AN EXPLORATION OF HOW POTENTIAL EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS AND TEACHERS IN DISADVANTAGED POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS PERCEIVE THEIR RELATIONSHIPS

Markos E. Rigos

(BA Hons, MA. Ed.Psych.)

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SUMMARY

The scope of this research is to present a meaningful way of investigating teacher - student relationships where the students' and teachers' experience is central. The research takes place in three educationally disadvantaged post-primary schools and involves students whose teachers have nominated them as potential early school leavers. From the very beginning my aim was to take into account the complexity a holistic understanding of teacher - student relationships involves while at the same time offer an exploratory framework that would render this research useful to the pragmatic demands of everyday teaching practice.

With the above objectives in mind, I proceed with an exploration that can do justice both to the subjective and to the systemic dimensions of teacher - student relationships. However, experiencing a teacher - student relationship involves more than referring to personal mental representations and to interpersonal systemic structures. The perceived lived experience that both students and teachers uniquely interpret is a dynamic factor that constantly recreates their relationships and needs to be underlined in an exploration that seeks to be holistic. By employing an interpretative epistemology with phenomenological influences I have tried to incorporate the dynamic element of lived experience into this exploration.

Thus, I used a number of qualitative methods and I elicited information from a selected number of teachers and students. The major methods included a range of interviews and observation techniques. Parents and other school staff were also interviewed and they were consequently part of the four teacher - student relationship cases that were formed. The information is summarised within each teacher - student relationship case in such a way so as to create a vicarious experience of the participants' perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and understandings for the reader.

Through its theoretical framework and the rich contextual information provided this thesis discusses, analyses and assumes potential transferability of its findings to other contexts. This research, although it is largely based on widely accepted psychological concepts, tries to promote an exploration of the unique. In this way, the contribution of this research lies primarily in its method and secondarily in its case-related findings.

The case-related findings emphasise the importance of individual interpretation and the dynamic nature of the phenomenon. Through the cases it is shown how people interpret the meaning of their relationships in various ways and how their emotional investment varies to such a degree that for some students the personal side of a teacher - student relationship seems to have no significance for their school experience while for others it seems to be of major importance. In the latter case it seems that a teacher - student relationship may play a pivotal role in the way students experience the school system and it could thus potentially act as a resilience factor against early school leaving. At the same time it seems that the perceived importance of a teacher - student relationship may change over time. In that respect, it seems that the teachers' persistent effort to improve their classroom climate and understand their students' experience can be a facilitating factor.

The thesis concludes with a discussion of certain theoretical and methodological compromises that were made along with a brief discussion of a few epistemological weaknesses. Recommendations for praxis follow and this project's potential use as a first step towards a school-based programme for the utilisation of teacher - student relationships' potential in disadvantaged schools is also discussed. Finally, it is noted that the promotion of quality teacher - student relationships is in line not only with the needs of students who might leave school early but also in line with the needs of modern education and contemporary citizenship.

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PROLOGUE

This project presents case studies of teacher - student relationships that take place in designated disadvantaged secondary schools. The focus is on how teachers and students experience and interpret their relations. Moreover, contextual information is presented which is comprised of an account of each teacher's classroom atmosphere along with the presentation of other important people's perspectives on the relationships in question. The fieldwork design of this project has utilised case-study methods to describe the context in which the teacher - student relationships develop and it largely employs an interpretative framework to discuss participants' perspectives. This research is also informed by existing psychological theories that are used in the elicitation, analysis and synthesis of the participants' understandings. At an explorative-descriptive level, I will first present and discuss the participants' perspectives. Then, in light of pertinent psychological theories, I will try to synthesize the insights of this exploration for the creation of a metaperspective that may be used to enhance analogous teacher - student relationships in similar settings.

Teaching is a form of mediation. There is a common body of knowledge and there are dominant ways to implement that knowledge that have to be mastered by all teachers. However, in day-to-day teaching the specifics of context and the peculiarities of learners are of outstanding importance. In other words, teaching is based on past knowledge but it is performed through a constant interpretation of present circumstances that are encompassed by a specific pedagogical setting. Since in this research I set to focus more on processes rather than outcomes and more on the subjects rather than the objects of teaching, I chose to employ an interpretative framework. A framework that may lead to better understanding and hopefully to better practice not only with regard to the phenomenon under investigation but also with regard to the process of the investigation itself.

At this point, I feel it is highly relevant both with regard to the aims and to the methodology of my study to define two key words of this work: the words 'thesis' and 'phenomenon'. Both words are Greek in origin and they respectively mean 'position' and 'that which can be perceived'. The word 'thesis' refers to something situated in a context since there can be no position without a space for that position to be placed. Moreover the word 'thesis' implies that whatever it refers to is only part of the whole

picture[1], since a thesis exists only in reference to an antithesis. In other words, a position does not exist unless we have another point of reference to compare it with. As it may already start to seem clear the word 'phenomenon' is very much related to the word 'thesis'. Something that can be perceived needs a perceiver and it can be perceived (thought of) by a mind taking some distance from it. In short a phenomenon can only be perceived from a certain thesis (position). These are important assumptions of the wider interpretative epistemological paradigm. The exploration of people's perceptions of teacher - student relationships that is developed here is just one case where the above positions can be applied and may lead to better understanding.

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[1] In other context one may have used the term 'truth' or 'solution' instead of 'whole picture'.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Throughout this research, in my effort to explore and understand teacher - student relationships, I analyse others' interpretations while employing my own. Interpretation is perhaps the most characteristically human cognitive action. If you try to understand the meaning of what you are currently reading then you do so by interpreting[2] the text. It follows that all meaning making or sense-seeking derives from an interpretative framework. In other words as Usher, (1996) underlines, 'understanding' is always prejudiced in the sense that it can only be approached through an initial projection of meaning. This initial projection comes from the subject's situatedness, from the subject's standpoint in history, society and culture. This historical situatedness creates one's personal 'pre-understandings' that constitute 'the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience... it is the conditions whereby we experience something'. (Gadamer, 1975) Since all understanding is from an interpretative framework then all knowledge is perspective bound and partial, relative to that framework. In this way my thesis is my interpretation of other people's interpretations as they all develop from the individuals' respective standpoints.

Keeping the above in mind, it may be useful for the exploration of my own situatedness to offer a brief and selective account of my personal history and of those choices that I judge to be of decisive importance to the initial formulation of this thesis. As A. Schutz (1970) claims, the 'biographic situation' is the basic unit of human understanding. In this way I try neither to deny nor to succumb to my history and my pre-understandings (prejudices) but to explore and hopefully take into account their role in this piece of research. In a similar way, the biographical presentation that follows may enable the reader to develop a more informed critique of my work.

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[2] Interpretation: The action of explaining the meaning of something. (Excerpted from *The Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia*. Developed by The Learning Company, Inc. Copyright (c) 1997 TLC Properties Inc. All rights reserved.)

The Researcher: Background and Incentives

I was born and spent the first twenty-three years of my life in Athens, Greece; the first son of a middle-class family. I attended my neighbourhood's mainstream schools. I remember enjoying primary school mainly because of my friends, the breaks and the free fruit juice; perhaps I enjoyed some of the academic subjects as well. I had four primary school teachers and I retrospectively remember one of them for her wonderful teaching abilities and the other three for their 'classroom management' abilities that ranged from the strict-authoritative to the completely loose end of the spectrum. In junior high school, I was an average student who was gradually getting worse academic results. As far as friends and teachers are concerned perhaps the most characteristic element of these three years is that even though I remember a good few of them as quite distinct personalities, I feel I was not particularly influenced by any of them.

As my results were dropping and as I had no vision about my future professional career we decided –a family decision- to continue the last three years of my education in a technical-professional high school. In this school the students were academically weaker and so I suddenly realized that I was at the top average range in academic performance. As if that was not enough of a change it also seemed that my teachers now somehow expected me to remain at the top of my class. Recollecting those days, I still clearly remember how smoothly and easily I was caught in this pattern of expectations. They were expecting a good enough response from me and I simply didn't want to let them down. At the end of the third year I was the top student of the school. With the guidance of a couple of significant friends I started thinking of third level education.

After considering the schools of primary education and social work I easily entered and completed with honors the B.A course in the Department of Psychology in Athens, Greece. On graduation I got a place at the Educational Psychology (professional training course) in the University of Exeter, England. Through that course not only did I refresh my interest in the educational domain but I also visited the school system with a different role; that of the apprentice 'problem solver'.

Before delving further into the problems of educational psychology as a practitioner, I realized the importance of one's ability to reflect on the interaction

between multiple perspectives on the same issues. Thus I was looking for a more comprehensive experience that would enhance my self-reflexive ability. I knew I wanted to do research in psychology and more specifically in educational psychology. I wanted to adopt a perspective and methodology that would give me a choice of practice that would be exceptionally pragmatic, strategic and self-reflexive; since these qualities enhance both the researcher's and the practitioner's roles that I wish to undertake in the future.

Qualitative research came as a possible answer to my needs. It is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. It involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials –case study, personal experience, interview, observation, interactional texts- that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). This kind of research seemed to resemble facets of the practitioner's world and was thus appealing to me. It fitted somewhere in-between my prejudices (frame of interpretation) and the pragmatic claims of an educational psychologist in practice.

One may then wonder what was my quest at the outset of this venture. Was there not a phenomenon that the quest sought to discover? Is the preference for a method the sole incentive for this thesis? I cannot say whether it was the process (method) or the object that first led me to undertake this research. I can nevertheless describe the way things developed as I have done so far and I can describe the contextual circumstances that highlighted certain issues, the combination of which led me to choose the phenomenon I explore.

As I have described so far from the very beginning of my third level studies I was interested in Psychology as applied in educational settings. During the Educational Psychology course an interest for human relations in the school setting, steadily developed. The culmination of this interest materialized in my dissertation 'If she don't respect me, I won't respect her back' (Rigos, 1999). There the focus was on students' perception of their relationships with their teachers in the case of students who show disruptive behaviour. While exploring different themes for my PhD, I tried to be sensitive to the issues that at that time prevailed in the Irish educational system. The combination of this sensitivity with my personal interest in the educative potential of the teacher - student relationship led to the formulation of this research project.

In Ireland, much has been written and many interventions have been piloted in an effort to combat the phenomenon of students leaving school early (Combat Poverty Agency, 1998). As I will explain later many of these interventions involved interference from outside agents and not much was written on the effect of the informal curriculum[3] on early school leaving. A notable exception was Scott Boldt's work (1994), that underlined the extent to which school-related factors and particularly the nature of teacher - student relationship is perceived by students as a reason to leave school early.

While acknowledging the large impact of out of school factors to early school leaving, it is also of substantial importance to examine those factors that manifest themselves as deriving from the school system itself and even more from the core of the educative practice, the teacher – student relationship. Such research can locate factors that may seem to make short-range impact on the overall 'at-risk' status of students. However since those factors are located within the proximal influence of the participants then perhaps they may show each professional a way to start assuming some responsibility in combating early school leaving. In a nutshell, this research focuses on the informal curriculum at the micro-level of teaching. It discusses some meso-systemic influences but it mostly focuses on the individuals' perspectives of their relationships as they are constantly interpreted in the school settings where they work and learn.

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[3] For more on the term, 'informal curriculum', please refer to pages 35-36.

The Quest: Synthesizing Psychological Theories and Personal Meanings
        in a Systemic Framework

A huge variety of factors have been found or have been theorized to contribute to the formation of the teacher - student relationship. On a micro level a number of student attributes have been found to influence teachers' perceptions of students and their patterns of interaction with them in the classroom. These attributes may refer to individual differences such as academic achievement, personality, physical attractiveness, seating location, writing neatness and speech characteristics (Brophy and Good, 1974). At the other end, at a macro-political level others (Bowles and Gintis, 1976), view the formation of teacher – student relationships (TSRs) as a result of the 'correspondence principle'. According to this principle the social relations in school constitute a mechanism of the capitalistic society that prepares young people for the social relations at work by replicating the hierarchical division of management and workers.

Although both of the above schemes may share some plausibility in their claims, the approach adopted in my work is one that I feel promotes four qualities that do not readily appear in either of the above perspectives. First, it is a psychological approach describing the relationship as it is holistically perceived between the people who directly engage in the educative process. Second, it is an approach that utilizes previous psychological knowledge that seems pertinent to the context and the people involved. Third, it is an approach designed in such a way so as to bring forth the complexities of the perceived relationships to a degree that allows for a reflexive critique of the dynamics involved; and fourth it is an approach that, by being pragmatic and interpretative, enables the participants to realize that progress is within their own power since it is an approach that tries to take into account elements of immediate individual and systemic factors.

The literature review that follows briefly presents a number of interventions that have been introduced in disadvantaged settings in order to combat early school leaving and goes on to show where an intervention on teacher - student relationships may fit in that context. Each participant in this study and perhaps even more the researcher himself try to interpret the circumstances and the phenomenon in a way that will be meaningful to them. This research begins with the assumption that each

participant's narrative is valid as far as it is a genuine effort to explain his or her perception. However, it would have been a major omission if the pertinent psychological knowledge were totally neglected. I will also describe the hybrid theoretical framework that I utilized in an effort to do justice both to the personal and to the interpersonal qualities of teacher - student relationships.

In the sections to follow it will be shown how the conceptual framework I have utilized tries to take into account intrapersonal psychological properties and phenomenological perspectives of meaning while acknowledging and trying to do justice to the encompassing context. Within that framework a research design that explores individuals' understandings has been developed. I have tried to accomplish that by applying a design that promotes the cross-nomination of participants; such cross-nomination enables the fusion of horizons[4] in such a way that different and often contrasting interpretations are considered. A more detailed discussion will be presented in the design section.

The discussion of findings tries to place equal weight both on relationship patterns and aberrations. That discussion as noted in the prologue is mostly a metaperspective on the phenomena explored. However it is a metaperspective informed by relevant research done on similar issues and open to a critique by anybody engaged in the same arena. I hope this work to be a contribution not only to the ever-changing terrain of scientific discussion on teacher - student relationships but also to some practitioners' pre-understandings that inform their everyday work.

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[4] A horizon is described by Gadamer, (1975) as, *"the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point"*.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Psychology is characterized by the peculiarity of a scientific domain where the subject and object of study coincide; human beings set out to understand themselves. Depending on the human aspect placed under scrutiny and the way scientists have set out to explore it, psychology has, over time, developed different fields and methodologies. Human relations have traditionally been the object of study in two broad fields: Social Psychology and Developmental Psychology. Social Psychologists have studied relationships mainly with reference to institutional entities; relationships that constitute the substance of society such as those of status, power, co-operation, and competition. On the other hand, Developmental Psychologists (Clinical or Child) place more emphasis on elective or familial relationships. Theories in this area have possibly overemphasized the role of the mother and undervalued the role of the child's relationships outside the family.[5] In this research I wish to study early adolescents' relationships with adults in particular school settings. Both developmental and social contributions are important therefore I cannot opt for one and simply neglect the other. On the contrary I need to selectively adopt those theoretical contributions from both fields that seem more pertinent to the 'object' of my study and employ them in the development of my work.

I chose to study TSRs in disadvantaged settings and as I will present later on, research unambiguously suggests that these relationships are either pivotal or at least an important contributing factor to students' learning experience. There are two main versions with regard to the aim of the teacher - student relationship (TSR). Both develop out of two broader views concerning the aim of schooling in general. Taken to extremes the first view sees schools as instructional sites and tends to quantify the educational process in the belief that the outcome will be some kind of excellence in given knowledge-fields that will later lead individuals to economic competence. The second view sees schools as cultural frontiers that promote ways of life. In this instance the school's main aim is to help students engage not only in their own self-formation but also in that of society at large (Giroux, 1992). The first view focuses more on the

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[5] Excerpted from *The Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia*. Developed by The Learning Company, Inc. Copyright (c) 1997 TLC Properties Inc. All rights reserved.

content while the latter more on the process of schooling. Imparting the academic content is not difficult, there are a variety of approaches. The difficulty rather lies in the process, in the teacher's embodiment of an attitude of active learning; such an attitude will elicit the students' self-engagement in the process of learning as a means not to primarily achieve results but to engage in constantly renewed self-formation and eventually lead to their development into self-critical citizens.

In order to achieve the aims of both views, Freire (1973), used Martin Buber's conceptual framework and explained, "*dialogue* (between teacher and student) *has to be an 'I – Thou' relationship, and thus necessarily a relationship between two subjects. Each time the 'Thou'* (the student in this case) *is changed into an object, an 'It', dialogue is subverted and education is changed to deformation.*" To promote this kind of relational development in students, teachers must first develop it themselves. Staff has to develop an attitude (that will be later referred to as 'tact') that promotes 'I-thou' relationships. It is more this attitude in the TSR that is explored here rather than the academic content or strategies. However before presenting the conceptual framework that was utilised to explore this dialogic core of the TSR, I will briefly try to contextualise this research. I will try to briefly present the wider framework of secondary schooling and educational disadvantage in Ireland since within this framework the specific relationships that will be presented in the following chapters have taken place.

Problems associated with educational disadvantage are amongst the most pressing and most widely discussed about the educational system in Ireland. As Kellaghan et al., (1995), have succinctly pointed out, this situation has three important implications. First, it means that the educational system does not provide all children with the opportunity to realize their full potential. Second, the level of 'human capital' in the form of skilled and specialized workers of the Irish nation is diminishing and third, compensatory costs rise in an effort to support those affected by the failure of the educational system. Educational disadvantage represents a complex phenomenon that results from the interaction of deep-seated economic, social and educational factors (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1992).

Early school leaving is closely related to educational disadvantage; as such it is also the result of many factors at many levels of our society. Early school leaving is very much discussed in the nineties and in the same period the number of early school leavers has declined. To exemplify, the proportion of those leaving school at the junior cycle declined from 32% in 1980 to less than 15% in 1995 (McCoy & Whelan, 1995). However, regardless of the proportion, those who tend to leave school early live in poverty or more widely put, in disadvantaged areas. The National Economic and Social Forum, "... *has previously referred to the link between the cyclic nature of educational disadvantage causing poverty, and poverty causing educational disadvantage and this must be clearly acknowledged*" (NESF, 1997). This relationship is a strong indication that early school leaving does not occur randomly in the school population but seems to be a possible indication of a mismatch between the structure of school system and the needs of the working class. This has been suggested elsewhere, "*Early school leaving is quite concentrated in certain kinds of schools – those that cater mainly for working class children...*" (Hannan, 1986).

The most recent statistics in this respect come from the National Economic Social Forum (1997), for the period 1993 – 1995, where it is indicated that 7.600 children (4900 boys & 2700 girls) leave the school system as soon as they have completed their Junior Certificate[6] whereas 3000 children, (1970 boys & 1030 girls)

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[6] The Junior Certificate (JC) is given after exams at the completion of the third year in the secondary school approximately when the students reach the end of their compulsory education at fifteen years of age.

leave without any qualification whatsoever. In Ireland the second level sector of the non fee-paying system is comprised of secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive schools. Secondary schools, educating 60% of second-level students, are privately owned and managed, but largely influenced by religious communities. Vocational schools educate 26% of all second-level students whereas community and comprehensive schools educate the remaining 14%. Although it is vocational schools that record the highest dropout rates (Breen, 1984), this research focuses on three inner-city, secondary schools that have been designated as disadvantaged[7].

These secondary schools are based in designated areas of disadvantage as established in 1990 by a scheme of the Department of Education that has most recently been reformed under the heading of 'Breaking the Cycle' (DES, 1996). The schools have been identified as disadvantaged on the basis of revised criteria as recommended in the Combat Poverty Agency/Educational Research Centre report. All are Dublin, inner city schools where, as reported in the 'Squaring the Circle' policy paper, the localised nature of the early school leaving pattern is clear; "…*in some areas the figure drops to 7% but in the poorest areas it can rise up to 70%… In particular, the designated disadvantaged areas in Dublin have serious levels of early school leaving*" (Fleming & Murphy, 2000). These are the schools where this research took place.

All students involved in the research live in disadvantaged areas and it seems that their social origin plays a major role in their school career. This has been extensively discussed in O' Brien's report (1990), based on a sample of 70 'disadvantaged' households where there seemed to be strong bonds in the community and it was not acceptable for students to deviate from its norms even if that meant displaying academic competence. O' Brien (Ibid.) underlines: "*Schools, however, foster individual competition and success... Thus the values of the school and those of the working unemployed class groups come into conflict. It is necessary not to show academic strengths which set you apart from your mates as this threatens the group*". Following from this, she suggests that schools have to be aware of and sensitive to this background. Before I elaborate more on the importance of the word 'sensitive', what it means and how it may be put in practice, I want to present the kind of interventions that have been introduced so far in order to combat early school leaving. Consequently it will be shown, what this research may have to offer in this respect.

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[7] For more information on this choice please refer to the design section and more specifically to Appendix A1

According to the Minister for Education and Science, "*…not finishing school is the most significant cause of keeping people caught in cycles of disadvantage and it must be a key national priority to radically address this problem",* thus under the national development plan, approximately 440 million punts are to be provided for initiatives designed to combat educational disadvantage (DES, November 1999). A lot of emphasis has been placed on the integration and better provision of existing services. A key factor for this integration is the improvement of relationships amongst the relevant services. A key problem Cullen (1997), underlines is that, "*…how personnel relate to new organisational developments is not fully understood... in the absence of this understanding, resistance within organisations develops alongside a re-dedication to long-lasting rules, regulations and behaviours".* It is interesting that even at this macro-level the evaluation of intervention programmes suggests the exploration and analysis of concepts like relations, change and resistance.

A prevention strategy that takes into account the importance of relations among children's natural settings and tries to deal with change and resistance is the Home-School Community Liaison Scheme. "*It is concerned with establishing partnership and collaboration between parents and teachers in the interests of children's learning. It focuses on the salient adults in children's educational lives and seeks indirect benefits for the children themselves"* (Department of Education, May 1997). However it is evident that the partnership and collaboration between children and teachers is not part of this strategy's agenda. Likewise at a governmental level most initiatives do not focus to enhance the core collaborative mechanism of the educative practice, the TSR.

To exemplify, schools with large numbers of disadvantaged pupils do not receive support if the overall proportion is not high enough. Moreover, programmes have been introduced at the curriculum level. In the Junior Cycle, the Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP) has been running since September 1996. Although the European social Fund report indicates that the Junior Programme is a positive development in general, there is some concern regarding its "*…potential to limit pupil aspirations, the value that is placed on this certification by employers and the availability of progression routes offered to the graduates"* (ESF, 1997). Finally and perhaps most relevantly to this research, the National Psychological Service is currently being developed. One of its priorities is the area of socio-economic disadvantage. However, according to the

ESF evaluation (1997), the relevance of this service to disadvantaged children has been limited and the "... *service could take on a more active role in supporting front-line teachers working with educationally disadvantaged young people*".

Following the national initiatives at various levels and the recommendations of their evaluations, it gradually becomes evident that the quality of social relationships is an overarching issue that is not adequately addressed. Moving down the scale to less centralised initiatives, I will indicatively mention the 'Demonstration Programme on Educational Disadvantage' and the 'Integrated Services Process'. However, commenting on those initiatives, Ahern, (1999), underlines:

> "Early school-leaving has emerged as the single greatest priority locally. One of the most important recommendations in the First Interim ISP Progress Report is the need to employ staff, especially on the front line, with the requisite skills to engage effectively with local people. It also implies that central management must understand and empathise with the people on the ground."

Finally there is a group of interventions that do not directly operate from the Department of Education and Science. These are comprised of a number of local measures and include: after school projects, homework clubs, transition programmes, literacy and numeracy interventions, parenting initiatives, mentoring and tracking activities, school-community initiatives, projects for socially excluded groups – travellers, etc. and third level access programmes (Fleming and Murphy, 2000). Amongst all those local initiatives there are only a few interventions that aim to target specifically at the quality of relations amongst those working in the school system. Interventions that partly deal with that issue are the Pathways programme and the JETS[8] initiative.

In short, the evaluations of initiatives and interventions show that more emphasis needs to be placed on the 'relations' factor, be that at the inter-agency cooperation level or the front-line level where teachers engage with students and parents. The vast majority of initiatives try to tackle the problem of students leaving school early by a variety of means and measures. However, none of these seems to be dealing exclusively with the core of the educative practice, with the way teachers and students relate to each other. This is where this research will try to shed some light on.

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[8] Jobstown Education and Training Strategy

The Place of this Study in Informing Preventative Measures

In Figure 1.1 we see the elements of a model for best practice in preventative education as modified from the 'Squaring the Circle' policy paper (Fleming and Murphy, 2000).

Figure 1.1

A Model for Best Practice in Preventative Education
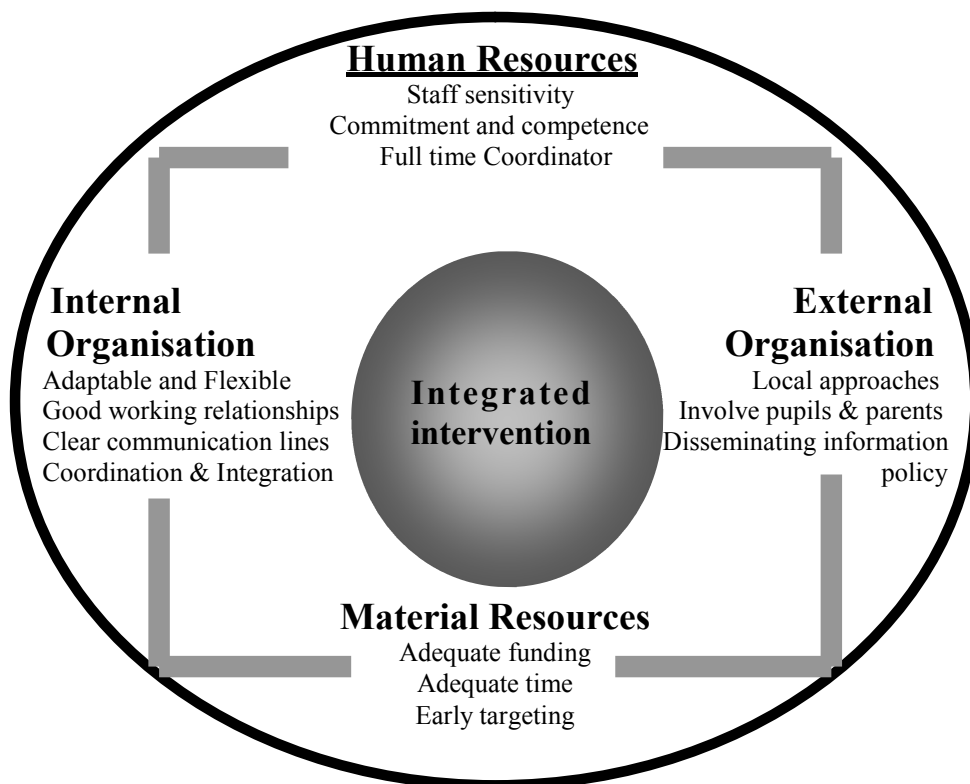
This model helps us organise and overview the different practices that may contribute to prevent early school leaving. Using this framework we can contextualise the place of the thesis made in this research. TSRs could be classified under the 'Human Resources' factor of the model. A corroborating indication is that the notions of sensitivity, commitment and time, which also appear under the same factor, come up in my research as the data are analysed. The element of 'staff sensitivity' is described by Boldt et al. (1998), where, referring to the work of Hannan, he states, "*There is a need for awareness among teachers for the cultural and value differences that children bring with them into the classroom.*" More specifically, Fleming and Murphy (2000), say that "*the issue of staff*

sensitivity is frequently mentioned in the literature and it needs to be considered more fully"; and then they go on to quote the ESF evaluation of the Department's preventative measures where it is emphasised that:

> Criticisms were also made of low expectations and negative attitudes held by
> teachers of children coming from backgrounds of educational disadvantage...
> it was suggested that part of the problem arises in the existence of different
> and... clashing sets of cultural values, with teachers either unable or unwilling
> to engage the culture and values of children who are presenting problems.
>
> (ESF, 1997).

As far as the element of 'Staff Commitment and Competence' is concerned, Rourke (1998), succinctly describes that, "*The calibre and enthusiasm of the programme staff is a key ingredient in the evolution of the overall programme...*". Also with regard to primary school initiatives, it is noted that:

> The pivotal role of teachers in the success of any initiative was clear...
> Respondents felt that some teachers may not see the value of these initiatives
> and therefore would not support them or adopt their methods in the
> classroom...
>
> (Boldt, 1996)

Finally, in JETS, one of the few programmes that seemed to place direct emphasis on the enhancement of relationships, the need for time to be invested in such a quest was definite, "*Given the other time constraints on teachers it would be extremely difficult to create the space required to have such an intensive relationship with the parents of the young people...*" (Rourke, 1998). The concept of 'space' will also come up later and will be elaborated in depth, not only as a topographical or time dimension but also in reference to an individual's emotional presence.

In my research I will utilise psychological theories to explore and discuss TSRs in depth. I will try to map the participants' mental representations of their relationships. According to Scott Boldt's findings (1994) when early school leavers recount their school experiences the word most frequently used in their expressions of their feelings about school and many teachers was 'hate'. How prominent are such expressions in the mental representations of students and what do they exactly mean when they use them? In a similar way, young people's opinion of a good teacher was, "*one who simply treated the class fairly and with respect, and taught them.*" (Ibid.) However, as Ryan (1999), insightfully explains, in the context of challenging pupils one should not underestimate the enormous skill required by a teacher to be perceived as one who is

'interesting' or one who 'treated a class fairly'. What do students mean by similar descriptions and to what degree do these descriptions reflect 'objective reality'? Likewise, how do teachers perceive 'at-risk' students and how do these students understand and interpret their teachers' relation to them?

Questions like these will be discussed in this research not with an aim to give prescriptive answers or fixed guidelines but with an aim to bring forth and perhaps illuminate issues professionals may need to consider in an effort to alleviate the mis-understandings that occur among teachers and students working in 'disadvantaged' schools. Through a detailed analysis of a few teacher - student relationship cases, I will try to explore and discuss the complexity of the phenomenon.

Risk and Resilience in a Multisystems Reality: The Need for an Inclusive Framework

In the previous section, I tried to contextualise the focus of this research in a framework of interventions aiming to alleviate educational disadvantage and early school leaving. A key term that needs to be defined and analysed for any of the above interventions to be successful, is that of 'Risk'. "*Historically, 'at-risk' students were primarily those whose appearance, language, culture, values, communities and family structures did not match those of the dominant while culture that schools were designed to serve and support*" (Hixson & Tinzmann, 1990). The same writers quote Goodlad & Keating (1990) to explain further, "*it seemed natural and certainly easy to define the problem as arising from deficiencies in the students themselves*". It is equally easy to define a child as 'at-risk' after it has presented some behaviour that is an indication of risk. However as Fraser (1997), notes this sort of definition renders the question of predictability meaningless since the risk-behaviour has already occurred and we cannot plan early intervention in advance. What needs to be developed is a working framework that will take into account both individual and contextual conditions affecting the probability of the development of a problem.

Before proceeding to present such a framework and locate the present research in its boundaries, I would like to define and briefly discuss the term 'at-risk'. The issue of definition remains alive and controversial because it reveals continuing ideological and philosophical divisions among educators, policy makers and the general public. Currently there are four general approaches to defining 'at-risk' students. First, the 'Predictive Approach', which is based on an early intervention philosophy for preventing rather than remediating problems (Hixson & Tinzmann, 1990). However, this approach is based on a deficit model of students and rarely leads to any examination of fundamental aspects of the school (Natriello et al., 1990). Even more problematic, is its side effect of labelling students and consequently having a negative impact on the teachers' expectations (Richardson & Colfer, 1990).

A second and equally prevalent approach is the 'Descriptive' one. This approach waits until school related problems occur and then identifies the students at-risk. An expected outcome of that approach is that by that time intervention and remediation has already become less likely to succeed (Hixson & Tinzmann, 1990). In addition the typical intervention involves ancillary programmes that do not alter the

regular school programme but intensify the impact of negative labelling and tend to slow down the students' progress thus diminishing their belief that they will ever catch-up with the rest student population (Levin, 1988).

Two less prevalent approaches are the 'Unilateral' and the 'School Factors' approach. The first simply proposes that virtually all students are at-risk, one way or another. This approach is attractive as far as it promotes egalitarian ideals and alleys the fears that disproportionate attention may be paid to poorly performing students at the expense of the rest student population. However if taken to extremes, this approach may lead to ignoring the urgent need to focus attention on more needy students.

Finally the 'School factors' approach is looking at school factors as potential causes of 'at-riskness'. Such factors may include inflexible schedules, narrow curricula, inappropriate, limited and rigid instructional strategies, inappropriate texts, isolated pullout programmes, monolithic staff attitudes towards students and parents. However, if such an approach is adopted exclusively it may lead to the lurking danger of absolving students of any personal responsibility for achievement and even more cultivating a school-blame approach to parents who ignore their responsibility as partners in supporting the school's effort to educate their children (Hixson & Tinzmann, 1990). The same writers' critique of the above approaches succinctly makes the point for a new approach that needs to be adopted. Thus they argue:

> "The degree to which a student... may be at risk... cannot be adequately determined by the simple existence of one or more predetermined characteristics... The predictive probability model relies on too high a level of generalisation to provide the direct guidance needed to develop specific interventions in individual schools, classrooms or communities... Similarly... the ancillary or isolated programme approach... does little to alter the circumstances or patterns of practice that allow poor performance in schools or classrooms as a whole to continue. At the same time we need to move away from a preoccupation with categorizing or labelling students. We need approaches that provide a more *meaningful database and perspective* for planning new, holistic, integrated and systemic alterations *in the norms of schooling*" (my italics).

> (Hixson & Tinzmann, 1990)

From the above, it becomes clear that the concept of 'at-riskness' needs to be contextualised in order not only to include the school system but the family and

neighbourhood as well. However, what this research tries to explore is not how children become at-risk but how we can improve TSRs so as to render them as a protective factor against the risk of leaving school early. Thus we will now shift focus from the concept of 'at-riskness' to that of 'resilience'.

The study of resilience emerged as a by-product of the research for risk factors. The term 'resilience' has come to be used to describe children who achieve positive outcomes in the face of risk (Kirby & Fraser, 1997). At this point, it is imperative to make clear that by 'resilience' we do not mean 'invulnerability'. The latter term may suggest that some children are unaffected by a risk factor that affects most children whereas resilience is defined by the presence of risk factors in combination with positive forces that contribute to adoptive outcomes (Garmezy, 1993). It is in this way that TSRs may be a contributing element to some children's resilience. This contribution will only be a part of the cumulative effect of protective factors. In the family system, Bradley et al. (1994) found that the presence of three or more protective factors -like parental warmth, acceptance, organisation and infant stimulation- differentiated resilient from non-resilient children. Thus, although we cannot talk of a linear effect on child outcomes, these data suggest that, like risk factors, protective factors may have an additive effect across various conditions (Kirby and Fraser, 1997).

Therefore, protective factors have effect only in a context of risk. In other words, protective factors are thought to exert little effect when the stress is low, but their effect emerges when stress is high (Masten, 1987). Based on this interactional dynamics, we may assume that the TSR's impact as a protective factor may emerge especially in those cases where stress is high, that is, especially with regard to those students who are most at-risk for leaving school early.

In a rich and diverse cultural world, things are even more complicated. The comments Coie et al. (1993), make about resilience and culture are revealing and call for the use of a culturally sensitive methodology. They suggest that, "*in relying on normative functioning to define resilience, we must recognise that culturally determined behaviour is a potential source of variation in outcomes. In other words, behaviour considered adaptive and normative in one culture may not be similarly adaptive and normative in other cultures*". To exemplify, 'difficult' temperament and its resulting behaviour is probably not viewed as 'proper' by the middle class school system norms but in other cultures with different norms, assertive and demanding temperament may be adaptive and perhaps even required for survival (Masten et al., 1990). In this way, as it will be displayed in the design of this

research, I have tried to make room for the elicitation of culturally diverse beliefs that underline people's perception of the teacher – student relationship.

This last comment brings Hixson & Tinzmann's (1990), conclusion once more in mind when, with regard to a working definition of risk, they were talking of "...*the need to use approaches that provide a more meaningful database and perspective for planning new, holistic, integrated and systemic alterations in the norms of schooling*". Likewise, Coie (1993), reminds us of the multi-systems reality individuals live in and of their struggle to adapt to all occurring differences. In this reality we need to take into account both the peculiarities of the system and the person. In other words not only do we need to adopt a methodology that will be able to incorporate TSRs as a function in a wider context but also analyse its subjective meaning for the participating individuals.

Conceptual Framework

In the following parts of the literature review I will present the conceptual framework that I have utilized for the better exploration of teacher – student relationships. As Miles & Huberman (1994), argue the conceptual framework of a qualitative research is perhaps the most complicated component. The conceptual framework lays out the key factors of what one aims to explore, the constructs and the presumed relationships among them.

In this research the conceptual framework for the exploration of the individual's perspectives of the TSR is built around a transactional model adopted from developmental psychology (Sameroff, 1989). This model helped me explore the individual's understanding of the relationship in question as the outcome of a transaction between contextual, phenomenological and subjective factors. This model will be presented in more detail at the second section of the conceptual framework presentation. Here I begin by presenting the way I tried to take into account the influences of contextual factors.

At the Pragmatic End of the Transaction Model Interface: Systems Theory

In order to explore TSRs and take into account the complex reality that generates and sustains them we need to utilise a theory that can integrate a certain degree of social complexity. Ecological theory has this inclusive characteristic; it can incorporate individual and contextual factors and is thus fully compatible with the person-in-environment perspective that is pragmatic and lies at the heart of many helping professions. From this perspective the social ecology of childhood can be conceptualised as consisting of interdependent and often nested parts or 'systems'; one part of which is the children's relationship with their teachers.

In this view then, the degree to which a student is 'at-risk' is a function of inadequacies that are not compensated for or are indeed in conflict with other subsystems in the student's social ecology (Hixson & Tinzmann, 1990). From this perspective, one does not simply define or describe 'at-risk' students but more appropriately, one regards as 'at-risk' the combined characteristics of educational environments (family, school and any other). In this way, the responsibility for the at-risk status of a student does not reside in one member –be it a child, a mother or a school- but is shared among all participants and the dynamics they have created in a specific time and space. Before illustrating how systems theory has been utilised in the design of this research, I will briefly review some major 'systems theory' principles.

Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986) offered a conceptual framework for analysing the layers of the environment. He sees ecological environments as being composed of micro-, meso-, exo, and macrosystems under the constant influence of the chronosystem. I present these here very briefly and pinpoint how they refer to aspects of my research.

- A microsystem is a pattern of activities, roles and interpersonal relations of an individual in a given setting; in this case, the focus of this research is the microsystem between a student and a teacher.

- A mesosystem is a system of microsystems. In this research, the relation pattern between the student's parents and the student's teachers is a meso-systemic influence on the student - teacher relationship.

- An exosystem is a setting where the individual is not directly involved but where events occur that affect or are affected by the individual's setting. Here the

relationship between the school's aims as expressed by the principal and the community's expectations of the school form an exosystemic influence to the relationship in question.

- A macrosystem is comprised of the belief systems or ideology that structure other, lower systems. In this research, I am dealing with the interaction between the ideology that guides the structure and operation of the formal school system and the ideology & priorities of the working class where all identified 'at-risk' students come from.

- The Chronosystem recognizes that change within the person and within the environment occurs over time. This influence is apparent here in some of the students' change of beliefs with regard to the microsystem under exploration.

Although this research focuses mainly on the micro-system and partly on the meso- and chrono- system, the outer systems are also considered. In the present research, only the social context elements that are underlined are taken into account as shown in the figure overleaf (fig. 1.2).

It is noteworthy that even though the main focus of the research is on students and the perceptions of their relationship, I have placed the whole teacher - student relationship in the centre of the systemic framework (fig. 1.2). This is due to three reasons. First, the relationships will be explored as the outcome of the properties of the teacher - student dyad, as a dynamic system, and not as the outcome of the properties of a single participant. Second, as I will later develop in more detail, I have adopted a conceptual framework from developmental psychopathology where researchers have come to recognise that what seems to be properties of the child may in fact be properties of its relationships (Bowlby, 1969; Sameroff, 1989). Finally all the concepts utilised from 'Attachment theory' (Bowlby, 1969/1982; 1973), 'Client-centred therapy' (Rogers, 1961) and 'Emotional holding' (Winnicott, 1965; 1971) explore relationships as dyads and tend to categorise not individuals but aspects of the individual's relationship with an important other. Thus even though the ultimate 'purpose' may be the student, it is the dyad as a system that is placed at the centre of this exploration.

Figure 1.2

The Systemic Framework Utilised for the Exploration of the Social Context in which

the Teacher - Student Relationship is Embedded
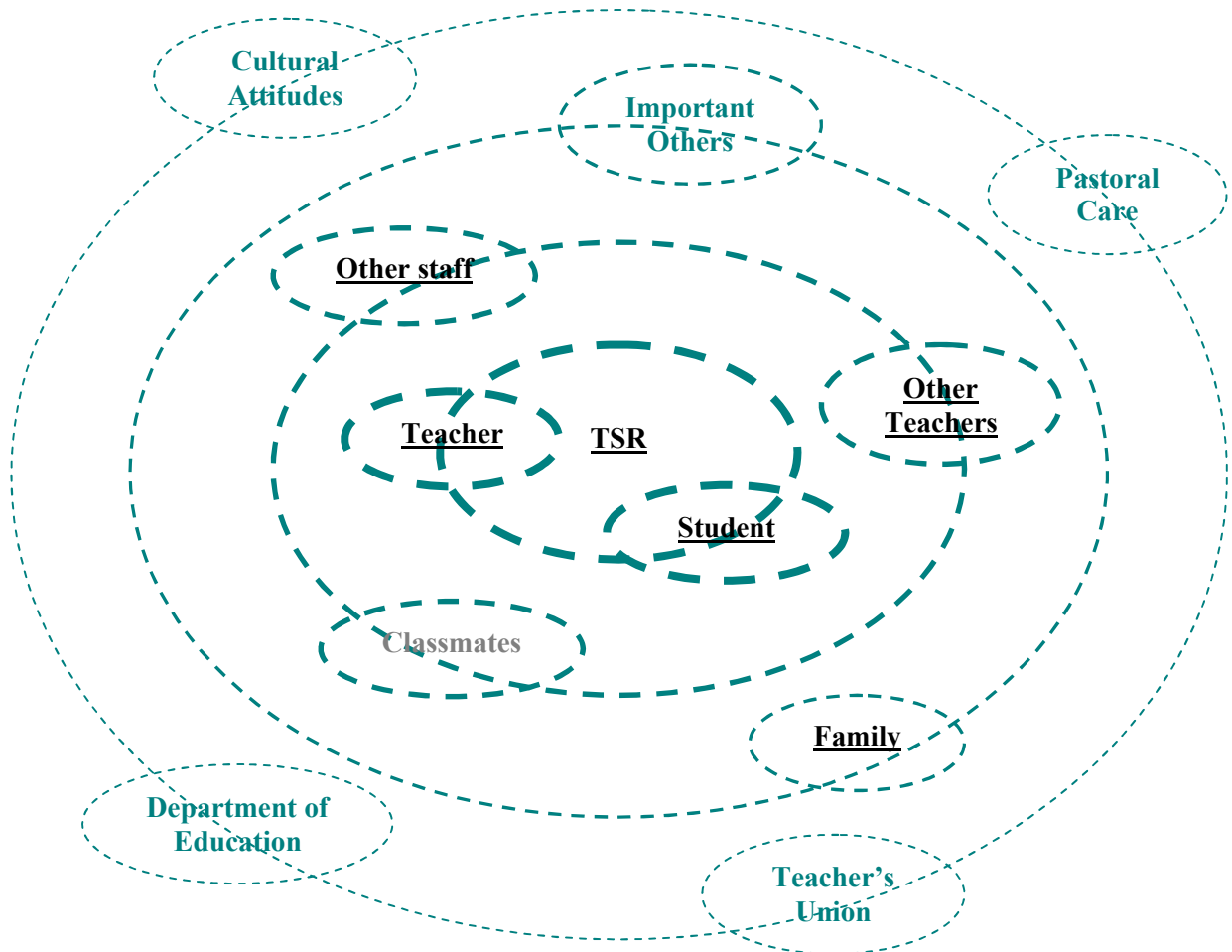
So far I briefly presented a systemic model and tried to discuss it with regard to my work. In this model, I must underline that the person itself is perceived as a system in constant commerce with its environment through permeable boundaries. Precisely because of that openness a system can maintain itself in the wider context (Katz & Kahn, 1969). The notion of 'information feedback' comes exactly at this point and is particularly useful to our understanding of how systems interact since it describes the reciprocal influence that determines how systems view one another.

Perhaps the most deep-seated and permeable concept of general systems theory is the assumption of circular causality. When systems (i.e. people, families, organisations) find themselves locked in dysfunctional interaction patterns, a linear

explanation of the 'cause' of the problem is not very helpful as it just swings the blame from one system to the other; a tendency that will often become evident at the information analysis of this research. Whereas, if we try to adopt a different view of things, if we seize to look for primal 'causes' and try to explain the cyclic patterns of interaction then a different epistemology is implied. The question 'Why' (linear, cause – effect model) is replaced by 'How' the phenomenon occurs and attention is paid to the sequences of interaction that make up the event (Dowling, 1994). This research is being built in accordance with the same principle of a complex, non-linear reality. It is trying to provide useful knowledge for those engaged in the educational domain and thus to reply with sensitivity to Desforges et al. (1985), acute claim that, "*(Psychologists) advice has had very little impact on the practice of teaching... Some (reasons for this) arise out of the manner in which those who have studied teaching and learning have oversimplified the lives of classroom participants.*"

Intimately linked with the notion of circularity is the concept of punctuation, that is, the point at which a sequence of events is interrupted to give it a certain meaning. "*Every item of perception or behaviour may be stimulus or response or reinforcement according to how the total sequence of interaction is punctuated*" (Bateson, 1973). In other words, the concept of punctuation enables us to give a reply to the question, "At which point have we stopped in order to gain perspective to our ever-changing, and often recursive, reality and thus overlook it and render it meaningful?" This is an open question that doesn't look for a dual response of yes/no, cause/effect etc. On the contrary, it looks for a personal stigma, a personal perspective; no punctuation is right or wrong, it is just a view of reality. At this point I cannot help but synthesise the different methodological paths combined in this research by underlining that the 'general systems' concept of punctuation is similar to the Aristotelian concept of 'intentionality' that lies at the heart of phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994).

In Aristotelian philosophy the term 'intention' indicates the orientation of the mind to an object. Just as 'punctuation' refers to the point we have chosen to stop in order to perceive and explain things in a paradigm of circular causality; 'intentionality' refers to consciousness; to the internal experience of being conscious of something. Through intentionality we recognise that self and world are inseparable components of meaning. Therefore in both theories the position of self is ultimately linked to the world. From the phenomenological point of view though the element of intentionality additionally explains the way consciousness is linked to the world. It claims that the

linkage is imbued with meaning and that the act of consciousness and the object of consciousness are intentionally related. Thus, the concept of punctuation is the centre of the crossroads where systems theory and phenomenology meet and constitutes the underlying layer that enabled me to combine both approaches of understanding reality in this explorative research.

Having discussed the environmental influences that minimally need to be taken into account in order to explore TSRs, the need to move to the individual's world and take into account the subjective contributions that shape the perception of the phenomenon in question emerges. However, for a smoother passage to the subjective end of our discussion, we can get valuable insights from some concepts that have contributed to the emergence of 'Developmental Psychopathology' and 'Developmental Niche'. Development is the common denominator here.

The Contribution of Developmental Psychopathology

Rutter & Garmezy (1983), argue, '*The process of development constitutes the crucial link between genetic determinants and environmental variables... between the residues of prior maturation or earlier experiences and the modulation of behaviour by the circumstances of the present.*" In this research I do not study the development of the person as a whole but the development of a person's understanding of a given relationship. Thus in an analogous vain the process of development -of this understanding- is again found at the crucial link between variables of the social environment and -not so much genetic but- subjective determinants; between the residues of prior beliefs or earlier understandings and the modulation of the relationship by the circumstances of the present... all of them enmeshed in a complex circular reality. In my effort to construct a robust conceptual framework that will help me delve deeper into the way an individual perception of a TSR is developed, I will now focus on theories of development and more specifically on Developmental Psychopathology.

In accordance with systems-theory, developmental psychopathology underlines that individuals can never be removed from their contexts; individual behaviour is enmeshed in social behaviour. In this way Sameroff (1989), claims that, "... *individual development has been reconceptualised as the adaptive establishment of interpersonal boundaries.*" As indicated in Rutter & Garmezy's definition above, a great deal of attention has been given to biological regulators of development. On the other hand, developmental psychopathology places emphasis on environmental regulators of development. In such an analysis, the state of the child triggers regulatory processes in the social environment. Sameroff (1985), makes a helpful parallel by arguing that,

> Just as there is a biological organisation, the genotype, that regulates the physical outcome of each individual, there is a social organisation that regulates the way human beings fit into their society. This organisation operates through family and cultural socialisation patterns and has been postulated to compose the *Environtype* (Sameroff, 1985; Sameroff & Fiese, 1989) analogous to the biological genotype.

Thus, we may say that 'Systems theory' is a way to analyse the structure of the environtype. The 'environtype' and more specifically the classroom context is the first of the two crucial factors that influence the way TSRs are perceived. For the purpose of this research's analysis I will call the second factor 'subjectype' –in the place of the

traditional genotype- and define it as the individual's organisation that regulates the subjective understanding of the phenomenon. The main component of the subjectype is the individual's internalised culture part of which are the individual's mental representations that will be explored in more detail later on.

Environtype and subjectype interact through an information feedback loop in a mode of circular causality; their outcome as understood by an individual at a specific -punctuated- moment constitutes the 'Phenotype'. The phenotype, in my research, will most vividly be depicted by the participants' incident-specific reactions and explanations. However it must be noted that the phenotype is not an outcome of linear causality, instead, as discussed, within the system it develops its own dynamic and in turn influences all other parts.

The information I will later on present constitutes crystallizations[9] that reflect all three levels, that form an individual's understanding. This is the conceptual framework I will base the discussion on, in an effort to promote an explorative understanding of how TSRs are perceived. Figure 1.3 below, is an adaptation of a model Sameroff (1989), presented to illustrate, at a more general level, the transactions among environtype, phenotype and genotype. Here the same model is adopted to portray the way TSR understandings develop.

Figure 1.3

The Cyclic Transaction Model and the Creation of

the Individual's Punctuated Perspective Points

Classroom-context (Environtype) — E1 → E2 → E3

Punctuated perspective (Phenotype) — **P1** → **P2** → **P3**

Mental representations (Subjectype) — S1 → S2 → S3

Intervals in time   *1*   *2*   *3*

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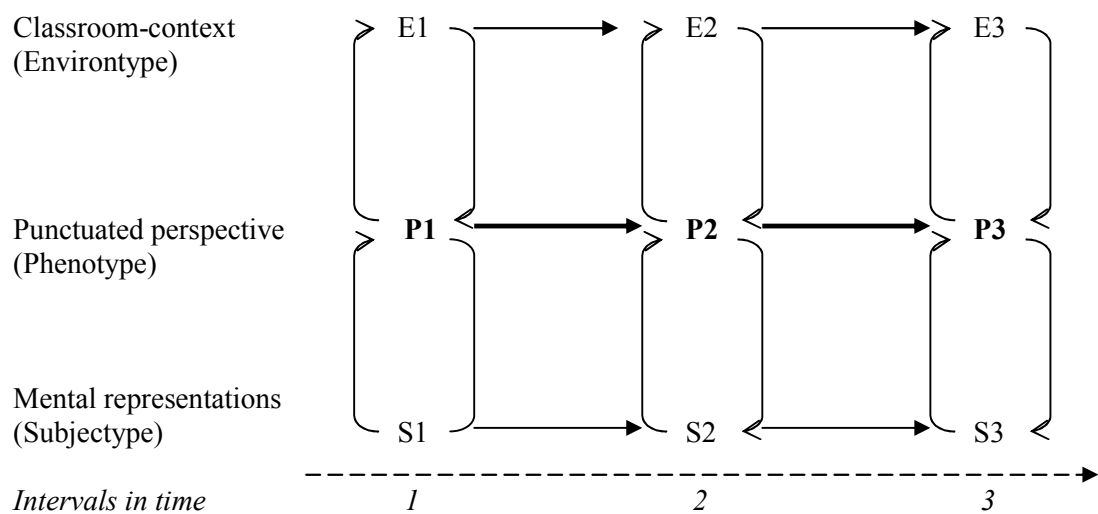
[9] This term will be elaborated in chapter four. However, the word 'perspectives' may be used as a synonym here.

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If we scan through figure 1.3 from left to right we can see that the development of a perspective (bold horizontal lines) of a TSR changes across time as a consequence of the transactions among three factors: The individual's perspective in the here and now (punctuated perspective - phenotype), the individuals' mental representations, (subjectype) and the classroom context, (environtype). In the same figure, we can see that the punctuated perspective is the interface, the place where the polar factors (classroom context and mental representations) come into the individual's consciousness and inform his actions. If we focus on the vertical arrows, we can see the circular causality among the polar factors and how that causality is punctuated and thus rendered meaningful (understood/interpreted) by an individual at the P1, P2 and P3 moments in time.

More specifically the upward arrows from subjectype to phenotype represent the influence of a student's mental representations especially of important past child-adult relationships. The downward arrows indicate the possibility of punctuated consciousness (perspective in the here and now) leading to gradual change of the student's subjectype. In other words, as it will be discussed in the following section, the circular causality here indicates what Bowlby (1969, 1982), said when he claimed that relationship representations are *working* models. In a similar way the downward arrows from environtype to phenotype represent the systemic influence of the student's classroom context. The upward arrows, from phenotype to environtype, indicate the individual's influence –through language and behaviour- on the school context. This influence, in turn, triggers specific systemic outcomes and the cyclic pattern continues. With regard to the formation of individual teacher - student relationships, it is noted that the environtype may change enormously from one classroom to the other where different teachers teach. Since the core of this exploration is the TSR and not the school - student relationship, it is the classroom and not the wider school context that here defines the environtype.

So far I have theoretically presented how a constant adaptation process may inform one's understandings. How could an understanding of this process lead to improved adaptation? Sameroff (1989), briefly states and gives an answer to this question, '*The study of adaptational process emphasises the constructive aspect of development in which each individual comes to terms with opportunities and limitations of experience to produce a uniquely integrated outcome*'. In terms of improvement and change, the key word in the

above statement is the word 'constructive'. It means that by our developing understanding of a given situation and the way we are enmeshed in it, we may construe a mental framework that could enable us to deal with that situation more effectively. Inevitably, the word 'constructive' points to one of the epistemological underpinnings of this research, constructivism.

In this project, I try to present a set of punctuated perspectives and then discuss possible ways of intervention using TSR dynamics as an interface that may result in a better adaptation between the influences of the polar factors. Before proceeding to discuss the subjective end of the perception interface (subjectype), I want to introduce two terms Super and Harkness (1986), used to elaborate on their concept of 'Developmental Niche'. *"The developmental niche is a theoretical framework for studying cultural regulation of the micro-environment of the child... from the point of view of the child in order to understand processes of development and acquisition of culture."* (Ibid.). Here, I will not use 'Developmental Niche' as a theoretical framework but I will only adopt two key concepts that will later guide the data analysis process, namely the terms, 'Regularity' and 'Thematic continuity'.

The term 'Regularities' describes the outcome of a system-scanning for internal coherence. To exemplify, the exploration of a student's understanding of his relationship with a single teacher may reveal a certain amount of regularities or else incoherence. The term, 'Thematic continuity', refers to the extent to which two or more systems share the same informational content with regard to certain themes. This term is similar to the term 'Information Feedback' since they both set to describe the dynamic among relationships. However, the first refers mainly to the content of informational exchange whereas the second to the process.

So far I have theoretically discussed the usefulness of systems theory in the exploration of the 'Environtype'. It is now time present the theories utilised to explore the 'Subjectype'. As already mentioned, while the genotype stands for the individual's biological predispositions and capabilities, the subjectype's main component is the individual's internalised culture. As Cole (1999), illustrates, the medium of culture, through ideal (e.g. language) and material artifacts, acts as a mediator between subject and object. In other words individuals perceive the world through their cultural representations. However, before delving further into the individuals' representations, I will present some overarching information in order to limit and embed their exploration in the school context.

