, by no means, an easy option for teachers to undertake but many teachers take on the challenge hoping to fill a void which cannot be filled by all.

Not many teachers will choose to work solely with pupils with EBD; many teachers find it an onerous task that they would prefer not to encounter. “Teachers became embattled and an increasing number were unable, because of their own insecurities to empathise with the needs of those children who misbehaved in school” (Garner, 2000). It is those who are able to empathise with the problems that these children encounter that choose to make a difference in their education.

Teachers are not simply victims of the social and psychological forces that produce emotional and behavioural difficulties. Whilst they are influenced by the context in which they operate, they are also an

influence upon it, and thus upon others within it (Cooper et al., 1994, p. 6).

Teachers who choose EBD education recognise that not everyone is equipped with the skills and personality to effectively deal with some children with more complex problems.

These teachers expressed less hope of a more general shift towards a positive view of EBD children amongst their colleagues. 'I would be very anxious if our (school) drive for a more inclusive approach was left in the hands of (named teacher) because he just does not see EBD pupils as having a rightful place here (Garner, 2000).

They are able to recognise that they can make a difference in accepting the challenge of EBD children.

I am not sure if people choose EBD education, but rather that EBD education chooses them. Literature does not point to any specific motivation for teachers to enter EBD education, but from my experience, those who are successful in their EBD vocation have chosen, or have been chosen, because they have time for the relation that goes with the education. They are able to work alongside pupils to overcome challenges that can be faced and are able to weather the challenges that are presented by their pupils. They recognise the importance of making education personal, but not taking the response personally. They recognise pupils have problems rather than labelling them as problem pupils. Finally they recognise the importance of a balance of power both inside and outside the classroom.

### 2.75 Where do you see power and control residing in the classroom?

This issue of power within teaching circles is a subject of contention. Teachers were once seen as the all powerful. I remember from my own school days, a dispute I

had with a teacher – it was about respecting your elders. We had gotten into a discussion about giving up your seat on the bus. I had agreed with my teacher, that I would give up my seat to an elderly or disabled person who were in need of a seat, however, it was as much my right as a person of my teachers age (who must have been about 35) to have a seat. My teacher disagreed with me saying I should respect my elder no matter how elder they were. I ended up out in the hall with detention after school. There was no question that she was right and I was wrong and I didn't dare tell my parents as they would have assured me there must have been something more to it. Today, however, there has been a shift in this power. Through the child-centred approach to teaching, children are meant to feel empowered. If I, as a teacher, did what my teacher had to me, I would expect to have parents at my classroom door demanding justification. Pupils, now, are encouraged to question teachers' authority whilst recognising the need for respect, but where does the balance of power lie? How do emotionally and behaviourally unbalanced children recognise this balance and do teachers always create an equality?

Within an EBD classroom, power and control are key issues. Rules and boundaries are essential aspects to successful relations with any child in any school.

School clearly need rules. The number of rules required in any organisation and the nature of those rules is, however, in the hands of the people who control that organisation – in schools, the headmaster and teaching staff. Rules in schools are usually justified in terms of them being necessary responses to pupil behaviour (Cooper, 1994, p.19).

Teachers will always want to be seen as having a certain amount of power and control within their classroom, however, how they establish, negotiate and consistently enforce their rules and boundaries will determine the power and respect they are seen as controlling.



The rules and boundaries enforced within an EBD school must display consistency and fairness. The pupils operating within these regulations must recognise the values attached to complying and acting within these rules. A teacher who exerts his or her power in order to further the achievements of a child will be the most successful. Teachers should demonstrate “how to maximise the forces of the population and each individual within it, how to minimise their troubles, how to organise them in the most efficacious manner” (Rose, 1989, p.5) in order to exert their control in the most effective manner.

Within a residential school the emphasis on shared control will help to create added responsibilities within its populations. A residential school often provides a more stable substitute of family for its pupils. It “accepts that behaviour of all its members will not always be perfect, and though not condoning bad behaviour it accepts and understands it” (Cooper et al, 1994, p. 35). In sharing power with the pupils in organising the rules and routines that govern the school, an aim should be to give pupils responsibility for their own behaviour. The focus therefore shifts away from control exerted from above to cooperation from all within the community.

When looking at the power relations within a school it can be interesting to extend the search beyond the classroom and into the staffroom. Head teachers subjectively choose the most effective way to run their schools. They have expert knowledge as to the best way forward for their school. They, in turn, will recognise the staff that act within their system of functioning and will reward these people accordingly. Power will only be shared with those who are acting according to the “best way forward”. Those who want to succeed will have to adapt “a certain way of striving to reach social and political ends

by acting in a calculated manner” (Rose, 1989, p.4-5). As Rose (1989) so accurately points out: “the power of experts act as relays that bring the values of authorities and the goals of business into contact with the dreams and actions of us all” (p.257).

The power relations that exist within all schools show interesting twists in management structure. It is important for teachers to share responsibility and power with the pupils within their classrooms and it is through this cooperation and negotiation of rules and boundaries that the most effective relations are managed with EBD children. However, in staff circles, the power is often enforced from above. Head teachers within schools create direction for their schools and, in doing so, will also create rules within which teachers will work. Though this sounds quite severe, it is recognising the basic instincts that power fosters within us.

In this matrix of power and knowledge the modern self has been born; to grasp its working is to go some way towards understanding the sort of human beings we are (Rose, 1989, p.258).

## **2.8 From the Outside Looking In to the Inside Looking Out- the value of exploring life stories of teachers**

The image a person ascribes to being a teacher and how they portray this image will be shaped by their life experiences within education. Each person will have their own individual experiences and impressions of what it means to be a teacher which will shape the image they choose to portray. The image they portray will then influence the power they hold as teacher, staff member, and member of society. ‘Effective’ teachers will recognise the importance of relations and self fulfilment for both their pupils and themselves through facing challenges together, sharing responsibility. Working with EBD pupils will highlight a teacher’s personal and individual response to teaching. How

they shape this individual role to fit into the views that surround them whilst continuing to add their own unique flavour to their role will influence the control they hold within the school as well as the classroom. A researcher will be able to get a glimpse of the individual and unique identity that teachers live through, in the stories and anecdotes that are shared in recounting their life experiences.

The stories that are told can be useful tools in recognising how a person constructs the concept of 'self' and how they relate this 'self' to the outside world. In telling your own version of your life story you are able to portray the wanted image to your audience. By examining life stories you are able to get the more personal account of the events that have transpired to make the person who he or she is today. This, by far, is a more interesting and truth questioning approach to research. As Clough, so aptly notes:

Conventional research reports (often) effectively render out the personal. ... Lives and difficulties are disinfected and presented 'steam-cleaned' (p.184, Goodley et. al., 2004),

However, by presenting life stories through the voices and words of the storytellers:

readers are never naive, passive recipients of ideas. Good stories stir minds and souls. (p.184, Goodley et. al., 2004).

Let us now take a look at the humble beginnings and developments in the art of life story research.

### **CHAPTER 3: AN INTRODUCTION TO METHODOLOGY AND METHODS EMPLOYED**

Exploring people's life stories is a task which requires dedication, truth and honesty from all participants involved. They are a great source of information for anyone who is brave enough to embark upon them, however their nature will often create numerous dilemmas for all people involved with the study.

The journey towards gaining a picture of a person's life story is one which will take time, which is often an underestimated quantity. It is easy to view the interview as the one main features of the life story, assuming that it will require the most time and preparation. However, completing the interview is only the beginning to the long and involved development of a truly valid and interesting life story. Collecting life stories must be engagement with a purpose. It is the starting block to a journey of analysis and investigation into what makes people the individuals they are. To me, it is one of the most interesting, engaging and constantly challenging methods of research as it involves an ever changing and subjective topic - that of people's lives.

The next two sections of this paper deal with the 'how- to's' of life story research. I will look at where life story research came from and where it stands today. I will look at different foundations of this form of research and how they affect the outcome of work undertaken. The foundations which the research is based on will also affect the position the researcher sees him/herself as taking. There are many roles which the researcher can assume and the benefits and costs of each of these will also be discussed. I will then show how all of this information impacts upon my own personal journey as a life story researcher and how I plan to justify my position and my research.



The foundations set in history and the underpinnings which define life story research will then lead me to discuss how my particular research was carried out. I will look at the preparation, planning and work that needed to be undertaken to actually gain the information and participation that I needed to complete my work. I will look at why I have chosen to do such research, where the research took place and how its impact has affected me and my participants both personally and professionally.

## **CHAPTER 4: THE HOWS AND WHYS OF LIFE HI/STORIES- METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 The Development and Definitions of Life History Work**

#### **4.11 The Past and Present of Research Involving Life Stories**

Life stories of 'ordinary people' are ever increasingly becoming a popular trend in mainstream media and entertainment. Documentaries charting the happenings in people's lives have been broadcast around the world. The whole notion of *reality TV* centres on the notion of gaining insight into experiences and confrontations people face in everyday life. How the camera shapes and edits what people perceive of these experiences begins to articulate the role of researcher in the life story model. TV is one of the new and exploitive ways in which life histories can be portrayed using a variety of media.

But this form of information and research began long ago in the realm of sociology. Life hi/stories take many forms having a history which dates back to the 1920s and 30s with the Chicago school of sociology. From the interest seen in the earlier forms of sociological life histories, came the ever increasingly popular trend to examine a person's life in relation to the society and surrounds in which it exists. Autobiographies have been written and diaries have been publicised – all in an attempt to gain insight into the lives of strangers in an intriguing and interesting way. These stories can be classed as formal research or informal and recreational interests, however, they all lead to the same end - they give insight into a person's experiences within a society. I will now examine the path life history research has taken to arrive where it is today.

#### 4.12 The Humble Beginnings of Life History Research

The origins of life histories have their roots in sociological research and the University of Chicago's School of Sociology. Some sociologists felt that sociology centred much of its research around surveys, however there a gap existed in the subjective explanation that may be present behind the data.

Empirical sociology is emerging from a long period when a single method of data collection- the survey- was the focus of scientific effort and legitimacy... however, most interpretive studies so far have not addressed the issues of historical and comparative analysis but have focused instead on specific fields, i.e. on situations that are defined spatially and temporarily and that give rise to typical interaction patterns (Bertaux and Kohli, 2001, p.142).

Surveys are able to provide answers to factual questions about the what, where, when and how of a research question, however, do not allow a great deal of interpretive analysis to take place. The 'why' behind these answers cannot always be easily interpreted through survey research. Life stories were seen as a method of exploring the 'whys' behind the facts.

Researchers began to look at the interaction between the problems within society, within individuals and specific social problems. It was here that some of the earliest notions of life histories took shape. William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki were two of the first researchers to realise the value of life history research.

William I. Thomas, one of the early researchers under the Chicago school of thought, saw the great importance that influential members of society placed on importing their own sense of control over the vast social change that took place in the society in which they lived. This social control, though embedded in the power groups of society, was also seen at an individual level. Social groups had power struggles but so did individuals within these groups. How a person defined his/her perception of his/her place within these social and hierarchal power settings played an

influential role in a person's life decisions. Thomas conceptualised these interpretations as 'definitions of the situation'

Not only concrete acts are dependent on the definition of the situation, but gradually a whole life-policy and the personality of the individual himself follow from a series of such definitions (Thomas, 1967, p.42).

How an individual defines a situation and imposes his or her values upon it will inevitably affect and shape the outcome or exchange seen. Thomas saw a strong relation between both the subjective nature of an event and the objective shaping of this event by those involved. It was here that Thomas' interest in personal recounts of life situations centred.

Thomas felt that people will interpret situations according to their own subjective experience; however these situations would occur independently and objectively within society.

An important aspect of Thomas's thought was the distinction between values and attitudes, values being (objective) features of society to which people adopt (subjective) attitudes (Hammersley, 1989, p.68).

To capture the impact of these interactions, Thomas relied heavily on life documents. He collected personal documentary accounts in the belief that "the unique value of the personal document is its revelation of the situations which have conditioned the behaviour" (1967, p.42). Through these life accounts, Thomas was able to identify and analyse how people subjectively viewed their encounters and experiences within the social world.

It was essential to learn to see the world from the perspectives of those under study, but at the same time this subjective point of view was to be located within an objective scientific account of the world (Hammersley, 1989, p. 69).

Florian Znaniecki introduced the concept of 'analytical induction' to the world of sociology maintaining that "emphasis must be put not on the quantity of cases, but



on the thorough acquaintance with each case under observation" (Znaniecki , 1928, p.316). Znaniecki saw the importance in studying the specific features of particular relations within society and what caused them to exist, rather than measuring statistical generalisations of how often they occur.

Sociologists must not be satisfied with showing that particular social phenomena are a product of 'a number of "cooperating factors" or "contributing causes", the relative importance of which may vary from case to case and the precise effect of any one of which separately remains undetermined and changing (Znaniecki, 1928, p. 309).

To study social life Znaniecki felt that researchers had to concern themselves with the social and often subjective material associated with people's everyday life. He realised the importance of giving voice to the subjective nature of sociological research.

Together, Thomas and Znaniecki (1958) pioneered the life history approach. They used "personal documents as collaborating to form a person's life history: letters, diaries, personal records, open interviews, autobiographies and tape recorded life stories" (Bertaux and Kohli, 2001). It was Thomas and Znaniecki who are noted as publishing the first life history account The Polish Peasant in Poland and America (1927).

By employing a life history account, The Polish Peasant looked not only at the specific social problems encountered by the Polish people but also at the ramifications these problems had on wider society and social theories associated with it. It looked at how social organisation stifled or emphasised individualisation of its members and how different levels of community, family and relationships between the sexes were affected by the social change experienced. It examined how abnormality became apparent due to clashes within the varying societies and also from natural predispositions held by individuals. It finally looked at the issue of social happiness

and how it could be affected from within and outside of a person's psyche. Thomas and Znaniecki believed that neither the society nor the individual were ever solely responsible for any one of these experiences, but that both each played its significant role and must be taken into account. "The cause of a social or individual phenomena is never another social or individual phenomena alone but always a combination of a social and an individual phenomena" (Thomas and Znaniecki, vol. 1, 1958, p. 44). They listened to individual "voices" and the perceptions people had of the social occurrences around them.

Thomas and Znaniecki focus mainly on written documents in their life history accounts:

Personal documents, and life history material, in particular, were best suited to the task because they facilitated the detailed description of social adjustment, and the subjective and objective factors involved in that process (Hammersley, 1989, p.70).

However, oral histories were also becoming prevalent. Clifford Shaw and his co-author 'Stanley' give a classic example of the use of oral history research in The Jack Roller. Shaw used a sociological approach combined in part with his therapeutic role as residential settlement house worker in a case study researching delinquency of a young boy.

The author's contact with Stanley has extended over a period of six years, the initial contact having been made when Stanley was sixteen years of age. During this period it has been possible to make rather intensive study of his behaviour and social background and to carry out a somewhat intensive program of social treatment (Shaw, 1930, p.1)

Shaw writes The Jack Roller using Stanley's "own story" to provide the reader with three key concepts inherent to a full understanding of a life history:

- 1) He allows the reader to experience how the boy understands and interprets his role in relation to others and the situations he faces.

The personal document that the child reveals his feelings of inferiority and superiority, his fears and his worries, his ideals and philosophy of life, his antagonisms and mental conflicts, his prejudices and rationalisations (Shaw, 1930, p. 4).

- 2) He places the reader within the social and cultural contexts of Stanley through "securing a description of the traditions, activities and moral standards in the delinquent's gang and play groups" (Shaw, 1930, p.10).

- 3) Finally he gives the reader insight into the events that have transpired through Stanley's life to bring him to where he finds himself when the life history was written. By securing this knowledge through personal accounts of Stanley himself:

The "own story" reveals the essentially human aspects of delinquency . For in such documents one gains a sympathetic appreciation of the child's own personal problems and the sort of world in which he lives (Shaw, 1930, p. 17).

During their work together Clifford Shaw and Stanley became quite close.

Shaw claims that minimal coaching was involved in eliciting Stanley's story:

The document was secured with a minimum of guidance and control on the part of the investigator, and the story necessarily followed the natural sequence of events in the life of the boy (Shaw, 1930, p. 22).

No matter how minimal guidance was, I feel that Shaw may have been negligent to the influence he may have had over Stanley in their collaboration.

On a number of occasions, Stanley talks glowingly of Shaw and it is clear too that Shaw and his wife invited Stanley into their home and kept in close contact. Whatever may have constituted the text of Stanley, there is clearly a great deal more going on around it (Plummer, 2001, p. 107).

It is important to remember with life stories and their interpretation, the researcher will always have some influence, no matter how minimal, on what is being told to them.

These two examples of the early stages of life histories devote a great deal of importance to the subjective viewpoint of important social events. I will now look at some of the more recent endeavours of life history research. From this, I will then discuss why I felt that a life history model best suited my research approach.

### 4.13 Life Histories Seen Today

#### 4.13a Tony Parker

Tony Parker played a monumental role in giving voice to those within the criminal justice system. His life history accounts are portrayed directly as told to him by his interviewees seen through “his resistance of editorialising devices or imposed narratives, as he sought to ‘record without comment or judgement’ the stories he was told” (Tarling, 2001). Parker endeavoured to give voice to the more marginalised members of society. He concentrated on the marginalised voices which were tailored by authors to suit their purpose. He wanted to provide a full picture of how people truly felt rather than an interpretation of these feelings. In Life After Life (1990), Parker interviewed twelve people convicted to life imprisonment. He devoted a chapter to each person and relied completely on the words given to him to create an intimate account of each person’s life. This account allowed Parker to give readers the truest picture of how life was experienced by ‘lifers’.

Reading all the books there’ve ever been about prisons won’t bring you anywhere near [the actual experience], because they’re mostly written by people who haven’t been inside. Even those who have would only be writing about how it was to them anyway... recreating a personal experience (Parker, 1973, p.17)

Parker acts as a transcriber for his interviewees. He does not place his own editorials overtly in the texts he writes. He writes the words as said to him by his participant in the study. He does not include editorial notes or personal interpretations of what he



sees the informants as saying. In doing so, he provides what he feels is an unbiased and unedited version of neglected life stories.

Once again, I feel it important to note that an author can never underestimate his or her influence on the life stories that gain from their subjects. Although Parker does not overtly edit or pass judgement on what he produces in a life story, he writes what he has heard, how he has heard it and his image of his participants in some way will inevitably influence his communications with his subjects. People often hear only what they want to hear and will only say what they want people to hear. In any life history approach to research, including autobiographical research, it can be difficult to ascertain you will only receive as much of a picture as the author wants to divulge.

#### 4.13b Nancy Scheper-Hughes

In Death Without Weeping(1992), Scheper-Hughes takes an ethnographic approach to her work in Brazil as worker with the Peace Corps from 1962 through until 1966. During this time she formed close relationships with members of her communities and was able to experience life of Brazilians through an enlightened position. She returned in 1982 but she bases much of her understanding on her initial experience, allowing her “a specific relationship to the community, ....[driving] a phenomenologically grounded anthropology, an anthropology with one’s feet on the ground” (Scheper-Hughes, 1992, pp.4-5). Scheper-Hughes gives *her* interpretation of the history of life of people of Alto do Cruzeiro, “I hope to give the reader a deeper appreciation of the way in which ethnographic “facts” are built up in the course of everyday participation in the life of the community” (Scheper-Hughes, 1992, p.25). I see Scheper-Hughes’ work as giving a history of a particular society. Through the

individual voices which are heard, force is given to her argument of the mistreatment in many of the communities in which she worked.

Scheper-Hughes writings show the subjective nature and its undeniable influence on researchers in life history work. She recognises this bias right from the start:

The ethnographer has a professional and a moral obligation to get the "facts" as accurately as possible. This is not even debatable. But all facts are necessarily selected and interpreted from the moment we decide to count one thing and ignore another, or attend this ritual but not another, so that anthropological understanding is necessarily partial and is always hermeneutic (Scheper-Hughes, 1992, p.23).

In recognising her bias, Scheper-Hughes strengthens her study. She recognised her role as an impartial and sympathetic listener to her participants. This gives her credibility not only with readers of her story, but also with the participants in her study. They recognise her as someone fighting for their position in society, allowing their voice to be heard. Her research question comes from her encounters with injustice, hunger and violence experienced during her time as a Peace Corp worker. She was there to help the people through a missionary role and this point of view is obvious in her writings. It would have been difficult to gain insight onto a community which saw a researcher as working for a cause which went against their own position. In allowing her own personal feelings to be seen, she gains a story which would not come easily to a person writing from the outside. Unlike traditional research approaches, subjectivity gives strength rather than weakness to a life history account.

We cannot rid ourselves of the cultural self we bring with us into the field any more than we can disown our eyes, ears and skin through which we take in our intuitive perceptions about the new and strange world we have entered. Nonetheless like every other artisan (and I dare say that at our best we are this), we struggle to do the best we can with the limited resources we have at hand - our ability to listen and observe empathetically and compassionately (Scheper-Hughes, 1992, p28).

4.13c Harry F. Wolcott

Harry F. Wolcott and his work with 'sneaky kid' give a poignant life history account which gives an example of some of the more extreme pitfalls a researcher can find themselves in. Wolcott was deeply involved in his 'sneaky kid's' life both for the purposes of his ethnographic work and personal matters.

Brad (the pseudonym for Wolcott's subject) had set up residence in a makeshift cabin he had erected on Wolcott's property unbeknown and uninvited. When Wolcott became aware of Brad's presence and realising his delinquent nature, he quickly became involved in Brad's life.

Brad had some hang-ups focused largely on his acceptance of his body and his preoccupation with sexual fantasy as yet unfulfilled-*Portnoy's Complaint* personified. In time (or, more candidly, not quite in time; he sank unexpectedly into a mood of utter despair and abruptly announced he was "hitting the road" because he saw no future where he was), I realised he had some deep-seated emotional hang-ups as well. My concern with this paper, however, is with Brad as a social rather than psychological being, and thus with personality-in-culture rather than with personality per se (Wolcott, 2002, p. 8)

What is interesting about Wolcott's work is that although he claims to be only interested in Brad's 'personality in culture', he becomes so involved with Brad on an intimate and personal level that I do not feel his research sticks strictly to the research question.

Through Wolcott's work with Brad, a personal relationship begins. This relationship crosses all boundaries of what is considered ethically just, as Wolcott becomes sexually involved with Brad having "a caring and sexual but not particularly stable relationship with Brad" (p.85). Wolcott, in defending his ethical stance, blames many of his critics as regarding the affair as an opportunity for homosexual persecution. His affair with a vulnerable young delinquent child, on the run from his

family looking for someone to trust, is justified by Wolcott in a letter to Brad's mother:

I happened along in his life when he needed someone desperately, too. My only regret is that I didn't realize that need for so long. My "therapy" was listening and, at times, a firm hug. Until I hugged him I didn't realise how totally beyond reach he had gotten, and by then he had already been here for 11 lonely months (p.72).

Wolcott speaks of Brad needing 'someone desperately' being 'totally beyond reach' and lonely. This, to me, signals an abuse in the power relation that existed between Wolcott and Brad. Wolcott does not see his influence as pertinent to Brad's eventual decline as he talks of Brad's delusional state and has difficulty seeing that he too, may be slightly delusional about the effect he has had on Brad's mental well being.

#### 4.13d Concluding Thoughts

As can be noted even by looking at the examples given concerning the development and modern use of life history research, there is no one singular way which can be deemed as its epitome. Life history research can take many different forms and has many different titles ascribed to it. It can be done in many different ways with various amounts of involvement seen by the researcher.

#### 4.14 Life History or Life Story?

Using the term 'life history' can be a generalisation which encompasses many forms of research with people's life. Life histories have been classified in many different ways and been given many different titles from autobiographies to testimonials. However there can be great confusion by what is meant by life *history* research in comparison to life story research. I will now examine, and define further, my research as a life history or a life story document.



Researchers have differing views on the differentiation between life story and life history research. Goodson and Sikes (2001) see life history research as a further step on from life story research.

Moving from life story to life history involves a move to account for historical context... it offers the researcher considerable 'colonizing' power to 'locate' the life story with all its inevitable selections, shifts and silences (2001, p.17).

This form of life history research moves a personal story into the social realm. It separates the story from the individual and relates its themes to the social realm. It can take a bit of the individualistic sense of a life story and shape it to form support for a sociological phenomena. Goodson and Sikes place the 'colonizing power' in the hands of the researcher. Though it is inevitable that the researcher will have the final 'editing power' in research, I feel that life stories should be able to keep their individual flavour, involving the teller to his or her full potential.

Luken and Vaughan (2001) define a life history approach giving more recognition to the individuals giving up their time to be involved.

Contemporary scholars argue that the epistemological and ontological bases of life history approaches provide additional benefits: rewriting history from the bottom up, allowing the subjects to speak for themselves, developing critiques of knowledge that are based in the experiences of dominant groups and in the conceptual apparatus of the social sciences" (Luken and Vaughan, 2001, p,151)

This definition is more relevant to this study. The intent of my research is to make heard the voices of teachers and creating a forum for their individual stories to be heard. It is an attempt to cast light on the motivation that drives these special people to maintain their sanity and their perseverance in a career that is often viewed as torturous.

A life story appears from this standpoint to be a stepping stone to achieve life history research. But can a life story constitute research on its own? "The life story approach has been defined as a method of data collection, more importantly, it is also a specific way of addressing the substantive (i.e. theoretical) questions of sociology" (Bertaux and Kohli, 2001, p. 144). The life story is viewed as the evidence and the materials used in analysis. Once analysed, a life history is produced bringing the individual story into the social realm. Therefore, when comparing life histories to life stories, I see them not as separate but as being intertwined with each other. To me, the life story is the information collected from people in order to have data to base interpretations upon. Life histories account for the analytical part of the study.

In turning a life story into a life history, the researcher must look at the facts beyond the words. Life histories involve presenting the material in a manner as to make sense of the research question. "[a life] story we tell about our life; a life history is a collaborative venture, reviewing a wide range of evidence... The crucial focus for life history work is to locate the teacher's own story alongside a broader contextual analysis" (Goodson, 1992, p.6).

I agree that a life history is a life story taken a step further; however I am not sure I agree on the further step that Goodson and Sikes see the life history approach as taking. I believe that a life history is allowing unheard voices to be heard and though the researcher is able to shape how this voice is heard, therefore exerting a 'colonizing' power, I think it is important that the researcher remember the importance of the individual voices that are heard. I am not saying that life history research is free from researcher's bias, however, it is important that any of the bias that may shape the researcher's retelling of a person's life story must be made clear up front, making it transparent and giving true value to the stories in question.

The ultimate aim of the narrative investigation of human life, according to Jolsselson and Lieblich (1995), is the interpretation of experience. But this is a complex matter, because both *interpretation* and *experience* are highly relative terms. Subjectivity is thus at the center of the process of life storytelling, reaching for meaning through interpretation as contrasted with experimental scientific approaches that seek to uncover laws (Atkinson, 1998, p. 58).

#### **4.2 The Postmodern Epistemology of Life Histories**

As the historical moment shifts, perhaps into a late modern world, what stories may lose their significance, and what stories may gain in tellability? (Plummer, 1995, p25).

Plummer (1995) sees a shift in how people tell their life stories towards a more post-modern, or late modern, way of thinking, but what exactly does he mean? Does this postmodern way of thinking apply to all life storytellers?

The 'truth' in life stories of individual people can be interpreted and contradicted in many different ways. There is no one correct way to interpret a life story, nor is there one correct life story in the way it is told. The postmodern view embraces the variability of life stories. It rejects the notion of generalisation of 'truth' and recognises the unpredictable truths people may believe. Postmodernity asks: Is there really a notion of the 'single truth'?

There has long been a concern with the plurality of truths, the ambiguity of meaning, the struggle of a social self in the dialectics of 'I and Me', the ceaseless flux, the localised context, and the deconstructed, decentred life in story telling (Plummer, 1995, p. 133).

Postmodernity places a great deal of emphasis on the language, symbols, signs and signifiers used within story telling. It recognises that words have different meanings to different people depending upon the symbols people associate with them.

A postmodern turn of life stories recognises that there is no one 'truth'. Stereotypes and generalisations do not always hold true, but can this always be represented in the mind sets of all researchers?

*Most of us were and are probably living simultaneously in traditional, modern and post-modern worlds. But it must be stressed that we do this at manifestly different speeds, to differing degrees, and with differing levels of self-awareness (Plummer, 2003, p.8).*

Though life story researchers may strive to base their research upon a postmodern way of thinking; culture, upbringing and the position that they find themselves within their society will all have a bearing on how they approach and interpret their data.

#### 4.21 Truth in the Post Modern World

The term 'truth' has quite a subjective flavour when looked at through the post modern eye. Truth is a term which can be used quite loosely, however putting a post modern spin on the word creates issues as to what constitutes truth and what influences are apparent in shaping how people in different contexts perceive truth.

Pasquino (1993) looks at Foucault's conceptualisation of truth and its relation to subjectivity and power. Foucault identifies truth as "the product of discursive practices – or, more precisely of the component of discursive practices which we may call practices of *veridication*" (p.41). In this sense "claims to truth are always discursively situated and implicated in relations of power" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p. 292). Truth becomes meaningful to different audiences depending on its usefulness.

Truth involves regulative rules that must be met for some statements to be more meaningful than others. Otherwise truth becomes meaningless and, if this is the case, liberatory praxis has no purpose other than to win for the sake of winning... in every instance of our behaviour, we presuppose some normative or universal relation to truth. Truth is internally related to meaning in



a pragmatic way through normative reference claims, intersubjective reference claims, subjective reference claims, and the way we deictically ground or anchor meaning in our daily lives (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p. 292).

It is the subjective nature of truth that postmodernity places a great deal of emphasis upon.

Narrative tales will always involve a 'crisis of representation'. Truth can no longer be viewed as a singular guaranteed notion as people will use their subjective experiences to shape their 'truth'.

Critical analysis of 'the truth' opens up the possibility, if not the necessity, of learning to live without inherited guarantees or securities, and with a 'pluralism of images and narratives of action, rationality and value' (Smart, 1993, p. 82).

In the analysis of life stories, therefore, it is not only important to look at what stories have been constructed, but also the influences that cause the stories to be constructed in such a manner.

A critical postmodern research requires researchers to construct their perception of a world anew, not just in random ways but in a manner that undermines what appears natural, that opens to question what appears obvious. To engage in critical postmodern research is to take part in a process of critical world making (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1998, p293).

All stories are told from a point of view. This point of view will always have a subjective flavour which the storyteller transposes onto the story from their own personal experiences. The researcher must question where 'the truth' lies for the storyteller and why it has been constructed as it has- the basis on which truth must still be considered tentative and elusive.

Getting at this bedrock of experience remains the honourable goal for many, but critics suggest that these very terms imply that these very terms imply humanity as capable of existing free from social constraints and discourse and are hence suspect (Plummer, 2001, p. 86).

How we relate to a story and explain it, cannot be free from our own personal bias and interpretation. Though we may claim to understand the 'truth', this is by no means making a claim to certainty or the absolute. Postmodernity espouses the ideal of recognition of the subjective nature of stories and the multiplicity of truths that exist in relation to the power.

There is also the issue of trust which crops up in researching life narratives. Trust involves entering into a risk situation where the storyteller is reliant upon myself, as researcher, to portray an accurate interpretation of each story. There is also my trust in the storytellers relying on a credible depiction of their lives.

For trust is only demanded where there is ignorance – either of the knowledge claims of technical experts or of the thoughts and intentions of intimates upon whom a person relies (Giddens, 1990, p.89).

I cannot assign 'truth' to stories that I am told, however I can identify the trustworthiness with which they are told to me. If there is a high level of trustworthiness to the actions that lie behind each story, then each story will hold an authenticity both for the storyteller and myself in the meaning that lies behind the words.

### **4.3 The Role of the Researcher**

When looking at research involving subjective recounts of life happenings and events that have defined a person's role in society, it is important to examine the presuppositions that the researcher is basing an analysis on. It is also important to examine the preconceptions participants have of the researcher's position both socially and professionally. The roles and relations that exist prior to a study will have a direct impact upon the roles and relations that will be ascribed within a research venture. How participants view themselves in relation to the researcher, how

the researcher views participants in relation herself and the roles ascribed to the researcher by all, will impact upon the information divulged by participants and how the researcher will interpret information given to them.

Though a life story approach to research is giving voice to those who are telling the story, the researcher still has a great deal of influence over how information is interpreted. "Some authors focus on the actors' subjective points of view, others see their task as the reconstruction of meaning structures; still others try to discern social relationships of which the actors themselves are not wholly or even partially aware" (Bertaux and Kohli, 2001, p. 144). If a researcher has a focus on the subjective story of the storyteller it may lend itself to the least bias, it may also neglect to see aspects of the story that are influenced by relationships seen within the society of the storyteller. It is important to realise, the impact of the identity of 'researcher' may impact on what they tell you.

"The humanistic-literary approach, some of whose advocates place much greater emphasis on the links established during the inquiry between the sociologist and his or her subjects. Other's emphasise the sociologist role as "publisher" of life stories aimed at the general public and thus as an advocate of people and groups who would otherwise have no chance to be heard publicly. (Bertaux and Kohli, p.145)

As an inside researcher, relations already exist between yourself and your storytellers. Going into a research situation and 'putting on your researcher's hat' may change people's perceptions of you. As researcher you need to keep things professional, however at the same time you do not want to lose the personal relationships you have with people who have agreed to participate in your study. Finding your own position within the research context can be a difficult balancing act but identifying how you will approach situations can make it easier.

The storytellers may also find solace in finding some descriptor to justify their reasoning for letting someone into their personal life story. In listening to a person's life story and struggles and triumphs that they have, you may be giving them emotional support in coming to terms with everything they have been through. Having a therapeutic role can have a serious impact on life outside of research. I do not think it can be separated from life story research, however research must not become therapy. Though it is therapeutic to talk, it is important that the research questions are always in the forefront of all conversation. Doing research which involves individuals and their feelings and emotions brings with it an element of caring. As Measor and Sikes (1992) highlight "It does seem that there is a responsibility there, which should be acknowledged – and that is a basic human responsibility to other people. We should not initiate situations that we are not prepared to see through to their potential conclusion" (p.226).

#### **4.4 How Will I Justify My Method and Position as Researcher?**

In the view of previous life story work in relation to my own work, I must realise my position within the research setting and how the research may affect my relations with the participants involved. I must recognise my intentions of research and what I plan to base my research on. I must define my research appropriately and contextualise my role within the research environment. This self-reflectivity is an important aspect of any research a researcher embarks upon and I will now look at questions concerning the relation of my personal research to the issues raised in discussion of previous research and definitions of the life hi/story approach.

How do I see life hi/story research fitting into 'my society'? Thomas and Znaniecki (1927) brought life history research into the forefront of sociology by



recognising the interplay between influences of individuals and society upon each other. They recognised that life history research was an ideal source of information which took into account both the subjective attitudes of individuals and the objective features of society. This relates to the postmodern interpretation of life stories not having 'one single truth' but multiple truths. My research will examine personal responses to work and life experiences of people in education of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). Most of my participants will be from a single school so influence of the society around them may not be particularly evident, however, its role must not be disregarded. What people want me to believe as true may not be true when viewed by someone else with similar experiences. I believe that both society and the individual shape the truths that people hold within the life stories which they tell me. Though I may see my research as working in a particular way, it is important to look at those who have done similar work before me to ground my research and look at the possible influences in my interpretations.

From the sociological, postmodern theory that I use to shape my research, I also need to determine what I plan to base my research on? There is a great variety to the evidence that has been used in the past for life hi/story research: written documents, personal diaries, recorded interviews both audio and visual. Then once I have collected my evidence, how do I plan to record and interpret it?

Recording and interpreting my evidence in a particular way will lead me to title my research efforts - is it life *history* or life *story* research? The definition of this type of research seems to echo the postmodernity ascribed to it as there is no one single true definition for life histories or life stories. For some, life histories seem to relate more closely to proving social theories. They try to relate the individual story to a social story. The story seems to no longer belong to the storyteller but to a more

general social being. Life histories, in my opinion, are what is made of life stories. I do think that there is a sense of seeing these stories in relation to the society in which they are told, however, it is important to keep the individual flavour and ownership to the storyteller. Therefore in defining my work, I will listen to the life stories of the people who have chosen to work with me, however, I will then analyse these life stories in the hope of creating life histories of who these people have become. I will strive to 'scribe' like Tony Parker (1973, 1990) did, giving voice to those who sometimes feel unheard.

Finally within my research I will need to define my own role and distinguish myself as researcher, remembering previous friendship links that exist which may also involve a counselling sense to some research. It is important that though it is my inherent responsibility as a friend and human being to recognise the therapeutic involvement in life story telling, I must also remember my reason for undertaking the research. In recognising my role as 'friend' I am able to also recognise the subjectivity that may exist. By recognising that those who speak with me may see me as counsellor, will allow me to alleviate the greater risks of the ethical dilemmas that I may encounter. Like Scheper-Hughes (1992), I must strengthen my study through the recognition of my involvement with my participants. Unlike Wolcott (2002) and Shaw (1930), I must not underestimate my role and influence on people telling me their stories.

Through self reflectivity, I am able to use the experiences of others to strengthen my methods. By recognising the strengths and weakness seen in others studies and definitions of work involving life stories, I am able to find my own position within my research. From discovering where life history research came from, I am now going to look at where I am going to take them.

**CHAPTER 5:**  
**DEALING WITH THE LIVES OF OTHERS – METHODS EMPLOYED**

**5.1 Introduction**

In any research venture, a number of considerations need to be examined and questions need to be answered in order for research to be successful. Where is the research to be based? Who is it necessary to discuss research with in order to obtain the appropriate permission to carry out an investigation? Who will be involved in the study and how would these people be selected? What is the time frame in which research would take place? What will be the best way forward in obtaining information with the least bias from both researcher and research subjects? How will this information be analysed? Finally what limitations may arise that may affect the outcome of the study and, where possible, what strategies could be used to overcome them? These were questions I needed to address in order for my research, involving life stories, to be successful.

As you are gaining these personal insights into a person's private existence, it is important to realise the sensitivity that must accompany any dealings and also the apprehension that people may hold towards you. Not everyone will feel comfortable telling you their secrets and letting you meet the skeletons in their closets. Some people may even begin the journey down the path of their history and fall short of divulging the fullest truth and picture to give an open and honest picture of how they have come to be where they are today. There are others, however, who will enjoy telling you about the trials and tribulations they have encountered in life. Life histories are interesting because you are able to gain a personal account of events in a person's life. These events though at times may seem like numerous tangents going nowhere, all play an important role in determining the significance of a person's life history. If someone feels that it is important enough to talk about it must be important

enough to be remembered, and significant enough to feel that someone else may be interested in it. Those who are reluctant to discuss certain issues may have reasons which may give insight into their 'guarded story'.

As a researcher you must also be prepared to tackle the numerous difficulties and dilemmas that will present themselves through doing life story research. As an inside researcher, using a research setting with personal and professional feelings associated to it, the issues and problems that I would encounter in any life story research are made more complex. Repercussions that affect the researcher may not only impinge on the research being undertaken, but also on the professional and personal relationships that exist between researcher and others involved in the study, both directly and indirectly. Life story research from the insider's perspective involves a self reflective aspect evoked from listening to people's life stories in which certain aspects are similar or intertwined with my own life story. It can provoke soul searching not only on the part of the teller but for the listener as well.

In this chapter, I will go through the events and challenges I encountered in preparing for and collecting data for me life history research. I will look at my own personal journey in discovering other's life stories and the impact that it had on my role as researcher, my role as teacher and my role as colleague and friend to those involved in the study.

## **5.2 Issues of Context**

The physical, personal, social, and professional localities of all people involved in a study will inevitably affect what is gained in research. When discussing the research within its physical and social context, you give people a taste of the society in which the research is placed. What is even more important for the reader to



recognise, is how the researcher fits into this society as it may give a subjective flavour to the research.

What we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to - is obscured because most of what we need to comprehend of a particular event, ritual, custom, idea, or whatever is insinuated as background information before the thing itself is directly examined (Geertz, 1973, p.9).

Our own construction of others will also be heavily influenced by our previous interactions. This will be even more prominent if research is coming from an insider's perspective. By examining where the research takes place and the place a researcher holds within this setting, a snapshot is given of the influences that may play a part in the analysis of data, the nature of any subjectivity which exists within the research and how the research relates to the setting in which it is placed.

### **5.21 Physical and Social Context of the Research**

Staff who volunteered to participate were from two schools which cater specifically for children with EBD. One is a day school with a maximum roll of 44 pupils and all of these pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. The school admits children ages seven to sixteen years of age. When this study took place, there were 42 boys on roll, however no girls were attending. It is also important to note that this school was also my place of work.

The other school from which participants were recruited is a residential school for children with EBD. It caters for up to 55 secondary aged boys and it had 52 on its roll at the time of the study. There are 31 pupils who board in the school's residential provision during the week, the remainder travelling from their homes daily. This is exclusively a secondary school admitting pupils ages 11-16. All the pupils have a

Statement of Special Educational Need and their places are funded by each pupils' local educational authorities (LEAs) as this, again, is a state run school.

Using these two schools provided two unique working environments. Though both schools taught children with EBD, one school constantly struggles with the outside influences of the children's home lives whereas the other school, by providing boarding facilities, may have consistent 24 hour boundaries for some of its pupils but can struggle with the daily routines the boys bring into the system. Teachers in the day school context will only have a direct dealings with pupils' activities during school hours, whereas those at the residential school may also have dealings with their pupils in a more social and informal context. Though working with children with the same deficit in behaviour, the attitudes teachers hold toward jobs and their positions may carry different attributes.

#### **5.22 Personal Context of the Researcher: the influence of becoming an inside researcher**

The personal context I found myself in would greatly affect my 'researcher's stance' and the platform on which I would base my interpretations. My colleagues will see me not only as a researcher but also as 'one of their own'. This may lead to disclosure, but may also set up barriers due to my close connections with participants.

Objectivity suggests that the researcher should be somewhat distant from what is being researched into. Prejudice, self-interest, familiarity, defensiveness would surely distort the research of a teacher. Who is likely to seek to falsify the very principles on which his [or her] teaching is based?

(Pring, 2000, p. 121)

I cannot claim to have pure objectivity in how I view my subjects nor can I assume pure objectivity in their responses to me. I must be able to claim, however,

recognition of my role as teacher and colleague and how it will affect my role as researcher.

In looking at the life stories of those with whom I work, there is the difficulty of the previous knowledge I have concerning what they tell me. Though I aim to be an impartial listener, I am involved in their lives. I have seen how they act and work through my day-to-day interactions with them. I will have preconceived notions of who these people are and what they stand for and this is something that can be difficult to divorce from an 'impartial' ear.

Like all forms of inquiry, practitioner research is value laden. Although most practitioners hope that practitioner researcher will improve their practice, what constitutes "improvement" is not self-evident. It is particularly problematic in a field such as education, where there is no consensus on basic educational aims. Practitioner research takes place in educational settings that reflect a society characterized by conflicting values and an unequal distribution of resources and power (Anderson et al, 1994, p.3).

This issue of personal context must be recognised so as it can strengthen rather than cause weakness and doubt in the data uncovered.

I had the added advantage of having an insider perspective on events that transpire during day to day life within the research environment

It represents insider or local knowledge about a setting. There is no way an outsider, even an ethnographer who spends years as an observer, can acquire the tacit knowledge of a setting that those who must act within it daily possess. This creates obvious advantages for the practitioner researcher, but it also makes it harder for the practitioner researcher to "step back" and take a dispassionate look at the setting (Anderson et al., 1994, p.4).

As Anderson and his colleagues recognise, insider research presents both strengths and weaknesses to any study. It gives the researcher a more in depth understanding to the events and happenings which may influence the study, but it also creates a personal attachment for the researcher with the content and subjects involved.

Insider research requires a researcher to reflect upon his or her own position within this setting, keeping in mind an aim of gaining improvement through the research which is undertaken. What constitutes improvement is for the researcher to determine and provide evidence for. As with any personal inquest, insider research is value laden - what constitutes improvements for one researcher may not for another. It is imperative that a great deal of reflection is involved in research which takes place within a personal context.

I needed to allow my participants voices to be heard as they would expect them to be heard rather than how I hear them. Reflecting on my role within the study should be used to add strength to any assertions which are made. Recognising my insider position will allow any influence to remain transparent rather than taint data analysis.

to be reflective and to be sensitive to the arts and all forms of human communication in order to understand the point of view of those who made the words or formed the expression. Reflective perspectives in anthropology have been described as 'the withdrawal from the world, bending back toward thought process itself' (Ruby, 1982, p.2).

(Campbell, 1988, p.64).

Recognising my personal context allows me to confront all assumptions and preconceptions I may have towards my participants. In listening to people's stories from their own point of reference I am allowed to see these people as they want to be seen.

Looking through the eyes of the observed could be of immense value to the biographer.... It takes for its life text the intertexture of the individual and the concrete worldviews of the individual and the intersubjectivity of the observer and the observed (Campbell, 1988, p. 60).

Though a life story is told by the teller in a way that they want people to see their lives, it is the role of the researcher to examine why it is that they might want their life



to appear as they describe. The research I had chosen would allow me to examine my own expectations, aspirations and rationale for being in the position I am in, as well as get insight into other teachers' dreams and desires about their positions.

What generally happens when we tell a story from our own life is that we increase our working knowledge of ourselves because we discover deeper meaning in our lives through the process of reflecting and putting the events, experiences and feelings that we have lived into oral expressions (Atkinson, 1998, p.1).

Recognising both the physical and personal context in which you are undertaking your research allows a greater understanding of the study carried out. Conducting research within your own working environment requires an approach which recognises the influences of researcher from within. Doing the bulk of research centred on my own school environment gave me the advantage of having some insider knowledge about many of my participants before embarking upon the study. However, if unrecognised, this knowledge can be seen as having not only an advantage in the research field but also a negative impact upon the study.

#### 5.24 Contexts of the Participants

Upon beginning work which involves the participation of others, it is important for the researcher to try to place themselves in the position of the observed. Though all conversations should have a relaxed and casual feel to them, it is not always easy to discuss subjects knowing they will be 'picked apart' and analysed which may cause worry and feelings of helplessness.

Research has the potential to empower people if it gives them the benefit of knowledge that will enable them to control their own destinies. But it is necessary to recognise that research also has the capacity for disempowerment (Crow, 2000, p.69).

Though life story work should be done in collaboration between researcher and participants, it is only natural for participants to be sceptical when research is in its infancy.

In an ideal world, people who agree to help out with life story work should do so without worry of the repercussions it will have to relations that may previously exist within the school. Hierarchical relations should have no impact upon what transpires between researcher and participants, and people should not feel threatened in the knowledge that someone within their work circles has insight into their life philosophy. Sadly, research cannot be divorced from the reality of everyday life as “issues of personal experience, social morality and public politics are an ever-present feature of research and need to be firmly confronted (Plummer, 2001, p. 206).

A person’s position in relation to the researcher within a work setting will greatly influence their comfort in speaking candidly about events in their lives. A person in a senior position may be concerned that they may divulge too much.

Researchers have contended with educational institutions that are structured hierarchically with formal asymmetrical relations of power and responsibility... In attempting to involve others in a critique of practice (and all it implies) she soon encounters resistance (Hutchinson and Whitehouse, 1996, p.85).

People who initially in their best intentions want to help out with the research may at a later date find it inappropriate and improper to discuss issues, as they may see it as an infringement on their position within the school.

It is important to make sure that all participants are fully aware of what research will entail and how they will be involved in the analysis process. This will help in warding off any feelings of disempowerment through keeping everyone constantly involved in the research.

### **5.3 Keeping the Research on Track**

The first hand telling of a life story through interview is one of the main components of life history data. Living and working within the research setting, it is easy to take for granted a lot of the information that you may gain which adds insight into your work. Staffroom gossip can give new insight into what people have told you, but as a researcher it is important to remember the emotive nature of the staffroom discourse. There are many sources which can be used but each must be looked at within the context that it is founded and what is made available to the researcher. In order to gain the most comprehensive life story data, the researcher must engage constantly in questions that justify and validate the research undertaken.

Plummer (2001) discusses the differing types of questions that should be addressed in looking at life story data which can help to deal with most of the issues that may arise during research. It also helps to keep a clear focus on the purpose of research. Plummer breaks these questions into five categories: substantive, social science, technical, ethical/political and personal questions. The substantive look at the information you are researching and the questions you are trying to answer. Social science questions look at how it is you are trying to present the data and the justification which lies behind the research question. These questions should give reason and rationalisation to the research. Technical questions address how research is actually undertaken - how information will be obtained. The ethical/ political questions are related to 'safety' issues of research. These questions should help the researcher to reflect on the effect the research may have on any parties involved and safeguard against exploitation and other ethical issues. Finally the personal questions endorse the reflexivity that life story researchers should employ. Personal questions recognise that life story research will most always have some personal links. These

questions confront the researcher with the personal impact the study may have (see Plummer, 2001, Appendix 5).

In order to keep all research on track a researcher must substantiate all of his/her claims. Is the information that is gained from people both in and outside of the interview situation answering the questions that have been asked? When presenting the information gathered, it must look at questions relating to facets of life of those involved. It cannot be comprised of stories told for the sake of telling - it should justify social action. The technical aspects of work must not be forgotten. It is important that the techniques used are sound and proven methods of data collection. These techniques must employ ethical measures to ensure the safety and well being of all parties involved in the research. Finally, the research must constantly engage in self-reflection, reminding the researcher of his/her position within the research and the effect it may have on research. This reflection should also give self-assurance to the researcher in the purpose of his or her study.

Doing life history research from an insider's approach can often put a researcher in a difficult position. It can create difficulties in discussing personal issues with colleagues of differing ranks in the hierarchy of work. People may have issues discussing details which may alter 'traditional' opinions others hold of them. Life story research can also provide a forum for people to create the persona they want people to see.

For all sorts of reasons, informants may be cautious about what they reveal, and this can be especially so when they are already in some sort of relationship with the enquirer. When the research solicits information of a personal nature, the potential 'power' that such knowledge gives to the researcher can be considerable: as Madeline Grumet (1991: 69) notes: 'telling a story to a friend is a risky business; the better the friend the riskier the business (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p. 25).



By using the self-questioning guidelines, set out by Plummer, as an ongoing guide to all facets of the investigation, researchers should have less difficulty in dealing with issues that may not be expected. Constant reminders of these questions should make the unexpected a little less awkward and a little more predictable. In my own research, it helped to provide me with the necessary 'guarantee' that my research was valid and worthwhile.

Each person who chose to become involved in my study had done so of their own free will. It was therefore important that if they did not want to continue with the work being done, that they were able to withdraw at any time. After each initial interview, the participants were asked if they wanted to continue with the study. Some asked for more information about what would be expected of them and from this information there was a participant who chose not to continue with the work. Though I wanted to include all the stories I had been told, I ethically knew that I did not have the right to the story.

The telling of a story of a life is a deeply problematic and ethical process in which researchers are fully implicated.... Life story research always means you are playing with another person's life: so you had better be careful (Plummer, 2001, p.224).

I wrestled with the ethical dilemma of including the unfinished portion of the story that I had collected, however through discussions with colleagues I realised that if I were to do so, I was taking away any credibility of presenting a story in which the storyteller had true ownership of. I wanted to give ownership not take it away. As Plummer (2001) so poignantly notes:

The potential harm and damage, the sheer intrusiveness into someone else's life, the bare-faced cheek to believe that one can simply tell another's story, the uncritical self-satisfaction of telling another's story, the frequent arrogance of colonizing their world view- all need to be considered (p. 225).

I wanted my participants to be proud of their contributions, not embarrassed by them. Now I will look at how I found my participants and how I prepared them, as well as myself, for the interviews that lay ahead.

#### **5.4 Participant Search**

One of the most essential elements of any study is getting the necessary people involved. Life story research needs people to tell their stories, therefore it is important that I had people to base my study on, otherwise the study would be non-substantive and unfounded. I needed to determine how I was going to select these people and inform them of the study I planned to undertake.

I had two schools from which I could request for volunteers to help me with my research. Each school needed to be approached differently, as people in my own school were familiar with me and the nature of my study, whereas the other school needed introduction not only to my research but to myself as researcher and fellow teacher.

There are many different methods which can be deployed to select participants in a study. Regardless of how you choose your participants, it is essential to gain informed consent and have documentation to ensure that informed consent is given and understood (see Appendix 2). By definition, informed consent allows the researcher:

To achieve a position whereby people who agree to take part in a research programme know what they are agreeing to and authorise you to collect information from them without any form of coercion or manipulation (Kent, 2000, p. 81).

This may seem like a simple and straightforward concept, yet it can inevitably cause many headaches and extra work for many researchers, particularly in ventures which involve colleagues and friends. To gain informed consent, participants must have a

basic understanding of the information and agree to participate without any undue coercion or manipulation.

I needed to inform people of what I was doing and the type of questions that I was looking for answers to. I began this process within my own school setting through informal discussions with members of staff. This gave people some time to think about whether they would be willing to get involved. It also provided me with preliminary feedback as to whether or not a study would be possible and who I thought would be interested in being involved. Initially it appeared that many colleagues were interested in helping out with my work and my initial impression was that I would not be short of volunteers.

The next step was to formalise the information which would lead to informed consent from participants.

When the research has an essentially collaborative nature that involves informants as co-researchers, perhaps when a key focus of the project is professional and personal development, then exactly what is required of them has to be spelt out (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p.27).

I needed to be clear with my expectations of all people involved. It was important for people to understand the purpose of my study and what exactly it involved. I choose to invite all teachers within my school to consider participating in the study.

From the informal discussion within my own staff room, there were a number of people who seemed interested in participating in my study. From the initial impression I gained from people, I hoped that I would be able to choose my participants. Unfortunately, not all people are happy to discuss their lives and my hopefulness seemed to fall slightly short. Some may be afraid of the revelations they may reveal, others may be embarrassed and some people may feel they do not have

the time to commit. Whatever the reasons, they needed to be respected. People need to feel comfortable in sharing their lives with you. It is important to remember:

You will be assisting the persons you interview to uncover and share the richness and depth that makes their lives important to them. A shared sense of meaning and purpose in life is what makes a life story important and interesting to others. Most people enjoy having someone interested in their stories (Atkinson, 1998, p. 31).

I sent out invitations to participate in my research project (see Appendix 1).

Originally I was able to gain informed consent from five members of my staff, all of whom represented a diversity of experience, age and rank within the school, however only four of these participants continued through all phases of the research. I now needed to try to expand my sample further by including teaching staff from the residential EBD school.

In order to gain access at my other chosen school, I was fortunate that one of the staff from my school previously worked at the residential EBD school. She agreed to help and gave some of the invitation sheets to teachers who were employed at the school. This helped in allowing me to gain credibility. I was unknown to people within the school and this gave me an opening to introduce myself. I made contact with the school office and organised a time when I was able to come into the school and explain the research I was doing. I hoped this would give people the opportunity to know who I was and therefore provide a better feeling of comfort when deciding whether to discuss their lives with me.

I then waited for some feedback and offers to collaborate on life history research. I was hoping to gain similar numbers of participants from the second school, however I realised that this expectation was being optimistic. In the end only one member of the residential school staff volunteered to help with my research. In total I had five day teachers of children with EBD from within my own work



environment and one representing residential teachers of children with EBD, with whom I was not familiar.

## **5.5 Interview Preparation and Procedures**

I now had my participants and needed to decide what the next step would be in organising the collection of life story data. What questions would I ask and what information was it that was important for me to know? How could I gain insight into what information was viewed as important events in people's lives and how was I to approach these sometimes delicate issues? I wanted to gain some insight so that when I came face-to-face with them in the interview situation, I had some background knowledge upon which I could base some conversation.

### **5.51 Timelines**

Timelines can be used in life story research to help focus all parties involved. They allow the researcher to gain an idea of important events in a person's life. It also allows the participant to refresh their memory concerning events that may have happened in the past and affected them in some way.

Timelines can help the researcher in learning about aspects of a person's past before discussing a life story account. It can be difficult knowing where to start with life story information, and a time line offers some insight into what people view as important and also what they will be willing to discuss. When giving people a task of creating a time line of their life, I was made aware of the detail and information that each participant was initially willing to give to me. The instructions I included in my timeline introduction were broad and general which gave each participant the individual licence to include the amount of detail they felt comfortable with (see

Appendix 3). It was interesting to see the differing detail which was included in each person's account and the apparent veils that were put over certain areas. Timelines gave me some guidance, as a researcher, in the question that may be relevant to each individual involved. Life stories are unique to each individual and questions that may seem apt for one person may not be equally justified with another.

Timelines are invaluable not only to the researcher but also can be used as a tool to refresh participants' memories. Asking a person to retell a life story will, in most cases, require some soul searching and reminiscence. Many subjects will be readily available in one's memory. Aspects of important events will have faded as they are not always subjects that are relevant to a person's everyday encounters. Timelines afford prompts to a person's memory and give some focus to details that they are trying to remember.

With these values clear in my initial research efforts, I began my research by requesting timelines from the people who had agreed to participate. This allowed me the advantage of getting to know some preliminary information to guide me in my interview efforts. It also allowed my participants to gain some focus on the task that I had set for them- remembering events and happenings that had occurred during their lifetime which changed or shaped their decisions to get into the teaching of children with EBD.

I sent out a covering letter along with some guidelines of what they could include in their timelines. These guidelines gave only general advice, as the importance people ascribe to different aspects of their lives is dependent upon each individual.

The timelines were returned and the difference in detail and content that each person included showed great variety. From some, I received a story like account of

what had transpired throughout their lives, whereas others gave brief bullet points, without explanation, of events and important dates in their lives. These timelines, on the surface, gave me starting points to base an interview structure upon. They enabled me to create lists of topics which were specifically catering for each individual. By looking at the content and detail of what was included in these timelines, I was also able to gauge the sensitivity necessary in approaching these people for information. I began to question whether all people who had volunteered really understood what would be involved in this research.

### 5.52 Personal Intuition and Relational Issues

The information written in people's timelines gave me a general history of who my storytellers were and where they had come to in the teaching profession. In looking at information that *wasn't* included, I was able to get a sense of the trepidation with which some were approaching this study. The storytellers who came from within my own professional circles were my colleagues. This gave me some insider knowledge of events and happening that had occurred in their professional (and sometimes personal) lives in the recent past. Therefore, though a lot of the information gleaned from the timelines was factual information, I was also able to make an informed guess as to what sort of interview atmosphere would be most comfortable for these people.

The relationship that exists between researcher and storyteller plays a pivotal role in any life story research and much of the data collected is dependant upon it. As Plummer (2001) has noted

When I commence a life history interview so much is dependant upon my mood and whether the interviewee and I get along or not-personal factors that books cannot really describe accurately (p. 146).

The participants from within my own work place had previous relations with me. Most of these people had been at the school for a longer time than I and therefore I was often viewed as 'the new kid on the block'. As much as I had preconceived notions as to the type of person each storyteller was, they too had preconceived notions of me. I knew this and realised that it would affect how and what they felt they were able to tell me. "The power to tell a story, or indeed not tell a story, under the conditions of one's own choosing, is part of a political process (Plummer, 1995, p.26).

In approaching the interview situations, I needed to take into account how my participants were approaching each interview and how they viewed me in the interview situation. I needed to determine if there was a purpose behind these people's participation. I needed to make informed guesses as to how to handle each situation and this relied greatly on my own personal intuition.

With storytellers from within my own professional realm with whom I experienced everyday life alongside of, relations already existed between us. These relations ranged from colleagues with whom I had personal friendships, to members of senior hierarchical positions who did not feel as comfortable letting an 'underling' into their personal life, though felt obliged to do so. My personal intuition helped to guide me in how to approach each person and how casual or formal the initial interview atmosphere needed to be. As each storyteller had the choice as to where they wanted to tell their story, I was also given more information on how they expected interviews to go. The storytellers whom I had socialised with in the past, were comfortable to go out and discuss their lives in a less formal environment, whereas those who were colleagues of similar rank, was happy to come to my room after school hours. Storytellers who occupied senior positions to myself seemed to



feel most comfortable 'on their own turf'. The three differing locations chosen gave me an idea of what context my storytellers were placing the interview in.

Two of my storytellers, Cathleen and Sonia, who chose to have an interview in a more relaxed and informal atmosphere, had an existing social relationship with me. They viewed me as a friend and trusted me in letting me into more personal aspects of their lives. Though there was this trust, I found that there was also an underlying importance to their appearance. Cathleen was a woman with a very strong character and wanted to prove that she had earned this strong character. Sonia was not confident in who she was as a person, but wanted to be seen as an altruistic person who did everything in life as a selfless act to help others. These two storytellers had put great trust in me and they had confidence that the stories they told would not be used to their detriment.

Another storyteller, Pauline, was a bit more wary of my intentions of listening to her life story. She came down to my room after school and seemed quite relaxed about discussing her life as a teacher. Over the course of the interviews, she had decided to give up teaching and return to her hometown to take care of her ailing parents. During this time she had difficult relations with senior management. At times, the interviews seemed to provide a platform for her anger and disappointment with events that had occurred in the recent past. I felt that though the story told was truthful, it was sometimes fuelled by the vengeful feelings Pauline had towards the limitations that had been placed upon her. Being situated at the school the story was often motivated by events that had happened in the day on which it was held.

The last of the storytellers from within my own setting, Martin, requested a more formal interview approach. I was asked to come to his office or classroom. With Martin, there was an overlying sense of reservation that accompanied the

interviews. As he held a position that was senior to my own, I got the impression that he was anxious that the information he gave me would be used against him.

Reassurance was necessary and I needed to try to break through the more formal front that this storyteller was upholding to try and gain an accurate depiction of how they viewed their experiences.

The unfamiliarity of the storyteller from the residential school did not allow any previous knowledge to help guide the initial interview. As I did not know this person, I was unsure what type of person he would be. It was difficult to gauge the purpose behind his agreement in participating I decided that as he had agreed to participate and was willing to discuss his life with a person that he did not know, I was safe in assuming that he would be a quite open and relaxed person.

The personal intuition that I brought to the initial interview with each storyteller added a sense of bias to the research. This will be discussed in greater detail in a later section concerning ethical considerations. However it was a necessary consideration to deal with the preconceived notions, apprehensions and expectations that each storyteller may have held. I will now look deeper into the impact that each storytellers expectations had on the information gained.

### 5.53 *Timing of the Interviews*

The story of someone's life in an ongoing process that does not have a neat cut-off point which signals when to end discussion. When starting this investigation, I underestimated the fact that life stories will not naturally come to a close when I decide to finish with my research. I limited my interviews to three sessions, however the time spent on each session was dependent upon how much each storyteller had to tell and how long they wanted to spend on topics that arose. I do feel that the time

given to each person was ample to provide the story of his or her lives to date that I needed. The difficulty I encountered was that although the interview process stopped, each person's life went on and I was a witness to events that had an impact upon information I had been given. What was I to do with this information? Plummer (2001), too asks this question:

Is there 'an afterlife of a life story', a life that it takes on of its own real consequences for those around it- maybe those included in the story, but not in the telling of it? (p.41).

This is one of the many ethical dilemmas I encountered in my study which I will investigate more later. It does highlight the importance of having time boundaries and limits to your life history research, which I realised as crucial in preparing for my study.

The timeline and personal intuition gave me some insider knowledge to how people would react within the interview situation and the appropriate tact with which to approach my storytellers, but I also needed to prepare myself to how I would personally organise the interview. As Matt Stroh (2000) points out, the interviewee is not the only nervous participant in an interview situation:

I did always pose the opening and closing questions. These I found, were the two most important parts of the interview. To begin with the interviewee (and probably the interviewer) will be nervous and unsure of what to expect. I was invariably nervous about how the interview would progress. Starting with a very general questions was very helpful.... The closing question was equally important, to ensure that the interviewee had a sense of 'closure' rather than drifting to an end.... The issue of confidence in your interview schedule is key to the interview being a success(p.207).

I, like Matt, was anxious about how the interview would progress. I knew that the best way to overcome any difficulties that may occur was to be prepared.

I scheduled dates for initial meetings with my storytellers and allowed them to choose the venue (see Appendix 4). I used the timelines and personal intuition I had

to organise and make clear questions that were necessary. I had my tape recorder and tapes ready and checked, everything that I could control was checked and ready to go. It was the aspect of time that was the uncertain variable. Though I had made clear that interviews could take as long as necessary (within reason) it was filling the time with questions and organising the following interviews that required attention.

The time within the interview needed to be fluent. A strong starting statement and closing could shape the interview into what I wanted. Each interview began with an explanation of life story research and what I was expecting to achieve from the work I was doing. From there, I reviewed what I had gathered from the timelines and asked for expansion and explanation and asked questions that I felt comfortable with. I tried to put myself 'on the other side of the table' using the information I already knew (see Appendix 5).

## **5.6 The Storytellers**

Each interview that I conducted was completely different in both the atmosphere and approach that I used. I gave the storyteller the opportunity to choose where they felt most comfortable and asked that they arrange the location of the interview. I limited the time to three interviews; however the length of the interview depended upon the mood and information gained in the interview. It was interesting to note the impact the atmosphere had on the information that was gained in each interview. In this section, I will start by giving a brief narrative of how each of my storytellers became involved in the research and how they approached the interview situations. I will then discuss specifics which occurred with interviews involving these people. The names used are pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of each



storyteller, even though, if read by people within my own work environment, the pseudonyms would be quite transparent.

### 5.61 Sonia

Sonia is a colleague at the school who had started at the school shortly after me. We had become friends through our common experiences with the children and also, as we were of similar age, we socialised outside of school. Sonia was in charge of the years directly above the children that I taught, so her pupils had once been mine and we were able to share stories of the pupils that we taught.

Sonia was born on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March 1974. She is the oldest of three children and both her parents have had careers related to education. Her mother was a primary school teacher and her father was a grounds manager at a local school. At the time of the initial interview, her mother had been diagnosed with terminal cancer and Sonia was trying to keep strong while she taught, visited her mother in hospital and worried about her father's well being.

Sonia was keen to help out in my research endeavours and volunteered even before I approached her. The timeline she provided me with was written as a story, including feelings and personal memories. There was detail that helped me to understand her position within her family and profession and gave me a good base for the initial interview. We agreed to make the interviews as relaxed as possible and decided to combine the initial interview with a social outing discussing matters over drinks. Though the tape recorder unnerved Sonia slightly, she soon forgot about it and we were able to have 'a nice meal with pleasant conversation'.

Soon after the initial interview, Sonia's mother passed away and the next two interviews were more painful for everyone involved. Sonia's mother was quite a large part of Sonia's life and her death made it very difficult for Sonia to carry on

with her life story. I knew how much it hurt Sonia to talk about her mother and I was worried that some of the topics that she or I brought up would be difficult to discuss. As her friend, I wanted to be there for her and help her through her difficult time; however Sonia wanted to carry on with the interviews. A lot of what she talked about was her mother's influence on her life. I am unsure of how much of an influence her mother's death had on the conversation, but it definitely had some impact. It was here that I faced the difficult job of balancing my friendship within the role of researcher.

The interviews with Sonia, overall, were free from problems in discussion. The timeline that Sonia provided me with gave me detailed information as to what she saw as important events in her life. I asked question to find out what made these events so important and how they affected her choice to become a teacher. Sonia, though nervous to start, was quite open in her discussion and the interviews were not dissimilar to a conversation between friends.