Defining Relationship in the School Context

There is not and never has been a norm and fixed maxim in education.
What is called so was always only the norm of a culture, of a society, a church,
an epoch, to which education too, like all stirring and action of the spirit,
was submissive, and which education translated into its language.

Martin Buber, 1979

I will start by presenting two overarching definitions of the term 'relationship'; the first one derives from psychology and the latter from education. It is often convenient to label relationships as primarily 'role' or 'formal' where much of the behaviour of the participants may be understood in terms of their occupancy of certain positions in society, like teacher - student, doctor-patient. Likewise, if much of the behaviour of the participants rests on their previous knowledge of each other as individuals then relationships may be labelled as 'personal' (McCall, 1970). In this respect, TSRs have a dual character. As TSRs develop, both their formal and their personal features become apparent and influence each other.

Focusing on the personal character, Hinde (1976), defines a relationship as a series of interactions in time and argues that, at a behavioural level, in order to describe a relationship, it is necessary to describe the content, the quality and the pattern of the interactions that occur. He underlines its dynamic structure and goes on to clarify that, *'In practice... we would never describe a relationship in terms of the details of all interactions that occur - we abstract from the empirical data to make generalisations about the nature of the interactions...'* . Three years later Hinde (1979), gives a more detailed account of what constitutes a relationship; there he also considers affective/cognitive aspects and makes a number of points he deems important. The major points are summarised in Table 2.1. (Ibid.), overleaf:

Table 2.1

What do we mean by 'relationship'?

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❖ Behavioural Aspects:

1. There is a degree of arbitrariness in what we call an interaction; it is not clear what is the right length of social actions that could qualify it as such.

2. An interaction must involve both partners and its nature depends on both even in though it may appear to be under the control of only one.

3. The behaviour involved in social interactions usually involves meaning even if that is true for only one of the participants.

4. An essential character of a relationship is that each interaction is influenced by other interactions in that relationship.

5. Dyadic relationships take place and are influenced by social context.

6. The extent to which an individual exhibits social behaviour is not indicative of the extent to which that individual enters social relationships.

❖ Affective/Cognitive aspects:

1. What A responds to B is partly a function of what A is. Especially important here are issues of selective attention. Furthermore A's behaviour may be affected by his perception of B's perception of him. [This sentence describes the concept of 'metaperspective', introduced in Laing's phenomenology (1966).]

2. Behaviour is most easily described if we use a concept of anticipation or expectancy.

3. Behaviour is usually goal directed.

4. Behavioural outcomes vary in value.

5. Individual's emotions and feelings may influence behaviour.

6. Experience is stored as symbols that can be manipulated. Important influences here are exercised by selective attention, distortion, anticipations and perceptions.

7. Behaviour is constrained by 'norms' either of a dyadic or a wider range.

8. Individuals operate as agents, manipulating their own environment.

</div>

Hinde (Ibid.), recognises the complexity involved in describing relationships and argues for an eclectic choice of descriptive concepts; those that seem useful for the researcher's task at hand. The TSR, as it is established in the school system, is primarily formal. However, as it develops it acquires personal attributes as well. In this research I am interested to focus the exploration on its personal properties and their

influence on the 'at-risk' students' schooling experience. Before discussing further the theory behind this exploration I will first present an educational definition of the teacher - student relationship and some of its formal properties.

Marcel Postic (1994), focuses on the educational character of the relationship and defines it as follows: '*the learning relationship is the sum of the social relations that take place between the educator and the learner with the goal to achieve certain educative aims in a defined institutional structure'*. As far as the personal character of that relationship goes, he adds, '*the personal role of the educator is diminished because of the school institution. The teacher assumes that he is freed from his individual and social responsibility which he transfers to some institutional body'*. In becoming a teacher one learns to occupy a role. Respectively, Brown (1965), succinctly defines the term, '*The word 'role' is borrowed from theatre and there is little in its social psychological sense that is not prefigured in its theatrical sense'*. Thus, just as the role of Hamlet has been played by many actors, likewise the role of teacher has been enacted by many people. Therefore roles prescribe certain ways of behaving that endure over time but also allow an amount of creative interpretation. So, what is the classroom role of the teacher?

Researchers have specified a series of teacher roles while some have specifically focused on the role of the middle school[10] teacher (Blyth, 1965; Ginsburg, 1977). According to Ginsburg (1977), the dimensions of the middle school teacher include roles such as:

- Socializer, an agent that contributes to the students' development of attitudes, beliefs and values.

- Instructor, an agent that attempts to increase the students' information base and improve their cognitive and physical skills.

- Controller, teachers are responsible for keeping students' behaviour within given institutional norms.

- Evaluator/selector, whereby teachers evaluate students' academic performance but also their attitude, behaviour and family background.

Sorenson (1964), tried to analyse teacher roles even more by asking the question, '*In what way does the teacher perform his or her role in the classroom?*' He gave the following six principal sub-roles as an answer.

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[10] The middle school largely coincides with the junior cycle of the secondary school in the Republic of Ireland.

- Adviser: Recommending courses of action for the student.

- Counsellor: Helping the student to discover for him- or herself.

- Disciplinarian: Establishing rules and administering punishments.

- Information giver: Directing learning and lecturing.

- Motivator: Using rewards to stimulate conformist activity.

- Referrer: Securing help of outside agencies.

Nowadays, due to the increasing focus on the process of teaching, they have come to adopt new roles such as those of the 'assessor' and 'reporter' (Fraser, 1992). Yet, in summary, the different roles mentioned so far may be grouped under three headings, namely:

- Instructor,

- Disciplinarian &

- Guide/Counsellor.

A teacher, within a 45-minute period may enact most, if not all of the above roles. However according to the ever-changing circumstances that she[11] may encounter at any given moment in her classroom, the teacher may focus on the role she deems more appropriate. The Guide/Counsellor role is the least adequately defined and the one whose facets are given particular attention in the present research. Many elements of the Guide/Counsellor role are enacted when the teacher acts as a facilitator and motivator for the students' learning.

In accordance with the teacher's varying role, the students tend to adopt a complementary role. Whereas the teacher's role is one of socially accepted dominance, the student's role is one of subservience. Any power students exercise is not socially sanctioned but illegitimate. As Delamont (1990), graphically says, '*they are expected to let their speech, dress, morals and behaviour be monitored and corrected, and their state of knowledge constantly examined and criticised*'.

So far I spoke of the personal and the formal roles of a teacher; however, their boundaries are neither universally accepted nor clear. Instead they seem to form a continuum. The term 'Informal Curriculum' sheds some light on this issue. The informal curriculum is not prescribed, orchestrated or monitored. Yet as McCaslin and Good (1996), argue, '*it is the stuff of schooling -the continuous, albeit uncoordinated, stream of*

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[11] For the smoothest flow of the text the pronoun 'she' will conventionally be used in reference to the teacher whereas the pronoun 'he' will be used in reference to the student.

momentary experiences (phenotype) *that students aggregate and internalise with varying degrees of awareness, protest and satisfaction'.* The same authors argue for deliberate attention to the informal curriculum so that school may enhance students' lives within and outside the schoolyard. As a starting point they suggest that, *'the informal curriculum involves official recognition that students are more than their achievement and achievement motivation'.* They continue by outlining an interesting research agenda for an informal curriculum based on relationship as the basic unit of classrooms (in place of the traditional unit which is the individual or the learning task).

So far I have briefly presented a socio-educational definition of the TSR and how that relationship is structured around a number of roles that are socially expected. I also introduced the concept of 'informal curriculum' as an educational effort to incorporate in the structure of school those elements that recognise the social origins and situated enactment of learning where the notion of relationship becomes central in the educational process. Coming closer to an analysis of the personal character of the TSR, Salzberger-Wittenberg, Henry & Osborne (1983), identified a number of expectations that either the student or the teacher may bring in the relationship. According to those authors, the student may see the teacher to be:

1. The source of knowledge and wisdom: The teacher who is the absolute master of her subject.

2. A provider and comforter: The teacher to whom the student turns in the hope that she will alleviate some of the discomfort that ignorance provokes.

3. An object of admiration and envy: The teacher as the ultimate authority or medium of power that the student may wish for.

4. A judge: While it is part of the teacher's role to assess the student's work, this lends itself to a feeling of being constantly watched over.

5. An authority figure: Either benign authority or abusive tyranny.

The same relationship may be viewed by the teacher as one that may:

1. Pass on knowledge and skills: Enable the teacher to expand herself.

2. Enable students to succeed.

3. Foster personal development: In this respect teachers have a function very similar and complementary to that of parents. However, a teacher whose private life is unfulfilled may be especially at risk for smothering the students with her needs.

4. Befriend students: Teachers may provide advice, companionship and some social facilities, which is fine unless they show favouritism.

5. Undermine the teacher's personality: This may include the teacher's fear of being criticized, fear of hostility and fear of loosing control of the classroom.

However, what happens when the actual relationship is formed is far more complex than the combination of any of the above expectations. Many other factors may influence how the participants perceive each other's role and the kind of expectations they may have from each other. Some factors that may influence teacher's perception of the students have been summarised by Brophy & Good (1974), and they refer to group characteristics such as social class, race and sex or they may refer to individual differences such as academic achievement, personality, physical attractiveness, seating location, writing neatness and speech characteristics.

All these student characteristics affect teacher expectations and attitudes regarding students and this, in turn, affects the way teachers deal with the students. Rosenthal and Jacobson's (1968) experiment on teacher's self-fulfilling prophecies is well known in this respect. However self-fulfilling prophecy effects of teacher expectations are more likely when the teachers' expectations are inaccurate and inflexible. Moreover, the teacher's pattern of coping styles and defence mechanisms also seem to be important since Brophy and Good (1974), noted that:

> Teachers who generally perceive reality accurately and do not feel threatened
> by it, and therefore are relatively free of anxiety and the defence mechanisms
> that accompany it, would keep their expectations more open and flexible and
> would be less threatened by failure than more rigid, anxious, dogmatic
> teachers.

The above statement is directly relevant to this research in so far as it discusses the struggle for accurate reality perception/adaptation through open and flexible communication. It also goes on to link the teacher's perception-openness with certain psychological phenomena and personality traits. In my exploration I do not aim to make such links but I do aim to explore individual perceptions and the degree to which they contribute to teachers and students understanding of each other and their relationship.

At the Subjective End of the Transaction Model Interface: Mental Representations

> In learning, one experiences one's ignorance, one's lack of skills.
> If learners develop a secure relationship with their teacher, they may feel protected by
> the consequences of their own ignorance...
> However, if for some reason they fail to develop this relationship,
> they can be overwhelmed by the experience of their own helplessness and
> consequently transform their self-punishing impulse into attacks onto the teacher.
> Paul Greenhalgh, 1994

As discussed earlier, in order to fully explore the students' perception of their relationship with teachers, I take into account the environtype, the phenotype and the subjectype of the cyclic transaction model (fig. 1.3). Based on these I try to explore the individuals' understandings. Even though an individual's perception becomes conscious and is enacted through the medium of the phenotype, in essence it is the outcome of a constant dynamic interaction among all three elements. So far I have discussed the structure of the environtype and explored some basic socio-educational elements that frame the relationship in the school setting. It is now time to turn to the subjectype and discuss its psychological structure, as it will be explored in this research.

I have constructed the framework of the subjectype's structure around a number of concepts deriving from 'Attachment Theory' (Bowlby, 1969/1982; 1973), and also the work of Donald Winnicott (1965; 1971) and Carl Rogers (1961). All of the above practitioners and theoreticians were primarily concerned with relationships between one individual and another that was in a dominant position in relation to the first, be that a relationship between a child and his caregiver or a client and his therapist. In addition the relationships these theoreticians analysed were ones that aimed at the weaker participant's empowerment. Both of the above qualities are present in the TSR that is explored here. It is also interesting to note that the theoretical concepts that will be used have strong integrative power in contrast, for example, to Hinde's (1976; 1979) classification that is more of an analytic form. This integrative power is also in accordance with the methodological path followed here whose aim is to explore people's perception of relationships as dynamic units of complex experience. In contrast, a fragmentary analysis of this experience might result

in losing view of this dynamic element and consequently lead to the research-practice gap of knowledge transference and utilisation.

Despite the fact that I incorporated elements from more than one theory, it is on attachment theory that I mainly base the explorative framework of the subjectype. This is because attachment theory extensively incorporates the concepts of 'secure base' and 'exploratory behaviour'. These concepts, in a very insightful way, link children's relationship pattern with their exploratory/learning process. Attachment is also a psychological theory that places quite a lot of emphasis on the environment and the dynamic nature of relationships by emphasising that, even though infantile experience is very important, change is not just possible but largely what inevitably happens in one's perception and formation of relationships over time.

At this point, I want to clarify that in this research I do not adopt whole theoretical constructs as such but simply borrow pertinent key concepts that can help develop my exploration. In this light, I will not elaborate on Bowlby's assumption of the autonomous, biologically based proximity systems that result in behavioural patterns of attachment between an infant and his primary caregiver (Bowlby, 1969). However I will discuss the more pertinent idea that these systems, according to the same author, are in a continual transaction with external factors. It is the actual experiences that children have in a relationship with an important adult that contribute to what he called the 'internal working model'. The concept of the 'internal working model' of a relationship is critical for this exploration.

An internal working model includes cognitive, emotional and behavioural representations of self and other and of the relationship that mediates their connection. This model is built through continual transactions between self and other that result in dynamic constructions of mental representations; in this way the model can be constantly changed through the mediation of new experiences. Even though Bowlby (Ibid.), underlined the importance of the relationship with the primary caregiver as it leads to the formation of a general internal working model that the child construes as a prototype for his relationships with other adults, he also emphasised that the child may form multiple internal working models characteristic of specific relationships. These models allow children to form expectations about the availability and probable actions of others along with complementary models of how worthy and competent the self is in the relationship with that other. Thus, the above conception not only suggests that multiple facets of experience are included in one's mental

representations of a relationship but it also suggests that one perceives and consequently forms relationships with others drawing both from his relationship history with significant others and his specific relationship with the person in question.

At a very early age attachment is mainly construed as a behavioural pattern of proximity with the primary caregiver. When the infant's anxiety increases, he moves closer to the attachment figure to regain feelings of comfort and security. Thus he uses his attachment figure as a secure base. '*In essence the role of secure base is one of being available, ready to respond when called upon to encourage and perhaps assist, but to intervene actively only when clearly necessary*' (Bowlby, 1988). However as the child grows up and is able to withhold memories and create symbols, a mental representation of the attachment figure is held in the child's mind. The more the child has felt that attachment as providing security and comfort the more he is able to develop his independence and move away from the attachment figure in exploration of his environment. Bowlby (Ibid.), succinctly clarifies, '*Much of the time, the role of the base is a waiting one but it is nonetheless vital for that.*'

Even more pertinently for the present research, is Abber and Allen's (1987), adaptation of 'secure readiness to learn' which is characterised by the desire to deal competently with one's environment and the ability to form successful relationships with novel adults. In relation to the above definition, Lynch & Cicchetti (1997), argue, '...w*ithin this conceptualisation of readiness, children with successful histories of secure relationships are more likely to adapt to school successfully and thus more ready to learn.*'

However as children grow up, they form relationships with a number of adults apart from their primary caregiver be that their father, older siblings, a professional caregiver or a teacher. Attachment theorists have consequently asked, 'What is the range of the primary attachment's influence?' and 'How are multiple attachments interrelated?' Although this research doesn't seek to answer these questions nor to explore the interrelation between the student-mother and the student-teacher relationship, it is however useful for a more informed synthesis of the TSR cases to present the four models that have been proposed as a reply.

The first model is called *monotropy* (Bowlby, 1951) and implies that only one figure -mostly the mother- is an important attachment figure while the influence of other caretakers is marginal. The second model, also proposed by Bowlby (1984), is *hierarchy*. In this model, one figure is the primary attachment figure but other caretakers may be considered subsidiary attachment figures that may serve as such in case the

principal attachment figure is not available. The third model is that of *independence*. This model implies that a child may be attached similarly to several different caretakers but the attachment relationships may be functional only in those domains in which the child and the specific caretaker have been interacting over a long period of time. It is only within that specific domain that the specific caretaker is effective as a secure base for the child. Finally the last model has been called '*integration*' and essentially suggests an attachment structure not in relation to a single figure but to a network of figures. In this respect, within a network of multiple attachments, it emphasises that secure attachments may compensate for insecure ones. In evaluating the above models, Ijzendoorn, Sagi and Lambermon (1992), found some support for the integration model since in their cross-cultural study there was evidence that secure relationships can compensate for insecure ones. However they make clear that '*a choice between the independence and the integration models is difficult to make.*'

Research on applied attachment theory in the school setting has shown that teacher – student relationships are affected but not necessarily determined by the student's mental representation prototype. Thus, it is possible that maltreated children's relationships with their teachers can act as protective factors against the negative developmental outcomes associated with maltreatment (Cicchetti, 1989; Cicchetti & Lynch, 1992). However in subsequent research (Lynch and Cicchetti, 1992), thirty eight percent of the upper-elementary school children in their study had concordant relationships with their mothers and their teachers. This concordance suggests that maltreated children's negative representational models of relatedness based on their interactional histories with their parents may taint their ability to form positive, secure relationships with their teachers. Quantitative research efforts like the ones mentioned above tend to provide findings pointing either towards the monotropy model (especially in the early-preschool ages) or towards the independence/integrative model (especially those efforts with late elementary or junior-high school children samples).

Whatever the extent of concordance between student-mother and student-teacher relationship, the latter in almost all cases seems to have some form of impact on the students' adaptation to the school setting (Pianta, 1999). Susan Kontos (1992), in a previous volume where Pianta (1992), tried to provide a framework for enquiry into the role of relationships between children and non-parental adults in development, concludes: '*Ultimately, we must learn how teacher-child relationships are associated*

with other individual and school-contextual factors and how they join with contextual factors in the home to influence school adjustment.'. In this research, the goal is to explore TSR understandings' of both parties with a subsequent aim to suggest ways that seem to lead to mutual respect and adaptation. This respect and adaptation may in turn enhance cooperative functioning in the school setting. Once again the concept of 'secure base' provides useful insight.

As Waters (1997), succinctly describes, both partners play active roles in the secure base relationship. Ainsworth (1978), conceptualised the caregiver's responsibilities in terms of (1) sensitivity to signals, (2) cooperation vs. interference with ongoing behaviour, (3) physical and psychological availability vs. unavailability and (4) timely response. Moreover, she described the secure base seeker's responsibility as (1) clearly signalling distress, (2) maintaining the signal until the care giver can respond, (3) active interaction of proximity seeking and maintaining and (4) finding contact and interaction with care giver an effective source of comfort. The above are key criteria for scoring attachment security in the strange situation procedure[12] that involves infants and their primary caregivers. Even though the same criteria cannot be directly applied to a teacher's provision of a 'secure readiness to learn' for her student, they may nevertheless give clues to a number of behavioural facets of the relationship in question that may be worthwhile to observe, analyse and improve.

Apart from Bowlby's ideas, for the exploration of the participants' subjectype I also used other pertinent theoretical concepts. In order to experience the feeling of safety and acceptance, we have to allow ourselves to feel in some ways dependent upon significant others. Thus dependency is the precondition for independence but too much dependence is emotionally depleting. From a state of absolute dependency the person moves towards independence through a stage that Winnicott (1965) describes as relative dependency. It is in that stage of relative dependency that learning takes place. Once trust between two people has been established there can be what Winnicott refers to as psychological potential space, '*a third area between the I and thou dichotomy, a space in which creativity can take place*' (Greenhalgh 1994). This 'potential space' may be paralleled with the length of explorative 'distance' an attachment figure provides when serves as a 'secure base'. As far as my research is concerned, Winnicott's 'potential space' is a quality that will constitute part of the exploration of

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[12] Developed by Ainsworth (1978).

the teacher's subjectype, as it is she who should provide the space for her students to explore.

Winnicott's conceptualisation of potential space is closely related with his concept of emotional holding that refers not to an action (such as the ones described at the provision of the secure base) but to a quality and a state of mind.

> Emotional holding is the holding and containment of disturbing feelings which are inhibiting the capacity for relationship, emotional growth and learning; it involves demonstrating that distressing feelings can be tolerated, helping children to manage feelings, think about them and understand some of their meaning.

<div align="right">Greenhalgh, 1994</div>

This concept implies that a primary caregiver is not only physically holding or comforting a child but also holding him in her mind. Emotional holding is a quality that is provided by the caregiver whereby the child is thought of, even when the pair is separated. Thus for the child to feel secure even in the presence of distressing feelings, he does not necessarily need to enjoy the physical comfort of another but at least to feel emotionally held. It may be that in older ages when physical proximity is less appropriate or less available and when multiple mental representations are built, that a child seeks to feel that he is emotionally held before a relationship that promotes learning can develop. Thus, we may better understand what Barrett and Trevitt (1991) mean when they say that, '*The provision of emotional holding in the school setting is perhaps the most important role of the educational therapist.*'

Educational therapy provides a second chance learning opportunity for children who are unable to make constructive use of their learning experiences. What seems to obstruct those children from learning is a combination of previously learned maladaptive relationship patterns and/or the children's unwillingness to trust another adult and consequently to take the risk of revealing their ignorance and their helplessness in the adult's presence. This revelation presupposes a degree of dependence on that adult. This sort of dependence is the primary prerequisite that can lead to independence in a process of emotional growth and constructive learning. The therapeutic adult-child interaction is one that contains the latter not only physically by providing a bounded space but also practically through the availability of a structured process and emotionally through the therapist's emotional holding and provision of working space.

The student needs a working space of his own in order to apply his intellect and creativity in the learning process (Ibid.). The utilisation of 'working space' depends on the student's capacity to be alone. Winnicott (1965), said that the self-realisation 'I am alone' is related to a child's unconscious awareness of the existence of an emotionally available mother and wrote of the paradox that, '*the capacity to be alone is based on the experience of being alone in the presence of someone*'. The development of such a capacity presupposes the primary caregiver's ability to tolerate *inactive* participation; in other words it presupposes an adult's presence and emotional holding while the child is experimenting without the first's intervention. Barrett and Trevitt (1991), introduce the notion of 'working space' as a school-setting application of Winnicott's (1965), idea of 'shared space'. They further explain:

> The working space is understood by children once they have experienced it. They quickly recognize it conceptually by learning that their thoughts will not be intruded upon; that the therapist will not become a 'smothering' or any other kind of mother; and that their need for space in which to think, talk, act, or switch off will be respected. They learn too that they cannot impinge upon the therapist's space. At times the space becomes almost tangible; a symbol of change.

<div align="right">Barrett and Trevitt, 1991</div>

In this way, 'emotional holding' and 'working space' are concepts that can be adopted to explore the quality of relationship between a teacher and her students. These concepts provide not only an exploratory but also a rich interpretative and preventative framework explaining the way a TSR can become a readily available tool for the teacher to empower her students' motivational and learning capacity.

A third theoretician that used relationship as a means of development and learning and discussed its educational implications is Carl Rogers (1961). Before discussing his 'conditions for learning' in therapy he first clarifies what he means by significant learning in Education:

> Simple knowledge of facts has its value...but I believe educators in general are a little embarrassed by the assumption that the acquisition of such knowledge constitutes education... I believe that most educators would share this sentiment that knowledge exists primarily for use. To the extend then that educators are interested in learnings which are functional, which make a difference, which pervade the person and his actions, then they might well look to the field of psychotherapy for leads or ideas. Some adaptation for

education of the learning process that takes place in psychotherapy seems like a promising possibility.

<div align="right">Rogers, 1961</div>

The same author tries to suggest some implications that his conditions for learning in psychotherapy might have for education. In short he discusses four points: (1) significant learning occurs more readily in relation to situations perceived as problems. Therefore, the teacher should present the curriculum vividly and bring her students in contact with real life problems, (2) learning would be facilitated if the teacher is congruent; that is if she is a real person in the relationship with his students. '*He can be enthusiastic about subjects he likes, and bored by topics he does not like. He can be angry, but he can also be sensitive and sympathetic.*' (3) The teacher must be able to accept the student as he is, to understand the feelings he possesses and accept him warmly by providing an unconditional positive regard. (4) The teacher should be able to make available any resources to the students, without the latters' feeling that the resources have been forced upon them.

So far I briefly reviewed some key concepts that have been used to describe the structure of empowering relationships between children and adults. I have also presented how the same concepts have been researched and/or applied in the educational setting for the improvement of the schooling experience and consequently the quality of learning. Anybody who is a member of a community that has institutionalized education for its youth and who is directly involved with that youth has inevitably some proportionate responsibility to boost young people's education. However, the major responsibility lies with those who establish and provide *compulsory* education. In this respect, Morgan and Hart (1989), argue:

> Schools must accept their own responsibility for examining how the dynamics of schooling may be contributing to 'problem behaviour', and what might be done both to ease the problems pupils are currently experiencing and, where possible, to prevent the same problems arising with the next generation of pupils... *Preventative work... directs the adjustments towards the needs believed to lie behind the behaviour, rather than simply trying to suppress or control it.* [Italics added]

I believe that with appropriate material and socio-psychological provisions, the educational relationship can be the most successful naturally occurring tool for the improvement of students' schooling experience. The specific social context where TSRs are embedded and the students' and teachers' current perspective on their relationships are two major starting points from which to explore the possibilities of

improving TSRs. The third one can be supplied by pertinent psychological knowledge. The emphasis in the present exploration is on the subjective domain and I am thus interested to explore teachers' and students' perceptions. While a phenomenological approach to that understanding is included, a hybrid framework of psychodynamic ideas largely guides my exploration and interpretation. The origination of these ideas has been briefly presented in this last section and is summarized by the following ten points. These points make up the qualities I set out to explore through the structured interview and the TSR observation schedule. Most of these qualities are presented in depth in Paul Greenhalgh's book, 'Emotional Growth and Learning' (1994). Here I have put them together and summarised them very briefly:

1. Provision of a well-bounded container for the student's feelings and actions:

    In providing emotional holding for difficult feelings, one might imagine providing a container for those feelings, and consider how one's actions, words and organisation serve to create and strengthen that container.

2. Containing anxiety whilst giving space for autonomy:

    '*The effective holding environment incorporates sufficient space for the development of the capacity for exploration and autonomy and sufficient boundary for the development of consistency and stability*' (Adams, 1986). In other words the teacher should try to accept the student's anxiety while at the same time try to boost his potential.

3. Demonstrating reflection and understanding instead of immediately responding to projections:

    In educational settings the teacher's task is to demonstrate that difficult feelings can be reflected upon, can be thought about and have some meaning. The experience of the adults' capacity for reflection gradually enables the child to internalise this capacity for him/herself. When a student projects his bad feelings onto teachers, the first task for the latter is not to get emotionally caught up in the difficult feelings.

4. Provision of mirroring:

    This quality involves the teacher's capacity to sensitively and empathetically mirror the student's reactions back to him in a way that the student won't feel threatened.

5. Provision of safety net:

    This provision can be made once the teacher has communicated to the student that she is reliably ready to listen at the student's own initiation or

request. This helps the student develop awareness that difficult situations can be contained with words and sharing.

6. Management of beginnings and endings:

Beginnings and endings mark times of transition when people are unsure of what will happen next; therefore these are times when anxiety is particularly likely to be aroused. When any difficult issues during transition periods are brought forth, children are helped to make more effective and creative use of what happened before and of what will happen after the transition.

7. Communication of the teacher's realness:

Realness or genuineness implies being personally involved in the relationship with a student, whilst also being able to observe this relationship with detachment. An example of 'realness' is where children in emotional difficulty are enabled to experience the availability of the caring adult's fullness of presence and concern (Greenhalgh, 1994).

8. Acceptance, holding and trust:

Carl Rogers (1961), and others have referred to this quality as the provision of unconditional love. It is the teacher's capacity to accept the student as he is and hold him in her memory even in periods of physical absence. This imbues a sense of trust in the child's mind towards his teacher. Reliability and honesty from the provider are of utmost importance here.

9. Empathic understanding:

This involves understanding the feelings the student possesses; providing unconditional positive regard for the student as a whole person irrespective of his feelings or behaviour. '...*One seeks to empathise even with the contents of the student's unconscious, the motivations of which he will not be aware*' (Cox & Theilgaard, 1987). '*If, nevertheless, there is what might be called too much 'empathy', too much accent on feeling and compassion, there is a danger that one might lose understanding; one needs to combine empathy with abstraction and reflection*' (Dreifuss, 1988).

10. Provision of resources:

This quality involves a range of concrete resources being made available to the students without being forced upon them. '*The teacher would want to let the students know of the special experience and knowledge she has to the field, and to let them know that they could call on this knowledge; yet she would want this to be perceived as an offer which could as readily be refused as accepted*' (Rogers, 1961).

So far I have reviewed all major parts of the conceptual framework of this research along with major contextual factors of the TSR that need to be taken into account. However, the phenotype, the most pragmatic and at the same time most elusive perception-dimension of the relationship in question has only been superficially discussed. When discussing the cyclic transaction model between environtype and subjectype, I defined the phenotype as '*an individual's punctuated understanding (apperception) in the here and now*'. It is the quality of 'here and now' that renders the phenotype both pragmatic and elusive. It is pragmatic to the degree that we can sense an environmental situation (i.e. Somebody shouting at us) only in the present tense. The paradox here is that the phenotype despite its pragmatic quality, is also the most elusive component of the cyclic transaction model largely because 'here and now' is always escaping us. Dilthey (1985), has suggested that in its most basic form lived experience (here and now), involves our immediate, pre-reflective consciousness of life: '*A self given awareness which is, as awareness, unaware of itself*'.

The realm of phenotype will be discussed in more depth in the methodology section where I will discuss phenomenological ideas that have influenced this research. Phenotype is therefore pre-reflective and as such it can never be fully explored by means of language, which is an essentially reflective action. To begin with, I will present some research attempts that place emphasis on subjective experience and try to elicit people's understandings as experienced in the here and now.

A Review of Approaches

Teacher - Student Relationships as Lived Experience

The authors of the studies that will be presented below have tried to bring research findings and practice implementation closer by taking into account individuals' contextualised experiences in the here and now. In other words, they have tried to challenge the 'enigma' of successfully applying theoretical knowledge to practical problems. This is one of the oldest challenges in the history of science and is yet to be fully understood. Aristotle comments in his fifth book of the Nichomachean Ethics (Ross, 350 BC/n.d.), "*while it is easy to know what honey, wine, hellebore, cautery, and the use of the knife are so, to know how, to whom, and when these should be applied with a view to producing health, is no less an achievement than that of being a physician.*" Therefore, the challenge always was to situate our knowledge in the living context in which the phenomenon we tackle is embedded.

Desforges and McNamara (1977), in an article on applying social science to educational practice, have tried to sensitize us on issues of applicability of theoretical knowledge:

> (Educational psychology) must be grounded in common experience of students and the complexities and exigencies of the classroom and it must employ rational and reflective models of man.... we must recognize that social science is in error when it attempts to simplify the teaching process and to treat it in a somewhat ad hoc and disjointed fashion. Teaching is a varied and complicated activity. It must be the task of the social scientist to recognize and, indeed, elaborate this complexity.

Moreover, Brophy and Good (1974), underline the need for scientific research to focus more on the complexities of embedded practice and do justice to the participants' lived experience. In a chapter dedicated to individual differences in teacher - student interaction patterns, they argued that up to that period, educational research hadn't offered much to the improvement of practice. They explained that that was mainly due to a lack of criteria for specifying when and what kind of teaching behaviour is appropriate in a certain situation and also due to a lack of attention to individual cases. That was a call for research to focus on particularization and contextualisation in addition to any work that may be seeking for generalizations.

Drawing from their extensive work in education and TSRs, Brophy and Good (Ibid.), remarkably conclude: "*Thus, at times, giving teachers information 'based on research' is worse than giving them no information at all.*"

Since then research in education and psychology has tried to take into account both context and individual differences or -perhaps more accurately- contextual and individual uniqueness. Many researchers claim that in order to understand others at a level finer than mere stereotypes, intense contact is required (Bierbrauerm, 1979; Langer, 1989; Stephan, 1987). Absence of contact with the person whose behaviour is to be interpreted results in a gross simplification of our perception of that other (Reicher, 1996). The contribution of qualitative research models in this exploration of contextualised lived experience has been prolific. Interpretative ethnographic research that is based on symbolic interactionism has offered much in this respect. Symbolic interactionism is based on the assumption that meaning is gained through interaction with others. In other words, how a student understands other individuals, how other individuals perceive that student, and how that student understands himself is largely an outcome of the interpretative process of the messages communicated in the multiple contexts in which the student in question lives. At this point, I will indicatively report some research findings.

After a year of participant observation of "Mr. Appleby's" classroom Dillon (1989), concludes:

> ...at the heart of Appleby's teaching are two driving forces – his sensitivity to his students and what they explicitly and implicitly need as they attempt to learn in a variety of contexts, and his love of the excitement, the unpredictableness, and the challenge of unsolved problems associated with teaching. These rewards and challenges are what motivate teachers like Appleby to strive toward mastering the art of effective teaching ... as indicated in Appleby's case, certain conditions must exist in order for effective teaching to take place ... At the heart of these models are the goals of developing relationships with students, believe in students' abilities to learn, listening to students to gain a better understanding of what they know and how they learn, and providing students with meaningful experiences during classroom lessons.

In another study, also focusing on the experience of teaching, Woods (1993), suggests that grounded life history of teachers, "*promotes the same kind of validity as grounded theory. It is rooted in the experiences under study ... it has operational validity, that is to say*

it is a method that feeds into the teacher's teaching". After presenting and discussing his material Woods (1990), notes that for a particular successful teacher:

> (Education) is for the child, and not for a pre-ordained order of society into which they should be socialized. The teacher is a facilitator, catalytic agent, midwife, novice as well as guru, for the teacher also is always learning. Teaching should therefore be relevant to pupils concerns, anchored in their personal experience, cognizant of the knowledge they already had, and responsive to 'the unique vision' that characterizes the period of childhood.

Although I do not intend to discuss methodology here, the parallel shift towards qualitative methods and the emphasis on embodiment, personal agency, particularization and contextualisation is evident in the above examples. So far I have presented some findings of qualitative research efforts dealing with effective teaching where the importance of TSRs is explicitly stated. Recently a number of studies have focused exclusively on teachers' and students' perceptions of their relationship. I will now present some pertinent research efforts.

Although the following projects do not share the same methodological paths, they all relate to my work in different ways. Thus, in the first research to be presented, the authors have used the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) from which I have adopted items in my own research. Even more there are similarities in the design they implemented as far as they have created cases comprised of one teacher's relationship with two students. However the methodology and the underlying thinking of the usefulness of their research is clearly quantitative.

More specifically, Abidin & Kmetz (1997), examined teachers' perceptions of their relationships with specific students, their experience of stress in relation to those students and whether those perceptions and experiences translate into actual teacher behaviour in the classroom. For the exploration of teachers' stress and TSRs they used the Index of Teaching Stress (ITS) and the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS). They carried out their research in two Virginia State middle schools where they administered the questionnaires to thirty teachers querying each one of them about their relationship with a behaviourally challenging student and a control student in their classroom. They also performed a behavioural six-second interval recording observation for a total of one hour where they noted positive, neutral and negative teacher behaviour toward their students.

Overall, teacher behaviour toward the behaviourally challenging child involved greater amounts of negative and neutral behaviours compared to behaviour demonstrated toward the control child. The amount of positive teacher behaviour, toward each type of student however was not significantly different. As far as stress is concerned, teachers seemed to experience significantly greater stress in relation to the behaviourally challenging child than they did in relation to the control child. In effect a teacher avoided contact with the behaviourally challenging students especially when the stress she was experiencing was associated with her sense of competence as a professional. As far as relationships are concerned, it seemed that the more positive the relationship, the more likely a teacher will engage a child regardless of membership in the challenging or control group.

The above-mentioned findings indicate the existence –or not as the case may be- of general tendencies in the behaviour and perceptions of a number of teachers

towards students that have been divided into two distinctive groups. The significance -
or not- of a correlation among variables indicates the potential generalisability of those
findings to similar wider populations after the application of the same instruments.
However, even in the case where the generalisability is applied successfully it denotes
nothing but an indication of a general tendency. If we look closer at individual cases, at
individual relationships among teachers and students we will most certainly discover
perceptions and experiences that although they may have similarities with the general
description the authors provided, they will be very rarely identifying with it.

This generalised information although pointing to some quantitatively valid
generalisations as succinctly presented above it is of very little help when it comes to
understanding and intervening in particular cases. Moreover as Abidin & Kmetz (Ibid.)
discuss, the methods utilized for the elicitation of the data may skew their validity. To
exemplify, during their recording sessions they found that the amount of positive
teacher behaviour, toward each type of student was not significantly different.
However, this finding as they critically discuss may be due to teachers' concentrated
efforts to balance the distribution of praise between both types of students because of
the observation taking place in their classrooms. Moreover during the observation
period the teachers may have reduced their awareness to other children in the
classroom.

Although the above research may be generating themes for further analysis and
may be sketching some tendencies of the factors it tries to explore, a number of major
questions linger. Doubts remain regarding the extent to which the instruments used
reflect the ideas explored (relationship and stress) and whether the participants in the
designated school settings define these ideas in the same way. There are also doubts
whether the findings consistently reflect everyday teaching practice and the
participants' experience. Finally one cannot help but wonder about the usefulness and
applicability of these findings in certain circumstances where teachers' stress is high or
where relationships fail and support seems necessary.

A more detailed study conducted by Moje (1996), is based on analysis of data
collected over a two-year period and argues that the relationship established between a
teacher and her students motivated them to engage in literacy activities. In other words
this research shows that students sensed and appreciated the teacher's caring for them
and responded positively to the strategies she taught although they did not always use
the strategies in the same way nor did they transfer them to other classes. Because of

this study's reliance on intensive, long-term participant observation throughout a natural cycle of events in the classroom culture, a methodology of ethnography was employed. The setting was one chemistry classroom in a junior high school. Twenty-two students of working and middle class backgrounds were consistently observed over the period of a full academic year. The author clearly states that her goal was to understand and not to evaluate. Apart from observation, a journal and other secondary data sources were used. For the analysis of life history data the researcher adopted a hermeneutic phenomenology framework that is partly used in my research as well. As an outcome, Moje (Ibid.) constructed *narratives* that told stories of people's lives, based on *their* dominant themes.

As far as the influence of TSRs on literacy practices is concerned, this research showed that that teacher's humanity and definition of caring shaped her teaching approach. When she was asked what it meant to care about students, she defined caring in the following way:

> To care? To make sure that when they come into my class that they feel good about themselves. To take means to do my best to make sure that they succeed at something, to make them feel that, "I can be liked by somebody." To care enough to take the time when you see a student that's having trouble to say, "Hey, I have time to help you", and not turn your back the other way... And in caring [for them] I want them to learn to care about themselves... When I care about my students, I want to see them do the best they can in my class, and prepare them to do well when they get out.

Her students also seemed to value the teacher's positive and caring attitude,

> She never puts someone down. She keeps them focused and makes them want to do the work more and more and more... That's why I like the class so much even though I am not an A student in there. She's positive so she keeps me into it so I'll keep trying harder. I'd be flunking chemistry if I didn't have positive teacher. You need something to keep you going.

What needs to be emphasized in this research is the finding that many students sensed the teacher's commitment to them and interpreted her teaching of literacy strategies as one way of expressing her concern. Perhaps this is the reason why students who did not deem her teaching practices as useful for their learning, they nevertheless supported them. However, Moje (Ibid.), critically discusses that, '*it can be argued that these students trusted and respected their teacher, and thus supported her literacy practices, simply because their life experiences were similar, rather as a result of her efforts to bring them into a*

relationship'. This plausible interpretation is taken into account in my research where teachers from different backgrounds are considered.

Yet, other researchers see TSRs as '*Hidden Dramas of Personal Development*' (Novak & Fischer, 1998). They suggest that a narrative structure is inherent in TSRs and argue that, "*the increased prevalence of a relational "narrative paradigm" of the teaching process would help both teachers and those who support their work attain a more authentically educative open-mindedness towards students... enabling teachers to act more as unique facilitators of personal development*." Jerome Bruner (1996), concisely but rather convincingly explains the rationale behind the adaptation of such methodology:

> We devote an enormous amount of effort to teaching ... the 'methods' for 'creating a reality according to science'. Yet we live most of our lives in a world constructed according to the rules and devices of narrative. Surely education could provide richer opportunities than it does for creating the metacognitive sensitivity needed for coping with the world of narrative reality and its competing claims.

Novak and Fischer's project lasted for one academic year. They asked a junior high school teacher of a lower/middle income school to look out for relationships with students taking an evident dramatic form. Once that teacher had chosen one or two relationships upon which to focus, he was to consciously cast himself as playing an influential role in them. He was asked to keep a set of journals reflecting back on these relationships, noting changes in their course, emotional reactions and negotiated difficulties that may had lead to new possibilities. He was asked to consciously envision himself as a developing character in the dramas of these relationships as the events transpired. In this way the researchers proceed and analytically present one such relationship before they conclude that that relationship was not an end in itself.

> [The teacher] did not try to be [the student's] 'buddy' as other teachers did. He let his care work behind the scene of educational activities. [The student's] class-work became *invested with meaning* drawn from his relationship with his teacher... the relational element is central to teaching [but] this does not mean that we should always be telling our students how much we care about them, but, rather, that the experience of finding meaning, both in others and in the world, is at the heart of teaching and learning. 'Finding meaning' is more than just 'knowing' in an empirically cognitive sense, though it necessarily involves

cognitive activity. It is investing ourselves, and working to invest others, in what we know. [Italics added]

When teachers perceive teaching and learning through the medium of relationship as it uniquely unfolds in each case, they unobtrusively realize that they are characters, not narrators or authors, and that they participate equally in relational stories whose meaning is not predetermined but yet to be discovered and decided upon. In this way, *'teachers do not simply repeat or recombine 'twice told tales' they already know'* deriving from past relationships, experiences and mental representations. Instead, *'they become players in the original, meaningful dramas of the lives of their students in their classrooms, dramas they hope will be continued differently because of the unique role they have played, but whose endings they know they cannot control.'* (Ibid.).

The three research efforts presented above, each engaging a different methodology, tried to explore the importance of relationships in the school setting principally as understood by teachers. I will now move on to present some quotes and interpretative findings from research exploring students' voices. Pomeroy (1999), conducted a number of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with thirty three young people that had been permanently excluded from secondary schools in England. During these interviews a number of salient features of the school experience were raised. The results mainly focused on excluded students' perceptions of teacher qualities that either hinder or foster the development of positive relations. The result is an ideal model of the TSR based on the excluded students' accounts. As Pomeroy concludes, *'This model reconsiders power relations in order to create a set of interactions that recognizes the students' non-child status while, at the same time, highlighting teacher specific responsibilities such as duty of care'*. Similar to previous research (Garner, 1995; Wallace, 1996), student teacher relationships were accounted as a key feature of school life. In Pomeroy's study, the most consistent and common grievance is that teachers do not listen to students:

> When I went to talk to 'em, like if I got in to trouble, they wouldn't hear my side of story. They'd take other people's side of the story, but they just wouldn't listen...

On the other hand, the ability to establish positive relationships, indicating care, was of utmost importance to those interviewees:

> I just used to get on with him, if I had any problems, then I'd tell him... and if I used to walk past him in the school, he [would], he'd stop me, 'Where you going, what you up to now?' And just to make sure that I weren't doing

nothing wrong. He was a fun teacher and some days if I were really ill and I
didn't wanna go home, I just wanted to stay in school for a bit, he'd say, 'Well
go and sit in my office then'.

Other student quotes focus more on disciplinary actions and underline the importance
of balanced discipline where freedom can be expressed within firm boundaries. Many
students spoke of preventative interventions and underlined the importance of early
link with their homes. Finally many students discussed issues of power and hierarchy:

Just that I don't like teachers, and its like they think that they're higher than
you. Like just cause they like try and teach me how to work and that, think
like they higher than you...

A similar study was conducted in Dublin (Boldt, 1997), where a research team
interviewed one hundred and thirty seven early school leavers between fourteen and
twenty-one years of age. Eighty-nine of those interviewed left a voluntary secondary
school, the type of school where my study took place. '*The findings indicate clearly that a
pupil's experience of school is one of the most important factors in determining whether he or she will
remain in school... It is also apparent that this experience depends largely on relationships with
teachers.*' Boldt concludes, '*There are many teachers who are unaware that they do not or are
unable to relate to pupils in such a way that pupils learn, feel that teachers are concerned about them
and enjoy some measure of success*'. The writer's concluding comment seems plausible but I
feel compelled to note that although TSRs are indeed perceived to play a major role in
the students' decision to leave school early, they should not be viewed as an additional
factor in the same way as learning difficulties or poverty are viewed.

Literature has revealed that there are many other factors, often deeply rooted
and more permeable in the students' lives than TSRs that contribute to the difficulties
some of them face at school[13]. What I presume makes TSRs a special factor is their
role as the major *interface* where already existing variables come forth to facilitate or
hinder learning. In other words TSRs' importance may be lying in the management of
the relational space created among students and staff where cooperation or conflicts
are dramatized in the school setting. The management of that relational space is a
dynamic procedure that has its own value and properties in addition to the
contributing factors each student, teacher or classroom system may be bringing into it.

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[13] Please refer to figure 1.1 for a presentation of some of these factors

This research targets and explores TSR as a major interface between designated-disadvantaged school settings and at-risk students' schooling experience. The centre of this exploration is the participants' understandings and experience of their relationships. However this exploration is largely based on a conceptual framework that considers a cyclic transactional reality. As its title suggest, this model adopts a systemic way of thinking that places emphasis on the procedures and intentions of transactions that form people's perceptions instead of looking for any linear causes that 'objectively' result in people's understandings. Its major components are constituted of the person's environmental context (environtype), the person's past experience (subjectype) and the dynamic sphere where the TSR phenomenon is constantly interpreted and recreated (phenotype).

Some relevant research efforts, developed within different methodological traditions have been displayed and discussed. The uniqueness of my explorative effort lies not only in its conceptual framework and underlying methodological synthesis but also in the way it tries to address the research-practice gap. A gap that places a challenge for any piece of research to provide not only policy recommendations but also personal insight that may act as a catalyst transforming general recommendations to specific practices with personal meaning. But 'insight' is an elusive concept, where may it occur?

In light of the cyclic transactional model, the 'management of the relational space' between a teacher and a student always takes place in the 'here and now' (phenotype); this is the 'boiling cauldron' where personal meaning and insight is created. Being reflective is a way that has been suggested as contributing to one's improved practice (Schön, 1983). However, Dilthey (1985), proposes that in its most basic form lived experience (here and now) involves our immediate, *pre-reflective* consciousness of life. Van Manen (1999), insightfully discusses about being reflective and the practice of teaching:

> Phenomenologically it is very difficult, if not impossible, for teachers to be immersed in interactive or dialogic activities with their students while simultaneously stepping back from the activity [and be reflective]... I would argue that the practice of teaching is so challenging not only because it is cognitively complex but also because the knowledge that inheres in our

practices is in part non-cognitive... in short, the study of the practice of teaching would need to be sensitive to the experiential quality of practical knowledge: the acknowledgement that much of knowing what to do, ensues from the complex dimensions of practice: one's body, actions, relations and the things of one's world.

This non-cognitive quality that is ever present in teaching Van Manen calls 'tact'. *Tact is the delicate and sensitive appreciation of what is appropriate and proper in dealing with others, esp. so as to avoid giving offence; adroitness or judgment in dealing with others or handling difficult or delicate situations; the faculty of saying or doing the right thing at the appropriate time.* [14] Tact resides in the non-reflective properties of the person's actions, in one's embodied practice.

By employing the design I will further on present, I have tried not only to demystify the interpersonal judgmental value that is hidden when discussing relationships but also to present examples of the various ways in which tact is -or not as the case may be- demonstrated by teachers and perceived by students. Thus TSRs involve much more than mere teaching techniques or personal instructional philosophies. TSRs are the dynamic interfaces through which every teaching practice in the school setting is embodied in the context of personal life histories and backgrounds while these practices become habituated in uniquely different situational and relational spheres of the present.

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[14] Excerpted from *The Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia*. Developed by The Learning Company, Inc. Copyright (c) 1997 TLC Properties Inc. All rights reserved.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Human relationships that take place in secondary schools are events primarily constructed in the realm not of nature but of culture. This is a study of human beings as social beings and is therefore concerned with relations that take place primarily in the symbolic world. As such, those relations are wholly enmeshed in the complexities of language. Under this light, the human relations explored are not amenable to explanation in terms of causes, in the natural science sense, but in terms of the ways in which they are produced and recognized as intelligible and sensible (Pomerantz & Fehr, 1997).

More precisely, the nature of what constitutes a 'teacher - student relationship' is not so much of material substance but more to do with symbolic processes that are created by people who engage with their fellow social beings. In so doing, they create a world that is locked together not by causal relations but by systemic conventions, shared rules and interpretative narratives. Their relationships are not so much woven by their physical entity but rather by their social presence that involves an endless 'conversation'[15] (Harre & Gillett, 1994). However, while I acknowledge that the relationships teachers and students have with each other are largely subjective experiences imbued with meaning; I have not neglected the space and time in which these relationships take place. On the contrary, it is the pragmatic needs of day-to-day interactions between teachers and students that render this research meaningful and useful.

This research is both exploratory and confirmatory. It is primarily exploratory because it tries to explore how participants understand their relationships. However the exploration is partly guided by pertinent psychological theory. At the same time, there is mutual influence between 'exploration' and 'guidance'. In other words not only is the exploration guided but also the guidance explored. To the degree the 'theoretical

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[15] A linguistic term that here may be read here as a synonym to the systemic term, "feedback loop" but with stronger emphasis on interpretative processes.

guidance' is challenged by this exploration, this research also has confirmatory elements; it explicates further the concepts that guide it.

A Synthesis of Traditions

In the discussion that follows I am trying to present the methodological influences that underline the development of this study. Within the qualitative, interpretative paradigm, I found that the best way to delve into the complexity of the nature of the teacher - student relationship without becoming too abstract or theoretical was to adopt a hybrid methodological framework that would do justice both to the subjective nature of the phenomenon and to the outstanding social and cultural contributions that shape it within the context of designated disadvantaged schools. In this way the methods used for the better exploration of the phenomenon studied are derived from the qualitative methodological traditions of case study and phenomenology.

Although all traditions have processes and standards of their own, one should not forget that they are only tools used for the explication of a 'problem'. As suggested both by practice and elsewhere (Creswell, 1998) authors may use tools from different traditions within a single study. However it seems plausible that the influence of each tradition should be explicitly stated before I proceed to their combined application through the research design. First I discuss a number of issues that explain the phenomenological influences on this study while at the same time I discuss why this work cannot be purely classified under this tradition of enquiry. Then, I present those aspects of the research process that are informed by case study methodology and discuss those issues that disqualify this research from being classified purely as such. Finally, through the design structure I will demonstrate how I tried to integrate both traditions in a coherent system of exploration.

Much of the conceptual framework of phenomenology is recognized as being established by Edmund Husserl (1913/82), who developed a philosophic system rooted in subjective openness. However, according to Kockelmans, (1967) it is with Hegel that the term 'phenomenology' is first clearly defined. For Hegel, phenomenology referred to knowledge as it appears to consciousness, the science of describing what one perceives, senses, and knows in one's immediate awareness and experience. A more recent and concise definition is given by Creswell, (1998); "*A phenomenological study describes the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a phenomenon.*" What follows is a discussion of apparent phenomenological influences on this study along with the resulting aberrations[16].

1. Of ultimate value in my study are the participants' perspectives of their experience. It is the understanding of these perspectives and the process of understanding itself that may help those involved to modify the TSR for the better. The relationship a student has with his teacher is much more than the observable behaviours. These behaviours are largely the socially permitted manifestation of a complex web of personal histories and social beliefs in a school context. The phenomenon is so complex that its 'full reality' may in principle be unknowable however this does not lead to the conclusion that subjective worldviews are futile to research. On the contrary this complexity renders all worldviews as perspectives to be respected. However it doesn't necessarily mean that all worldviews are equally valuable. In his pragmatic account, Nietzsche (1964) suggested that world views are to be judged by whether they allowed effective manipulation of the world. Just like Newtonian Physics, an explanatory framework does not need to describe reality with absolute precision to be useful. (Hawking, 1996).

2. Phenomenological questions are meaning questions; they do not seek to problem solve. Individuals, especially those coming from distinctively different social backgrounds may perceive reality differently. In other words in such a complex context where the teacher - student relationships take place the multiple understandings and the meaning inconsistencies are not dealt with as a problem to

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[16] Based on an initial sketch of hermeneutic phenomenology by Max Van Manen, 1997.

be solved; rather they are respected and perceived as part of a situation that needs to be thoughtfully understood and tactfully dealt with.

3. Phenomenological research is the study of lived experience. My research does not seek to come up with a new theory with which to explain or control the world. A possible goal of my study is to offer the possibility of plausible insights that may bring those involved in teacher - student relationships in a more direct contact with the world as perceived by the other with whom they engage in educative institutions.

4. According to a method based on the work of Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen, as adopted by Moustakas (1994), the first step in the analysis of phenomenological data is to obtain a full description of the researcher's experience of the phenomenon. In this study, the researcher's experience of the phenomenon has an extensive two-fold influence that is discussed: First as a biographical incentive for the study itself and second as a research tool for reflecting embodied knowledge that comes forth as a result of the researcher's interactions with the participants.

5. The main goal of this research is to enhance the understanding of how teacher - student relationships are perceived by the participants so that educators may act responsibly and responsively in their everyday practice with those to whom they stand in a pedagogical relationship. Thus this work is very much aiming to cultivate a thoughtfulness, a minding, a heeding, a caring attunement of what it means to live in a teacher - student relationship. These qualities are promoted in the works of important phenomenologists like Heidegger (1962).

6. This work seeks to humanize human institutions and produce action sensitive knowledge. This effort to 'humanize' is a basic phenomenological goal that reflects existential[17] sensitivities (Van Manen, 1997).

However if we delve deeper into the basic phenomenological assumptions we can see that, strictly speaking, this study cannot be put under the umbrella of 'pure' phenomenology because:

1. The ultimate goal of my research is not the discovery of the very nature of the phenomenon; I do not intend to describe the internal meaning structures of lived

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[17] Existentialism: A modern philosophical trend, the leading tenet of which is that a person (unlike a thing) has no predetermined essence but forms his or her essence by acts of pure will. Excerpted from *The Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia*. Developed by The Learning Company, Inc. Copyright (c) 1997 TLC Properties Inc. All rights reserved

experience as phenomenological research does (Van Manen, 1997). That is, I do not ultimately seek to find the essences without which a 'teacher - student relationship' ceases to be defined as such (Husserl, 1982; Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Instead I am trying to explore individual experience and the bound context within which teacher - student relationship understandings occur and to gain insight in the factors that may influence these understandings.

2. This research is not a study of the lifeworld as experienced purely pre-reflectively without being conceptualized, categorized or reflected upon or without referring to particular cultures or social groups like Husserl (1970), has advocated a phenomenological study should be. Instead most of the eliciting questions are influenced by existing theory and the discussion is elaborated with reference to cultural and social issues that seem to be prominent in the context where the phenomenon takes place. Thus, although this work emphasizes the meaning individuals give to their experiences, it does not necessarily seek to portray a pre-reflective experience. In short, phenomenological reduction[18] is not the goal of this work.

3. The phenomenological principle of 'Epoche' was not fully applied. As Moustakas (1994), explains, "*What is doubted by the phenomenological Epoche are the scientific 'facts', the knowing of things in advance.*" If we oversee the project it will become obvious that psychological theories have influenced its content and accordingly guided the structure of data collection instruments. That choice of adopting pertinent psychological theories was made in light of existing knowledge on human relations, teacher - student relations and especially on research and interventions carried out with populations working or living in disadvantaged socio-economic contexts. The existing wealth of knowledge on these issues was simply too important to be ignored. However, at the same time all this theoretical knowledge seems to be of little or no use as we close our books and step into the schools. There, it seems that the huge quantity of accumulated knowledge can be rendered of no avail in the fraction of a second of lived life.