### 5.62 Martin

Martin was born on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1969. He had worked at the school for three and a half years and was head of the maths department. When I sent out the requests for help, he volunteered as he had recently completed an advanced diploma and knew how difficult it could be to find volunteers.

Martin's teaching career began in 1995 at a mainstream school where he worked for three years. He then became intrigued by special education. Martin has now worked at the day EBD school since 1998.

Martin's timeline gave a detailed overview of his experience with school and work. It talked about his strengths and duties throughout his life and was similar to a remit of his professions. There was mention of his family but no detail to give an

impression of his feelings towards any personal matters. Though I was able to read about Martin's experiences in education, I did not get much of a picture of how he felt about it. I approached the interview understanding that it could be difficult to get the full true picture of Martin's experiences.

Martin appeared quite laid back about the interviews, however, preferred to have the interviews in his classroom.

The initial interview allowed Martin to expand upon the facts in his timeline, explaining his feelings attached to the facts. Martin's answers were usually accompanied by a slight pause as if he was thinking about exactly what he wanted to say. During the following interviews, I asked Martin to look more closely into the paths he had chosen in life and how they had affected his career choice. I also asked where he saw himself going within his career.

The three interviews were held in a semi-formal manner, however, it seemed that the location has some influence on the manner in which the interview was approached. It also seemed that Martin was quite guarded about the information that he wanted to share and I sometimes questioned the truthfulness of his statements.

### 5.63 Pauline

Pauline quietly agreed to volunteer with my research one day after school. She didn't make a fuss about it and was the only volunteer who did not make a public display of her participation. Pauline had worked at the school for quite some time and always appeared quite aloof. She kept her distance from other staff members and made a point of keeping her personal and professional lives separate. I was excited about the prospect of interviews with Pauline as I did not know her that well but thought she would have an interesting story to tell.

Pauline's timelines mirrored her distinct boundaries of life. She divided her stories according to which sphere they fell into - 'Family Background' and 'General Work History'. She was born 16<sup>th</sup> of March 1951. She is the eldest of five children and left school at eighteen to train as a teacher. She qualified in 1971 and her first post was as a Physical Education teacher in a mainstream school where she also taught Art.

She moved into special education in 1976 and then moved into EBD education in 1993. Pauline returned to mainstream school teaching in 2001, but returned to the EBD school she left less than a year later. She now teaches Resistant Materials and Food Technology.

Pauline was happy to come to my room in the school after school hours to conduct the interviews. She seemed quite relaxed at the first interview and she seemed quite willing to give her opinion about what had happened in her life and how it had affected the decisions she had made through the course of her life.

Pauline's attitude in the second interview was less friendly than in the first. During the lapse between the two interviews, she had made the decision to leave teaching and go back to her hometown to tend to her ailing mother and father. She had handed in her notice over the half term, which gave short notice to the school. Senior staff within the school were not happy, as they knew a replacement would be hard to come by. This had caused some tension between Pauline and the school. This tension seemed to follow her into the interview and a bitterness was noted in how she spoke of the school and what had happened to her. The overtone of the entire interview seemed influenced by difficulties she was having with senior members of staff at the school,



At the end of the second interview, Pauline felt that she had covered most of the information and asked if another interview was necessary. I realised that the information that Pauline was now giving me was fuelled by her anger towards the school and I agreed that the second interview would be the final interview.

#### 5.64 Cathleen

Cathleen had started teaching at my school in the graduate teaching programme. We had a common interest in running and soon became friends outside of school, running and training together. She was keen to help out with my research as she felt that she could give a unique perspective coming from a residential EBD school where she worked as a teaching assistant to becoming a teacher at our day EBD school.

Cathleen's timeline was a brief handwritten sketch of some of the events that had occurred in her life. She apologised for its briefness as she was short of time but assured me that she could expand in the interviews. Cathleen was born 14<sup>th</sup> of June 1971. She is the middle child of three children, having two brothers. Her father was an electrician and fork lift operator and her mother a mental health nurse.

Cathleen became a learning support assistant at a residential EBD school in 1995 and studied for an English degree at the same time. Then in 2001, Cathleen enrolled in the Graduate Teacher Programme and did her training at the day EBD school. She qualified in January of 2002 and finished her NQT year in the summer term of 2003.

We agreed to combine the interviews with training sessions for a run that was coming up. We went for runs after school and then retired to local cafes or pubs to conduct the interviews. All of the interviews had a relaxed atmosphere and were

certainly not short of conversation. Cathleen seemed quite keen to discuss the events that had gotten her to where she was. She was eager to expand upon the events that had occurred and how she felt about them. The initial interview lasted for just under an hour and we agreed to meet again at the same time in the following two weeks.

The next two interviews were shorter in length, just over half an hour. In these two sessions, I didn't really ask many questions, but allowed Cathleen to discuss events that she felt had particular relevance to shaping her life. She went into more detail about her personal feelings about what she had been through and how it had affected her life.

### 5.65 Alfred

I was lucky to find Alfred who was willing to participate in my study as he was the only storyteller with whom I had no existing relationship. Our interviews were arranged over the phone and it was agreed to meet at his home on the site of the residential school in which he taught which was 15 miles from my home.

Previous to the interview, Alfred had posted his timeline to me. It was written in story form and provided quite a bit of evidence about his life. As I did not have any personal experience with Alfred, I needed to be sure that I was as well prepared as possible, so I had studied his story several times.

Alfred was born on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 1951. He was the older of two children having a younger sister. As a child, Alfred regularly attended school but sports were the ulterior motive to his education. He became quite involved in football in his secondary school and later went onto play professional football.

His teaching career began in 1978 after a number of friends badgered him into considering the idea of teaching. He began his career in the area of special needs but

worked in mainstream from 1980 to 1984. In 1984, he began his work at residential special schools and moved to his current residential school in 1991 where he took up the position as Deputy Head Teacher.

I arrived for the initial interview prepared but not really knowing what to expect. I had only spoke to Alfred on the phone, however from reading his timeline, I felt confident about the person I was about to meet. I was greeted enthusiastically at the door and we went to the dining area. It was quite a relaxed atmosphere and Alfred seemed quite pleased to meet me and was eager to help. The first interview lasted just under an hour and a half and was the longest interview I conducted. This was in part due to the fact that everything he told me was unknown apart from what I had read in his timeline. We went over the timeline information that he had given me and I was able to ascertain a more personal flavour to who Alfred was. At the end of the interview I agreed to call Alfred to arrange the next interview within the next few weeks.

The next interview with Alfred was just under a month later. It was difficult to arrange a convenient time that suited us both, but we again met at his house where I was greeted by a very relaxed and laid back Alfred and we had the interview in the same room where our first interview took place. This interview lasted about 40 minutes and went over some more details about Alfred's life path and his feelings about who he was and how he had arrived at his current situation. At the end of the meeting we arranged to have a final interview several days later at the same time and place.

The final interview focused mainly on closure issues of the interview. Although all interviews had ending points and closure issues, as I had no other contact with Alfred, the closure of the interview needed to be that much more secure. This

interview lasted for about twenty minutes and focused mainly on what I planned to do with the information and any final remarks Alfred wanted to make.

## **5.7 How to Deal with the Information Gathered**

We seek to be one thing, for the story, no matter how complex, must still be the single story for a single life. As a modern adult, one must find meaning at home, at work, and in all other domains of life; one cannot and must not be everything to everybody at every place and time. But an individual *can* be some important things for important people, at particular times and in particular places. Furthermore, he or she can be these things in a way that is unique, self-consistent, coherent, meaningful, purposeful and gratifying (McAdams, 1993, p.122).

### **5.71 Interpreting the interview**

Looking at the information received from my storytellers, it was important to remember that the story that was given to me was not necessarily the same story that would be given to someone else. As McAdams points out, there is a single story for a single life, however people are able to construct their lives in order to please the people that they are with at particular times. The stories that I was told were the stories that the people wanted me to hear, how they intended me to perceive it. It was important to look beyond the words in certain instances and take into account body language and tone with which the story was told to try to see the story *behind* the story.

When interpreting the stories, there were a number of considerations that I needed to keep in mind. It was important to consider where the interview took place and how it would influence the discussion; when the interview took place in comparison to happenings within the storytellers lives would also need to be considered; the relationship that existed between the storyteller and me; as well as the



body language and tone of voice used during the interviews. As Plummer (2001

notes:

Getting the story can be fun, but making sense of it takes much longer and requires a lot of work.... This is truly the creative part of the work- it entails brooding and reflecting upon mounds of data for long periods of time until it 'makes sense' and 'feels right' and key ideas and themes flow from it (p.152).

It was this 'brooding and reflecting' that would bring my *life* to the stories of people lives.

Where and when the interview took place would most certainly have a direct impact upon the interview. I had invited the storytellers to choose the location of the interview in hopes of creating the most conducive atmosphere, however those who chose to interview within their place of work may have unconsciously placed barriers to me gaining the most sincere and unrestrained story. A sense of formality accompanied the interviews held in offices and classrooms that did not always invite an insight into personal lives. Those who chose to be interviewed in a more casual or familiar setting outside of the professional context seemed more willing to 'let themselves go'. The content of these interviews did not seem as guarded and it was important to consider what role this guarded sense played in discovering each storytellers' life. Those interviews that continued as a part of the work day, being directly after school hours also held an overhanging feeling of the events that had occurred during the day. It was important to make note of the timing of the interview in comparison to other events in the storytellers' lives.

As with any conversation, one must remember that verbal language only accounts for a small percentage of the messages that people are sending. People's body language and tone of voice are also important factors in looking at what message is being sent along with the words that are being spoken. The non-verbal cue that a

person reveals either consciously or subconsciously gives great insight to the truthfulness and comfort with which a person imparts their story to an 'impartial' listener.

In looking at how the person imparts their story, it is important to also look at who is listening to the story and how their relationship to the storyteller would influence what was told. As mentioned previously, a person's position in relation to the researcher within a work setting will greatly influence their comfort in speaking candidly about events in their lives. This personal relation will also influence how and what is shared. People will always have an image that they want to uphold. This image may not always be compatible with events and happenings that have occurred during a person's life. In upholding the image a storyteller chooses to portray, the information in an interview will be manipulated to suit this particular persona. Though there may not be intentional deception, the truth will be told in the way the storyteller wants it to be told.

The influences I have discussed give rise to the issues of reliability and validity of the life stories. However, were these important aspects of the research? Reliable research will yield the same outcomes regardless of who conducts the procedures and valid research looks at the 'correctness' of the answers given. Life history research does not neatly fit into either of these categories. It is hoped that the answers given to me were gained in part due to my position within the research and I am not of the opinion that another researcher would gain the exact picture I was able to. In this same respect, who is to question the correctness of people's answers? Though, to an extent it is important to carry out research with every attempt to ensure that procedures are reliable and valid, the information gained through life history research cannot be measured using these terms. As Atkinson (1998) points out:

A life story encounter is a highly personal encounter; an analysis of a life story is highly subjective and may have as much to do with the quality and depth of the interpersonal exchange itself as with any theory that might be applied to the content of the narrative (p.59).

Reliability and validity are not necessarily applicable to the content of the stories told, however they are important measures in assessing my ethical practice within the interview and its analysis.

### 5.72 How were the stories composed?

When looking at the transcripts of the five life stories I received, it was difficult to decide where to begin and what to include in the final 'story'. It was important to keep the focus of research in the back of my mind whilst recognising that each individual had his or her own story to tell with its own flavour. I wanted to ensure that it was the voice of the storyteller rather than my voice superimposed upon their story.

I knew four of my five storytellers personally and therefore had some insight into their personality before beginning the interviews. This helped me to select the information which was included in the final narrative. With all the stories I was able to find a rhythm that each storyteller had in telling their tale. I wanted to include elements of each storyteller's character to allow the reader to identify with each storyteller. Though I deleted the 'umms and ahhs' and nervous repetition, I tried to include each storytellers unique style of language use.

In each case, I wanted to ensure that the stories were readable and that readers could engage in recognising the emotion behind the tale.

The life story must usually have a dynamic tension which adds momentum, gives coherence and makes a story interesting: we speak of the plot 'thickening' to indicate events that grab the reader's interest (Plummer, 2001, p.187).



I wanted each story to flow. "An individual inherently sees life events as related or connected in some way, because this is how one's life is ultimately rendered meaningful" (Atkinson, 1998, p.60). In looking at the stories I, together with my storytellers, arranged events to give it sequence and direction, as described below.

#### **Detailed description of the creation of the stories**

The transcripts were read several times, on several levels to create the finished product:

- **1<sup>st</sup> Reading-** making sense of the words. Deleting any unnecessary grammatical mistakes and creating order to events
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Reading-** Creating coherence. Giving the story a 'flow' whilst preserving the individual character of the storyteller.
- **3<sup>rd</sup> Reading -** looking for themes. Looking at the stories as a whole and finding similar trains of thought and creating an edited version.
- **4<sup>th</sup> Reading-** checking validity. Having the storytellers verify that the edited version signifies their story.
- **5+ Readings-** going over the stories again and again to find the deeper meaning behind the words and looking at the varying impacts upon its telling and recording.

(Goodley et al, 2004)

{My dad well he told me he hated reading in front of the class because it made him feel uncomfortable.} [ The job he did, you know he was a rep for a firm, but he never wanted a promotion. He could read, yes but he was a slow reader, in terms of slow it would take him a long time to read through a page.] { He left school at 13 because that's what they did then, you were entitled to leave school at 13 so he did and started working and doing whatever. }

*This section came from two different discussions with Alfred. It combined the information of his dad's background of school and his achievements and shortcomings with his work. Through the first reading I was able to delete unwanted words. The second reading allowed me to string thought together (the two forms of bracketing show which discussions each section came from. In the third reading I was able to see themes of failure therefore I included it as it related to failures he has experienced in his life. The fourth reading was done alongside Alfred to confirm it as representative of what he had told. The final readings allowed me to delve more deeply into how Alfred's view of his father's failure affected his choices in life. In creating these life stories together along with the storytellers I was allowing their voices to be heard in the manner they expected them to be heard in whilst turning these stories into historical and socially meaningful documents. It was difficult in analysis to ensure that I did not create my own interpretation that may have infringed upon the voice that had freely been heard. The more that I read, the deeper I looked at the stories. It can be difficult to know when you have gone deep enough, ensuring that you do not overstep the boundaries of violating the stories and voices you have you have tried to empower.*



It was not for me to ensure that the stories told to me represented what I saw as true. I wanted the storytellers' own experience of what they remembered. They were not my stories to change, but a vehicle for my storytellers' voices to be heard how they wanted to be heard. As Atkinson reinforces: "The narrative approach to the study of lives maintains emphasis on internal coherence as experienced by the person, rather than external criteria of truth and validity" (p.61).

### **5.8 Ethical Issues involved in Life Story Research**

Ethics were of paramount importance in my life story research. Being personally involved in many of my participants' lives added an even greater complexity when addressing my ethical standards. To optimise ethical and moral performance within my study involving all parties, I needed to recognise and assess my own personal values and how they were imparted into my research and the role I played within it. I needed to confirm the consent I gained from each participant and the assured confidentiality which accompanied this consent. I also needed to reflect on how I assigned ownership to the stories, and how I determined the honesty in the stories I was told. These issues all highlighted the importance of my 'self-reflexiveness and reflectiveness' in my approach. "The important issue starts to become a greater awareness of making ethical choices in every part of a life and the profound ambivalent nature of these choices" (Plummer, 2001, p.229). My reflection on my own work and the self-reflexive nature with which it was carried out, helped to ensure that much (but not all) of the ethical dilemmas I may have encountered were prevented.

### 5.81 Personal Values and Roles

How the storyteller tells the story and how the listener (or researcher) interprets the story give a greater deal of subjectivity to oral histories. This subjectivity can be influenced by the personal values that a researcher holds. It is inevitable that these values will influence and shape the role the researcher holds in retelling and creating of life histories. As Plummer (2001) notes:

The social researcher is not a mere medium through which knowledge is discovered; he or she can also be seen as a 'constructor' of 'knowledge'. We need to look at how the researcher's personal and social worlds lead to these constructions, and how such constructions are subsequently used in the social world (p. 206).

As I have mentioned previously, I had preconceived notions of the identity of my storytellers. In dealing with my colleagues on a day-to-day basis, I had formed impressions that would shape how I interpreted what they told me. This relied heavily on my value systems and how I felt they compared to those of others. By doing so I was able to shape my approach to these people, however the values I held were not always compatible with those held by others. Comparison of values can add weight to understanding; however, imposition of values can invalidate and change the meaning found in a person's life story.

Imposing your own values onto the story of another's life will add a judgemental flavour to the stories told. The storytellers in my research all volunteered to participate; to become judgemental of the stories they shared with me could bring personal hurt to them. My role as researcher was as a listener and an interpreter, judgement could ethically harm my storytellers' personal well being. Though interpretation is subjective, it should not be judgemental:

In analyzing life stories subjectively ... we do not judge, we make connections. Rather than assuming a stance "over and against" the person telling the story, analyzing, limiting, or classifying the

storyteller in any way, we seek to find the relevance of the story itself (Atkinson, 1998, p. 69).

I needed to be able to take a step back from my own personal stance on teaching and make sure that I did not judge or compare what I saw as the 'right way' to how others carried out their lives.

As I was directly involved with many of the storytellers on a day to day basis, it was difficult for me to keep a distance between my personal, professional and research views. It was important to identify my views as to allow the reader to recognise the influence they held in my research. How I felt personally and professionally about the storytellers and the impressions they left with me, both within and outside of the research context, would influence how I interpreted the information they gave me. In most cases, the people involved in my research were more than just participants, they were colleagues and in some cases friends. The relations I had with my participants previous to the research situation would colour how I viewed the information they gave me.

The influence that my previous relations had on the research was mirrored in the influence that the research had on the relations I had with the participants outside the research situation. In letting me into their life stories, I was able to learn a great deal more about people with whom I had casual relations. This information gave me a greater understanding of who these people were and what they stood for. In some cases, this created a feeling of camaraderie for those whose ideals were similar to mine. In other instances, however, this knowledge brought about feelings of resentment when I recognised elements of dishonesty or when I felt that the standards on which they based their teaching were purely selfish. It was here that I needed to distance myself from my 'martyr-like' stance and remain an impartial listener rather than judge. Though difficult, it was imperative that I made my own stance transparent

within my analysis and made sure to reflect on how my stance would influence the outcome of my work.

The position my colleagues held within the school also had an impact on their willingness to participate in the study. It can be difficult for a person who is to be seen as a supervisor to be able to talk about personal issues which may affect the power that they are seen as having. Life story telling can make a storyteller feel vulnerable and open in letting someone into his or her personal feelings and experiences of life. It can be difficult, and at times impossible, for managers to disclose personal information to their junior colleagues without fear of repercussions. Though this can sometimes be difficult for a researcher to recognise, it is important to recognise and be able to respect a person's personal choice to not participate or withdraw without explanation.

#### **5.82 Informed Consent and Confidentiality**

Consent and confidentiality are issues that are inherent to any research venture, however as life history research has such a subjective and personal nature involved, these apparently straightforward issues are made more complex. Who you need to gain permission from and how much confidentiality can be expected are questions that are not so easily answered.

Though insider researcher brings with it the benefit of familiarity, this familiarity can also constrict participation as well. I approached my life history research with a great amount of enthusiasm and ideas of who would be ideal participants to help out. My first port of call when looking into gaining consent to carry out the research was to approach the managers or head teachers of the schools I chose to involve. They both had no concerns about my research and allowed me to



approach staff to participate. In approaching staff I made every attempt to make my actions and purposes crystal clear to avoid drop out at a later date. Regardless of my attempts, I could not guarantee confidentiality within the community in which the research took place. If any of my colleagues chose to read my work, it would be easy for them to identify the storytellers.

In life stories, confidentiality can be a sensitive issue. By telling your life story, you make yourself recognisable to those who know you. Within insider research, identity is not easily hidden. Though I made promises to attempt to keep anonymity of all my participants, I could not guarantee it. I made this point clear from the start. I promised to keep anonymity, as much as I possibly could. Aliases would be used and I would not discuss participation with my other colleagues. These promises did not ensure confidentiality but offered as much protection of the storytellers' identity that I could secure. If they chose to make their participation known to others, then it was their decision and I could not be held responsible for any breaches of confidentiality that arose from this knowledge.

### **5.83 Ownership and Honesty**

Interpretation of verbal accounts depends on a great many factors. It is important that the stories are interpreted to mean what the storytellers intends rather than what fits into the researchers' scheme of work. Although the interpretation in its presentation gives the story intended by the storyteller, it is also important to note the impression the researcher gains about the honesty behind the words. How each person views the purpose of the interview and how they expect the interview to progress can impact upon what they tell and omit and how they create their story.

In life story research, you are interpreting a person's life experience.

Interpretation has everything to do with meaning and validity, but this is complicated by the fact that the meaning and the validity of a life story may be different for the one who has told it than for the one recording it (Atkinson, 1998, p.58).

The interpretation will vary and change considerably depending upon numerous factors. As mentioned, the relationship that already exists between the different storytellers and myself will affect how the story is told. How I look at the story will be influenced depending on how I feel about the individual. The interaction and how comfortable both the storytellers and I felt in the interview situation would also effect the information shared and how it was interpreted. If the storyteller was uncomfortable they were unlikely to be forthcoming with sensitive information. If they fidgeted or used other non-verbal signals of discomfort, it would influence how I viewed what they told me. If I sent of signals of nervousness or discomfort, the storyteller would equally be put off in disclosing information and may not allow me to get a full picture of his or her life. How my experience 'fits in' with the experience of the stories told would also affect how I was able to relate and interpret those stories. The better I am able to relate to another person's experience, the more I can understand about a person's feelings. Finally the epistemological standpoint I chose to adopt would affect my interpretation. Employing a postmodernistic way of thinking allowed me to recognise the variable nature of life stories.

Essentially the two aspects of interpretation are to validate the story itself and to explain the meaning of the story. This is an ongoing process that takes place throughout the planning, doing and interpreting phases of the interview. A balance between subjectivity and objectivity is what usually works best in interpreting a life story (Atkinson, 1998, p. 58).

### **5.84 Epistemological Standpoint**

My overall epistemological approach will hold an overlying influence over the entire research effort. It will affect my interpretation, my ascertations and my approach to the storytellers and the information they impart to me.

Postmodernity places an emphasis on the subjectivity of people's stories. As Klages (2003) points out, it is important to recognise "HOW seeing (or reading or perception itself) takes place, rather than on WHAT is perceived". When reflecting on this standpoint, I am able to acknowledge that how I hear the story may not be how the storyteller intends it to be told. Postmodernity recognises the flexibility that must be practised in approaching and interpreting life stories. It recognises that each person involved brings a variability to how the story is interpreted. No two people will ever have the exact same interpretation. Postmodernity appreciates the importance of self-reflectiveness in recognising the subjective nature of story-telling and story-listening.

[There is] a tendency towards reflexivity, or self-consciousness, about the production of the work of art, so that each piece calls attention to its own status as a production, as something constructed or consumed in particular ways (Klages, 2003).

In my research, I am choosing to listen to my storytellers for a particular purpose. I am looking for information to assist in a particular goal. The stories are being analysed to discover the motivation of teachers and I will therefore look at the information given to me in a particular way. In doing so, I must ensure that I am not contriving the information in a way that makes it say what I want it to say rather than what the storyteller intends. I need to ensure that the ownership of the story remains in the hands of the storyteller and although a postmodern approach recognises the variability and subjectivity of life stories, it does not give me licence to twist the words to mean something that was not intended.

### 5.85 The 'Reflexive Reflectiveness'

The personal nature of life story research can bring about sensitive issues for both storytellers and researchers alike. When looking at the impact of ethical issues in life story research, it is important to not only safeguard the participants but as a researcher I must look inside myself to ensure that I am not damaging myself. The postmodern approach that I employed regarded this self-reflection as an essential component of life history research. This introspection involves taking stock of the impact upon both my professional and personal well-being.

Basing most of my research within my own working environment placed my professional being in a very vulnerable position. In listening to people with whom I worked express opinions and facts about their life history, gave me insights which could make working conditions uncomfortable. In listening to my colleagues I was getting insight into a world that was not ordinarily discussed in the work environment and this knowledge could make things difficult for me in both professional and personal circles. How would my relationships change due to the knowledge imparted to me? How would my views be influenced by what I know? Will I be able to work in an 'enlightened work environment'? These are questions that needed to be constantly evaluated and answered throughout and beyond my research endeavours.

The place I hold within my school, fortunately allowed some professional distance from my colleagues. The school is mainly considered a school with secondary provision. The primary base within which I work is seen almost as a small appendage to the main school. In this sense, I did not have many direct dealings and first hand professional contact with most of the storytellers. There were some, however, who were senior members of staff who I had to answer to as a matter of



professional courtesy. Though there was this professional distance, there was still an issue with my personal views.

It would have been naïve to think that my research would have no impact upon my own life and work. In gaining insight into people's lives I gained knowledge of what fuelled their conduct within school. Though these insights did not directly influence how I carried out my job, they influenced my views and opinions of the people I worked with. The knowledge I was privy to allowed me to recognise that I could not take everything that I came into contact with at face value. I became aware of the untruths that were present in people's everyday actions. It became clear that some of my storytellers were either being untruthful in the stories they told or the public lives that they lead. Where the truth lay became clear in my analytical thinking; however the conflict of values changed my attitude towards my professional duties.

Being self-reflective, at times, made my working life difficult. I tried to keep my research and professional views separate; however, this is an impossibility when research lies so close to your own being.

## **5.9 Why Analyse?**

Life stories standing alone can be seen as interesting anecdotes of the trials and tribulations that a person has been through in his or her life, however without analysis it can be difficult to find a focus in research. Analysis is a tool for researchers to use in order to keep focused on the issues through validating and explaining the stories that have been told. It also gives researchers a platform to voice their own subjective stance, relating it to theoretical position they are using to justify their claims.

There is a creative relationship that develops between two people involved in the life story interview that may determine to some degree what actually gets told or even how (Atkinson, 1998, p.59).

Analysis allows the researcher to give the reader his or her personal interpretation to the stories told. Analysis gives light into the subjective flavour of the life stories that have been told and the life stories that have been heard. It is through analysis that life stories become life histories and the influence of the researcher and the constructs within society are made more transparent. As Plummer (2001) notes:

The social researcher is not a mere medium through which knowledge is discovered; he or she can also be seen as a 'constructor' of 'knowledge'. We need to look at how the researcher's personal and social worlds lead to these constructions, and how such constructions are subsequently used in the social world (p. 206).

Analysis is essential in recognising the self-reflexive and subjective nature of life story research. If we were to not analyse we would neglect to acknowledge important aspects and observations about the stories that have been told.

## **CHAPTER 6: THE LIFE STORIES**

### **6.1 Introduction**

Here are the five life stories that made it to print. These stories come from the taped interviews with five teachers who teach in an EBD environment. The first four of these teachers work in a day school whilst the other teaches in a residential setting.

Each story is told by the storyteller and I have transcribed. The stories have been edited in the sense that repetition and extraneous information has been reworked, however each storyteller has read over the 'finished product' to ensure that it is their voice rather than my own which has been heard.

Each story is told in its own particular way and I tried to preserve the character behind each story. They have covered what they view as highlights in their lives and their relations to teaching. I hope you are able to enjoy the stories and gain pictures of the people behind them. They are the real thing- the stories behind the 'normal everyday EBD teacher'.

I was honoured to be the recipient of their stories and I hope they are able to shed light on each individual as well as the society of EBD education.

Life stories- our chosen form of narrative – tell us as much about individual and collective, private and public, structural and agentic and real and fictional worlds. Stories occupy a central place in the knowledge generated by societies (Goodley et al, 2004, p. ix)

## 6.2 Sonia's Life Story

My mum said I'd be a good teacher, and mum became a teacher for the same reasons I did. She was an extremely conscientious hard working teacher. She spent every night doing two or three hours work and one day of the weekend. That was every night until she stopped teaching, which meant my parents didn't have much of an evening in the week, they just had their weekends. By the time she realized that she was working too hard, she had been teaching for 14 years. She never felt she was any good at it but she was fantastic and all the parents that I knew thought she was brilliant, and she was. She was a really really excellent teacher. But she just, I think she thought wasn't any good at discipline, but she definitely was. So I think a lot of the teachers at my mum's school were very sort of career oriented and stuff. My mum just always wanted to teach kids, teach in a local school you know she didn't have any ambitions of deputy head, she just wanted to be a teacher.

When my mum was at school, her parents sent her to a finishing school in Eastbourne where she had to do home economics, you know, cooking and sewing and stuff like that. She use to sneak off and walk to the art school and her parents eventually agreed for her to stay at the art school and do that. My gran had gone to the finishing school and they always wanted my mum to do the finishing school as well, they were really well to do and that was expected. Then she got into, what is now Central St Martins but was the Central School of Art, the biggest art school in London, to do fine art which is just amazing. She was brilliant. She did it for a year and then she dropped out because she didn't like it. She says now she wished she'd done ceramics like I did, but



she found it difficult living in London and stuff. My mum left school when she was 16 to work in a bookshop and she did really well at the book shop. She took loads of qualifications, she won book seller of the year in the Telegraph and was in all the national papers, she wrote books in her own time that was more when she was older. She's always written books and stuff, plays and poems. She worked there for years and that's where she met my dad.

My childhood was an important part of my life. All the things we did as a family, that was my childhood; holidays together, just doing everything together, having such fantastic parents, the amazing Christmases. Everything that we did, it was just us all together, all five of us. That would be the happiest time of my life. No, no that's wrong, because I have loved every area of my life. I was so lucky to have a happy childhood. Friends are the next important thing in my life apart from my family. That's one thing that I do think that I am a success. Not financially maybe not in my career but I am a success with friends. I've got a lot of friends and I am the one that I guess keeps everyone together and that's cool. All my happiness is based on my relationships and my friendships, so that would be a very important thing.

The main reason, for me to go into teaching? I loved school and I was always involved with my teachers, I had some fantastic teachers. I went to really good schools which helped, but I had fantastic teachers, one of them in particular I was really inspired by at primary school. That's when, you know, I really felt that's what I wanted to do. I think it ties in with being a vegetarian and everything else. It sounds silly but I wanted to do something that was worth while and that's why I dropped the materialistic. You know I always thought I wanted to be successful and make money but really, I just realised I

wanted to be successful and be happy rather than rich. You know, have a happy family, and have kids, have a job I liked. I always wanted a job I liked. I just wanted to do something rewarding. The older I've got, the more I can't stand materialistic things. I often hate the Western society that we live in. You know the rat race. I just feel that that's why I went into teaching because I wanted to be something that was giving something back maybe, or helping kids. Which is why I felt frustrated at mainstream 'coz I felt I wasn't actually teaching art in a mainstream school where the management was ineffective. I felt like I wasn't getting anywhere. I still didn't really enjoy it.

In my head, I always planned to be a primary teacher. When I left university, though, the easiest way for me to be a teacher was to go and train as a secondary art teacher. Everyone had said to me 'If you train as secondary, you can go into primary. Whereas if you train as primary you'll have trouble going into secondary'. So I trained as secondary, and I'm glad I did because since I trained as a specialist, I got to be a specialist for a year. But primary is what I wanted to do. I feel you have more influence on the kids lives, more impact on their education. If you are secondary, you just see them once every two weeks, you just teach them art. I always felt, and I still do, that it's not necessarily my knowledge of art that I give to the kids. It's the way you talk to them and the way you are with them. And that's where my mum, I think was an excellent teacher. She was a really kind and generous person. She gave everything to the kids and they knew it. And they responded to it. I've always wanted to be a teacher. I think I wanted to be the kind of person my mum was. And I still do.

I think I particularly like working with kids, which is partly why I became a teacher. I was just one of these kids who was into everything like, I became a veggie at

9, which was kind of an important step I guess, I just wanted to. I didn't think animals should be killed and I think looking back I was kind of, you know sort of, kind of advanced. I was always in the Brownies and stuff, worked in the local farm shop I was just one of those who was involved in everything... Duke of Edinburgh, my mum was kind of... you know she did Guides and Brownies, she was someone that always joined everything, like I did the operatic with her, yeah she joined everything going.

At both primary and secondary schools I was into everything. At secondary, I did everything, loads of clubs and, you know, I did far more joining and stuff than I did academically. I was a student tutor, mentoring kids and I was one of the sixth form tutors and did loads of stuff within the school. I was managing director of a young enterprise company at school. They set up a small company, you actually set up a company and you have shares and stuff. I was managing director, you know, I organized, well, we had lots of company lunches! Yeah I joined lots of things at school, I was always involved in everything.

I never really had any connection with bad behaviour in my childhood experience. You know I'd never really been difficult myself nor were my brother or sister. I came from a little village school where you had all sorts. Two of the kids in my year were extremely bad, in fact one of my best mates from primary school is in jail. When I taught at primary, maybe I felt that I was getting through to a few kids that weren't getting anything from anywhere else in the school. I sort of had that confirmed because I had some really bad boys. They weren't badly behaved, but they were poor academically because of their behaviour. I had some lovely kids, but my weakness is in extending bright kids. It just, it has no interest for me. A lot of people are there with assistance to

get bright kids to achieve. I just felt that with the slower kids, that's what I enjoyed. That's where I buzzed. They always say you got to buzz in teaching and that's where I got a buzz. You still have to try and extend them with the emotional and behavioural problems that they've got, which is still a challenge. I feel when I was dealing with bright kids in mainstream, both primary and secondary, that there wasn't the challenge there, they just didn't interest me. It certainly wasn't that I didn't like the kids or I didn't want them to excel. Maybe it's something that I was proving to myself. I could get them to do something.

I can see how the kids that we have get into the situations they get into. I wasn't into it mainly because of the way I was brought up, I wouldn't have done anything to bring shame on my mum and dad and also I guess I was scared, I just never had any desire to do those kind of things. I am quite a rebellious person in a way, though. Maybe if my parents had put their foot down and said no you're not doing that maybe I would have turned out a lot different. My mum had been brought up so strictly, they were just so level headed and fair with us. I think that is why I can relate to our kids. I can relate to our kids in the fact that they don't have a fair deal and they fight out against that. As a youngster, I did break out in other ways. My vegetarianism. I spent a lot of my youth going on walks and getting petitions up and all that sort of stuff. I never did anything else like break school rules but that's where my urges were. I could have done a lot of things. I never broke the law but everything within the law. I don't know if that relates to my teaching. Also I am someone with a very hot headed temper, which very rarely comes out. It doesn't come out at school. But when I lose it, I do lose it. So I can definitely sympathise with the kids in that respect. The difference is I can control it. I



take after my mum and dad. I was horrible, I wasn't a nice teenager, I certainly wasn't perfect. I just wasn't bad at school. I let all my steam off at home. So I certainly wasn't perfect but I wasn't bad at school.

My vegetarianism, I'm not sure it has any more bearings on teaching kids with EBD, but I think it's to do with my view on life. Being aware of wanting to do something good with my life. I've always lived my life feeling, if you live your life in a good way, you ended up getting good back. I always thought, not that I am going to win the lottery but I thought if I am a good person and I live my life in a good way I will have a happy family and a happy marriage. Not a big house or anything like that but, you know, what you do feeds back into who you are. I do question that slightly at the moment 'coz I feel my mum couldn't have been a nicer better person and I am not sure the hand she was dealt was fair, but she did have a very happy marriage and a very happy family. What happened to her does make you question your whole reason for doing good. But I guess with the vegetarianism I am sensitive to that and for the same reasons I wanted to be a teacher. It sounds like a funny link to me but I guess it does feed into the EBD because our kids question everything, they have such a limited tunnel vision experience. Whether it be diet or race or more important things. I think that's a good thing. Because I am sensitive, obviously I am sensitive to these kids and that's why I started teaching EBD. I felt that I could help the kids, because all of our kids have got a story, however horrible they are, they have all got quite an unpleasant story that you can empathise with. So maybe its using your skills.

When I worked at mainstream, there were a lot of kids that, I still feel could have been at our EBD school. It seemed that a lot of the people there actually enjoyed the

confrontation. I didn't at all. I didn't go into teaching to confront, I'm not that type of person. I guess that's why I suit EBD in a way. You have to be quite calm and patient. At mainstream, a lot of the teachers had no patience for the difficult kids. In their eyes, they were disrupting their class of 27 or whatever of really good kids who were trying to learn. Whereas, I'm a teacher of a subject that helps 'coz I can be a bit more relaxed with them. They always use to turn up to my detentions and I guess I was fair with them, you know. It got to the stage that I kept having to do cover lessons for the difficult kids, because they, relate to me I guess. It might have been, you know I don't think it was being young. I think it was just being a bit more sympathetic.

I always said I wanted to work with special needs kids, but I'd like to specialize in art and I would like to teach both secondary and primary. I went to my interview they said you can do both. The extra money did mean that since then, I haven't struggled. Well I didn't do it for the money, but I wouldn't necessarily have changed at that point for the same money. It was further away and where I was, I was obviously close to home and stuff. The extra money gave me the incentive to move, lets put it like that. I would take less money for the job I wanted. Now, I'd like to do primary mainstream, but teach special needs. I would like to ideally, just find a job that was dealing with EBD kids but within a mainstream setting.

It can be difficult for me, just focusing on EBD kids. I find it very frustrating teaching the same sort of kids. If I was going to stay in an EBD school I am going to stay where I am in charge of my own department. In every job that I've done, I've worked really hard and I've been fulfilled. I feel that here, you can coast. I always wanted to do EBD because I thought that I could make a difference. I've actually realised that you

can make a difference in mainstream, but the kids we've got, are there because of the circumstances they're in. Once they're at an EBD school, its very unlikely that they're ever going to go back to mainstream. I would like to focus on keeping the kids in mainstream 'coz I think once they get out of mainstream, they're lost in the system.

I don't think I will change these kids lives, not vastly and not long term. I might have a small impact but I don't think anything major. When I was young, the values that I got were not only from my parents, but I feel that I had teachers that filled me with good values. Our kids are so far removed from the reality of the life that I lived, it is very difficult for them. There are certain things I do and I can see the impact that I've had, but I doubt when they're 25 they'll look back and say 'Oh look Miss Green taught me to brush my teeth'... 'Miss Green taught me how to use a knife and fork',

You know I observed my mum on a number of occasions and she was cracking. Looking back you know she was perfect, she was a good teacher and would have made a good EBD teacher in the same way in that she was very calm and she didn't shout and things. But at times she felt that that was a weakness in a way but she was very effective. I think as she taught more she got more confidence about her ability and yeah I think she was a brilliant mum. I think the worse thing for her was she didn't have the ambition to go on, she was very ambitious in that she wanted to be a happy and successful person but she didn't want to go on and be head or stuff like that. A lot of people she taught with went onto become heads. School was important to her but life with my dad was more important.

I became a teacher, because I wanted to do the right thing. I've got quite strong feelings about right and wrong and the way we live our lives and I wanted to do a job that

was worthwhile and that I felt I was giving something back. I didn't want to go into the city, which I could have done easily, lots of my friends did, just earn money. I didn't want to be an artist. I know it doesn't relate to my teaching but I am a really honest person. I look at a lot of things that I could have done differently: would I have become a teacher? Would I have done this? Would I have done that? Possibly I would have done different A levels maybe that would have sent me in a different direction. But I think I would have always come back to teaching because it was what I always wanted to do from an early age. I love art, but love art for me. I wanted to do something that was worthwhile. And that's how my mum felt.

I think I've come full circle. I've taught mainstream, I taught secondary. I think I have needed to go through all the changes I have gone through to get me where I am but I think I have sort of ended up with what I suspected anyway. I did secondary and I felt that I related to EBD kids. I felt to actually have an impact on the children's lives you had to have them more than you did and at a younger age, so I went into primary. I did feel in primary you had a big impact on their lives because you are teaching a group of kids, six hours a day for a year. Again, I felt I related particularly well with the EBD kids. So then I went to do both primary and secondary EBD. I think before, I felt possibly the best teachers you meet are mainstream teachers as they are most effective. I wanted to go to EBD to see if I could learn strategies that would make my mainstream teaching more effective. Now that I am where I am, I don't think you can be a weak teacher to be an EBD teacher, you've got to be good. To be the most effective teacher possible to children is to actually be a mainstream teacher who helps to keep kids in the system. As I said before, once kids get out of the system you've lost the impact you have on them.



Maybe not lost your impact entirely, but its very minimal. To keep EBD kids in mainstream school, at least on a part time basis, that is where you are most effective helping children to alter the course of their lives.

My life looks pretty crap. I am not sure if this will give the answer you want from me because of what has happened to me in the last few months. If you had asked me this six months ago or a year ago my answer would have been different. This is going to be hard. Losing my mum is the worst thing that could have happened to me. So until I get over that nothings going to look that rosy. We'll be all right, we'll get there but it's hard to look beyond every day, every hour. I am lucky 'coz I have got a future. I hope I will have children and get married. I have always been someone who has been able to make myself happy. I am lucky in that respect. But it is hard to keep that focus now. Like I said earlier, you live your life and eventually you'll get back what you put in and I just feel.... Even though I will be happy and I will be happy again, it will never be the same. Life will never be quite as good because my mum's not there. She was my best mate. So it is really difficult, you know one minute I am talking about advancing myself but at the moment I don't give a shit about anything. I don't care about teaching. All I care about is making sure my dad is all right, my brother and sister are all right. I don't care about anything else. I want to, 'coz my mum would have wanted me to do what I wanted to do and she would have been proud of me for the things I am doing. It is a struggle to go in and do the job that I am doing. I am finding it really hard, I can see things going up but it is hard to see a future.

### 6.3 Martin's Life Story

I grew up in Cornwall. My mum worked at IBM she was a temp. She used to do time keeping. I don't think my dad ever wanted her to work. I think he was just old fashion, very old fashion. He probably would have stopped her from going back to work. My dad always liked going to work, he is like my hero. I always looked up to my dad. He stopped work just last year, he's 56. He just got fed up with the paper work. It was the job, he loved the job all his life but then they started changing the way he worked. He says he doesn't get any respect. So he retired he took early retirement, now he plays golf, all he ever does is play golf.

My dad's always been someone who's pushed me to do things, and it's like, the motivating factor; you know, go out and do this and do this, go to college, go to university. He's the one that always pushed. I guess I respect him 'coz he was always a disciplinarian. He was always saying 'you got to do something with your life'. Now he always says 'I'm so proud of you and your brother'. My dad's one of those people, who if there's something he wants to do, he'll either go to the library and get a book and find out how to do it or he'll go and ask somebody direct 'How do you do it?'. He'll find out how to do it and then have a go and do it himself, which is something I've always tried to do. If I don't know how to do something I'll ask somebody. Ok, it might be a complete and utter catastrophe but I'll have a go. My dad's always one of those people that says 'People that do nothing do nothing wrong.' So if you have a go and it goes wrong, fair enough, but if you never tried, you never know, so have a go. So that's the way that my father was and always has been. 'Don't sit on your backside all day. Get up and do something'.

My dad has always pushed, pushed, pushed all the time. I was very ill when I was 15, I spent a lot of time ill, lying on the bed and I remember him saying 'Just pull your bloody self together and get up and go to school'. The following day I was taken to the hospital. I thought 'Thanks dad, keep pushing'. It wasn't the right time to push, I was genuinely ill; I was in hospital six weeks. I was very glad that he did push me, that's how I was brought up, to keep pushing to do things all the time. That's the one time that he did make a big mistake it wasn't a good idea to keep pushing all the time. The only other time I remember was my dad, even though he was six foot four, he had never, ever, been violent at all, apart from when I was very rude to my mum and he got up and pushed me up against the wall. That's the only time I can ever remember him losing his temper, ever. Yea they are both pretty negative things. See my dad's always been a person that's done things himself. I mean, the extension I put on my house, that's because that's what he's done. It's all a bit sad; I think if my dad bought a dog, I'd buy a dog. My dad always got up at six o'clock, so I always get up at six o' clock. I guess he's the only person I know as being a father. I'm going through the same things with Jim, he does things that I do. I guess it goes around in circles.

My mum's always said do what you have to do, if it means driving buses, then you can drive buses, but no one gets along with my mum. My mum's approach to things was different. She had a very different way of talking to people, it kind of got people's back up. But it's just the way it was, you don't question it. It's not till somebody else points out 'Why did your mum do that?' that you think 'Why did she?' whereas before I'd think she does it because that's what she does. When you can look from the outside in, you think that maybe things aren't the way they quite should be.

I liked the idea of school. I wasn't very well behaved at school and academically I think I was good. The emotional scars, I mean, a whack with a stick is over and done with but the tactics they used at my primary school were much more severe. It was 'if you didn't do this, God hated you' that type of thing, you know 'just you wait and see what happens', it really was emotional. You know when your young that's a psychological game, its very harsh. They used to rule the place, you had to have a pair of shoes for outside, you had to have a pair of shoes for inside, you had to have a pair of shoes for games. Very, very strict. That's why I think I went into teaching, I just thought I must be able to do a better job than them. There were no teachers that I liked at primary.

I did five years of secondary school. In the last year of school I didn't go to school an awful lot. I had a lot of time off school because I was ill, that's when I found out about my diabetes, and went into hospital. I was in hospital for three months. When I came out of hospital and went back to school nobody ever really challenged me at all. I never thought I was any good at maths, but I carried on doing maths. I was bad at everything else and maybe just average at maths. You know, I'd go into school, think this is dull and get up and walk out and nobody ever said anything. Nobody ever challenged me about it at school and I don't know why. I had good friends and most of them were the same about school. You know sometimes I use to stay in school just for lunch times. Buy some cigarettes, a bag of chips, nothing ever came of it, my parents were never called. No discipline really. I was bad at everything else and maybe just average at maths.



I used to sit there and think 'You're getting paid to do that and I could do it so much better'. Looking at my maths teacher and she used to tell the class that she was a good teacher. She wasn't but that's what she told everyone. Everyone believed her, she was absolutely terrible. Looking back now that I'm a teacher, and I know what you're supposed to do, I realize she was lying, but because she'd told us she was a good maths teacher, no one questioned it. I think she was absolutely diabolical. The approach she used to have, worked well for me - do the work, get the answers at the end of the lesson. What I mean is that she was not a good teacher in what she did, but what I mean is, I don't know... maybe she did alright. Is the job of a teacher to inspire people or is it just to pass on some facts? She was very good at passing on facts.

I went back to school to do my A levels and it was 100% my dad. He wanted me to be a doctor but he never ever put pressure on me, just disappointing feelings....you know 'I'm very disappointed that you don't want to be a doctor'. My dad has always been my hero, he still is. I've always wanted to please my dad. My mum, she wasn't interested she just sat back, no I don't think she cared. Maybe she had to care because she was my mum. I think she was overbearing when we were young. As long as we were happy, she wouldn't do anything. It was when we were unhappy. I guess she was happy when we were happy.

I finished my degree in maths and decided that I didn't want any responsibility and I just wanted a job, I didn't want anything serious, and I saw the job for a croupier advertised in the Job Centre. I thought it sounded like real good fun and I could see what happens on this side of the table, get some tips, I'd have to win. So I did that, but it was damn hard work for not very much money, so I didn't last very long at all. I then started

looking for a stress free option. I got fed up with no responsibility, it got boring, so me and my friends decided to train as teachers. Someone at university recommended it as being a job you could do if you hadn't really made your mind up what you want to with your life. If you go into teaching, you've got time to think what you want to do and it was a year to train, pay some of my debts off. With the job you got long holidays, nine to three and there you have it. There was a shortage of maths teachers, so you were guaranteed a job at the end of the course. No other reason really - guaranteed employment.

I started work at a mainstream school and got interested in disaffected youth, I think I got on well with the children who behaved badly. Then I moved into EBD because I saw the job advertised in the Jobscene. Now working here for four years, this is what I thought teaching was all about. You know in mainstream it was 'blah, blah, blah, go away' 'blah, blah, blah, go away.' There was no quality to it, when you've got so many faces coming in and out of your class. Here, you have more 'quality' time and you can see when the children achieve things, I enjoy that. I think that you can see the improvement within the child, not every day but sometimes you can change the way a child is. You know maybe a little bit of what we say does sink in. It's a very small step, maybe only one child, one day, but it has a lot more value than having 30 children know their times tables. I prefer to be approachable and friendly because I think you are going to learn more in a climate where there is respect. If I taught the way I teach here, in a mainstream school, I don't think it would work. The strategies used here wouldn't work with a large group of children, which means I'm never going back to mainstream, but I am.

Do I as a teacher inspire people? Some people, some of the time, but not as much as I'd like. The bell always rings when they are inspired and that's the most annoying thing, quite often the children won't go. They'll just sit there wanting to finish it off, messing around and then the penny dropping and the inspiration usually comes too late and the bell rings. A part of me says 'sod it', stay, just stay and do what you're doing here and then another part of me says it won't work having two groups in here. Whether you make a difference to a child's life, I don't think you ever know if anything you do ever makes a difference. It's maybe when the child comes back after 5 years and says I remember you. I remember this activity and then you can say I did make a difference, but I don't think you can make that judgment yourself.

People often ask to me 'What do you do for a living?' Am I a maths teacher or do I work in a special school? I opt for the 'I work in a special school for emotional behavioural difficulties and then as a sideline, I teach maths.' But I wonder if it's the wrong way round because people in maths have a maths degree and that's far more important than the fact that it's a special school. But I always say I teach in a special school at which I teach maths with a small 'm'. I think the special thing is paramount and the maths thing is just a job.

My problem is not having that momentum to make that change. Most of my career's been here, which worries me. It's the energy to bother to apply for another job. It's too easy to stay. I think I do enjoy it, yes. I always say it's forty days till half-term, but to be honest, it doesn't really make a difference, whether it's a holiday or whether it's school, there's not a real big difference apart that I have to get up that bit earlier in the morning. I find being at home harder than being at work. I've got to motivate myself, I

can't be sitting around doing nothing. When I'm at school I'm paid to be at school, and I do enjoy coming to work.

I was thinking last night as I was driving to pick Jim up at nursery – what do people think of me when I turn up at the nursery? Things changed gradually with life if you never stop and think. I'm presentable, I don't swear, if I saw me, I think I'd be quite nervous. I'd certainly respect myself. It's difficult to put into words. But I'm still Martin, the boy who didn't bother going to school. I think other people look at me and think I've got respect for that guy because he's somebody. Yeah, but I'm not. You put a fancy suit on and you drive around and... If I was to see that – I still think inside that I'm me – I'm nobody.

I went through a stage where nobody ever called me Martin. They'd call me Mr. Jenner, in mainstream school all the children all the other staff called you Mr. Jenner. One day the neighbour over the wall shouted 'Martin' and I completely ignored her and she shouted again and I thought God, that's my name. It's so bizarre to forget your own name, but because everyone called me Mr. Jenner all the time. My wife never calls me Martin and Jim calls me Daddy. It was just so strange that you'd forgotten what your first name is 'coz no one calls you by your first name. So I thought that's how other people see me. It's not how I am. I'm just me, I'm nothing special, but I can always tell that people see me differently when I'm talking to people. I think well 'Why are you nervous talking to me?' Or people come in and say can I borrow two minutes of your time – well course you can, I'm not that important that you need to beg me for my time– you can borrow twenty minutes of my time. I seem to notice more and more that people say that – 'Can you help me with this?' and 'thank you very much for your time'. But you don't



need to do that. It's just something I've been noticing recently. I've got my feet on the ground. I don't mind if people feel they need to have that distance between them and me. Sometimes I think if I say jump everyone will jump.

I'd like to live my life again, but I'd have done exactly the same. I think that maybe I shouldn't have wasted my year working in the casino, but that was a year I needed to do at the time. I don't think I'd change anything. Maybe I'd have gotten married earlier. I got married when I was 29, maybe I should have done it when I was 22? I'm happy with what I've done with my life. I've done things I've wanted to do. Looking back in hindsight maybe it wasn't a good idea, but it was a good idea at the time. So, no, I wouldn't change anything, apart from getting married earlier.

I think I'm getting less patient. I don't know if that's 'coz I've got more things to do? I'm very aware that I don't always listen to what people say, whereas before I would. I think now that I'm less patient with people, I feel like I am more likely to finish someone's sentences if they are boring. That's terrible but I'm not as patient as I used to be. I'm less tolerant of other people's failures.

I think special does mean extra. You have to have extra skills. It's essential to have a sense of humour and I think you have to like the children. I think you could work at mainstream and absolutely hate children and get away with it. But I think here, you have to like the children. You have to be very flexible and to be able to adapt to things at a moments notice. You have to have the flexibility to turn things around, to be able to look at things from a pupil's point of view. If a child is getting annoyed you have got to be able to see why are they getting annoyed and what can I do to make this different. That's the difference between special and mainstream that you have the time to do that.

With small groups you are able to look at individual children and see what the problem is, where as in a mainstream school, you are more likely to say shut up or get out I don't want to listen to it anymore. That's something you need to be able to do to succeed, you've got to be able to look at where they are coming from, not necessarily where you are coming from.

OK you go to work, you get some money, you spend some money. It's easy to get into a routine of work, eat, sleep, work, eat, sleep. There needs to be something, a reason why you keep doing that. I had this great idea of having a book, whenever I feel fed up, 'Ten Things That Make Me Happy', ten things that I enjoy doing and just pick one of them and do it. I've only got three in my book so far. I like spending money, with gambling, but lots of things people enjoy doing, I don't – like going on holiday. People look forward to going on holiday, I hate holidays, I really don't enjoy it at all, I think I find pleasure in strange places. I'd write down things I enjoy doing, that make me happy and it usually involves taking risks more often than not. It's that adrenalin feeling which is going back to gambling. Getting points on your license for driving so fast. They're things I enjoy doing 'coz I know when I'm finished, I can say to myself 'Jesus, I'm alive!' I actually feel my heart is going to come out of my chest any minute now, as the adrenalin is going so much I feel I'm alive. That's probably a part of why I like this teaching. It's flying by the seat of your pants again, it's that adrenalin rush. I work better under pressure, where I've planned nothing, those lessons work better for me and I think the children get more out of it. It's that thing – 'God I'm alive, I'm alive' but that's bloody scary. It's a hell of a risk to take. If you don't take risks you don't go anywhere.

#### 6.4 Pauline's Life Story

I was born in 1950, the eldest of five children. My childhood was fun. We were always playing, riding bikes, swimming etc, but I sometimes resented being the eldest because I was expected to take responsibility for my younger siblings from time to time. I was close to my brothers and sisters, and it was not difficult to look after my sisters but when I became older and realised that other people were having more freedom than I began to resent it. Usually I was quite happy being the little mother.

My grandfather was a surveyor by trade and he was just a lovely person. I remember very well and he had a lot of time for me because he was retired. I think being the eldest he took me off occasionally and we'd have practice reading and practice writing - that made me feel quite grown up. He was very good with all his grandchildren but he died when my brothers were quite small, they didn't get the same benefit that I got. It wasn't my grandfather particularly that got me interested in teaching, but he bought me my first books and made me laugh.

I wasn't academic but I did better at school than expected. I passed enough O levels to stay on to Sixth Form and take A levels. I was good at sports and received county colours in hockey and swimming. No, my brothers and sister were not like minded in sports. I get my sporting spirit from my grandfather and my father. My grandfather trained to be a fighter pilot in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War but he was PE instructor in the air force. My grandfather was very active in just things like, walking, rowing, sailing.

My parents were surprised when I decided to study education, because I suppose again we weren't considered to be good enough. You know if you are going to be a shop assistant, or perhaps work in the bank or be a secretary or something like that. But not to

actually be a qualified teacher, because I mean my dad thinks it's a wonderful profession- you only work from 9 until 4 and then you get all these holidays and you get such a good salary and then at the end of it you get a pension! And the fact that I am not married, therefore do not have anyone to look after me, 'that doesn't matter dear- you're a teacher, you're all right'.... 'yes dad'. So that's not my attitude that's his attitude.

My parents weren't unintelligent, dad left school at 13, and mum went to a private school and was better educated. But you didn't bother with any exams when they were at school. Therefore, when I passed the 11+, they were absolutely amazed that a child of theirs should be able to go to a girls' grammar school. Consequently they were rather bemused, but then my other sisters did the same thing so obviously the genetic combination was quite good.

Yes, my sisters did the same in later years. Valerie specialised in junior education and Janet in preschool and infant. My sisters left teaching because they found that it wasn't, how do I word it, they were discontent with the amount of criticism that was, and continues to be, thrown at teachers. They decided that why should they be around to pick up the flack when they could probably have a better job doing something else.

I qualified as a teacher in 1971 and at my first post I was a member of the Physical Education Department and I also taught Art. When you are trained to teach Physical Education, you always have a subsidiary subject in case you have some terrible accident and you are not able to run around and do things. So to be honest at first I didn't know which to do. At school I was very good at art and got straight As and the art teacher said it would be a good thing if I trained to be an art teacher. But I was very



active too and I thought while I've got the energy I've got to use this. So ideally I did the two.

When I was first at college, we just stuck pins in the map because we didn't mind where we went and I ended up applying for a job in Rayleigh and got it. I worked at my first school, I was there for sometime and then I went over to another mainstream school. I was head of department there, and then went over to special education, to work with physically handicapped children. I was there for a long time and I thought that was where I would stay. Then I was asked if I wanted to retrain so I did the design technology course, and came back... I suppose going away and coming back, things aren't quite the same. Then my mother was ill and I decided, not to give up teaching all the time, but worked in a temporary capacity and was a design technology coordinator back where my parents lived. We all thought my mother was going to die because she was quite severely ill and I was there and helped my dad. Gradually she got up and sorted herself out so I was able to come back to where my friends were. Most of my friends are in this area because this is where I've lived.

I found my demands were too high as I do not think you should molly coddle the children just because they are physically handicapped. I taught them art and worked out mechanical aids and devices that they needed to help them. I thought I would be in a good position to follow on and do design and technology. But following a syllabus is a lot harder than getting the children to do what they can do to the best of their ability. The idea the head proposed was we should aim to do GCSE and there was no way the children there could do GCSE. I argued the point that it would be good for them to be as independent as possible hence the independent training sessions and to learn to adapt

whatever appliances they've got by using their skills to make themselves better. Or to at least be able to say to someone well if we could do an extension here by just putting in a piece of pipe or plastic or putting a nut and bolt on the end, then they would know what was available and how to use them and making them applicable to them. But that wasn't what the headmaster wanted. So I said, ' Well, OK I can't do the job then because I can't manage to do this because no way can these children do an exam course. You will have to find someone who will do the work for them and that means not doing the work themselves.'

I went to work at a girls' grammar school on supply and then saw an advert for this EBD school. I came to look around the school and was offered an appointment. The reports I had heard about the school were both from men. An older colleague was very scathing of the school. He felt the children needed to be much more structured, be told what to do, where to go and all that nonsense. He was a sort of 'ex army'. But the other colleague was much younger. He had a lot more compassion and he felt that there was a lot of misunderstanding of what went on at the school. He felt that if the children were given a secure background and they could have confidence in the teachers then good would come of it. So I thought isn't this interesting I have two different views here, it would be good if I could get a job there and see what the set up was for myself.

I enjoyed the grammar school but I didn't enjoy the arrogance. They were just sort of, you know, noses in the air all the time. It as quite a gigantic leap working at a grammar school and an EBD school at the same time. Whilst I was there, at the grammar school, I was so concentrated on the GCSE course work, and everything that needed to be done. I didn't feel I gave enough time for preparation here. So when it came to the

crunch, I had to make a decision and they couldn't offer me a job at the grammar school full time, but they could offer me a job here. I thought it was much fairer to throw up one and work as much as I can to be as well prepared as I can for the other school. I thought perhaps I am not cut out to be at a grammar school. Perhaps it is better for me to be at a special school knowing that I got on so well at the last. I thought I could use that experience to help me here.

The school is run quite differently to how it used to run, in a way much more lax. Which in some ways it is good but in others it is not. I think this is where we have this problem with the older members of staff. My job has just changed so much because I was responsible just totally for the art when I taught here full time. Then they realised that my CV said design technology so they asked me to manage it as well. It was an absolute uproar to have a woman teaching in the workshop. The boys just couldn't get over it. I had a really 'who do you think you are?' welcome. In fact the first few weeks were quite a struggle. But when they realised what I had to offer and how I changed the programme and how I developed it, bringing in their abilities and teaching them new skills, I couldn't do any wrong. Still, I think it is quite a popular subject. They get a feeling of satisfaction, they are learning things they can use later on in life and it gets rid of a lot of aggression. Drilling holes, banging in nails.

I enjoy teaching EBD children because on good days you get recognition in the fact that the child has responsibility for its own growing up and when the realisation dawns that, although they're a product of their parents and environment, they can, if they want to, be responsible for changing that and do something they want. They have not got

to complete the cycle. They can break out of it. And those rare moments are very pleasing. And also teaching practical skills I think is very important for this type of child.

I've stayed here because I enjoyed it, until the last inspection. Where I didn't feel that I was supported. I felt that the comments made about my department were totally unwarranted, they hadn't spent much time with me at all. I didn't get any feedback, any help at all. I felt totally stranded and I thought this is unfair, I believe in what I am teaching. I believe it does these children good. I thought maybe I am out of sync here maybe I ought to get out while I can before I get too old. So when the job at DeLaSalle was advertised I applied for it and got it. Unfortunately when I was there, they cheated. They said I could do one job, which was resistant materials Key Stage 3 and they put me into teaching art and graphics GCSE. Which was fine, but the man running key stage 3 hadn't got an idea of what he was doing. I wasn't allowed to be in the workshop because I was a woman. You wouldn't believe the antiquated things that were going on. So I was just totally depressed after a while. I thought what do I do, do I stick it out?

When I heard they hadn't managed to fill my position. I was persuaded to come back here and have the new challenge of food technology. Always liking a bit of change I thought 'OK I don't know much about it but it could sure do with a bit of improvement'. I am not very good at leading people because I am not very good at leading myself yet, but I am getting there.

I am not as uncomfortable with the differing boundaries that are set for me as some people. I applied for the deputy head and was turned down and in no uncertain terms was indicated by the present head that I was not suitable for any type of promotion. I don't know why. She seems to think that I am best off being a good classroom teacher.



So I swallowed my pride and thought OK, if that's my best way to remain in teaching without promotion, then I'll stick with it. At the end of the day it has hurt my pride. Again when the senior management jobs came up, it was quite cleverly done because I couldn't apply for them because I hadn't ... I can't remember what the credentials were but I couldn't do it because I hadn't been ear marked for the job. I would like to have got higher. I don't intend to try anymore. I accept where I am and if I remain here until I retire so be it. I realise that I can't move to anywhere else because I am not prepared now to go back and retrain. I don't mind going on courses to be updated, I think we should all do that. But it is a bit of a kick in the teeth when a letter was sent to the school 5 years ago and it never got to me, I found it in the food technology room to say that the workshop and my training courses all need to be updated. I didn't know anything about it. An adviser I spoke to said that all schools were informed you should definitely have been on courses by now. I do resent the fact that these things are kept from me. Why can't I go and improve myself. I am quite happy for you younger people to do so but I think it is only fair that us oldies should have a turn too. I don't intend to try anymore, getting any higher. I would have liked to get further in mainstream school. I had the wrong side of being senior manager, but it hasn't happened, I'm too old, I've given up. Once you're over 50 it's a lot harder to get on. Experience doesn't seem to count for anything.

I don't find the work here is as challenging. It's not work, it's discipline that's the problem and I think more and more time is spent disciplining the children before you can educate them and before you can help them safely. The regime in the school is different. The children are not the same and the regime here is not the same. The previous head

teacher was much more strict and the children weren't as arrogant, they weren't so 'I can do as I want'. There was an element of respect even though there were upsets, arguments, panics all those things you would equate to severe behaviour problems, there was no violence, there was no upset, tears, worry, stress. Now it's more the verbal abuse and physical aggression and the 'I don't care' attitude as if they are coming from somewhere different and they are almost boasting about how many schools they have been to, whereas before they didn't really like talking about that. The outlook of the children has changed, quite drastically. In ten years it is quite interesting.

I survive one day to the next. I don't know if I do very well. I can't always see positive results. I sometimes go home and think I'll give my notice in tomorrow cause I'm not getting anywhere, um so I am not actually feeling at all positive about my role.

The days are good when you can see the child has made some progress and if that happens only once a week, with one person, at least me helping him to have confidence to overcome this niggling I've got to be rude to other people and be arrogant and his usual awful behaviour, that to me is what it is all about. It's becoming more and more infrequent and that's why I think it's harder because you can't measure success with infrequent instances, but that's my point of view.

I don't know how other people envisage of me. Boring probably. I would think someone looking at me would think, I think, my life is quite sad. I would think someone looking at me would think this poor old burnt out lady, she toddled off in her car to work each day and she goes home. She lives alone. What does she do to keep herself ticking over? Where does she come from? Does she have any happiness in her life? What keeps her going? I don't know how people view me. I would think my neighbour thinks I am

quite self contained. Quite what I mean by that I don't know. Dean Southfield came up with something very interesting the other day, he said 'you're very much like a pottery'. I said 'That's interesting, can you explain that'. He said 'No it's something in the way that you behave and the way you look, you're like a pottery. Like a piece of pottery.' I wondered what he meant. I sit still, I don't do anything, but that is just from a child.

I think it's quite sad that I haven't learnt when to stop. I think I should have stopped teaching a long time ago. Because I don't think I have the same amount of energy. I have got the enthusiasm but with all the new initiatives my heart sinks, I don't know what I really want to do, which indicates to me, that maybe I shouldn't be doing it, I should change. At the moment, I don't know of anything else I can do. Well I do know things that I could do but they would bring me the same income. I am not that concerned with the financial side. I don't need the money that I earn. It's a question of do I hang in here until I'm 55, or whenever I can retire, or do I give up now and do something else, downsize. Spend more time doing what I want to do, which is painting in the garden, sailing. I have a workshop at home, why not?

I'm not prepared to take risks. I think that's the problem, at the moment. And yet you could say to me, why not? Because I've got two people sitting on my shoulder, one on one and one on the other. Having been to see my younger relatives during the holiday and seeing what they are doing, I really do think. I guess that is what I am, I mean I haven't got the initiative to go and maybe I should just accept what I am. I need to find a reason why I am what I am but right now make the most of it.

At this moment, I really can't think of something that drives me. I really can't and I know it sounds really bad and very unprofessional. It's not the money that's

keeping me here. It's not the children that are keeping me here, I haven't got a great deal of close friends here so maybe I'm stuck in a rut.

Now I'm older I feel older and maybe I'm more content, maybe I don't need to try and prove to others ..... so therefore I'm more content to be with family. I have no family, therefore my family have to be my mother and father. They are my next of kin, because I don't have the responsibilities, they are my first priority. I have been increasingly worried about my parents and in fact I have been wondering if I should give up working here, move closer to them, get a part-time job, because my mother has become ill. I think that I sometimes spend more time thinking about other people and what they are doing. I don't want to sound all fortune teller, but I do have the knack of being able to say well it would be better for you and people do listen to me. I am available to help with the hospital and really... that's my role. I am not important to any one person but I think I am useful to several.