Thus on a broad level, this research is guided by given scientific knowledge. However on a deeper level, in my day-to-day interactions with the participants I was trying to be present with an open mind to their way of understanding things; I

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[18] Phenomenological reduction is a multi-staged process. According to Merleau-Ponty (1964), it is "the ambition to make reflection emulate the unreflective life of consciousness".

was trying to place my biases in Epoche. In my discussions with them I was trying to take everybody's and at the same time nobody's position; I was trying to give every belief, idea or feeling an equal value; to recognise every aspect of understanding for the participant in question. In this way I was discovering, in my attitude as a researcher, a deep-seated phenomenological quality, that all phenomena should be addressed as possible human experiences. As Van Manen (1997), clarifies, "*It is in this sense that phenomenological descriptions have a universal (intersubjective) character.*"

This phenomenological quality is realised through the disciplined process of the 'Epoche'. In this project I have not tried to set the whole study in Epoche. I only state the scientific 'biases' that initially guide it and I accept the challenge to examine and test this study's biases and enhance my openness to new understandings. In short, I haven't' strictly applied but I am inspired by the value of the epoche principle. Moreover, it is this unique synthesis of being open within the boundaries of a system; of using the 'Epoche' only at a certain level; that stimulates the discussion of findings. A discussion that compares individual understandings and juxtaposes scientific and personal 'biases' in an effort to shade some light in the area in between; in the area of relations.

4. Although I want to believe that phenomenological thinking advances the quality of this study with its human sensitive background, it is not an end to the research process. Although I try to empower the participants to discuss their understandings and to elaborate their meanings of the phenomenon; this is not done in order to come to an ultimately fuller grasp of what the phenomenon means. In this research the ultimate aim is not phenomenological in the sense that I do not ultimately seek to become more fully aware of 'what it means to be in a TSR relationship'. Because, as phenomenologists themselves claim:

> 'To *do* hermeneutic phenomenology is to attempt to accomplish the impossible: to construct a full interpretative description of some aspect of the lifeworld, and yet to remain aware that lived life is always more complex than any explication of meaning can reveal. The phenomenological reduction teaches us that complete reduction is impossible, that full or final descriptions are unattainable' (Van Manen, 1997)

The understanding of the meanings participants attribute to the phenomenon is treated not as an end but more as a developing narrative that may clarify circumstances and lead to better intersubjective understanding and tactful respect.

Another reason for not being faithful to the ultimate phenomenological goal are the concrete demands of an institutional reality whose participants desperately seek a direct and realistic way to cope with their everyday problems. As Van Manen (1997) extensively discusses, 'thoughtfulness'[19] and 'tact'[20] might indeed show us the way to more humanistic educational relations. However even though some of their elements can be mapped out, their experiential nature cannot be directly transferred through language. Thus interventions on the 'phenomenological essence' of TSR cannot be introduced directly as effective measures in urgent situations that demand immediate interventions.

Teaching has often been discussed as craft knowledge (Cooper & McIntyre, 1996). The practicalities of teaching are at least as important as the underlying beliefs of those who engage in its practice. Therefore room has been made to take into account practical factors that go beyond the explication of one's meanings. These factors are more clearly evident when we start to discuss the system in which the participants are placed. Therefore, methods traditionally used in the case study design come as necessary supplements to the teacher - student relationship exploration.

Case Study Contributions

Although ultimately it may be the individual participant that gives meaning to a particular teacher - student relationship, this relationship undoubtedly takes place in a multi layered social context. If we want to explore the subjective end of the phenomenon, we can use phenomenological ideas to discuss personal understandings. Likewise if we want to explore the intersubjective/contextual end of the phenomenon we may use systemic methods. For the better illumination of the contextual issues that arise, I have adopted ideas and used tools that traditionally form part of the case study methodology.

'*A case study is an exploration of a 'bounded system' or a 'case' over time through detailed, in depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context*', (Creswell, 1998).

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[19] A quality that describes action as having been informed by reflection

[20] The practical resourcefulness that is sensitively attuned to the individual situations

In this research there are several elements that traditionally belong to case study methodology, although some of them only in part. Here I list seven of these elements:

1. In order to specify the width of my exploration and thus render it feasible, I have utilised a design that promotes the creation of cases. It is within these cases that the individual understandings are presented and discussed. The formation of cases not only brings to the surface the complexities that pragmatically arise in the time and space where the individual perceptions meet but also places boundaries to the exploration of these complexities; boundaries that are so much needed in a reality of infinitely intermingling systems.

2. I explore a small number of cases and although patterns may arise among them, I primarily seek to understand each one for its own uniqueness. I do not use cases to generalise to a wider population but to particularise. This particularization may illuminate relevant generalizations and consequently lead to a better understanding of the phenomenon.

3. Contextual descriptions are presented even though they are not as rich as they could have been if I had focused solely on case study methodology.

4. Multiple sources of information have been considered. However, they are not given equal value for the explication of the phenomenon.

5. The key interpretations pursued are not the researcher's but those of the people being studied. I try to understand how the actors, the people being studied see things and only then do I actively bring my presence in the interpretation of the case and present assertions based on my own understandings.

6. As Stake (1995) notes, *'good case study is patient, reflecting and willing to see another view of the case'*. In this research I consciously tried to exercise those qualities.

7. Finally, purposeful sampling has been utilised which is a sampling choice that is often used in case study designs (Creswell, 1998).

It becomes evident that some points that I have listed above (e.g. 5, 6 & 7) argue both for the phenomenological and the case-study approach. This is not conflictual but on the contrary a reminder that both approaches are qualitative and that they share common characteristics. This is also the main reason why one can combine them for the better exploration of a given issue. However, the present project cannot be classified purely as a case study for four main reasons:

1. In this research, what is defined as 'a case' is not typical for a case-study design because the focus is not so much an object or a person but a process (Stake, 1995).

Here at the centre of each case is the dynamic web of meanings and interactions that is developed as an outcome of each specific TSR.

2. Although I have utilised a design that promotes the creation of cases, these are situated in different -although similar- contexts[21]. In this way the resulting multiple case design is not clearly bound in space.

3. Different sources of information have been given different weight. In order to gain research resources[22] that will enable me to incorporate phenomenological principles the contextual material collected is not exhaustive. Therefore the description of each contextual setting assumes a secondary character.

4. For the reasons given in number three above, the within-case analysis is also not exhaustive. I chose to stop at the in-depth analysis of the primary participants (teachers & students) and I only present other peoples' perspectives more briefly.

In short, this work is an effort towards a holistic study of teacher - student relationships, taking into account subjective experiences and personal meaning as well as contextual influences. If one of these two dimensions is omitted then an essential part of the phenomenon fails to be explored. The social context is not only the space in which the experiences are lived but it also provides the way to intervene both in the procedural/pragmatic and in the meaning dimension of those experiences. In this way, the cases presented, the resulting interpretations and the forthcoming suggestions will be two-fold, both systemic and tactful.

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[21] Two designated disadvantaged schools.
[22] Mostly in fieldwork time and writing space.

CHAPTER FOUR

DESIGN, METHODS AND QUALITY

This research aims to explore people's personal experience. It seeks to understand uniqueness and at the same time discuss it in a way that may be helpful to the people that are involved in those experiences. Under this light, the goal is twofold: First, to elicit people's subjective understandings in a credible way and second, to create a useful meta-perspective of those understandings. Therefore, given the possibilities and limitations of the resources available, the quest is to develop the research in a way that will satisfy those goals to the best possible quality. However, before delving further into issues of methodological quality, I would first like to present the research design and methods.

Research Design

Pre-recording period

I was ready to begin with my research design only after a year of reading relevant literature, preparing the ground for fieldwork and piloting, (Appendix A1). In this way, with the beginning of the next academic year, I was ready to proceed with the main fieldwork. I gave all teacher participants a brief leaflet with a general overview of my background and information on what I intended to do in the school (Appendix B2). We informally discussed the content of that leaflet on a one to one basis and I replied to any questions they had. From that initial contact onwards I consciously set as my priority to make the teachers feel relaxed in my presence. The target I had in mind was to enable them air any concerns they might have had with regard to my research and my role in the school.

I wanted to make sure that teachers would see me as somebody who is in the school in order to learn from them and not to judge them or impose an external procedure ignoring their needs. Therefore, one of my fieldwork principles was to give participants priority by adjusting my research schedule according to their needs. In this

way I felt I had better chances in gaining teachers' cooperation. Adhering to that principle proved to be very demanding in terms of my time and my resources in patience and resilience. However that principle was at the heart of my research and acted as a pillar to its success. The last interview I conducted in Ivory school, in May 2001, was with the principal. While we were talking about 'Improving teacher student relations and anticipated difficulties', he spontaneously commented on the way I chose to carry out my research:

> *Some people are very suspicious because they feel that they are being watched and monitored. I'm surprised that you've got away with it so well. I thought that there would be a stronger reaction against your presence but you were very casual, relaxed about it, you didn't force yourself on people. Supposing we went about it differently and I went to a staff meeting and said "this guy is coming in and he's going to actually be looking at how you're teaching your classes and the different methods you're using and things...", one person in that staff meeting would have said, "No, I don't think that's a good idea" and then a few more people would have said it and then the meeting would have rejected the thing but the fact that you came in without me consulting the staff as a group and you went to one person at a time and that person had a choice and they were able to make the choice without somebody else roaring into their ear that this was wrong then that was ok with them; then it was ok with the next person and then you were in; so the person who was likely to object wasn't involved in the first place.*

The next step, as I had designed it, was to spend some time in the second year classrooms I would follow without recording any data. I was ready to commence the pre-recording period in both schools. This step took place between the 2nd and 27th of October 2000. In my first classroom visit I introduced myself to the students and explained my role as that of a foreigner who was interested in observing the lesson in different classrooms. In this way, I started to make myself part of the teachers' and the students' weekly schedule. That period served three main purposes. First, the students started to realise that 'Mr Rigos', would be in their classroom 3-4 times a week, passively sitting at the last desk observing their classroom. Second, the teachers got used not only to my presence in their classroom but also realised that if any outstanding incidents occurred, I was there not to criticise them but to offer an understanding ear.

Thirdly, my own presence in the school started transforming from one that had the clumsiness of the first-timer to one that was well oriented and an expected part of

the school's weekly schedule. I soon learnt to find my way round the school and got used to each teacher's classroom setting. I located where the students that I was interested in sat and even more I adjusted the pace of the research development according to each teacher's personality and classroom circumstances. In other words, the timing of my work and the moment I would commence the next step was from then on only roughly guided by the design I had formulated on my papers. The most important clues were given by the school setting and more particularly by the participants' readiness to accept and proceed with the next research phase.

Selection of Participants

Students' Pool Sample

During the pre-recording period, the 'selection of participants' phase took place. Since I discussed with the teachers that my research evolves around the theme of 'students at-risk for early school leaving', I proceeded by asking them to let me know of a number of second year students that they thought may be at risk for leaving school early; and more precisely before the completion of their compulsory education. For that reason I used the 'Identifying Students at-risk for Early School Leaving' form (Appendix C1). It quickly became evident that, due to the streaming structure both schools were using, there was a large concentration of students 'at-risk' in the academically weakest second year group. The information gathered at that point from both schools appears in concise form overleaf (Tables 4.1 & 4.2), where only students of the two weak groups and their teachers are presented.

On the first horizontal line of the tables, I have placed all members of staff who nominated students as potential early school leavers. On the first vertical line I placed all students that got at least one nomination of being at risk for early school leaving. In this way I collected the names of eleven students from Ivory school and nine students from Priory school; these constitute each school's student pool sample. Out of these twenty students I chose seven to follow throughout the academic year. However, in this thesis I present only four students and I have excluded the rest who can be identified in the tables by the prefix 'excl' followed by a number. The four students presented here are depicted with a pseudonym while the rest are identified by

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the 'St' initials followed by a number. Likewise the teachers included in this research are given a pseudonym while the rest are identified by the letter 'T' followed by a number. As far as the rest table-cells are concerned, whenever a teacher nominated a student, a number appears. That number indicates how high in the teacher's list of students at risk for early school leaving the specific individual is.

Table 4.1

Ivory school: Pool sample of nominated students for 'at-risk' status

Staff \ Students	Pr[*]	HSCL	C[**]	Tutor	Ms Sutton	Ms Anderson	T1	T2	T3	Sum
St1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
St2			2	2	2	2	3		2	6
Timmy		**2**		**5**	**7**	**4**	**4**			**5**
Excl1		4	3		4					3
St3		3		4			2			3
St4					6				3	2
St5				3		5				2
Alex					**3**					**1**
St6					5					1
St7								2		1
St8						3				1

[*] The Principal said he would consult the class teacher so he had nothing new to fill in.
[**] These are the Counsellor's nominations

Table 4.2

Priory school: Pool sample of nominated students for 'at-risk' status

Staff \ Students	Pr[*]	C[*]	HSCL	Ms Anne	YH[**]	T0	T1	T2	Mr Porter[***]	T3	T4	Sum
Philip			**2**	**2**	**1**	**2**	**1**			**3**	**4**	**7**
St1				1	4	6		4		1	1	6
St2			1	3	5	3		7		2	2	7
Ian					**6**	**1**	**2**	**3**		**4**		**5**
Excl2						7	4	1		6		4
Excl3						5		5		7		3
St3					3	4					3	3
St4							5	6		5		3
St5							3	2				2

[*] The Principal and Counsellor did not reply. They both referred me to the teachers
[**] These are the Year Head's nominations
[***] This teacher did not nominate any students. Instead he said, "all of them and none of them might be at-risk for early school leaving"

So far I presented the pool sample and spoke about two important decisions. First of my decision to work with seven students, out of the initial twenty and second, of my decision to exclude three students of this presentation out of the seven that I worked with. For the rationale behind both decisions to become clear, I first have to present the next research design step.

Teachers Pool Sample

At about the middle of the pre-recording observation period, I had all twenty student names available. I was then ready to choose the teachers and eventually build the teacher - student relationship pairs; it was time for the students to make their nominations. Therefore, the next step in my research involved a brief, one-to-one, preliminary interview with all students of the academically weakest class in each school. Interviewing all students also served to avoid focusing on any particular student. That was very important especially in view of the classroom observations where I wanted to avoid having particular students suspecting that they might be particularly monitored.

During the preliminary interviews, that lasted fifteen minutes on average, I got the chance to meet all students on a one-to-one basis. After a short introduction about myself and my work which was in the general terms of '*I am interested to learn how students and teachers get along with each other*', I proceeded with the items that appear in the 'Student's Preferences' form (Appendix C2). The aim of those items was not only to ask the students of their 'preferred' and 'non-preferred' teacher but also to get a general idea of their criteria behind that choice. Moreover, I used all these items and not a simple straightforward question like, 'who is your preferred teacher' in order to provide the students with thinking time and thus minimise the probability of getting any thoughtless responses. In addition, through the preliminary interview schedule, I got some information on the importance students place on the their TSRs and also some information about their family background.

I consequently reviewed each student's replies giving special weight to the 'if you could choose one teacher…' type of questions. In this way, the students' preferences for their teachers were not only evident but quite informative as well. All student nominations are presented in the following tables (4.3 & 4.4); the relationships that were eventually selected to be explored appear in bold.

Table 4.3

Ivory school: Students' nominations and selected relationships

Students (Times nominated)	St1 (8)	St2 (6)	Timmy (5)	Excl1 (3)	St3 (3)	St4 (2)	St5 (2)	Alex (1)	St6 (1)	St8 (1)	St7 (1)	Sum ✓	Sum ✗
Nominated Teachers													
Ms Anderson		✓	✓ - Prompted					✓	✓	He didn't want to differentiate among teachers	He focused on subjects only. Teachers were not part of his agenda at all	4	-
Ms Sutton			✗ - Prompted			✗	✗	✗	✗			-	5
Tutor	✓				✗	✓		✓				3	1
T4				✓*			✓					2	-
T1				✗								-	1
T2	✗											-	1
T5					✓							1	-
Feel/think	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗				
Work	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	Don't know				

*Student's initial choice was a teacher who has only occasionally taught his class. A month later when asked again he nominated T4

The symbol '✓' indicates that the student has selected a teacher as his preferred one and the symbol '✗' indicates a 'least preferred teacher'. The last column on the right of the tables shows the total number of positive and negative nominations each teacher had. The last two rows with the headings 'Feel/think' and 'Work' indicate the students' reply to the question 'if your preferred teacher were to teach you most school lessons, would that make a difference in the way you: a) *Feel or think* about school and b) *work* in the school'. In this case, the symbol '✓' indicates that the students said that it would make a difference for them whereas the symbol '✗', indicates that that would make no difference. This question was included at this stage because it gives a clue to the degree of acknowledged importance each student gives to the TSR with the teacher he was talking about.

Table 4.4

Priory school: Students' nominations and selected relationships

Students (Times nominated)	Philip (7)	St2 (7)	St1 (6)	Ian (5)	Excl2 (4)	Excl3 (3)	St3 (3)	St4 (3)	St5 (2)	Sum ✓	Sum ✗
Nominated Teachers											
Ms Anne	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	**5**	**-**
Mr Porter	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗		✗	✓	✗	**3**	**5**
T0	✗			✗	✓					1	2
T2						✓				1	-
T1						✗				-	1
T4			✗					✗		-	2
T3		✗								-	1
Feel/think	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	?	✗	✓		
Work	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	?	✗	✗		

I must note that from the very beginning all students seemed to take the nomination procedure very seriously and their criteria were based on judgments like: 'good teaching', 'good help', 'not narky' and 'have a laugh with'. The only exception out of all twenty students was Ivory's student 'St2', who noted that his preferred teacher would change the way he feels about work because he would rest more. So far I presented how individual potential participants were collected. It is now time to discuss the criteria I used to in order to focus on certain TSR pairs and thus chose the final participants.

Selection of Final Teacher - Student Relationship Pairs

The methodological influences of phenomenology and case study are present in the participants' selection[23]. This selection can largely be classified under Miles and Huberman's (1994) categories of 'purposeful sampling'. More specifically, from a phenomenological perspective I have applied 'criterion sampling' whereby all cases meet some necessary criterion. In this way, one criterion is that all 'core'[24] participants have experienced TSR and a second criterion is that all students acknowledge some importance to that relationship.

However, if we look at Timmy's case, we can see that at the time of the interview he couldn't see how the teacher he nominated as his preferred one could make any difference to the way he feels about school or to the way he works in school. Actually, Timmy didn't readily nominate any teachers either as preferred or non-preferred. It was only when I prompted him by asking, 'If you were to chose one teacher, which one would you chose?' that he spoke of specific teachers. Consequently, Timmy is chosen as a disconfirming student, whereby one explores a case that may challenge the original concept explored, seeking for exceptions and looking for variation. This criterion is used more often in 'case-study' research designs. Moreover, I chose Timmy not only because he could form a disconfirming case but also because he was high at the rank of the teachers' nominations. Likewise, Philip and Ian are at the top of their teachers' nominations. But why did I choose Alex?

As I explained earlier this thesis focuses on uniqueness. Uniqueness is what teachers face daily in their classrooms and however useful any generalizations may be, teaching is a craft learnt not only through books but also through experience. There have been plenty of quantitative research efforts in the past that 'have found' what elements constitute a 'good teacher' or qualitative ones that give voice to teachers and pupils (Belden & Plattner, 1999; Morgan & Morris, 1999; Stone, 2000). My thesis aims

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[23] I try to avoid using the word 'sampling' because it is my thesis that in order to understand TSRs better we have to place emphasis on particularizations. Thus, the focus is on the specific relationships explored as such and not on the TSRs as samples of a wider population.

[24] 'Core' participants are the teachers and the students that form the TSR pairs whereas 'peripheral' participants are all others (parents, principal, HSCL, Counselor, tutor).

not only to give voice to people's understandings of their TSRs but also to underline their uniqueness by displaying how differently they might be perceived from another vantage point.

In order to serve that goal I tried to create antithetical cross-nominations among participants. Therefore, I tried to find students that not only adhere to the participants' criteria mentioned above but that have also nominated the same teacher antithetically. In this way, Philip's least-preferred teacher is Ian's most preferred one and even though Timmy and Alex agree on their preferred and non-preferred teacher, they seem to place antithetical importance on their TSR with those teachers. I didn't choose St1 as the other 'pole' to Timmy because St1 seemed to have specific learning difficulties. He seemed to have hyperactivity problems and his severe speech and learning difficulties could make interviewing a very difficult if not inappropriate task for the elicitation of his understandings.

However not only did I base the selection of my participants on the information gathered from the forms but also on observation notes that I kept after each interview. Those observations were guided by a list of points based on Greenspan and Greenspan's (1991), framework for systematic observation of the child as well as some of Gorden's (1980), nonverbal elements (Appendices D1 & D2). The items of the observation list served as reminders of possible important points to note down. Therefore, the observation notes where used to give a brief overall picture of the person I was working with.

What follows are four tables with the preliminary information on each of the main student participants as derived from their teachers and from my observation notes (Tables 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8). Each table is comprised of two sections. In the first I present those observational data that I recorded during the preliminary interview (Using Appendix D1) and I also briefly note the initial impression each student gave me while in classroom. In the second section, I present the information that critically contributed to the final selection of the aforementioned students.

Table 4.5

Brief participant selection information about Alex

Observations notes	Relation engagement:	Reciprocally cooperative.
	Personality:	Proximity seeking, nervous.
	Potential:	Fair.
	In classroom profile:	Quiet, cooperative, moody.
Criteria that contributed to student's selection	- Identical nominations with Timmy. - Antithetical importance to Timmy. - Unique TSR conflict: Student was nominated as at-risk for early school leaving solely by Ms Sutton. - He nominated most frequently selected teachers.	

Moreover, it was only during the same period that I gathered information about the nominated teachers from many students. This is presented in the following bullet lists. In this way one can see in more detail some student criteria for the nomination of the teachers either as preferred or least preferred.

❖ Ms Anderson (Four 'preferred' nominations)
- She is very nice. She helps you. (Alex)
- She is polite; not narky. If you can't do art she gives you a video. (Timmy)
- She is very nice and friendly. She wouldn't row if it wasn't serious. She doesn't make us, she asks us. She gets us fun things. (St2)
- She's a good teacher. She'll come over and give you a hand. She doesn't give out. (St6)

❖ Ms Sutton (Five 'least-preferred' nominations)
- I don't like her. She got me suspended for fighting. (Alex)
- She never lets you go to the toilet. Gives you work. If you can't do it she still asks you to do it; but she is a good teacher. (Timmy)
- I don't like her. She just gives out all the time. (St6)
- She gives too hard on you. If anybody talks she sends them to the principal. (St5)
- She always gives out and all. I am fed up. (St4)

❖ Ms Anne (Five 'preferred' nominations)

- She is very good to us. Good learning. Don't hear her shout much (Philip)

- I prefer the way Ms Anne explains, helps if you are slow and gives extra time to catch up. (St2)

- She doesn't go too hard on you and explains things. (St5)

- You get a laugh out of her as well. (St4)

- She is better to talk with. (St1)

Table 4.6

Brief participant selection information about Timmy

Observations notes	Relation engagement: Cooperative, typical.
	Personality: Immature, playful, easy going.
	Potential: Poor.
	In classroom profile: Easily distracted, obedient.
Criteria that contributed to student's selection	• Identical nominations with Alex.
	• Antithetical importance to Alex.
	• High in the list of nominated students (5 nominations).
	• He nominated most frequently selected teachers.

Table 4.7

Brief participant selection information about Philip

Observations notes	Relation engagement: Cooperative, typical, distant.
	Personality: Tough, Streetwise.
	Potential: Good.
	In classroom profile: Leader in class, disruptive.
Criteria that contributed to student's selection	• Antithetical nominations to Ian.
	• Top in the list of nominated students (7 nominations).
	• Nominated most frequently selected teachers.

Table 4.8

Brief participant selection information about Ian

Observations notes	Relation engagement:	Cooperative, friendly.
	Personality:	Peer motivated, mischievous.
	Potential:	Fair – Good.
	In classroom profile:	Sociable, participates in lesson.
Criteria that contributed to student's selection	• Antithetical nominations to Philip. • High in the list of nominated students (5 nominations). • Nominated most frequently selected teachers.	

❖ Mr Porter (Three 'preferred' & five 'least-preferred' nominations)
  ✓ I like working in his class, I get the work done very quickly. Sometimes you can get a bit of a laugh. (Ian)
  ✓ You are not messing, just sit there and do your work. You make a laugh with him (St1)
  ✓ Get a laugh out of him (St4)
  ✗ He is the narkiest, when you do something he gives a lot of homework and does a lot of shouting (Excl2)
  ✗ He's always giving out load of work an all. He shouts sometimes. (St2)
  ✗ You do get into trouble. Cause you get into trouble, if you don't have your uniform. (St3)
  ✗ In a bad day, he'd row at you and stuff. Too much writing (St5)
  ✗ Philip insisted nominating Mr Porter approximately 3 weeks after his initial nomination of another teacher.

Since St1 also indicated Mr Porter as his preferred teacher, I could have chosen him instead of Ian. However I didn't do so because St1 already had a severe problem of absences. During the pre-recording period he would come to school no more than three days a week. Therefore not only would it be very difficult for me to observe and interview him but I also felt that withdrawing him from the classroom would be unethical in light of the many school-hours he had already missed.

Classroom Time Designation and Peripheral Informants

All of the above happened during the pre-recording period that ended at the beginning of the autumn mid-term holiday week. Therefore, after the break I was not only familiar with the school settings and the classrooms that I would observe but also I knew which students and teachers I needed to focus my attention on. I spent considerable time trying to arrange a weekly schedule that incorporated visits to all three schools and observations in the classrooms of the designated teachers. I used to spend two full days in each main fieldwork school and half a day in the pilot school where I continued to collect information. Two days a week was enough for me to observe each designated TSR for an approximate 45-minute class-period a week. These are the observations of the selected TSR pairs I managed to complete:

- 2 pre-recording observations in Ms Anderson's classroom but no recorded observations since from November onwards she had certain out of school problems and by Christmas she had left school.

- 6 recorded observations in Ms Sutton's classroom.

- 10 recorded observations in Ms Anne's classroom &

- 6 double[25] recorded observations in Mr Porter's classroom.

The time I spend in the classrooms and schools may be underestimated if I do not mention that the overall time I actively researched in both schools, for that academic year, lasted approximately seven months. A lot of it was spent in the staff room, in the interview rooms, or in the above classrooms even though the students I was interested in were not present. I followed that practice because I didn't want to explicitly connect my presence in the classrooms with the presence of the students I was focusing on. Lastly but certainly very importantly, I should note that all of the above students had been nominated as at-risk for early school leaving and therefore a good few times they were absent from school. That situation made the observation opportunities scarcer.

So far I only presented the core participants. However as explained in the conceptual framework for the better explication of the phenomenon I also needed to gather information about the TSRs in question from 'peripheral' participants who have

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[25] Each week I observed for two consecutive periods in Mr Porter's classroom.

a close, meso-systemic view of those relationships. Therefore I briefly interviewed a number of people about the TSRs in question and also about more general information relating to the contexts that may affect TSRs (like family situation & school-community links). Table 4.9 presents the peripheral informants and the kind of information we discussed.

Table 4.9

Peripheral participants and kind of information discussed

Peripheral participants	Kind of information
Home School Community Liaison	Case specific and general
Counsellor	Case specific and general
Tutor	Case specific
Principal	General
Parents	Case specific

As I mentioned earlier, I observed and worked with 7 students in the two main fieldwork schools and with 2 more in the pilot school. Therefore, according to my research design I also interviewed all teachers that were nominated by the students and the latter's parents. However, it was only when I was about half way collecting this information that I had completed a preliminary analysis of the pilot data and realized that I would probably not have the resources to present and discuss all 9 cases. At that moment, I decided to proceed with the information collection as designed and decided which cases to exclude at a later stage. From the excluded cases I will only present information that seems to have direct influence to the four selected ones.

Information Gathering Means

In order to elicit and gather information from the participants, the context, and myself I used three major means. A number of interview schedules, a number of observation forms and a fieldwork diary of incidents and thoughts. The interview schedules are very different since they include a wide range of questions, from very open, 'phenomenological' to very structured, closed ones. Likewise the observation forms are quite diverse since I chose to pay attention both to detailed teacher - student relationship clues and to more vague contextual information.

This wide range of recording devices reflects the theoretical background of this research that tries to combine influences from well-established theoretical concepts and at the same time stay open to the original information each participant gives. The primary aim of this work is to explore participants' understandings therefore the first instruments used are open-ended. However this exploration is partly guided by psychological concepts and therefore it also includes more structured instruments based on those concepts. Miles & Huberman (1984), in their section on instrumentation provide well-articulated arguments for the use of variant means.

> Within a given study, there can be both exploratory and confirmatory aspects that call for differential front-end structure, or there can be exploratory and confirmatory times, with exploration often called for at the outset and confirmation near the end… (A multiple case study) is looking forward to cross case comparison, which requires some standardization of instruments so that findings can be laid side by side in the course of analysis… (Also) much depends on the case definition and the levels of analysis expected.

As already shown, this research resembles a multiple case study where the structure of cases is dual, comprised of a core and a peripheral (contextual) level. The analysis will develop along the same lines, thus the variation in 'instrumentation'. I will now begin by presenting the information gathering means beginning from the least fine-tuned one.

Fieldwork Diary of Events and Thoughts

The fieldwork diary of incidents and thoughts is a tertiary but very important tool. I gave it no specific structure and I used it freely to record daily events and thoughts both with regard to the development of my research-design and with regard to the schools and participants I was working with. I can now realise, especially after reviewing the many fieldwork difficulties and frustrations that the diary contains, that it also served as a thinking space and an emotional outlet. It was a working-space where my thoughts could develop and my feelings aired, at times even in a free-associational way. This instrument and the unprocessed information it contains will not be presented here as such due to its lack of focus and cohesion and also due to space limits. However, many procedural and research-design information[26] as well as some outstanding incidents that I include in my narrations are originally taken from those written notes that were, almost always, written on the day they originally took place.

Observation

I have been an observer in schools since the first time I set foot in them. However, my role, the quality of the observations and the focus of where the emphasis was placed have changed over time. At the end of the first year of this research, I acted as a classroom assistant. That was a moderate-participant type of observation because I have been playing an acceptable role in the scene studied (Spradley, 1980). At the beginning of the second year both during the pre-recording and the main recording phase I was mostly a passive-participant observer. However there is a differentiation between my presence in the pre-recording period and the main recording period. During the pre-recording period the main goal was not to collect observational information but simply to expose myself to the participants and to let myself be observed by them so that eventually they may be used to my presence. During the main period I was still a passive-participant observer who was however actively recording information.

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[26] Like the 'Research Project: First Year' Appendix, (Appendix 1).

Before proceeding to present the observation devices I structured for the needs of my study I want to discuss the general orientation of my observational presence in the schools. König (1967) considered observation as being a 'kind of world experience' and as such it is uniquely structured by the observer. In light of the goal of my study and in light of the complexity of the phenomenon under exploration, the goal of my observation was not to see what interactions *really* happened but a) to offer a third interpretation to the narratives of the main participants and b) to bring forth crucial lived moments in the discussion with the participants so as to elicit their subjective interpretations and meanings. In addition, I would like to clarify my observer role more by briefly discussing five points in connection with that role as they have been identified by Friedrichs & Ludtke (1975).

1. Defining the role of the observer

All of the participants knew that I was working as a researcher in the school. However, a different aspect of my research study was emphasized to each of them. All the school staff was informed from the very beginning that I was carrying out a research investigating parameters that could potentially influence the students' at-risk for early school leaving status. My specific research focus on teacher - student relationships was initially discussed with the principal, the HSCL officer and the counsellor. It was only later, through the discussion and interviews, that the focus of the research was fully revealed to the core teacher participants. The students were informed that my research involved, 'discussing what they think about the school and their teachers'. Finally the parents were informed that my research was investigating their son's relation to school and to his teachers.

2. Choosing key persons

As already discussed, the principal was the key person from whom I had to have full cooperation and consent. Having established that cooperation new key people emerged. In one school it was the HSCL officer while in the other it was mostly the class tutor. The importance of gaining cooperation with key people became evident during my fieldwork in a frustrating but also didactic way. Since one of the two classes I worked with was dominated by a class-leader, named Philip, it gradually became evident that I had to gain that person's cooperation. Thus, Philip emerged as a key

person for the smoother development of my work. More about him and his role is presented in the corresponding case.

3. Intensity of the interaction

I have already noted when and why I chose to step into moderate and passive participant roles. Since I have been trying to observe an interactive phenomenon in a structured setting as the school classroom, I feel I had to adopt a passive-participant role that would interfere less in the TSRs than any other more active role.

4. Going native

'Going native' has been mostly used by ethnographers to describe a process by which the researcher gradually looses his quality of being an outsider and takes on the values and semantics of the observed (Ibid.). My research had two main shields against this type of bias. First the design itself involved working in depth both with teachers and students and thus minimized the possibilities of identifying with one or the other and second, the fieldwork arrangements where time was allocated between three settings. In this way the possibilities of being drawn into any single school atmosphere were minimized.

5. Intrarole conflicts.

The research design bred no such problem since throughout the information-recording period I only adopted one role, that of passive-participant. The classroom assistant role that I undertook in one of the schools during the previous academic year had seemingly no influence on the students' expectations five months later, especially since the passive-participant pre-recording period occurred in between.

Classroom and Participant Observation Techniques

In accordance with the division between core and peripheral informants, the observation forms I used also focused on a core and a peripheral issue. The first was the observation of the designated TSR interactions and the second was the observation of the classroom environment that largely constituted the context in which the different relationships took place. In order to focus my observations on the elements that were more relevant to my research, I structured a number of observation forms. All of them were designed on A5 paper and attached in a medium sized ring folder that I carried with me throughout the fieldwork period.

For the recording of the classroom atmosphere, I used the 'Classroom Climate' form (Appendix E1), which is largely divided in four sections. The first and the last section focuses on the beginning and the ending of lesson period, while the other two focus on the structure of the lesson and on the students' behaviour. Any student absences, the date and classroom of observation as well as the students' sitting positions were noted. In addition there was a complementary form in which I had summarized twelve crucial points that determine the classroom atmosphere (Department for Education and Employment, 2000; Kyriacou, 1998). Most of the classroom observation narratives are based on those points (Appendix E2).

For the recording of the designated TSR interactions, I used the 'Critical Events' observational approach that has been developed by Flanagan (1949). According to that approach the observer looks for specific instances of classroom behaviour that do not need to be spectacular but they are judged to be illustrative of the phenomenon he is investigating. In my case, I was looking for all TSR interactions among the nominated students and teachers. In a second step, the observer writes down on a proforma what led up to the even, what happened during the event and what the outcome was (Appendix E3). For a more rigorous and reliable observation I created and number-coded a list of events that might come up during observation (Appendices E5 & E4). I called those, 'critical events' along with any other events that

might have had high interactional value[27]. Most of the items in the 'general events list' (Appendix E4) came up during the pilot phase. Most of the items in the 'critical events list' (Appendix E5) were largely formed after the attachment behaviour Q-set cards. Those cards were created by Everett Waters (1997b), in order to better define the behavioural referents of the secure-base concept, in order to stimulate interest in normative secure base behaviour and individual differences in attachment security beyond infancy and in order to examine relations between secure base behaviour at home and strange situation procedure classifications.

For the best description of critical events, I put together, in a concise form, a number of important interactional points to pay attention to while observing the relationships in question (Appendix E6). Those points refer to:

- Body language & positioning.

- Mirroring of behaviour or speech.

- Kind of boundary setting: Firmness and flexibility.

- Feedback loops: Interactional quality ranging from plain response to empathic attunement.
    - Responsivity: One-way response to conversational content.
    - Coordination: Two-way response to conversational content.
    - Mutuality/Synchrony: Two-way, whole-person communication.
    - Sensitivity: Communication ignited due to Teachers' sensitivity to student's needs along with the mutuality/synchrony elements.

- Selective attention: Consciously focusing on or ignoring incidents.

- Student regulation: What seems to regulate student's behaviour (esp. self vs. others).

- Emotional regulation management: Teacher's ways to manage student's emotional reactions.

It is imperative to say here that the observational points and categories presented above are used only as rough guides. Their content is not going to be

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[27] A usual teacher student interactional event like a 'yes/no' reply to a teacher's question is judged to be of low interactional value whereas a more complex event like a teacher - student discussion with emotive elements is judged to be of higher interactional value.

meticulously analysed and compared point by point. Reference to the above interactional points will be found within the observational narratives I have created which I will present in the next chapter. Their purpose was to build more dependable observational narratives based not only on my personal judgment but also on more structured external elements.

Apart from creating a third, informed perspective on the TSRs in question, the second of the observation goals was to facilitate discussion with the core participants about some TSR incidents observed. For the better achievement of that purpose during the piloting phase I created the 'Events' Query' forms, one for the teachers and one for the students, whose main purpose was to elicit the participants' subjective interpretations and meanings (Appendices F1 & F2 respectively). For most of the fieldwork period, I used the teacher form as a guide to discuss some points with the teachers immediately after the lesson I observed had finished. However, it quickly became clear that the opportunity to use those forms would be scarce since the teachers were often unavailable.

The students' form was used on a different basis. In their case, the form was used only if I had observed something outstanding happening in relation to their TSR. In that case, I would ask them for a five-minute interview in the room that was designated to me by the principal. That meeting happened after consultation with their teachers. However the whole process developed to be quite disturbing for both students and teachers. More specifically, after the students' withdrawal had been repeated a couple of times it seemed that they had started to stand out from the rest of the class. At the same time, the withdrawn student would enter the following lesson with a 5-10 minute delay that proved to disturb the lesson flow despite the teachers' initial consent to that process. Therefore, these student meetings were interrupted approximately a month later. Nevertheless, the opportunity for me to query on a couple of important incidents that I observed on subsequent days was given during the main interview procedure that followed.

Interview Schedules

The practice of interviewing leads quite literally to developing a *view* of the phenomenon between people (Brenner, 1985). Interviewing covers a wide range of practices. Since in this research the focus is on eliciting and understanding other people's perceptions and experiences, the interview is the main tool. In this work, I have used interviews with different structures, ranging from open-ended, to more structured ones. In the open ended ones, the major task is to explore the participants' understanding of the TSR phenomenon. In the more structured ones, the major task is to fill in information gaps in relation to the guiding theory I have used to analyse TSRs.

When discussing qualitative interviewing Lindlof (1995), identified seven basic objectives it may serve.

1. Learning about things that cannot be observed directly by other means.
2. Understanding a social actor's perspective.
3. Inferring the communicative properties and processes of interpersonal relationships.
4. Verifying, validating, or commenting on data obtained from other sources.
5. Testing hypothesis the researcher has developed.
6. Eliciting the distinctive language –vocabularies, idioms, jargon, forms of speech- used by social actors in their natural setting.
7. Achieving efficiency in collecting data.

All of the 'objectives' but number five are, to a different extent, served in my research. I have already discussed that the main focus of my research is to understand people's perspective (objective No 2). I will now elaborate on how the interview process has been used as a tool for inferring some of the participants' relational qualities. Most of the other 'objectives' will be briefly discussed in the 'Research Quality' section.

As Lindlof (Ibid.) proposes, '*the researcher may also take advantage of the performance qualities of the interview event itself to infer the communicative properties and processes of interpersonal relationships'*. In other words, the interview situation is an interpersonal event; even

more in my research, where interviewing with the core participants was not a one-off but a sequence of predictable events. In this way, I had the opportunity to explore the quality of a developing relationship with the participants. In this case, I was also interested in the subtle qualities that are subjectively felt and interpreted in an evolving relationship like those of gradual disclosure and tact. The way each participant treated me in our relationship and the way *I* felt in the relationship with each core participant are unique, experiential data that are used for the better understanding of the communicational qualities and relational properties each participant may have brought in the original TSRs explored. Those relational properties I experienced were noted down on interview observation forms. I have already presented the students' form with reference to its role in the students' selection process (Appendix D1). In addition, I used an analogous form to note down the relational impressions I got from my interactions with the teachers (Appendix D2).

Students' Interview Schedules

I will now present all interview schedules along with brief information on their development and particular usefulness. The core participants went through extensive open-ended and theory-driven interviewing while the peripheral informants were interviewed once using only open-ended interview schedules. As shown in the table overleaf the students went through four interview schedules (Table 4.10). That means that if a student was interviewed with regard to two teachers, he went through eight interview meetings. Each meeting was made in accordance with both teacher and student. The duration of the meeting was usually one period (approximately 45-50 minutes); however the duration varied according to the student's willingness and endurance to continue.

The 'Student's Preferences' schedule has already been discussed since it was used for the students' selection process. However it also contains information that will be included at the beginning of each student's vignette under the heading of 'Preliminary Information'. Before proceeding, it must be noted that a brief 'stress state' scale was used at the beginning of each interview (Appendix G1). It was used in order

to make sure that the student was feeling good enough in the interview setting and moreover it was used as a structured means that could engage him in expressing his feelings.

Table 4.10

Interview schemes that each of the participants went through

STUDENT	TEACHER	CRYSTALIZATION/CONTEXT INFORMANTS		
1. Preferences (Teachers' pool-sample & Preliminary info)*	1. General (School & students) (Community & parents) (Support systems)	• HSCL	(About parents) (TSR - Suggestions) (Student & parent specific)	
2. Imaginary Incident (Teacher specific)	2. Case specific (Student focused) (Parent focused)	• Class Tutor	(Student & parent specific)	
3. Open (Teacher specific)		• Counsellor	(Student specific)	
4. Structured (Teacher specific)		• Parents	(Student & school specific), (Teacher specific)	
5. Ideal (Imaginary teacher)		• Principal	(General) (TSR – Suggestions)	
6. Follow up (Teacher specific) & Evaluation (self)				

*In brackets I have noted the 'subject' that oriented each discussion.

The second interview schedule, is called 'imaginary incident', and is an invitation to the student to describe an imaginary incident with each of the nominated teachers (Appendix G2). It is in essence a phenomenological exercise where the student is given an initial incentive (an interactive scene in this case) and is then set free to develop his own story about it. The interviewer's role is non-directive and limited but nevertheless very useful since he is probing the participant to say more about the

various aspects of the experience he is describing. Moreover I take this exercise a step further by asking the student to take his teacher's place and try to imagine the teacher's experience of the same incident. This meta-perspective type of question is found in different modes throughout the student's interview schedules and as explained in the literature review it is discussed in Laing's (1966) phenomenology.

Gradually I move to more structured schedules probing for various TSR dimensions. This is largely done by using the students' 'Open' interview (Appendix G3). In this interview schedule the questions have been arranged with the most open ones placed at the beginning. The student's 'Open' interview is split in three parts. The first part is comprised of general TSR questions that are minimally directive with an aim to elicit the student's experience of the relationship and his perception of the teacher. The second part is comprised of five questions that are seeking the student's understanding of his teacher's role dimensions. Again the questions are open. The subquestions here constitute an effort to explore the 'depth' of the student's understanding and ability to see himself in relation to the way his teacher accomplishes her five teaching roles. Finally the third part is comprised of two exercises. These exercises probe into issues that have already been queried but by using different methods.

By employing these latter exercises I try to take into account the fact that all students I worked with were from deprived/disadvantaged background. First I ask the student to describe his TSR in written form. The writing exercise was difficult for some students but for those that had developed adequate writing skills it provided a more relaxed thinking space and helped them to take their time and express themselves. The second exercise is called 'Feeling faces' and it is a means to help the students elaborate on emotions they couldn't readily come up with but they could certainly recognise once these emotions were presented to them. The 'Feeling faces' exercise is based on Tindall & Salmon's (1993) project that can be used as a means to igniting discussion about one's feelings. The process involves presenting to the student a number of basic pencil drawn faces each of them representing a feeling that is also written beneath each drawing. I split the presentation of faces in three groups: A, B & C (Appendix G4). After going through each group's emotions in order to ensure the student's understanding of them, I ask the student to choose those that best describe

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his relationship with the nominated teacher. Then I ask the student to elaborate more on the reasons why he chose each feeling face.

The next step in student's interviewing is the structured, theory driven interview (Appendix G5). This interview is based on the ten points I summarised in the 'subjective end of the TSR perception' section of my literature review (pp 46-47). The questions under the ten TSR qualities are trying to probe into each of these qualities and are inspired by the psychodynamic theories that underline them (Bowlby, 1969/1982; 1973; Winnicott 1965, 1971 and Rogers, 1961). This is a structured questionnaire whose application helps elicit information the student didn't readily come up with and also, with its structure, contributes to a richer cross case comparison.

The last schedule that was discussed with each student was the 'Ideal Teacher Student Relationship' interview (Appendix G6). This interview begins with two general questions about school and continues with the main group of questions that ask the student to imagine an ideal TSR. Then, through a series of procedures based on Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) techniques I try to elicit the personal meaning of the qualities the student has given to his ideal relationship (questions 4-6). According to PCP, people make sense of themselves and the world through bi-polar dimensions that provide a meaningful discrimination based on each individual's experience (Kelly, 1955). In this way, after the individual has ranked his ideal TSR qualities in terms of importance, I ask him to try and define what constitutes the opposite quality to the one he has given. In this way more information, often revealing unique interpretations, with regard to what each student considers to be an ideal TSR might come forth. Then, I ask the student to place the actual teachers he has nominated in relation to the bipolar constructs he has just created. The outcome is a picture of the specific TSRs under exploration within the students' expectations of his ideal TSR. Finally, after that procedure was complete, I asked them to directly compare the two teachers using a pair of dyadic contrast questions (Spradley, 1980).

About two to three months after the last interview, I met again on a one-to-one basis with the students for one final brief session. During that session we discussed whether anything in their TSRs had changed in the meantime (Appendix G7). Moreover I asked the students to evaluate the truthfulness of the information they had

given me (Appendix G8). Finally, that meeting and especially the last form facilitated a debriefing discussion on our cooperation over the year and lead to the closing of our one-to-one meetings.

Teachers' Interview Schedules

There are two teachers' interview schedules, a general and a specific one, both of which are semi-structured. The general one is comprised of three parts (Appendix H1). The questions of the first part are trying to probe into the way the teacher perceives her role in the school, her understanding of 'at-risk' students presence in the school and the lessons she has learnt from her work with this population. The second part moves the discussion to the teacher's understanding of the disadvantaged community, to her relation with that community and also to her perception of the students' parents. Although I formed all questions, I would like to mention that I was, to some degree, influenced by Schutz's (1977) work on Educational Values and specifically by the Teacher – Community descriptive items. Finally, the third part of the general interview schedule is an effort to collect concise information of the teachers' perception and satisfaction with the support systems at their disposal. The questions included in this part are informed from some of Pettegrew and Wolf's (1982), 'Teacher Stress' variables.

The teachers' general interview took place at the same time I was interviewing the students but the specific one was introduced only after I had finished all my work with the students. I followed that order because my focus on TSRs became explicitly known to the teachers through the specific interview schedule and I wanted to avoid any influence that knowledge might have had on the teachers' behaviour towards the nominated students.

The teacher's specific interview schedule was comprised of two parts (Appendix H2). The first part prompted the teacher to talk about the nominated students. Here, some questions are taken from the Teacher Relationship Interview (TRI) that was developed by Pianta (1999b). TRI contains questions regarding a teacher's description of their TSR with respect to specific topics such as discipline,

achievement, communication and affect. It is those questions' call for specific events and for associated feelings and thoughts that fit with the theoretical background and aim of my research. In addition to the selected TRI items (items: 7, 8, 9, 13) this part also contains some questions of meta-perspective, questions regarding the teacher's expectations of the student and also questions regarding the teacher's perception of the individual beyond his student identity. The second part is trying to gather information about the teacher's perception of her interaction with the student's parents. In cases where a parent-teacher meeting hadn't taken place, I tried to probe into the teacher's inferred image and expectations of the specific student's parents.

Peripheral Informants' Interview Schedules

The peripheral informants were interviewed after the TSR observation period was completed. I created a semi-structured interview schedule for each of the informants. The aim of those schedules was to explore different perspectives of the designated TSRs. Those perspectives not only provided different views of the TSRs in question but they also placed the teachers and students' subjective understandings in a wider framework of understandings enabling a better informed meta-perspective and discussion.

The HSCL person was presented with a series of general questions regarding the relations between community and school, parents and teachers and also an inquiry into what she considers an effective TSR and how that could be achieved (Appendix I1). At a later stage the HSCL person was asked to offer her perspective on the nominated students' and their parents presence in relation to school. Again, suggestions for the improvement of the specific parent-school relations were requested. A second person that was also invited to offer her perspective was the school counsellor. More specifically she was asked to comment on the existing TSR ethos in the school and on measures for its improvement (Appendix I2). The counsellor was also interviewed in relation to the designated students and she was queried about the students' school presence and any other information that she considered outstanding in their case. Finally, in those cases where the class tutor wasn't

a nominated teacher, she was briefly interviewed for a last scan of any significant student-related information that may have escaped up to that point (Appendix I3). Finally a last schedule was created in order to elicit contextual and TSR-improvement information from the principal of each school (Appendix I4).

Even though TSRs take place in the school setting, the parents' influence is of great importance. The parents' interview took place in the parents' home and was comprised of three parts (Appendix I5). The first one was developed in order to gather demographic information as well as any outstanding information in the student's life that might have had a great impact on his school experience. The overall aim here is to build a thick description of each student's case. The second part includes questions with regard to the designated student's school experience as well as some questions investigating the parents' involvement with the school. The last part tries to explore the parents' experience with the designated teachers and what kind of relationship they think their son might have with them.

Documents

At the end of the academic year I also gathered information from some official school documents. This information, where available, included:

- Student's progress marks

- Student's term reports

- Student's behavioural logs

Since I felt that the information gathered that far was adequate to build thick case vignettes and mutli-perspective TSR cases, the 'document' information was primarily gathered for the sake of method triangulation. All students' document information along with their choices at the 'stress state' scale is concisely appendiced (Appendix J1).

School Location and Layout

Both Ivory and Priory are located in designated disadvantaged settings in a large city. More on the educational system and the schools' selection procedure appears in appendix A1. As I have noted, this exploration will focus on the micro systemic analysis of the TSRs and therefore I will not proceed to analyze the influence of other environmental parameters. However, I want to underline here that my familiarity with all three schools (including the pilot one) was very helpful because it made the unique influence of the 'environmental context' parameter very clear. This issue will be brought forward again in the discussion about findings' transferability.

Issues of Quality

In 1972 Diesing wrote, '*Scientists react to the weakness of a method in two different ways. If they are not using the method themselves, they cite its weaknesses as sufficient justification for ignoring the method and its results, for despising it as unscientific or inadequate and not teaching it to their students. If they are using the method, its weaknesses become problems, challenges that make work interesting and results an achievement.*' Thirty years later, all methods still have weaknesses. The question is to what degree scientists make informed and useful methodological choices. The phenomenon I was trying to explore was the guiding light of the methodological decisions which I have already noted. Having adopted a hybrid methodological framework based on two qualitative traditions, I tried to apply it to the best possible degree that my personal and academic resources could afford.

The discussion here will focus on the processes that I used to enhance the methodological quality of this project. Before addressing those processes I will first present three major challenges that Woolgar (1988), notes need to be faced in the development of any social research project. He graphically described them as methodological horrors. All three challenges are linked to the problem of 'gap' between objects and our representations of them, a gap that is common in all sciences; these challenges are:

- Indexicality[28], in which an explanation is always tied to a particular occasion or use and will change as the occasion changes,

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[28] It denotes that the perception of an item may change according to the index under which one has categorized it.

- Inconcludability, in which an account can always be supplemented further and will continually mutate as more is added to it; and

- Reflexivity, in which the way we characterise a phenomenon will change the way it operates for us, and that will then change our perception of it, and so on.

This project's aim was far from transcending those 'methodological horrors'. However, having acknowledged their influence, I tried to do my best within the given methodological limitations. The next issue to present is some criteria against which the quality of this project may be considered.

Criteria for Quality

Trying to explore how the participants understand TSRs means accepting and delving into a reality of circular causality, of self-maintaining systems and personal agency. In their effort to propose criteria for qualitative research trustworthiness Lincoln and Guba (1985), proposed four criteria that essentially derive from criteria used in quantitative research; they translated them into qualitative language and presented them (Table 4.11).

Table 4.11

Lincoln and Guba's translation of quality criteria

Quantitative inquiry	Qualitative inquiry
Internal validity	Credibility
External validity	Transferability
Reliability	Dependability
Objectivity	Confirmability

The question of credibility asks, 'How do we establish confidence in the truth of things'. The same writers (Ibid.) make the following suggestions:

- Prolonged engagement in the field
- Persistent observation
- Member checks

- Triangulation exercises
- Criticism by a disinterested peer reviewer and
- Search for negative instances that challenge emergent hypothesis

Despite the fact that the focus of this research is to understand the participants' perceptions of their TSR and thus the principal tool is the interview, I have also stayed in the schools for more than an academic year and I have tried to adequately observe the context and the phenomenon in question. I have also applied member checks to the degree that I gave all the adult participants their transcribed interviews back, asking for any changes or elaborations (Appendices K1 & K2). Moreover, one of the four students I have chosen to work with creates a disconfirming case, that is a negative instance where the nominated TSRs can be explored but are not perceived as constituting an important factor for the student's schooling experience.

A major credibility challenge is the degree of bias that inhered in my relationships with all people involved. As I have discussed in the prologue, this challenge ultimately leads back to the philosophical assumption that the perception of social phenomena is always situated and biased. A step towards lessening the importance of my situated bias was to offer an account of my relationships with the core participants so that that parameter could be taken into account. Additionally the plethora of triangulation processes throughout the research design, contribute to a more informed interpretation of the TSRs in question and thus diminish my perceptional bias. Triangulation exercises are not only the most important but also the most controversial quality process of this research and will be discussed separately, later on. Finally, for credibility purposes this work has been reviewed not only by my official supervisor but also by a 'disinterested' peer who is a professional teacher of English as foreign language.

It is indicative of the complexity and controversy involved in exploring human experience that although my efforts in this research have developed in the direction of all of the above quality suggestions, the phenomenological influences in my work place a large question mark with regard to the purpose the above suggestions are supposed to serve. This is so because in everyday circumstances, when for example a problem arises in a TSR, we need to approach the issue by exploring all participants' perspectives in order to create our own interpretative provisional truth about it. At this

level we indeed try to establish confidence in our interpretative 'truth' because based on that confidence, as practitioners, we may act. However the presupposition for establishing our truth is to understand the truth of each individual involved, to realize his or her perspective fully. Therefore, on the other hand, establishing confidence in the truth of the other means both enabling the other and preparing ourselves to accept their truth. This acceptance goes beyond what our own interpretation may tell us, beyond the outcome of the so-called 'Credibility' criteria that we have applied for the exploration of the phenomenon in the first place.

Therefore, in accordance with the conception of the whole project, the criteria for quality need to be two fold. First, I need to examine to what degree I enabled the participants to share their perspectives with me, to what degree I was open to those perspectives, to what degree I understood them with minimal distortion and finally to what degree I managed to put them on paper with minimal alteration of their essence. Spending time with the participants, setting aside my biases and prejudices, clarifying my role and the boundaries of our relationship, acting in a respectful and enabling way, creating space where they feel secure to express their view, going back for member checks and getting an outside person to cross check my reports of their narrations are means by which I have tried to achieve high quality in my phenomenological approach to understand people's perspectives. Second, having done my best to understand other's perspectives I also need to move to the shared space where TSRs take place and incorporate means like the ones proposed by Lincoln and Guba in order to gain confidence in my own interpretation of the phenomenon.

Looking back at Table 4.11 I will now briefly discuss issues of dependability, confirmability and transferability. For a better examination of research dependability, it is suggested that the author provides documentation of data, methods and decisions made during the project (Ibid.). A methodologically open and self-critical account of how the research was done that involves triangulation exercises is also a way to achieve confirmability. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) are more precise when they discuss research dependability. They argue that the researcher should identify the particular status position taken in the field. In this respect, I want to remind that my position in the field was principally that of a learner. I explained all teachers that I was there to learn from their accumulated experience. However, my 'learner' position was not just a

statement but more an active role I adopted. My identity as a foreigner was an additional element that helped those around me to readily accept my status as that of a learner.