I believe, and I still do believe I have a rapport with children. When I lose that then it will be time to give up. With all children, yes ... when I used to teach in mainstream school it was the difficult or the noisy or the problem child that I used to find ways of dealing with whereas the general flow of the mainstream is that they take care of themselves because they are able to. Its the slow child or the odd child, they're the ones I always found needed more help..... so I've always done that and I've always thought of the underdogs. Whether I am any good at teaching children with behaviour problems, is for someone else to assess. So when I feel I can do something to help them on their way to becoming 'normal', then I'll keep trying. To normalise them and allow them to understand what life is really about because it is so sheltered here.



I would quite like to go and finish my days in a mainstream school but I don't, they would ever look at me. Experience doesn't count for anything. It's youth and enthusiasm. I think I am enthusiastic in my own way. I can honestly say I do the best I can and if it is not satisfactory then they will have to find someone else.

## 6.5 Cathleen's Life Story

I am very close to my dad, in some ways. We share the same interest in lots of things. Probably when I was growing up, my dad was working and my mum had severe postnatal depression that lasted until our teens really, so she was never really very supportive, I looked to my dad for support. My brother and I used to get kicked out in the morning, my dad never knew any of this, my mum had to keep it from him. We got kicked out of the house during the holidays and the weekends, first thing in the morning, and we'd get into all sorts of bother and then we'd come home by seven o'clock for our tea. My older brother, he was two years older, Dan's younger, Sean's older, was the one who had to look after me. Sean looked after me when Dad wasn't around. Which was tough on Sean, cause I was a pain.

Dad was around Sundays and we would always do something then, I mean sporty, usually to give mum a break. We were always really encouraged by my dad to do lots and lots of sport. He used to leave before we got up, traveling around working for an electrician firm and got home after we got to bed and used to work weekends, for the overtime. We were really short of money, very very short of money. There wasn't really much time for socialising when I was a kid because he worked, but he made sure to spend time with us on Sundays. It wasn't until my teenage years when they had a bit more money and he didn't have to do the hours he was doing that actually I realised how kind of antisocial he is. It's a standing joke as well, we all laugh and he agrees. It's just, you know, 'good for him he's his own man.'

My father *is* antisocial. He doesn't really go out, I mean he has very few friends. He is very loyal to the friends he's got, but he doesn't see them very often. He'll talk to any one that is there but he won't make any effort to go out and see anyone. He is just shy and can't be bothered with small talk, I mean he'll never go out and have a conversation just for the enjoyment of a conversation. Everything he does, he is so industrious, I mean, everything he does has a purpose. This made me aware of how you can isolate yourself. I figure you have got to make an effort with friends but he doesn't make an effort with his friends. When you need him, he'll do anything - if you're desperate and you need something, he will usually be the one to do it. He won't even think about it and it won't be a chore it's almost a pleasure for him to do it for you. But he won't make the effort on a regular basis if there's not a sort of crisis or something.

My mum wasn't involved much in our outings. On her 'break' days, she would come with us and my dad, but she'd ruin them if she did. She'd get cross and shout, depending on the outing. If we'd go walking and we'd gone into the countryside doing a walk, she'd always spot hidden hazards that weren't hazards and have a paddy about them, shout and scream. If we were on holiday and went and did things like that, she'd get upset and uptight. She's always uptight, she's never relaxed. I mean, I am not a very relaxed person, I'm a very energetic person, but I don't think of myself as being uptight. She's always uptight, something always unfair or annoying her.

When we were kids, I guess to a degree you think its normal because it's your life and it's all you know. We knew that mum had a terrible temper and flew off the handle very easily, and sometimes embarrassed us in front of our friends, she'd yell and shout and she'd even yell and shout at them. I can't really remember becoming suddenly aware

that she was very depressed unlike other mothers. But when you reflect back on your childhood, you suddenly realize how depressed she was, and how very unsupportive she was. You know, no fault of her own really, but its still difficult sometimes to go over the fact that all the problems you've had; the postnatal depression, the anorexia was not her fault but those kind of illnesses are more difficult in a family relationship, a very close relationship, to understand. You know cancer is easy to deal with because, well not easy to deal with, horrible to deal with but it is easier to deal with because there is no way to justify that its her fault. Whereas postnatal depression, and the anorexia you kind of think, 'Oh God, belt up!' You also think its slightly embarrassing when your mum hits 48 and starts smoking and hits 50 and becomes anorexic. You know, you're in your early 20s and you think 'hold on a minute, isn't that supposed to be my role'. I resented my mum in a sense.

For a long time my mum's 'disease' affected the relationship with my younger brother Dan really badly. Sean and I have probably been through more with our mum and we still try and give her the benefit of the doubt, be understanding and try and get on whereas Dan just completely resents her, treats her very badly but she can't do enough for him. It's that kind of victim relationship. I think my mum certainly strained out relationships especially Sean who had to look after me when I was a kid. He really resented me for years, because he really didn't have a childhood as he always had to look out for me. Maybe not look out for me, but having your little sister hang around with you which wasn't cool.

As kids, we hung around the street corners, I was difficult, Sean wasn't really. I think I was difficult because, you know, I could be. We regularly shoplifted, we



regularly broke into places, and because I was little I was always forced through the window. We were always playing football in places we weren't supposed to, being chased by the park police every week. The shoplifting was only for sweets, you know we didn't have any lunch so we wanted a Mars bar. The breaking into places was usually a dare. Sean kind of bullied me in a sense, but then looked after me at the same time. There was never anything malicious it was always just daft. I was always in casualty, I can give you a huge list of things that I have done, like slipping disks and bones that have been broken and things like that but I was the dare devil you know I was the one that was always up the tree and I'd jump out and be the hard one. Hanging around with my brothers and all his mates you had to prove yourself absolutely all the time. I was the only girl, I was always stubborn and I remember being happy all the time. I think it was always doing what we wanted to do because it always felt normal, we just got on and did things, we were always having an adventure. We were going on a mystery this day or we'd go miles on our bikes, literally, and we just had a great time. We were always in trouble but it was just harmless trouble. As long as my parents didn't find out.

My mum did find out occasionally and then she threatened to send us to the children's home. She cut my hair one time because I'd been naughty. She hit us violently, lock us in our rooms, not feed us, stick bars of soap in our mouths, that kind of thing, you know until you vomited then you'd have to clear it up. I didn't deserve the way my mum treated me. She used to frighten us, even though whatever we did wasn't naughty and not malicious. You know we never did anything maliciously we were just naughty and excited. Mum was out of control, when she reprimanded us or told us off or whacked us, or whatever, she was out of control and she was scary. So even though she may not have

beaten us within an inch of our lives, or anything like that, we knew that she was just so very angry. That was horrible. You know, when she cut my hair, she just chopped my hair off. It wasn't like, oh my god my hair's gone, it was, my god what could she have done almost, she was frightening.

My mum favoured my brothers but I just accepted that they were different in my mum's eyes, not my dad's. My dad would have just gone along with my mum to keep the peace and that. We were in a fire in a tent on holiday, I guess I was about nine. The tent we were in caught light, and the flames went across the doorway. My dad and the other father just threw people over the flames. It was the only way to get people out. I remember being thrown over the flames by the other father and lying in a ditch, because we were camped quite close to a ditch. I remember my mum holding Dan. Sean was there, and my dad - they looked like a family unit. My mum was screaming and sobbing 'thank God my baby's ok' and hanging onto Dan. I guess is probably quite normal, but I remember thinking they don't know I am out yet. My dad suddenly realised that I wasn't there and went back in. I remember watching him go back in and thinking they didn't know I was out. I was always the last one, I mean the coast guard called out when everyone was all right, it was a night mare, but yeah I remember feeling, I guess, resentful or maybe just sad. Not resentful. I didn't feel, you know 'bloody Dan', I felt 'oh they don't know' yeah, that's a pity, I might be dead and they don't know!

You know I quite enjoyed being cantankerous. I did have the coast guard called out about a half a dozen times for me. Always on holiday I'd run away. All these stories you know when families get together. I was always the person everyone talks about because I was the one who had suddenly taken her clothes off in front of Swan Lake and

embarrass everyone. I was always the one that, yet again, had fallen into the river and had to be dragged out by my thighs or whatever. I was always the one in casualty. Every week, in the summer holiday, I had broken so many bones and done so much. I was always the little cheeky one that was usually liked by teachers and mostly liked by families, partially because I was small and got away with it. I knew that a lot of the things that I did was naughty. Sometimes I did it to be naughty but sometimes I did it because it seemed like a good idea at the time. I wasn't very good at consequences, kind of like our kids. It was like, oh well I'll do that and see.

I left home when I was 16. I had a drug habit when I was 19 until I was about 21, I mean we all smoked gear when we were at school, we all smoked dope and again I was always one of the people who would do anything. I ended up taking vast amounts of speed and cocaine, still worked all the time while I was doing it. Because of my personality, which is probably toned down a bit now, no one ever knew I was on drugs. And if I wasn't on drugs and I was down and quiet everyone assumed there was something terribly wrong and asked me questions all the time. So I took drugs to be the person everyone assumed I was. I lived in a squat, I was only there for two months, and I was living with a boyfriend who was dealing. My friend's parents actually offered me a room which was how I got out of the squat. My parents didn't know I was living in the squat they just thought I was living with a boyfriend; they didn't come around to visit or anything. I didn't get out of the drugs straight away. Then I lived with various friends on and off, living in terrible caravans with no toilets all sorts of horrible places really. I got off the drugs when I was 21, saw a psychiatrist who was brilliant. I'd seen various drug counselors up to then and that sort of crap, and then I got to 21 and realized, for the first

time in my life, recognized that I wasn't happy. I thought I was always happy; I make an effort to be happy. I got to 21, and my boss at the time paid for me to see the psychiatrist. I lived with her, and I think she realized that there was something wrong. She also didn't want me to have any time off work. I don't think she knew I was into drugs, no one knew apart from my dealer boyfriend and my best friend.

I was in quite a lot of debt then and then started dating another guy, who I lived with. I'd seen a psychiatrist, got off the drugs started sorting myself out. Then I was living with him and he started beating me up so it was like out of the frying pan into the fire. I eventually left him, it was very difficult leaving him. I moved back home after that, more or less. I just said we were splitting up and I needed somewhere to come. I went home and finished paying off those debts 3 or 4 years ago I guess and have stabilised for a while and now think I need to get out again. I went home partly because I felt sorry for my dad because I felt that it was really difficult at home for him and he could do with some support. My mum and dad were having huge problems, cohabiting but not sharing a room. They do now, they sorted their heads out, sorted themselves out. She lived at home because she wasn't going to give it up. The lifestyle she didn't mind because she didn't put any money towards it.

My introduction to teaching was with my brother's girlfriend who was a teacher, and I'd go in and help. She was an NQT when they started dating, and she's got terrible, terrible arthritis. So a lot of the work she was struggling with, more on a physical level than anything else. It was horrible and I had some free time. I knew she was working some really long hours and it was more as a favour than anything else. She'd come home



and she'd chat about her kids and it was interesting and I've always really liked kids' company. I like their honesty.

I was teaching riding, instructing riders with disabilities. EBD kids fell under that umbrella. I really enjoyed teaching them. Its really hard for the RDH (riding for the disabled) to get instructors because you're teaching people with such profound handicaps, it's a very big responsibility and most people don't want that. I specialised and started training disabled teams. I kind of just veered towards teaching them. I enjoyed teaching able bodied as well, but there was an edge to the RDA that I really enjoyed. A friend of my mum used to bring groups to me and she told me about an LSA job at the residential EBD. I had loads of GCSEs going but nothing that would professionally qualify me. So I thought if I go there I can actually do a degree. I went there and never really intended to go into teaching.

While I was assisting, I really enjoyed being in a classroom with the kids but I didn't really enjoy the lessons and use to find lots of them dull, not all of them, but some of them were dull. I just think how do these kids even stay in here because quite frankly I think I'd like to go home at this rate. I just thought I could do a better job really. So I decided to do a degree. I knew I could do a better job than most of the teachers, and obviously needed a degree to do it. That was a bit scary for a while. But it was fun and I started with my best friend Mandy coz she'd been to university. We did it together really. We did different courses but we still moaned together.

While working, I got involved with one of the teachers. We got on really well as mates and then we went out at the end of the holidays. He told me that he was in love with me and I was a bit shocked really. I saw him over the holidays a few times, and I

hadn't even really considered him because he was involved with Julie and had a family and yet he'd become such a close friend. Looking back I was aware that I'd mention him, I talked about him a lot, but again I thought as a friend. We started seeing each other and I fell in love with him.

He influenced me in as much as he is a good teacher. He has a good way with the kids. I had him on a pedestal. I thought so much of him and because I knew that he thought that I was good, I think that influenced me more. I miscarried with his baby which made it hard. We'd been seeing each other for a few months and I went home one night and started bleeding really badly one evening. I'd been on the pill and I'd just changed my pill. I phoned up the doctor and managed to get an appointment that night. He told me he was really sorry that I'd miscarried and what was I doing taking the pill when I was pregnant. I had no idea at all. Which is probably best, looking back, and I just went into work pretending everything was fine. I went back to school and the head of care took one look at me and said are you all right and I just burst into tears. I was then ushered into a room and just told her everything. She told everyone immediately about it, betraying my confidence. I had taken her into my confidence, but I was stupid in doing that. I should never have gone into school that day, I should have just stayed at home and talked to friends. I didn't tell him because I was sent home. I was angry at him, I was angry with me. Mostly me cause I thought oh my God, how could I have missed this and now I am pregnant. You know I am not one of those stupid women that you hear about. Pat knew that I had gone into school and burst into tears and had decided basically that he was going to call it quits. So he came around and I saw him and he asked what was wrong and I just said Thursday night I miscarried, when I have

something to tell I tend to just say it. I was really matter of fact, and he got really upset and he was crying and it was very emotional. I remember comforting him. I remember feeling completely detached. He said to me had I had the baby it would have been the excuse to leave his family and I always felt a complete failure, like he needs one. What a mixed up person he is. I was pretty resentful of him and I guess in a way I still resent him, because I left the job I liked. One of the reasons was the relationship was over and I needed to get out. Even when I was at Millward for a year he still called me. It's one of the reasons that I am nervous if I go back. But then I know how I feel. I know I don't want that. He's my friend.

I think if I had been with Pat, if we had been together, I wouldn't have left. My career wouldn't have mattered so much. I wouldn't have needed to earn a particular amount of money and I could have waited that bit longer before doing it. Obviously being single you have to earn a reasonable wage, and I needed to do it for myself. Pat wasn't a hold any more I needed to get away from him for a while. Which is sad because we are still friends. It's weird how we're still friends, I don't think I could have that with any other boyfriend that I'd been that close to. He makes me laugh.

Honesty is important to me. I work with EBD children, what's going on there. But there is something honest about EBD children as well. You know, their emotions are often governed by how they feel. I mean they can be snide and they can be sneaky but they are the EBD kids that we all can see, but the majority of them are governed exactly by the way they feel. I don't know I like that.

I don't think I have to prove myself to my family. I do have to prove myself to me. I constantly have to prove myself to me. That I am worthwhile. Sometimes I guess

in some ways I feel that I have failed. You know I had to move back home and I am not financially independent, yet. You know I think I ought to be I work bloody hard for it. I prove things to me all the time. Sometimes people say things and I have to rise to the challenge. I'm terrible like that. I remember Pat saying about maths, so I thought I'd get it as a minor on my degree. It's fingers up to you mate. But it wasn't really for him as it was for me. It's always for me.

I think I am the biggest con artist ever sometimes. I don't know how I do it, I don't know, I really don't think I work that hard. I don't really think I deserve to have so many accolades that I get from work. I don't know if I am a con artist or what. I don't think I am coz I don't think I am that dishonest.

I don't think I am lazy. I don't think I am a particularly good English teacher but I am a good EBD teacher. I switch off when I leave, I don't take it home which I think is really important. I think I have got a good sense of humour. Which allows me to laugh at myself. I tend not to take things too seriously. I do enjoy my subject and I like the kids learning, I really get a kick out of them getting into it. I think I am very enthusiastic and I think I am energetic and I think that makes me good at my job. I think I am fair as well, if I am not I want someone to tell me. I guess naturally I kind of get them, I get where they are coming from. I enjoy their company and that makes you good I think. I really do enjoy their company. I could never ever do a normal job. You know I have had to go from being a jockey to a stud groom to a teacher of mad children. It's entertaining. I like being entertained, I am easily bored. I get to be that wacky teacher that hopefully they'll remember in years to come. They may not remember what they've learned but they will remember this wacky teacher and that it's ok to be different and existential and I



don't think there are many jobs that will allow me to bounce about and skip at 31 and sing and do things like that. It's fun, I get to do stupid things.

I'd stay in EBD because I like the challenge. It is never ever dull. I like the kids you tend to get. I like the fact that you can build special relationships even though they'll throw it back in your face. You're doing something that other people wouldn't. I also like having a job that people think 'oh my god that's different'. It was quite a hard decision for me to come here, because of personal links. That was a difficult decision because I do love him very much. Probably next to my dad as much as I've ever loved anyone. Not that he deserved it.

## 6.6 Alfred's Life Story

There were three people that said I should do teaching. And I didn't believe any of them for a while. There was my cousin Sue, a guy who I used to play football with, who became a teacher and my wife at the time. It was something that I hadn't considered, you know, I hadn't any qualifications and it just wasn't on my list of possible job options really. And even though they told me, they told me individually. Whether they got together and colluded, I don't know. They told me individually and probably at different times, and when they told me I just sort of ummed and aahed. I suppose then in the end, it sowed the seeds of me considering it. But it was some time before I said, 'Well, all right.'

I have happy memories of childhood, childhood then was a little bit more idyllic ... the freedom you had! I mean I roamed all over the place. I have this memory of just outside my house, it was a terraced house. They dug up the road and when they did there was this wonderful smell, it sounds crazy, of clay impregnated with the gas. Even now, I can close my eyes and smell the smell. You know I'd sit there and I am sure the workers were very tolerant, I was all of four years old. But that was really my first memory, I was sitting and I was a worker. I just did what he did, I'm sure there was a particular work man. I don't know how long this lasted, it may have only been three weeks, but it's an outstanding memory. The memory was, to me it was dark, it must have been late at night. I mean it was probably just outside my mum's door. My vision was it was dark there and you had your tea, it was really exciting.

We moved when I was 6, and there was a place out in the back called the racecourse, maybe at sometime it was a race course, but now it was an open space of grass. I can remember going up when I first started playing football, taking my boots up and joining in without a care. My mother was very pleased with me because I never ripped my clothes but I was always dirty.

I certainly didn't get my love of football from my dad. My dad is quite into certain sports but he had no interest in football at all. My grandfather was a supporter of Brentford so whether it is from him or not, I don't know. But it was certainly not my dad. It was just, I loved it and just started playing and that's all I wanted to do. I'll go back a little bit about my dad being interested in football. He wasn't interested at all. But we went to a shop one day and we were talking to the guy in the shop and the guy said your son looks like a footballer, have you ever seen him play? My dad said no, I must have been 11 or 12 and my dad had never seen me play. He had no particular interest in football, we used to go and do other things. This guy said 'you bastard why haven't you spent time with...' and my dad felt terribly guilty. It hadn't bothered me. After that he came all the time, up until I retired. That was where my relationship was defined. And he was my best pal until the day he died.

My dad told me he hated reading in front of the class because it made him feel uncomfortable. The job he did, he was a rep for a firm, but he never wanted a promotion. He could read, yes but he was a slow reader, in terms of slow it would take him a long time to read through a page. He left school at 13 because that's what they did then, you were entitled to leave school at 13 so he did and started working and doing whatever.

My mum is a traditional mum. She was the woman that stayed at home. If I'm honest she would still like to do that now. As long as she sees a few people, has a chat - that's what she does. She was frigid and my dad he was very tactile, very touchy. My mum went a bit mad, she didn't like sex, my dad obviously did and had a few affairs, and then he met someone who he felt would give him a better life responding sensitively and sexually. So my parents got divorced. My sister didn't take the divorce well. What I hadn't recognised as a child was that I think my dad had been all over my sister, until he discovered football with me and I think she felt rejected. When they got divorced the relationship struggled and really never recovered. It recovered to a degree, and they would see each other and that but it was never the same. And she's never told anyone why. I've asked and I think it was the rejection, the betrayal. They never sorted it out, and I don't think my brother in law helped, he's a clinical psychologist, but he's stupid. I know this sounds terrible. But he is good on paper and I sure he didn't help her. Whereas I would have tried to at least drive the situation to sort it out.

I genuinely enjoyed school. I think it was a combination of both lessons and my friends, I did enjoy school. I don't think I was ever unhappy about going, I wasn't ill. I remember skiving once. I was so stupid, I actually skived from a lesson I liked. You know, and sort of ran off. I only did it once. You know it had no interest for me. I wanted to be in school. It had everything I wanted there.... Friends, sports, I didn't mind lessons particularly. So yeah, it just had all the things I quite liked. At the end of primary I took the 11+ and failed and transferred to a secondary modern school.

At secondary modern school, my memories are of me gazing out the window watching the sports events or running myself. I was obsessed with sport and it gave me



most pleasure. During secondary we moved from the London suburbs to Fulham and I was worried of moving. I am sure it was quite traumatic, because I was very happy where I was. It must have been slightly traumatic. I mean Fulham is very, it's very posh now, but it wasn't then. There were posh bits of it but it was quite working class whereas I had lived in the suburbs; nice big houses, very few flats. There was a big difference.

My new school was a dump. We went in there and the deputy head showed us around. He wore his gown back to front, you know inside out and we went in a class and there was a kid sucking a sherbet or drinking a drink. You know, I went in thinking 'Oh well the secondary modern school had been really strict and there were no girls', so maybe this wouldn't be so bad. I never thought I took notice, but looking back, I had. When I think back, you think Jesus, I'd gone from this school, this secondary modern school that had four/five rugby fields to this inner London school where there was just nothing. But from a personal point of view, I was quite lucky because the school had no playing fields of their own so we had to be bussed every Friday to sports venues for our games sessions. I went to rowing, horse riding, I did some ice skating as well as general sport. I liked the rowing, I enjoyed that. So to have a chance to do something else, it was great but I suppose I didn't really see it as that. The football took over that's all I ever did. I started secondary modern school in GCSE stream. My attitude dropped, I just didn't care that much. I think I became obsessed with sport and that was it really.

I remember getting the cane because I went to sit down in the classroom and as I slid in, I got a splinter in the back of my leg. I said 'fuck it' and that was that. In another lesson, I got hit in the head by a lump of wood thrown at me by my science teacher, 'B.O. Baxter' we called him that because he stank. I was pissing about and he just whacked me

across the head. I told my dad and that's the only time I've ever seen my dad angry. He didn't go up and sort it out; he didn't go and do anything. But I think he just said if he does this again.

Once I threatened to bash a teacher's head with a tennis racket. It was too, it was far out of proportion to what the event was, in my view. He accused me of lying but chose to tell my girlfriend at the time rather than me. I went crazy. What happened was I'd taken a lift on the back of a scooter and I didn't wear a crash helmet. I usually did when I went on this guy's bike. It was a student teacher who accused me of not wearing one. He was really young and hadn't been there long. I said 'No, I always wear a crash helmet'. I got it wrong. He went to the girlfriend or some of my friends and said what a liar I was. I just saw red. I just couldn't cope with this at all. That evening he was playing tennis with some other staff. I lost it a bit. I just said if you are going to go around accusing me of lying, and I did explain to him I had made a mistake and everything but he didn't want to listen. And that's what pissed me off. I don't know why he told, it was immature. He was as immature as I was. But a good thing came out of it. A guy that was the senior master, he'd thrown a board rubber at me when I wasn't paying attention. I didn't mind, I liked him. He took me aside and I told him the story and he never went overboard at all. He listened to what I said, told me off for being a bit of a prat. He did the cane, but he told me he would go and speak to this girl. And I believed he did. And that was enough. A bit of a traumatic event. I'm not an angry violent person. But it was just one of those occasions.

I don't think I ever completely fit in. I think always I was slightly on the outside looking in. I mean I've got a friend and he says you've always gone your own way. I

don't set out to do that, it just seems to be that it's the road less travelled and there is always a slight kink in it. This guy did, at the time, describe me as a nigger in a woodpile. The RE teacher, well he ran the football team. And I played bits and bobs. I got into the first team when I was younger but he wouldn't play me regularly. I could never work it, I thought I was good enough to do it, and most of the lads thought I was good enough, but he just said I was a nigger in a woodpile. I just didn't fit in completely. His expectations were of a team player. I don't think he was saying it unkindly, I just think it was a comment. He may have said it in a report I can't remember. I didn't take it unkindly. It's only more recently that I thought well other people feel the same so there must be something in it.

I think I was sharp. I could pick things up. But I wasn't academic in terms of say essay writing or particularly interested in Pythagoras' theorem. But I think I was sharp in terms of a reasonable brain but without the incentive or the drive. It was sport that drove me, football. I had played for the school team but I didn't make the district team or anything like that. It was just what I was going to do. I think I was quite unrealistic. I had no knowledge of it, I had no sort of contacts with it. I just thought that's what I want to do. One of the guys I played with on the school football team, he ended up at Brentford or Fulham or whatever and I played against him later on. But there was a reasonably good standard and I expect one or two of us bounced off each other. So there was a bit of competition. I didn't play for the school in the last year because I was playing for Brentford or somewhere. What happened was at that stage, you were 15, you signed to be an apprentice or ground staff. I played this year at Brentford, who were going to sign me, but it put me a year behind. So when I went off to West Ham after that,

they were then saying well you're a bit too old. If it had been a year ago, then we would have signed you. So I had to get a job. I got a letter saying they had heard I was playing at Brentford and would you like to come and have a trial with us. So I spent a season there. They couldn't sign me on an amateur performance. But I could go just as a guy who trains with them, plays on the youth team. I wasn't full time employed.

My first wife, a nurse, convinced me along with her friends and relations, that I could become a PE teacher if I wanted. I suppose if I am honest a guy called Henry was also a big reason for me to consider teaching. He said 'I just thought you had something more to offer'. I was terrified of doing the exams because I didn't have any qualifications. I think that needed to be worked on because I do think I have a low opinion of myself academically. Then everything fell into place in terms of getting the exams when I wanted to and having enough money to survive because I was earning reasonable money playing football. I enjoyed working with kids, I did know that. I had spent some training sessions with kids and I had a job, which I didn't find daunting. I did enjoy it.

I had an interview at Nonnington and was accepted on the conditions I got the exams. I think I had applied for two colleges, I applied Burrow Road and if I had gone to Burrow Road they wouldn't have let me play football outside. So I said I wasn't interested. Then Nonnington, they liked the idea that I played top quality non league football. It was a much different attitude. One attitude said no, no, no you play for the college whereas the other said if you can play for us occasionally and bring your expertise in, and you want to do some coaching with the football, then that's great! And I just thought that that



approach was so much better and obviously it was financial. I was earning money. I couldn't afford, you know not to earn. I wanted the money that goes with it.

I got divorced my 3<sup>rd</sup> year and that's where I met Debs, she was a teacher as well. She was looking for a job in a special school, and applied. She went to look around the school and I went with her. The head said, 'well I am looking for a bloke, are you interested?', it was a male PE post. I think this is the story of my life, 'well all right then' I replied and that was that. It was ES and M: Educationally Subnormal and Moderate which today is MLD. Initially it was teaching, go home and go training. Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays were taken up with football, coz I was only part time. I trained Tuesdays and Thursdays and played Saturdays. The school was very supportive. I was the hero with the kids. Like most of my life, they said well do you fancy it, there was no driven call.

When I had stopped becoming the centre of attention, I went back to my first wife. Football was coming to an end, and I wasn't this hero I was just this old fart, a player that wasn't that good. In becoming more involved in the teaching career, all of a sudden I wasn't the hero. I'd gone to a residential school which is incredibly all encompassing. Not too clever really, and it caused a lot of problems. So I was playing football Tuesdays and Thursdays, doing on call duties Mondays and Wednesdays and occasional weekends! It replaced the camaraderie of football. Deb took her teaching career slightly more serious than I did and it just became.... I think what happened was I'd be going out for a drink with the people from the residential and she wouldn't come because she had marking to do. Then all of a sudden your not there to go out anymore, you're just out.

I had a look at mainstream to see what it is like. I did enjoy it but I ended up with the waifs and strays. Within a few months I was doing remedial with a bit of PE. I was just gravitating towards the odds and sods that didn't seem to fit into the system very well. I went to look around an EBD school and found out how much I'd earn. Initially it was about the money, there was no vision of doing anything. Later I thought I was probably quite good at EBD because I got on well with the kids. I seemed successful with them and they seemed to work well with me. I have more satisfaction personally with them than if I was in mainstream.

You know at first I was getting an extra £3900 to work in the evenings. You say I will never rely on this money, this is just a bonus. But of course you do. I've always said to myself if I was crap at it, if I really found I couldn't work with these kids anymore, if I was unhappy, that I'd jack it in. I don't dislike it. Yeah I do get frustrated but I have never not wanted to go into work. I am on call two days a week living here. I'm really responsible for the school.

I've lived here for 11 years. It's the same age as John, John was born in January, I moved in, in December. So 1991. 12 years. I got married to Amy when Josh was 18 months. It was the birth certificate, they wouldn't put my name on it. We didn't give a monkeys. I don't think we would have now. I just felt that I wanted Josh to have my name. Which he could have had, I just wanted to make it official. Once she was pregnant I was happy but if you had asked me beforehand I didn't want kids. I liked to go skiing and I would have been a crap father. Because I was so much older they hadn't seen me play. They've never had to go every Saturday and see dad play.

Special needs suited me, it suited my character. I got on well with the academic kids but I enjoyed working with the less able and the less school orientated kids. That just gave me a bit of insight. But that was the funnel for me, I had a rapport, I suppose and I actually enjoyed going through things and trying to get them to learn. I found it much more fun, I found that I was in much more control. With the remedial kids I found that quite quickly I was developing my own curriculum, I was using other stuff as well. It was one-to-one, small groups and the kids seemed to enjoy it so I was given good feedback, which makes you feel good. Whether I was able to teach them anything remains to be seen. It was fun, the kids seemed to enjoy it, and the parents seemed to be pleased. That's what drove me, managed to keep me going.

Anyone coming to this world, I say to them you've either got to have empathy and you have got to enjoy the work. I don't think there is any in between. Yes, I do enjoy it. I go in every morning and I am happy to go in. I'd like to think I am reasonably good with the kids, I'd like to think I give something to them, not just in terms of RE and what I teach now, but in terms of an overall confidence and an overall approach to life.

I don't think EBD kids are that different, they are just extensions of the male species. Most EBD kids are male. I'm not a great believer in ADHD, what I really believe is that males are a bit peculiar and have strange habits and they are tribal and traditionally it goes back through our development. We are hunters and we protect. And I think we've got a frustration that happens in life and, as men, I think we are struggling for a role. I think the kids that we deal with are kids from low rations, not always, but what they are expressing is their frustrations in life. They are very male, they're aggressive, they're attention seeking, the stuff that men generally do. So I suppose all I

am trying to do is fit that in and enjoy the fact and appreciate the fact that they are not that different. I mean I don't think that their behaviours are any different, they are just a bit more extreme.

EBD is more of a challenge. It's more of a challenge in terms of you have to be on your toes a bit more. I think your relationships have got to be better. You know, they shit on you and they don't respond and they do respond and I quite like all that. I suppose it is why I like cats more than dogs. Cats have independence, you can give all the love in the world and they just sniff you and piss off and do their own thing. I quite like that with the kids. With all their problems with all their hang ups, they don't accept you willingly. You've got to work at it. You've got to convince them to trust, and some will never trust you. But you have got to work at it. I suppose that is the challenge that I see, and the challenge I enjoy. Does that make sense?

I'm a slight underachiever, whose probably settled for a comfortable life rather than accepting the challenge. I get along well with kids with difficult problems. I don't mean working harder with the kids. I think we all have weaknesses, if I have a weakness I'm not particularly marvellous at picking up new initiatives and following through and doing them because part of the cynicism is I've seen a lot of them before and they've just come around in circles. I'm not always sure it does our kids any good. I'm sure it does but it is the time and effort you have to put into it, I am not sure that what they gain is worth the heartache and the hard work the teachers put into it.

I liked school, liked learning the things I liked learning. Lacked commitment towards the academic goals, and quite comfortably took the outlet that I wasn't anything special. I was a bit stropy, I didn't fit in. I am sure that part of drifting towards EBD,



part of the empathy is that you see yourself in that position. I've never been in the army. I couldn't take that sort of structure and rule. Our kids struggle... yes there is an EBD-ness in my head. I think the kids see that as well. I think people who come into this work are slightly off beat.

I'm not very good at blowing my own trumpet, but I guess I am good because I am funny, approachable, consistent, kids know where they stand. I give them time. I think they trust me. I think I am quite a disciplinarian as a teacher because I respected the disciplinarians in my school. Like a lot of youngsters, I had great glee in exposing inexperienced or teachers without control. I felt guilty about it afterwards sometimes, but you can't help yourself. They were the ones that impressed me. The ones who could control the class, but also they had a rapport with the kids. As strong as they were, I think kids need boundaries and these people gave them those boundaries. I say I have never lied to you; I always say that and stand by it. I am a loner but in an emotional way more. I was always on the outside looking in. Even when I was successful at football at a non league level, I still wasn't totally one of the gang. I didn't mind but I didn't, I wasn't ... I don't know what it is that I didn't do but it was quite obvious in the situation that I was in. I think I have always been a little bit detached. I have loads of acquaintances but not many real friends, those friends really go back a long time. I've got one friend who goes back about 10 years. You know I trust him and everything but if you had asked me three years ago, it wasn't the same relationship.