Secondly, the same writers argue that researchers should say as much as possible about those who provided the data and thirdly the social situations in which that was done. Fourthly, that the researcher should give a full account of the theories and ideas that informed the research and finally that a detailed account of all methods used should be provided. I have already presented the design and the tools used to help the elicitation of the data therefore that process is open to critique. At this point, I want to discuss more about my classroom presence.

During the first one or two weeks of the pre-recording period it was more than obvious that the students were trying to figure out how far my presence would change their way of being in the classrooms. Would I participate in the lesson? Would I help the teacher? Would I tell the teacher of their 'improper' behaviour? Would I reinforce their behaviours? They soon realized that I had no intention of actively intervening in anything that was going on in the classroom. Equally evident to me was the fact that during that period the students' and the teachers' behaviour was influenced by my presence. However, as the students and teachers got used to it, my influence quickly diminished. Having completed a few months of classroom observation, I realized that the degree of what superficially and linearly seemed to be *my* influence was largely the dynamic result of a number of factors many of which were part of the established 'classroom climate' in each teacher's classroom.

From Triangulation to Crystallization

The discussion on quality has inevitably led to self-reflective research critique that I will further elaborate at the discussion chapter. At this point I would like to continue by presenting other processes I adopted in order to enhance the research quality by briefly discussing triangulation issues. *'Triangulation techniques in the social sciences attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint.'* (Cohen & Manion, 1994). In this way, we may talk of methodological triangulation where the problems of any one method might be compensated for by others. This kind of methodological triangulation occurred naturally in this project due to the complexity of the phenomenon that cannot be fully explored by a single method. So far, in the conceptual framework and the design section I have done nothing less than describe a theoretical and methodological triangulation. This is so because as I have shown, the development of people's understanding of their TSRs is nothing less than the outcome of the dynamic interaction among the elements of the transactional model (Fig. 1.3).

However, in understanding other people's perspectives, it is my thesis that triangulation cannot be used as a validation tool. It is in building *our own* perception of things that triangulation can be useful. In other words, I have asked different people about the same TSR not in order to triangulate their perspectives and create a third one that is supposedly closer to the truth but in order to realize that people might have different perspectives on the same issue and that these perspectives are very true for the people who own them. Ultimately people's actions are based on their own perspectives and this is the starting point for change and improvement.

It is evident then that presenting accurate records of people's accounts is of utmost importance. For that reason, Lincoln and Guba (1985), propose 'member validation' as the most crucial technique for establishing credibility. As already mentioned, the participants were given the opportunity to comment on the accuracy of their interview transcripts. This constitutes the 'weak version' of member validation as opposed to the participants' commenting on the final research report, which is the strong version (Seale, 1999). The weak version ensures that the information derived from the participants is indeed the information that they would like to impart at that

moment in time. I didn't proceed with the strong version not only due to practical difficulties, since a couple of months after the completion of the fieldwork, I moved back to Greece but more importantly because my analysis and synthesis of the participants' reports is admittedly interpretative and its goal is not only to present people's accounts of their perspectives but also to offer a *meta-* understanding of the TSRs based on pertinent psychological theories.

In other words, in a multi-perspective reality, the participants' comments on my interpretations (strong member-validation) will not constitute a validation of my understandings but an understanding anew. One may claim that a new understanding is a synthetic step forward and therefore it could have improved the depth of my exploration. However, it seems to me that things are not that simple because for the purposes of a strong member-validation it could have been better if the participants were introduced to the theories that guided my exploration before reading and commenting on it. To take it a step further, perhaps it would have been better if the participants were also educated about the philosophical underpinnings of this work. Consequently it could have been better if they were enabled to carry out a process of researching into their own TSRs. But then we are talking of a different research methodology altogether. In my research, I chose the weak member-validation version and at the 'suggestions' section, I highly recommend what could have been a step towards a strong version: A teacher education module that will include all major theories and issues involved in the formation of facilitating teacher - student relationships.

It is already evident that issues of confirmability are not that straightforward to discuss. Richardson's (1994), metaphorical description of validity (and more precisely, here, of account validity) is very insightful and may illuminate the discussions of triangulation and member validation above. In a very literal way, in her discussion about validity she replaces the fixed, two-dimensional, metaphor of the triangle with that of the crystal:

> The central image is the crystal, which combines symmetry substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, alter but are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends on our angle

of repose... Crystallization, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of 'validity' (in that it shows how there is no single truth to be confirmed); and crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know.

When I chose as core participants the teachers with most nominations (either positive or negative) I based this decision on general tendencies. When I chose to understand students' antithetical perspectives of their relationships with the same teachers, I chose to challenge the generalized information and thus I realized that the phenomenon I tried to explore is indeed perceived as a crystal. I found that through research I learn more about a phenomenon and that I must always be ready to discover a new view of the crystal that somebody else might reveal.

Quality of Practice: Usefulness

If the phenomenon is indeed perceived as a crystal, the next question that comes in mind has to do with the generalization of 'findings'. Does what I have learnt from this research provide me with a good enough perspective of the 'crystal' so as to use it in other similar circumstances? The answer to this question is two fold. First, through its design and philosophy, this research promotes an understanding of multiple perspectives and changing realities. In this way it keeps the person who is interested in exploring TSRs alert with regard to individual differences. In this respect it suggests a way in which one could proceed in various circumstances. Second, as far as the generalisability of findings of specific cases is concerned, two main parameters have been extensively discussed in qualitative research, those of generalisability based on thick description and generalisability based on theory.

Since in a given teacher - student relationship we deal with specific individuals, with their unique personalities, their constructed understandings of the world and their specific behaviours the word 'generalization' isn't suitable. While bureaucrats and policy makers seem to prefer aggregated numbers about certain social conditions, and for their needs generalisability seems to make sense, this research poses questions of

meaning and interpretation with regard to specific cases, therefore traditional thinking about generalisability doesn't fit this approach.

Instead and with great cautiousness, I will use Lincoln and Guba's (1985) term, 'transferability'. As the term suggests, what is advocated is that the findings referring to a specific case may be transferred to another setting. However, the transfer may take place only among similar settings and only in those circumstances where the person who wants to make that transfer has adequate information about both the original and the new case. Lincoln and Guba (Ibid.), note that, '*Whether [findings] hold in some other context, or even at the same context in some other time, is an empirical issue, the resolution of which depends upon the degree of similarity between sending and receiving contexts.*' Therefore, the provision of a thick description of the context where the TSRs took place may help transferability functions. To this respect, I have provided information not only about the classroom atmospheres where the TSRs took place but also, to a certain degree, about the participants' backgrounds and their wider mental frameworks of their experience of educational disadvantage. This is defended in the lengthy 'information presentation' chapter that follows.

Theoretical generalization is a second rationale for generalizing from qualitative research studies. The basis of theoretical generalization lies in logic rather than probability. '*We infer that the features present in a case study will be related in a wider population not because the case is representative but because our analysis is unassailable* (Mitchell, 1983). What is important here is that the validity of extrapolation depends not on the typicality of the case, but on the strength of the theoretical reasoning. Although this kind of generalizing might be appropriate for a grounded theory project, it cannot be fully defended here. This is so because this research does not try to create a substantive theory of teacher - student relationships. Instead the explorative framework of this research is partly based on already existing theory. We could however, argue that the particularities explored in this project could be transferred more reliably to other cases that are also amenable to exploration by the theories used here. This rationale is promoted by the elaborate presentation of the theoretical framework and further discussed through the analysis of the disconfirming case.

In short, it seems that the issue of quality in qualitative research is not a straightforward one. This is not surprising since qualitative social research is embedded in a highly complex interpretative reality. Quality in this sense is not a goal of perfection to be achieved. It seems to be more of a constant striving for improvement, for refinement of the framework and the means we use to explore an issue. Like teacher - student relationships, quality doesn't seem to solely depend on specific elements but more on a conscious dynamic engagement with the issues at hand.

CHAPTER FIVE

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

As I have stated in the previous chapter, the information gathered from the fieldwork and classroom observations took the form of written notes while all the interviews were tape-recorded. All students and parents were assured that the information would remain strictly confidential. The teachers were also given the same verification. The participants did not appear to be stressed or in any other way influenced by the presence of the tape-recorder. However, in the case of teachers, tape-recording sometimes caused some apprehension that nevertheless did not exceed the first three to five minutes of their first interview session. It is interesting to note that one 'least preferred' teacher seemed to be quite alarmed by tape-recording. That teacher, whose information was eventually excluded from this thesis, agreed to the tape-recording providing that I would erase the content of the tapes as soon as possible. For that reason, she asked me to sign a 'confirmation of erasure' form (Appendix L1). All participants were also informed that the final account would not contain any real names of people, schools or places. They were also assured that any information that could directly lead to the participants' identification would be changed.

Parental consent was obtained as soon as possible by means of a consent and explanatory letter that was signed by all core students' parents (Appendix L2). During the period in which the interviews were taking place, I was also transcribing the recordings. Due to the length of the tape recordings, I had to get most recordings transcribed by typists. In my effort to ensure confidentiality of the tapes' content I asked all typists to sign a 'confidentiality agreement' (Appendix L3). I then trained them and gave them written transcribing directions (Appendix L4). The goal of training was to promote uniformity of detail, successful usage of special transcribing notations and some NUDIST 5[29] compatibility since the transcriptions would

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[29] NUDIST is a computer programme that helps with the management of qualitative data. Its initials stand for Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching and Theorising.

eventually be imported into that computer programme for analysis. By the end of June 2001, I had all the interviews transcribed and a couple of months later I had also binarised all the observation notes.

In order to proceed with the discussion of findings I first had to make the information gathered manageable. It is important to note that the information derived from the transcriptions is not strictly (or perhaps purely) 'raw'. Researcher's preconceptions and the devised design have ultimately influenced information gathering. Moreover, the information management processes inevitably imply interpretation and recontextualisation of the information. Creswell (1998), described these processes and claims that the analysis phase of many qualitative projects largely conforms to a general contour. In this research I adopted his process 'contour' and I present it below (Fig. 5.1). It is precisely this 'conformity' that has enabled me to incorporate analytical processes both from phenomenology and case study approach.

Figure 5.1

The Information Analysis Spiral

Procedures		Examples
Representing, Visualizing	Account	Tables, Insights, Suggestions
Describing, Classifying, Interpreting		Presentation of vignettes & cases, Comparisons
Reading, Memoing		Reflecting, Memo writing, Free categories
Data managing		NUDIST 5 documentation & organization
	Data collection (notes, interviews)	
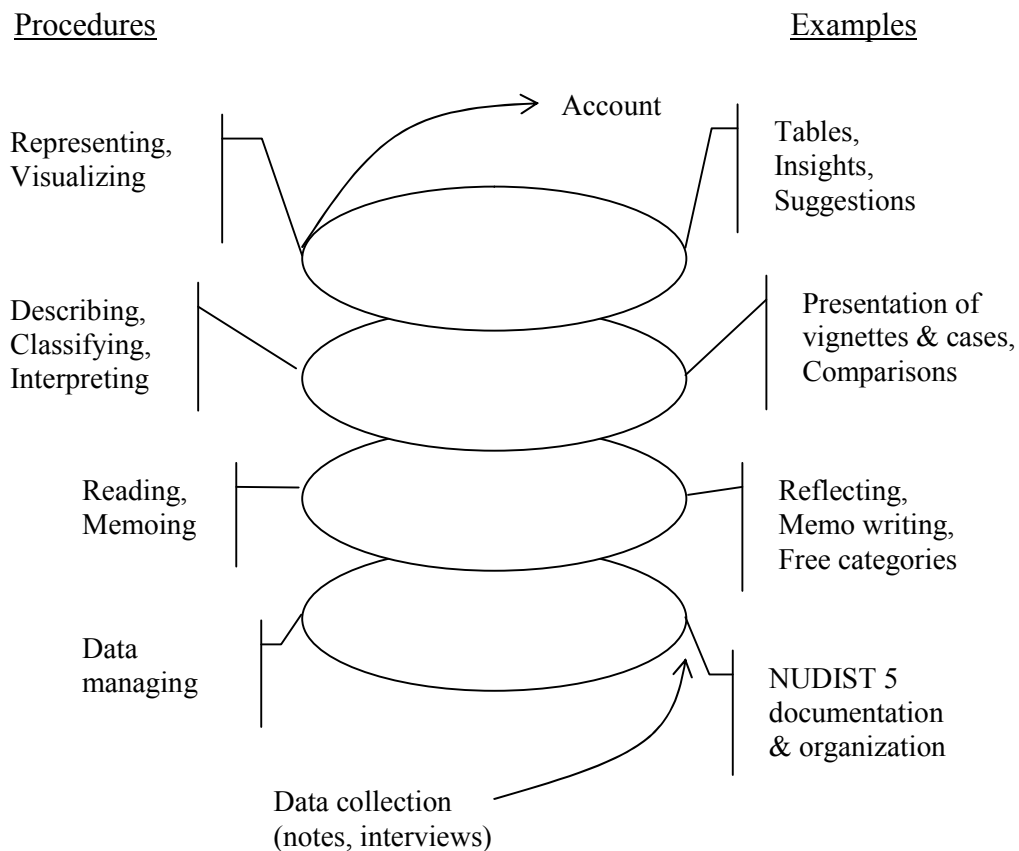
At the bottom of the Information Analysis figure, we see that the spiral begins with data collection and in order to reach the final account at the top, it goes through different stages. On the left side of the figure, Creswell (Ibid.) presents the analysis procedures while on the right side I give some examples relevant to this research.

Once I had all information binarised, I started importing it into NUDIST. At a first stage, I used NUDIST to group all information collected by interview or observation schedule. In other words, I indexed all information by creating a nodes-tree (Appendix M1). I then categorised information according to its content. At a third stage, NUDIST helped me create and manage coding memos. Those memos contributed to the third step of interview horizonalisation (look numbered list below) and also contained some thoughts that occurred to me while working on this process. The process of 'Horizonalisation' comes from the phenomenological notion of 'horizon' that implies that people are situated in contexts and can perceive things only from a certain vantage point. As Moustakas (1994) presents, the horizonalisation of an interview or other text consists of three analytical steps:

1. Considering each statement with respect to its significance for the description of the experience.
2. Recording all relevant statements &
3. Listing each non-repetitive, non-overlapping statement. These are the invariant horizons or meaning units of the experience.

Having gone through these steps for every *single* interview and also for all observation notes, I proceeded to a second order horizonalisation. This involved looking for repetitive or overlapping information among *all* interviews of each participant. To exemplify, the same information might have come up in a student's 'structured' interview and in the same student's 'feeling faces' interview. In this case the procedure demanded that I should keep the quote from the 'feeling faces' schedule. This decision was made because priority was given to quotes that have been derived from the more 'open-ended' interviews. In this way the quotes bear the participant's 'signature' more strongly. Having done that, I printed the information and clustered it by participant.

During the horizonalisation process qualitative coding becomes more salient since it may lead to the creation of new categories that derive from the interpretation

of the data. Indeed, a few new categories were created since in some cases the participants would elaborate on an issue beyond the intended scope of the question. At the same stage, where the information was judged to be irrelevant to the theme explored it was cut out, however sometimes the information even though not directly relevant to the exploration of TSRs portrayed an important aspect of the wider mental framework of the individual speaking. In these cases the information was kept and presented in the relevant category.

Even after the processes explained above the information to be presented was very large and cumbersome. More overlapping statements or relatively non-essential information needed to be excluded. At this point, the help of 'the disinterested peer reviewer' was solicited. After going through all the information processed that far she suggested some possible further truncating that would not distort the essence of the participants' perspectives. She did not exclude any whole incidents or interview replies but she did suggest summarising some of them. I reviewed her suggestions and after accepting most of them, the information reached its final form[30]. It was then ready for presentation.

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[30] The information before the external reader's suggestions as well as the original transcripts are available upon request.

All participants' perspectives and the interview and classroom observations will be presented case by case. As explained in the theoretical review, the core of the case is the TSR dynamic and not the student alone. Therefore the information[31] will be presented in seven cases that, for the facilitation of a synthetic discussion, will be clustered in two groups, one per school (fig. 5.2).

Figure 5.2

The Seven Cases Clustered Per School

1. Alex – Ms Anderson
2. Alex – Ms Sutton
3. Timmy – Ms Anderson   A' cluster – Ivory school
4. Timmy – Ms Sutton
5. Philip – Ms Anne
6. Philip – Mr Porter   B' cluster – Priory school
7. Ian – Mr Porter
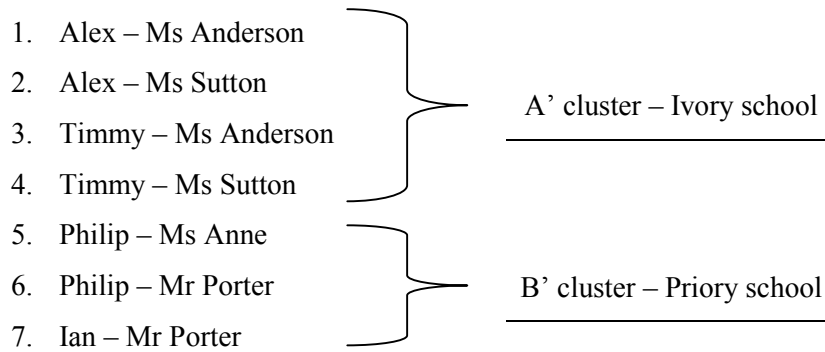
Despite the fact that the processes described in the previous section have considerably reduced[32] the information great care has been taken not to distort the participant's meaning. The participants' words, in the large majority of cases, are presented verbatim and keeping in mind that the participants shared their views orally one may understand why their information presentation sometimes lacks the cohesion and smooth structure of written speech. In this respect and with great care to maintain the participant's unique style, minimal changes have been made for the sake of rendering the text less difficult to read.

The presentation of each TSR case begins with the student's vignette that includes contextual information about the student (Table 5.1). Then the 'case' is

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[31] The word 'information' is used instead of the word 'data' throughout the research. In this way it is emphasised that people's narratives and even observations are not simply given (datum) but they are also interpreted within a systemic framework of other parameters.

[32] Horizonalisation is also called, 'phenomenological reduction'.

introduced and the student's perspective on his preferred nominated teacher is portrayed. This perspective will be presented under the respective interview schedule titles used. What follows is the teacher's vignette where the teacher's general portrait is built. I then present the teacher's perspective on the specific student in question. This perspective completes the core TSR information. Where the same student talks of a second teacher, the same order of presentation is followed. Then specific information concerning both nominated teachers is presented. Each case comes to a close with the presentation of various crystallisation perspectives.

Table 5.1

Layout that is adhered to for the information presentation

Student Vignette	Specific TSR case (student)	Teacher Vignette	Specific TSR case (teacher)	About both Teachers (student)	Crystallization Perspectives
Preliminary	General Classroom observations	Background	Teacher's perception of the TSR	Student compares teachers	HSCL
Family's perspective	Observed classroom interactions	Interview observation notes		Follow up	Counsellor
Interview observation notes	Student's perception of the TSR	Beliefs & experience (interactive)		Self-evaluation	Tutor
Contextual Experiences & (ideal) Expectations		Beliefs & experience (general)			

Before delving into the cases, I think it is very important to go through each of the interview schedules that were used (Appendices G to I). In this way, a better understanding of the degree to which the participants' replies were guided by the schedules or were produced as spontaneous responses can be gained.

Ivory School

<u>Student Vignette: Alex</u>

Before proceeding, I would like to clarify that all information presented in the rest of this chapter is comprised of sentences written in two major modes:

a) Verbatim, in which case the transcript quotes are included in quote marks.

b) Summarised, in which case the transcript quotes are trimmed or even slightly altered and therefore quote marks are not used. Those summaries are formed both in direct and indirect speech.

Preliminary Information:

For Alex Ms Anderson is, "The teacher who helps you the best". "She is nice….when you are stuck or in trouble she helps". Initially it was his tutor that he singled out but his final choice was Ms Anderson. The teacher Alex least liked was Ms Sutton because, 'He just doesn't like her' and because, 'She got him suspended for fighting'.

Alex considers that Ms Anderson would make a difference in the way he feels about school because as he comments, "I would go (to school) because Ms Anderson is teaching, she helps you". Moreover she would make a difference in the way he works because, "Another teacher would probably not listen to my questions, Ms Anderson would."

Alex thinks he will stay in school till 'Junior Cert'[33], probably till 'Leaving Cert'[34]. His mother is the person who knows the school and the teachers the best and also she is the person whom he trusts most.

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[33] The Junior Certificate is awarded after successful examination at the completion of the third year in Irish post-primary education. It usually coincides with the time students' turn fifteen years of age and consequently education seizes to be compulsory for them.
[34] The Leaving Cert award is awarded after successful examination at the completion of the sixth year in Irish post-primary education.

Family's Perspective (mother)

Family situation:

Alex is 14 years old and lives with his mother. His brother John attends the third year in Ivory school he also has two much younger siblings. His mother is separated and has a local job. Whenever Alex gets homework he does it in 30-45 minutes and "…he is more inclined to keep coming down (to the living room) and see what's going on... so he knows there is nothing going on behind his back". Alex's mother left school when she was 14 but last year she went back to do English. If Alex stays up after eleven, "He does be like an antichrist in the mornings."

Alex is a brilliant footballer but when his mother's partner died last year, "Alex kinda took it bad and kind of gave up everything for a while but he is starting now to get back into it".

About student's thoughts of school:

"Sometimes he does be in bad humor and he'd come in and tell you. Last year a teacher (that has now left school) started picking out on Alex, she actually said to him, 'Ah, you are like your brother' so Alex run home to me. I just keep saying, 'Just don't open your mouth. If they are mistreating you or anything just tell me and then I'll go down to them.' Alex doesn't seem to really give out about anyone else now. I think they genuinely get on alright with him like."

About student:

"Alex is getting on grand now in school. I'd like him to stay on to do his Leaving Cert. I think he will because when it comes up to doing exams, he loves getting results. (After leaving school) I always thought he was going to be into football."

About school:

"I have done a parents' course (at Ivory) for a few weeks. Some of the stuff now, was sort of a bit unreal you know? It wouldn't be the way I'd go on with me kids. Like you've to just sit them down and you've to keep talking to them and talking and I think sometimes if you sit them down you get more embarrassed. If they want to talk to you they'll come to you anyway.

I haven't been down there this year cos the last time there was a teachers' meeting, I was working. About Alex I had a great report off all of them.

I just disagree with the teachers the way they treat the kids when they're from downtown flats. Like there is a few kids… and they are terrors… but I mean not every child is like that. But they think every kid is like that. I think once they know they're from downtown flats they do get a completely different attitude."

Ideas for improvement:

"I don't think that Alex thinks he can talk to them, like there was that teacher Ms Anderson and I knew he could go and say talk to her if he wanted to; because it's not everything they'll come to us about so it's nice to have teachers that the kids will go to. Also talk to them, just give them a little bit of respect. They also have a lot of free classes. I think that makes kids get up to mischief as well.

He loves getting praise. I think if (students) are from downtown flats, they (teachers) are giving tickets out too handy… they could be getting suspended for stupid things...like Alex got a ticket for talking without putting his hand up … it all depends on the humour of the teacher as well.

(What could help Alex is) just to get on with some of the teachers. They should give kids respect as well as letting the kids give them respect. Like once they are from downtown flats I think the teachers see, 'oh, well, they won't stay on to do their Leaving' and that and it's making their job handier by just giving them tickets out and they are not taking responsibility for their job. They are teenagers after all… I don't think they seem to realize that and that they are going through their own changes.

(A teacher could best help Alex) by laughing with him as well. I mean they can make school enjoyment for them... instead of just being strict all the time."

About Ms Anderson:

Upon my question whether there was something else that might have an impact on Alex's schooling, she added, "The Liaison teacher, he's very good now and there is another teacher, she's gone now; I don't remember what she was teaching but he used to love her, get on great with her. He used to be saying that if they had them out on a corridor.. She'd walk by and she'd say, 'Alex don't open your mouth.. just don't mind him; just do what you're told'. She kind of always guided him great and I think they always looked up to her because she was on their side as well as being a teacher. Even John got on with her. I've seen her down the school but I've never sat and talked to her. I just remember the two of them coming home and talking about her, 'aw did you hear what Ms Anderson's done today or we'd a bit of a laugh'. Like she always made things funny for them, they enjoy it… and yet when they were in trouble she'd back them up as well…"

About Ms Sutton:

Alex never mentioned anything about her.

Observation Notes from Interview Situation

Most of the comments in this section have been collected during the first interview I had with each student. However, after every consecutive interview meeting, new and relative information was noted down and some of it is also included in this section.

Appearance & Initial impression:
Alex is of average weight and a bit shorter in height than most of his classmates. His complexion is bright and his school uniform had minor flaws. He is a well-behaved, reticent boy. A couple of times he seemed tired and sleepy. At the very beginning of our very first meeting I felt he was quite nervous. I thought that nervousness was arising from the yet unsettled quality of our relationship. Very soon he seemed much more relaxed and adopted a friendly, even affectionate style.

General impression & Attention level:
Alex was trying to focus and understand the tasks at hand in a consistent fashion. He was mostly sitting in a relaxed posture sometimes sleepy at the beginning and more alert as our discussion progressed. He was usually more expressive when talking about trouble with his least preferred teacher than when elaborating other aspects of his relationships.

Relationship with interviewer:
The degree of involvement and alertness in our interactions seemed to grow steadily from meeting to meeting. His proxemics suggested that he was seeking not only to cooperate but also to relate. His body language revealed some regress signs like thumb sucking. Later on in the year he was the only one who was not only willing to participate in our meetings but he was also taking the initiative to ask about our next meeting. He was always cooperative and a few times he would initiate contact. Our eye contact pattern commenced with shyness on his behalf but quickly balanced. He was the student I most strongly felt sought to relate to me.

Affects & anxiety:
Alex is quite introverted. He always passively accepted whatever I asked him to do. A slight nervousness might be detected at the very beginning of our meetings that very quickly seems to get transformed to a relaxed atmosphere. Overall his emotional texture was more sad than cheerful. Overall there was no discrepancy between his statements and

my observations and feelings although sometimes he spoke quite calmly of very intense negative emotions. He did not present any intense positive emotions.

<u>Language:</u>

Alex's vocabulary, articulation, fluency and elaboration of the matters discussed were quite poor. Sometimes I had to probe him repeatedly in order to get some additional information. A good few times my waiting for more would result in mutual silence that was not felt as uncomfortable but only signaling that he had nothing more to add. At times where I insisted, he tried to come up with more but unsuccessfully. His few gestures and facial expressions mostly had to do with feelings of dislike.

Other Contextual Experiences and Expectations

This section is comprised of two main parts. The first includes brief information on the student's experience with his classmates. The second gives some information on the student's expectations regarding school and what he considers an ideal TSR.

- About classmates:

Alex said that he got on well with his classmates. He added that he does not particularly like St1.

- About school:

"From school you get a good education and you can learn stuff. You do good stuff. What I most like is talking to me friends and all ((prompted))[35]."

- About Ideal:

In the table overleaf (Table 5.2) the information derived from the Personal Construct Psychology procedure is concisely presented. In the first and last column of the table the student's bi-polar definitions of his ideal relationship appear. They are presented and numbered according to the importance the student places on them with number one being the most important characteristic. In the middle columns the student has positioned his most and least preferred teacher; they are represented with

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[35] '((prompted))', appears when the information was prompted by some additional comments.

the symbol '✓' and '✗' respectively. The three-step scale shows how often the student thinks his nominated teachers demonstrate the characteristic described.

Table 5.2

Alex's nominated teachers in relation to his ideal TSR bi-polar constructs

| Descriptions of relationship with good teacher | Always-Usually-Often | | | | Often-Usually-Always | | | Opposite descriptions |
	3	⇐ 2	1	0	1	⇒ 2	3	
1 Get on well with each other	✓					✗		Roaring, Not getting on
2 Not narky		✓					✗	Nice: You can talk to; if you ask a question she will answer it
3 Takes you places			✓		✗			Keep you in and do all work with you

At my last question, Alex noted that an ideal teacher as the one he just described would not make a difference for him in school.

<u>Case 1: Alex – Ms Anderson</u>

General Classroom Observations

- Beginnining of lesson:

The students were waiting outside the door for Ms Anderson to let them in.

- Main lesson – work management:

The students' desks were forming a large rectangle facing towards the teacher's desk. There was a low level of noise in the classroom comprised of the students' talking to each other about the work or the material they wanted, and talking to the teacher. Often they would chat about other issues but most of the time they would do that while working. There was one incident when the level of noise was higher than it should be for a work conducive climate. Ms Anderson wanted to talk to them and I was amazed that instead of shouting louder she simply made a hand gesture and showed it to the class. Some of the students who noticed that special gesture turned to the others and said something like, 'quiet, Ms Anderson wants to talk'. Within less than a minute the students had gone quiet and then she scolded them for their noisy behaviour.

- About my presence:

Ms Anderson not only welcomed my presence in her classroom but also added that I could sit in whenever I wanted. Even though the children occasionally noticed my presence, I felt it did not cause any important fluctuations to the lesson flow.

Observed Interactions between Ms Anderson and Alex

This information is not available due to teacher having resigned from school before I was able to carry out recorded observations. That resignation had to do with personal and not school-related reasons.

Alex's Perception of his Relationship with Ms Anderson

Imaginary incident

"She'll move down and sit beside me and she'll ask me what I want and if I can't do it she'd draw an example and then I'd just do it. She might say, 'Why are you not doing your work?' and I'd say, 'I didn't know what you were saying'. Then I will just try that drawing. (When Ms Anderson is coming to me she looks) curious about why I am not doing my work and she might be thinking, 'Why is that boy not doing his work?' I think she is feeling all right. (At that moment I am thinking) that she is going to give out to me. Sometimes she gives out and then she explains me what to do.
The others will be working or walking around the class."

Open interview

1. Open question about the teacher
Ms Anderson is a nice person.
2. The student's first impression of the teacher
Good, because she told us to draw and asked us our name and all.
3. Relationship exploration
"It was good with her, we can look forward going out to her... She brings you to places, like the museum and she does competitions with us. I've never been in trouble. Some other teachers we don't get on. I think she is a very nice person and I am disappointed that she left. I wish she had never left because if you ever had a problem she would sort it out. Like when a teacher hit me and picked on me. Then I said, I'd get my mum and Ms Anderson came and she was talking to my mum; she helped me good. She talked to me, she says, "Are you sure like it happened?" and I tell her and she just tell me what to do."
4. Teacher's relationship to classmates
Some of the students are good. Some of them would mess and she would give them a ticket.
5. On teaching & management
She's teaching good like. She would do very nice work with you like draw your name in a funny way. She'd come along beside us and give us a hand … and says it in a funny way. She did the work for us and we just copied off or we just do it in our own way; she gives us time. She's strict, very strict. You'd be allowed messing around and all... but if you go too

far she'd tell you to stop it. But you could have a laugh with her. (That makes me feel) good like, some other teachers do not let you do it.

6. Student's reply to metaperspective questions

After some prompting Alex came with a tentative reply, "She probably thinks I am a nice boy, I don't know... She'd put you in a Gaelic team that she run… and play with other schools and she was messing like that… the other teachers wouldn't really give it a chance."

Feeling faces

The feelings, the student singled out to describe how he feels with each particular nominated teacher, appear in brackets. Here, the feelings appear as they were briefly elaborated, that is in sentences.

- (Disappointed) because I thought she would stay longer.
- Sometimes (alone). Like we are in the classroom, Ms Anderson always helped you. The odd day with other teachers I feel alone. Like I have no one to talk to, Ms Anderson cheers you up.
- (Happy) to have Ms Anderson... because I get on with her.
- I feel (confident) about something, like doing work.
- I am feeling (relaxed). Like I have nothing to worry about doing the work. I wouldn't get much trouble in her class.
- (Interested) in Art.
- I feel (shocked) that she left and (surprised) that she left as well. It's really the same thing.
- I feel (focused) when doing something.
- (Playful): Sometimes you are allowed to play the piano. She is playing a song on the piano and we're singing.

Structured Interview

Due to the great detailed involved and as a result of the phenomenological reduction process the information here is not presented according to the particular interview schedule's sub-sections but in the form of a unified summary[36]. The reader is advised to read through the relevant interview questionnaire in order to be informed of the degree the students' statements were guided (Appendix G5).

Alex thinks the rules are strict but fair because, "Ms Anderson is trying to help us, get us out of trouble" and because, "She'd treat us all the same and sometimes she'd let you go out". Alex says, "I feel good, like it's no problem when I am in that class." She would deal with misbehaviour or teasing. He also thinks she'd be available to help him. He understands her lesson and she can understand him because she listens. He also believes that sometimes she would understand how he feels, "like say I had trouble with me ma, she'd understand". Alex works because he likes art. If Ms Anderson saw Alex misbehaving, he'd get in trouble. She would look angry and, "…she'd give you a ticket if it's serious like." Alex would then feel that he shouldn't have done it. Sometimes she deals with his messing privately and Alex apologizes. If Alex had been messing at a previous lesson she would single him out and "…she'd just warn you before you go into the classroom" (but she wouldn't be more angry).

Alex likes that, "She is messing with you; she'd like say, 'Get on', in a Donald (Duck's) voice." Ms Anderson gets on with everybody. They talk outside the classroom and even more Alex thinks that she shows her true self because although she talks only about the lesson, "She means all the stuff she says and she is honest to you". What Alex will remember of her is, "That she is funny".

Alex trusts Ms Anderson and tentatively replies that she probably trusts him as well. He also tentatively replies that she cares for him because, "If I had any problems like she'd try to help me". Alex believes that Ms Anderson thinks that he is, "A nice boy, well able to do the work… she'd try to think that I am going to do my work, I am not going to mess". However Alex doesn't think he was special for her in any way nor can he think of something that he gets out of his relationship with her.

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[36] All the in-between stages of textural analysis that have led to the 'structured Interview' summaries are available upon request.

Teacher Vignette: Ms Anderson

Background

Ms Anderson has a BA in Art. She worked for a year in a very disadvantaged co-educational school and for the past six years she has been teaching History, Irish, remedial Maths and English to refugee students and Art in Ivory school. She has also been a class head to fifth and sixth years.

She has relatives who are teachers and she ended up in teaching as she said, "Having this little idealistic view in mind, to be a teacher or a nurse."

She was hesitant about Ivory school because she knew that it was in a rough area but she lives nearby and she felt lucky that she got the post.

Interview Observation Notes

All interviews took place in Ms Anderson's house. I felt she was friendly and genuine. Her approach was straightforward and lively. Her facial expressions were clearly drawn on her face and she displayed a wide range of emotions. She was fully and willingly involved in our discussion and she would often elaborate or seek confirmation to help my understanding. She seemed to enjoy remembering the school and the students we discussed. Her general style was cheerful and optimistic but she was also realistic and very confident, "I don't mind if you go to Ivory school and read it (the interview) in the staff room".

I felt no anxiety with regard to any topics discussed or the tape recorder. On the contrary I felt she was very relaxed. I also felt very much at ease to ask her questions about emotions and she was the teacher that mostly took the initiative to talk about them. Even more she could be self-ironic and self-critical. Throughout the interviews, I felt serious, puzzled, compassionate and playful; overall I was happy to listen to her.

Any explanatory comments added in this or the following sections appear in brackets whereas any important non-verbal clues appear in double brackets.

- Teacher's role:

The teacher has to keep in mind the difficult situations affecting the 'at-risk' children and try to make the best out of a bad situation. Thus the teacher has to try to put herself in the children's situation every morning and take into consideration that these children come from a different society than she does. One of the consequences is that the school rules often have to be bent and the punishments have to be productive. In a nutshell the role of the teacher is that of an enhancer.

- Teaching goals & ways they can be achieved:

A general academic goal is that the students know the key points of the subject even though they might not be able to achieve success. A general behavioural goal is that they all show respect by developing manners. There are also individualised goals especially for the students who need a lot of attention. Finally making sure that the children look forward to your lesson because they like you and respect you is one big teaching goal.

Students who do not show manners are ignored until they show respect and for those who are very needy the teaching targets are adjusted to their very basic needs. Having structured lessons that lead to immediate results and being meticulously prepared for a class are of utmost importance.

- Students' role:

Develop manners that will take them far in life regardless of their IQ is what students should do; especially the 'at-risk' students who are used to roaring and being aggressive because these latter behaviours are often survival techniques in their lives.

Also be diligent and 'try to leave their home situations back; a very difficult task.'

- Developmental goals & challenges:

Realise what the transition to secondary school means and try to discipline themselves in accordance with their school responsibilities. To make themselves aware that by going to school they will definitely achieve something in the long run.

Even though they might pretend otherwise, they all want to pass their Junior Cert; it's a big deal.

- Feelings working with students:

Ms Anderson is very clear when she says, "I love working with that particular group, I had great trust with them", and notes that she manages this classroom well –to the other teachers' surprise- because she makes herself approachable to the children. She continues, "I've had huge arguments with kids, I've shouted, 'stand outside the door', I've gone out and I've talked to them saying, 'why did you do that? Why would you do that to me?' and once we got it all talked out I'd say, 'Right ok, you've told me the truth can we forget about this? Can we carry on?' And they'd look up at me as if to say, 'you mean after doing that you're going to forgive me?' and whatever the issue was they were amazed that you would forgive and I'd say, 'Yea I'm not going to hold it against you for the rest of your life, forget about it; let's carry on', and it was through incidents like that happening and through them going back telling a friend that the relationship I had with them was brilliant." Ms Anderson went on narrating a few incidents showing mutual support and care between herself, the students and their parents.

- Describing how teachers and students should ideally relate:

Respect each other and have friendly interaction –chitchat- without going …too familiar.

- Dealing with difficulties:

Ms Anderson says that she does not like the school's disciplinary system. Instead of using it, in her classroom she would get everybody's full attention and then deal with the person who's causing a problem, exposing him and the problematic situation to his classmates. Alternatively, she would try to deal with difficulties on a personal level, causing some inconvenience to the student for example by keeping him busy during some of his lunchtime.

Ms Anderson's Teaching Beliefs and Experience: General Level

Training:

- Teacher (training) … disillusioned me because I thought things were going to be totally different. In Ivory school I have learnt more than I've ever learned in my life.
- Until we can connect with (and educate) the parents …we are never going to keep these children in the school, never.

Teacher - student differences:

- Whether the teacher is right or wrong you have the power to tell that child, "Stand outside the door, I don't want to listen" and as often happens the teacher will use that power … maybe just because they don't like that particular child. It can work the other way as well but I have often seen it work in a negative way.

Teacher - student similarities:

- Everybody wants to be right. Both the teacher and the student might go to the bitter end to prove they were right.
- We are all just learning. I'm trying to figure them out, they're trying to figure me out. They're trying to deal with my bad moods; I'm trying to deal with their bad moods.
- Afraid of failing. The kids are afraid to take any chances to do anything in case they're wrong and I am afraid too that at exam times, they are all going to fail and that I am going to look very bad. They haven't got the confidence to produce, that's a big issue in disadvantaged schools.

Role clearly defined:

- I know I definitely keep by what I believe.
- The role of the class teacher is not clearly defined.

Support in dealing with students:

- The discipline system is not applicable for this type of children because we want to keep them in school (instead of) constantly suspending them.

- We need more than academic activities like a breakfast club or a game system. Also more things to get them achieve practically, maybe electrical work, plumbing, building construction.
- I feel supported by those of us who are teaching that group. We also have a great, supportive principal, he might sort of say into your ear, "Is there a way we could get round this without suspending the child?"
- The fact the students still come into school is support in itself because they are saying, "I know you are trying and I know you want the best for me".
- The Health Boards do nothing. However the community links programme are trying.

School decisions:

- The staff room can be a dangerous place for young members of staff. Thank God I never listened to what anybody ever told me about a child. I made my own decision. It's not customary to go against the grain in here.

Drawing energy from:

- I would work better with children than I would with adults because children do not analyse people; children take you for what you are.
- I love Ivory school and I love the boys because they were motivated to a certain extent. When they liked you and respected you they wanted to do well for you and they want you to be proud of them because they might go home with that sheet and their mother might (disregard it).
- But it's very hard to be motivated if you feel you and maybe a few others are the only ones in the school that are trying. I try to do things well and not half measured; probably might just be energetic.

Advice to new Teachers:

- You have to be meticulously prepared.
- There has to be good interaction (but) …if you are too familiar, you will automatically lose authority.
- They need to know they can trust you; that's terribly important. I can't give anybody a recipe of how you gain that with children however, I would have let them know a bit about me.

Community and School:

- There is a community programme (very active with children). The children nominated me to get an award. That meant a lot to me; so very good relationship.
- The bond was much stronger when the Christian brothers were living in the area helping the really poor.

About parents:

- A lot of the parents would not have a responsible attitude towards their children's education because they don't see the value in it because they didn't need it themselves. You say, "He has missed so many days", and they go, "I called him in the morning and he didn't get up".
- They blame everybody else except themselves for any of the problems that their children have.
- The only reason sometimes I feel that they'd rather have them at school is because they're out of their hair.
- They expect us to mind their children and put up with anything, cursing, messing, whatever they do. They don't realize that we can only do a very small amount in the development of their child; they have to do actually the biggest bit themselves.
- They're aggressive, you will end up seeing those type of parents slapping the child in front of you in the room. A lot of them will lie in their children's face. The chid will say, "Well, you told me to say that", "I did not tell you to say that", and you know in your heart and soul that that mother did say that and then she didn't want you to hear it.
- Drink is also a huge factor. Also some of the lone women have men coming and going; lack of money is another thing, you also have children who might have members of family in the prison.
- There's not much point in a school setting up a regime when the child goes home and the parents don't carry on with that. They just don't know any better. ((said with understanding))
- Until the time we educate the parents we are fighting a loosing battle. Because they would much rather take Johnny or Michael out of school than have to listen to that school ringing again today about him.
- I have seen no change in six years.

Case 1: Ms Anderson - Alex

Ms Anderson's Perception of her Relationship with Alex

1. First impression:

He was not destructive or disturbing the whole class but just a very moody child.

2. Student self perception:

I think Alex had a big problem with feeling sorry for himself, a lot of self pity. Because of his older brother who had given the school a lot of trouble and I think Alex thought, 'well, they are gonna be on my back now', but that wasn't the case.

3. Feelings about school and teachers:

Alex thinks that everyone is against him, he automatically would come and have adopted a very bad attitude in my class because he had previously fallen out with another teacher and he couldn't separate me as being a (different) person.

4. Teacher's experience:

We are all moody but he was particularly moody; Alex would cry if he didn't get what he wanted. However I didn't have a problem with Alex because I laid the facts on the line for him when he came in. I told him, 'listen Alex you're extremely moody there's no need to be carrying on the way you're carrying on; you're a big cry baby and there's no need for it' and he went over he gave me a dirty look for a few days and he got over it. Then he knew that I wasn't going to be taking any of these old moody business that he was used to showing in other classes. I noticed that if I praised Alex I would get fantastic work from him.

5. Student's perception of teacher and projected image to parents:

I'd say Alex trusted me because he knew I'd straight things as they were. I think that day that he ran to me when that happened with the other teacher [see 7. below] I suppose that in a way shows that he did have some trust in me otherwise he might have run out of the school.

I think Alex would put a good opinion of me to his parents. I know that he got on with very few teachers. He probably would have said 'oh you know, she's good crack".

6. Attendance now, future and improvement:

His attendance was poor. I'd say he will make it as far as his Inter Cert. (perhaps) into the Leaving Cert Applied. I questioned Alex about why he was missing from school and it was because he had to do something for his mother.

Alex needs to know that he'd have a personal relationship with one teacher. That one teacher would at some time every single day see -not the 4a class- but Alex himself, to talk to Alex for two minutes. Alex tries to make a bond with somebody but you've to be very careful then with him because if you shout at him or if you correct him he takes it to heart, he can't believe this person is giving out to him. I know that class teacher Alex had; she was getting so fed up with them as a class as a whole. To have a class head is ok but to have one child, given to, say me, and another child given to another teacher just to make contact every day. I'm convinced that would have helped a lot more (children) as well. They need to feel somebody wants them to come to school, (they need to think) 'it means something for somebody for me, for me to turn up to school today.' I know that it definitely did work for myself and another 5th year student. Now some teachers wouldn't be prepared to give their time but that's another thing.

You could pick at least 10 or 15 more that are having the same problems. Their culture is completely different to what you or I are used to; it's a whole society problem in downtown flats.

7. 'Don't get on well' incident:

There was one situation in the school where Alex was in a particular class and the teacher just tipped him on the shoulder to tell him to turn round, she was holding a ruler at the time, it was a very slight tip and Alex accused the teacher of hitting him viciously with the ruler and he ran out of her class into mine and he said, "I'm after getting hammered I'm after getting hit" he blew the whole thing completely out of proportion and then when I talked to him about it he took a very bad attitude with me. I knew for 100% of a fact that she did not hit him, I told Alex what I thought of him that time, I said, 'I don't like ya for what you are doing to a teacher, I know you are exaggerating I don't want to be your friend.' I told him that straight and we didn't talk for 2 or 3 weeks, then his attendance went down for a while. "I can do whatever I want. You 're are all against me. You 're taking her side". It took a long time to get Alex to understand that the whole school wasn't against him because of that one incident. He came running in through the door to tell me what had happened in front of all the students that I was teaching so I got him calmed outside. I tried to tell Alex that he needed now to have respect for that other teacher he needed to forget about what had happened and realise that that other teacher wasn't gonna hold a grudge for him so around that time the feeling was bad between us but once he got over his problem with the other teacher and they forgave each other for what happened we got back on track again.

Alex knew what he had done was wrong; he knew the seriousness of his allegations and I'd say he felt, "God, I'm in a hole here and I don't know how to get out of it", but he wasn't

talking to me. If I fall out with someone that I like it would bother me like you know and I'm sure that he would be the same. I would never trust him because if you could do that to that teacher you could do that to me.

8. 'Get on well' incident:

I was made captain and manager of the Under 14 hurling team and I used to take them (twice a week) to play and Alex was on my team and he was fantastic and after that myself and Alex got on brilliant in class because he has seen a different side to me I saw a different side to him. Probably thought to himself, "God, she doesn't know much about hurling what the hell is she doing". I was the only one prepared to go out in the evening time with them to practice so that's the only reason I got to do it but eh I'd say that Alex liked me but Alex knew when her fuse goes, it goes so he didn't push me that far. It was nice to see him on a hurling pitch he was extremely determined, very conscientious, very committed but it's no good being fantastic on a football pitch if you're gonna be unmannerly in school. The two should go together and Alex didn't make that connection. School was an environment then that he wasn't so sure of or wasn't sure of his capabilities which made him react in a different way than he reacted when he was out playing hurley.

A lot of kids from that area have bad communication skills and rather than tell you, "listen, I don't understand listen, I can't do this" he'd rather be moody and disruptive.

9. Pushing student & motivation:

Ms Anderson (once) showed him the reasons he should revise his work. However Alex insisted on his own way. At that point Ms Anderson chose not to force him anymore, 'after all you've got 16 other kids there, you can't spend your time with one person.' Elsewhere she adds, 'Alex will be motivated to work as long as you praise him for the slightest thing that he does.'

10. Relationship description:

I had a good relationship with Alex. He didn't want to fall out with me because I could say to him, "Right, you're off the team" and I used that against him loads of times. I had something to hold over him. It's no use looking at Alex as student number one-six-five, that won't work; Alex needs to know that it's a personal relationship. Because Alex is obviously craving attention and you can see that, that's why he's moody that's why if you don't come to him immediately it's no good to come to him 5 minutes later.

(Alex doesn't appreciate my efforts), when I was that age myself, I didn't appreciate it, for God's sake. Alex has never entered my mind outside the school; he was never a big problem.

11. Reputation:

Initially Ms Anderson said, "Alex could effect your reputation as a teacher because he could say anything about you." However when I queried about the specific case she replied, "No not really, I had a good relationship with Alex, I gave out stink to Alex but he couldn't affect my reputation as a teacher. You only affect your own reputation at the end of the day".

12. Behaviour management:

Alex stopped being moody because every time he'd do it, I would point it out to him and he'd try not to be like that. I'd say, "get up from your chair, stand at the board and feel sorry for yourself for about half an hour and when you're finished come back to do your work". I would point out, "hold it everybody lets all look at Alex... for 5 minutes because he needs somebody to look at him" and he'd say, "I don't, I don't" and he'd put down his head and start muttering to himself. That slowed me up in class; I didn't get half of what I wanted to get done with them in first year because my whole time was taken up with dealing with personalities.

If Alex had been the type of child that would burst out crying when I singled him out, well then I would go over and apologize to him for embarrassing him, not in front of everybody but lowly into himself but I'd try another tactic the next day. I'd say Alex thought it was a bit of a laugh. I know for a fact there were times Alex thought twice before he started getting moody. He would just be about to go and I would go (funny facial expression conveying the meaning "don' you start") and he'd stop! So I think he took it in a good spirit.

13. Student as a person:

I thought he was a nice enough kind of a fella. I often just feel that if you could take them all away from where they're living they would be all great boys. I mean if I came from a home like they come from I would be the same, exactly the same.

14. About parents:

It was at the end of the first year when the mother was called over his behaviour. She came across to me to be exactly like Alex, very defensive. If Alex smashed a window in front of her she'd say, "No it wasn't Alex, the wind was blowing too high"; that didn't help Alex at all.

Unfortunately (when we met) I was the Devil's Advocate because I went in and I didn't have a problem with Alex. Usually a parent is called when there is a problem with the child. Naturally (the other teachers) hardly wanted me to go down to say, "Ah God! He's great in my class" and everybody else complaining about him cause the parent might say, "Well how come there's no problem with Ms Anderson's class and there's problems with..." I saw

her in a good enough light but I did see her in other lights as well. You need to have some kind of cooperation between the teacher and the parent. The other teacher was maintaining that if I tipped Alex with the ruler, that Alex would have never had made any issue of it. When the other teacher met with the mother she tried to tell her, "…that didn't happen with the ruler and I think Alex has taken a dislike to me" and the mother was not helpful, she created a worse situation.

A lot of people feel, "You are in there to teach my son and you are to take any type of abuse that my son gives you and you are supposed to put up with it", that's the impression that she had and that we are all kind of mafia to get Alex, you know? Everybody was at fault except herself.

Case 2: Alex – Ms Sutton

General Classroom Observations:

The notes and incidents portrayed in this section were derived from a number of classroom observations, as analytically displayed in the design chapter.

Beginning of lesson:
The students were always forming a line by the classroom's door waiting for Ms Sutton. Many times she would speak to them with a strict voice trying to get them behave themselves from the very beginning. She was usually pretty tense both in her face and general posture. The students were difficult and the battle to keep them quiet was beginning.

Particular incident:
As soon as the students entered the classroom she shouted, "Be quiet, I don't want to hear a sound". The students sat down quietly. Ms Sutton let me know that she is trying to make them put their hands up before speaking and added, "That's what I am trying to do so I might not get the job done."

Main lesson – work management:

The students writing or reading in turn consumed most of the lesson. The themes that were closer to the students' lives were the ones that got them to participate willingly; otherwise the teacher seemed to be engaged in a constant effort to keep their fragile attention on the lesson. Although the lesson rarely ran smoothly, there seemed to be some improvement in the work management over time.

Main lesson – General Atmosphere:

Ms Sutton's behavioural management and the resulting classroom atmosphere were often characterised by tension and conflict. She didn't seem to have established herself as an authority in the classroom and the students were taking advantage of the loose boundaries to have some fun and show off. As a result sometimes she reacted in panic, being very strict, very quickly but only in a fragmentary fashion. The tone of her voice often transmitted the message, "You are going to listen to me"; it was a battle that had to be won. During the last month of my observations she seemed to have started to establish a set of rules and I felt that after those rules have been well established the next step for her would be to relax in order to make the lesson more enjoyable.

Particular incident:

Two students started chatting about something relative to the lesson. Ms Sutton shouted, "Did I tell you to start a conversation across the classroom?" My feeling while the students were talking was that the teacher was blatantly ignored and therefore the discussion was undermining her authority.

Ending of lesson:

Most of the times the reaction of both students and teacher when they heard the bell ring made me feel that the lesson was nothing but a chore to be endured by all involved.

Particular incident:

When the bell rung and while Ms Sutton was telling off a student the rest of the students just got up and went out. Ms Sutton accepted their behaviour without saying anything.

The effect of my presence:

- Once, after observing Ms Sutton's lesson, I approached her and she started talking, "I am not good at discipline, they are wrecking your head." Thinking that she might feel uncomfortable and knowing that they have improved since the beginning of the year I asked her if they are usually like that. She replied, "They are acting out a bit more when you come in." "Do they?" I wondered; and she nodded smiling, "A little bit". Then, thinking of another factor that might have made them more fidgety, I added, "They were all in today" and she commented, "Yeah, they are usually not."

- "Do you think my presence had an effect on them?" Ms Sutton replied, "No, they were ok. Last time it did, perhaps because it was just after Christmas break."

Observed Interactions Between Ms Sutton and Alex

The information in this section is derived using the 'Critical Event Proforma' and the 'Critical Event Particulars' forms (Appendices E3 & E6). More particularly, the style and content of the 'further notes' information that follows most particular incidents portrayed below has been discussed at the 'Classroom and Participant Observation Techniques' subsection of the design chapter.

Particular Incidents

1. Ms Sutton was asking questions. Alex twice came up with a reply. Ms Sutton nodded or else corrected his replies. The rest of the students were quiet.
    Further notes: Ms Sutton was standing close to Alex in a firm posture. The boundaries were flexible. Their 'feedback loop' was characterised by harmony, their conversation developed smoothly as part of the lesson flow. Alex showed self-regulation.
2. Alex put his hand up. The teacher let him speak and he made a comment about the lesson. Ms Sutton simply nodded.
    Further notes: Absence of mirroring. Teacher's voice: cold, flat. Feedback loop: Coordinated. General comment: The teacher had adapted a strict and often disengaged stance throughout the lesson.
3. Alex had his hand up for 50 seconds, he is the only student who tries to be noticed in this way since most students will put their hand up and at the same time call, "Miss...

miss". Ms Sutton eventually let him speak. The rest of the students were quiet or participating in the conversation.

4. 6'-36'[37]: Alex was fully focused on the lesson.

Condensed description of all incidents observed

Ms Sutton's nervous and strict style seemed out of place when she was talking with Alex since Alex was often very quiet, obviously meaning no trouble and definitely more relaxed than his teacher. Alex seemed ready to me to move to a friendly mode that Ms Sutton could by no means adopt while the class, as a whole, was often unmannerly. Alex was one of the students who participated most while caused minimum trouble. He was also one of the students who tried to adhere to rules.

Alex's Perception of his Relationship with Ms Sutton

Imaginary incident

It happened the other day. Like if you are messing during the class, she won't say anything to you, she just wait till after the class. (When she sees me) I would just stop because she gives you tickets for nothing. Just say someone is messing she'd blame someone else for it. She thinks you were messing as well so she gives you a ticket. So then she would just say, "... the ticket" and then we just say, "For what?" and she says, "Get out" (without talking about it). She just tells you, you are messing and not doing work.

Sometimes I wouldn't take it because I wouldn't do anything. But then I'll take my ticket cause otherwise it's going more trouble. Then I feel angry, like killing her (a smile followed). Ms Sutton probably thinks, 'give that boy a ticket'. She is calm like but she gets angry. (The other lads) are messing as well.

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[37] In this and similar notes, the minute the observation started and the minute it ended is noted.

Open interview

1. Open question about the teacher

Ms Sutton is narky. Like you ask a question and she roars at you, she tells you to put your hand and all. Say I look out of the window or something she'd give me a ticket.

2. The student's first impression of the teacher

(The first thing that happened with Ms Sutton is that) we were all talking and she told us to shur up. Alex's impression hasn't changed since the first lessons, "She just don't like me".

3. Relationship exploration

Alex feels 'crap' that Ms Sutton is his teacher because he doesn't like her, "She gets you suspended for nothing. Like when I was fighting, she gave me a ticket as well and suspended me." Upon my question whether he thought that that was fair he replied in a somehow confused manner, "I don't know". About Ms Sutton helping besides the work, Alex replied, "Probably no, I don't know. I don't get on with her because most of the time she is very narky. Sometimes she is nice. Sometimes she gives us a video like if we are good."

4. Teacher's relationship to classmates

Alex said that Ms Sutton is getting on with some students while not with others. However he added, "Like we're the same like she gives out to everybody"

5. On teaching & management

Alex understands Ms Sutton, "just a little bit". Elsewhere he added, "She would help you, like she'd tell you what to do." Alex says that Ms Sutton is in charge of the classroom, "She won't let us all mess, if you mess she gives lines".

6. Student's reply to metaperspective questions

Only after offering Alex some options about what Ms Sutton might think of him did he say that she thinks he is trying with his work but she also thinks that he is messing all the time. As far as outside school is concerned, Alex thinks, "Ms Sutton is all right. She is probably nice to talk to, like."

Feeling faces

- Sometimes (bored), when we're doing all work.
- (Indifferent) about one of the teacher's lessons.
- I feel (confident) in class. I can do like all the work she asks us to do.
- I feel (stressed) when we got to do loads of work.
- A bit (anxious).
- When she gives out tickets and roaring, I get (annoyed) and (angry).

Structured Interview

I feel all right but if she is narky; you wouldn't be able to do anything and she'd give you a ticket. If I didn't mess for about a week, she'd come over and say, 'Alex, keep it up you are doing very well'.

Alex feels Ms Sutton treats him like she treats all other students. Even though Alex thinks that putting your hand up before speaking is a fair rule, he doesn't like it since nobody follows it. Ms Sutton sometimes lets him go out of the classroom. If somebody hit him, he would not consider asking the teacher's advice but he would hit them back.

Alex doesn't recall having discussed his work progress with Ms Sutton. He works in her class because of the good marks he gets at the tests. Unless she is writing on the board she would notice his hand up and she would come down and help him, "She'll tell me what to do." Sometimes she does ask the students about what to do next in the lesson.

"If I was messing she'd just shout, 'Alex Connolly, stop messing!' (She'd look like) an angry person. (But) I don't care. Say you were sent out of class and the next day say you mess in this classroom cos you were wasting your time; she'd say, 'right, go (in the classroom), but if you talk or anything you're getting sent up'."

Although Alex perceives Ms Sutton as paying enough attention to him he cannot be sure whether she is interested in him. "She is usually there to help you", but they have never talked about anything besides the lesson nor would he like to. Alex understands Ms Sutton and he believes that she understands him as well but he cannot be sure whether she understands what he feels. Even though Alex cannot find anything he would like to imitate of her personality, he would like to do crosswords as well as she does.

Ms Sutton is honest like every teacher is. They say 'hello' in the school corridors. Alex thinks she is the same person outside the school and once she waved at him from her car.

Alex thinks that, "She gets on with most lads". Although Alex says, 'I would trust her because she helps with your work', he can't be sure whether she trusts him, 'probably not.' Alex guesses that she thinks of him that he is a good boy but also cheeky and she expects him to be good, pay attention and do all his work.

At the last lesson at the end of the year, she will probably give us a video or lines or both. He cannot think of anything he might remember of her once he finishes school. Overall, 'A loan of a pen' is what Alex says he gets from his teacher.

Teacher Vignette: Ms Sutton

Background

Ms Sutton has a BA in Geography and History. Last year she did her H.Dip practice in Ivory school and she is now going through her first full teaching year. When I asked her why she chose the teaching profession she chuckled and replied, "I don't know really why. This wasn't my first choice but I wanted to study geography and history so then teaching would probably be the only main work area I could use." She came to Ivory because this was the first school that offered her a job after she had been interviewed.

Interview Observation Notes

All interviews with Ms Sutton were held in her classroom during free classes. My overall feeling during the interviews was that her only incentive going through them was that it would be rude not to do so. However I felt that she was trying to impart as much information as she could in a sincere and straightforward way. At the same time it seemed to me that she had difficulty discussing her emotions. In some instances I felt that her description of things was too light hearted and not appropriate to the seriousness of the circumstances she talked about.

- Teacher's role:

… making sure that the students are actually safe, trying to kinda of teach them basic skills as well as communication skills … Get their behaviour in order as well.

- Teaching goals & ways they can be achieved:

Number one is 'No fights', because a lot of them are very easily agitated. Number two is 'Keep them working all the time', not just listening but writing down; even simple sentences.

- Students' role:

Obviously to learn… but that doesn't happen in our case ((chuckles)). I can't think of anything else ((chuckles)).

- Developmental goals & challenges:

I don't think they think towards (academic) goals or anything like that in second year …get an apprenticeship maybe. Speaking generally probably to have a roof over their heads, in the future to have a family maybe… I don't know.

- Feelings working with students:

Ms Sutton comments that she could be doing more than giving them the basics but that anything more would confuse them. She doesn't give them much freedom because of a severe fighting incidence in the past.

- Describing how teachers and students should ideally relate:

Initially she misheard the question as regarding teacher-teacher relationships so she replied, "I couldn't get better than here…" but then when she understood the question she giggled nervously indicating that her previous reply sounded like a joke and continued, "…its hard to say in this school. There should really be more allowance for the children to think (and take initiative) but that's ideally, that doesn't happen" ((giggles)).

- Dealing with difficulties:

She comments on how difficult it is to keep them interested all the time and continues that she tries to deal with the difficulties by keeping them busy; writing all the time so that they won't have a chance to look around and start hitting someone. She said that she has a wide range of problems from shouting to full-scale war and that she tries to deal with them by shouting or calling another teacher or keep them outside the classroom; "…and the list goes on…"

Ms Sutton's Teaching Beliefs and Experience: General Level

Training:

- ((cynical laugh upon hearing the question)) No use at all, totally crap! ((Said with vehemence)). They were talking of a complete different school than I work in. Everything I've learned is from the teachers here.

Teacher - student differences:

- Huge differences… The students are mostly working class whereas the teachers are middle class. I'd mention 'your house' and they'd say 'flat', little things like that…. Also they'd set a lot of value on material things… like having a good telly and video.
- Teachers' parents would have pushed for an education whereas the parents of the pupils in this school really only want to see them maybe get a FAS course; some of them don't even push them to be good attenders.

Teacher - student similarities:

- Getting angry. When they are absolutely going mad and they are doing nothing for you, you do get angry because it's so frustrating ((Inhales))… And then if you correct them a lot of the time a lot of the kids would get very aggressive and just say whatever they want.
- Especially with the younger teachers… I'd have the same interests in clothes as they would or say musical taste or films …that's about it.

Role clearly defined:

- I know what my role is… but in this school I find I'm disciplining more than teaching.

Support with students:

- The books that I have are too difficult for the reading age of that class.
- If you needed for example to contact a parent there is a system where you can go through your tutor… The disciplinary system is (also) a good school procedure because it can knock students into order.
- The staff are brilliant, they couldn't do enough for you with regard to advice with problems… or giving you any extra books that they have.

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- Ms Sutton laughed nervously and replied that she is not supported by the students. Then she added that sometimes students do support you and gave an example when a fight broke out in her classroom and a lot of kids jumped in and pulled them apart.
- Ms Sutton replied that she has not stayed enough in the school to know anything about 'external support'.

School decisions:

- Staff are always consulted on everything. (For example, the principal) wouldn't have someone new in class without getting approval first. So, very good.

Drawing energy from:

- The majority of kids are nice… There are some bad kids but it's the good kids that kinda make it, you know?

Advice to new Teachers:

- I couldn't give any ((in a bewildered tone)). I don't have experience so far ((laughs nervously)).
- The one thing I would say would be to set down the rules. I mean at the start it was complete chaos and it was only after a few weeks with them where I would write ten rules and make them copy them and copy them and the next day I'd come and say, "What are the rules?" (in a sharp tone). Little things, like don't bully anybody, don't leave your seat, don't talk out of turn, don't throw papers. They are not always followed but at least you can keep coming back to them.

Community and School:

- I don't really know cause I haven't been here long enough.

About parents:

- I think the parents are afraid of the school. I've only done one parent teaching meeting. They see the teachers as being aloof or above them. They'd sit back, away from you and they would agree with everything you say. I feel as if they are a bit intimidated by teachers.
- They are not really interested in the education system, at all.

- They don't have a lot of expectations (of teachers). Some parents would want you to "push him a bit" and others had no comment to make.
- They want their kids just to get through but not really to do well as such. Maybe get their Junior Cert but not pushed for a Leaving Cert.

Case 2: Ms Sutton - Alex

Ms Sutton's Perception of her Relationship with Alex

1. First impression:

I started working with him this September. The initial impression was his very bad temper. He couldn't take correction, very short fuse.

2. Student self perception:

I think he thinks he's real tough. Work wise he does make an effort he is very good. He doesn't have a problem with talking in class.

3. Feelings about school and teachers:

Alex hates school. I think he has a problem with teachers. I don't think he has a problem with me as an individual teacher but he just doesn't like teachers at all.

4. Teacher's experience:

I've given him tickets at the start of the year for his bad temper - absolutely no respect, fighting, talking back; he doesn't do that now he has his moments but generally he has improved a lot.

5. Student's perception of teacher and projected image to parents:

Alex probably feels bored. But I think I let them talk a little bit more now so I think he appreciates it because at the start he didn't like it because I make them write constantly I wouldn't let them say a word. (What he would say of me to his parents is) 'thick, bad tempered, always giving out'; that's true ((chuckles))

6. Attendance now, future and improvement:

Generally poor (attendance). I'd say he will drop out after third year. I don't think there is something a teacher could do to improve his attendance; it's too difficult. I am not a class teacher; I don't know what the policy is.

7. 'Don't get on well' incident:

At the beginning of the year I gave him four tickets. For example Joshua was sitting where Alex used to sit and Alex came in and said to him... so there was a huge row, … and the rest of the lads broke it up and I sent someone to call another teacher … I think Alex felt justified in hitting him because he was in his seat. I felt... I am sick of them; I didn't want to look at them after it.

8. 'Get on well' incident:

Since Christmas now, I've been getting on better with him, because I don't eh... I try and walk on eggshells around him if you know what I mean. I wouldn't come down on him as quickly as I would with others because I know what his temper is like. A little bit of encouragement helps keep him from flaring up. I think he appreciates me; he likes to hear... Like the stuff I am doing about his home area. I can see a bit of progress with him.

9. Pushing student & motivation:

I don't push him too much because even if he gets a little bit done it's an achievement. They're so weak and it's hard enough to keep the behaviour good and even if they get a little bit, I don't mind. Alex is motivated if it's something he's interested in. If it's something he finds boring he'll do a bit but he won't make an effort. Doing a few different activities in a class I think is the only thing (that can help him).

10. Relationship description:

As I said already, not to push him too far (is a good relationship approach). To be aware of just how he can flare up; of his temper. I don't think he really appreciates it (teacher's efforts); he doesn't like school.

11. Reputation:

Alex could affect my reputation. If you get on his wrong side, he is so hot tempered. I think if you did something to him and met him outside school, he could be liable to shout at you or something. I think you have to be careful around him.

12. Behaviour management:

I am careful around him. I wouldn't come down giving out on him as much as I would with others I would be more kind or encouraging him all the time. (If he doesn't respond) I just leave him if I've tried, I just couldn't be bothered because sometimes if he's not willing it could end up the whole class suffering.

13. Student as a person:

I'd say he is a nice kid because he can be... perfectly nice when he wants to be. He is a nice kid if you treat him ok, I think.

14. About parents:

Ms Sutton hasn't met Alex's parents nor does she see a point in meeting with them. 'I have no real issues with them, big issues.'

Alex's Relationship With Both Teachers

This section is comprised of three subsections. The first one displays the student's effort to give an overall comparison of the teachers he nominated. The second subsection briefly explores whether anything in the way the student perceives about the teacher or her lesson has changed since our last meeting. The last subsection displays the student's choice in the self-evaluation form (Appendix G8). All information under this section was elicited during the follow up interview meeting.

Brief Comparison of the Teachers the student Nominated:

"Ms Anderson was nicer and Ms Sutton wasn't nice... Like Ms Anderson brings you places." Alex could find nothing that these two teachers have in common.

Follow up information:

• General update:

Alex says that nothing has changed but he doesn't get into trouble because he is doing his work. Later he says that he feels different now than at the beginning of the year because, "I know I'm not going to get into trouble". However Alex says that even now the classroom he gets most in trouble in is Ms Sutton's.

• Relationship update:

Alex says that Ms Sutton is still narky but adds, "It's alright like, we're not getting into arguments or anything. She is getting a bit nice but she can be narky with you when she wants to be."

Self-evaluation:

After joking that it was "all lies", Alex circled No 10, "Absolutely true, I didn't change or made up a single thing" of the Self-Evaluation Form and added that he didn't make up anything.

Home School Community Liaison Officer's perspective

All the peripheral people's information is presented here in the form of quotes. However, some of them have been edited. The whole unedited transcript is available upon request and since all transcripts have been inputted into NUDIST, the original quote of any specific person is easily accessible.

Family Portrait

Alex's father had a drinking problem and Alex would have seen violence towards his mother but he just used to go quiet about the whole lot. Then the father moved away and a short time after that the mother met another man who was looking after them and offered stability. However, it was less than a year ago when the partner got a heart attack and died. So there was a lot of trauma in the family and I think Alex internalised the whole lot.

I know the mother would love them to do well. I think education is important to the family but education to what? Ambition for them to follow their dream about where they could go, I don't think has come into the story yet. If there was a parent teacher meeting, she would come but once I told her, "How are things for you?" and she says, "Do I have to hear more trouble?" That would be her expectation of the school and I would say, "Good Lord, you are bigger than that!" But I am not too sure the teachers can affirm her.

I would find my relationship with her very positive. (About the teachers) I don't think there would be an overly positive one. It would be sort of working relationship, not aspirational.

Student in School

I would think, Alex's relationships with teachers by and large would be heading towards the positive side.

Counsellor's perspective

Student in School

After Alex's major loss, he was very upset, he was tearful when talking to me and he seemed to get a bit more awkward in class. He begun to get tickets and all so it was really that kind of grief sort of not dealt with. I gave him the option if he ever wanted to tell me more but he hasn't initiated that of his own free will. Lately he sees his biological dad on a weekly basis.

He was the only one who said to me that he'd like to move class. I think he felt that he might do a bit more work if he could move class. But at that kind of time in second year it is very difficult. Last year he felt there was an awful lot of messing going on and you see they were all painted with the same brush. He wanted to move class since last year but you see I can mention it but I have no control over that.

Maybe it might be no harm if somebody took an interest in Alex, specifically in Alex. Now I don't know how he gets on with men teachers. I am thinking of the fact that he has lost the male role model in his life and he was very fond of him. I mean you don't get too many children who would come in here and tell you that kind of thing, you know?

Tutor's perspective

Family Portrait

The mother is very supportive. She rings if he is not going to be in the school that day and she has been up to the school a good few times during the year.

Student in School

Last year Alex had a lot more clashes with teachers than he's had this year. If he thinks somebody is correcting him in the wrong or they are giving him a ticket in the wrong, he'll stand up and he'll make the situation worse, sometimes. He mixes well with the rest of the class. I think the majority of the teachers would think that he is pretty ok.

I wouldn't say he is the most likely to leave but I think maybe the family situation and that, he might leave after third year. He's quite bright but I don't see him having an awful lot of drive academically speaking. I think Alex craves attention; he likes any bit of praise. He gets very moody if you can't answer him exactly when he wants to be answered. But he's a very nice child and he appreciates anything that you do for him, but if you do anything for him he expects more from you.

Preliminary Information

Although Timmy will try harder with Ms Sutton, 'to get the work done and not get into trouble', it is two other teachers that help him the best. Only after some prompting did he come up with Ms Anderson as his most liked teacher because as he said, 'she is polite, not narky and if you can't do art she will give you a video instead'.

Ms Anderson was also the teacher he most likes to be in the classroom with and learn because, "Sometimes, she learns you good art" and because, "I might become a good artist and get some money".

Upon my question to choose a teacher he doesn't like, Timmy replied, "They are all good teachers, if they give you a ticket, it's for a reason". Only after I pushed him to choose one did Timmy nominate Ms Sutton because, "She never lets you go to the toilet, she gives you work and if you don't do it she still asks you to do it", however he added, "but she is a good teacher."

Timmy wasn't sure until when he would like to stay in school but he noted that it depends on his Junior Cert results. The most important opinions for him are his parents.

Family's Perspective (father)

Family situation:

Timmy is thirteen years old. He has three siblings that are older than him and two that are younger. His older siblings left school before getting their Junior Certificate. They all work now. Timmy is not doing any part time job.

About student's thoughts of school:

Timmy doesn't talk about school a lot. Once he comes in from school, he goes to the youth club. He never complains (about his teachers). He never passes any comments so obviously things are plodding along as they should be.

About student:

There's certain subjects he doesn't like but that's understandable. He doesn't like (one of Ms Sutton's lessons) or Science. Other than that he's happy enough in school. He has no

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complaints about any of the teachers, they're all fairly fair. He has this lacksidasy attitude, he says, "Ah, I couldn't be bothered" but when he tries he's good.

They might get a free class and they get their homework done in school. Ninety nine times out of a hundred he would have it done at school. (If he brings it here) he'd get it done after he comes back from the club at half past six. He will spend as short time as possible.

If he has his way he'll be a snooker player; these things don't always work out but I mean there is no point in me choosing a career for him that he doesn't like and he might do it just to please me which would be wrong.

He's a happy go lucky person, that's the type he is. He takes life one day at a time he never plans ahead of himself, he is not pushed, he will never start rows and that, he will plod along at his own pace.

I'd love him to go to college, I mean I know the way he should go on but like, at that age they don't realize this, they think they will never get out of school. Kids now think, "As soon as I'm fifteen I'm out of here". I'd like to see him sit his Leaving anyway; at least his Leaving Cert to give him any chance in the world. I'd say... if I can keep him in school until he's sixteen I'm doing well. He'll definitely do his Junior Cert.

About school:

We were all the same in school, I mean I never liked Art or Biology or anything like that. (This year I went to the) parent teacher meetings; see how he's getting on. I met all the teachers. I am happy enough with the school. They're all generally good teachers. It is up to the student if they want to learn or they don't want to learn.

I send Timmy to school to be educated. All right, students can be difficult but that's why (a teacher) is trained; it's down to him to know what to do with difficult students. To be able to deal with whatever comes up in (the school) on any given day. He should also know whether his progress could be better or whether he is at his right level and it's up to the teachers to either let me know or let Timmy know that he's falling behind. It's up to the teacher to know and they said he's doing alright they said he's progressing at a normal rate so we are happy enough with that. He just gets his days but other than that they get along well with him.

Ideas for improvement:

If they moved in a snooker table. That would definitely bring him to school more. He'd go to school on Saturday and Sunday.

(How the teachers should treat Timmy) depends on the occasion. Now, we let him know that they're the boss, simple as that. Because when he comes in here he knows who's the

boss is here so when he's told to do something he just does it otherwise he gets a clip around the ear so if they were as stern with him as I am they'd get more cooperation from him.

About Ms Anderson or Ms Sutton:

Timmy's father hasn't heard anything from his son about any of his teachers.

Observation Notes from Interview Situation

Appearance, initial impression:

Timmy seems to be the youngest among his classmates. He is thin and small. His hands formed an astonishing contrast with his child-like appearance since they were rough enough to give you the impression that he had done quite a lot of manual work. His clothes were often worn out.

General impression & Attention level:

Timmy tried to cooperate in all our meetings however his activity level quickly fell as he seemed to lose interest in our conversation. Very quickly I found that I had to repeat and explain my questions since Timmy would sometimes misinterpret or simply not bother to reply. His attention could be easily distracted and his sitting posture, mainly indicated boredom. However most of the times I asked him, he denied feeling bored.

He demonstrated a variety of facial expressions, mostly cheerful or bored. The one that mostly characterised our conversations was his pouting expression conveying something like, 'I have nothing to say, I have never thought of that'. I noticed no discrepancy between his statements and my subjective feelings apart from his denial of feeling bored.

Relationship with interviewer:

Timmy was patient and cooperative. His way of relating to me was in accordance with his interest in our discussion. During our first meeting he initiated conversation 3-4 times. However after our third meeting very rarely did he initiate a conversation. Thus our cooperation pattern started in a climate of mutual friendliness and discussion and ended up as a one-way communication that was eventually perceived by both of us as something to get over with.

His bright eyes conveyed enthusiasm especially when talking of matters he enjoyed. However the most intense impression his eyes conveyed was tiredness. His eye

contact was very good, regularly alternating with mine. Overall I felt he was very much a friendly child and I felt affectionate towards him.

Affects & anxiety:

Only initially did Timmy present some moderate anxiety that lasted for a few minutes. He quickly relaxed. His replies with regard to his supportive teacher were sometimes spontaneous but they were rarely accompanied with any intense feelings. Most of his replies with regard to his non-supportive teacher were neither spontaneous nor emotive.

Language:

Timmy had very poor language skills that undoubtedly could have influenced his elaboration and interpretation of matters. His voice volume was sometimes barely audible and the pace of his speech was mostly slow unless he spoke of some out of school activities that he liked.

Other Contextual Experiences and Expectations

- About classmates:

Timmy said that he has some best friends among his classmates.

- About school:

(From school) you get a good education. What I like most is Physical Education and woodwork. (School means) a lot to me.

- About Ideal:

Table 5.3

Timmy's nominated teachers in relation to his ideal TSR bi-polar constructs

Descriptions of relationship with good teacher	Always-Usually-Often				Often-Usually-Always			Opposite descriptions
	3	**⇐** **2**	**1**	**0**	**1**	**⇒** **2**	**3**	
1 He would not be angry with you			✓	✗				Doesn't give out to you a lot. She'd teach you. No work: Lets you talk quietly
2 He would be kind		✓	✗					Angry at you
3 He would let us watch a video	✓			✗				Doesn't show us a video
4 He would take us out for a game of football				✓*			✓ ✗	Doesn't take us out for a game of football

*I told him: You said Ms Anderson didn't take you out for a game of football either, did you? Then he thought for a second and changed his tick.

Timmy thinks that if the school had teachers like the ideal one he described above that would make a difference for him, it would make him feel good because, "You won't have to do work, you would work less".

General Classroom Observation

This information is similar to 'General Classroom Observations' in Alex – Ms Anderson case, page 121.

Observed Interactions between Ms Anderson and Timmy

This information is not available due to teacher having left the school early.

Timmy's Perception of his Relationship with Ms Anderson

Imaginary incident

Ms Anderson will come over and help me. She would say, first thing, why aren't you working? I'd say, I don't know what to do and then she would just tell me what to do. She looks relaxed. I think she feels all right when she is coming to help me. She is thinking why am I not doing any work. The other students are doing their work.

Open Interview summary

1. Open question about the teacher
Ms Anderson is not narky. She is only narky when you're doing something wrong. If you give her respect she'll give you respect back
2. The student's first impression of the teacher
(The first impression Ms Anderson gave to Timmy was) all right, the best ever.
3. Relationship exploration
All right, I'd like to have Ms Anderson as my teacher. I don't know why, she's just - I like art an all, she is not as narky. We were getting on good; I am not getting into trouble and all.
4. Teacher's relationship to classmates
All right, the others like her as well.

5. On teaching & management

Good. She is a good drawer. I don't know... she 'd get to you sheets and all. She would come down and see where you are and show you how to do it. It is helpful a little.

6. Student's reply to metaperspective questions

I don't know. I can't think of anything.

Feeling faces

- Sometimes (bored); sitting there doing nothing, that's bored.
- A bit (relaxed) sometimes when I was sitting there doing work.
- (Focused): I was trying to do what I was doing. There is no point in doing something else; you should do what the teacher's telling ya.
- (Interested) in Art.
- I don't know. A bit (loved). Sometimes, not all the time.
- Sometimes (happy). It's only because... you look on your own work and see if it's good or bad; it's good.
- Sometimes (proud). Don't know why. When we watched a video. (perhaps as a reward?)
- (I feel impatient) because she'd talk to somebody else and I'd say to myself 'come on'.

Structured interview

Timmy seems to experience the rules in Ms Anderson's class as, 'all right' and fair. Most indicatively he says, 'you can talk while you don't' shout and don't mess'.

Timmy seems to feel that the teacher notices him when he needs her and she will be available unless she is helping somebody else. He says that she speaks about the work and she also lets him do something that he wants to do. 'All right' was the most elaborate reply Timmy would give to describe his relationship with Ms Anderson. His impression is that she warns students first before giving a ticket unless it is bad. She looks angry and roars at you but… a little bit.

Timmy liked that she let them watch a video and as he said there were loads of things he liked but he couldn't think of any examples.

Timmy feels that Ms Anderson is paying enough attention to him and also feel that she would intervene if somebody picked on him.

Although Timmy could not say if he felt she was interested in him, he said that she would listen to him and help him but always about the lesson since, 'there is nothing to talk about beyond the lesson'. Timmy seems to feel that she is quite approachable and understandable. He thinks she is honest with everybody.

Timmy thinks Ms Anderson cares about her students and his guess is that he is not special for her; she probably wants him in her class. However Timmy couldn't not talk of any expectations that his teacher might have of him. Even more he was uncertain about the quality of trust in their relationship. Overall, he couldn't think of something Ms Anderson gave him by being his teacher.

Teacher Vignette: Ms Anderson

This information is similar to 'Teacher Vignette: Ms Anderson' in Alex – Ms Anderson case, pages 125-130.

Case 3: Ms Anderson – Timmy

1. First impression:

It was the year before Timmy first came to secondary school when I was coming out of the gate of the primary school, a young boy stood in front of the car and wouldn't let me out. I tried to move him so he ran off. I jumped back into the car and just as I was going to take off the child ran, stood out and stopped us again. Then, he pulled down his trousers, put his bum up to the car and said, 'kiss that', slapped his backside and ran off. As he was running off, he turned round and I kept his face in my mind.

A few months later, Timmy landed in my class. So the minute I saw him in the class I said, "Can you come here a second I want to talk to you outside" this was our very first meeting. I took him outside the door and I said, "Do you recognize me?" and he went "No". I said, "Well I recognize you, I saw you, actually I saw your backside up against my window one day" and I said, "Now Timmy don't beat about the bush it's your very first day here in this school, tell the truth was that you?" I remember he said to me, "What will happen if I say it was me?" and I said "Don't worry about the consequences, admit if you did it". He looked around and said, "Will I get thrown out of the school?" and I added, "Well, lets put it in this

way, whatever happens to you for telling the truth it's going to be less than if you tell me lies" and so he said with a low voice, "Yes it was Miss" and he started to cry and he said, "…but I am a very good boy". I said, "Are you? The impression that I had now was that you were a nasty boy." And he exclaimed, "…but I'm a very good boy" and I'll never forget, he said to me, "My brother was very bad in this school but I'm going to be very good!" This was my first meeting and he says, "Don't judge me because I'm not like my (two years older) brother". I'd say at that point Timmy liked me because of the way I handled the situation. (My impression of him in the classroom) was very very good actually. He was very anxious to work and he liked working on his own, he didn't like being part of any group.

2. Student self perception:

Timmy has a problem he always believes that whatever happens to him is because of the way his brother carried on. Therefore he doesn't fully accept responsibility for little mistakes he makes but actually as the first year went on he begun to lose that. Timmy has low self-esteem. He will come up to you with his work and he'd say, "It's bad, it's no good".

3. Feelings about school and teachers:

I think Timmy likes school. It gets Timmy out of the house and it's very much in Timmy's mind that his brother is a bad guy. Luke just got involved with the wrong gang, and Timmy could easily fall into the same type of thing. Timmy is making a big effort in school. If you are good to Timmy, if you realise he is only a child, if you praise him... those are the teachers Timmy will get on with. Also if it is too academic, his attention span wouldn't hold.

4. Teacher's experience:

Timmy is very funny; I had a good experience with Timmy. He is the kind of guy who likes to comes up and tell you a wee story like, "Did you hear what happened la la la la la". I will just say, "Yeah, that's amazing" and then let him tell me regardless of me listening or not. Maybe the other teachers wouldn't have the time for that.

5. Student's perception of teacher and projected image to parents:

Timmy would probably say the same for me, funny. Like once I was going to give him a ticket probably just because I was just sick listening to him; and God he came up at me, "Don't give me a ticket, I don't want a ticket, my mammy will kill me" ((in an excessively sad kid's voice)) ah big hullabaloo and I said, "Right boy I wont give it today I said but if you make any noise again I will." I think he would give a positive image to his parents, he would say that I was a fair person, but if her temper goes, that's it, we are all dead.

6. Attendance now, future and improvement:

Timmy would miss at least two days a week. Maybe as I said before a 1-1 tutor would help Timmy. Timmy needs a person that could only be mad or happy at Timmy's own actions. Also Timmy doesn't get enough remedial tuition, for example do maths in a fun way because the maths teacher simply doesn't have the time to do that. I think they need to have a remedial teacher who can take them on a more personalised level. Timmy is a lovely child but I see him making it as far as maybe third year because all the forces outside school are against him. His parents don't have any regard to education and his brothers have gone off track.

7. 'Don't get on well' incident:

I never had a bad experience with Timmy. The worst thing Timmy's ever done to me is that he wouldn't be prepared to let anyone else show what he has to do, he wanted me to show him. Once I was about to give him a ticket but that was probably my fault. Timmy was helpful, he couldn't do enough for you.

8. 'Get on well' incident:

I suppose we clicked at that point where I didn't take a spite to him for what he had done outside school. Even if he told lies, I wasn't going to give out to him because how do you admit that you pulled down your trousers and stuck your ass up at a car, it's quite understandable to lie about it. I know he is disruptive in other classes but he isn't in mine.

9. Pushing student & motivation:

I didn't push Timmy. An hour and fifteen minutes is a long time. He would always work till he was nearly finished and then he'd just have a tiny wee bit to do and he'd say, 'That's it now, I can't do it anymore, I'll do that tomorrow'. I praised him for the bit he'd done. I would have pushed other children but with him I felt that was better than losing interest and not working at all.

Timmy has fantastic motivation to work as long he gets praise; then he will sit there with a big smile on his face delighted with himself. He liked art though and he was quite highly motivated to work and motivated to turn up to the hurling training too. You had to pick a theme he was interested in; he also loves getting stickers and prizes. We stop that when they come to secondary level (but) some of them need that little star.

10. Relationship description:

Honestly sometimes I felt like Timmy's mother. He was very close, very touchy. He loved knocking up showing you things and telling you stories. There is no point being cold to Timmy because he will be cold back to you or maybe disruptive.

Ms Anderson went on describing an incident that involved discussing development of ethical thinking with regards to Timmy's behaviour. Elsewhere she comments, 'It was absolutely amazing that they all knew people who robbed people, who robbed handbags but it wasn't till I explained to them that I was robbed once (and how upset I was) that they realized, "Oh my God, people that are getting robbed are ordinary people like Ms Anderson"; they never, ever make the connections until it is pointed out to them. Timmy's relationship needs to be personal. He is not getting (enough attention). I mean when he comes here he looks as if he just hopped out of the bed and stuck his head in the toaster and ran.

I don't think he makes a connection (to appreciate my efforts); they only see it when they are 16 or 17. Some of them will write back to you and say 'thank you'. Timmy doesn't really come to my mind outside the school, it's always the bad ones that do.

11. Reputation:

I don' think Timmy could affect my reputation because he wouldn't have anything bad to say about me.

12. Behaviour management:

If Timmy gave me something that was very poor, I would still praise him because if Timmy's getting no praise in the class then he thinks he's getting no attention and he can get disruptive. Timmy only messes in class -I mean, going around annoying the rest of them- during the last 10 minutes unless I give him something to do when he is finished. Sometimes a good roar would sort things out. I don't have a stern way of managing Timmy. I just explain things, "Timmy, don't do that, you are annoying me, you are upsetting me, wasn't I good enough to give you pens? Can you not sit down for five minutes?" And he would sit down.

But he didn't ever disturb anyone on my class. Just when he wasn't going to work anymore, I had to give him a pen to write that was in different colors or smelt of strawberries or blackcurrants, he was fascinated with that. That would hold him for the last ten minutes.

13. Student as a person:

Timmy is a lovely child but he is too innocent and he is going to go down the wrong path because nobody cares. While he's coming to school he has someone ringing up to say, "Why are you not in today? Where are you? We want you here", he has that kind of feeling, he needs it; well we all need it but he definitely does.

14. About parents:

I only met the father when his brother threw a block and smashed another teacher's car window. The impression with the father was like father like son. I don't think the parents

expect anything from me, they are just sending Timmy to school because they have to. (Luke left just before completing compulsory education).

As far as I saw there was no change after our meeting.

Case 4: Timmy – Ms Sutton

General Classroom Observation

This information is similar to 'General Classroom Observations' in Alex – Ms Sutton case, pages 135 - 137.

Observed Interactions Between Ms Sutton and Timmy

1. Timmy was focused on the task for about half an hour. After that he often returned to the student sitting behind him, mostly talking about work.
2. Timmy was smiling at two other students twice. Once he laid his head on his desk for a couple of minutes.
3. The teacher was working with another student at the board. Timmy mischievously pretended he was throwing a rubber forcefully at the teacher. The teacher didn't notice and Timmy didn't do it.
   Further notes: During that time there were a few 1-1 chats among other students.
4. 20'-35': Timmy was making faces to Phil and not paying any attention to the lesson. 25': Teacher scolded Phil, saying, "Phil you are really annoying me." No cognitive or affective explanations for the result of their behaviour. No change occurred. Timmy was making very childish faces and rude gestures. The teacher ignored them as far as they seem not to disturb the lesson flow since the rest of the students were interested in the lesson and were engaged in a discussion.
   Further notes: Boundaries: Loose. (Teacher noticed and chose to ignore). Selective attention: filtering (ignoring). Control of unfriendliness: she seemed to want to avoid conflict.

Condensed description of Incidents

Timmy was often quiet; either half asleep or trying to work. However there was a number of times when he would be immaturely playing and distracting one or two classmates that were sitting next two him. Phil who seemed to be Timmy's best friend often distracted him. A number of times, Timmy seemed bored and that seemed to lead him to resort to 'showing off' playfulness.

Timmy's Perception of his Relationship with Ms Sutton

Imaginary incident

Ms Sutton would ask me, "Why aren't you working?" I'd say, "I don't know how to do it." Then she would show me how to do it. When she was coming to me, I was just thinking, 'she is going to give me a yellow ticket' or 'what she's gonna do'. (She probably thinks), 'why is there no work? Has he not been listening?' I feel relaxed; she is probably relaxed as well. The others are working.

Open Interview

1. Open question about the teacher
Ms Sutton teaches good.
2. The student mentioned that he had nothing to describe as 'first impression' with the teacher in question
3. Relationship exploration
'All right, I was never in trouble with Ms Sutton'. However elsewhere he is not sure and he says that she gets on with him but, "…a little bit".
(I haven't asked her for anything besides the lesson).
(I feel) Good (because I am always happy); because she never gives out to me. I don't really want to go to the class.
4. Teacher's relationship to classmates
All right... Not so good. She doesn't get on well with them but sometimes she does; with some people she does.

5. On teaching & management

Timmy cannot describe. ((He seems to simply nod at my prompts)). (she is mainly calm), she gives out sometimes when you mess. (She helps you good) most of the times. Yes, she is in charge of the classroom.

6. Student's reply to metaperspective questions

I don't know.

Feeling faces

- (Relaxed) Yes, I just feel relaxed all the time
- Sometimes (focused) on the work. (unrelated to Ms Sutton)
- (Happy). Yea. I am always happy.
- (Helpless), sometimes. Like when you're stuck down the work and you ask her when she is just trying to do her own work ..
- (Bored) Most of the time.
- (Indifferent). I am not interested in that work. I don't like it.

Structured interview

Timmy thinks Ms Sutton's rules are good and fair. However he seems to feel that her humour may be a factor influencing her decisions. With some uncertainty he says that if somebody picked on him, he would ignore him.

Timmy says that he feels all right in her classroom and if he wants to ask something she will usually notice. He cannot tell if she understands how he feels and elsewhere he says that she doesn't speak to him about his work and that she is quite directive.

Timmy says that he has only messed once in Ms Sutton's classroom and adds, Ms Sutton, like most teachers, roars at you –but a little bit- and tells you to stop. After two warnings she gives a ticket.

Timmy believes that she tries to listen to him and that she is available to help. However he can't say if she is interested in him. Timmy thinks Ms Sutton is honest and he finds that she gets on with most of his classmates. They sometimes greet each other in school and he feels she may be approachable.

Although Timmy says that he trusts Ms Sutton, however he cannot guess what she thinks of him or whether she trusts him. With some uncertainty he says that she expects him to be good and do his work. Although he says that he understands her, he doesn't know if the reverse is true.

Timmy could not find anything that he liked of her personality and he doesn't expect anything special at the last lesson of the year. He can't think of anything special to remember of her.

Teacher Vignette: Ms Sutton

This information is similar to 'Teacher Vignette: Ms Sutton' in Alex – Ms Sutton case, pages 141 – 145.

Case 4: Ms Sutton – Timmy

Ms Sutton's Perception of her Relationships with Timmy

1. First impression:
(At the beginning), Timmy was confused; new teacher, what subject, what copy and this hasn't changed yet.
2. Student self perception:
He doesn't have a very high opinion of himself. A lot of the time he finds things difficult and sometimes he's not willing to make an effort because he's afraid he'll be wrong.
3. Feelings about school and teachers:
I don't think he minds coming to school. I think he likes teachers; he has respect for them. I think he kind of appreciates if you give him encouragement.
4. Teacher's experience:
(My experience with Timmy is) good. He is polite, he is alright.
5. Student's perception of teacher and projected image to parents:
I think he thinks that I'm ok that I am fair with him. (This will be the description to his parents).

6. Attendance now, future and improvement:

He still has a very bad attendance. I say he will drop out during third year because Timmy's parents wouldn't encourage him (to stay). There is nothing a teacher could do to improve his attendance.

7. 'Don't get on well' incident:

I've always got on ok with him; I've given out to him one day; not a serious incident. I met him that afternoon in the hall and he went, 'sorry miss for earlier'.

8. 'Get on well' incident:

I've always kind of got on with him. However, he is in school so little that I can't think of a particular incident.

9. Pushing student & motivation:

I push him a good bit because he's weak so I spend a lot of time standing at the desk when he's doing something. All of them in that class need a lot of help. He's good; he makes an effort. (To improve his motivation he needs) encouragement; to say that something was good.

10. Relationship description:

(The relationship approach should be to) say he's good, say he's doing good work, correct his copy; things like that he appreciates. To say that that question was well answered or to actually pick out specific things he's after doing. (I think he appreciates my efforts) because he's just polite to me and he is very respectful and always says, "Hello" at the corridor. (I don't think of him outside the school.)

11. Reputation:

(He doesn't affect my reputation.)

12. Behaviour management:

His behaviour isn't really a problem. There is so much other problems in class ((laughs)) he is not a major problem. The only thing about his behaviour would be if he doesn't understand something he'll talk out of turn but it's not boldness.

13. Student as a person:

Very nice kid, very polite.

14. About parents:

I have met his mother but with regards to his brother. She wouldn't have that much motivation for them. I don't think there's any point (to speak to her about Timmy). I am not his class teacher so I don't think there would be any point in me saying anything that hasn't

been said before, you know? I think she expects me to treat him fairly, to be treated with respect.

<u>Student's Relationship With Both Teachers</u>

Brief Comparison of the Teachers the student Nominated:

Timmy said that the only difference was that he liked Ms Anderson's subject more than Ms Sutton's. However elsewhere Timmy says that when he goes to Ms Sutton's classroom he thinks, 'I don't really want to go to the class (because) you have to do a lot of work'. In Ms Anderson's case he thinks, 'I want to go to the class and see what they are all doing so that I can do something like that'.

Follow up information:
- General update:
Everything is grand, it's better now. (Ms Sutton is still narky but) I just haven't been in trouble with her. I liked a project we did in small groups, a survey, just colouring on it, making all the bar charts. It's not changed but like I didn't get into trouble with her because I am doing me work. I feel different, good because I know I am not going to get into trouble.
- Relationship update:
I get on with her the same

Self-evaluation:
At the self-evaluation form, without much thought, Timmy circled 10, 'Absolutely true, I didn't change or make up a single thing.'

<u>Crystallisation Information</u>

Home School Community Liaison Officer's perspective

<u>Family Portrait</u>
I've left his parents a card asking them to contact me and I never had a response. So I don't know them.

Counsellor's Perspective

<u>Student in School</u>

I found that Timmy was cheerful and bright. This year when I asked him about school he said it was ok. He told me that he was slugged but it wasn't something that was causing him a problem. When I met him in the first term he had no tickets so that is usually a very good sign. He wouldn't have struck me as somebody that I would worry about. He seemed to be able to take things in his stride. From what I gathered from him the background was ok. Both parents are living at home; the father is employed. However, it should be noted that the father contradicted himself when at some point he had claimed he was employed during a certain period (the previous year) whereas at a later meeting he claimed he was unemployed during the very same period.

I can't see anything motivating him in school. I mean he's another fella that seems involved in the snooker and the football. Of the ones you chose I would feel that he would be the least at risk but on the other hand the dropping out is in the family. I would think that Timmy is the most open; Alex is a quieter personality. Timmy would come across maybe as being the friendliest; it's not that the others aren't but I would consider him maybe more outgoing in a more accepting sort of a way, not a cautious way.

Tutor's Perspective

<u>Family Portrait</u>

I met both his parents once. I get the impression that there's a bit of difficulty between the two parents. The parents wouldn't exactly push Timmy so he misses a fair bit of time. It's very difficult to get any feedback from them; it's very hard to actually get in touch with them to find out why he's not at school. I only saw them in first year. They seem quite nice but they are not even remotely interested in how he's doing academically. It's more his behaviour they were concentrating on as in how he was getting on with people and was he causing any trouble.

<u>Student in School</u>

Timmy is a very nice child …he's very sociable. He is very friendly even with teachers who don't teach him. He is a very gentle child, very loving. He likes any bit of praise. However academically he's very weak so I think that is his big problem, his letdown. He will probably stay for the Junior Cert. but I couldn't see him staying after that.

Priory School

Preliminary Information:

As the teacher who helps best, both Mr Porter and Ms Anne were suggested but Mr Porter was finally chosen. However Philip's preferred teacher was Ms Anne because 'she is very good to us', because good learning takes place (in her class) and because 'I don't hear her shout much'. Philip feels most motivated by woodwork, which is taught by a third teacher. As far as the least liked teacher is concerned, Philip named Ms Curtis because of the boring subjects she teaches. Later Philip said that if Ms Anne was teaching most lessons, which would make a difference for him because he would pass the exams; after some thought he added that she would make a difference because she is a good teacher. Philip initially said that he intends to stay in school till his Leaving Certificate examination but when asked again he was uncertain saying that he doesn't know. Philip's mother seems to be the person in the family who mainly contacts the school. Finally, Philip states that his own opinion is the opinion that is most important for him; only after some probing to name another person did he add, "Me Ma".

Family's Perspective (mother)

Family situation:

Philip was fifteen years old at the time of the interview; he is the eldest in a family of five boys. He lives with his mother and the father of the four younger boys. His biological father was beaten to death when Philip was 18 months old. His mother has been diagnosed as agoraphobic. She says that all the other boys that go to primary school are excited about school and she smiles when she adds that she hopes they aren't like Philip when they grow up. The stepfather and one of the boys are diagnosed with dyslexia.

About student's thoughts of school:

'When Philip started attending the secondary school his attitude to his stepfather changed, like he was saying 'that's not me da' and his stepfather got angry about it.' Philip says that he wants to leave that school and go somewhere else. He complains 'I hate this

school, me head is wrecked; me head is melted over that school'. When she asked him, "How come Shane gets homework and you don't?" he replied, "Because we're in the stupid class, d' you know? We're all thicks". She seems to believe Philip because she adds, "Well, I never got homework in secondary school either". She goes on to spontaneously add, "I know I am not going to have any say over the matter but I know he's going to do his best to get a job, when he's sixteen... If I tell him to stay in school he goes, 'Oh! I hate school'; and he stamps his feet like a two year old... His uncle gave him an apprenticeship but I wouldn't let him do it and he hates me for that... If he leaves school at sixteen and a half, I want him to go on a training course, do something; I know he won't get a good job because of his grades..."

About student:

'Philip is not well educated, he can't even spell small words, you know? Philip gets twenty-five pounds each day and spends them in sweets and smokes'. Philip has a lot of aggression that's why the counsellor in the hospital wants to see him. His mother went on and gave some not so clear explanations so as to why this might have happened. The mother says that Philip believes that when he leaves school, 'it will be different' and adds: 'He thinks he knows it all... I know he's not bleedin mad, he is stupid... but like Philip I think he tries to be big you know, in front of all his mates...' Then she adds that he loves manual stuff and exclaims: 'you know, even in the school now, he loves woodwork.'

About school:

'There is always trouble. I've been in the school last year; I saw the counsellor and the principal. That was about Philip kicking a table at one of his classmates but the principal didn't know that that student had called Philip a queer and all... this happened in primary and it's after carrying on to secondary....' and continued: 'Ms Anne wanted me to go to a parent teacher meeting but I'm stuck here (at home) and they don't seem to want to know.' She also mentioned another incident where despite her effort to defend Philip, he was finally expelled.

Ideas for improvement:

Philip's mother believes that it could make a difference for Philip if the teachers were giving 'little presents' to the students. She repeatedly said that the teachers were doing enough for him and added that Philip should have put his mind down to work and do what he was told instead of just wanting to be different. She explains: 'if he gave them less attitude... they wouldn't be on his back all the time'. Although Philip's mother knows that it is very difficult, she suggests, 'Philip would do loads of work on a one to one basis'. Elsewhere she is complaining: 'She [Philip's tutor] told me of his attitude and that he was

great two weeks ago... but she never rung me to tell me then; that way I could have praised him, instead of giving out to him.' Finally she said emphatically, '...expelling Philip and sending him to bed for the day is no punishment; if he gets detention, well he'll hate that more.'

<u>About Mr Porter:</u>

'The only teacher Philip has problems with is Mr Porter... Like with the ball incident, Mr Porter told him: 'I'll tell you Philip, if you had a hit me with that ball I'd have punched the head off you'. I don't want a teacher talking like that to my son, you know? ... but two other fellas had it and Mr Porter never said anything to them... now he could give him bit of space, you know? ...and [I want] for Philip not to be carrying on all the time... Three weeks ago Mr Porter said something to him and I looked it up in the dictionary and it wasn't nice, you know? ...That teacher used words I wouldn't know... Philip hates that teacher, Mr Porter.'

<u>About Ms Anne:</u>

Philip's mother said: 'Well, I think Ms Anne is great... he likes her... well Ms. Anne has her good days with Philip and she also has bad days'. But also complained: 'but I never get a phone call off Ms Anne to say how good he's doing.'

Observation Notes from Interview Situation

<u>Appearance, initial impression, Quality of Relationship:</u>

Philip appeared to have entered puberty in contrast with most of his classmates. He gave the impression of a young man instead of that of an early adolescent. His complexion was pale and sometimes he was untidy. Initially, he gave me the impression of being very respectful. Subsequently more traits came up. He had adopted a macho style that often got him into trouble. During the first couple of meetings, Philip was quite cooperative but then suddenly at our third meeting a huge change occurred. He had told me that he would come to my office but then he simply did not appear. I tried to approach him despite his response of initially ignoring my presence even while I was talking to him. I reminded him of his promise but he said that he did not want to join me because he liked art (the lesson he would miss that day). When I offered an alternative, he came up with another excuse, "I don't want to miss lessons, I want to pass my Junior Cert". It seemed to me that both reasons were excuses instead of the true reasons that made him change his mind. My last chance of gaining his cooperation was to tell him of the impact of his decision on my work

and to promise giving him a small monetary reward for his help at the end of our cooperation. At once he changed his mind and agreed to work with me once again. During our meetings, I felt no warmth or even friendliness developing. I felt frustrated because my effort and openness did not seem to bring us any closer. He was the only student with whom I felt our meetings were a purely work focused typicality.

General impression & Activity level:

For most of the time when we were working he did not give any distinctive anxiety signs and after our additional agreement he exercised good patience and effort to reply to my questions. He was serious in his interactions with me and he seemed to believe every bit of what he was saying. That seriousness was however permanent since not even once do I remember him speaking of something in a light-hearted way. His activity level was steadily moderate to low.

Affects & anxiety:

What stood out for me during our initial meeting was my difficulty to sense any emotions through our eye contact; at that time, he gave me the impression that his inner world of feelings was frozen. However in our subsequent meetings I eventually sensed suspicion, anger, loathing and sometimes momentarily sadness through his eyes. Moreover, I often felt he was thoughtful, annoyed and frustrated when describing most of his experiences with Mr Porter. The only time I heard him speaking positively was when he was talking of woodwork. He showed excitement but again I felt a disengaged stance. Moreover, in some of his descriptions of Ms Anne I felt his state of permeable stress/anxiety had calmed down. When he was talking of her he seemed more relaxed and even momentarily in peace with himself. Not once did he give me the impression of being happy though.

Language:

His vocabulary was rather poor and it hindered his language expression. However, my impression is that his cognitive abilities have a much higher potential.

Other Contextual Experiences and Expectations

- About classmates:

All my classmates are grand; mad they are. We treat each other the same.

- About school:

At school I want to, "Get an education, behave and all…. Look forward to getting along with the teachers."

- About Ideal:

Philip briefly said that an ideal teacher would see what the students are like and his past experience would suggest that he gets along with students. He would also be informed about the students' behaviour. He is nice and sweet. He talks with you and you can buzz off with him. He would send any bold students to the principal.

This teacher would make a difference because at the end of the day you would walk out with a good education. This teacher can get it into your head and wakes you up and makes you stand if you're falling asleep.

Table 5.4

Philip's nominated teachers in relation to his ideal TSR bi-polar constructs

Descriptions of relationship with good teacher	Always-Usually-Often				Often-Usually-Always			Opposite descriptions
	3	⇐ 2	1	0	1	⇒ 2	3	
1 Have a laugh with				✗ ✓				Narky all the time
2 Give a good education	✗ ✓							Wouldn't teach you, just sits there doing nothing
3 I can understand what they are saying	✗ ✓							I cannot understand
4 Help me read and other people as well				✗ ✓				Don't help me while they may help somebody else
5 If they work with me I will work with them	✗ ✓							They don't give me work so they have nothing to work on

6 To get to know them		✓		✗				Angry at you. Doesn't know you and doesn't want to know you either
7 To teach me well for the JC	✗	✓						Things wouldn't get up to your head
8 To get on with them	✗			✓				Don't talk about stuff, like how you get on with work
9 Me friends would be like… good in their classes and all	✗	✓						Don't get on with you. Give out all the time

Case 5: Philip – Ms Anne

General Classroom Observations

Beginning of lesson:

Ms Anne's lesson was after the lunch break. Most of the time a small number of students were waiting for her outside the classroom. Some of them were chatting quietly, not always in a row. They entered the classroom quietly and sat down. Ms Anne would often wait two to four minutes for latecomers to arrive. Then she would close the door and record any absences. Any latecomers from that point onward would have to go to the secretary to get late-stamps. The whole procedure took place smoothly and quietly most of the time.

Particular incident:

Philip was late perhaps half of the times and he was sent to get a late stamp. At that point the teacher seemed disappointed rather than angry and I felt that she was sending Philip to the secretary not for any particular reason that had to do with him but because that was what had to be done.

Main lesson – work management:

Ms Anne often started the lesson by examining the student's knowledge of the previous lesson. This always took the form of discussion and not formal examination. Then she would often introduce the topic while discussing it with the students. She would often write the major points on the board. Later the students were asked to copy those notes and read

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them for homework sometimes along with one or two additional tasks. Ms Anne would often discuss terminology and sometimes issues (like geography or maths) that were going beyond religion but that were necessary for the students understanding. She asked for hands up most of the time although she would not reprimand a spontaneous reply. She tried to get all her students involved in the lesson. A few times she would go round the students to check their work. Most scaffolding was going on orally and she would often ask students to help each other by discussing their opinions.

Main lesson – General Atmosphere:

I felt Ms Anne had managed to establish a relaxed, friendly climate. Sometimes she would correct the students' sitting posture or try to engage those who were daydreaming. She could correct a student's behaviour using either a playful or a firm voice depending on the circumstances. In conflict situations she could get her message across and only rarely minor arguments might arise. Her behaviour management was often preventative trying to nip the problem in the bud and she displayed confidence in her judgements and decisions while she seemed to keep an open sensitivity to the students needs. Ms Anne would often display confidence in her students' abilities, especially toward the weaker ones. She would listen to the students attentively and openly enjoy their jokes, if appropriate. The students seemed mostly relaxed and work focused. The main problem for Ms Anne was not behaviour management but to maximise lesson engagement. Ms Anne consistently displayed many characteristics of an effective teacher like clarity, order, fairness, participation, support and interest.

Particular incident:

During the lesson, the students were cooperating as a group, marvellously facilitated by the teacher. They were relaxed, listening and talking in turns in a learning discursive environment. During that cooperation, there was only spontaneous conversation without the need for the students to put their hands up. It is interesting that the whole lesson flowed very productively even though there was some initial intense behaviour management when Philip entered the classroom in a bad mood.

Ending of lesson:

It was Ms Anne who declared the end of the lesson while the bell served only as a reminder that the lesson must soon finish. Even after the students were obviously dismissed, sometimes they would stay for one or two more minutes discussing the lesson.

The effect of my presence:

- The teacher let me into her class without any apparent uneasiness. In fact after the first couple of observations we would sometimes make eye contact that indicated mutual feelings or thoughts about a student's comment or reaction.

- Once I entered the classroom on a day we had not scheduled and she was happy to let me in. There were no outstanding differences.

Observed Interactions between Ms Anne and Philip

Particular Incidents

1. Philip entered the classroom 9 minutes after the bell had rung. Ms Anne asked for his late stamp. However, she didn't understand what Philip said and with a firm voice, she asked him again. Philip repeated that 'he's got it' but with a more annoyed voice this time. Ms Anne ignored his negative mood and with a smile, she calmly replied, "Good lad", and he sat down.
Further notes: All other students were quiet, observing. The teacher's distance from Philip was about two meters and she had employed a straight posture and assertive voice. The boundaries established seemed flexible and the feedback loop of their interactions characterised by sensitivity. The teacher would focus on positive behaviour and the students seemed able to exercise self-regulation.

2. Philip participated in the lesson a couple of times without putting his hand up. At a later instance, Ms Anne asked a question and Philip spoke again in the same fashion however this time, John had put his hand up to reply. Ms Anne calmly and firmly told Philip, "Hand up please Philip" and let John reply the question. Philip accepted her decision. During that time she was standing closer to John. I feel that this is an example of the teacher accepting a student's subjectivity while being attentive to the others. The boundaries are flexible but present.

3. The teacher was about to set a role-playing task. Almost all students wanted a role but Ms Anne had the final word. While the roles were assigned, Philip spoke loudly, "I'll be the interviewer"; Ms Anne readily agreed. Everybody accepted Philip's initiative and without adopting his style kept asking Ms Anne for the remaining roles. Everybody in this one-off incident seemed to accept Philip's initiative with no traces of feeling treated unfairly by the teacher. That request to participate was deemed more important

than inflexibly adhering to the assigning roles procedure. Moreover the teacher's choice seemed to be readily accepted by the rest of the students. When Philip was demanding to be the interviewer, he reminded me of a 4-year-old craving for something.

Condensed description of all incidents observed

Ms Anne was flexible to Philip's behavioural peculiarities without in any way compromising the behaviour boundaries in her classroom. She would always try to overcome Philip's bad mood and especially help him overcome his negative mood by giving clear directions and avoiding confrontation. Her asset was not so much her directions but more the way she would communicate them. She would always speak to him in a firm but calm voice, always listen to what he wanted to say and then either praise him or in cases where he was wrong, direct her attention to another student who 'might have something else to add'.

Philip's Perception of his Relationship with Ms Anne

Imaginary incident

She'd give out... and then I'd start shouting saying that I can't do it, I can't understand a few words of it. [Then, Philip thinks], 'I just want to get out of the class' [and she'd say,] "Do that work... you don't do, go to your year head."
[Philip narrates what would happen in his year head's classroom. There he would ponder:] … 'I don't want to stay in this school'. He thinks of going to another school, he is feeling 'very down'; he has actually tried leaving and adds in a low voice, 'but I came back'.
When this incident is happening, Ms Anne is probably thinking why does she have to put up with this...[and feeling] sad like. [Philip feels] angry. Philip said that he'd also feel sad and added that some other teachers might also feel sad and explained: 'I don't like messing on all the teachers in here... they're all very nice... they're trying to teach us like and... we're messing on them. [While this incident happens his classmates will be] just looking and laughing.