I believe in society, I believe that the sum of its parts is what makes it strong. It is people that make things happen. It is people that keep people happy. The rest of it is just a by product of what we want. I suppose I believe a society must survive and

communities are important and relationships are important. You are trying to give these kids a place within society rather than looking in from the outside. I am a realist and I know that some of them are never going to step into it because of whatever reason they are too far beyond. Within the prison community or whatever, it is still part of society and you still have a role to play within it and they still filter in and filter out. That to me is important. When they come to us I don't care what they have done, to be honest. My view is here we are and our school is a community because it is residential as well.

My involvement is much more with the holistic kid rather than the classroom child as residential kids takes up much more time. If you look at the hours they spend in the school day- they are there for 24 hours but the majority of it is within the home aspect of it. That is the big difference. I don't think kids fail because of their GSCE scores, they fail because they don't fit in and that is what we need to work on. At a day school I would do similar things but it was shortened, here I have more of a chance of making a bigger influence. That's my ego isn't it? I think kids in day schools if they have those sort of problems miss out because it isn't quite the same.

## **CHAPTER 7: WHAT CAN WE GAIN FROM THESE STORIES- ANALYTICAL CONNECTIONS**

### **7.1 Introduction**

Upon completing the life story interviews with my storytellers, the interactive nature of these stories became increasingly evident. A story is always told with a particular audience in mind. The teller is ever aware that they want their story to be believable, interesting and it must create the image that the storyteller desires. In recognising the impact that the audience as well as the storyteller has on each story, interesting points must be noted in the analysis.

There are several layers of each story that need to be analysed. Firstly, it is important to recognise the underlying themes of each story which lends itself to the research question of why teachers enter into the profession of working with EBD children and what keeps them there. This is the most fundamental level of analysis. It is also important, however to go deeper than the themes and look at what influences shape the telling of the story. How have my views influenced how I interpret the stories? How do the storytellers shape their tales to fit into 'what the researcher expects'? Finally, how do the positions that the storytellers hold, influence the way they speak of their position?

In my analysis I do not intend to pick apart each individual story, rather, I will make reference to them in creating the foundations for my arguments. I intend to create a general conversation about the stories as a group and combine the themes as general notions rather than individual preferences. Each storyteller has told his or her story and I am creating my own story to enhance these stories with my own subjective interpretation.

I am not looking to confirm or disprove the 'truths' that have been told in these stories. Analysis is not labelling liars or truth tellers. What I will do is look at the

varying influences that come to play in the telling and interpretation of these stories. In telling a life story, each person is constructing the social image they wish to portray to the outside world. What is included and omitted gives information about what is important to the storyteller and what they expect of themselves. As Goodley (2004) alludes to:

We know how we should act in given settings. We are aware of the limits of where we can appropriately go in our identity construction. We are free, but only to act in ways that we know we should act (Goodley et al, 2004, p. 115).

In the historical foundations of life history research, Thomas and Znaniecki (1927) used written recounts of the Polish immigrant population within Chicago to give a subjective account of events within a society. They recognised the importance of giving voice to an unheard population. Shaw expanded upon the life history approach by relying upon oral recounts of Stanley, bringing his readers into Stanley's social and cultural experiences through "a sympathetic appreciation of the child's own personal problems and the sort of world in which he lives" (Shaw, 1930, p.17). Both of these early approaches working with life stories highlight the strength of the subjective and personal side to research.

An interest in life history work is further seen in the more recent works of Parker (1990), Scheper-Hughes (1992) and Wolcott (2002). These research efforts highlight the importance of the study of the subjective nature of people's everyday lives. They recognise the importance of giving voice to the unheard. Though many positive aspects of life story research are seen through these examples, we are also able to recognise the bias that the researcher may consciously or unconsciously have on the stories that are told. Though Parker claims to transcribe, we only hear what he wants us to hear, a more subtle influence is noted. Scheper-Hughes (1992) is slightly more open about her bias in



allowing the reader to recognise her position and relation with her storytellers. Wolcott (2002) allows a vivid picture of what can happen when life story work gets too personal. His research overstepped the boundaries that should ethically accompany any research effort. These more recent accounts allow insight into the strengths and pitfalls that life history research carries with it. I was able to guard against the pitfalls that can occur through research involving personal information whilst strengthening my position as researcher.

Through careful examination of these previous life history works, I was able to create my own personal life history research involving teachers at both day and residential EBD schools, the final result being five stories told personally by the storytellers. In creating the final version of these stories, they were then edited and rechecked by each storyteller to ensure that the voice that was spoken was the one that was indeed heard. I recognised the need for sensitivity in approaching both the stories and the storytellers in order to create the images that were desired, whilst keeping my influences upfront and obvious.

In this chapter, I analyse the stories and their impacts upon the storyteller. I will begin by discussing the importance of analysis. I will then move on to highlight some of the recurring and predominant themes that are seen within the stories and what these themes tell about the storytellers. In highlighting these themes, I will pose questions concerning the insights gained from these themes. Initially, I will try to approach these themes in an objective manner rather than impose my values upon them. I will then move onto answering some of the questions posed. I will look at how these questions

afford insights into my storytellers' lives. I will try and use these question to gain answers to my research questions regarding the motivation behind EBD education.

After looking at what insights the themes give concerning the storytellers, I will turn the study inwards and look at how I influenced the themes and how the themes have influenced me.

In concluding this chapter, I will try to tie everything together and look at how this work and the stance taken within it can give insight into my original research questions:

- a. How does the image a person constructs an EBD teacher as having, affect their motivation to teach?
- b. How have experiences of educational/ pedagogical challenges shaped their practice?
- c. How does their view of what it means to have EBD relate to the security, risk and challenge they associate with their work?

## **7.2 The Importance of Analysis in Life Stories**

A person's life story sheds light on a person's perceptions and experiences within his or her social world and by listening to and publishing their stories I was able to give voice to the unheard. Some have seen the analysis of life stories as working against the objectives of the research. Goodley and his colleagues (2004) recognise that "to analyse stories takes away ownership of the primary narrators and masks the qualities of a narrative with the abstract interpretations of the theorists". Also mentioned is the fact "that researchers have a responsibility to take further what stories might tell or tacitly

acknowledge. The role of analysis is crucial particularly in postmodern times (p. 148)". The argument of storytellers' ownership versus researchers' responsibility highlights the importance of analysis not only of the stories told but also of the methods used and the relationships that exist both within and outside of research.

### 7.21 Maintaining Ownership

Embarking upon life story work involves responsibilities of the researcher. As a researcher, you are responsible not only for your work, but also to your storytellers. People volunteer to participate in the work you have undertaken, understanding that their voices will be heard. In allowing you into their lives, they expect a true representation of what they have provided.

I entered into my research with a teacher-centred approach. Thomas (1995)

quotes:

There has been an expansion of teacher-focused studies with a calculated intent to help teachers to tell their own stories and to find ways of getting these stories heard.... Many so called ordinary teachers, and not just a few *prima donnas*, have been able to make a personal and professional statement (Elbaz, 1991, quoted in Thomas, 1995, p. 4).

It was my intention to give voice to the 'ordinary teachers' with whom I work. The stories that I wrote were my storytellers' stories. The final version of each story was verified with each storyteller to ensure it reliably told the story intended. I cannot take credit for the information they imparted to me, however, how my interpretations came from my own personal standpoint, which in a sense created a joint ownership of the process.

This collaborative process implies that the researcher does not possess the right to an absolutist interpretation of the narrative, but as a reader may offer to share with the writer reactions to the stories, but is not given judgemental powers (Thomas, 1995, p.8).

As I mentioned before, my analysis does not intend to label truth tellers or liars, but it will give my impression of the importance and the significance behind the words that were spoken.

Whilst I worked collaboratively in creating the edited life stories, this analysis, in a sense, is my own story. It does not intrude on the stories, but rather reflects upon them. It introduces my voice as an overlay to the existing stories, subjectively explaining and validating the themes and images seen.

### 7.22 Explaining and Validating

A crucial element of analysis involves explaining your data in relation to the research question and validating the usefulness of it. This involves a constant return to the research question, keeping it at the forefront of the analytical critique you make of the stories. Stories are full of subjective tales which the teller wants his or her audience to hear. Their stories are their own truths of their lives. It is the researcher's job to explain how these tales answer or give any evidence about the research question.

The validity of the story is not recognising the truths or untruths that are told. It is inevitable that "inside most non narrative discourses there is a story struggling to get out and within each narrative there 'stalks *the ghost of non narrative discourse*'" (Rosen, 1987, quoted in Thomas, 1995, p. 3). Thomas distinguishes between his fiction (narrative) and non-fiction (non-narrative) and recognises that they will intermingle in



any life story. The relevance of this 'validity' is not key to life story research. The validity which is important is its representation of the person.

We do not judge, we make connections. Rather than assuming a stance "over and against" the person telling the story, analysing, limiting or classifying the storyteller in any way, we seek to find the relevance of the story itself (Atkinson, 1999, p68).

It is the recognition of how these stories relate to the persona that each storyteller is upholding and what influences lead to the image portrayed. It is the recognition that although the story may be narrative in nature, you must look beyond the story to discover why the story had been told in that particular manner.

### 7.23 Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

With the emotive nature of life stories and the personal investment that comes in telling them, the issue of trust can greatly influence both how the story is told as well as how it is interpreted. In order to gain acceptance from the 'researched' it is important for the researcher to create a close and committed relationship with each of the storytellers.

This can create a sense of abandonment when:

The researcher, essentially a transient, will at some stage abandon the field and re-enter an alternative social reality... leaving the researched behind in the field setting which can lead to acute feelings of abandonment and betrayal (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p.178).

This seems like quite a harsh depiction of the researcher's role, particularly in life story research from within one's own workplace, however, it is an image that I am sure pervaded some of my encounters.

In looking at how I, as researcher, should explain and validate each story told, it was important to look at the issue of trustworthiness in the relationships that existed

between the storytellers and myself. “Trustworthiness is a more appropriate word to use in the context of critical research. It is helpful because it signifies a different set of assumptions about research purposes than does *validity*” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p. 289). If my storytellers did not trust me, how likely are they to engage in discussion of deeply personal matters. Alternatively, if I did not trust my storytellers, how will this affect my analysis of what they are telling me?

In order to assess the credibility of the stories involved, Denzin and Lincoln (1998) set out their criterion for critical trustworthiness. The credibility of portrayals of constructed realities must be considered as “researchers award credibility only when the constructions are plausible to those who constructed them” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p. 288). In other words, it is not up to the researcher to determine the plausibility of the story, but rather to look at how this story may be plausible to the teller. Secondly the *anticipatory accommodation* must be considered. By this research must recognise that:

Humans reshape cognitive structures to accommodate unique aspects of what they perceive in new contexts. In other words, through their knowledge of a variety of comparable contexts, researchers begin to learn their similarities and differences- they learn from their comparisons of different contexts (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p. 288).

Through recognising the variability in which stories are told to allow the desired portrayal of the teller, the empowerment which life stories research should foster will be gained through the self reflection “which research moves those it studies to understand the world and the way it is shaped in order for them to transform it” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p. 289).

### 7.24 Recognising Subjectivity

Subjectivity lies at the heart of life stories. There are so many factors that influence the subjectivity of both the telling and interpretation of a story that to neglect to identify it is to disregard a crucial outcome of the research.

A life story is a text like any other document or story in any other field. It can stand on its own, because, like a novel or poem, it evokes certain individual responses based on the experience it describes or the perspective of the reader (Atkinson, 1999, p.70).

The individual response that the stories evoked from myself reflected the subjective nature with which I approached them. The meaning that I attach to these stories is influenced by my own personal experience; knowledge of; and relationship with each storyteller. The sympathy or scepticism that is evoked from each story will be influenced by my impressions of the storyteller as a teacher and as a person. My insider position with the storytellers from my own professional context was almost like a double edged sword – I wanted to be able to take the stories as I heard them, however, having the previous knowledge that I did about many of my storytellers made it difficult. Atkinson (1999) raises some interesting questions:

If you previously know the storyteller, does the story told fit with what I see or know about the person? A life story that we hear from someone may be totally coherent or have strong internal consistency, but is that particular story one that best characterises what is evident or known about the person otherwise? (p.71).

Here, it was important that I balance the information that I had. I did not want to discount the 'real life history' I had with many of my storytellers, but I also wanted to read the stories as they expected them to be read. In recognising this subjectivity I needed to balance a somewhat objective approach.

My experience with each storyteller differed greatly. Many were my colleagues in education; I had personal opinions and feelings relating to their position and nature.

As Plummer (2001) notes:

If we wish to understand a life story, then, we need also to know where both the researcher and the teller of that life are coming from, what type of relationship they are having together, and how this fits into the wider social order (p. 208).

The relationships I had with many of my storytellers affected the reasons they wanted to tell me their stories. There were friends that wanted to help, there were colleagues who wanted to let me know just how good they were at what they did and there were colleagues who wanted to shed light on the rationale to their bitter feelings. The differing reasoning that lay behind the telling of the stories, shed some light on why the stories were told in the manner they were. If there was a grudge that was held, the story would reflect the bitter feelings felt by the storyteller. Likewise, if there were heroic tales to be told, the story would be told in a flattering manner. It was important to look at how people see their own lives in relation to how they tell their story.

There was also the one storyteller with whom I had no previous experience with. This too brought a great element of subjectivity to my research. Alfred was gaining nothing from telling me his story. He didn't know me or have any previous experience with me, nor I with him; therefore his story was only that which I experienced during interviews. The story came from a clean slate but did this mean it was bias free? Combining life stories of people that I worked with alongside one from an unfamiliar storyteller created another important area of analysis - how did the fact that I did not have any pre-existing knowledge affect my perception of his story?



Subjectivity does not only arise from the experiences you have with individuals but also with your own personal experiences. Your own personal life will have bearing upon how you view others. If you can recognise the situations, you are more likely to have empathy. It is important that here you not only analyse the stories that you have heard but also why you have heard them the way you have. You must turn the study inward and it is here that much of the most potent information will be found.

### 7.25 Acknowledging the Self-Reflectivity

Turning the study inwards to reflect upon my own position and its relation to 'the wider picture' was one of the most difficult aspects of my research. It is a lot easier to look at another person's life and see what it tells about the teaching profession, but it can be difficult then to relate this to your own life position. There were traits in all of my storytellers that in some way related back to me. These traits were both positive and negative and being able to face this recognition was an essential part of my research efforts. It is not always easy to face your own 'narrative ghosts'. In understanding my storytellers, I was also able to gain a better understanding of myself. There were themes in each story that struck a familiar chord within my own self. There were not necessarily familiar in structure, truth or event, but the feelings and emotions that were behind the stories were easily recognised within myself. As Goodley (2004) points out:

Researching life stories allows us to bring in parts of us.... Getting to know ourselves would appear to be a crucial part of life story research – in terms of considering the subject matter, the significance of that subject and, most importantly, the objects of our subject whose voices are so often lost in paradigmatic debate and intellectual pretensions (p.167).

I will now turn to look at the recurring themes of the stories that were told. In looking at these themes, it is not necessarily the concrete themes that give insight into the world of EBD teachers, but the reasons and the emotions that are behind these themes.

### **7.3 The Recurring and Predominant Themes**

Each storyteller's story was unique in content and structure, however, similarities can be noticed in the themes that were visited by each of the storyteller in their own way. Here I will look at the varying themes that were seen. These themes, though similar, may not necessarily tell the same things about the storytellers, nor does it necessarily reflect the impressions gained from each. This list that I am compiling is objective in nature. From this list, I will then look at the subjective impact that these themes had on both the storytellers and on me as researcher and teacher.

I am going to focus on six themes that were predominant in my storytellers' reasoning behind their teaching choices. Many of these themes are seen on a continuum and each experience lies somewhere on this continuum. The themes that I have identified are:

1. Failure/ Success
2. Acceptance/ Individuality
3. Self/Social Identity
4. Image of Teacher
5. Image of EBD children
6. Security/ Risk and Challenge

I found it quite interesting to look at how the storytellers' images of people that they spoke of reflected on the image of themselves. The stories were telling not only in directly describing each individual, but also how their images of others and the images that they prescribed others of having of them, reflected on their own self image, however I will discuss this further looking at what the themes tell about the storytellers. This section will just recognise the themes that were apparent in the stories.

### 7.31 Failure/Success

Rose recognises that "productive work itself can satisfy the worker... good work can be a means to self fulfilment" (Rose, 1989, p.56). A motivating factor for any teacher is knowing that they are good at their job. On the surface, all of the storytellers thought that they were good at some aspect of their job. Whether it was their knowledge of their subject, their relationships with their pupils, or their enthusiasm about teaching, there was some element of each person's story that reflected their pride in the success they had achieved. This success provides fulfilment through the successful productivity in which they engage.

Some stories tell of success in school and in particular sports. Others have had success in being a class teacher rather than working their way up the management scale therefore creating a successful base of experience. One of the most important gauges of success seemed to be based on the rapport that each person had with the pupils they have come into contact with. It is interesting to look at where the balance of success lies. Do the storytellers rate their ability on the more professional attributes such as curricular knowledge or is it the personal attributes such as rapport and character that make each

individual feel successful? In looking at the literature of Garner (1995), (1999), (2000) and Cooper et al. (1994), it was clear that many teachers within the field of EBD seem to recognise that their skills are based more on personal rather than professional skills.

Unlike other areas of special education, there are few professional qualifications that are deemed as essential for teachers of children with EBD. Does this focus tell anything about the storyteller's confidence in their own ability? The storytellers speak of the strength and successes of their personal attributes, particularly in comparison with those they have seen fail in the past. The strengths that the storytellers attribute to themselves are what allows them to make a difference in the lives of children who are apparently lacking in the social skills which the teachers empower.

I felt that each of these achievements, however, was overshadowed by an underlying fear of failure. These fears of failure haunt many teachers in their goal of success. The failures that are eluded to encompass not only their own personal failures, but also failures they have witnessed. Again these failures are both professional and personal in nature. There is the recognition of weakness in early academic pursuits, however this does not always equate to failure, rather just a stage in life. Much of the failure spoken of is that which 'others' have experienced, particularly failure in personal traits. What do the failures of parents in their relationships with others tell about my storytellers? Is the image of failure transposed onto others to deflect any fear of their own failure? The fear of growing old and not knowing when to stop, having difficulty focusing solely on badly behaved children, being unable to gain financial independence and being a classic underachiever are all concerns that the storytellers directly relate to



themselves. But are these ‘surface fears’ the ones that are socially acceptable and the fears that are imposed upon others the true worries?

### 7.32 Acceptance/ Individuality

Garner (1999) recognised that teachers of children with EBD are often viewed as “variously charismatic, oddball, liberal and divergent” (p. 33). It is these traits that are mirrored in many of the stories that were told to me. My storytellers seemed to want to fit the ‘slightly unusual’ mould of what many people see an EBD teacher fitting into or at least be viewed as doing so.

The stories seemed to emphasise each person’s need to feel different and therefore special. It was a strength to be seen as different and be recognised as successful in these differences. Pauline had struggled to assert herself in a field which was viewed as a man’s domain. Sonia made a stand through vegetarianism. Martin had to overcome his diabetes. Alfred felt he was viewed as “a nigger in a woodpile” as he just didn’t fit in completely and Cathleen figured she was viewed as “that wacky teacher” as she too did not quite fit into the norm.

In looking at the images that are attributed to teachers, as Bullough (1992) noted each individual has “a model of what ... teaching is ‘supposed’ to be. It includes meanings about students and the student role, about parents and the nature of schooling, knowledge and knowing”(p. 10). How an EBD teacher views the children whom they teach will inevitably be different from many of the images that are traditionally associated with schooling. Each storyteller seems to want to break out of the ‘normal’ teacher model therefore being seen as different. In order to be successful in this

difference, however, they must base their teaching on success they have experienced, however EBD teaching cannot always be viewed on par with mainstream education. Though they do not want to be seen as a 'normal teacher', they do want to be remembered as the 'successful teacher'. As Weber and Mitchell (1995) point out "some of them manage to break and recreate images while making sense of their roles and forging their self-identities" (p. 26). In creating their own self-identity as an EBD teacher; one who is different and successful in this difference, they use their previous knowledge of the success and failure they have seen in education as well as their social interactions to shape their unique teacher image.

In expressing these needs to be seen as different, however, could it have been a way for each person to feel accepted? In being different and in doing so setting themselves apart from the 'norm', people create their own individuality which at times can create a stage for the attention they desire. Being different can at times set you apart from the crowd creating a sense of loneliness but can also give a sense of uniqueness in forging your own identity.

### 7.33 Self/Social Identity

How a person defined his/her perception of her/his place within social settings plays an influential role in a person's life decisions. As Thomas (1967) recognised, there is an interaction between a person's values and attitudes, and the events that occurred within their life. Through this interaction a person is able to forge their identity. This identity is comprised of personal values being imposed on societal norms in what is deemed to be a socially acceptable way. However, sometimes how a person sees

themselves is different from how society views them. We all construct society differently. It is here that we must question: Do we feel responsible to uphold our own personal image or the image that people hold of us?

In looking at identity, everyone has an image they want to live up to. They want to meet all of the expectations that others have for them as well as the ones that they hold for themselves. Some hold this 'perfect picture' of what it means to 'be'. In fulfilling this perfect picture through the telling of life stories, are we getting a picture of who a person truly is or rather who he or she wants to be? As Plummer (2001) recognises every story is told with a specific audience in mind. One must ask how the differing influences of the audiences in question influenced the stories told.

Cathleen separates her life into personal and professional compartments as far as the children are concerned. She "switches off" when she leaves the school, however is the reverse true as well? Her affair with Pat seemed to permeate her life both personally and professionally. Her drive to do well seemed to be fuelled, in part, by having to live up to the image she wanted to present. "I had him on a pedestal. I thought so much of him and because I knew that he thought I was good, I think that influenced me more". Here we see that Cathleen's personal experiences directly influenced her professional decisions and shape her identity as a teacher and as a person.

It is interesting to note the image that we assume others have of us. We heard of a 'burnt out old lady', 'dirty child', and a 'nigger in a woodpile' and being presentable in Martin's contestation: "if I saw me, I think I'd be quite nervous. I'd certainly respect myself." Are these images that people have of us or rather what we want them to think?

There are also the identities that we ascribe to others - how we identify people who have had a great influence on our lives. If a parent holds a 'hero' status and we see his or her image in a particular way, how does this influence the identity we forge for ourselves? Does this only hold true in the hero images we have of significant others, or do the villainous beings who have impact on our experiences also hold sway? Though this may not necessarily impact upon a person's motivation to teach, I think it adds credibility to the postmodern argument concerning the multiplicity of existences that can be played out in life stories.

### 7.34 Image of Teacher

There is great diversity and individuality to each person's story of their life and the subjective experiences and insight they have had as teachers, in particular EBD teachers. What people see as the characteristics of a teacher is dependent upon their experiences within education; however, teachers of children with EBD often need to adapt these characteristics to work in a school environment which is different from the one they may have previously experienced. There are, however, many traits that make a teacher successful regardless of the conditions in which they teach.

The image of teacher reflects upon what each individual feels about themselves. Each storyteller has their own theory of teaching and the proposed best way to teach. They each have their own way of forming special relationships with their pupils and they have impressions from their past experience on what works best in forming these relationships. Some see the importance of balancing high demands with compassion whereas others recognise the need for a sense of humour whilst maintaining discipline.



As Garner(1999) recognised, skills relating to EBD “are not set out [in] definable and distinct set of professional attributes” (p.36). Each storyteller has a slightly different balance to what equates to a successful image of an EBD teacher, however they all seem to rate the personal attributes as more important than the professional.

In looking at the image of teacher, some also reflect on their negative experiences within education. Martin speaks of the ‘emotional scars’ that were a product of his education and Alfred recalls confrontation with an ‘immature, inexperienced teacher’. In recognising these ‘ghosts’ of discontent in past experiences, are we justifying our own actions? Martin recognises that he follows his father’s example as it is all he knows of a father:

My Dad always got up at six o'clock, so I always get up at six o' clock. I guess he's the only person I know as being a father. I'm going through the same things with Jim, he does things that I do. I guess it goes around in circles.

Can we, as teachers, be accused of the same?

In looking at the image that people try to fulfil in being a teacher, it is interesting to look at the power relationships that accompany this role. Do people see a teacher as an ‘absolute power’ within the classroom? How does power fit into the image of teacher and does it fulfil a need to be in control? In being a teacher, do we gain a sense of power and authority in recognising that “Sometimes I think if I say jump everyone will jump.”?

I think it is important to look at how children enter into EBD and the effect that people’s image of teacher impacts upon this. The statementing process allows teachers to reclaim any power they have lost in dealing with ‘problem children’. In recognising that these children’s needs must be specially catered for, does this process reinforce “the power of experts act[ing] as relays that bring the values of authorities and the goals of

business into contact with the dreams and actions of us all” (Rose, 1989, p.257)? Every Child Matters (DfES 2004) recognises the need for children to feel listened to and respected which seems to go hand-in hand with the image ascribed to the storytellers. What is also interesting, however, is the power images that seem to underlie much of the processes behind EBD education.

### 7.35 Image of EBD Children

Teachers within an EBD environment are usually there because they want to make a difference. Their view of children with EBD usually places the focus of their problems as coming from outside of the child rather than from within. All those who spoke of the children they were teaching, saw the children’s behaviour as a result of the circumstances they lived in and needed to find a way to break out of the cycle or find their own place within society.

Pauline and Sonia have similar views of the children. They see their behaviour as a result of the circumstance they live in. They both want to be able to make a difference in helping the children break out of the negative cycle they have been born into, however, this is not an easy task. At times, they have difficulty relating to the children and seem to forget that the problems lie outside of the child, taking the abuse personally.

Cathleen maintains “their emotions are governed by how they feel. I mean they can be snide and sneaky but they are EBD kids that we all can see, but the majority of them are governed exactly by the way they feel”. She has no disillusion with the children and through this honest appraisal of both the children and herself she is able to reinforce the importance of honesty to her.

Alfred's interpretation of EBD children is interesting in that he relates them more directly to himself

I don't think EBD kids are that different, they are just extensions of the male species. Most EBD kids are male... what I really believe is that males are a bit peculiar and have strange habits and they are tribal and traditionally it goes back through our development. We are hunters and we protect. And I think we've got a frustration that happens in life and, as men, I think we are struggling for a role. I think the kids that we deal with are kids from low rations, not always, but what they are expressing is their frustrations in life. They are very male, they're aggressive, they're attention seeking, the stuff that men generally do. So I suppose all I am trying to do is fit that in and enjoy the fact and appreciate the fact that they are not that different. I mean I don't think that their behaviours are any different, they are just a bit more extreme.

Alfred does not see EBD as making children different, he just sees it as an extension and exaggeration of male behaviour. He is able to recognise the frustrations that these children are having and in doing so, is able to empathise with them.

Martin's story did not make many direct observations about the children that he taught and where he sees their behaviour lying. He speaks of his interest in 'disaffected youth' but does not really develop his discussion to explain why. He expands on his interactions with the children and recognises how it affects his teaching, but does not really discuss the children unless it reflects on his teaching. Does this omission say anything about Martin's priorities?

Each of the storytellers seems to relate the children's difficulties as a deficit not within some area of their life. They do not assign blame to the child, but rather recognise that it is the responsibility of society to ensure that these children are able to access positive role models. It can be difficult to remember that these children are a product of their environment. In "[taking] the psychic functioning of their parents and relatives, or the social group they have been born into, as the norm" (Fromm, 1957, p.166), they will

often respond to their teachers in the way that they have been responded to from within their own experience. It is here that excuses can be made for the abuse they may hurl at their teachers.

The children with EBD are approaching education from a disabled position. They have been excluded from previous educational provision due to their inability to cope with 'differentiated curriculum'. As Corbett (1999) notes "unless they are highly resilient, they are likely to absorb these negative images of themselves and take on the roles of passive victim or social outsider" (p. 181). Each of the storytellers seems to recognise the deficit positions that 'EBD kids' are coming from, and in acknowledging this, attempt to provide the alternative education that will bring them into the learning society. It is this alternative approach to education that involves not only the professional duty but also an added moral responsibility.

### 7.36 Security/ Risk and Challenge

Issues of security, risk and challenge were noticed in most of the stories. They were either spoken about as a quest for challenge, enjoying the risk involved, but in another breath, the same person whose quest for adventure fuelled their drive, had no incentive to take any further risks or impel any further change.

Pauline seems to have given up. She no longer sees any challenge in her work. She felt 'stuck in a rut' with no initiative to take risks. She realises that she had not recognised when it was best for her to stop and in continuing has lost the enthusiasm she once had.



Martin's story shows some contradiction in his attitude towards risk and challenge. He equates his love for teaching to the risks involved:

I actually feel my heart is going to come out of my chest any minute now, as the adrenalin is going so much I feel I'm alive. That's probably a part of why I like this teaching. It's flying by the seat of your pants again, it's that adrenalin rush.

But he later speaks of his comfort in staying where he is by recognising that his "problem is not having that momentum to make that change".

Cathleen, in particular, spoke of taking on challenges and "fingers up" to those who thought that she could not achieve. Her childhood was governed by dares and she has carried these values into her adult life with "people say things and I have to rise to the challenge".

Alfred speaks of his personal challenge in his relationship with his pupils. "It's more of a challenge in terms of you have to be on your toes a bit more. I think your relationships have got to be better." The challenge that Alfred speaks of is not so much a dare but rather a goal to better himself.

The differing attitude towards challenge, risk and security can relate to how each individual finds their self fulfilment. Though money is mentioned fleetingly on several occasions it does not appear to be the driving force to keep teachers where they are. One must question what makes teachers suited to EBD?

Through the satisfaction of these instincts and the matching of work to temperament that workers would be induced to give their best. Hence the worker would not be forced to work against his will, but to be encouraged by removing the obstacles and difficulties that prevented him from giving the best to work (Rose, 1989, p.68).

## **7.4 Tying It All Together To Answer the Research Questions**

When you look at the six themes that resonated throughout the stories told, it is interesting to look at how they all intermingle and intertwine to answer the research questions at hand. I will now relate the research questions to the literature reviewed, my knowledge of previous life hi/story work and the knowledge imparted through the stories to provide answers and evidence to support my findings.

### **7.41 How does the image a person constructs an EBD teacher as having, affect their motivation to teach?**

The influences of the image a person envisages an EBD teacher as possessing can relate to each of the themes seen within the stories. The experiences that people have with their teachers will in some way shape their image of what it means to be a teacher (Weber and Mitchell, 1995), however, in these instances the teachers that people have become are not the same as the teachers they have experienced in their own education. Becoming an EBD teacher allows you to fulfil an image of being a breed apart from the 'regular teacher' (Garner, 1999) and through this you are able to realise a difference in image. My storytellers all felt they were different in their own right, and having an occupation that 'complemented' this difference allowed them the security of knowing that it was acceptable to be seen as different. In the end, my storytellers related EBD teaching to helping an underprivileged group in society.

I do think it is interesting to look at how the issue of control and its relation to teaching fits into each person's motivation. As Foucault advocates, all knowledge is constituted and socially constructed under conditions of power (Foucault, 1977). The

issue of power within an EBD school is a complex one. Cooper recognises that “School clearly need rules... and the nature of those rules is, however, in the hands of the people who control that organisation”(Cooper, 1994, p.19). It is possible that the storytellers overtly or covertly enjoyed this sense of power. Through this power, a teacher is able to impress their values and goals onto the population under their control. Rose (1989) recognises the impact of “power of experts” upon the societies in which they exist. This is not necessarily a detrimental observation. I do think that the power that teachers exert, for the most part, is done ‘for the better of society’. However, one must ask - is the better of *our* society able to transpose itself onto the societies from which many of these children come from? I return again to Rose:

In this matrix of power and knowledge the modern self has been born; to grasp its working is to go some way towards understanding the sort of human beings we are (1989, p.258)

Teachers of EBD are often motivated by the ‘do good-er’, slightly off centred image that is associated with an EBD teacher. But we must ask ourselves if this motivation is based on gains for the children or moral and identity gains for the teacher?

#### **7.42 How have experiences of educational/ pedagogical challenges shaped their practice?**

The experiences that each of the storytellers had within their educational career on both sides of the desk shaped each storytellers practice in differing ways. Each storyteller had become a teacher – some were striving to fill the picture of the ideal teacher they had experienced in school; some were trying to avoid the disastrous images they associated with teachers they had come into contact with; whereas others were

proving that they could succeed despite the educational images others had of them.

Everyone has an image that they wish to portray to society. This image is shaped through the experiences, values and attitudes that make up each individual (Thomas, 1968). How experience mixes with values and attitude to shape an individual can create very interesting characters both in the stories told and the lives led by the storytellers.

The way in which each story is told, gives the reader insight into the character and personality of each storyteller. As Thomas (1995) and McAdams (1993) recognise, people are able to use their stories to legitimise the values which their lives are based upon. Through the personal myths and truths that are mixed and created within each story, the practice of each storyteller is justified according to their experiences. In order to more fully address how each storytellers' practice was shaped, I needed to look more closely at the classroom practice of each storyteller. However, due to the nature of the study and the subjective flavour which each storyteller infused into their own interpretation of their experience in the classroom, a one-sided impression was gained. Whereas Cathleen sees all of what she does as a challenge to measure herself against, Pauline looks at the barriers that have created her defeatist attitude towards her job and her situation. If you read into how the stories are relayed you are able to gain a picture of what life in each storyteller's classroom is like, and why they are successful, or why at times they struggle. However, this picture is coming from within each storyteller and as mentioned perceptions of what is 'true' can vary depending on the viewpoint taken. One must question - do a person's attitude's and practice shape the experiences that they encounter and how they approach and relate to these experiences? Does Cathleen's challenging attitude create a more challenged experience for the pupils in her classroom?



Does Pauline's defeatist attitude transfer into her teaching style not allowing her pupils to always reach their full potential? The way each storyteller approaches his or her life can shed a great deal of light onto how they approach the classroom environment.

As with any profession, a person will bring their own personal style to teaching. Your attitudes towards yourself will directly influence your attitudes towards your work and interactions with your pupils. Your classroom practice will mirror your attitudes towards the students that you teach and the educational experiences you have had during your lifetime. It can be difficult through a life story account to gain an objective picture of a teacher's classroom practice, as a story will always be created to fulfil the 'perfect portrayal' of a persona. But I needed to question how a personal image would affect performance in the classroom. Through my own personal experience, it is easy to recognise how a teacher feels about the children they teach, their own experiences in education as well as their personal beliefs about themselves through their interactions in the classroom. Therefore, in order to gain greater insight into the effect that experience of educational/ pedagogical challenges have had on each storytellers practice, it may have proved valuable to have moved into the classroom to gain insight onto how their practice was judged by others as well as by themselves.

**7.43 How does their view of what it means to have EBD relate to the security, risk and challenge they associate with their work?**

Security, risk and challenge can be an integral part of any person's motivation. Separately or combined these three attributes associated with situations faced in life can provide the excitement or comfort that make people happy.

As Garner (1999) noted, many people seem to almost accidentally slip into EBD education. They do not enter into it with any specific professional qualification, but rather seem to rise to a challenge of working with the 'problem pupils' that people have failed with in the past. The world of EBD education, at times, takes on the 'I dare you' mentality in creating successful environments for pupils who don't seem to cope well with the usual differentiated environment provided by other teachers. They enjoy taking the risks involved with volatile children, in the knowledge that this risk involves a challenge that they can usually succeed with, as Rose (1989) so accurately cites "good work can be a means to self fulfilment" (p. 55).

It would be naïve to think that the risks and challenges that are associated with the day-to-day activities associated with EBD teaching (<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/paydoc>) go unrewarded. Teachers within this profession have the added comfort in the special increments in pay that are afforded to them. The storytellers do not deny that there were financial incentives that played a part in their decision to enter into their profession, however, I do not think it is a factor that could keep them there.

I do think that the challenge and risk that is associated with EBD teaching appeals to a certain type of personality that seems to thrive in an EBD environment. The feeling associated with the heart racing risks or the satisfaction of challenging the odds to get somewhere that people in the past have failed seems to drive many of the storytellers. One must wonder if there is certain personality that is more likely inclined towards EBD teaching?

## 7.5 To Sum Up.....

In answering the research questions, many more unanswered questions seem to have arisen. I do think this is an inevitable by-product of the postmodern approach to life hi/story work. The self-reflective and inwards turn that life hi/story work evokes, brings with it the questions that we continually ask ourselves in looking at whether our analysis is related more to ourselves or to the stories at hand. Plummer (2001)

distinguishes life stories in the postmodern era as:

Stories that bring with them a much greater awareness of their own construction and writing. This is a distinction in the form of story: whilst most earlier life stories brought with them a sense that they were telling a story of life, these latter kinds of stories become self conscious and suggest story telling is a fabrication,, an act of speech, a mode of writing. Whatever they may say, stories do not simply tell a tale of life (p.34).

I will now take a critical look at what insight the themes of the stories may give about the tellers and writer of the stories.

## **CHAPTER 8: CRITICAL COMMENTARY OF THE ANALYSIS**

### **8.1 What do these themes tell about the storytellers?**

Each of the narratives has twists and turns which signify significant aspects of each storyteller's self. In looking at the questions that have been raised concerning the evident themes, there are numerous ways they can be answered. I am not going to direct the answers at particular storytellers, however I will now look at some of the possible solutions that will answer the questions posed.

#### **8.11. Why focus on personal or professionals attributes?**

In looking at each storytellers approach to their job it is interesting to see where their focus lies - is it looking at their professional ability to teach or their personal ability to communicate? Does their image of what it means to be an EBD teacher directly influence their motivation to teach?

It is evident from previous studies that pupils within an EBD environment rely greatly on the supportive and trusting relationship that are built with their teachers.

[It] is important in providing these pupils with the necessary support, more a sense of teacher-pupil identity or relationship. ... One of the potentially significant issues in these data is that the pupils locate their teacher as the mediator between 'being included' and the 'non-inclusive system' (Garner. 2000).

All of the teachers spoken to seemed to echo this sentiment. They all used words such as 'empathy', 'compassion', 'approachable', whilst recognising the need to listen and respect their pupils. This came through in all of the stories. Most teaching successes with EBD children were in terms of personal, more emotive attributes, however there is



still the need to justify a professional competence. As Garner (1999) found in his study of teachers' views on personal and professional characteristics:

[there are] dilemmas facing those with experience of pupils with problems; we know that the work is different, and that the children have highly individual, often personal needs. And yet there is an abiding desire to have the respect of colleagues that operate with so-called 'ordinary' children .... We are in danger of being seen as the old-fashion, do-gooding person who just loves kids to death (p.47)

I am not really sure what is wrong with that picture, but it recognises that society does have an influence on how teachers view their success. My storytellers all felt that they had a good rapport with the children they taught and this was paramount in the decision to enter EBD education. Most liked the children and felt that they deserved a chance to 'break out' of their negative cycle. However, many of my storytellers also felt the need to express their success in academia as well, which may acknowledge the overall importance of being seen as successful. There were a multiplicity of identities that needed to be viewed as successful.

In relation to the research question, the image that each storyteller had of an EBD teacher enabled them to create links with success. I think that each storyteller was able to accredit themselves with some form of success therefore providing happiness in their profession. Each storyteller has strong personal attributes upon which most of the success was measured. They were able to use their image of the 'different EBD teacher' to justify their feelings of success not only on a professional level, but also on a personal level. The professional aspects of the job seemed almost secondary.

### 8.12. Where does power fit in the image of teacher?

The stories told reflected the importance of this balance of control and cooperation within the classroom, recognising the need for discipline and structure whilst still seeing the importance of the more emotive attributes mentioned above. However power seemed to be an important attribute in the image that each person portrayed to society. Many of the teachers wanted to be seen as having an influence on the children's lives in changing them for the better. Is it this link with power and the image of an EBD teacher that motivated some of the storytellers?

Some spoke of the power images they gained through their position whilst others complained about the powerlessness they felt in their position. The issue of power in teaching raises some very important questions. It is important that as a teacher you feel empowered to make a change not only for your pupils but for yourselves. In the world of EBD it is easy to recognise the positive changes that you have had and Pauline recognises its importance.

The days are good when you can see the child has made some progress and if that happens only once a week, with one person, at least me helping him to have confidence to overcome this niggling I've got to be rude to other people and be arrogant and his usual awful behaviour, that to me is what it is all about.

But Pauline also recognises that this does not always happen so frequently and it is here that teachers need to feel empowered in themselves. Pauline who seems to lack this empowerment left the EBD school soon after these life stories were completed. Martin, on the other hand, who felt empowered in himself has recently moved into a deputy headship at the school.

The image of power seems quite influential in a person's choice to work with EBD children. By making a difference to children's lives through providing opportunities to succeed; having 'hero' status in bringing enjoyment into their day-to-day living; or providing the empowerment a child yearns that teachers can make a job productive, profitable and satisfactory providing rewarding personal and social relations (Rose, 1989). However this 'powerful influence' that teachers are seen as holding may not always motivate teachers to continue. They need to feel empowered not only in their work but also in their development.

The importance of restructuring may be less in terms of its direct impact on curriculum, assessment, ability grouping and the like, and the demands placed on teachers, than in terms of how it creates improved opportunities for teachers to work together and support each other on a continuing basis (Hargreaves, 1994, p.256)

If teachers feel empowered, they are motivated to continue with their work, however, if the support networks and opportunities for succession are dissolved, teachers often find themselves 'stuck in a rut', finding it difficult to find contentment in their work.

### *8.13. How does the image of failure reflect upon the storyteller?*

In each story, there was reference to failures that had been encountered by the storytellers. They were not necessarily personal failures, but failures that those close to them had experienced. In looking at these images of failure, it can be interesting to look at the images associated with EBD and how they relate to a personal approach to work.

Much of the failure that was discussed in the stories was related to weakness in social and personal attributes. Antisocial, unattached or excessively demanding fathers; frigid mothers and mixed up lovers - these were all important people who had failed in

some aspect of their being and in turn failed the storytellers. Though they had failed, they were still important and for most of the storytellers, they were the ones that they needed to prove themselves to.

In becoming a teacher of children with EBD there is an emphasis placed on strong social and personal skills. In choosing this profession are the storytellers proving themselves better than those who had failed in the past? Do they come into 'special education' as it is working with children who have an "acknowledgement of social and personal weakness" (Corbett, 1996, p.48)? Is working with children who have been seen as failures a way to minimalise the failures seen in one's own life? Does the failure associated with the children equate to success and security in our own view of ourselves? Are we as teachers able to live up to our image of perfection in comparison to other's weaknesses? Though these are not necessarily answers to why people have chosen to teach they may shed some light on the security that is afforded to those working with EBD children.

#### **8.14. Is being seen as different a means for acceptance?**

Each storyteller seemed to fit into the classic description Garner ascribes to EBD teachers. Each had their own quirkiness which made them different in some aspect of their life. In being different they stood out from the crowd either through their personality, a personal stance, or a professional orientation. With the stereotypical image that is associated with teachers (Weber and Mitchell, 1995), is the image of an EBD teacher one which is more comfortable for those who want to be different?



As Alfred points out “yes there is an EBD-ness in my head... I think people who come into this work are slightly off beat”. Many people who enter into the teaching profession do so to emulate good practice they have witnessed or to ‘be better than’ poor teaching examples they have experienced. Within EBD education, however, there is a twist – you are having to prove yourself to a disenchanted audience. To end up in an EBD school, a child will have had some negative experiences within the education system. They will be left with feelings of exclusion and often distrust of the education system. They have not been able to conform to the rules set for them within a mainstream school, therefore they are different.

To be successful EBD teachers must appeal to this difference. They need to take a creative stance toward both the educational and social development of their pupils. Through the different approaches each storyteller has taken towards their own life, they are able to approach the children in a different way, breaking down barriers that may have previously been seen in their own educational experiences.

A major challenge facing teachers who work with children who present emotional and/or behavioural difficulties will be to define those characteristics of teachers who create the conditions for successful intervention: as Cole and Visser (1998) have inferred these are as much about intuition and creativity as they are about curriculum input and classroom management (Garner, 1999, p. 49)

The approach that these successful teachers take towards their pupils is not something that can be learned, there are the personal characteristics that have made each storyteller different.

This is not to say that all mainstream school teachers act within the parameters of a ‘traditional teacher’ and it is not saying that all EBD teachers fit into the ‘Type A stereotyping’ that is attributed to them (Garner, 1999). It seems, however, that teachers

who are to be successful with 'problem pupils' either in mainstream or special schools need to have an element of difference to them. In a community of 'different teachers' the quirkiness that many of my storytellers attribute to themselves can almost be seen as a necessity for acceptance.

### 8.15. Where do the children fit into the picture?

The storytellers all professed to having good rapport with the children and there were those who were able to expand upon why. Some attributed their relationship to the feelings of empathy whereas others recognised themselves in the children that they taught. Some teachers seemed to base their relation on more of a charity model, seeing themselves as an escape route out of the negative circumstances they found themselves in.

All teachers have a set of beliefs about what causes the problematic behaviour of some pupils... individual teachers will construct, on the basis of the causal factors they attribute to the behaviour of children, an identity for the child based on the behaviour itself (Garner, 1999, p. 107)

In identifying what it means to have EBD in the differing ways, the storytellers are constructing their own relationship with the child. Are the teachers allowing children to empower themselves or are the teachers able to feel a position of power over the children?

All people come into a teaching profession for differing reasons, however, to be successful, particularly with EBD children, there must be a great focus on relations with the children. Teachers who are able to empower the children, recognising the children's needs as well as their own are able to create relations based on mutual respect. Those

who, at times, struggle for power will often struggle with the 'EBD-ness' which is often inherent within themselves.

Assertive teaching is decisive not destructive, it is about teachers stating their needs, without demeaning or disparaging the needs of the pupils. It is about encouraging compliance with rules which are there for the benefit of all, not winning personal battles or showing who is boss (Cooper et al., 1994, p.127).

It is interesting to look at the detail given to the children in each story. Is the child viewed as an entity in its own right or is it only seen in relation to the storyteller? Each story devoted some time to the children, but is the time devoted to the children correlated to the importance of the child in the eyes of the storyteller? This is a question that each storyteller must struggle with when assessing their position as teacher.

**8.16. Are we getting a picture of who a person truly is or rather how he or she wants to be seen?**

The one question that continually raised its head throughout my research was recognising why the story was told. Are these stories a true representation of how a person is or rather how they want to be? In the end it is interesting to look at why the story was told as it was. As McAdams (1993) states:

Stories help us organise our thoughts, providing a narrative for human intentions and interpersonal events that is readily remembered and told. In some instances, stories may also mend us when we are broken, heal us when we are sick, and even move us towards psychological fulfilment and maturity (p.31).

I am interested in why their stories were constructed as they were. This goes beyond looking at their motivation to teach but also their motivation to uphold a particular image.

It was evident that each storyteller wanted to be seen in a particular way even though the image portrayed may not have been the image that they lived up to. Through their stories they are expressing themselves and their world to others (McAdams, 1993). The stories that they tell about their life is how they want their life to be viewed. They expressed their opinions of previous experiences in education both as a student and as a teacher which reflected in part on their image of teaching and the relationships they forged with their pupils.

My storytellers allowed me into their lives as they wanted it to be seen and gave me insight to their personal world. These insights do not necessarily answer the questions of how or why their practice was shaped as it was, however it did give insight into the type of person who was willing to talk about it. It took great courage to allow a colleague into areas of your life which are not necessarily in the public domain and it is not for me to delve into why they did or devalue the stories they have told. In analysing their stories I can raise questions but certainly cannot claim to have the answers. Our social constructs can be radically different and it is not up to me to determine the 'correctness' of the social constructions of others.

I did not want to judge my storytellers; however, it can be difficult to detach pre-existing knowledge that may come into conflict with the stories told. I have seen what it can be like in some of these differing classrooms and how the personal image teachers have of themselves as well as the children they teach affects practice and interactions within the classroom. This did not always correlate with the stories that I was told. This does not make the stories invalid as each story is a vision that the storyteller wants to



depict. In analysis, my knowledge will lead me to question what the impact of the story truly means not only to storytellers but also to myself as researcher and person.

## **8.2 What do these themes tell about the researcher?**

The themes focused on in the research were chosen by me. They were the areas that I saw as important in delving further with each story. Plummer (2001) recognises that researchers using a life history approach are “an embodied, emotional, interactive self, striving for meaning in wider historically specific social worlds and an even wider universe” (p.255). I have made sure that throughout my writing I have made no claims of objectivity in my stance. I have made every effort to illuminate my own standpoint in relation to my storytellers and the analysis of their stories. Here I will look at the subjective influence on my analysis and what it tells about me as a researcher and as a person.

I could not detach myself from the stories that were told. They all struck a familiar chord in my own motivation to teach. The stories told were done so for a particular audience - me. How they were told to me reflects how each storyteller thought of me and the image that they wanted to portray to me. In recognising this, what do the stories tell about me?

Simply getting respondents to write ‘raw’ letters or simply flick on a tape recorder for a subject to ‘tell their story’ will certainly provide a subjective tale, but it will lack the depth and detail that could be gleaned if the researcher was immersed in the subject’s world for a long time and tried to build up an in-depth description from the insider (Plummer, 2001, p. 209).

I was immersed in the subjects’ world as an insider researcher. My life shared a commonality in choosing the same profession. I do feel that I am respected by my

colleagues and peers for my integrity and dedication to my work, and in this instance, to my research. I am sure that this respect would have influenced the nature of each story both in the way it was told and the way it was interpreted. If the storytellers shared my feelings, it would be mirrored in their attitude as well as mine towards their story. I would be less likely to question someone with similar beliefs as my own. However, if the storyteller had a different agenda in telling their story, be it to portray an altruistic self that was not always apparent in day-to-day life, or to 'get even' with the powers that be, it would be more likely that I would question what meaning lay behind the words.

I have my own ideals for teaching within an EBD environment. I realise it is not an easy profession to undertake, but I have undertaken it to make a difference. I do not view the children I teach as abnormal, however I recognise that the challenging behaviour that can be exhibited has a basis that often exist outside of the child. This view is not an easy one to maintain. There are times that the children are terrible and it can be difficult to take a step back when the abuse is flying. It is easy to say that there are issues outside of the child that create their behaviour, but when you are in a situation is it always so easy to detach yourself from it? It can be easy to criticise those who 'take it too personally' at times, but in reality, it comes with the territory. I did find myself reading into stories and at times taking a 'higher than thou' attitude and needed to remind myself to keep my own feet on the ground. It is easy to have ideals, but not always easy to act in an ideal way.

Each storyteller had their own relationship with me. Did I like them? Did they like me? How would this affect the outcome of both the story and its interpretation?

Throughout the research there were questions that I needed to ask myself, and these are illustrated in the following table:

**Questions I as a researcher needed to constantly engage in**

*Before research: Why I am doing this study? What is my motivation- do I have an axe to grind or a passion? How does this motivation affect my work? What does my work say about the type of person I am, and what does it say about who I like or dislike and situations I am willing to enter?*

*During research: Do I like or actively dislike the person being interviewed and how does it affect my questioning?*

*After Research: How do I feel about the work, the field notes, the transcripts and analysis?*

(from Plummer, 2001, p.215)

By constantly engaging in this questioning throughout the analysis and reflecting back on how I felt during each stage of my research, I am able to recognise the personal flavour that my analysis takes. I did have particular feelings about each of my storytellers and whether their stories were in fact how I perceived them or rather how they wanted to be perceived. It is difficult to divorce your work from your own personal feelings and I at times struggled to see each individual equally. It was important for me to remember to question everything and to remember that the answers that I have are not necessarily the answers that would be arrived at by another.

In the end, it was me who chose to do this research, it was valuable to me. I imposed my values onto the research but in doing so realised that my values are not universal. As Sikes and Goodson (2001) point out:

It is hard to imagine that anyone would even consider using life history if they did not have some sympathy with the concept of multiple realities and did not, therefore, see informants and researchers as being each engaged in interpreting the world from their own various perspectives (p.39).

The outcome of my research is personal and subjective. It has meaning but this meaning must be related to the personal and contextual contexts that I placed myself in. The personal nature of my study fed into the theoretical foundations upon which it was based.

### **8.3 Relating It Back to My Theoretical Foundations**

The postmodern approach places a great deal of emphasis on the subjectivity of stories told and the importance of self-reflectivity. It also recognises the empowerment given by allowing each person's story to be told. Each story is told with its own individual flavour of each storyteller. In listening to the stories told and then rereading and retelling them it is inevitable that they all come back personally to me. Then through the collaboration between the storyteller and researcher a final story is able to be heard, allowing others to share in and understand the lives that are 'story-fied'.

#### **8.31 Postmodernism and Subjectivity**

Each story was told from the subjective position of the storyteller. No other person could tell the exact same story as each individual's experiences create a knowledge that is unique and individual.

Looking at things another way, turning them on their heads, considering perspectives that have not yet been voiced can help us take a more critical, open and comprehensive stance towards what we are studying and how we are studying it (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 40).

Hargreaves recognises that through celebrating the subjective nature of life stories, you are able to gain insight from another perspective. In gaining this additional perspective you are able to see the multiplicity that exists within society. The notion of a 'single



truth' loses its power and the multiplicity of viewpoints gives a 'people based power' to those who speak of their experiences (Plummer, 2001).

Thomas and Znaniecki recognised the importance of gaining the perspectives of those under study, whilst recognising that this subjective point of view was to be located within an objective scientific account of the world (Hammersley, 1989, p. 68). Through this pluralist knowledge a fuller picture is revealed. "Poststructuralist storytelling aims to excavate the power and knowledge that are used to construct versions of humanity" (Goodley et al, 2004, p.101). Through reading the stories we are able to recognise the subjective nature in which the story was told and how the storytellers have defined themselves within society. In looking past the stories to the circumstances and positions from which they are told, we are able to gain insight on the influences on this definition, therefore raising questions about our own position within it.

### **8.32 Postmodernism and Reflectivity**

When embarking upon my research, I underestimated its impact on me as researcher, as teacher and as a person.

In the postmodern world the fragile self becomes a continuous reflexive project. It has to be constantly and consciously remade and reaffirmed. Like American freeways or British motorways, it is continuously "under construction"... This heightened orientation of the self and its continuing construction can be a source of creativity, empowerment and change (in principle, you can be as you want to be) (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 71).

Postmodernity allows 'you to be as you want to be', however this being is embedded in self-reflection. This self reflection looks at the multiple realities that exist. Nothing can

be viewed as absolute and therefore, the continuous questioning which arises from the self-reflectivity takes away from the certainty of who you really are.

The introspection sparked through my study allowed me to recognise that I am viewed from many angles and these angles define who I am to others. The stories that I listened to may not represent what I see of a person but rather what people see of themselves. Likewise, my story has meaning to me which may be construed differently by others.

In analysis it was important that the power given to these stories through a postmodern eye was not taken away through a self-fulfilling need to have your own version of the 'truth' imposed upon others.

### 8.33 Postmodernism and Empowerment

Stories give voice. They allow a voice to be heard through the narrative that is told to a listener. These stories empower people by putting them in control of the stories they tell. 'Truth' is imparted in a subjective manner giving an interpretation to events through the storyteller's construction of his or her society.

A human subject and associated sense of self is created through power and knowledge. Selves and individuals, the available objects that are used to talk of (and therefore constitute) the self, emerge from the discourses of a culture in which they are created (Goodley et al, 2004, p.100).

Each story gives a personal view of the society and culture of the storyteller and how he or she feels about his or her position within. I, as a researcher, empowered my storytellers by giving them a forum where their voices could be heard. It was not my position that was important in telling the stories but the position of the storytellers.

It was my responsibility to empower my storytellers, it was important that the research did not become “elaborate projections of the researcher’s own unconscious needs” (Devereux, 1967, quoted in Plummer, 2001, p.206). Postmodernism treads on a tedious tightrope when it looks at the self-reflective nature of research. Though self reflective, it is not self-fulfilling. Upon reflection I was able to recognise my own shortcomings and strengths through the strengths and shortcomings I saw in each storyteller. In recognising the multiplicity of truths associated with postmodernity, I was not to use these self reflections to pass judgements on my storytellers. A weakness in my eyes could be strength in another’s.

The power I held as researcher needed to be controlled. To say that there were not times that I wanted to judge my stories would be naïve. Having everyday dealings with my storytellers who chose to either continue or to drop out of my research created opinions about the stories I was endowed with. I needed to constantly return to my theoretical base of ‘no one single truth’ which justified each story. To truly empower my storytellers I told the stories how they were told to me. Upon analysis I often asked questions rather than gave opinions which may have been detrimental.

My own empowerment came from my self-reflection. I was able to gain a fuller picture of myself through listening not only to the stories but also how the stories were told. I was able to gauge how people viewed me as a person, as a teacher and as a researcher. Through this fuller picture of myself I was able to feel comfortable in being who I wanted to be as a person, as a teacher and as a researcher.

Postmodernity acknowledges that stories are constructed through an individual's struggle with issues of power, subjectivity and knowledge (Goodley et al, 2004). It gives a person voice to tell about their being within the society in which they live leading to a sense of empowerment. It allows them to feel valued, as someone wants to know about their story. It allows them to have their say as to what has happened to them without contestations from others around. Most importantly, postmodernity creates cause for introspection and reflexivity creating a self-enlightenment for all people reading, writing or telling the stories. The influences of power, subjectivity (or self-knowledge) and reflectivity intertwine to create a method of recognising the value and significance of life stories in evaluating the society in which they are told and the audience to whom they are told.

#### **8.4 Concluding Thoughts - How do these stories and this analysis contribute to the research question?**

A number of questions have been raised in the analysis of life stories. A lot of these questions are ones that evoke a self-reflective nature and a great deal of introspection. I do think that each story is different and unique in its own sense, however I also think that many of the issues that have been brought to light are issues that face many of society's teachers.

A personal story can be like a trail, or a journey, leading us somewhere completely new. Or it could so strongly validate something we already know that it could lead us to a new conclusion about something we were tentative about previously.

When a life story does this, it leads us beyond the meaning of the story itself to possibly greater meaning for some or all stories (Atkinson, 1998, p.73).



In looking at whether the stories give insight into why teachers choose to teach within the realm of EBD education and what keeps them going, I do think they give insight into the personal lives of each storyteller. I am not sure that these stories can be generalised to fit an entire population of teachers, but that was not what this research was about. I do feel it was successful in gaining some insight into the lives of some EBD teachers and their rationale for teaching within an EBD environment. More importantly, I think it more successfully raised questions that others within the profession could reflect upon to strengthen their position both personally and professionally. This was certainly the case for me.

I do think the questions raised gave insight into researching both the motivation and retention of teachers. A feeling of success goes hand in hand with the motivation to continue along a chosen career path. I think that each storyteller was able to accredit themselves with some form of success therefore providing happiness in their profession. Each storyteller has strong personal attributes upon which most of the success was measured. The professional aspects of the job seemed to take a back seat which for some seemed to allow them to avoid the failures they have seen in the past. The storytellers seem to have chosen their profession to fit into the self image they have ascribe to themselves - that of being different. In this self-image, they are also able to tailor their image of teacher to suit their own personal style. Some are able to gain the sense of power they desire in carrying out the job in the fashion 'that they know' whereas others are able to relate to the children and empower them to succeed.

The stories told allow insight into the images each storyteller ascribes to themselves. "Imagoes exist as carefully crafted aspects of the self, and they may appear

as the heroes or villains of certain chapters of the life story” (McAdams, 1993, p. 123). The stories told allow us not only to see why teachers came into the profession but what image they associate with sticking with it. From the images ascribed to others in the stories, we are able to recognise the importance that these teachers ascribe to success within their chosen career.

All of the reasons mentioned above were reasons of personal success, identity and image, but what about the children? Does this image of selfless teacher still exist? This is an interesting question with a complicated answer. I do think people enter into the teaching profession to make a difference, however with EBD kids, this can be a difficult and challenging task. I believe that each of my storytellers related part of their reason for teaching, to the benefits the children received, however I do not think this can be seen as the sole contributing factor, and though it may get you into the profession it won't necessarily keep you there. I think that, yes, people do come into the profession because they have rapport with children, they enjoy working with children and EBD children can be seen as having that challenging edge in building a relationship. Though I do think that you need to enjoy your work with these children, this enjoyment does not only stem from the 'good you are doing for others' there has to be something in it for yourself. This incentive can be financial in the money that you earn; personal in the status and image you attain; or professional in the positions you are promoted to. But I do think that in the end it is not only the children who need to benefit.

So to answer the question: *Why on earth would you want to teach those kids?* I do not think that there is only one way to answer. What I do think, however, is that in

order to continue within the profession, you need to feel a sense of empowerment, in yourself, in those you work with, and the children that you teach.

## **CHAPTER 9:** **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? – CONCLUSIONS AND** **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **9.1 Introduction**

We have these five interesting stories about the perceptions and lives of teachers of children with EBD. Each of these stories gives us insight into some of the rationale behind the motivation to continue in the career path they have chosen. What is it that we can gather from these stories and what further steps can we take to clarify or broaden the research efforts? Have they effectively answered the research question and how can I use this research as a stepping stone to further my research? Finally, who is it that will benefit from this research? In answering these questions, it was important to evaluate the methods and theory that I based my research on and look at what contributions have been made through this study. Therefore, I will now evaluate how the postmodern stance fits into this research, and look how it builds upon and relates to the literature regarding EBD education.

### **9.2 Evaluating the Postmodern Stance**

The key tenets of the postmodern approach I based my research on, revolve upon the notion that truth, power and a subjective viewpoint must all be considered in the analysis of stories. Truth is an ever-changing notion which depends on the circumstances that it is placed in and the people that are affected by it (Hargreaves, 1994; Plummer, 2001, 2003; Goodley et al, 2004). The subjective nature that is attached to these 'truths' becomes increasingly evident in the life stories that are told by each person. Through listening to the varying accounts of 'truth', the postmodern approach then emphasises the



importance of turning the research inward and employing a self-reflective analysis of the impact that the research has had. A narrative research venture does not search for 'truth' but rather how and why each narrative has authentic meaning to those involved.

In looking at these stories it is clear that each person has their own construction of society and its multiplicity is apparent in many facets within each story. How I see and interpret a person's words can be drastically different to what was meant. As Hargreaves (1994) noted "Selves become transient texts, to be read and misread, constructed and deconstructed at will. Human selves become things that people display and other people interpret," (p.70). Each storyteller has their own self-justification for working within an EBD environment and how they fit in and I have my own.

Postmodernists hold that this view of an absolute, scientific truth has now been discredited: truths are much more multiple, fluid, changing and fragmented (Macionis and Plummer, 2002, p. 45)

I may not necessarily agree with each storyteller's standpoint, however, through recognising the authenticity that is attached to each story in relation to society; the storyteller; and to myself, I am able to gain a clear picture, not only of motivation behind teaching, but also their self-justification in remaining in the profession. They are trying to assimilate their personal self with their professional one and the balance is different for everyone.

I may not interpret the stories with the same background knowledge in which they were told and, although I will have my own interpretation, it may not be the one true way of interpretation. This, however, is at the backbone of a postmodern stance.

Postmodernity places a great deal of emphasis on the language, symbols, signs and signifiers used within story telling. It recognises that words have different meanings to

different people depending upon the symbols associated with them. But this again can be seen as strengthening a postmodern approach.

Researchers should take sides; should study experiences that are biographically meaningful for the researcher; should attend pivotal turning point experiences; should uncover and display models of truth, accuracy and authenticity; should privilege languages of feelings and emotions over those of rationality and science; should examine multiple discourses and should write multivoiced polyphonic texts which included the researchers' own experience (Plummer, 2001, p.13)

My research gave voice to each individual who wanted to be heard, in the way they expected. Through my analysis I included my own experiences with the research to give my picture to what I felt was meaningful.

Postmodernity recognises the relevance and importance of self-reflectivity in any research effort. This study allowed me to appreciate the significance that this self reflection can have on a study. As mentioned previously, Hargreaves (1994) attaches importance to the notion that "teachers' words do not merely provide vivid examples of theories at work. They also pose problems and surprises for those theories"(p. 4). Through listening to the voices of others, I was able to recognise the voices that I sometimes hear from within. These inner voices shed light not only on my research efforts but also on my own motivation. Recognising that others had similar experiences or feelings made the struggle with my own feelings, somewhat easier.

I believe my study highlighted the multiplicity of images that each storyteller portrayed depending on their relation with whom they spoke. I think this multiplicity is something that each person who chose to participate in (or pull out of) my study had to come face-to-face with in the realisation that they were sharing their lives in which the images did not always remain constant. The self-reflective nature of postmodernity

allows me to recognise that the conclusions I make may not be the absolute essential conclusion that others will form. Though this may be seen as a flaw in validity in scientific research, it strengthens a study which employs a postmodern approach.

### **9.3 Evaluating the Life Hi/story Approach**

Studying life stories within education provides a great resource for information that is personal and relevant to teachers within the field. There are so many studies that are done from 'places on high' that are sometimes difficult for 'regular teachers' to attach any significance or relevance to. Through capturing the voices of 'real life teachers', my study hopefully provided some comfort for those involved. The life stories I recorded are the unheard voices of the 'everyday teacher'. By putting it into the social context and making their lives 'historical' I endeavoured to make them meaningful to other readers. Through the interesting anecdotes that the storytellers use to portray their lives, a picture is given of how they have come to where they are today. By looking at this in the wider social context, the motivation to continue in their chosen education becomes clearer.

By looking at the life stories and placing them into a context of recognising the biases and influences from the society around, I was able to create some potent life history work. The experiences that have shaped these people's lives, and how this has affected their perception of society, allows insight into their construction of the world and what has brought them into EBD education. I am able to get a more in depth look at what brings teachers into the profession and more importantly am able to ask myself why I am where I am today.

Through discussion of each person's motivational tactics, it was interesting to see the image they attached to what they were being motivated to do. I think that all of my storytellers were motivated not to fail. They wanted to be viewed as successful and wanted to ensure that they would not fail as they have seen others fail in the past. These failures had both personal and social aspects. Are they concerned about failing themselves or failing someone else? This is a question that could provide an interesting avenue for further study.

The self-reflective nature of the research brings with it some home truths that can impact upon all those involved in the study. For me, reading and listening to the stories told, allowed me to recognise the strengths and weaknesses in my own philosophies. I have no claims to perfection but I do have my ideals. These ideals, however, are not always easy to live up to. My image of teacher 'making a difference' is what I strive for but is it the only motivation behind my teaching? Likewise with others who claim 'initially it was about the money' can that truly be a sole motivator? I do think that all teachers have genuine reasons which bring them into the profession, however, in order to be effective, I think these reasons are usually a mix and match. You may want to make a difference, but that cannot always spur you on in times when success can be difficult to see. Money is an added bonus but there are certain things that people cannot justify financially no matter how much they are paid. I do think that EBD teachers are a breed apart. It is not a job to be entered into lightly. Each of the storytellers could be labelled as 'different' in their own particular way. It is this difference, however, that seems to make them successful. As the children within an EBD school have had negative experiences with 'regular' teachers, I do think that there is an element of success in having



that difference as an EBD teacher. I also wonder if it allows the teachers to relate more to these 'different' children. All teachers enter into their profession for their own personal reasons, but these reasons do not remain static. Those who enter into it for the holidays or money, may find that they enjoy the relations that they build, whereas those who want to make a difference are often swayed by promoted status and salaries.