Open interview

1. Open question about the teacher:

Ms Anne is a great teacher; she'll teach a lot. If you are in trouble and it's not too bad she'd just try to get you out.

2. The student's first impression of the teacher:

She was very nice. She helped me when I was getting suspended.

3. Relationship exploration:

I feel good to have her as a teacher. She gets along with me ma when she comes to see her. She gets along with all of us. Nothing to worry about her (but) sometimes she is narky, I mean... all teachers are like that. She can talk to you without shouting and that's great about her.

4. Teacher's relationship to classmates:

Some of them she doesn't like, she wouldn't get on with, like she gives out a lot. Generally, she gets on ok with them.

5. On teaching & management:

She teaches so that it sticks in the head like. She gives great help. If you put your hand up she comes to you. She is the head of the classroom, in control of it.

6. Student's reply to metaperspective questions:

Last month I was a little bit giddy because I was getting into trouble but now I am after changing; I think she's gonna like me more.

Feeling Faces

- Philip feels (furious) when others hit him and he wants to leave the class and kill them.
- He also feels (angry) when he comes to Ms Anne's after he's been thrown out of another class for nothing.
- When he passes his tests he is very (happy).
- Philip says that he is always (focused) on his work, in every class.
- Sometimes when the class is reading the bible he feels (bored).
- (Sceptical): Philip says that he always thinks about stuff in the lesson. Like he's afraid that somebody out of school might stab him in revenge.

Structured Interview

Philip believes that Ms Anne is honest and trusts her. He thinks that the rules are generally 'all right' although he finds putting your hand up all the time, in order to speak, 'unfair'. He feels free to speak his mind and go out if he needs to. If somebody teased he would react, he would kick them. However sometimes he might consider speaking to his teacher as well. Philip says that he likes being in Ms Anne's classroom where he feels wanted, unlike some other classrooms. Ms Anne 'gives a good education, teaches clearly and understands what Philip says'. They speak about his progress and he thinks he works well there. However, Philip says that she usually doesn't ask the students' opinion for organisational matters.

Although at a general level he does not think his teacher understands his emotions, when we speak specifically about his mood, he says, "Probably after something happening there's sad in your eyes like you're about to cry and she'd look at you and say 'what's the matter what's wrong'".

In cases where he misbehaves she angrily sends him out of the door till he calms down. He then feels uncertain and he thinks he should go back to his classroom and resume work. He notices no mirroring between them nor does he want to imitate anything she does; however he says that when she praises him he feels 'good in himself'. He seems to think that she gives room for special events (that emphasise transitional periods).

He doesn't think she is interested in him because she is probably tired of his behaviour and the whole class. He thinks that she is her true self only when she gives out to them and not when she is speaking nicely about the lesson.

What's different about her is that, "She can get along with you unlike the others who are just looking for arguments". However he cannot think of anything he got out of her relationship with her. In a few years he says he will think, "All the teachers in the school helped me through this".

Teacher Vignette: Ms Anne

Background

Qualified in 1997 as a teacher of Religion and English. She has been working in this school the last four years. Since her fifth year in secondary school, she wanted to become a teacher; the subjects she teaches were chosen eventually. Ms Anne is from Dublin and works in Priory simply because she was given a job there.

Interview Observation Notes

Ms Anne actively looked forward to our discussion. She seemed to be honest & genuine in her expressions and I felt that she fully trusted me. Her body and face were relaxed, while at the same time many facial expressions and gestures animated her expressions. She seemed to perceive her job with optimism and realism. She smiled often. She spoke openly about feelings even disturbing ones. I felt she found the perspective questions challenging and enjoyed trying to adopt her student's perspective. Although she often seemed worried about Philip she presented no signs of anxiety. Although she was often thoughtful, she said that she found the questions easy to answer. She transmitted a caring and sometimes playful attitude.

Ms Anne's Teaching Beliefs and Experience: Interactive Level

- Teacher's role:
I have thought about this a lot. We have the role of teaching them a subject but more and more I think the role of the teachers in this school is to act as a good example. They don't see good adult examples at home or among their neighbours and we are examples of people who work and have to some respect been successful in life.
- Teaching goals & ways they can be achieved:
That they have an understanding and can express the basics of what I have taught them. I may achieve that by putting the basics in a language that they can understand, they can achieve and learn from.

- Students' role:

In this school the role of the students is to learn 'basic' responsibility and do their work and you hope that by the end of the sixth year they have stopped blaming the rest of the world for their problems and that they have tried to take responsibility for themselves.

- Developmental goals and Challenges:

That they know how the school functions and what's expected of them; to start taking responsibility. Also to control themselves so that they don't necessarily go with the crowd. Issues of drinking, smoking, drugs, shoplifting, sex; that they can say no to teachers but also to their friends.

- Feelings working with students:

Frustrated, because there's some kids that you put an awful lot of effort into and their parents go and ruin it within five minutes …and very often there is nothing you can do about it.. And you often wonder …if the kids who sit there nice and quiet are often the ones who are neglected by the teachers but you don't know what's going on at home because you don't talk to them that often. It's frustrating, especially when you see that they have potential and it's never used.

- Describing how teachers and students should ideally relate:

There should be a basic respect and if there is a problem that you can talk through it instead of reacting to it.

- Dealing with difficulties:

Ms Anne works with the special needs teacher but she does deal with behaviour problems successfully herself; usually in an individual way and often by contacting the parents. She will avoid shouting but try to discretely use eye contact to warn her students. Nevertheless, sometimes the only way out is to shout at them all because otherwise they might think you are a pushover; however constant shouting looses its meaning. You just have to judge the situation that you're in and do your best. Every class that I teach at some stage I make some mistakes in it and at the end of the class I think, 'I should have tried it another way…', but that's where you learn from it. There is no such thing as the perfect class; there will always be something unpredictable to destroy your plans.

Ms Anne's Teaching Beliefs and Experience: General Level

Training:

- The H.Dip. one-year course is useless.
- My degree was a four-year one and we had [practical] training throughout my course. However even in my course not enough work was done on discipline problems.

Teacher - student differences:

- The value that we place on Education. 'At-risk' students may want to read, write and count but apart from that, education doesn't mean much else.
- They are teenagers and we are adults, we have a bit more cop-on than they have.
- The attitude towards life. We are not going around with a huge chip on our shoulder that something happened to me when I was young and it's everybody else's fault but mine. We don't have that attitude, a lot of kids here do.

Teacher - student similarities:

- Being human, having feelings... teachers don't like being wrong, students don't like being wrong, we don't like being embarrassed, they don't like being embarrassed, we don't like a lack of respect and neither do they.

Role clearly defined:

- I know what I am doing.
- However others might criticise my subject as not important in front of the students and that's highly unprofessional and disrespectful.
- My role is seen very much as a female role. The students often see us as an extension of their mother but they have to learn that females can very much be an authority; but I think sometimes the staff see it like the kids do.
- I am representative of young staff, I have been teaching only for four years. …it doesn't necessarily mean that just because (others) were teaching longer they are any better.

Support with students:

- The ideas behind the school procedures are good but the way they are put into practice, is not. For example tracking down late students is fine but nothing is done to try and prevent them from being late.
- As far as staff (support) is concerned, certain people won't help me and other people would go to the ends of earth to help me.
- As far as the students are concerned, I think some of them appreciate your effort. However they only appreciate you when they have left not when they are here getting homework from you.
- The government throws money around and thinks that's going to be enough and they do nothing to support the family problems. The psychological services are appalling. We can only deal with what we see in school but the outside problems are not being dealt with by the various agencies.

School decisions:

- Some school decisions are made without any of us knowing and that's not good.
- However when the decision is discussed openly, some people think is bad and they criticise it and do nothing positive to help.

Drawing energy from:

- I enjoy teaching and I enjoy working with young people and it was what I wanted to do.
- I don't have as much energy as when I started but that's because I involve myself in too many things.

Advice to new Teachers:

- You couldn't give general advice. It depends on the class and on the student involved. Some students might be very quiet; others shout at you all day long. There are kids who will start working after you give out to them and then there's the kid who will just rebel further and actually needs to be coaxed.

Community and School:

- The parish doesn't exist around here.

- There are community groups after school but they are not involved during school time. Their kids go to this school, therefore they should do the running (to link with the school).

About parents:

- Some parents are trying their hardest to keep the kids in school. Others won't answer the phone to us probably because their school experiences was about conflict as well.
- The teachers who might have had a row with their kids are not respected; the 'nice' teachers are ok. Some parents are brilliant some others can be abusive.
- Teachers very often are seen as people who can cause them trouble; they can end up in court if the kids aren't in school.
- In some ways there is a bit of a threat, because in most cases the teachers are more educated than the parents.
- They expect us to give their children the basics.
- They rightfully expect us to care for their children but some of them do, no matter what. Once they send the child to go to school he becomes our problem, not theirs. Even if they lose their books, they won't take responsibility.
- All parents want the best for their children; they just don't know how to give it.
- As for the parents of students at risk, we don't actually see them. They will sit in their living rooms watching television all day long and they'll wait for us to arrive. Their kids are at risk because they know their parents don't care; they know that they can get away with leaving school. It's a vicious circle.

Case 5: Ms Anne – Philip

Ms Anne perception of her Relationship with Philip

1. First impression:
Philip didn't stand out as a disruptive student at the beginning. The class was generally quiet. It was only after three very disruptive students left the class that Philip decided to take over.

2. Student self perception:

"Philip thinks he's hard, he told me that the other students in the class were afraid of him... which isn't true but he thinks he's the leader in the class."

3. Feelings about school and teachers:

In both cases, it's a bit of a love hate relationship. Philip is a bit of a bundle of contradictions. He keeps saying that he will leave school so eventually you just ignore him. Philip has quite a respect for teachers; the ones who are hard on him are the ones who have the most contact with him. I'm sure he says at times he doesn't like me but he tells me everything.

4. Teacher's experience:

Classes are easier to teach when Philip is not in the room. If you get his constant attention he's brilliant but that takes an awful lot of your energy. The staff's energy levels have dropped. We cannot give him the attention he needs and he's left trying to figure out why we're not - he wants us to focus on him and give out to him for ten minutes because he likes being the source of all attention but we're not doing it anymore. We have realized that with everything that's going on in Philip's head and going on at home there's nothing we can do. We have tried every method in the book - it's just not working. It's not what we do it's how he comes in here in the morning and we can't determine that because we're not sitting in his house the night before.

5. Student's perception of teacher and projected image to parents:

Ms Anne tried to see herself through Philip's lenses without the slightest concern about feeling guilty, inadequate or blameworthy. "She's a moan, she's always on at me", Philip would say. He would think that I care and worry about him but then that will be it; because he will blame me for calling his ma. Ms Anne thinks that Philip probably tells his mother that she always blames him and elaborates, "He might think that he is always under the spotlight. He doesn't actually realize that he is doing a dance under the spotlight to get to see him; so he would think that I would go on the hunt for him to blame him."

6. Attendance now, in the future and improvement:

Philip's attendance is disimproving because he has an awful lot of responsibilities at home; but he shouldn't, school should be his job. It's been discussed that he goes to a youth workshop I think Philip will do his JC there. If he was to stay in this school, I couldn't see him finishing third year. That would be fairer to the other students as well because he takes so much time. I don't think a teacher can do anything to change his attendance because his parents do not seem to help him arrange his priorities.

7. 'Don't get on well' incident:

Earlier this year other teachers were constantly sending him to me. Until I flared at him one day and told him I wasn't giving him attention anymore because 'I'm not his mother and I don't want to have to behave like that.' When he realizes that you are not going to give him any more attention he kind of 'eases back to himself'. Philip will disregard you and he will fight back with you and that's very hard to face. However Ms Anne is sure that Philip feels a bit disappointed and then rationalizes it, "she doesn't care about me anymore". She says that a confrontation with Philip is very draining. Negative incidents in her classroom can be 'little things like putting his head on the desk or swinging on the chair.'

8. 'Get on well' incident:

I was working on my own when another teacher sent Philip to me. He sat and then he just started telling me of his mid-term trouble with the police. I approached him and we started chatting and he told me of his counsellor, his home, his dad, his stepfather he told me loads and loads about himself. I felt it would be marvelous if he was like this all the time but I'm sure he went off to class then and gave somebody else a bit of grief. I think he was honest with me, delighted because of the attention and because he felt very adult talking to me; I am sure there was a kind of relief as well. Philip keeps no secrets instead he glorifies his actions.

9. Pushing student & motivation:

You do push him to learn yea, because he is surprisingly bright. However you have to sit down with him and go through his work but it's not easy to find the time. What works for him is 'praise him to the high heavens' and he glows; cause if you fight with him, he clams and he'll do nothing to spite you. However I am finding it increasingly difficult to find something to praise him for...

10. Relationship description:

It's mixed. Sometimes I am an ogre, sometimes a friend. It doesn't depend on my mood or actions; it depends on what he is doing. You can't predict how Philip is going to be because you don't know who's going to annoy him that morning. If he is sent to me, I have to deal with it because in the eyes of the other students he has to be treated as equal. Philip needs rules and somebody checking up that these rules are followed. But when things get too much for him he also needs somebody that he can go to. He is extremely confused. Philip sometimes hates himself while other times he thinks he is the best thing in the world. His appreciation of my efforts is relevant to his mood and whether he likes the topic. If something isn't done for him now, Philip won't grow old because he can get very aggressive. If something is done Philip could do very well for himself. Ms Anne was lately

thinking of Philip at home because she was considering the possibility of sending him to a youth workshop.

11. Reputation:

Not among the students but he might do among the staff because I think some of the staff think I've gone very soft on him and they send him to his year head instead of me. I am sure they think I am not doing enough with him. Because in a lot of people's minds it would be a case of just send him home; for me I always see that as the last option. Because having him at home for a week running around the streets is not good for him because other people in the school don't know Philip as well as I know Philip.

12. Behaviour management:

I'd let him know that I am not interested in him taking up fifteen minutes of the class. I kind of tease him so that we'll laugh about it or very often I use the others and say, "Oh My God, is Philip moaning again?" and the others will start laughing and he laughs with you cause he knows that you know. Gentle poking, gentle fun at him and if you get a laugh out of him he'll kind of go, "Oh, ok!" and he'll go back to work. I don't think he is embarrassed or put down, he just realizes that it's my way of saying, "Get back in your box over there and we're getting on with some work". Short time outs, telling him to calm down and then come back in classroom worked for a while.

13. Student as a person:

Philip is very confused and very likely to get himself into trouble. Once he met me along with two other of his teachers outside the school but it was me who got the, "How'ya miss", the wink and the cigarette in the hand; and it was basically to let me see how big and grown up he is. I'd say he is easy to have a laugh with but he'd turn on you if you used a word he doesn't like or something... He is very defensive. Perhaps he doesn't get much attention home because he has younger brothers, I don't know.

14. About parents:

Philip's mother says that she cannot leave home because of agoraphobia. However Ms Anne doesn't believe it, "I think it's a convenient excuse so she doesn't have to take all the responsibility of coming up to the school. I know she has left her house at night." Ms Anne has only seen the stepfather when he was called in because Philip was in serious trouble. "I got the impression that he very much wanted Philip to stay in education because he told me that himself had recently learnt how to read and he knows how important school is. We also spoke about his aggressiveness and another parent's complaint of Philip being a bully.

<u>Case 6: Philip – Mr Porter</u>

General Classroom Observation

Beginning of lesson:

As soon as the teacher appears, the students stop any misbehaviour. The atmosphere at once becomes very orderly and quite tense. Mr Porter places emphasis on proper conduct from the very beginning and applies very firm behaviour management. He seems to be treating cases with almost equal firmness while at the same time he is treating each individual differently according to the circumstances and the individual's past behaviour. He almost always holds the students accountable for any misconduct, refusing to listen to any excuses. Sometimes he would have to deal with students who had been misbehaving in his previous lesson and in this case he would often look stressed and angry.

Particular incidents:

a) A student not wearing a tie and a student that entered the classroom three seconds after the door had closed were singled out and told off.

b) In case Philip had not fulfilled any of Mr Porter's requirements and was often treated in a strict and at times rigid way. Ian, (the fourth and last student to be presented) who was told off much less, was often treated in a strict way but not as rigidly as Philip was and sometimes even playfully.

Main lesson – work management:

Mr Porter often revises the previous day's work or examines knowledge that the students should have acquired. Then he often starts various tasks engaging the whole classroom. These tasks may involve reading, oral presentation of the lesson or discussion. Mr Porter is in full control of the classroom while conveying a strong passion for learning and love for the subjects he is teaching. He utilises methods to get all students' continuous attention & engagement especially using a large variety of oral and body language. He is able to deal with more than one student at a time. He is able to draw the classroom into a working mode and get his students engaged even when most of them seem to be tired or uninterested. He uses his knowledge of what his students may find interesting outside the school to help them feel more relaxed in an otherwise work-focused or sometimes rather tense (due to severe scolding) environment.

Particular incidents:

While the students were engaged in a written exercise Mr Porter spent about fifteen minutes helping Jerry during which there was occasional hand-shoulder touching indicating that Mr Porter is fond of that student. ((Mr Porter's positive comments of that student in the staffroom also contribute to that indication)).

Main lesson – General Atmosphere:

Mr Porter was trying to boost students' learning-esteem and at the same time hold them accountable for their learning. Also, he often spoke to them in a manner that indicated he considered his students mature enough to take certain responsibilities. He repeatedly showed his ability to control the classroom preventatively. He seems to masterfully be in control of the lighthouse effect that is, keeping an eye on all students and at the same time checking them in turn in case they need help or in case they present any minor misbehaviour. His feedback is firm, immediate and with direct eye contact. He also seems able to turn the classroom mood from serious to a more light-hearted mode and back again without loosing control of the students since the students realise when it is appropriate to have fun.

At times, Mr Porter was ironic in response to the students' excuses for not being adequately prepared. He would sometimes use the students' vocabulary, he would try to empathise with them and use a variety of methods in order to alert and engage them. However all these working strategies and efforts to relate to his students were always embedded in an overarching firm climate that often touched the boundaries of authoritarianism.

Particular incidents:

a) Towards the end of double periods Mr Porter started walking around the classroom and playfully flicking the ears of 2-3 students. Some of them seemed to smile genuinely while some others seemed to do so because they had no other option.

b) Towards the end of a double period and while assigning homework Philip moaned as in a complaint for the workload. Mr Porter asked, "Who's the only person who's allowed to moan in this classroom?" "You sir", Philip replied. Mr Porter nodded and they both returned to work.

Ending of lesson:

In Mr Porter's case there are two ending points to be observed. One is at the end of the two consecutive periods and the other when the bell rings indicating the end of the first period.

In the latter case, almost all of the times, observed neither the teacher nor the students reacted to the bell ringing but simply continued with their work. At that time the only thing that may cause upheaval is the presence of a student from another class who might have been kept back as a form of punishment. It seemed to me that even the smallest clue of perceived disrespect towards Mr Porter may cause a very intense conflictual situation. At the end of the second period, it is Mr Porter who dismisses the students and not the bell ringing. After the lesson is over he sometimes speaks privately with some of them.

Particular incident:

In between two consecutive periods: A student from another class was severely told off for talking back and he was strictly and explicitly ordered to stay on in that class. Mr Porter was shouting at a very close distance to that student's face. Both of them were in the classroom, with all students present, directly in front of me, a bit less than 2 meters away. The teacher's fingers were jerking nervously and his muscles were tense (face, neck, hands and feet). The teacher was standing on a floor beam in order to be taller than the student. The student did not want to make eye contact with Mr Porter while the latter was shouting at him. The teacher was repeatedly asking for direct eye contact and straight posture. Not only did I see but also felt that the teacher was extremely frustrated, nervous and angry. At that time, all the students' attention was focused on that event. However in an unexpected moment in the middle of shouting, he winked at me and gave me a slight smile! That student was told to keep writing for the whole period. After the incident was over Mr Porter organised an intense working climate interspersed with jokes.

About my presence:

Upon my question whether my presence causes any difference in the way the students behave, Mr Porter was laconic and straightforward, "No difference. Difference may occur depending on their daily mood; but they can behave".

Observed Interactions Between Mr Porter and Philip

Particular Incidents

1. Mr Porter asked Philip to read. Philip was initially on the wrong page and Ian who was sitting next to him, helped Philip with it. Mr Porter looked attentively; he did not reprimand but he later helped and praised Philip. While reading, Philip made an inappropriate funny comment. Mr Porter laughed in a friendly fashion and corrected the student. Philip kept participating in the classroom for the rest twenty minutes. At the beginning of the second consecutive period Mr Porter noticed that Philip was daydreaming. He asked the student to indicate the line where they were reading. Philip said that he didn't know and the following conversation took place in a direct and serious fashion:

   Mr Porter: Do you want me to be in a bad mood? 'Cause today I am OK.

   Philip: No sir!

   Mr Porter: Do you like the story?

   Philip: Yes sir!

   Mr Porter: So pay attention.

   Following that, Ian helped Philip again and the latter resumed reading.

2. About ten minutes before the end of the first period and while the lesson was flowing smoothly, Philip spontaneously said something to the teacher. However Mr Porter thought it was inappropriate and replied with a firm voice, "Look at me, do I seem interested? That's one of the comments I don't want to listen to." Philip looked confused and shook his head. However, only a few seconds later the teacher understood that Philip's intentions were not to say something inappropriate so he looked at Philip, smiled and said, "I'm sorry Philip, I confused you, didn't I?" Philip looked at him with a puzzled face and did not reply. The rest of the students were just observing quietly.

3. The lesson had only started a few minutes ago and Philip was sitting with his forehead leaning on his desk, looking like daydreaming. Mr Porter noticed him and asked him a question pertinent to what was going on at that time in the classroom. Philip could not reply. At once, the teacher spoke in a strict manner and told Philip to put his hands and head on the table in a position similar to the one he had when he was daydreaming and then asked him to stay like that. Mr Porter let Philip in that position for the next fifteen minutes. From his jerky movements and from a quick glance at his face, it seemed that Philip was rather uncomfortable and angry. When Mr Porter released him, he told him

that he would ask him to stay like that if he were caught daydreaming again. The other students were observing quietly.

Condensed description of all incidents observed

When Philip was actively participating in the classroom, the teacher helped him and praised him. Philip was often speaking without putting his hand up. His comments were often relevant to the lesson and they were thus accepted and reinforced by the teacher. Providing that the classroom was already set in a working climate, even some off-lesson comments were followed up by Mr Porter. If Philip misbehaved, Mr Porter would initially reprimand him firmly. In cases of relapsing Mr Porter could be very strict with Philip. When relapsing seemed likely to occur, it seemed to me that Mr Porter would send Philip out of the classroom –or not accept him in the first place- in order to avoid further conflict.

Philip's Perception of his Relationship with Mr Porter

Imaginary incident

He'd tell you to get up and get outside the door like he doesn't want you back in his classroom no more… He won't ask me what's wrong. He is really angry when he says it like he'd say to you, "Do you know where we are now?" and then you would say, "No sir"; then I found where I was and I was eh, sort of thinking about stuff and [then he asked], "Do you know where we are again?" and he goes, "No? Get up!". Then I am just cursing in me head, you know? Then I just go outside the door and keep quiet.
Maybe he's (thinking), '… why does he not listen in the class and all'. I feel cross with him because he is throwing you out for nothing! He feels really furious I'd say. At that time the other students are all doing their work.
Upon my query whether something like that had really happened, Philip went on to narrate an almost identical event that happened earlier that day.

Open interview

1. Open question about the teacher:

Mr Porter is always on your back, always giving out to you for nothing; he doesn't leave you alone.

2. The student's first impression of the teacher:

I don't like him. He was teaching me in the primary school and he was giving out there as well.

3. Relationship exploration:

He gets on your nerves, you just want to hurt him you know? He is worse than the other teachers. We don't get on well. He just don't like me. You sometimes get a laugh with him. If you get slugged he helps you. I feel grand but not when he gives out to you like.

4. Teacher's relationship to classmates:

He likes the rest of the lads like he doesn't really give out to them that much.

5. On teaching and management:

He is teaching well, he is getting everything in your head. He does help you a lot. (The way he is in charge of the classroom is grand …cause he gets everything into your head like - he's always givin' out to you.

6. Student's reply to metaperspective questions:

He is all right as a person but every time anybody [messes] he just gives out and shows off like. I know he likes me because he says it to me but I don't want to be in his class. He gives out to me. I don't mess in his class or anything.

Feeling faces

*   I feel (confident) when I have done my work. When he is eh - shouting at you - roaring at your face you're confident not to say it back to him because you know you're going to end into trouble on it you know?

*   (Angry & furious): When he is giving out to you feel like going mad and just .. running out of school.

*   Sometimes I'd be (proud) of myself when I am working hard in his class.

*   It's like I am always (focused) on my work and doing it in his class I don't ... like messing with one another.

- (Indifferent): I don't care really sometimes or be bothered, what he shouts to me.
- (Sceptical): I do be worried about a lot of other stuff I think about.

Structured Interview

When Philip refers to Mr. Porter's teaching abilities, he is very clear. He underlines that his teacher is in good control of the classroom and he, "Gets everything in your head". He also adds that Mr. Porter can be a good laugh and a good help to him. Philip says that he feels free to speak his mind and that his teacher gives him feedback about his progress for which he sometimes feels proud. 'Mr. Porter can get you an education.'

However whenever Philip thinks of himself in one-to-one instances with his teacher, bad memories seem to prevail. Even though Philip seems to realize that what Mr. Porter dislikes is Philip's misbehaviour he sometimes feel that he is disliked as a person as well. Philip expresses a direct dislike for Mr. Porter, he feels like 'hurting him... and running out of school'. Philip thinks that Mr Porter shows off in the classroom, 'the way he shouts at you and then leaves you at that and then makes a laugh out of you'.

An exploration of some relevant factors may help us reflect more on Philip's experiences. Philip describes that when Mr. Porter shouts at him, he feels hurt and wonders: 'why does he do it to you? Why does he say these things to you?' Surprisingly Philip says that Mr. Porter can understand how he feels and explains, 'he should see how hurt you are in your eyes when he shouts'. Philip seems confused because he finds Mr. Porter's mood and consequently the rules applied unpredictable. Philip also comments about an incident that had happened in another classroom and that Mr Porter, 'still holds that against me, cause he's always saying it to me.' Finally it should be noted that out of school factors seem to play a major role in the way Philip lives his school life since he seems to be preoccupied with other events in his life.

Philip says that they would probably greet each other outside the school and adds that Mr. Porter is honest with the students and talks about stuff beyond the lesson as well. However he seems definite when he says, 'You can't really trust Mr. Porter... there is no way he could trust us either... he's not going to trust you if he doesn't like you'.

Philip wants to be 'indifferent' to the teacher shouting at him but at some point he muttered to himself, 'no, he won't get on me nerves, someday, someday he doesn't get on me nerves'.

Teacher Vignette: Mr Porter

Background

BA in English and History. Four years teaching and three years tutoring in this school plus two years teaching in two other schools. He resorted to teaching, as he could do nothing else with his BA. He chose this school because his parents' house is in the vicinity.

Interview observation notes

Initially Mr. Porter wanted to make clear that he would not answer all questions. He was very engaged in the interview while he seemed to enjoy displaying being in charge. He was serious, direct and informal; sometimes funny, sarcastic and using street language. I did not feel Mr. Porter was in any way anxious because of my presence or the questions, however his annoyance as soon as I uttered the word 'relationship' was obvious. Through his indications of being busy, I felt I was somehow disregarded. Perhaps the best way to describe how I perceived his relation to me is 'artificially friendly'.

Using an ironic style, he implicitly accepts that he can be aggressive with his students when he told me with a faint smile, "... and as you know I am never aggressive with my students".

Mr Porter's Teaching Beliefs and Experience: Interactive Level

- Teacher's role:

Teaching the classes you're paid to teach. Making school a positive experience and getting the best out of every individual student. However it involves crowd control most of the time and the teacher acting more as a social worker. The teaching profession is not respected either by the students or the society.

- Teaching goals & ways they can be achieved:

The first goal is to help students succeed at the state exams. The second one to treat them as an adult, not a kid. This can be achieved by making sure that the course content is well prepared and that the classes are places where they can learn and they can have a laugh in the middle of that learning.

- Students' role:

Coming to school which is an achievement for some of them. Get the best results you can in order to set yourself on the right road. However the students think of their role differently, as being aggressive and arguing.

- Developmental goals & challenges:

Improve their social skills including respect, mostly for women. Also the whole idea of maturing as confident young men with the possibility of making a decent contribution to society.

- Feelings working with students:

Mr Porter 'is a working class Dub', so he gets on great with them and adds, "I probably care about them a bit too much and I try to help them a bit too much. There's nothing really I can do except for make their subject interesting."

- Describing how teachers and students should ideally relate:

For Mr. Porter there is one word and that word is 'respect' not only between teachers and students but also among teachers and among students. He adds that teachers and students disregard one another. However, thinking of an incident, he wonders how could a teacher, who has been sexually harassed by her students, treat them with respect and adds that the law should enable the school to expel such students.

- Dealing with difficulties:

I'm a disciplinarian in school. The kids know that they don't want to have a row with me because I will discipline them and I will be consistent and fair. You shout sometimes when it's suitable, you give punishment work sometimes when it's suitable, you sit down and have a quiet chat, sometimes when it's suitable. But number one is they have to know that you think they are sound. You have to consistently tell them that they're worthwhile people and once you have a row with them, they'll respect you.

o Beliefs about and attitude to students:

Mr Porter comments, "These are good decent kids who have a lot of shit to put up with. …When they're not respectful I'll kill them, not kill them-kill them but I'll make them very sorry. …I don't talk down to those kids I don't make them feel that I think I'm better than them, I just make them understand that they're in a situation in a school where they're expected to behave in a certain way." However, at the same time he wants them to know that they can go to his room to relax. Moreover, Mr Porter does not like his students to think they receive special treatment but on rare occasion he may behave differently towards a student with personality problems like Philip.

Mr Porter's Teaching Beliefs & Experience: General Level

Training:

- Absolutely zero… those who can't teach, teach teachers; that's the old maxim.
- Mr Porter also comments about the supervisor's visits during training, 'it is a very false environment'.
- When I was in a school working, the teachers taught me the ropes.

Teacher – student differences:

- Mr Porter identifies 'status' and elaborates, 'you can talk about holistic education... but at the end of the day the teacher is the person who's in charge and the student is the person who's there to learn".
- He speaks of the teachers' family backgrounds and middle class schools who focus on different issues and adds, '…the teachers judge kids by academic results, kids don't judge themselves by that anymore.'

Teacher – student similarities:

- Teachers have contempt for the kids and the kids have contempt for the teachers.
- Most of students don't want to be here neither do most of the teachers.
- They both struggle with the system in this school, it doesn't help either student or teacher.

Role clearly defined:

- Mr Porter feels that his role is very clearly defined and elaborates, "I am a colleague, I am a friend, a social worker, a father figure, a football coach…"
- "…There are certain people in this school who are excellent teachers and they recognize the fact that I work hard to do a good job and they respect me …There are certain people who are a disgrace to their profession… and all they see me as is a trouble maker who I should shut up and pay respect to his elders; they see me as a junior member of staff which is entirely disrespectful… there's nothing about my position that is junior anyway…"

Support with students:

- "…there is no real discipline structure."
- "…the young teachers have no support whatsoever."
- "…the individual teacher takes care of her own problems... a lot of people in this school feel very isolated…"
- He proposes that they should collectively organise strategies targeted to specific difficulties or students so that they will be consistent in all classes.
- As far as support by the staff, he comments, "You'd pick who you work with..."
- "…if you treat the students with respect they will act in a respectful manner to you most of the time… I think because this school is not managed properly... any child would recognise that the job isn't being done properly so the students think, 'why should we give respect?"
- As far as external support is concerned, Mr Porter says with a smile, "The local barman" and adds, "When I leave this place I don't... bring it outside with me... I get all my stress out here by being very open and energetic and in roaring and shouting."

School decisions:

- Mr Porter talks of the Leaving Certificate, "…in this school it hasn't been implemented properly and it's a disgrace."
- "…The (discipline) policy is... don't bother me with it, do it yourself."
- I learnt a long time ago in here to deal with issues myself and if I think a guy needs suspending, I won't ask them (the school authority), I'll tell them.

Drawing energy from:

- …if I worked in a school... which was managed properly and if all I had to do was teach, I'd love it. You see a kid learning something and you see a kid even having a shit day and you help him out, it makes everything work well but... you can't have that feeling in this school any more.'
- He actually plans to leave the school but not until summer because he doesn't want to let down his tutor class that he has been minding for the last two and a half years.

Advice to new teachers:

- "Don't come in! …Because there is no support for young teachers, no support from parents, no support from society..."

Community and School:

- The kind of problems that you get in working class areas are experienced in this school.
- (Our students) have their own way of dealing with things. On the one hand they're very confident kids cause they have to survive and on the other hand they're astonishingly lacking in self confidence, particularly when it comes to academics.
- The school should offer a sense of community and support.

About Parents:

- 90% of the parents are genuinely decent people.
- There's a huge majority of parents that regard us as glorified baby sitters.
- There's a huge amount of parents that only come in to talk to us when they feel we've been unjust and they aren't (at all) interested in their child's behaviour or academic performance.
- They're astonishingly lacking in self confidence.
- The parents you meet the least are at-risk kids parents because of no interest or because of the parents' bad school experiences or because they have trouble trying to manage their kids at home and they don't want to come in here to hear us telling them how terrible their kids are.
- (Some) parents automatically believe their kids' story (and ask) that their kids are treated in a respectful manner but you do find that a lot of parents don't care if their kids aren't acting in a respectful manner in return.
- There is a lot of contempt, I think for teachers.
- …rightly they think that there are a lot of people working in this school who treat their kids with disrespect and there are a lot of people working in this school who deserve to be treated with disrespect by the kids. Some parents think all teachers are like certain members of our staff who are a disgrace to the profession.

<u>Case 6: Mr Porter – Philip</u>

Mr Porter's Perception of his Relationship with Philip

1. First impression:

Grand lad... but relatively weak.

2. Student self perception:

Mr Porter stated firmly, "He doesn't like himself one tiny bit, he has no self-esteem whatsoever... I think that explains his aggressive tendency."

3. Feelings about school and teachers:

He hates school because it requires him to be disciplined and he doesn't know how to discipline... There are certain teachers here whom he respects 'cause they treat him like an adult.

4. Teacher's experience:

"...Not really different than any other student... if he does the work he is grand if he doesn't do the work he is dealt with." After saying that he likes Philip, Mr. Porter added, "Philip has all the warning signs for falling by the wayside" and attribute those on his unstable home and aggressive attitude.

5. Student's perception of teacher and projected image to parents:

"Philip is the type who would always give a negative answer... talking to him not as a teacher talking to a student but as someone who gives a shit talking to somebody who needs a shit to be given about him... ehm, I'm sure he'd say that, 'Hard but fair, and good laugh as well most of the time...' I haven't disrespected Philip the way he gets disrespected by a lot of other people." Mr. Porter continued, "Philip would probably say to his parents that I am a pain in the arse".

6. Attendance now, future and improvement:

Mr. Porter said, "Very poor recently... he won't do his Junior Cert" and concluded by suggesting an apprenticeship for him. When I asked whether a teacher could do anything to improve Philip's attendance, Mr. Porter got nervous and replied, "Philip comes into my classroom like any student does and it is my duty as a professional to teach them to the best of my ability and there is very little I can do about him ehm, not coming to school." Mr. Porter underlined that, "It is important for Philip to be taught in every class [but that] is difficult to happen because of Philip's problem with women teachers and because his background doesn't give priority to the school."

7. 'Don't get on well' incident:

Mr Porter commented, "On a bi-weekly basis Philip... instead of saying 'sir, I forgot me uniform' and me saying 'right, there is your punishment work' he will immediately just jump in fighting cos he expects that my reaction will be to fight with him." Mr. Porter banged his fist on the table twice and continued, "…and that's when I say, 'Ok, Philip, see you'". He then summed up, "Ninety per cent of the times, he'll come in all guns blazing, aggressively because he's expecting the onslaught because Philip thinks, 'He is going to kill me for not having my homework done.' So I'm not going to let him give out to me'". Upon my question, Mr. Porter added, "[Philip feels] frustrated, more than anything else with himself and angry that he's being forced to come in to deal with me; Philip feels that school is like a prison sentence".

8. 'Get on well' incident:

"It happens every day when he is in class. If he's slept enough last night, if he's interested in the lesson or if he remembers something we did last time... 'Good man Philip', he loves that. That happens when he doesn't see the class as a sentence, doesn't have to think about it, just participates ... in the process of learning then he loves it... because all of a sudden he is not 'thick Philip' as he thinks of himself."

9. Pushing student & motivation:

"He's very easy to suss in that way. Philip's very black and white. There are days when you don't have to push him at all and there's days when you can keep pushing him but never to the point where he'd be embarrassed by not being able to do it; I'll always help him along. Philip has zero motivation but you can improve it mostly by keep them interested and keep standards in accordance with their abilities."

10. Relationship description:

Whenever I approached the relationship issue, Mr. Porter would get nervous. He succinctly replied, "I'm his teacher and he's my student" and elaborated, "This whole thing about relationships between teachers and students bugs the shit out of me, you know, anybody who works with me knows that I really give a shit about the kids that I teach... and probably a little bit too much but the fact is that the boy comes into my class to be taught, he's in with me 40 minutes a day... and I have a very small influence on how his mind works and his values are formed, so I mean relationship... he knows that... when he comes into my class and he's in good form he'll be taught and he'll do well; if he's in bad form he goes away; how's that for a relationship? ... Other than that, I reckon if I met Philip on the street in 5 years we'd stop and say hello...I am not trained to counsel... that is the only way to deal with him... show me a different way and if it works I'll do it." In reply to my question Mr.

Porter said that his efforts may be, "somewhat appreciated" by Philip and then straightforwardly denied thinking of his student outside the school.

11. Reputation:

Mr Porter declined the possibility that Philip affects his reputation with no further elaboration.

12. Behaviour management:

"You do it as it comes up, just like with every student." [Unless Philip is in his aggressive mood] then he goes (sent out of the class) ...because I am not going to give [him] the pleasure of disrupting the class for twenty minutes."

13. Student as a person:

Mr. Porter said that Philip is a product of his environment and gave an example of a day he missed school. Mr. Porter explained that Philip returned the following day in a bad mood because he had to stay at home to mind the baby since his parents had gone to a 48-hour party.

14. About parents:

Mr Porter has not met Philip's parents and he does not think they will be interested to meet him because as he said, "If they come in they'll either be aggressive and blame the school or they'll say they'll help Philip but do nothing ...What they expect of me is to keep their son quiet and don't annoy them."

Philip's Relationship With Both Teachers

Brief Comparison of the Teachers the student Nominated:

Miss Anne can talk to you and be friends with you... Mr. Porter can't; he's always giving out, never gives you a chance". On the other hand you get the same with them because they both give you an education. I mostly get into trouble in Mr Porter's class.

Follow up information:

Philip left school permanently and we didn't manage to have this interview.

Self-evaluation:

At the self-evaluation form and while keeping direct eye contact with me, Philip circled No 10, 'I didn't make up or change a single thing.'

Home School Community Liaison Officer's perspective

Family Portrait

Philip's parents are fairly neutral towards school. Philip's parents will only come in if they are called; and most times it will be a disciplinary problem; it's never something positive. They need to be approached slowly, friendly and informally and then in school, they need careful handling because with their own background to schooling it's easy to turn a neutral feeling into a negative one. Teachers need to establish a positive contact with his parents but then they don't want to enter into that simply because they know that next week Philip will be 'bad again' and then they will have to go back on what they've said and say 'well, he didn't actually improve at all', and then they will have been caught in between.

Student in School

Philip seems to be faced with overwhelming pressure and then he tends to build an unbreakable wall around him. You have to coax him slowly and only after a long time he might go and talk to someone whom he perceives in a non-threatening way; that is not his teachers. At first, he might talk to you in a way that you will perceive as insulting but that is the only way this child can engage with you and you have to accept him as he is.

Counsellor's perspective

Student in School

Philip is aggressive and dominant in his group, with poor social skills. He is confused; he wants to be in the school but he causes disruption; he has a serious psychological disorder. An apprenticeship would suit his needs.

Preliminary Information:

Ian was cooperative and a bit shy.

He chose Mr Porter as the teacher who gives you best help and added that you do hard work with him. The classroom in which Ian would try harder is Mr Porter's because he likes the subjects. If Ian could chose one teacher to teach all lessons he would chose Mr Porter because he likes working in his class since he gets the work done very quickly and sometimes you can get a bit of a laugh.

On the other hand Ms Curtis is the teacher he would chose not to have. That's because he doesn't get on well with her, he doesn't know why but he comments that he is always thrown out. Ian said that if Mr Porter were to teach most lessons in school, that would probably change the way he works because Mr Porter would make you work harder but it would not change the way he feels about school.

Ian said he will probably stay in school till his Leaving Cert. The person whose opinion is most important for him is his uncle's who trains him for football.

Family's Perspective (mother)

Family situation:

Ian has an older sister. She didn't do her JC and she's now working. He also has four younger siblings, all attending school.

About student's thoughts of school:

"He'll tell you he only likes certain classes, like (one of the subjects Mr Porter teaches). Ian sometimes speaks of incidents he enjoys at school (sometimes in relation to Mr Porter)". His mother thinks that an influence on Ian's schooling might be a person who is chasing him for his football skills. "Ian thinks he doesn't have to do any work cos he's going to be a footballer. At school, he is grand, I just call him in the morning and he gets up and he goes, like never complains really."

About student:

I never see him doing his homework; he does it in his room. Sometimes in the morning when I call him for school, there he is writing something out. He shares that room with his two

brothers but they are usually out. His mother said chuckling that she would like him to stay in school as long as possible and she would hope that he does his Junior Certificate. Ian's mother would like him to stay till he's eighteen but then she says that she would also like her daughter to have stayed on. At the same time she also seems to be happy with the fact that her daughter has a job.

About school:

In secondary school is a lot better than primary school. They've called me down; they tell you it's his attitude. Sure I know he has attitude, he's the same at home. He is quick with the mouth, has to have the last word but that should be the teacher's right, you know? But I don't see it as... ehm, being cheeky. I said to them, I've run at him, what can I do, kill him? Sometimes there are very petty things you get called down for, like when Ian and other fellas encouraged a quiet boy to discuss a sexual act, like got a laugh out of it, now Ian said that that was hysterical, don't get me wrong; I think that was the worst incident I got called down for. When I went down the faces on the teachers, you know, I am surprised now, I was supposed to look shocked as well, you know what I mean? I mean boys are going to talk about these things, you know what I mean? I know they're not supposed to do it, out loud so everybody else can hear it but...

Ideas for improvement:

I think actually he is bored. He hates writing. When the teacher say he's just not interested, I'd well believe them. Like he could have (the least preferred teacher's leson) and he'd come out to me this morning and (ask something needed for that lesson). Like he always leaves it till the last minute. I was surprised when the PE teacher told me he does no PE. I think he deliberately forgets his gear. They tell me to check his journal but Jesus, I'm getting five of them out here in the morning and I am rushing like crazy. I couldn't tell you how a teacher could best help Ian, I don't really have an idea what's he's like in school at all and he doesn't talk about it unless he is in trouble.

About Mr Porter:

And there was an incident the other day when they were looking for a teacher's ring and Ian said, "I bent down and picked it up off the floor' and Mr Porter said, 'is your hands sticky?' and he said, 'Ma, he stared at me, giving me this look for 10 minutes as if I was after taking this ring', cos Jesus, Ian never stole anything in his life but it really annoyed me, I'd be intimidated if somebody stared at me like that. Mr Porter says he gets on with Ian. I found him a bit cocky. I got the impression that he is two faced. Like he is too nice to you and then I'd say there is another side to him with the kids. He said, "I have no problem with Ian", but he tried to be too cool or something. Like he said all that to me, he was all real,

into my face but then there was that incident that he's fearing him out like that. Ian said, 'You'd want to see the way he was looking at me. He thought I took the ring, I am sorry now I picked it up.' I think Mr Porter thinks that Ian is a smart arse and I reckon he thinks, 'I'll put you in your place, I'll sort you out.' I don't believe that he gets on that great with Ian as he says he does. I couldn't be sure though.

Observation Notes from Interview Situation

Appearance, initial impression:

Ian seems to be at an early pubertal stage with an average physical development compared to his classmates. Ian very quickly adopted a generally relaxed stance. He was trying to reply to all the questions to the best of his abilities. Sometimes he was pensive especially if he was probed for more. He was very well focused throughout the interviewing.

General impression & Activity level:

Ian initiated contact a few times. I noticed good congruency between what he was saying and his facial expressions. His expressions had a great variability; he could be frustrated, puzzled or smiling in accordance with what he was talking about. His eyes were lively, conveying cleverness and playfulness; sometimes mischievousness other times understanding. His eye contact was reciprocal with a cyclic pattern I felt appropriate. Sometimes he seemed to be presenting the circumstances in such a way so as to protect himself and appear 'right'. However I don't think he was lying but perhaps sometimes not telling the whole truth. Sometimes he would talk to himself in order to clarify his thoughts, an element that made me feel he was genuine in his replies.

Relationship with interviewer:

I felt our cooperation was reciprocal and he was friendly and engaged from the outset. He seemed to feel relaxed in my presence. I felt engaged when he was explaining his perspective and he gave me a feeling of genuineness. Overall he gave me the impression of a well-intentioned, easygoing kid to whom peers are of utmost importance.

Affects & anxiety:

Ian displayed no signs of anxiety either about our cooperation or about the questions asked. He seemed to be able to reconcile both his positive and negative thoughts with regard to his teachers and thus he was not presenting extreme feelings. However a few times he did feel annoyed with Mr Porter.

Ian's vocabulary and fluency were probably better than most of his classmates. He seemed to understand most questions and he also asked for clarifications.

Other Contextual Experiences and Expectations

- About classmates:

Ian didn't mention any particular problems. "I get on great with most of them", he said.

- About school:

Ian says that it is important for him to get a good education and do all right. However he smiles when he says that what he looks forward to when at school is going back home.

- About Ideal:

Students don't mess with a good teacher but also a good teacher is not too strict, he has a good personality.

Table 5.5

Ian's nominated teachers in relation to his ideal TSR bi-polar constructs

Descriptions of relationship with good teacher	Always-Usually-Often				Often-Usually-Always			Opposite descriptions
	3	⇐ 2	1	0	1	⇒ 2	3	
1 Get on well together		✓			✗			Pick on you. Arguing, sending you out of the class
2 Have a laugh with			✓		✗			Very boring. You wouldn't like the class
3 To talk about stuff (football)		✓		✗				Won't talk about stuff (not so important)
4 Student doesn't mess	✓					✗		Student messes

Ian noted that an ideal teacher like the one described would make a difference for him since, "it'd help me stop messing; because when there is not a laugh you are bored".

General Classroom Observation

This information is similar to 'General Classroom Observations' in Philip – Mr Porter case, pages 187-189.

Observed Interactions Between Mr Porter and Ian

Particular incidents:

1. Mr Porter went out of the class for a while when more than half of the students started talking however Ian was one of the ones who stayed focused on their work. Towards the end of the lesson, Mr Porter had started reading when he noticed Ian daydreaming. "Ian Liam!", Mr Porter said and Ian at once focused on work again.
    Further notes: Both teacher and student were sitting. Mr Porter's voice was firm and a bit louder; his face serious but not tense as in other reprimands. Clear and flexible boundaries were established. Mr Porter displayed sensitivity to Ian's needs while Ian seemed able to self-regulate his behaviour.

2. Ian was paying full attention. He spontaneously asked 2-3 questions and made 2-3 comments. Overall he looked relaxed and focused. At a later time, Mr Porter teased Ian playfully about three times and asked him what he would do if he were the President of Ireland. Ian responded positively while the others were smiling or laughing.
    Further notes: Mr Porter's posture was flexible and he was smiling. It seemed that the incident implied an 'I tease him because I like him' message. Later I interviewed Ian asking for any comments he wanted to make about the lesson. He said, "I worked well today in Mr Porter's class. The work was good. I like the double classes when he is in good mood". Upon my question why Mr Porter might be in good mood, Ian replied, "Probably because [his favorite football team] won", however elsewhere he spontaneously added, "He likes our class".

3. The following is an observation in Mr Porter's room on a day he was absent.
    All students were sitting down talking quietly. The vast majority of the conversations were initiated and led by Philip with themes of fighting, trouble and girls. A couple of times he was nastily teasing John, an international student.
    Ian spoke a few times but his comments were not descriptive like Philip's but mostly funny remarks on what he was listening to. At some point Ian told the others in a

sneaky voice, "Mr Porter is coming!" and at once some students stopped swinging their chairs, others took off their jackets while others readjusted their chairs in a proper way. A minute later, Ian exclaimed with a smile, "I am only messing". Then most students seemed confused till one of them asked me if Mr Porter was indeed coming and as soon as I said he was not, a group exclamation of relief was heard in the room and everybody resumed their initial laid-back positions.

Condensed description of all incidents observed

Ian was generally focused and relaxed in the classroom, working most of the time. His attention is one of the best among his classmates. He never got into a grave conflict with Mr Porter but only into minor conflict in cases where he had neglected his homework or for minor inappropriate behaviour. On the contrary I noticed a couple of incidents where Ian and Mr Porter seemed attuned to each other, conversing in a friendly and sometimes playful way.

Ian's Perception of his Relationship with Mr Porter

Imaginary Incident

Mr Porter would probably wait to put my hand up and ask about the work that we were doing; and the he goes, "I'll explain to you now". [When I ask him] I feel a bit nervous cause it's him, you know? …And if I'm after being in late, he'd probably just say, "Why? You should have been in on time to know what you were doing but you made the rest of the class..." Even if I wasn't late and I hadn't understood something, just I'd say, "Sir listen, I don't really understand this work, I just don't." During this all the other lads would be working away.
If Mr Porter was strict like every other teacher then he'd be a great teacher. He is strict but he gets the work done, he knows what he is doing.

Open Interview

0. Unstable teacher preference

Before my questions, Ian exclaimed, "I don't like him" and added with a smile, "He just hates me, cause any time I mess in any other class they tell him and he just deals with it. He does whatever he has to do instead of the other teacher giving out."

1. Open question about the teacher

He's a narky teacher, he is too strict, like even whisper and he runs amuck… no one in the school likes him… Sometimes he can be alright… like he can have a laugh with you, it's good ((smiles)).

2. The student's first impression of the teacher

My cousins had told me that Mr Porter is a bit of a mad teacher (smiles). At the start it was just grand, nothing happened.

3. Relationship exploration

"I'd rather (have) a different teacher than him." After my prompting for more Ian was pensive and replied, "I guess he can be all right now and again, I haven't been in trouble with him for a while but he can just be dodgy. When I am going to his class I think 'I hate this room, I don't want to go to his class.' He just gives out too much. (What I like about him is that) he's the same football team as I and he can be a bit of a laugh. He tries his best to get you for your Junior Cert. I don't like (our relationship) unless he is in a good mood.

4. Teacher's relationship to classmates

Mr Porter gets on with the rest the same as me; he won't treat a person different.

5. On teaching and Management

He can be a great teacher, he knows his stuff like; and he makes sure you get into your head. You'd put up your hand and ask him and he'd explain it on the board for you. When I asked him how he feels about Mr Porter being in charge of the classroom, Ian replied, "It doesn't really bother me" and then went on to say, "I don't like him being in charge cause like, you said you were right and he goes, 'no the teachers were right'". He says, "Who will win? I will always win" [and] that's right because he's a teacher but if you're in an argument with him, you can't win.

6. Student's reply to metaperspective questions

"He always says I am a good student. But then in other classes he says that I'm a pain in the arse." Ian agrees with my suggestion that both sides of the coin are true at least to a certain extent.

Feeling Faces

- Ian says with a smile, "I always feel (mischievous)" and adds, "I wouldn't feel that much in Mr Porter's class because if you mess in his class he'll give you a load of work [while] in other classes you just a get a warning."
- I'd feel (frustrated) when I am right and he says that I'm wrong.
- (Interested): Sometimes, in what he is doing like Harry Potter.
- I feel (confident) when I'm doing me work because I know what I am doing and sometimes (proud) when he says, "Well done Ian".
- Like you have to be (relaxed) so you know what you are doing; if you're nervous you don't really know what you are doing.
- You'd be (focused) into the work, then you feel (curious) because you'd be focused.
- (Bored): To a certain extend.
- Sometimes when I am in a bit of trouble [said with a smile]. Then I get (worried) because he'd give you loads of homework or lines.
- (Skeptical): I might think of other stuff, I always do that, like going home and playing the computer or something.

Structured Interview

Ian believes that Mr Porter's rules are the same for all and he seems to feel at ease to ask him questions or to go out of the class. They talk about his progress and write it on his journal. He doesn't think he can scare Mr Porter. However if somebody picks on him, "I'd just jump up and start roaring back".

Ian seems to generally feel 'all right' in Mr Porter's class unless he gets into trouble. Then if Mr Porter is in a good mood he may just say 'stop it' otherwise he puts a mad face on. Ian works in the class because if he doesn't he will get even more work but he also likes the way Mr Porter teaches. Even though he feels like talking he won't do so to avoid trouble. Mr Porter may be a bit lenient with him. He doesn't hold a grudge unless he gets complaints from other teachers.

Ian comes up with examples where Mr Porter mirrors the student's behaviour. Ian feels that Mr Porter is generally right in his classroom management. He really likes that they talk about football and other stuff. There are times when the whole classroom enjoys the lesson. Close to holidays Mr Porter always does something different for them. Mr Porter pays

enough attention to everybody and is available to help; "He gets on well with everybody if you get on well with him.". Ian won't complain if a student is teasing him because that student will end up in serious trouble.

Despite that they greet each other at the corridors and they talk about stuff, Ian doesn't believe Mr Porter is fully genuine at school; "because if you say, 'sir? Do you drink? He will say 'no!'". What Ian will mostly remember of him is the trouble that you get.

Ian thinks Mr Porter cares about his students and there is mutual trust as far as the work is concerned. He doesn't think he is special for Mr Porter however he thinks that Mr Porter is happy to have him in his class, just as any of his students. Mr Porter expects you to work and behave. Ian is sure that Mr Porter can understand his potential, however he is not sure whether he can understand his feelings. Finally Ian finds Mr Porter lucid and very helpful with the work and he feels that that is what he can get out of his relationship with him.

Teacher Vignette: Mr Porter

Mr Porter's Perception of his Relationship with Ian

1. First impression:

With two exceptions in the last two years, he's been very polite. I get on very well with him and he does his work.

2. Student self perception:

He's a quite confident young man, particularly in relation to football. He'd be quite typical of a student (in a class for weak students) where he wouldn't feel that he's very intelligent even though I think he is quite intelligent. He wouldn't have the 'not liking who he is' problem of Philip. Academically he would be one of the better ones in the class. His reading and writing skills are probably as good as anybody else in his class and as good as the majority of guys in second year.

3. Feelings about school and teachers:

I don't think he has any particular problem that would differentiate him from any student's normal perception in this school where it's something that has to be done; not enjoyed. But his attendance is good. As far as particular teachers are concerned, Ian has huge difficulties with women. He's extremely aggressive towards female staff, he doesn't like being told what to do by them. Throughout my fours years in this school I came across guys who I thought were absolute gentlemen speaking to female teachers in ways which I never thought anybody could speak to female women so it seems like a cultural thing maybe. I would probably be the only kind of... fuck it, dominant kind of male teacher that they have.

4. Teacher's experience:

No different than anybody else's teacher. He generally does his work. You

would welcome him into your room because he's very enthusiastic most of the time and if he does have a bad day it's definitely got to do with a specific event outside school. If he's in a bad day he'll put his hand up and say, "I have a headache" and I'll just tell him that he can relax and put his head down for a while. He's quite mature in that way actually.

5. Student's perception of teacher and projected image to parents:

Well I mean, [sighs with difficulty] I presume it would be very positive. I presume people like the fact that every time they walk into my room they get taught. I know that they like the fact that I don't treat them as inferior and I know - I think they respect the fact that I would be a very harsh disciplinarian when it's required; and be good craic when that's

required as well. So … very similar to me Philip's response. I would be quite sure that any student that comes to my class would be happy enough; although they probably find me quite scary as well - I know they do. I'm sure kids in school only report the bad things; it's a natural human instinct. So I'm sure the parents hear me as being the teacher who (roars and) says feck and arse in class. But I met his mother recently and I would say that she would have a positive perception of me from him.

6. Attendance now, future and improvement:

Ian's attendance, at a Priory level, it's very good. His school career will be difficult because he is in a class of 13 and (10 of them) without the shadow of a doubt will leave at or before their JC, unfortunately. Ms Anne has done an excellent work with that group. But it would take a massive sea change in Ian's home for him to stay in school because everybody in his family drop out in the third year, so that's the thing to do; but anyway, he will do well for himself. What a teacher can do to improve his attendance is teach them; be professionals in our jobs. We can't change the social mores of those people; I am one of them, from the same area.

7. 'Don't get on well' incident:

It was once when he was involved in an incident with Ms Curtis, in her classroom. He made very rude remarks towards her and I creamed him for that, I was very annoyed. he kept saying that, "it's got nothing to do with you". he felt it wasn't fair that I pulled him up over something he does outside my class, when he comes into my class and behaves. But Ms Curtis is my colleague and even if she wasn't, I won't have anybody that I'm in charge of speaking like that. The incident was when Ms Curtis had left her ring on the table and it had been taken off. She was very cool and said, "I'm not going to start roaring; the ring has probably fallen somewhere so if you have a look for it." And then Ian kind of went, "Oh look here it is, it was at the back desk" now she hadn't been near that desk. So the boy had taken it and decided that he was going to give it back but I was staring at him and they were making jam at the time and I said, "Ian, lets look how sticky your fingers are". With that he was really angry with me denying the accusation that he had taken it. That's again very typical of a Priory boy; they don't like taking responsibility for their actions. I'd say he felt embarrassed I mean he'd done something stupid and he wanted to make it up. I just wanted to let him know that I knew what he'd done without giving him a hard time about it. I just wanted to let him know that I was slightly disappointed but pleased that he had been mature enough to dig himself out of the hole. ((In direct contrast to Ian's and his mother impression))

8. 'Get on well' incident:

We click everyday in class; we get on well in class, he usually enjoys it. Once he came in crying and I brought him outside and found out that his mother had just miscarried a baby the night before. After that he was very withdrawn in my class probably because I knew stuff about him that he didn't want me to know and that I'd seen him cry and he didn't want me to see him crying. I think since then we have gotten on even better than we have done. How did I feel? Just that I wanted the problem gone. I didn't want the child crying in the room, just deal with it, get him home.

9. Pushing student & motivation:

Again very similar to every other student. You make Ian work by convincing him that he is not working; without pushing him. The best way is to make them not realise they're learning by making them laugh in the middle of learning but making sure they know that there is work time and there is laugh time. I don't see the point in pushing him because I think if I push him I am going to alienate him.

About Ian's motivation, Mr Porter said, "He doesn't want to do a tap, he needs a little roar every once in a while." What is most effective for them is make the lesson interesting by being aware of the text you're going to use, the language, the stories you're going to tell (to a class for weak students); I tell them that the rich didn't have to pay any taxes and the bleeding poor had to pay everything and they get annoyed, so you try to make a connection with them. Your aims are to educate these kids to the best of your ability and to push them as far as they can be pushed. Don't push them so far that they go off the edge and want to leave school, push them so far as they're always achieving and make sure that when they're not doing the work that you know they can do that they'll be dealt with. Ian always has his homework because it's always reasonable homework that he gets.»

10. Relationship description:

I don't have any relationship with Ian, he's a student in my classroom, I'm a professional and I go in to teach him. Well I am the most unconventional teacher you're gonna meet; but only unconventional in the sense that I don't have this teacher thing where ehm you know, a lot of teachers think they are very important people... and they think that the kids are eh below them; the kids get surprised when they realize that, "Yea ok, he's a total bastard... He really makes us do a lot of work he gives us homework every day we work every day in class but he says feck he says arse and he talks about football". I've been teaching only for five years now; my relationship with every student is the same. My arse is teaching a vocation, it's a job and I have to make sure that these guys perform in exams. I am there to make sure that their experience of school is a positive one. Even if they're not going to use

those exams academically to progress, it's going to be a little bit of pride in their lives. I think my efforts are well appreciated by Ian …because I am a man and because he gets taught.

11. Reputation:

Mr Porter simply denied the possibility that Philip affects his reputation and added that his reputation is up to him.

12. Behaviour management:

Ian is not somebody who ever I have had behavioural difficulties with. I don't really have discipline problems in my classes; I don't know why, I don't do anything particularly different to anybody else but they don't really arise and if they do they have to do with me not dealing with a situation properly, not got to do with the student. In case there was a minor misbehaviour, I'd tell them to shut up ((spoken with feeling)). Today two of them know they broke the rules and they know I'm gonna punish them but then I let them go early [from detention] and they'll like that you see, so it's all the little games that we play.

13. Student as a person:

Upon my question of what he thinks of Ian outside his student identity, Mr Porter replies, "I don't really you see... I don't think of them.". Upon my probing to elaborate more on Ian's personality, he said, "He's a lovely young lad, he's got probably a tough enough little family background. I see Ian going the right road. There are two factors that could put him on the wrong road, number one, all his mates leaving next year and number two that there is no desire or will at home for him to stay on.

14. About parents:

I've met his mother. We had a 30 second conversation, "He's doing well goodbye." She seemed to be a nice enough lady. I wouldn't say her priority is school though. She does give a shit about her kids which is very important. I'll tell you one thing she'd expect and she's right(.) she'd expect me to treat her son with respect now whether she expects her son to treat me with respect might be an entirely different thing. Does she expect me to teach and educate him? I don't know, I am not an educator... I am a grinder.

After clarifying that education is widening students' horizons and giving them a love for a subject and making them better citizens, he blames the educational system that is based on exams and teachers for being arrogant and concludes, "Now, [parents] don't want education, they want grinds".

Ian's Relationship With Both Teachers

Brief Comparison of the Teachers the student Nominated:

Mr Porter is different to Ms Cirtis because we talk about football and because he has a laugh
but not that much with Ms Curtis. Mr Porter is a bit better than Ms Curtis at giving lessons.
They are similar only in the way that they do hard work. I mostly got in trouble with Ms
Curtis but this has now changed. That's because this is only her first year and at the start she
is probably nervous. I get on better with Mr Porter as well now because we know him more.

Follow up information:

- General update:

Ian said that nothing that he didn't like happened and continued, "He's been giving extra
help; I was good in his class in the last few months."

- Relationship update:

I feel good in his class as well because he's been nice to me the last few months; he hasn't
been strict on me and he's helping me out with me work and I got two A's. I have been doing
work a lot better now and he help me out better now, it's been good.

Self-evaluation:

Ian circled No 7, 'most of the time apart from a couple of times' and added, "I probably
exaggerated about Miss Curtis like but we don't get on well together, I always mess or
something and get thrown out."

Home School Community Liaison Officer's perspective

Family portrait

"The father's attitude tends to be a bit over the top, 'get in there now or I'll give you a thump' and that works quiet well, you know? Let me see now, is it the father or the mother, which is the aggressive one, I can't remember off hand, one of them is."

The HSCL didn't have any specific information on parents contact with the school. Instead he started speaking at a general level, vaguely including Ian's parents as well.

Student in School

Ian will easily get very offended and stand back from you and he won't compromise and eventually he will lie. He must fear punishment in some way. He has one interest in life, football; and he is excluding all other possibilities so he is naturally lazy. He doesn't bring his gear in because he thinks he'll get away with it and to a certain extent, he does; that is just pure rebellion.

Counsellor's Perspective

The counsellor said that he had no contact with Ian.

Tutor's Perspective

Student in School

Ian gets on very well with the others in the class. He's the one who will make them laugh because he will say something inappropriate. I am not aware of a case where he was in trouble with his peers. With regard to teachers, he's the kind of kid that will always talk back and that gets on teachers' nerves. It could be something minor and he goes, "But, but, but..." and he makes it worse for himself. His mother has told me that that's exactly what he does at home. I'd say he's been in trouble with every teacher at some stage. I'd say he is a moaner and very lazy but there is no major problem with him at school.

Ian is a grand kid, very honest especially in one to one situations. Sometimes he has some strange ways of looking at the world and he won't take a correction from a teacher but the

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rest of the class can kind of put him back in place. I'd say he will do his JC but he's not going to be back here. There is somebody who has been looking at him because he plays good football and I'd say that will be the main reason for him leaving school early.

Family Portrait

His mother is very nice and very honest she is very like Ian. The only thing is that if Ian has been in trouble, she will believe every story he will tell her. Then she comes up here in a bad mood, annoyed with us. Even though Ian will paint us as monsters, when she meets us she [quickly] realizes the truth and she's beginning to mellow a bit; she wouldn't come in now as confrontational as she used to be. I know education is important to her but she is realistic enough to know that Ian is not going to last through to Leaving Cert.

Ian's 'Family Portrait', as given by his Tutor brings the presentation of information chapter to a close. The content of this chapter is the product of meticulous information reduction that has taken the form of various textural descriptions. Those descriptions consisted of unaltered quotes, edited quotes and summaries. Although the above information was undoubtedly filtered through my perceptions and the research design procedures, there was a conscious effort to keep it free of explicit interpretative influences. In the following chapter I will try to combine and synthesise the above information therefore my interpretations will play a more prominent role. In this way a new perspective will be created that may provide additional stimuli for thought and reflection. In the following chapter the reader is invited to reflect not only on the content of the interpretations but also on the theoretical framework that mediates between the participants' understandings and the final text.

CHAPTER SIX

INTERPRETATIVE REFLECTIONS

Working Rationale

At this point, if I were to follow a phenomenological path of synthesis, I could have proceeded by creating 'composite textural descriptions'. Such descriptions, as Moustakas (1994) suggests, could have been developed from the aggregated individual information. Therefore, I could have created a composite textural description of *all* students' perceptions of their relationships with their teachers or a composite description of *all* teachers' perceptions of their relationships with their students and so on. However, to use Stake & Trumbull's terminology (1982), following this path one is led to create interpretations that are directed towards propositional suggestions in contrast with interpretations that may promote naturalistic findings.

The above distinction is important because it clarifies the methodological rationale behind this discursive chapter. If this study were to conclude with a list of statements that depict a synthetic reality as it is perceived by a number of people who share similar roles or other characteristics it could have employed different methodologies. Instead from the very beginning the emphasis is placed on depicting and understanding people's unique perceptions. Therefore, I will now proceed by discussing -that is, recreating- the web of meanings and experiences that seems to be involved in each unique TSR case. This goal is better served by employing a discursive methodology based on a case-study framework.

'Case studies are undertaken to make the case understandable', (Stake, 1995). The complexity of social reality and personal meanings involved in the TSRs presented demands that attention is paid to each individual case. This demand is also present in the school context itself where the students I just presented seem to crave for individual attention. For such a demanding reality, teachers certainly do not go unprepared; however, they mostly seem to learn on duty; that is, from their own engagement with lived life in disadvantaged school settings and also from vicarious experiences. Thus, it is mostly through their experiences that teachers inform their

TSR pre-conceptions which they may in turn employ the next time they encounter a similar occasion. These preconceptions that have been informed by past experiences often lead to generalisations. It is these generalisations that Stake and Trumbull (1982), have called naturalistic generalisations; in their words, *'naturalistic generalisations are conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life's affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves'*.

These generalisations are based on personal experience and consequently when communicated their experiential meaning is at least slightly distorted. In other words, *'naturalistic generalisation is important more because of its embeddedness in the experience of the reader, whether verbalised or not'* (Stake, 1995). It is in order to provide a vicarious experience for the reader that I wrote such an extensive information presentation chapter. The use of participants' language, numerous quotes and particular incidents served the same purpose. Therefore, at this level of analysis, I have chosen to develop within-case interpretative discussions instead of creating all-inclusive, composite textural descriptions. Even the within case discussions are not meant to be exhaustive. The goal in my research is not to return to an analytical process of textural deconstruction but to heuristically synthesise the major case-specific points.

The within-case points, in close resemblance to fieldwork practice, have been selected as a result of an interpretative process. Their selection, to use case-study terminology, is the outcome of either categorical aggregation or direct interpretation. That is, I have either sought to find instances that denote issue-relevant meanings within each case or I have drawn meaning through the analysis of a single instance alone. More importantly, the selection of each TSR key point is the outcome of a complex reflective process that is informed by multiple sources as they have been discussed in the methodology chapter and presented in the design section.

The first and lengthier discussion section is called 'the second interpretative level'. This is so because the information has inevitably been interpreted -at a first level- through my design choices. The second interpretative level consists of a selection of elements from each participant's narratives along with some observations that I find particularly important for the understanding of each TSR case. Those understandings will be compared with other participants' perceptions and they will also be juxtaposed with the researcher's own experience of his relationship with the

core participants. At the third interpretative level, participants' quotes or observed incidents will rarely be presented. Instead, the emphasis will be placed on building individual students' and teachers' relational profiles.

Second Level Interpretation:
Synthesising and Juxtaposing Key-Participants' Understandings

Before proceeding to juxtaposing the students' and teachers' perspectives of their specific relationships, I will present a synthesis of important contextual information on which the specific TSR understandings have largely developed. This information comprises each person's vignette.

Discussing Alex's Vignette

The first thing that singled out Alex for me was his investigative & thoughtful eye contact during my initial presence in the classroom. Two major points were revealed to me through that eye contact that later got reinforced. First, I realised that he was interested in my presence and second that a meaningful relationship could make a difference for him in school. I also remember that his clothing was sometimes worn out and I cannot easily forget my visit to his house where I felt very relaxed and welcomed even though I was initially surprised to see that it was evidently neglected with a window and the main door broken.

From his family background I feel it is important to keep in mind that his stepfather died a year ago and as his mother said, that death had a great impact on Alex that he only now begins to overcome. Trust may be an issue for Alex since his mother says that he is inclined to check whether there is 'anything going on behind his back' even at home. That major loss along with his fragile confidence about trusting others seem to make relationships a very sensitive matter for Alex.

Alex's mother notes that he loves getting exam results and adds that this is the reason why he will probably stay until his Leaving Certificate. Elsewhere she underlines that the presence of his one-year-older brother who was often in trouble seemed to have labelled Alex negatively; however, her general impression is that teachers get on 'all right' with him now. But what does that 'all right' mean? 'All right' seems to co-exist with her strong impression that teachers treat kids from the flats differently, suspending them 'for stupid things' and thus failing to take responsibility for their job. She says that teachers should give kids respect and seems to largely define respect in terms of relationships since she notes that Alex cannot talk to his teachers and she believes that what could help him in school is 'just to get on with some of the teachers'.

At the same time Alex noted at his preliminary interview that Ms Anderson would listen to his questions unlike other teachers and while Alex has not spoken much of Ms Sutton at home he certainly has done so about Ms Anderson. The mother is left with the impression that Ms Anderson managed to form a very positive TSR with Alex and that they seemed to have formed an alliance to which Alex could turn to for support in difficult times. It is noteworthy that Alex's mother underlines the existence of that relationship separately from Ms Anderson's teaching skills.

So far it seems that it may be important for Alex to form a relationship with an adult and that he may be very sensitive during that process. My experience from our interview meetings reinforced that impression. At the very beginning of our meetings he seemed quite nervous but as soon as he felt safe in our relationship he seemed to be quite relaxed and he eventually became the only student who actively looked forward to our meetings. His body language, that at times revealed signs of regress, underlined a deep emotional need for him to relate. Overall he was probably more sad than cheerful and I felt he was as honest as he could be.

Some discrepancy I noted between his narration of negative comments and a simultaneous lack of emotion may suggest that those comments were mostly mentioned as moral tales[38] of the students' group Alex belonged to. Such tales may include negative

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[38] The concept of moral tales was used to explain students' narratives more than fifty years ago (Abbe, 1950). More recently, Adelman et al. (2000), used the same concept in a study exploring students' conflictual narratives. The concept of 'moral tales' has also been used in systemic family

content towards teachers and can well be created and shared by students especially if they are reinforced by real but usually over-dramatised incidents. What makes moral tales important is that sometimes they can be so strongly shared among a group that they literally create a perceived reality for the people who adopt them. Alex seems to describe a different reality when speaking in generalised terms in contrast with specific terms. This may be due to his difficulty in abstracting from specific incidents as well as due to the influence of his group's moral tales.

We see that his general replies about school and classmates are bluntly positive. The most important characteristic of his ideal teacher is to 'get on well with each other'. Although his ideal teacher seems to develop from his real TSRs, when he refers to the abstract, ideal teacher, he says that such a teacher wouldn't make a difference for him in contrast with 'real' Ms Anderson who could make a difference.

Discussing Timmy's Vignette

For Timmy teachers are all, more or less, the same. 'If teachers give you a ticket, it's for a reason', Timmy said; but one cannot ignore that he has never had a ticket that far. As his father says, 'Timmy has a lackadaisical attitude and he seems to differentiate teachers based on that worldview.

Timmy is thin and small and looks as if he is the youngest among his classmates. Some days, he was lively and other days he looked quite tired and sleepy. Sometimes he looked neglected in appearance. In contrast to Alex, he entered our interview procedure looking quite relaxed and lively and he gradually lost interest and seemed quite bored and uninvolved. Overall he was quite cheerful, patient and likeable despite being easily distracted. Again in contrast with Alex, a lot of my questions did not seem to be relevant to the way he perceives his school experience. However, it has to be noted that his very poor language skills could be a major factor that prohibited further elaboration of his responses to my questions.

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therapy as a mechanism that reinforces certain interaction patterns within the family group (Byng-Hall, 1988).

Timmy has five siblings and a family history of leaving school before Junior Certificate exams. His father's attitude seems to be quite lackadaisical as well. He notes that the lack of Timmy's comments about school (and teachers) means that everything 'is plodding along as it should be' and elsewhere he says, 'it's up to the student if they want to learn or not' and that Timmy almost always does all his homework at school, and teachers say he is progressing at a normal rate. He would like to see Timmy going to College but 'if he can keep him in school till Junior Cert, he is doing well.' He is happy with teachers and believes they should be able to deal with whatever comes up in any given day. In a nutshell, as his father comments, 'Timmy is a happy go lucky person'.

Classroom Atmosphere & Specific TSR Interactions

Ms Anderson

The students seemed to look forward to Ms Anderson's lesson. The atmosphere during the lesson was relaxed and often chatty however the boundaries were present and Ms Anderson seemed to be able to implement them without causing extensive conflict between herself and her students. She welcomed my presence in the classroom that did not seem to alter the existing classroom atmosphere.

Ms Sutton

The prevailing atmosphere in Ms Sutton's classroom was that of a battle between the students wanting to have 'fun' and the teacher aiming to keep them quiet and trying to deliver the lesson. Unlike Ms Anderson, Ms Sutton had employed some measures in order to establish an ordered beginning of the lesson. However, those measures created tension. Extensive reading and writing activities had lost their academic purpose and were often transformed into discipline measures. Despite her

efforts to establish herself as an authority some seemingly minor incidents would indirectly but blatantly remind everybody that she was not *really* in charge of the classroom. The permeable tension and boredom was sometimes audible through everybody's relieved sigh once the ending-bell rung. Some improvement in the classroom atmosphere over time has to be noted perhaps due to teacher and students getting to know each other better and possibly realising that none has bad intentions.

It seems that Alex's past bad behaviour and the classroom's overall tense climate did not make room for the teacher noticing Alex's well-intentioned efforts. However the overall classroom atmosphere improvement seems to have had an impact on the way they perceive their relationship, especially on Alex's part.

Timmy was often distracted from the lesson; he was very chatty and sometimes mischievous. However, he would never make anything too extreme that would get him in deep trouble. Timmy could be mischievous with an innocent smile. Ms Sutton often 'blamed' St1, Timmy's best friend, who sometimes distracted the whole classroom and would be mischievous in more 'clumsy' ways than Timmy.

Ms Sutton sometimes blamed my presence for the students being upset but other times she did not seem certain whether it was my presence or other factors which caused the students to be excessively bold.

Juxtaposing Ms Anderson's and Ms Sutton's Vignettes

Background and Observation Notes

Ms Anderson has taken a number of roles during her 6 years experience in disadvantaged schools. She chose teaching for 'idealistic' reasons that she now judges as 'little'. Ms Sutton, who is doing her first teaching year did not choose but resorted to teaching as a career option.

Both teachers seemed to be honest and straightforward in their discussions. However two points differentiated them. First, their emphasis on emotions. While Ms Anderson was openly talking about emotions in her job, Ms Sutton seemed to avoid speaking about them. Second, Ms Anderson seemed much more thoughtful in her responses than Ms Sutton; including trying to view things from the students' perspective. Overall, I felt Ms Anderson enjoyed both the content of the discussion and my presence and that Ms Sutton's interview participation was mostly typical and involved some apprehension.

Ms Anderson's and Ms Sutton's Beliefs: Interactive Level

Ms Anderson largely perceives her teaching role as adjusting not only to the children's academic needs but also to their culturally different upbringing. She seems to employ thoughtful understanding to bring school and students in a cultural balance. Thus her teaching goals, apart from the academic also include 'survival techniques' or 'manners' as she says. Wider goals involve the development of self-discipline and making students aware of the advantages of school. In order to achieve those goals she feels that her students have to trust her and look forward to the lesson because they like and respect her.

Ms Anderson defines the ideal TSR as a respectful and friendly one where boundaries are kept. She exclaims that she loves working with that particular class and that she trusts them. She believes she has such a good classroom management because she has been approachable to the students and as a result they trust her. By being approachable, it seems that the whole student community has accepted her and thus she often uses group dynamics to discipline a student. On a personal TSR level when 'huge arguments' occur she seems to focus on her personal feelings and on her belief in the students' ability to act better. Those arguments however are soon forgotten in light of the positive climate she seems to have established.

Ms Sutton is trying to teach her students basic skills and get their behaviour in order. Her goals may be practically the same to Ms Anderson's but Ms Sutton seems to lack in mindfulness of the students' cultural background and their personal understanding of things. This quality of mindfulness consists a major part of emotional holding and is often present in Ms Anderson's narrative. Ms Sutton defines both teachers' and students' roles in a much more short-term light probably underestimating students' abilities. She had difficulty imagining an ideal TSR relationship and her effort included only the practical side. She confronts a wide range of problems in her classroom and her main tools against misbehaviour are keeping the students as busy as possible or simply telling them off.

Ms Anderson's and Ms Sutton's Beliefs: Non-Interactive level

Both teachers found their experience of teacher training irrelevant to the school needs and claim that everything they learnt was from their professional teaching experience. Power is the main difference Ms Anderson identifies between teachers and students and she adds that teachers sometimes abuse it. The teacher – student similarities she identifies have very much to do with all-encompassing, personal needs. Ms Sutton focuses on more 'visible' similarities like clothes or both herself and the students 'getting angry'. She identifies social class as the main teacher – student difference and consequently the way they live and the emphasis they place on education.

They both seem to know their role in school but only Ms Anderson feels that she keeps to it. As far as school support and school decisions are concerned, it seems that Ms Anderson is more opinionated and critical than Ms Sutton. They both mention students as a source to draw energy from (and support in Ms Anderson's case). Again, Ms Anderson seems more thoughtful in her response. The same goes for the advice they offer to new teachers. Ms Anderson's replies are more complex, taking into account more parameters especially of personal interaction in addition to academic management.

Ms Sutton does not know the community yet whereas Ms Anderson has already been acknowledged by it. The teachers' experience and beliefs about parents seem to be quite similar. Ms Sutton has the impression that parents feel intimidated in school and that their expectations of school and their children are quite low since they are not really interested in education. Ms Anderson's seems to go to a deeper level elaborating the parents' motives and environmental conditions that might have led them take the position Ms Sutton narrates. Again she places more emphasis on personal interaction that goes beyond pure academic goals and underlines that it is imperative that parents should be educated so that the parent-school gap may lessen.

Students' Experience of their Relationship with their Nominated Teachers

Alex's Perception of his Relationships with Ms Anderson & Ms Sutton

From the imaginary incident we see Alex's expectations clearly. In Ms Anderson's case he expects support in Ms Sutton's case he expects trouble. In addition Ms Anderson seems to be perceived as more direct, immediate and approachable than Ms Sutton who seems to be perceived as not always fair and thus provokes aggressive emotions in Alex.

Alex perceives Ms Anderson as a nice person with whom he gets along. Ms Sutton is perceived as a 'narky' teacher, often too strict who 'just doesn't like him'. Alex is clearly attached to Ms Anderson since not only did he look forward to going to her lesson but he had expectations of support if he was in trouble. On the other hand he is confused about his relationship with Ms Sutton; a relationship that Alex tends to perceive as unsupportive. It is interesting that when he was asked about the teacher's relationship with other students, he mentioned that in both classes students 'mess' but in Ms Anderson's class he seems to hold the students responsible while in Ms Sutton's case, the teacher. Alex perceives Ms Anderson as funny, flexible, fair and also strict when needed. He doesn't seem to be very happy with his understanding of Ms Sutton's lesson but judging from the tickets that she gives, he describes Ms Sutton as being in charge of her classroom as well.

Alex thinks Ms Anderson is available for him and that she understands when he might be having difficulties even beyond academic tasks, unlike Ms Sutton. Alex thinks that Ms Anderson is genuine, truthful, funny and also gives students a chance unlike other teachers. He says he trusts her and he thinks that she might trust him and care for him. In this way, she seems to have a meaningful impact on him since through her judgments he manages to condemn some of his actions. However, he does not see himself as treated in any special way. It is noteworthy to underline that his reply to Ms Sutton's judgments is, 'I don't care'. Thus even though he also perceives Ms Sutton as genuine her opinion does not seem to matter that much. When talking of trust, Alex says that he trusts Ms Sutton but places that trust on her availability to help with the

work and at the same time he thinks that she probably doesn't trust him. Alex perceives Ms Sutton as too strict and unfair since her rules are not adhered to by all students; however, he acknowledges that she sometimes praises his good behaviour.

In his effort to guess what his teachers might think of him, Alex had more difficulty in guessing about Ms Sutton. He guesses that Ms Anderson might think positively of him as a person while Ms Sutton might think positively about his work and also that he is 'messing' all the time. Finally while he said he would remember Ms Anderson for being funny, he couldn't think of anything to remember Ms Sutton for.

Alex feels confident about his work in both classes but he feels relaxed with Ms Anderson and more stressed with Ms Sutton. It is also interesting that he didn't comment on Ms Sutton as a person at all while he gave many reasons why he was happy to have Ms Anderson as a teacher and disappointed to lose her.

Timmy's Perception of his Relationships with Ms Anderson & Ms Sutton

Timmy narrates a similar, work-focused imaginary incident in both cases with slightly more negative expectations appearing in Ms Sutton's case. He seems to accept both teachers' behaviour management and teaching skills as fair and good enough. Only with regard to his relationship does he seem to differentiate the teachers. He clearly speaks positively about Ms Anderson and while he initially makes the same positive comments about Ms Sutton, after second thoughts, he eventually says that he doesn't really like going to her lesson.

Timmy's 'feeling' descriptions focus more on the lesson where he feels bored in Ms Sutton's and more interested in Ms Anderson's classroom. He describes himself as relaxed and happy in both cases and comments that he feels like that all the time irrespective of teachers. Perhaps the most telling differentiating point is that he describes feeling 'a bit loved' in Ms Anderson's class.

Both teachers are judged to be 'all right' and fair even though he suspects that Ms Sutton is sometimes affected by her humour in her decisions. Timmy perceives both of them as available and approachable even though he differentiates Ms Sutton as being more directive. As far as 'giving out' is concerned both teachers are perceived as

'roaring but… a little bit'. Both teachers listen to him, talk to him and help him although only about the lesson because 'there is nothing to talk about beyond the lesson'. Timmy nods to my question whether Ms Anderson cares about him and says that Ms Sutton expects him to do good work.

Timmy wasn't able to reply to more abstract questions; to questions that involved taking another person's perspective or to discuss issues of trust, or other TSR qualities in an abstract manner.

Teachers' Experience of their Relationships with the Nominated Students

Ms Anderson's & Ms Sutton's Perception of Alex

Ms Anderson's first impression of Alex is that he is very moody and that he often feels sorry for himself. She takes in account his brother's presence and notes that Alex feels that the whole school is against him and as a result he often adopts a generalised bad attitude without being able to differentiate among teachers. However she makes clear that Alex's moodiness was never disturbing to the whole class. Ms Sutton notes in a general fashion that Alex has a very bad temper, no respect and that he probably thinks of himself as real tough. However, according to Ms Sutton, both his academic work and his behaviour have improved a lot recently.

Especially at the beginning, Alex responded to Ms Anderson with bad manners but she kept a firm attitude combined with understanding which had a great impact on him. She laid out the facts for him from the very beginning and she also made herself available as a safe base that Alex used whenever he felt upset. Ms Anderson believes that a personal relationship with Alex could make a great difference to his schooling experience and she goes a step further to comment that such a relationship needs to be carefully handled since it would mean much to him. Ms Anderson has to some degree built such a relationship, either by her funny, understanding and forgiving attitude or by involving herself in extra-curricular activities. As a result she seems to use her good relationship with either Alex or the rest of the students to manage the former's behaviour. She speaks openly about emotions and she can be very straightforward when

mirroring Alex's behaviour even in front of the whole class. However she seems to have made sure that Alex does not perceive such mirroring as unbearable.

Ms Sutton believes that Alex probably feels bored in her lesson and that he depicts a bad picture of her to his parents. Upon narrating a bad incident she seemed to be quite fed up with the difficulties she faces from the whole class. However, gradually she found that by not coming down on him as quickly as she used to, by praising him and by incorporating his interests in the lesson, he gets better. She seems to take into account his personality in her teaching interactions and feels that he can do good work for her if interested. She pinpoints that being aware of his temper is the best way to manage their relationship however she believes that he doesn't like school.

On the other hand, Ms Anderson notices how conscientious and committed Alex can be when playing hurling and she thinks that it is those students' poor communication skills and low school self esteem that promote their problematic attitude. At the same time she displays understanding, thoughtfulness and empathy in her thinking and says that personalised management and praise could work miracles for Alex. Overall she says she had a good relationship with Alex and although she resents that Alex could lie about somebody, she believes that Alex, unlike with other teachers, would not lie about things that happen between them.

Ms Anderson finds that a lot of other students have similar problems because such students need to feel wanted in school; 'it is a cultural problem', she comments. Speaking of parents, Ms Anderson finds Alex's mother very defensive and not responsible enough. However, Alex's mother notes that in the parent-teacher meeting, she was the only teacher who had something positive to say to her about Alex, a fact that didn't particularly please the rest of the teachers who had mostly problems to report.

Ms Sutton doesn't think Alex appreciates her teaching efforts. In addition, Alex's hot temper is perceived as a potential out of school threat for her. When describing his personality she says that, 'he is a nice kid, I think'. However, this uncertainty leaves a very important question mark unanswered and perhaps undermines issues of trust and relationship. Finally, she does not see a point in meeting with Alex's parents since 'she has no big issue' to talk with them.

Ms Anderson's first impression of Timmy could have led to conflict and dislike; however, on the contrary, it was handled in such a way that it served to clarify the level of communication and understanding between the teacher and student. It ultimately built a sense of trust and alliance between them. Timmy is seen as a student with low self-esteem and a tendency not to accept responsibility for the mistakes he makes. However Ms Anderson also underlines Timmy's efforts in class and his declared determination to be 'a good boy in school' unlike his brother.

Ms Anderson sometimes feels like a mother to Timmy. She seems to have understood how he operates in school, what his academic and personal needs are and she has adopted her role to these; be that showing some interest in his 'amazing' stories, accepting his level of work and praising him, withhold from pushing him, giving him a pen with strawberry smell or preparing something special for him for the difficult last 10 minutes where his attention span falls. She believes that Timmy has a positive image of her and that he would describe her as a fair person to his parents. However she feels that Timmy might leave school early because of his family background. She underlines that what could make a difference for Timmy is personalised tuition and guidance.

Ms Sutton's first impression of Timmy was that he was confused and what is interesting is that she still finds that he doesn't seem to know his way around in her classroom. She finds that he has low self-esteem, that he is polite, that he doesn't mind going to school, that he 'kind of' appreciates encouragement, that they 'kind of' get on ok and that he probably thinks that she is 'ok and fair'. Overall, although Ms Sutton's understanding is not contradictory with Ms Anderson's, it certainly seems more blunt, that is, neither deep nor informative enough. I believe this is an indication of no engaged thoughtfulness in relation to the student's welfare especially as far as understanding and containing his whole personality is concerned.

Ms Sutton feels Timmy might leave school early because his parents show no interest in education and she believes a teacher can do nothing to improve his attendance. However, she pushes him 'a good bit' because he is very weak and she feels

that his motivation improves with encouragement. When the discussion focused on relationship she directed the conversation to their academic interactions that are probably appreciated by him since he is polite to her. She had no specific positive or negative incidents to mention; instead she said that they usually got on ok. In light of other difficult students, she doesn't have any problems with his behaviour. Like in Alex's case, she cannot see any point in meeting with Timmy's parents since she won't have anything new to tell them.

Ms Anderson generally elaborates more than Ms Sutton. What seems to be most important through the specific incidents that she describes is her ability to be empathetic and have a holistic perspective of a given situation. It is also interesting that in her case both Alex and Timmy, even though to a different degree, seem to consistently ask for her personal help. When disciplining, she might roar at Timmy but she knows that, "there is no point being cold to him". She has found that talking about her own emotions is a good behaviour management tool for Timmy. Finally, elsewhere, as an indication of her ability to identify general needs of her students, she notes that many things need to be pointed out to Timmy, since he does not seem to make connections by himself.

Discussing Philip's Vignette

It very quickly became evident that Philip was the self-elected class leader. It is noteworthy that initially he identifies his own opinion as the most important in his life and only after some thought he speaks of his 'Ma'. He is by far the toughest lad and the only one who could appear unshaved among his classmates. Although he thinks it is very important for a teacher to 'get things in your head' and although Mr Porter is the teacher who teaches best he finally chose Ms Anne as his preferred teacher and Mr Porter as his least preferred.

His family situation seems quite difficult and stressful. His mother, who recognises his bad attitude, considers that Philip has some sort of responsibility for his behaviour. She seems to feel hopeless with her son and frustrated with his teachers because they do not take into account his out of school problems that have a major

impact on his schooling. She lists a number of personality difficulties her son has, especially aggression and his need to feel he is in charge of situations. Moreover, she notes that Philip often says that he hates school and believes that despite her good will, he will do his best to leave. She underlines that he loves manual stuff, which also seems to be the only thing that gives real creative pleasure to Philip in school.

 She goes on to list a number of ways that might help Philip, like praise, positive phone calls, one to one work or little palpable gifts while she emphatically says that 'sending him home for the day, is no good'. She seems to feel quite upset and intimidated with Mr Porter however again she places some responsibility on her son. She underlines that Philip likes Ms Anne but her impression seems to be that it is Ms Anne's mood that makes a difference, avoiding to comment on Philip's attitude.

Philip displayed mannerly behaviour in our meetings until he realised that the interviewing situation was a context in which he could be in control of. Then, he soon used this power to show off to his classmates that he was in charge of a given situation. His words about 'not missing classes' proved to have no true meaning but simply served as pretext for his actions. If he deems something as worthwhile he seems very determined about it, be that woodwork or a monetary reward. His vocabulary was poor but especially due to his determination, he seemed to have potential for development.

He seemed to transform his frustrating feelings with the help of his physical development into a tough and sometimes aggressive or malicious (extensively bullying classmates) character. Even though our meetings caused him no anxiety, he seemed to be permanently stressed. The only positive emotions I felt was when he was talking of woodwork with excitement and of Ms Anne being sweet with some mellowness.

When talking more generally about his school experience, some of his rationalisations for feeling angry appeared. Thus he spoke of looking forward to getting along with his teachers, implying that it is the teachers who cause any problems since he has good intentions. He also spoke of his classmates treating each other the same while he is not only bullying but also prompting others to bully. Additionally, he noted that a teacher is good because, "he makes you stand if you are falling asleep"; implying that it is the teacher's responsibility to keep you awake and not the student's.

Although he indirectly prioritises Ms Anne for her soothing personality, when asked to describe his ideal teacher he consciously prioritises work-focused elements. In

a nutshell, it seems to me that Philip has strong defence mechanisms that, at least to a certain degree, distort his perception of reality. The unfortunate result is that he finds it very difficult to address his problems realistically.

Discussing Ian's Vignette

Ian seemed to be the most able student. He didn't show any emotional difficulties; he was sociable with good verbal abilities and he seemed thoughtful enough in the way he interpreted his experiences. It was mostly Mr Porter's work management abilities and secondly his funny sense of humour that got Ian to nominate him as his preferred teacher. It seems however that Mr Porter cannot make a difference to the way he feels about school.

No outstanding difficulties came forth as far as his family is concerned. His mother says that he likes history and that he seems to enjoy certain incidents that happen in school, however his greatest attraction is football. She says that she would like him to stay in school but there seems to be no determination even to help him improve. She implies that the fact that Ian wants to have the last say in things is a problem but again she doesn't seem determined to change that. She seems to judge on different ethical standards than teachers do thus being more lenient with Ian's behaviour. It seems that her understanding is that Ian is the one who goes to school, so Ian is responsible, not herself.

Ian's mother is not happy with Mr Porter. Her impression that he is two-faced is a result of the contrast between his words and actions. She perceives him as a person who shows off by trying to be 'cool' both with parents and students but at the same time thinking & behaving in a way that possibly intimidates both.

During our meetings Ian was actively participating in a way that displayed mindfulness, friendly and genuine relatedness and congruent emotional variability. He sometimes slowly talked to himself to clarify complex thoughts and other times he asked for clarifications to my questions. His bright eyes conveyed to me a perception of cleverness that was transformed both to an appetite for playfulness and willingness for understanding of the other. Perhaps this dual quality potentially enables

mischievousness, especially when a classroom is not well managed, and honesty of expression to coexist as facets of his personality.

It is my impression that his peers are very important to him and it is within their group that he mainly defines his school presence. He seems to be able to reconcile both positive and negative emotions as part of the same person and thus perceive reality quite accurately. His replies to the more abstract questions promote such an interpretation since they seem to be well balanced, honest and reflective.

Classroom Atmosphere & Specific TSR Interactions

Ms Anne

Ms Anne always had a smooth beginning at her lessons. She had adopted a flexible boundary setting, that incorporated the students' difficulty to always be on time, with set and clear limits. Her work management included a variety of activities that aimed to engage all students; the central activity seemed to be 'whole classroom discussion'. She had established a relaxed and friendly climate and wherever there was a threat of disruption she would either disregard it (especially if it didn't disturb the lesson flow) or deal with it by explaining the difficulty to the students involved sometimes in a subtle and playful way but always with a firm tone. Overall, the feeling one had from her classroom was that she was in charge of it, displaying confidence in her judgments and at the same time keeping an open sensitivity to the student's perceptions of the classroom events. She readily accepted my presence in her classroom and we soon formed an alliance.

Sometimes Philip might enter the classroom in a bad mood, giving me the impression that he was looking for an opportunity to let off steam. Ms Anne would always deal with him in an attentive, calm and firm manner. She seemed to make room for Philip's personality to the degree that sometimes, different standards applied but only when accepted by all students. In cases where direct conflict was unavoidable, her emphasis was on the school rules and not on Philip's personality or bad attitude. In a

nutshell she was in control of the classroom dynamics and that allowed for accepting and holding students' subjectivities.

Mr Porter

Mr Porter often displayed overwhelming passion when teaching. As a result, most of the times the whole classroom –including myself- would be fully engaged in the lesson. He was in full control of the classroom climate that could easily alter from work-focused to fun time and vice versa. He spoke in the students' language either about the lesson or about off-lesson issues and in the majority of instances he tried to prevent disruption problems.

However, in cases where the students either didn't come up to his work expectations or where somebody had broken some school or classroom rule, or even worse if Mr Porter perceived some kind of disrespect towards him, the climate could become very intense. My feeling was that all students were, to a different degree, afraid of being at the focus of any of his intensely emotional outbursts he sometimes had when managing students' behaviour and as a result, they were all as alert as they could be in order to prevent them.

Depending on the mood Philip and Mr Porter were in when they had entered the classroom on a given day, their cooperation could fluctuate to the extremes. They might sometimes chat about off lesson issues and Philip could put on a show for everybody's amusement or at the other extreme, Mr Porter might feel disrespected or fed up with Philip and he could treat him in an aggressive manner that seemed to overload Philip with aggression that the latter tried to manage.

Ian had a different academic profile. He was most of the times diligent and actively participating in the lesson. His light hearted and witty personality often created an attuned interactive pattern with Mr Porter who often responded in a similar fashion. It seems that Ian managed to get the best of Mr Porter's lesson without the latter's 'bad mood days' overshadowing his nonetheless outstanding teaching contribution.

Juxtaposing Ms Anne's and Mr Porter's Vignettes

Background and Observation Notes

Both teachers have four years teaching experience. However their motives were initially different since Ms Anne liked the process of teaching whereas Mr Porter liked the subjects he studied. They both were straightforward and honest however their interactive style differed markedly. Ms Anne smiled a lot and I felt she fully trusted me. Mr Porter was mostly serious and expressed some initial apprehension that however disappeared after our first meeting. My feelings of relatedness were also very different since I felt Ms Anne had a relaxed, actively interested, caring and playful personality whereas Mr Porter gave me the impression of an artificial friendliness despite his use of informal and sometimes sarcastic language. In a nutshell I felt as if Ms Anne was interacting with me as a person whereas Mr Porter was mostly interacting with the content of our discussion, in his case, I felt I was seen mainly as part of a task.

Ms Anne's and Mr Porter's Beliefs: Interactive Level

The overall feeling I get from this information is that Ms Anne's replies are thoughtful whereas Mr Porter's are opinionated and final. Ms Anne sees the teacher's role more as being a role model for her students whereas Mr Porter's goal is to accomplish a job whose aim is to get the best out of every student. Both Ms Anne and Mr Porter underline both academic and personality goals. However, Ms Anne seems to place more emphasis on the interactive part whereas Mr Porter on the content part of their work.

It is interesting that although Mr Porter defines success at examination as the students' role, he finds that behaviour and not academic problems is what distracts them from that goal. Thus he believes that students must improve their social skills and mature as confident citizens; perhaps this is why he insists treating all of them 'as adults'. Ms Anne believes that students have to learn to be responsible for themselves in

school and consequently in life. She finds that they need to develop a self-contained, considerate personality and elsewhere she adds that an ideal TSR is made up of such personalities.

When difficulties occur she tries to either intervene discretely or more dynamically; or to make use of the school support team in collaboration with the parents. She underlines that since mistakes cannot be avoided they should be perceived as opportunities for learning. However she cannot help feeling frustrated when she sees that students' potential is often lost or her efforts ruined as a result of the parents' negative impact. Mr Porter underlines that students have to know that you respect them so that he may discipline them without further conflicts. He emphasises the uniqueness of each case but unlike Ms Anne he does not mention team or parent collaboration. Instead he says that both students and teachers disregard one another.

He may say that he will make them very sorry if they disrespect him and that perhaps he cares about them a bit too much but he also says that he wants them to be able to relax in his class. He spontaneously adds that he doesn't want to make them feel that he is better than them but his only aim is to make them understand that they have to behave. In a nutshell as far as the teachers interactive practice is concerned, it seems to me that Mr Porter disciplines his students in order to *make them* understand whereas Ms Anne tries to hold them in order to *let them* understand.

Ms Anne's and Mr Porter's Beliefs: Non-Interactive Level

Both teachers found their training far from adequate. The meaning teachers and students give to education is very different. Mr Porter focused more on school roles, power and class issues whereas Ms Anne focused more on teacher's and student's different philosophy and experiences from life. The similarities she pinpointed among teachers and students were also in regard to the whole personality and especially their feelings and way of relating. Mr Porter seemed to be overwhelmed by his frustration and underlined that aversion and contempt for the school system is what they both have in common.

Mr Porter describes himself in multiple roles but what upsets him is that he feels older colleagues perceive him as a disrespectful troublemaker. He finds support, especially for young teachers, and school organisation non-existent and adds that students realise that; however, most of them are respectful enough. Trying to overcome those problems, he chooses to behave reactively and perhaps aggressively both to some of his colleagues and to his students. As a result he can no longer enjoy helping individual students and considers leaving this school. Likewise, his advice to new teachers is to avoid coming to this school because support is rare and so is satisfaction.

Talking of her role, Ms Anne sounds confident but complaints about her older colleagues' attitude. She seems to appreciate some supportive ideas but she finds them inefficient in practice. Moreover she finds that the school decision structure is not working properly. Finally she emphasises that family and psychological support are non-existent. Despite that she says that she enjoys teaching and working with young people and that she is involved in many school activities. However, she couldn't give general advice to new teachers since every situation asks for unique handling.

Lack of organisation seems to characterise the school and community links. As far as parents are concerned, after underlining that there are a variety of attitudes, she adds that parents fail to see a situation from more than one perspective, responsibly and realistically and can be abusive. However, she notes that some of them may feel threatened by teachers. Finally she seems to believe that parents want but they don't know how to provide the best for their kids while the parents of the most 'at-risk' students don't even seem to care. Mr Porter on the one hand says that 90 per cent of parents are decent people and on the other that the huge majority of them aren't at all interested in their child's school presence. He finds that parents lack self-confidence and expect teachers to care for and respect their children but not vice versa. He finally comes back to the problems he confronts with his colleagues saying that rightly some parents think that some 'disgraceful' teachers treat their kids with disrespect and thus there is a lot of contempt from parents.

Students' Experience of their Relationship with their Nominated Teachers

Philip's Perception of his Relationships with Ms Anne & Mr Porter

Through the imaginary incidents Philip expressed many emotional difficulties. In both cases, he imagined the teachers shouting at him but Mr Porter being unreasonably strict and rejecting him more than Ms Anne. In Mr Porter's case, Philip says that he feels angry at the teacher while in Ms Anne's conflict, he seems to feel angry at the school and 'very down' with the situation. This is so perhaps because he imagines Mr Porter feeling furious during that incident while Ms Anne feels sad. This perception of sadness seems to have led his mental trail in more thoughtful and self-reflective paths.

Philip's spontaneous descriptions of his teachers are diametrically different. Ms Anne is thought of as a helping hand whereas Mr Porter as a burden. He feels good to have Ms Anne as a teacher because she is calm and cooperative with everybody. At the same time, when he thinks of Mr Porter aggressive emotions seem to overwhelm him though he sees Mr Porter's positive side as well. He considers them both good teachers and good classroom managers. His meta-thoughts are revealing. Mr Porter's positive words do not seem to be stronger than the negative feelings he instigates in Philip. At the same time when talking of Ms Anne his thought shifts in a self-reflecting, more responsible mode.

Out of school issues seem to worry Philip in both teachers' classrooms. However, he generally feels happy with both teachers' subjects even though his occasional boredom and the fact that teachers send him to Ms Anne's classroom whenever he is in trouble could have contributed to a negative perception of Philip's relationship with his tutor. When Mr Porter gives out to him, Philip seems to struggle with himself. He says that he feels angry and furious and that 'someday, Mr Porter won't get on his nerves' however at the same time he tries to be indifferent and says that he is confident that he will not shout back at him and get in more trouble.

Some other important differentiating elements include issues of trust and likeability where Philip trusts Ms Anne but not Mr Porter, he also feels wanted in Ms Anne's classroom but sometimes disliked as a person by Mr Porter who is also

perceived as holding a grudge against Philip for past issues. Philip seems to be confused with the application of discipline in Mr Porter's classroom. It is also interesting that he perceives both teachers as having some insight to his emotions but only Ms Anne acts in an understanding way. He enjoys Ms Anne's praise and Mr Porter's fun. He doesn't seem to perceive either of them as interested in him; more specifically, Ms Anne because she is probably tired of him and the whole classroom and Mr Porter because of his disrespectful attitude.

Philip seems to find it difficult to build positive generalised expectations. He seems to believe that Ms Anne is her true self only when she gives out. Moreover, he cannot think of anything he gets out of his relationship with her even though he declares that she is the only one who can get along with him and that she is also available to help him in various circumstances.

Ian's Perception of his Relationship with Mr Porter

We already know that Mr Porter was not Ian's 'wholehearted' choice probably because of the conflicts he had with him when other teachers sent Ian to Mr Porter and 'he had to deal with their issues'. In the imaginary incident, Ian focuses on work issues and no conflict problems arise. However he genuinely admits that he feels a bit nervous, 'cause it's him'. What does he feel nervous about? As he says elsewhere, 'Mr Porter's mood'. Ian is a clever student and the fact that he knew that 'Mr Porter is a bit of a mad teacher' in time, might have prevented initial conflicts.

Ian regards Mr Porter very positively for his teaching abilities and because they share some common interests besides school, perhaps the most important being that they have the same kind of witty humour. Ian feels interested, focused, confident and proud when working; perhaps more importantly he says that he feels relaxed because he knows what he is doing. Ian feels that Mr Porter treats everybody the same and that the way he is in charge of the classroom doesn't bother him apart from the fact that he always wants to win arguments even if he is wrong.

Mr Porter manages Ian's attitude well but at the same time Ian doesn't want to be in his classroom when Mr Porter is 'dodgy'. Interestingly enough Ian says that he

doesn't like their relationship unless Mr Porter is in a good mood. What does Ian perceive then? Evidently, a lesson he enjoys, a teacher with whom there seems to be mutual likeness -expressed through mirroring- and a teacher he can trust that will do his best to get him achieve in exams. However, Ian's understanding of his teacher is that he is not fully genuine because, as Ian says with a smile, Mr Porter denies that he smokes.

Teachers' Experience of their Relationships with the Nominated Students

Ms Anne's and Mr Porter's Perception of Philip

Ms Anne thinks that Philip perceives himself as the class leader and she notes that he has a 'love-hate' relationship with school. She goes on providing specific examples of her experience that have lead her to the above understandings. On the other hand, Mr Porter places emphasis on his own interpretations of Philip's worldview instead of trying to describe his student perspective. Then, when asked about his teaching experience with Philip his reply has depersonalising and conflictual tendencies, 'he is not really different than any other student… (and he) has all the warning signs for falling by the wayside'. Ms Anne is more specific, she notes some difficulties she has with him, how teachers in general have started to perceive Philip and she continues trying to see things and give interpretations stemming from his perspective of school reality.

Ms Anne thinks that Philip would probably emphasise the difficulties he has with her but that he would probably realise that she also cares about him. She thinks that he would probably blame her to his mother and goes on to give the reason why. Mr Porter brings three different issues in his reply as to what Philip may think of him. First, he splits 'teaching' from 'caring' role. Then, in reference to the second role, he replies that Philip would have a positive image of him and thirdly, he brings in the theme of 'his colleagues disrespect'. Finally, like Ms Anne he believes Philip gives a negative image of him to his parents.

Both teachers believe that Philip will leave school soon and they suggest an apprenticeship for him; they also do not seem to believe that a teacher could help him stay in school. They both refer to his parents' attitude as a reason for that difficulty, however, while Ms Anne sounds more understanding in that respect, Mr Porter sounds bothered by my question and emphasises that trying to keep Philip in school, as such, is not his duty.

When narrating the 'don't get on well' incident Mr Porter's affect is quite intense; he bangs his fists twice on the table. He seems to blame Philip for coming in with an aggressive mood because as he says, Philip expects a very strict discipline from him and consequently Philip feels angry and frustrated with himself. Ms Anne refers to the times other teachers send Philip to her because she is his tutor. Her words seem to reveal an underlying caring attitude that needs to be limited since Philip can be emotionally draining. On the other hand she notes that Philip may speak to her in a personal and attuned way and again attributes that to his needs for attention, feeling adult and gaining some emotional relief. Mr Porter doesn't provide a specific example but vaguely refers to his good workdays. However, Mr Porter's interpretation is very insightful, Philip is brilliant when he ceases to think of him self and just participates. Both teachers say that sometimes it is necessary to push Philip; Ms Anne talks more of praise and Mr Porter more of adjusting the work to his abilities.

Talking of relationship, Ms Anne is very clear and straightforward. She believes that how their relationship is going to be perceived by Philip very much depends on Philip's out of school experiences. She says that he is extremely confused and his situation is grave and that if somebody could act as a safe base for Philip that would be helpful. Mr Porter gets nervous upon listening the word 'relationship'. He seems to understand that such a word implies too great a responsibility that he cannot take on board as a teacher; thus he comes to define relationship in pure, clear and strict working terms. He reckons that Philip may appreciate his efforts and certainly cannot have an impact upon his reputation. On the other hand, Ms Anne, after making clear that, as perceived by her students, Philip has no effect on her, transfers the issue of reputation to two underlying questions: Who, among her colleagues, is to judge one's reputation and by what criteria.

Speaking of Philip's personality, Ms Anne finds that he is very defensive and very confused but notes that he can also be quite funny. She tries to manage his behaviour by gently poking fun or sometimes using short time outs. Mr Porter does not describe Philip's personality, instead he notes that he is a product of his environment and even though he hasn't met his parents, he seems quite certain that such a meeting would be of no avail. Ms Anne, as Philip's tutor, has met both parents about whom she says that on one hand they seem to want him stay in school but on the other they seem to avoid the responsibilities that come with his stay in school.

Mr Porter's Perception of Ian

Mr Porter's first words about Ian describe their positive relationship over time. He notes that Ian probably doesn't feel he is very intelligent even though he is better than most of his classmates. Ian probably feels confident and doesn't have self esteem problems like Philip. For Mr Porter, Ian feels about school like most students do, that it is a chore and he also notes that Ian can be aggressive towards female staff noting that that may be due to a cultural problem.

Mr Porter seems to want to perceive things in a depersonalised manner. His comment that his experience with Ian is similar to that of all other teachers points to that conclusion and also creates one more conflictual statement since according to Mr Porter Ian treats female staff aggressively. Moreover, he notes that Ian is very enthusiastic, does his work and speaks his mind to him. It seems that Ian's image of his teacher is an issue that entails difficulties for Mr Porter. At once he generalises and speaks of all students' opinion of him. In this respect he is certain that his students like his lesson, his discipline, his respect of them and the fun they have. He concludes that any student going to his class would be happy although he adds that he knows that they find him quite scary as well.

Mr Porter's reply about what picture Ian might give of him to his parents seems to me like a blend of defensive perceptions. Mr Porter, once more, first speaks generally prioritising the students' 'natural instinct' to emphasise the negative and then goes on to add that Ian's mother probably has a positive image of him. Just like with Philip, he

feels there is nothing he can do to help Ian's attendance apart from being a good teacher since he cannot change those people's mores.

Mr Porter refers to a negative incidence he had with Ian because the latter had misbehaved in somebody else's class. He also sounds conflictual in that report. At the beginning, he said that he 'creamed' Ian and at the end he says that his intentions were that he wanted to let Ian know that he was slightly disappointed with him and even pleased with the stance he later took on. It is also interesting that he says that there is nothing he can do to alter the mores of these people but at the same time he is determined to control anybody that he is in charge of.

The wide boundaries of Mr Porter's control area seem to create difficulty for Ian since he seems to change his behaviour according to the teacher he works with. Finally, I cannot help but identify some derogatory connotations in Mr Porter's use of the word, 'boy', when referring to Ian's ring incident, that are in conflict with his repeated statement of treating his students with respect. Mr Porter describes his 'get along' incidence referring to the time Ian opened-up his feelings to him. It is interesting however, that the latter notes that having done that, Ian probably felt uncomfortable. Mr Porter avoids speaking of his feelings during that incident but adopts a purely work-focused perspective. At that time, Ian was a problem to be dealt with.

As far as work motivation is concerned, Mr Porter perceives Ian as in need of some pushing and adds that the lesson has to be adapted to their personal needs in order to be effective. He goes on to describe how he tries to motivate the students and closes by saying that Ian does his homework because it's always reasonable homework that he gets. Here, I wondered, 'do all of his students get reasonable homework?', because if they do so, according to Mr Porter's last sentence they should all do it. However, judging from my observations, that isn't the case.