The diversity in the nature of the stories and the personalities of all those involved recognises further the changing nature of the teaching profession and the image associated with it. The teaching profession is constantly undergoing change. The image of a teacher and how people fit into this image is evolving to recognise the diversity of individuals. I do not think you can have 'the ideal image' of teacher as there are so many ways to be a good teacher. All of my storytellers are good teachers in their own right. They all approach teaching in varying ways but are all able to have an impact on those who they teach. The values they have may be different to those that I hold but they are equally valid and valuable.

Overall, I do think that my research has taken the life hi/story approach further. In using life history research within my own personal setting, I came face-to-face with many of the ethical dilemmas that previous life history research has been faced with. Ethically I was bound to my storytellers to include only what they told me and in the way they expected it to be told. I do think this added strength to my research, however, decisions were not always easy to make. When the one storyteller withdrew I was torn. I wanted to include her unfinished story and use it to exemplify further the influence that power and image held in the telling of the stories, but I knew I could not. By excluding this story, however, I do think that my approach was actually strengthened. Though not

included on paper, it was still an inherent part of my research study. I do think it would provide an interesting avenue to pursue in the future - looking at the untold stories that will often play a key role in life hi/story research, particularly when there is a personal element to it.

My approach to a life hi/story research project was done in my own personal way, as must be seen with any insider research. "As Madeline Grumet (1991: 69) notes: 'telling a story to a friend is a risky business; the better the friend the riskier the business'" (quoted from Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p. 25). Though I did not see myself as each storyteller's friend, I was always a colleague. This can sometimes make people more sensitive to what they allow you to see as the image they portray may not always be consistent to the one that they see from within. I do think I was able to approach each of my storytellers in a way that allowed me to get stories that gave light not only into their own personal world but also insight into the world of EBD educators. Though there must be warnings of generalisations, I think that I was able to gain an accurate picture of some of the influences affecting the decision to enter into EBD education.

#### **9.4 Revisiting the Analytical Themes**

In looking at the recurring themes that were spoken of and the impact of these themes on the storytellers and myself as research and teacher, some powerful conclusions can be drawn. The underlying themes of failure, acceptance, identity, security and images of both themselves and the children they interact with, all seem to link together in an almost web like fashion. They are not all interconnected, however they all seem to link together in some way or another.

The similarity in the image the storyteller spoke of compared with one presented in everyday life was not always consistent. If they do not match, one has to wonder why not? Does the notion of multiple truths espoused by the postmodern standpoint account for the multiple images? I think that in a sense it does. Everyone has their personal and public lives which they live. How they feel on the outside may not necessarily match with their feelings on the inside. For example, people may want to be viewed as strong, however, is it not be stronger to deal with issues rather than block them out? Life stories provide an avenue for self-exploration. My storytellers needed to come face to face with the idols and demons that exist within their lives. Through this self reflection, the storytellers were able to voice their success and failure. This was not always easy, but in further discussion, some of the storytellers told of the impact it had upon them. I feel it allowed them to relate their personal and public images coming to terms with the multiple truths that they live with.

The images within a life story can give insight into different aspects of each person's image. In the telling of the stories, most stories had both heroes and villains; people who had impacted upon the storytellers' lives in both positive and negative aspects. There were those who had failed the storytellers and those who had supported them in their drive to succeed. I am sure that all of the failure and success spoken of in each story sheds light on the image that each storyteller holds of themselves. Though the failure may not be personally attached in each story, there are elements that each storyteller is afraid to see repeated in themselves or strives to avoid. The success spoken of, gives insight into the image that each storyteller wants to uphold to the public. However, does this public image always mirror the image the storytellers attribute to

themselves? Though this does not give direct insight into motivational factors, it does give evidence concerning the personality of each individual.

The image of what an EBD teacher signifies and how each person fit themselves into this identity, both personally and socially, provided some interesting suggestions to the emotional motivation attached to EBD teaching. In some respect, each storyteller saw themselves as the champions of the children's rights being able to form a relationship with their pupils in order to help them forge their own identity within society. In looking at the identity the teachers are supporting, it can be interesting to recognise that sceptics may see this identity being imposed upon the children by the teacher. As Plummer (2001) speaks of the bleak values of human stories for Foucault (1978, 1980):

Seeing them as little more than instances of power/ knowledge at work in the disciplining and surveillance of life... their lives are constituted through talk, writing and discourse; and how power relations inevitably constitute this process (p. 4)

This view brings into question the image of power associated with EBD education. Is there an image of absolute power that people associate with shaping the pupils lives for the better?

It is interesting to look at how each storytellers' own personal image fits into that of the societal image of an EBD teacher. All the storytellers in some respect wanted to be viewed as different and successful in their difference. I do not think any of my storytellers fit the image of the traditional stereotypical teacher that Weber and Mitchell (1995) speak of, however, there are not many modern day teachers that do. I do think that my storytellers actually enjoyed the fact that they were a breed apart. Though there are no professional attributes that can substantiate this difference, I do feel that it is a difference that my storytellers feel affords them some respect. Garner (1999) quotes



Halliday (1996) in recognising “there is no point in specifying something that cannot practically be checked”, however, “few would survive the sledgehammer scrutiny of OFSTED by adopting such an approach” (p.48). It can be here that EBD teachers need to be confident in their own ability to provide that difference in education and showing its success through their own personal measures. They must strive to understand rather than control their pupils behaviour. EBD schools need to provide a difference:

If staff working in dedicated provision for pupils with problems feel that they have to jump through the same curriculum hoops as their counterparts in mainstream settings, there would appear to be very little chance of sustained innovation ... fear of failure means that risk-taking curriculum modifications are conspicuous by their absence (Garner, 1999, p. 105).

The identity ascribed to the pupils by each storyteller can also shed some light on why they have involved themselves in EBD education. The storytellers all ascribed the problems the children were living through as existing due to outside causes. They did not hold the children personally responsible for the rational behind their actions and wanted to help each child forge a better identity for themselves within society. They denounced the deviance model and agreed with Cole (1998) that:

good teaching is good teaching and usually fosters good behaviour... Personal qualities of commitment, empathy and organisational skills are required of staff in abundance but not mysterious and exclusive methods to teach and motivate pupils (p.114).

This, however, I feel sometimes caused some of my storytellers to take things a bit too personally. In recognising that children’s behaviour problems are exacerbated by external influences, do they sometimes feel that their teaching is at fault? I do feel that through telling their stories, some of the storytellers were able to benefit from the therapeutic side of life storytelling. In listening to a person’s life story and struggles and

triumphs I was giving them emotional support in coming to terms with everything they have been through. As Measor and Sikes (1992) highlight “It does seem that there is a responsibility there, which should be acknowledged – and that is a basic human responsibility to other people.” (p.226). I feel teachers need people to talk to and confide in and this would help to promote the sense of security and success essential in any teachers’ drive to continue.

It is interesting to look at how people ‘detach’ themselves from their working lives and whether this is a true reflection of the feelings involved. The personal image that a person holds does not always fit neatly into the societal image that is desired. Through my research I was able to provide an avenue for each storyteller to question themselves. I think that this study highlights the personal struggles that people can face in a job with emotional ties. Are you really able to detach yourself so that the abuse is not hurtful and the pain of the children is not felt? Though there were claims of switching off, I think that every one of my storytellers based some of their motivation on the relations that they had with the children they taught. EBD education allows a closer relationship between pupils and teachers and each storyteller seemed to recognise their strength in building relationship with their pupils.

The themes within each story wove together to give a picture of who each storyteller was. The image perceived may be different depending upon each person’s previous personal experiences and in some cases the experiences they share with the storytellers. The underlying themes of failure, acceptance, identity, security and images of both themselves and the children paint some differing pictures of each storyteller but they also allow some common threads to be seen. I do not think that these themes can be

generalised to create a recipe for motivation, however, the personal traits that can be associated through each storyteller's handling of their life themes can give insight into the strength that is associated with teachers of children with EBD. I think they give insight into the needs of teachers alongside policies and practices that could be introduced to fill these needs and strengthen their practice.

### **9.5 Policy and Practice: implications and applications**

In looking at the educational and social policies and practices relating to EBD education that have been implemented through the government, the chief concern is the well-being and development of the children. Any mention of staff development seems to be centred on the benefits that are afforded to the children. I do think this child-centred approach to education has great merit, however, is it not also important to recognise and address the personal as well as professional needs of the teacher?

It is important that a positive attitude towards learning must exist in order for an EBD school to be successful. This success must not only be measured in the pupils' attitudes but also those of the staff. It is easy to recognise that the children within an EBD school have a lot to cope with; they may feel unaccepted due to their previous experiences within mainstream classrooms. As Merton and Parrot (1999) note "the goal, for better or for worse, is to help young people cope with and adapt to society, not to give them the ambition or the tools to change it" (p 25). In giving the tools or ambition to the children, we must also acknowledge the teacher's desires for the ambition and tools to promote their development. In many school there are avenues for professional development and it is important that these avenues are made abundantly clear for teachers

within an EBD school. When Evans (1998) speaks about “centrally initiated conditions ... only becoming real and meaningful and relevant to teachers when they become contextualised” (p. 141), she recognises that professional development must not only be something that is spoken or on paper but must be a practiced.

The personal well-being is equally, if not more important to address when looking at teachers working within an EBD environment. Through listening to the life stories of my storytellers, the therapeutic value of having someone to talk to was made predominantly clear. The emotion that fuels many of these teachers needs to be listened to. In dealing with these children, it can be difficult to completely detach oneself from the troubles that are seen. It is here that support needs to be provided, not only for the child, but also for the teachers. Every Child Matters (2004) recognises that “children and young people want to feel listened to and respected” (DfES, p. 26). Is that not also the same with the teachers? In looking at all agencies working collaboratively together to promote the well-being of the child, I often think that the well-being of the professionals is put to one side. A concerted effort should be made for teachers and other professionals working in an EBD environment to make sure that time is taken to support each other as well as the children in their care.

## **9.6 So, where do we go from here?**

In looking back at the research and the claims that I have made, I am able to recognise the subjective flavour that fuelled this study. It was a research effort looking at an issue that is very personal. But how can this research be applied to make a difference and what are its implications to policy and practice within education of EBD children?



The research I have done was valuable to me. It allowed me to look more deeply into others reasoning behind their career choices which also made me examine my own. I claim to lay my bias in the open; however do I truly do so? I have been able to recognise the sources of where my bias is based - with personal relations, experiences and opinions. I am able to subjectively give insight into my relations, experiences and opinions, but I leave it to the reader to draw their own conclusions. I hope that from my storytellers' stories the reader is able to gain insight in to who the storytellers really are and who they want to be. The stories are theirs, not mine and I hope that this ownership is recognised. I firmly believe, however, that the stories told were influenced by me the listener and writer. Life stories are subjective truths told by the storytellers and then transcribed by researchers. I think they hold great value in giving voice to the unheard, but there is an element of the voice being shaped by the researcher both consciously and unconsciously.

This research had a great personal impact on me. It allowed me to recognise the diversity of my profession. I still love my job and the relationships I have formed. But I find that my eyes are now opened that bit wider. I have realised it is easy to criticise when you don't know the full picture. I still have my opinions, as they are difficult to get rid of, but I now also am able to realise that though everyone will have their faults, there are usually a multitude of reasons that make these faults seem insignificant in the scheme of things. People who are in EBD education, and want to be in EBD education are there for the kids. They may not be perfect and they may not always deal with situations in the way that I would, but this is where the variety in the teaching profession can be seen.

As Garner (1999) has recognised, it can be difficult to define professional attributes associated with successfully teaching 'pupils with problems'. I do feel that this study has again highlighted this difficulty as my storytellers have a great experience to support their 'pedigree' for teaching, however there does not seem to be much evidence of specific EBD teacher training. Qualifications for EBD education seem to be more personally based. This study lends itself to both policy and practice within the staffroom and the classroom. The government is trying to give guidance to professionals through papers such as Every Child Matters, recognising that "Children and young people want to feel listened to and respected. They want services that adapt to their needs, talents and circumstances" (DfES, 2004, p. 26). However, I think that practice must now focus on strengthening personal skills associated with productive EBD teaching, and in doing so, must ensure that teachers themselves feel supported and successful in their endeavours to achieve.

The teachers that I spoke with were successful and motivated through the empowerment they gained from their teachings and their relations in life and school. Much like with their life stories, the issue of ownership seemed pivotal in creating a sense of satisfaction and achievement. I think it is important that future policies recognise the importance of teachers maintaining ownership in their roles. Through initiating changes from the top down, the voices of the 'everyday teacher' may go unheard. Much like work within the classroom, change in policy needs to be negotiated. How government establish, negotiate and consistently enforce these policies will determine the power and respect they allow the teacher to maintain. If teachers are disempowered, what motivation is there for them to continue in a sometimes thankless job?

It would be interesting to revisit my storytellers in a few years time and look at how their truths have changed. From my relationships with them, I realise that many of their life situations have changed. Pauline has moved back to her parents, Martin has been promoted to a senior management position, Sonia is pregnant. Do they all remain in the empowered (or disempowered) positions they felt before? It would be interesting to see if their views have changed and whether the same motivational factors that existed at the time of study still exist. This moves towards a more personal interpretation of the research question. I feel that in asking others to answer the research questions, I, in turn, am creating answers for myself.

Our personal myths provide our own lives with a sense of unity and purpose. But our own lives connect to other lives, our myths, to other myths. The most mature personal myths are those that enhance the mythmaking of others.... We must be true to ourselves, certainly. But we also must be true to our time and place... Ideally, the mythmaker's art should benefit both the artist who fashions the myth and the society that it adorns (McAdams, 1993, p. 113).

**APPENDIX 1: INVITATION TO ENTER RESEARCH**

Dear Friends, Colleagues and Fellow Teachers,

For those of you who do not know me, my name is Margo Shuttleworth and I am the teacher in charge of primary teaching at an EBD School. This is my third year at the school, however I previously taught in a mainstream school in Essex. I have been a teacher for six years and during my teaching career, I have continued my educational study. I completed my Masters in Inclusive Education which I studied at the University of Sheffield and I am currently in the process of completing my Doctorate of Education.

My thesis for my Doctoral studies will focus on the lives of teachers of children with EBD and this is why I am making contact with you. I am interested in looking at the different reasons and motivations that compel teachers to teach children with EBD and also what 'keeps them going at it'. In order to fully understand the reasons teachers have for entering and staying in the profession I will be asking volunteers to guide me through their life history. What this means is through time lines and interviews, I hope to discover how and why teachers of children with EBD have come to be where they are and why they remain.

In order to complete this doctoral study I will need volunteers to discuss their lives as teachers with me. This will involve interviews which may require several meetings. I will ask volunteers to construct a time line to give me some initial information about who you are and where you have come from and then I will schedule some meetings with you in order to discuss in greater detail some of the events and happening which have brought you to where you are today.

In completing this study I hope to gain a fuller picture of how and why teachers come into the area of EBD teaching. From this picture, I hope to gain insight on how teachers are able to support and provide for children who have been disabled not only by their difficulties but also by the difficult circumstances they encounter in their personal and educational environments.

I greatly appreciate any and all help I will gain from those who volunteer to participate in this study. I want to ensure that any information I receive from people will be strictly confidential and I will verify any information before I use it in my study.

If anyone is interested in helping and would like further information before 'committing' themselves, you can contact me with any questions and I have the proposal for my study which may give people a better understanding of the nature of my study. You can reach me through my school, or contact me on my home telephone number (01702)477 103 in the evenings.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Margo Shuttleworth



**APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM**

I have read the invitation to enter into the research being done by Margo Shuttleworth and am interested in helping. In doing so I realise that the process will involve taped interview sessions developing around events that have happened in my life and may have shaped my decision to become a teacher of children with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD).

I understand that in agreeing to participate in the work done by Margo, I am allowing her to record and share my life story for the purpose of looking at the motivation of teachers working with children with EBD. This will be done through private interviews and Margo will do her best to preserve the anonymity of the people involved, however I do understand this can be difficult when considering people who are familiar with the research context.

In agreeing to work with Margo, I understand that if at anytime I feel uncomfortable with the interviews I have the option to discontinue my participation. If I am happy to continue with all work done, the transcripts and final stories produced will be given to me in order to ensure that my words are being used as I would expect them to be.

Signed

.....

Date

.....

**APPENDIX 3: TIMELINE LETTER AND GUIDANCE**

Dear

Thank you once again for agreeing to participate in my study. It is important that you are involved in the project, and this is a quick idea of what the study will involve and how you can help. I want to reiterate that everything discussed throughout the course of this study will be strictly confidential and I will verify any of the information you have given me if I intend to use it. It is important that you are able to fully trust me with any and all information you disclose in order to gain the most open and honest study.

Everyone who volunteered to be involved in the study will be included in the beginning. It will be necessary, due to time constraints, to limit the number of people involved to three or four key informants. During the course of events, I will need to choose only a few people to continue through the study. This will, in part, be a random selection which I will discuss in further detail closer to the time.

To begin the study, I am asking you to create a time line of the important events that have occurred in your life. These may have had an impact on your career, teaching and influenced you in what your life choices or just be interesting aspects of your life which you may want to include. This will give me some 'talking points' for interviews and help to give me an idea of experiences that have been influential and relevant in your life.

Once the time lines are returned, I will ask if we can get together to discuss some of the events in more detail and for you to tell me 'the story of your life'. These discussions will be spread over several occasions and we can arrange a mutually convenient time and location to hold these sessions. I would like to record these sessions on cassette if there are no objections. It is important to remember that I want you to tell the story you want to tell, how you want to tell it. I do not want objective non-partisan stories but rather stories which reflect how you have experienced life and teaching. I am hoping that this will be a fun and interesting activity where we both can learn a little bit about why we are teachers of children with EBD!

It would also be helpful if you were able to keep a diary of events and happenings that occur in your life. These may be incidents or events which are directly related to teaching or even just anecdotes which you may find amusing. Using a diary may be helpful to us both in reminding of issues that we wanted to explore further and forgot to bring up during our interviews. These diaries are asking a lot, but I am hoping that you will consider it. They are not something that you HAVE to do, but hopefully will be a useful aid. Once again, I am not expecting 'objective views of facts' in the diaries, but rather I hope the diaries may bring some personal satisfaction in remembering interesting events that have brought personal pleasure or they could be seen as a kind of celebration of annotating your 'heroic' (or not so heroic) deeds or maybe even a kind of therapy in working your way through problems that may have arisen. A diary would not be something that I would want you to write for the sole purpose of research, but I would hope that it could be written to help with both personal and professional reflection and development. In doing so, I hope you can share some of the diary with me to aid in gaining a fuller picture.

Included with this letter is a prompting sheet to help you in creating a time line for me. Hopefully it is clear and gives you an idea of what I want, but again this research is a two way street so however you want to complete it is fine. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions, reservations or concerns and hopefully I will be able to explain.

**APPENDIX 3: TIMELINE LETTER AND GUIDANCE (con't)**

Please find some 'prompts' to give you an idea about what I would like you to include in your timeline of your life!!! This time line can take whatever form you find easiest- story, bullet points or even just filling in the blanks.

- Place and date of birth
- Family background, birthplaces and dates
- Parents; occupations; general character and interests
- Brothers' and sisters place and date of birth; occupations or school location; general character and interests
- Extended family; occupations and character
- Your childhood: description of home and general discussion of experiences – (give me an idea of what it was like to grow up in your shoes)
- Community and context: character and general status and 'feel' (this is to give me an idea of the 'feel' of what it is like to live in your shoes now – where you live, who you live with, what your 'community' is like)
- Education, preschool experience, school experience: courses taken, subjects favoured, credentials achieved; general character of school experience; peer relations; teachers; 'good' and 'bad' experiences (give me an idea of what your educational experience was like when you were on the other side of the desk!!)
- Occupations, general work history, changes in job, types of school, types of position
- Marriage and own family: dates and locations.
- Other interests and pursuits
- Future ambitions and aspirations

Some of these may seem repetitive, but I was making sure to try to cover any and all ground I could think of. If you can think of anything else that might be relevant or something that you may want to discuss please include that as well. If there is any confusion about any information please don't hesitate to ask me in person, by phone or by post.

Thanks again for your help!



**APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW ARRANGEMENT**

Thank you so much for taking the time to organise your timeline of life. I realise how busy you are with work on top of everything else and it is great to have your help in my project which is proving to be very interesting.

The next step in my research is the interviews! The word 'interview' gives quite a formal sense to a process that I would prefer to be as relaxed and stress-free as possible. I am, therefore, counting on you to take the lead in deciding when and where you would like the interview to take place. I am completely open to suggestions whether you would prefer for me to come to you, for a meeting to be arranged somewhere or you could come to me. We could catch a spare moment after school (if you can find that illusive spare moment!), in the evening or over a weekend, whenever and wherever is easiest and most convenient for you. I do realise that some of the information may touch on personal aspects of your life, but I only want you to discuss things that you feel comfortable discussing.

This initial interview should not be longer than a half an hour, but it will probably be helpful to have some follow up sessions if possible. My next weekend in Sheffield is the weekend prior to half term, where I will be getting direct feedback from my professor. I am hoping to have some concrete work done on my research by then and am therefore hoping to have at least the 'first batch' of interviews done before then. I would really appreciate it, if it is possible, to have some suggestions as to times and place for interviews by Monday the 27<sup>th</sup> of January. I do realise that you are busy and this date is to organise the interview by, not to have the interview completed.

Thanks again for all your help

Margo



## **APPENDIX 5: CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTERVIEWS**

**(Taken from Plummer, 2001)**

**Substantive questions** *what* questions- what you are actually looking for:  
Actual information questions.

**Social Science Questions** *why* questions- the backing up fore the information that you are getting, why is it important to what you are studying.

**Technical questions** *how* questions not really involved in the interview process directly but more to do with the technical hands on experience of finding information and knowing how to use the information

**Ethical and political questions** looks at the justification of the study- why it is being done and how it will help improve the situation it may be dealing with.

**Personal questions** these are the questions which may cause impact not only on the research issues but also on the personal life of the subjects and the researcher. These are the issues that may be difficult to ask and may be difficult to answer. It is important to remember that theses are the questions which often give the meat to the stories and are therefore essential in the process of life histories.

There are a number of ways in which the interview can be organised and approached:

### **Example questions (Atkinson, 1998) for helping with Life History Interviews**

What were the most important turning points in your life?

Tell me about the happiest moment of your life, what about the saddest points

Who've been the most important in your life, who are you closest to now

What does you life look like from where you are now

If you could live your life over what would you do differently

How do you explain what's happened to you over you life

If you had an opportunity to write a book about your life what would the chapters be about.

How would you describe yourself when you were younger... now

Have you changed much over the years, how?

What is your philosophy of life, overall what is the meaning of life to you?

### Bibliography and References

- Anderson, G.L; Herr, K.; Nihlen, A.S. (1994) Studying Your Own School: An Educator's Guide to Qualitative Practitioner Research, California: Corwin Press.
- Armstrong, D (1995) Power and Partnership in Education: Parents, Children and Special Educational Needs, London: Routledge.
- Armstrong, F (2003) Spaced Out: Policy, Difference and the Challenge of Inclusive Education, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Atkinson, R. (1998) The Life Story Interview, California: Sage Publications:
- Bakhtin, M.M. (1986) The Dialogic Imagination, Emerson, C. and Holquist, M. (Trans), Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Berger, P. (1966) Invitation to Sociology, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Bertaux, D and Kohli, M (2001) 'The Life Story Approach: A Continental View' in Denzin, K The American Tradition of Qualitative Research, Volume II
- Britzman, D.P., (1986) 'Cultural myths in the making of a teacher': Biography and Social structure in teacher education', Harvard Educational Review, 56(4), pp. 442-56. in Weber, S and Mitchell, C. (1995) 'That's funny, you don't look like a teacher': Interrogating Images and Identity in Popular Culture, London: Falmer Press
- Bullough, R.V., Knowles, J.G. and Crow, N. A. (1992) Emerging as a Teacher, London: Routledge,.
- Campbell, D.T (1988) Methodology and epistemology for social science: Selected papers, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cole, T (1998) 'Understanding Challenging Behaviour: prerequisites to inclusion' in Tilstone, C., Florian, L., and Rose, R. Promoting Inclusive Practice. London: Routledge, pp.113-127.
- Cole, T and Visser J. (1998) 'How Should the 'Effectiveness' of Schools for Pupils with EBD be Assessed?', Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 3(1), pp 37-43.
- Colley, H (2001) 'An ABC of Mentors' Talk About Disaffected Youth: Alternative lifestyles, Benefit dependency or Complete dunces?', Youth and Policy (72) 1-15.
- Cooper, P., Smith, C., and Upton, G. (1994)Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties: Theory to Practice, London: Routledge.
- Corbett, J (1996) Bad-Mouthing: The Language of Special Needs, London: Falmer

Press.

- Corbett, J (1999) 'Special Needs, Inclusion and Social Exclusion' in Hayton, A., Tackling Disaffection and Social Exclusion, London: Kogan Page, pp 178-190.
- Crow, I. (2000) 'The Power of Research' in Burton, D. (ed) Research Training for Social Scientists, London: Sage Publications.
- Dalin, P. (1993) Changing the School Culture. London: Cassell.
- Denzin, N and Lincoln, Y (1998) The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues, London: Sage.
- Department for Education and Employment (1997) Excellence for all Children. Meeting Special Educational Needs. Nottingham: DfEE.
- Department for Education and Skills (2001) Special Educational Needs. Code of Practice. Nottingham: DfES.
- Department for Education and Skills (2004) Every Child Matters: next steps. London: DfES.
- Devereux, G (1967) From Anxiety to Method in the Behavioural Sciences. The Hague: Mouton and Co.
- Elbaz, F. (1991) 'Research on teachers' knowledge: The Evolution of Discourse' Journal of Curriculum Studies 23(1), 1-19.
- Evans, L (1998) Teacher Morale, Job Satisfaction and Motivation. London: Paul Chapman.
- Foucault, M. (1977a) 'Truth and power' in Foucault, M. and Gordon, C. (1980). Power/knowledge. Selected Interviews and other writings 1972-1977, pp.109-133. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M (1977b) Discipline and Punish, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Foucault, M. (1978) I, Pierre Riviere, Having Slaughtered My Mother, My Sister and My Brother..., Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Foucault, M. (1980) Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth Century French Hermaphrodite, New York: Pantheon.
- Fulcher, G. (1999) Disabling Policies? A comparative approach to education policy and disability, Sheffield: Philip Armstrong.
- Gamarnikow, E. & Green, T. (1999) 'Developing Social Capital: Dilemmas, Possibilities and Limitations in Education' in in Hayton, A., Tackling Disaffection and Social Exclusion, London: Kogan Page, pp. 46-64.



Garner, P. (2000) Teachers and Pupils Voices on Inclusion: Preferred Strategies For Children Who are Regarded as Having Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD), presented at ISEC 2000, Nottingham Trent University, (ONLINE: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/edcol/documents>)

Garner, P (1999) Pupils with Problems: rational fears... radical solutions, Staffordshire: Trentham Books.

Garner, P., Hinchcliffe, V., Sandow, S. (1995) What Teachers Do: Developments in Special Education, London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

Geertz, Clifford (1973) The interpretation of cultures: selected essays, New York: Basic Books.

Giddens, A (1990) The Consequences of Modernity, California: Stanford University Press.

Goodley, D., Lawthom, R. Clough, P., and Moore, M. (2004) Researching Life Stories: Method, theory and analyses in a biographical age, London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Goodson, I. (1981) 'Life histories and the study of schooling', Interchange Vol. 11, No.4, pp 62-75.

Goodson, I (1992) Studying Teachers' Lives, London: Routledge

Goodson, I and Sikes, P. (2001) Life History Research in Educational Settings: learning from lives, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Grumet, M. (1991)'The politics of personal knowledge', in C. Withering and N. Noddings (eds)Stories Lives Tell: Narrative and Dialogue in Education, pp.66-77. New York: Teachers College Press.

Hammersley, M (1989) The Dilemmas of Qualitative Method: Herbert Blumer and the Chicago Tradition, London: Routledge.

Hammersley, M and Atkinson, P. (1983) Ethnography: Principles in Practice, London: Tavistock Publications.

Hargreaves, A (1994) Changing Teachers, Changing Times: teachers' work and culture in the postmodern age, London: Continuum.

Hutchinson, B and Whitehouse, P, (eds.)(1996) 'Taking Education Back - The Classroom of Tomorrow', Journal of the Educational Research Network of Northern Ireland, Vol 10, pp 1-88.

Johnston, R. (2000) Education for Inclusion or Imprisoned in the Global Classroom?, SCUTREA, 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, University of Nottingham, (ONLINE: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/edcol/documents>)



- Jolsselson, R., and Lieblich (Eds.) (1995). The narrative study of lives: Vol 3. Interpreting Experience. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kent, G (2000) 'Ethical Principles' in Burton, D. (ed) Research Training for Social Scientists, London: Sage Publications.
- Kincheloe, J and McKaren, P. (1998) 'Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research' in Denzin, N and Lincoln, Y The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues, London: Sage, pp. 260-299..
- Klages, M. (2003) Postmodernism, (ONLINE: <http://www.colorado.edu/English/ENGL2012Klages/pomo.html>)
- Luken and Vaughan (2001) 'Life History and Critique of American Sociological Practice' View' in Denzin, K The American Tradition of Qualitative Research, Volume II
- Luzern. (1998). *Zusammenarbeit* (4). Luzern: Erziehungs- und Kulturdepartement des Kantons Luzern, Schulen mit Profil. Translated by Franziska Vogt (ONLINE: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/edcol/documents>)
- Macionis, J.J and Plummer, K. (2002) Sociology: A Global Introduction, Second Edition, Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- McAdams, D.P. (1993) The Stories We Live By: Personal Myth and the Making of the Self, New York: Guilford Press.
- Merton, B. and Parrot, A. (1999) Only Connect, London: NIACE
- Miller, A (1996) Pupil Behaviour and Teacher Culture, London: Cassell
- Padfield, P (1997) 'skivers', 'saddos' and 'swots': pupils'perceptions of the process of labelling those 'in trouble' at school. (ONLINE: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/edcol/documents>)
- Parker, T (1973) A Man Inside: An anthology of writing and conversational comment by men in prison, London: Michael Joseph.
- Parker, T. (1990) Life after Life: Interview with Twelve Murderers, London: Pan
- Parry, G and Fry, H (1999) 'Widening Participation in Pursuit of the Learning Society: Kennedy, Dearing and The 'Learning Age'' in Hayton, A., Tackling Disaffection and Social Exclusion, London: Kogan Page, pp. 95-114.
- Pasquino, P (1993) 'Michael Foucault (1926-84) The Will To Knowledge' in Gane, M. and Johnson, T Foucault's New Domains, London: Routledge, pp.36-48.
- Pelzer, D (1997) The Lost Boy, London: Orion.
- Plummer, K (2001) Documents of Life 2: an invitation to a critical humanism,

London: Sage.

Pring, R (2000) Philosophy of Educational Research, London: Continuum.

Ranson, S (1998) 'Lineages of the Learning Society', in S. Ranson (ed.) Inside the Learning Society, London: Cassell, pp1-24

Roaf, C. and Bines, H. (1989) 'Needs Rights and Opportunities in Special Education' in Roaf, C. and Bines, H. Needs, Rights and Opportunities: Developing Approaches to Special Education, London: Falmer, pp 5-19.

Rose, N (1989) Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self, London: Routledge.

Rosen, H (1987) Stories and Meanings, NATE Papers in Education, Sheffield: NATE

Ruby, J. (1982) A Crack in the Mirror: Reflective perspectives in Anthropology. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Scheper-Hughes, N. (1992) Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life In Brazil, California: University of California Press.

Shaw, C.R. (1930) The Jack Roller: A Delinquent Boy's Own Story, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Sikes, P, Measor, L. and Woods, P. (1995) Teachers' Careers: Crises and Continuities. Lewes: Falmer Press.

Skrtic, T. M. (1991) Behind special education : a critical analysis of professional culture and school organization. Denver: Love.

Smart (1993) Postmodernity: Key Ideas, London: Routledge

Sparkes, A (1994) 'Life histories and the issue of voice: reflections on an emerging relationship', Qualitative Studies In Education, 1994, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp.165-183.

Special Educational Needs Training Consortium (1996) Professional Development to Meet Special Educational Needs. Stafford: SENTC

Stones, R. (1996) Sociological Reasoning: Towards a Post Modern Society. London: MacMillan.

Stroh, M.(2000) 'Qualitative Interviewing' in Burton, D. (ed) Research Training for Social Scientists, London: Sage Publications.

Tarling, R (2001) The British Criminology Conference: Selected Proceedings. Volume 4. Papers from the British Society of Criminology Conference, Leicester, July 2000.

Taylor, C. (1989) Sources of Self, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Teacher Training Agency (2004) (ONLINE):  
[www.useyourheadteach.gov.uk/php/read.php?sectionid=146&articleid=938](http://www.useyourheadteach.gov.uk/php/read.php?sectionid=146&articleid=938)
- Thomas, D (1995) 'Reasonable or trustworthy text: Reflections on teacher narrative studies' in Thomas, D Teachers' Stories, Buckingham: Open University Press, pp.1-23.
- Thomas, W.I (1967) The Unadjusted Girl, New York: Harper & Row. First Published 1923, Boston, Mass.: Little Brown & Co.
- Thomas, W.I and Znaniecki, F.(1927) The Polish Peasant in Europe and America: New York: Alfred Knopf.
- Thomas, W.I and Znaniecki, F.(1958) The Polish Peasant in Europe and America. New York: Dover Publications.
- Weber, S and Mitchell, C. (1995) 'That's funny, you don't look like a teacher'. Interrogating Images and Identity in Popular Culture, London: Falmer Press
- Wolcott, H.F (2002) Sneaky Kid and Its Aftermath: Ethics and Intimacy in Fieldwork, AltaMira Press: California.
- Znaniecki, F. (1928)'Social research in criminology', Sociology and Social Research 12: 307-22.