Just like in Philip's case, Mr Porter doesn't like talking of relationships. He brings in his problem with his colleagues' disrespect and clarifies that his relationship with every student is the same; it is based on the 'exams goal'. He adds that that success can bring a little bit of pride in their lives and adds that for that reason Ian appreciates his efforts and also because Mr Porter 'is a man'.

Ian didn't cause any behavioural problems to Mr Porter, no student did and Mr Porter astonishingly adds that he doesn't know why. He accepts full responsibility for

any misconduct in his class but at the same time he gives me the impression that he cannot afford to accept that a student may have a tiny bit of responsibility (and thus power) for misbehaving. Mr Porter continues on a general level by elaborating 'on the games played in school' whereby he might lessen a strict punishment that he had given and thus try to promote an 'understanding' image of himself to his students.

Mr Porter declares that he simply doesn't think of his students' personality. Thus, in my opinion directly confirming his lack of thoughtfulness. He then gives a positive picture of Ian that within the context of the rest of his comments seems to me more like a depersonalised, ready-made reply applicable to almost all of his students. Although he spoke with Ian's parents he didn't seem to believe that there is point into going into any detail about him. Mr Porter's perception of Ian's mother is that she is a woman who cares and she wants teachers to educate and respect her son. However he wonders whether she defines that respect as mutual and he also wonders how she defines education. His closing comment reveals frustration and puzzlement when he emphasises that education is no longer a vocation, it is a job that provides grinds, and that he is a grinder.

Third Level Interpretation:

Concise Profiles of Students' and Teachers' Relationship Representations

After synthesising each TSR case's contextual information and comparing people's perceptions of the relationships in question, it is now time to advance the discussion a step further. I will now present what I think, at a findings level[39], is the culmination of this research. In other words, through the provision of the individual relationship profiles below, I try to do justice to each participant's unique experiences and understandings and consequently to a meaningful exploration of TSRs. Thus, in this section, I will sketch each core participants' TSR mental representations with an emphasis on students' relational needs and teachers' emotional holding capacities.

Students

Alex's Relational Representations

Alex has been traumatised a lot during the period since he first came to secondary school. He has seen violence in his house and he has suffered paternal loss. He seems to have internalised painful feelings that probably create his moodiness. However, he is a student who craves attention and is still a child who seeks to make a meaningful relationship with an adult. This is emphasised in Ms Anderson's, his tutor's and my experience of him. Moreover we have all sensed that such a relationship tends to raise Alex's expectations of it and so he may easily get hurt if his expectations are not met.

Ms Anderson has to some degree provided the safe base that Alex looks for and that his mother believes will be most helpful for him. With regards to relatedness, Alex primarily speaks of his attraction to Ms Anderson's personality. It is through his relationship with her that he manages to perceive himself in a positive light in school.

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[39] 'Findings level' is mentioned in contrast to ontological, epistemological, methodological or design levels.

His investment in that relationship seems to primarily boost his self-esteem in an existential way and consequently promote his educational and behavioural expectations of himself. On the contrary he has built no such relationship with Ms Sutton.

In her case, Alex seems to try to find himself a clear-cut role but he often ends up confused. He 'knows' that Ms Sutton doesn't like him. His relationship representation to her is partial, emphasising mostly work-focused elements. As a result he 'just doesn't care' about what she may be able to offer to him. In other words, he seems to perceive no relational capital. It is interesting that, at the end of the academic year, although he noted that Ms Sutton is getting 'a bit nice' and that he doesn't get into trouble in her class as much as he used to be, his initial thought is that, '*Nothing has changed*'. It seems that for Alex the personal side of teacher -student relationships is very important and at an emotional level, it is *everything.*

Timmy's Relational Representations

Academically, Timmy is very weak, none of his elder siblings have ever sat for the Junior Certificate. His appearance often seems not well taken care of and he often looks rather tired. He often misses school days, his best friend is very much at-risk for leaving school early and his parents are very hard to find. At the same time, his father believes that at school 'everything is probably plodding along the way it should be', and adds, 'Timmy is a happy go lucky person'.

For Timmy, his relationship with different teachers doesn't seem to make much difference. This perception of relatedness may be, as his father says, affected by Timmy's lackadaisical worldview. Timmy himself notes that he feels happy in both nominated teachers' classrooms, not because of the teachers themselves but because that's the way he generally feels. That is exactly what I have also gathered from my interactions with him. He was very sociable and good-willed without showing any depressive or aggressive emotional symptoms.

Although most of his spontaneous comments, in relation to both teachers, were work focused it is interesting to note that the few differentiating elements present mostly involved qualities of personal rather than academic character. In this respect, he

perceives both teachers as fair, in charge of their classrooms, available and approachable. Although Alex uses similar descriptions, especially regarding Ms Anderson, it is interesting to see how he gives them different meanings. Timmy's spontaneous remark that he feels loved by his mother may be the underlying factor that decisively affects his TSR representations. He may note that he feels 'a bit loved' by Ms Anderson but in light of his mother's provision of secure base, that feeling doesn't constitute an outstanding element strong enough to differentiate his specific relational representations with Ms Anderson from that of other teachers.

Philip's Relational Representations

Philip is going through times of great personal turbulence. He seems to have faced a lot of emotional difficulties in his family and in the context of his past school experiences. His way of relating and his overall student identity seem to have been built around his struggle to manage his feelings and find a meaningful role in school. As the HSCL says, 'He seems to be faced with overwhelming pressure and has thus built an unbreakable wall around him'. The bricks that constitute this wall are defence mechanisms and the process that keeps them together is Philip's extrovert and dominant personality along with its aggressive explosions.

Through observation of Philip's relationships with those people who do not exercise adequate power over him, it seems that his readiness for relatedness is characterised by dominance. His dominant relational pattern perhaps satisfies his need to feel in control of his life and also provides him with a meaningful and successful role in school. In light of the above observations, it is revealing that both teachers he nominates are people who exercise some power over him and although in a different way, they both succeed in managing him in their classroom. Thus Philip seems to seek external boundaries that will guide him in school; but as Ms Anne, insightfully says his attitude to school and those boundaries, 'is a love – hate relationship'.

An important factor that seems to be present in both Philip's relationship representations is his readiness to emphasise any negative aspects. Philip often enters both teachers' classrooms with a readiness to create conflict and air his frustrations.

His relationship representations also seem to be imbued with the same defensive tendency. However, it is when Philip manages to regulate himself and think about his relationships without being overwhelmed by his overall emotional difficulties that differences in his specific relationship representations between Mr Porter and Ms Anne mostly show.

With Mr Porter, Philip's behaviour is often controlled but his emotions do not seem to be held and managed productively. Thus Philip's frustration often builds up and transforms into general thoughts of dislike or fantasies of aggression. On the contrary, through Ms Anne's thoughtfulness and tactful action, Philip seems to be able to hold both his actions and emotions. Thus, Philip sometimes manages to create a relational space where he is able to think less defensively and consequently more realistically. At the same time, Ms Anne's emotional holding of Philip's aggressive and defensive attitude sometimes helps reveal deeper needs that come up as depressive symptoms. However, those symptoms surface only momentarily since Philip does not seem to have the analogous mechanisms to handle them. Consequently Philip lapses back behind his 'wall' of aggression and dominance and the vicious circle goes on.

Ian's Relational Representations

Ian is a bright and cognitively able student. He comes from a relatively stable home that however doesn't seem to make any organised effort to actively help Ian at school. Ian has been nominated as 'at-risk' for leaving school early from teachers who do not seem able to manage his mischievousness. When Ian thinks of teachers he seems to think in terms of the work they do together. Thus, although he sometimes strongly dislikes Mr Porter's attitude, he still nominates him as his preferred teacher. Perhaps this is why Ian says that that teacher does not make a difference in the way he feels about school.

Ian is the only student who combines friendliness and thoughtfulness in his interactional patterns. His ability to see things from different points of view and sometimes be self-critical is unique among the few students described here. He also seems able to reconcile both positive and negative thoughts when describing a person

and he thus probably perceives a better-rounded reality. In this way, Ian seems to regard Mr Porter's abilities and humour highly, he seems attuned to Mr Porter's style of management and he thus feels relaxed in his classroom since he knows what to expect. His representations of the teacher - student relationship are mostly based on their work-focused interactions and Ian seems to do well in this domain. Thus, the difficulties he has with Mr Porter's personality do not seem to confuse him. It is interesting that Ian expressed confusion the time Mr Porter's discipline style was enforced without being expected.

Ian seems able to cognitively and practically deal with Mr Porter's attitude thus allowing for the latter's teaching skills and humour to become the prominently perceived relational qualities. In a nutshell, it seems that in Ian's case there is no major need for the teacher to hold any unbearable feelings. What the teacher needs to hold is the students' mischievousness and Mr Porter succeeds where the teacher Ian nominates as 'least liked' fails.

Teachers

Ms Anderson's Teaching Beliefs and Relational Provision

The impression I got from Ms Anderson's exploration of teaching beliefs is that she has developed a well-rounded teaching presence. She seems to define herself in relation to the groups that encompass her teaching role (colleagues, seniors, parents, students, academics, other agencies) but autonomously from them and at the same time she seems to be knowledgeable of their perspective without being attached to it. In this way, she largely defines her teaching role as one of moving in between and thus adjusting to individual, group and cultural peculiarities.

That role enables her to develop an opinionated, critical and at the same time self-reflective perception. Her teaching role encompasses both academic management and personal interaction. In fact, she seems to largely build her educational success on her ability to take into consideration her students' personalities. Ms Anderson's mindfulness seems to incorporate an insightful look into deeper personality and

emotional needs that she perceives as the reasons lying behind any problematic behavioural patterns.

Ms Anderson feels that she is able to work in line with what she defines as her teaching role and she particularly emphasises that she loves teaching that particular group. With regard to both Alex and Timmy she seems to have built a trustful alliance. She has set the boundaries according to both students' needs and she has displayed tactful sensitivity to their needs in a way that seems to be appreciated especially in Alex's case.

In his case she has built an interpretative model that is informed by her understating of the student's cultural background and explains his school difficulties on the basis of his assumed personality needs. In this way she has created a cognitive and emotional space to hold Alex's moodiness without reacting to it. The fact that Alex does not make the slightest complaint is a strong indication that Ms Anderson's mirroring and verbal explication techniques with regard to Alex's moodiness were perceived to be contained in the wider safe base structure she provides. In Timmy's case there seems to be no major need for the provision of such emotional holding. However Ms Anderson's thoughtfulness and perceived emotional relatedness to that student –she says that she often feels like a mother to him- suggest that a safe base is available for him even though it hasn't been used as yet.

Ms Anne's Teaching Beliefs and Relational Provision

Ms Anne's beliefs and actions are very much similar to Ms Anderson's. The establishment of clear boundaries with their flexible and personalised application is evident in her case as well. She sounds confident in her judgments and at the same time that confidence doesn't prevent her from keeping an open sensitivity to the way her students perceive their shared classroom reality. She is in control of the classroom dynamics not only because she can tactfully and powerfully -when needed- manage her students' behaviour but also because her students seem to accept her as worthwhile and trustworthy for that role.

Just like with Ms Anderson, I felt Ms Anne fully trusted me and that she displayed a genuine personality who was before me because she enjoyed the process and *our* interaction. Ms Anne thinks that, to a large degree, she fulfils her teaching role that is primarily being a role model for her students. Just like Ms Anderson, her emphasis on the relational part of the teaching profession is evident. She also speaks of the need for inter-group collaboration with parents and other professionals without neglecting to mention the difficulties faced. She also emphasises that she enjoys teaching these particular young people and even more she overtly expressed her attraction to the meta-perspective questions that enabled her to think of other people's perspectives.

Ms Anne gives plenty of specific examples to demonstrate her beliefs about what may guide Philip's behaviour in school. She feels that a relationship of personalised care is established and perceived as such by Philip. She underlines how confused and defensive Philip is and that he has adopted the class leader role. She notes that a relationship that could be perceived as providing a safe base for Philip could make much difference for him even though elsewhere she says that Philip will probably leave school very soon and that there is nothing a teacher could do to prevent this. Tactful manipulation of Philip's sensitive mood is her main tool to contain him in classroom often expressed in a playful tone that is used to prevent direct conflict with him.

Mr Porter's Teaching Beliefs and Relational Provision

Mr Porter often has a good laugh with his students, talks in their language, swears, and discusses issues of concern to them. All these qualities along with his firm discipline often create a very engaging lesson climate. However, Mr Porter disregards the personal, relational side of his teaching role. As he says, he doesn't think of his students' personalities; as far as he is concerned, the students are there to be taught and his only goal is to make them learn. I clearly perceived this lack of relational thoughtfulness in our interaction as well where I felt he was performing a duty as a good teacher -that had nothing to hide- would. I felt that during our meetings, I was perceived as part of the interviewing task and not as somebody who consisted a unique presence to be thoughtfully held and taken into account.

Mr Porter is strongly opinionated, and very critical of the school system and his colleagues' 'disrespectful' attitude. However his critical spirit does not seem to include himself and he also seems to lack genuine empathy and thus the ability to understand things from the other's point of view. That seems to be the case even though he gives his interpretation of what other people might think. What Mr Porter seems to lack is action sensitive thoughtfulness. I find this in his resolution that meeting some parents is of no avail, in the split 'all-bad' image he portrays of some of his colleagues and in his attitude to our relationship where he accepts collaboration with me –and thus respects me as he might have said- but through his attitude, always keeps me at a low priority level, and like he says with regard to his students, as 'something to be dealt with'.

It also seems to me that Mr Porter's underlying beliefs are not coherent enough and sometimes they are even contradictory. The first and most important lack of cohesion appears in his split image of the academic and the relational aspect of teaching. Mr Porter notes with frustration that he is a 'grinder' and he gets annoyed when I ask him to speak of relationships. He gives me the impression that he places 'relationships' with students at too high a level to be reached -like changing people's mores- and thus rejecting any personalised thoughtfulness. It is very interesting that even though he may treat students differently this 'dealing with' is not the fruit of thoughtfulness and as such the end of his actions but it is only a means, a tool in order

to achieve the ends, which is exam results. Thus his differentiated actions do not seem to create an environment where his students feel they are emotionally held. This is certainly the case for Philip but also for Ian who is reported to feel embarrassed having revealed 'private' emotions to Mr Porter.

When speaking of Philip, Mr Porter mentions but tends to underestimate his individual peculiarities. I feel our conversation about Philip is very much a display of Mr Porter's interpretative lens at a generalised level that fails to include Philip's perspective adequately. It is noteworthy that in the few instances where Mr Porter directly tries to see things from Philip's perspective, he fails to do so since he presents a defensive -embellished- image of himself. However, Mr Porter insightfully notes that Philip is brilliant in his class and when he 'forgets' himself he can be carried away by the lesson-flow. Therefore Mr Porter's excellent lesson-presentation abilities have this indirect but positive relational side effect.

It is interesting that the first time Mr Porter spontaneously mentions the word 'relationship' is the first time he is asked to describe Ian. It is also only when talking about Ian that he refers to *specific* teacher - student incidents. Generalisations and depersonalisations are present here as well but they seem to coexist with a more palpable individualised relational representation. More contradictions appear, some in relation to his interactions with Ian. However, when he was explicitly asked to talk about his relationship with the student in question, he stared generalising once more and evaded the question by referring to his colleagues' 'disrespectful' attitude to their students.

In short, Mr Porter with his strict discipline manages to control his students' behaviour and along with his excellent lesson-engagement abilities he creates an atmosphere where his students difficulties rarely disturb the lesson flow. However, he is not perceived as someone who can thoughtfully hold his students' emotions or act as a safe base and thus perhaps enable his students to deal with their emotional difficulties. Therefore, since Philip cannot handle his emotions productively, Mr Porter's relational style creates additional tension. On the other hand, even though Ian also dislikes some of Mr Porter's characteristics, he seems able to think about them and contain them. As a result, he is able to think and prioritise Mr Porter's academic abilities and thus, even hesitantly, nominate him as his preferred teacher.

Ms Sutton's Teaching Beliefs and Relational Provision

Ms Sutton is the only inexperienced teacher since all other have four to six years experience. Ms Sutton has difficulties controlling the students' group. She has great difficulty establishing herself as authority in the classroom and managing the students' behaviour. Having that practical difficulty makes it virtually impossible to provide emotional holding or a base for security for any of her students. She struggles to establish herself in the classroom and despite the shouting and use of the school's discipline system, the students continue undermining her efforts. Two reasons seem to perpetuate this condition. First, although she tries to manage the students' behaviour, she ignores some seemingly minor but very important incidents, thus even when at times she seems to have won the battle, a student's comment that indirectly disregards her may be used as a starting point for a new cycle of misbehaviour.

Second, she seems to have difficulties relating to her students. What I noticed through my classroom observations is that it took almost a full academic year for both students and teacher to start realising that perhaps their interests are not conflictual and that despite the students showing off or the teacher shouting they can both develop a cooperative pattern based on mutual good-will. I think it is not only her lack of experience and the stress she faced on a daily basis which are the reasons for her nomination by most students as the least preferred teacher. It is also her lack of thoughtfulness, her inability for emotional holding and her difficulties in adopting a multi-perspective understanding of the situation that seem to hinder the formation of an alliance between herself and -at least some- of her students.

She avoids talking of her TSRs' personal side perhaps because that side has not yet developed. Her lack of thoughtfulness and inadequacy to emotionally hold Alex's needs become apparent when she bases her interpretations mostly on the symptoms he presents instead of trying to look what may motivate Alex to behave the way he does. She thinks that he has a tough self-image, that he doesn't like school and that he can be a threat for her outside school. About a month later she hesitantly says, 'he is a nice kid, I think'. In Timmy's case, she had reached that positive but *non-resolute* understanding from the very beginning since Timmy had a less distracting presence. Thus, Timmy, 'kind of appreciates' praise and they 'kind of get on ok'. Again, when

talking of their relationship, she focuses exclusively on the academic side and she cannot come up with any specific relational incidents to describe. Finally, she notes that she can do nothing to improve her students' attendance.

However, Ms Sutton is the teacher whose TSR mental representations have changed the most over the course of the academic year. The fact the she notes that praising Alex and recognising his personality peculiarities can be helpful is an important step forward. It is a step that seems to be recognised by Alex but that has not yet transformed their relationship representations of each other. Alex's follow up description that he feels he won't mess in her classroom as he used to and that 'she is getting a bit nice' but at the same time that 'nothing has changed' is most telling in this respect.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THESIS REVIEW, CRITIQUE AND SUGGESTIONS

The Interpretative Function of the Theoretical Background

As I am bringing this research to a close, I would like to re-focus on the psychological concepts that guided this work. In this way I will try to make their interpretative contribution more explicit and also discuss those instances where theoretical concepts were not adequately utilised in the research process. Through the cases presented and analysed, I wanted to show the dynamic influence of the personal side of teacher student relationships that may take place in disadvantaged school settings. I also wanted to show the uniqueness and variability present in each TSR case. Even further, I wanted to show how each person's perception of their relationship is a unique combination of myriad of factors that come into play regardless of the perceived reality and meanings each individual attributes.

Moreover, the theoretical framework used, apart from having an exploratory function, can also provide an interpretative framework for a functional approach to improving 'at-risk' students' and teachers' school experience. Through the presentation of the TSR cases it became evident that when teachers assign the status of 'at-riskness' its credibility can very well be questionable. This alone presents a strong indication that changing people's perceptions and attitudes may well contribute against early school leaving. Consequently, interventions that focus on the everyday processes of schooling could be particularly effective.

In Alex's case we saw how his relationship with Ms Anderson -at least to some extend- made up for Alex's impaired capacity to cope with stressful events. What needs to be emphasised here is that Alex appreciated Ms Anderson as somebody who was able to hold him emotionally only after some time had lapsed after the stressful event. In this way, we see how the behaviour and perception patterns of a student need to be thoughtfully held for a long enough period in order for some sort of behavioural change to become possible. According to developmental psychopathology principles,

this kind of adaptive change is the core of development, *"The process of development constitutes the crucial link… between the residues of… earlier experiences and the modulation of behaviour by the circumstances of the present"* (Rutter & Garmezy, 1983). What both Ms Anderson and Ms Anne seem to constantly keep in mind is that their students' attitudes have been built through an adaptation process which relates to their -out of school- contexts. Mr Porter also realises that, however, he seems to have difficulty translating this understanding into empathic thoughtfulness and consequently into tactful management.

The concepts of safe base & emotional holding clearly underline the third level interpretation discussion; however, I want to make some additional comments. Aber and Allen's (1987), conceptualisation of 'secure readiness to learn' is vividly presented in Timmy's and Ian's cases. Timmy might be 'at-risk' because of his weak academic skills and other contextual factors, Ian seems to be nominated as 'at-risk' because of some teachers' poor management skills and his wittingly mischievous behaviour but both students seemed to have acquired a secure readiness to learn in contrast with Philip and Alex for whom the need for emotional holding and perceived security seemed to play an major role in their school experience.

Winnicott's concept of 'potential space' becomes relevant when we explore the teacher's specific TSR narrations. There are indications in Ms Anne and Ms Anderson's perceptions that they have created a mental 'potential space' for their students. Although Mr Porter also seems to have created some sort of 'potential space' for his students, this is only partial since he seems to reject dealing with its emotional aspect. His perception of the personal side of his relationships with his students is content-focused and he is thus not perceived as emotionally available in relation to the provision of a safe space where students may develop their self-regulation capacities. In this way, he either avoids dealing with Philip's feelings or deals with his student's emotional issues as if they were of the same quality as academic goals. Mr Porter is trying to make things 'all right' for the student by prioritising what he thinks is best in any given situation. However that happens without Mr Porter accepting or containing the students' stressful experience. In this way, it becomes more difficult for the student to develop his own emotional regulation.

Ms Sutton's potential for emotional holding and provision of potential space seems even poorer since she seems to have created neither an emotional nor an academic potential space for her students. Instead she uses what seems to be a superficial symptom-based interpretative framework to explain the students' emotional and behavioural difficulties. In addition, her aspirations for her students' academic potential seem to be very low perhaps because of the major classroom management difficulties she faces.

The very different TSR profiles and the students' largely differentiated perceptions and behaviours in different classrooms largely suggest that students, over time, tend to form independent relationships with each teacher. However we see that, especially when the students were not presented with specific questions about a specific teacher, they had the tendency to generalise their relational representations to all teachers. Again, each case presents unique variations. Ms Anderson's comments on Alex's difficulty to realise that each teacher is a different person are very relevant in this respect. At the same time, we see that at a later stage, Alex used Ms Anderson as a safe base in time of personal anxiety. Thus, turning to Attachment Theory's terminology, I find that Ijzendoorn, Sagi and Lambermon's (1992), conclusion that, "*a choice between the independence and the integration models (of mental representations) is difficult to make*", is suitable as far as the formation of TSR Mental representations is concerned. Moreover, the dynamic nature of mental representations seems to render questions of classification questionable since change may occur over time. This research provided such an example where the tactful presence and emotional holding capacities of a teacher were *gradually* perceived as important for the school experience of her student and thus seemed to have changed the quality of his mental representations and his perceived secure base within school.

In short, despite its complexity and the diverse components it tries to combine, the cyclic transaction model portrays –at least to a minimum degree- the challenge that the exploration of TSRs poses to researchers and practitioners alike (Fig. 1.3). A theoretical model of human interaction that will be adequate in the face of the complexity of lived life needs to take that complexity into account. Through the in-depth exploration of the TSR cases this research suggests ways in which applicable interventions that are adequately informed can be developed.

The Practical Function of the Theoretical Background

Ultimately, the relationships perspective presented here may offer a lens for an analysis of school policy and practice. Such an analysis has not been applied in disadvantaged educational settings despite the large amounts of money and effort recently mobilised by the Irish government. More importantly, such a focus has not been applied despite the evidence that shows the positive contribution of the quality of TSRs to at-risk students' school experience. The development of a relationships perspective for the improvement of the educational system, especially in schools that have been designated as disadvantaged, is one that highlights and tries to elicit the best out of the human resources available. Although throughout the project I set out to explore a human resources facet, I want to clarify that its utilisation as a means to prevent early school leaving cannot be developed in isolation from the other three major elements of the model for best practice in preventative education (Fig. 1.1).

The relationships perspective looks into people's mental representations and recognises the enormous difficulties all participants face in educationally disadvantaged settings. Through the cases presented here it seems that, regardless of the results, all people strive for what they think is best in any given situation. This indication is in line with the developmental psychopathology view that most maladaptation results from the active strivings of each individual to adapt to his or her environment (Sameroff, 1989). Consequently research that blames specific individuals, in most cases only succeeds to misdirect public opinion since it fails to view the wider picture. Such research that places emphasis on individual scapegoats disregards the emotional mechanisms that greatly impact on relational representations. It disregards the fact that people's perspectives are not only built on reality but also on their effort for cognitive congruency and emotional integrity.

The interpretative framework provided here and at the same time a critical point in my thesis is that such framework could be used as a structure for introducing and understanding relational issues in TSR remediation efforts. Consequently, such a framework could also serve as a means to develop action sensitive casework that will be able to practically deal with any problems that are in some way influenced by TSRs.

In other words, the interpretative framework used here could provide an informed reply to the practically significant question, 'how best can our knowledge for a specific TSR within a given system be applied in order to enhance the functioning of the child and the adult in their particular school setting?' According to the same framework, the reply to such a question involves interpreting classroom practices from the perspective of teacher - student relationships, understanding what preconceptions the teacher and student in question bring in their relationship, taking into account the major systemic influences of the given relationship and consequently using relevant techniques to strengthen and improve that relationship.

What needs to be emphasised is that from the outset of such an exploratory process it may well be found that the quality of teacher student relationships is not a pivotal contributing factor to some students' school resilience. Timmy's case as a disconfirming one presents two major issues to consider. First, especially in light of Timmy's school adaptability, it seems probable that it is mostly out-of-school factors that play a pivotal role in his being nominated as at-risk. Second, for his own unique reasons, despite the differences in the teachers' narrations and my observations of his nominated TSRs, he doesn't regard TSRs as playing an important role in his school experience. Both factors are most telling in this respect and indicate how important it is to view students' needs without having preconceived ideas as to what might improve their school experience.

Despite some tempting indications as to why TSRs are not of great importance for Timmy[40], this kind of interpretation is not an issue to be developed further in this research. Ultimately, what has to be underlined is the importance of taking into account the students' situated perspective and trying to build an individualised intervention based on a basis that might make a difference for that particular student. However, as it has been portrayed through the juxtaposed cases, one has to avoid treating the students', teachers' or their own perspective as an accurate account of events but solely for what they are: situated perspectives.

In short, the thesis of this research is that if an exploration of teacher - student relationships is to be pragmatically useful in terms of providing personally meaningful information that may lead to better adaptation of people's perceptions and attitudes, it

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[40] Those indications have been briefly presented in 'Timmy's Relational Representations' section.

needs to develop as a multi-factorial, heuristic project that does justice both to the systemic and phenomenological nature of human relationships. Exploring human relationships means exploring lived experience and no matter how unreachable this quest seems, I believe it is far better to recognise and struggle with the difficulties involved rather than ignore its phenomenological nature and lose touch with the lifeworld. Teacher - student relationships are always unique and my thesis is that, when dealing with such an issue, we need research and theory of the unique. In other words, we need research with the flexibility to be eminently suitable to help us not only understand but also deal with the concrete and ever-changing circumstances of human experience. The importance of my thesis becomes significant when elements of human uniqueness and differentiation play a pivotal role and that happens especially when people come from different backgrounds, may have different values, different life experiences and possibly different goals. Disadvantaged educational settings constitute such a diverse arena.

In Light of Previous Research

This work constituted an effort to explore TSRs that take place in school settings that have been designated as disadvantaged. The main reason the Department of Education and Science in Ireland proceeded to that categorisation was the large percentage of early school leaving that occurs in those schools. Many professionals interested in the educational field have advocated the use of child - teacher relationships as a preventative intervention to early school leaving. Thus Pianta (1999), who elaborates extensively on this issue, suggests,

> These relationships provide children with emotional experiences and opportunities to learn social skills and self-regulatory capacities and to practice basic developmental functions, such as attachment, exploration, play and mastery… These relationships serve as a 'natural context' for the infusion of intervention efforts that may serve large-scale prevention goals in relation to reducing risk… Local factors (e.g., a teacher's willingness to change, a parent's involvement, a child's attendance) always constrain the applicability of any intervention or practice (Molnar & Lindquist, 1990). Thus there is substantial need for theory – knowledge about the processes that produce the problem under consideration and about the factors that alter the problem. Every child has the opportunity to develop a relationship with an adult… thus from a service delivery view, the resources for intervention are already in place. Yet teachers, psychologists, and other school professionals are often in the dark as to how to harness, direct, and refine these resources to benefit children.

The goal of this research was to give a good-enough picture of those relationships as both teachers and students experience them. It is only through an adequate understanding of the relationships in question that we may proceed to subjectively meaningful and practically useful interventions and consequently to successful policy reformulations. I have already discussed the importance of TSRs with regard to early school leaving and I have also discussed other research that presents findings to that direction (Abidin & Kmetz, 1997; Lynch & Cicchetti, 1992; Moje, 1996; Pomeroy, 1999). My research is methodologically unique and consequently different from the ones I have presented in the literature review. However, at this point, I will proceed by discussing my research with reference to two

other projects. Those research projects, despite their differences in methodology or focus, also deal with the exploration of TSRs and their potential usefulness in secondary schools. This discussion will help define the place of my thesis, especially of its case-study findings, in light of existing research.

Lynch and Cicchetti (1992) have conducted research on maltreated children's patterns of relatedness. In a subsequent research the same authors tried to examine relationships with various important adults, including teachers (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997). That latter project involved a sample of 1.266 seven to fifteen year old students. Those students belonged to a low risk community where about 93% of them make it to college. Their research discusses its findings in quantitative terms of general tendencies therefore most of the questions I have already raised with regard to Abidin & Kmetz's work[41] (1997), also apply here. Moreover, it is noteworthy that although Lynch and Cicchetti comment on the lack of assessment techniques for measuring the quality of relationships they proceed to use whatever 'measures' they find available. Equally striking is the fact that although with most of their sample Lynch and Cicchetti ask for replies based on perceptions of individual relationships, their directions to middle school students is to evaluate how they feel with *all* their teachers *on average.* Consequently, as they admit, this direction '*represents a departure from how the other relationships were measured*' and they simply warn that there is a need for caution in the generalisability of findings.

Having explored many issues of contextual and subjective nature, as they are presented in my research, it is not difficult to realise that Lynch and Cicchetti's research (1997), presents with grave problems. In research where the quality of relationships is measured with the single use of a 10-item, multiple-choice questionnaire and the quality of proximity seeking behaviour is measured with a similar 7-item scale, the methodological approach seems inadequate and the findings not only frail but at the same time practically meaningless. Thus, Hixson and Tinzmann's (1990), concluding comment of "...*the need to use approaches that provide a more meaningful database and perspective for planning new, holistic, integrated and systemic alterations in the norms of schooling*", comes once more to mind. Research efforts like Lynch and Cicchetti's can at best provide some quantitative indices but they are influenced by so many factors that

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[41] Please refer to pages 52 – 53.

the researcher will inevitably be forced to either make interpretative extrapolations based on a very poor understanding of the phenomenon at hand or else be restricted to simply suggesting further research for clarification or explanation purposes.

Even worse, if the researcher or the reader of such research is not critical enough then Brophy and Good's (1974), conclusion that, "…*at times, giving teachers information 'based on research' is worse than giving them no information at all*" could very well be confirmed once more. Ms Anderson's words reflect a similar process which occurs when one misinterprets or is indeed misinformed by a third source that claims generalised knowledge on an issue that essentially involves particular individuals and unique interactions, "*The staff room can be a dangerous place for young members of staff. Thank God I never listened to what anybody ever told me about a child. I made my own decision. It's not customary to go against the grain in here*".

In this line, the effort to assess multiple TSRs' quality 'on average' does not just pose a warning indication but it can well be an element leading to arbitrary interpretations or even worse, misleading 'results'. What would have happened if I had asked Alex to tell me of his relationships with Ms Anderson and Ms Sutton 'on average'? What could such an 'average' description be when the student runs from one's classroom because he feels threatened and goes to another classroom to seek support? In a similar way, the results of such research, although plausible at a statistical level, are simply meaningless for the daily practice of teachers and students alike. My research brings a new perspective to the above issues and deals with them in a more pragmatic, thorough and reflective way. Such important issues when one is trying to explore the quality of TSRs have to be addressed through informed methodological choices.

The second research project I want to refer to is Moje's (1996) ethnography work on TSRs as contexts for secondary literacy. I will only discuss this work in terms of its findings since I have already presented some methodological and design similarities to my work[42]. In her discussion, Moje notes that the students' respect for the teacher may be due to the similar life experiences -or cultural background- that they share with their teacher rather than due to the teacher's effort to build a relationship with her students. The exploration of cases in my research indicates that the cultural

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[42] Please refer to pages 53 – 54.

factor can be an important element in the perception of TSRs but only one among many. The importance of cultural similarities to the perception of the quality of TSRs is portrayed in Mr Porter's teaching style. His language, knowledge of the students' preferences and straightforward, often street-wise attitude are perceived as positive teaching abilities. However, as vividly portrayed by Philip's and Ian's reports, it is the unique interaction and the constantly recreated subjective perceptions between the teacher and each of her students that create the perceived importance of such qualities. Moreover, the fact that Philip prefers Ms Anne's relational style to Mr Porter's, despite Ms Anne's more middle class -or as the students say 'posh'- attitudes, also corroborates to that respect.

When exploring TSRs, I regard the exploration of the main participants' beliefs that inform their teaching practice and relational stance as an inseparable part of their relational representations. It is interesting that in a similar fashion Moje (Ibid.), regards the teachers' beliefs about their students and the social and political contexts as a factor that should be taken into account when one wants to study teachers' beliefs about the practice of their subject. Moreover, she comes to the conclusion that emphasis should be given to literacy *processes* rather than to isolated literacy events. In the same way I have emphasised that for an adequate study of TSRs one has to focus on their dynamic and systemic nature rather than simply infer from isolated events or perspectives. An outstanding narrative and interpretation Moje (Ibid.) presents with regard to TSRs is the following:

> When I asked Angela *-the student-* what made the two (teaching) approaches different, she described an SQR3 method that did not exactly match what I had observed Landy teaching the year before. Thus, Angela had modified the SQR3 method but had attributed that modification and its (positive) outcomes to Landy. It is possible that, because of her relationship to Landy from the previous year, Angela felt a certain allegiance towards what she believed was Landy's strategy.

Here, Moje suggests how TSRs may function as a filter, a lens, through which the students' perceived learning experience is not just interpreted but also distorted. Therefore, it seems that there are both methodological and interpretative parallelisms between Moje's and my research; however, distinctive differences also exist.

For my needs, taking into account the family context, at least to some degree, was essential for the better interpretation of the students' mental representations. Moje didn't consider including parental influence in her study. However, she did include a phenomenological study of participants' previous life experiences. Although in my study I have included questions probing into participants' past experiences, I haven't included a section exclusively for that. In other words, the inclusion of an exploration of teachers' personal relational history could have provided more information with regard to the reasons that might have contributed to their behaviour in the present relationships cases. However, as I have explained earlier, this research's primary concern is not to diagnose individual problems but mostly to describe TSRs in a functional way so that a problem solving, systemic intervention strategy may be developed to aid their enhancement. Nevertheless, my research has a few other problems that need to be made explicit.

Theoretical and Methodological Compromises

Although, in the explorative framework I tried to incorporate both social and developmental components, I did not adequately discuss developmental issues of early adolescence. Through the students' profiles, some information pertinent to adolescence is presented but issues characteristic of that transitional period are not extensively discussed. Taking into account the general developmental trends of adolescence is of paramount importance for an informed understating of the TSR narrations. However, assuming that certain issues are important in students' experience before exploring young people's perceived reality could easily misdirect one's understanding. This is so, particularly because adolescence's boundaries, characteristics and even standards of normality are still a subject of controversy.

Historically adolescence has been described as a period characterised by turmoil, including emotional upheaval, conflict with parents, alienation and identity crisis (Erickson, 1968, Weiner, 1992). However, although adolescence involves many challenges, research has shown that individuals cope with it in various degrees of success. Again, the interpretation of facts largely lies in the eye of the beholder. Costello and Angold (1995), conclude that prevalence rates for child and adolescent disorder in the range of 10-12% have been obtained from based on single informant reports. When combining information from different sources, rates of disorder have been found to be in the region of 20%. Not only are there various estimates on the degree of adolescence turmoil but also various interpretations on the function and desirability of this turmoil. An exploration of teacher - student relationship formation with emphasis placed on issues pertinent to adolescence was not developed here and it could well be the goal of another research project

To turn to another problem, as I explained in the design chapter, one school rejected my project since the teachers felt that my presence would make their time with 'at-risk' students even more difficult. However, that very reason presents an additional incentive for such research to be carried out in a school whose teachers, at least at first sight, appear to have negative expectations of what might happen in their interactions with 'at-risk' students. However, as Ivory's Principal noted, perhaps what strongly

contributed to my research being rejected was the way it was introduced to the school staff. Consequently, a one to one discussion with the people involved might have been more successful in overcoming their defences.

During the project I set out to record students' and teachers' perceptions of specific events immediately after they occurred. I found that process of information gathering very helpful and richly informative. Since I tried to meet people immediately after the lesson, my observation of their emotional reactions was still fresh in my mind and in addition their narratives could be juxtaposed to my observations without a long time-gap period interfering. However, I was unable to carry out that practice throughout the project since it demanded time from either students or teachers that was not available. This practice posed high demands on many people and in the face of the novelty of my work, the preciousness of teaching time and the defences that needed to be overcome I chose to discontinue it. Perhaps in subsequent research, where more time is available for the school personnel to be gradually introduced to this kind of work, a procedure like this could be carried out to its full potential.

Exploring understandings with that immediacy and delving into comparisons of people's subjective understandings of specific incidents strengthens the exploration of the phenomenological dimension of TSRs. Due to the difficulty involved in the effort to capture and present lived experience, although theoretically emphasised, this dimension was perhaps the one that was practically less explored. Open questions were indeed used and an effort to reveal personal understanding of specific incidents (both imaginary and real) was put in place; however, further exploration into the core participants' subjectivity was possible. Perhaps working more with the family and getting acquainted with the students and teachers beyond the school setting could have contributed to a stronger rapport and trust between them and the researcher. That kind of rapport might have led to the elicitation of additional or more genuine phenomenological information.

An enhanced rapport could have been useful especially in those cases where teachers and students had difficulty revealing their inner thoughts or where they were easily drawn by group dynamics and by socially acceptable norms. Such a rapport might have probed into their personal experience even in those instances where the person was strongly influenced to adopt the group's moral tales as his own perspective.

However, is it possible to understand a student's or a teacher's experience in a pure way? That is, outside the context they live and they are influenced by? Even more, can we eradicate the influence of our presence in that exploration? Perhaps we can work this way but by doing so we are then moving away from the theoretical and pragmatic pillars of this research. This research conceptualises and studies TSRs as phenomena embedded in their social context and intimately influenced by it. Moreover, it promotes a way of researching into teacher student relationships that is pragmatically meaningful and not disengaged from professional practice.

In this way, phenomenological and systemic influences in my work frame each other and make this thesis a balanced explorative effort between the realms of phenomenological subjectivity and systemic practicalities. In other words, the phenomenological investigation stops where it starts losing touch with its systemic context of secondary teaching and the contextual investigation stops where it can no longer be directly interpreted by the phenomenological perspectives of the core participants.

Therefore, having presented the systemic model in which TSRs are assumed to reside (Figure 1.2), I went on to explore each case's TSR microsystem along with some selected mesosystemic influences. However, especially after the analysis of the teachers' interviews many issues of exo- and macro- systemic influences came forth. The major issues of different cultural, social and moral characteristics between teachers and students or their parents along with the paramount issue of the so much needed teacher training and support, specifically targeted for disadvantaged settings, suggest the need for exploration of those outer systemic influences. Such an exploration, despite its importance, could not be included in this research and is thus suggested as a very interesting, future project that might come up with very useful findings and recommendations.

Before the commencement of fieldwork, I was hoping to proceed by exploring and discussing case regularities and inter-case thematic continuities. As the research evolved, exploring case regularities, in other words exploring the coherence of participants' perceptions of their TSRs, did take place since information was collected over time and since a number of different means were used. However, I did not proceed to analyse thematic continuities between teachers' and students'

understandings. I could have preceded that way by comparing each and every theme that a specific teacher - student pair may have brought forward. In other words, I could have tried to explore whether there is continuity in the issues teachers and students discuss in their narrations.

Such an analysis might have revealed interesting insights in the description of the TSR cases. However, it would have been very demanding in terms of time and writing space and it would have essentially led to a different information analysis and discussion altogether. Proceeding with an analysis that essentially looks for *any kind* of thematic continuities resembles the 'saturation'[43] process that is used in grounded theory projects (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Therefore, such an analysis, if carried out correctly, would essentially be incompatible with the presence of any sort of theoretical background influencing the research before the information collection phase. Since this research was largely guided by past theoretical knowledge, such an analysis was not suitable.

Finally, a major compromise in the presentation of this thesis was that I ended up presenting and discussing less people than I originally intended and worked with. That happened despite the piloting phase that took place. The main reason for that is my underestimation of the writing space the presentation and analysis of each case would take. However a precise estimation of the amount of information that I would end up with was difficult to judge. Noting the difference in the amount of information Ms Sutton and Ms Anderson offered presents an example of the difficulty that qualitative research involves in allowing the researcher to foresee the quantity of information that would eventually be gathered. Thus, instead of choosing to superficially discuss all cases explored, I chose to do justice to the theoretical and methodological choices adopted and proceeded with an in depth analysis of a few selected cases. The rest could very well constitute the material for another report.

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[43] Saturation is a Grounded Theory process by which one looks at the information collected for instances that eventually will come to represent a higher category and to continue looking until the new information analysed does not further provide insight into the emerging category.

Discussion of Inherent Epistemological Weaknesses

It is important in every research initiative to identify its underlying epistemological assumptions and characteristics. Such discussion is additionally important here, since the main contribution of this work primarily lies in its investigative framework. All methodological and epistemological characteristics need to be discussed; both their strengths and weaknesses so that it can be revealed how these may be influencing the production of the final -case related- information. Issues of methodological quality have already been discussed in chapter four (pp. 99 - 108) before the 'Information Presentation' chapter. Now that all information and interpretations have been provided, I will try to shed some light specifically into epistemological issues regarding the influence of my authorial presence and consequently I will try to engage in a meta-perspective regarding both the thesis and its author.

One's authorial presence is directly linked with one's epistemological assumptions in any scientific research effort. However, before proceeding to present some critical notes in this respect I wish to underline that in a similar way one's fieldwork presence is also pivotal for the whole information collection process. As far as the latter issue is concerned I have already developed a relevant discussion (Appendix A1 & Pre-recording Period, pp. 69 - 71). From an epistemological perspective, this work has been located and has developed in the wider constructivist paradigm. In this respect the presence of observational material albeit the use of the theoretical backbone and the observation itineraries (Appendices E1 - E6) is undoubtedly coloured by the interpretative mind of the author. This is especially the case where I have used adjectives and metaphors in order to vividly portray certain incidents observed. My goal during the information presentation chapter was to present my observations with the least interpretations possible. However, it has been shown that even visual perception itself may entail bias (Luck et al., 1997). Here I wish to call the reader to critically isolate those instances where the described observations seem to have been blatantly coloured by my perceptive filters and use other case

relevant information material in order to juxtapose information and built a most informed case vignette.

Videotaping could have been a very useful source of information and this is indeed suggested as a tool professionals could use to improve TSRs. Videotaping could have also been useful in this research. However, its absence provides us with a more pragmatic exercise, since in everyday teaching practice personal perspectives always appear biased. If we take this for granted then along with improving the means by which we perceive and describe information we are also challenged to develop a methodology that will help us built the best -but always provisional- meta-interpretations of a given social situation. This type of methodology I have tried to develop and defend here.

The concept of crystallization[44] that has been used to explain how participants' perspectives are understood is also employed to include the researcher's perspective. Both the author's and the participants' narrations are explicitly stated as situated perspectives. However, while this is an inescapable parameter for such a social research effort what I wish to note in the following paragraph is that under different circumstances a type of a more balanced design process could have been employed. As it succinctly appears in the formation of the seven cases presented (Fig. 5.2) qualitatively different perspectives on the same teachers were discussed and also different and often contrasting teacher perspectives on the same students were presented.

However, not every teacher in this research was portrayed through the eyes both of a student that perceived them favourably and of another one who perceived them less favourably. Such is the case of Ms Sutton; who however, at the time of the initial preliminary interview did not have a single favourable nomination given to her by any of her students. Certainly this could have changed over time, especially since towards the end of the academic year both Alex and Timmy seem to start perceiving her teaching performance more favourably. Consequently, since there is only a non favourable and a mostly blunt student perspective for Ms Sutton, the reader of this thesis may not obtain a full picture of all possible perceptions about that teacher. However, presenting all possible perceptions was never the intention of this research,

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[44] This discussion appears in the section titled, 'From Triangulation to Crystallization', (pp. 104 - 106)

nor was it to judge any teachers, students or other participants. Nevertheless, regardless of the intentions, judgmental values are inherent in all participants' perspectives, not excluding the author himself.

Taking the issue of judgemental values and perspectives a step further, at this point, I will include a few thought-provoking notes about the researcher's presence as a voice participating in social science discourse. Through the rigorous and methodical effort presented in this thesis, I claim that my goal is to explicate and discuss the TSR phenomenon. However, this explication is deeply imbued and framed by a specific social status that derives from its very participation in the social scientific discourse in question. When Foucault tries to analyse the order of discourse, he identifies three major mechanisms that control scientific discourse. More specifically he mentions that,

> It is usually the case that infinite sources of discourse creation are found within the creator's discourse fertility, the complexity of one's comments and the development of a certain branch of knowledge. It may be so, but *the above three sources are also means of constraint and power* and in order for their positive and complex role to be adequately understood, their controlling and dominating function also needs to be taken into account.
>
> Michelle Foucault, 1971 (my italics)

Foucault here discusses how truth is established within discourses and adds, "*…truth isn't outside power, or lacking in power: our institutions and schools of thought, our universities and charismatic leaders, our ministers our parents, our teachers, all of these collaborate to create a context in which something is established as 'true' …Truth emerges only within a structure of rules that control the language, the discourse*". What he suggests is that we should review the mechanisms of truth formation. We should give discourse its episodic (pragmatic) character; we should reveal how comments (interpretations) constraint the development of others' discourses and we should underline the importance of language. The same author presents the phenomenon of madness as an example and mentions,

> …the unity of discourses on madness would not be based upon the existence of the object 'madness', or the constitution of a single horizon of objectivity; *it would be the interplay of the rules that make possible the appearance of objects during a given period of time*: objects are shaped by measures of discrimination and repression, objects that are differentiated in daily practice, in law, in religious casuistry, in medical diagnosis, objects that are manifested in pathological

descriptions, objects that are circumscribed by medical codes, practices, treatment, and care.

<div align="right">(my italics)</div>

Thus, in the case of TSRs, we are lead to think of the theoretical pillars of this research as constraints to the students' and teachers' discourses as to what constitutes a TSR altogether. This has been discussed to some extent[45] therefore what I particularly want to underline here are the underlying issues of power. Through my authorial presence as a social science researcher I cannot refrain from exercising a certain form of power over the people I worked with. As Foucault (Ibid.) explains, this kind of power is exercised through our classification of people into groups and consequently when we equate people with their current identity. This form of power turns people into subjects. Subjects subject to the other through control and dependency and subject to the identity others give them to which they tend to attach. Through my adaptation of an epistemology that claims to provide only provisional and not objective or permanent 'truths' (case-vignettes) I seek to lessen the power of my research that degrades people into mere subjects; however, ultimately, this impact is unavoidable.

A last comment that I wish to place in this section discussing inherent epistemological weaknesses is that recommendations for wider action do not automatically follow from such intensive studies with a small number of cases. This research and its case-related findings do not provide any generalisable findings that are directly applicable to wider populations. The issue of generalisability has already been discussed in the 'Quality of Practice: Usefulness' section (pp. 106 - 108). However, this thesis comes up with certain hypotheses about the quality of teacher - student relationships, about what methodology is mostly suitable for their meaningful exploration and consequently about the type of findings and applications one may expect from such a research. The recommendations for praxis, presented after the suggestions for future research that immediately follows, are made up of re-organised material that best suit the advocated approach to investigating and analysing teacher student relationships.

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[45] Especially when discussing that the phenomenological methods have not been used in full.

Suggestions for Future Research

The above methodological compromises and epistemological weaknesses have substantially limited the framework in which the present research has developed and at the same time they point to suggestions for the improvement of any other similar project. What follows in this section are suggestions for future research that are not stemming from the compromises or weaknesses already stated but from discussions found in the literature and from creative possibilities that this research has generated.

Following up the relationships explored until they cease to exist, could be a rich and useful source of information especially in the exploration of the dynamic nature of TSRs. More specifically such a study could investigate TSRs' potential for change and their mechanisms of fixation as they appear in one's mental representations and resulting behaviour. In the same way it could be very interesting to apply such an exploratory framework in specific TSRs that take place in primary school. Investigating primary school students' relational representations with a single teacher and following them up in secondary school, identifying changes, fixations and adaptations in their relational representations could prove very useful in preventative practice especially in relation to transition problems. Such a prevention programme might involve assigning a tutor that, based on the student's past TSR representations, would match his idiosyncratic relational style and thus boost his resiliency and ultimately help his adaptation in secondary school.

In light of each case's particularities as they have been explored here, relevant research that explores different relational experiences involving students' and teachers' with different relational profiles is highly recommended. The information provided by such research would not only offer new TSR profiles and understandings but it could also frame the findings of this research since the exploration of other TSR experiences could act preventatively against over-generalisation tendencies in relation to the ones explored here. Moreover, after adequate profiles have been explored, interactional patterns that could possibly inform our expectations of other TSRs may be tentatively drawn. However, such an abstraction should not divert us from the most important theoretical premise of this research, which is based on the phenomenological

dimension of TSRs, and refers to their temporality and uniqueness. Any generalisation, however tempting, should not be used to replace the cultural and systemic information that local contexts provide and the individualised exploration of people's needs.

This exploratory project could also develop as an action sensitive research whereby the exploration of specific TSRs within a given school would naturally lead to individualised suggestions for their improvement. In other words, localised research based on a similar methodological framework could constitute a very appropriate beginning for the implementation of an extensive resilience based school programme. Such a programme could focus on improving teachers' and students' school experience using TSRs as the main tool and as an explorative lens for an analysis of the school's social organisation. In this way, teachers could be exposed to an understanding of the role of relationships in their students' social development, the meaning of children's relationship-oriented behaviour toward them and the role their own biases and tolerances may play in the TSR that they form (Pianta, 1999). The combination of a simultaneous exploration of their own and their students' experiences along with the study of relevant literature could provide immediate and useful material for future problem solving interventions.

The newly formed Educational Psychology service in Ireland could provide the personnel and expertise needed for the development of such an action sensitive research and also contribute to facilitating any needed change. However, suggestions for research and intervention would have been incomplete if an analogous evaluation process did not supplement them. Such an evaluation process would need to take into account both the complexity of the phenomenon and the local needs. In an effort to devise such an evaluation model, Burden (1997), defines evaluation as, '*a cyclical process whereby 'snapshots' are taken at various points in time*' and develops the '*S*etting, *P*lans, *A*ction, *R*esults and *E*valuation' model (SPARE). This kind of definition of evaluation and the SPARE model that seeks to provide an evaluative approach that can be applied in the real world with a focus on people's everyday lives seem to be particularly suitable here.

Recommendations for Praxis

The TSR cases that have been presented shed some light on the participants' relational beliefs, goals and capacities. In those cases where the teacher's effort does not seem to be adequate in providing relational support so that learning may take place, large omissions and inadequacies of the educational system are revealed, especially as far as teacher training, teacher support and family involvement are concerned. Through this research I want to make an appeal for the conscious and organised utilisation of the enormous potential teacher - student relationships can offer. This potential is already there and can be used not only as a resource for preventive practice but also for the improved mainstream school experience of teachers and students alike. It is time for teacher - student relationships to gain the focus and resources they deserve so that their innate potential may be deployed contributing to students' learning experience and personal development and to teachers' working possibilities and personal fulfilment.

A lot of individual and systemic techniques have been suggested in the literature and have been tried out in practice in this respect. Presenting these here is beyond the scope of this research. However, a short list of literature references that discuss -often along with other issues- steps that could improve the quality of teacher student relationships has been collected (Appendix M2). In this research it has also been taken into account that some students do not perceive TSRs as an important factor for their school experience; such seems to be Timmy's experience. In this case, it may well be preferable for any individualised interventions to strengthen other parameters that seem to more substantially contribute to that particular student's stay in school. However, here, the recommendations that follow may be particularly effective in those instances where a TSR seems to be perceived as an important factor for the student's schooling experience.

The fact that the methodology and design followed in this research, with certain alterations, could very well lead to action-based research as suggested at the previous section becomes clearer if we examine the following suggestions that have

been given by Pianta (1999). They are a list of goals that any school consultant might try to accomplish in their effort to improve teachers' mental representations:

a) Create more flexible and differentiated representations, in which there is evidence that the adult sees and interprets the child's behaviour in a range of ways, both positive and negative, and that these representations are contextualised (i.e., tied to the child's actual behaviour and not global characterisations).

b) Make them more positive in tone or at least reflect positive and negative emotions in a more integrated manner… (Cultivate) an understanding of the child's needs that give rise to the behaviours that the teacher characterises as negative.

c) Reflect the teacher's belief and experience that her behaviour affects the child, and thus there will be an absence of blaming the child for the entirety of relational problems (or advances).

Even more relevant to this research, Pianta (Ibid.), suggests the following methods for working with teachers' mental representations:

1. Help the adult narrate the representation.
2. Label narrations, observe patterns and summarise.
3. Identify and understand connections among beliefs, feelings and behaviour toward the child.
4. Introduce new information or frameworks for understanding the child and the interaction with the child.
5. Strive to emulate good relationship building in terms of interactions with the teacher.

In light of the defences the teacher may use during such an intervention, the same author (Ibid.) suggests that videotaping teacher student interactions may prove a very useful source for discussion. Videotaping will guide people's various interpretations to focus on the same incident and at the same time lessen the impact of selective recall or lack of memory. However this procedure should be used with tact, and Pianta (1999), emphasises that the consultant should strive to emulate good relationship building in terms of interactions with the teacher. A similar method, also using videotaping, that has been used in therapy with children with serious disturbances of social and communicative development is the Marte Meo method (Hedenbro, 1999). Although I will refrain from extensively discussing either method

here, I must underline that in both cases, the interventions do not explicitly intend to help the participants do anything differently but to help them observe and understand the situations they are involved in differently. In other words, the primary target of the intervention is the children's or teachers' mental representations and feelings in the here and now.

In an earlier article, Pianta (1997) developed the Banking Time technique where the teacher works with a consultant and implements a 5 to 15 minute meeting with a target child, preferably on a daily basis. There the adult is trying to interact in a non-directive way with the child. The student is free to use the time as he wishes. However, it is underlined that Banking Time is not to be used as a reinforcer since the relationship that entails is not a means to achieve some other aim but the goal of the intervention. As the author explains, "*The notion is that the adult (and hopefully the student) invest in their relationship with one another and this investment pays dividends in the long run in situations were stressors appear in the relationship…. When teachers view child-teacher interactions in reinforcement terms (e.g., Goodlad, 1991), they impose a narrow view on child-teacher interactions; in so doing, they are removing the possibility that these relationships might serve other developmental functions and are viewing the child as someone to be controlled or managed*"

Such developmental functions are explored by the theoretical concepts that have been used in this research. In this way, interventions mobilising the power of TSRs may involve Ego-strengthening work by explicitly addressing issues which may be troubling a student and consequently obstructing learning (Dockar-Drysdale, 1990). The consistent application of programmes like Circle Time (Mosley & Tew, 1999) may provide opportunities where students' personality may be strengthened. Through programmes and techniques like the above the students are helped to resolve their own problems and consequently move on in their own developmental path. The application of a large number of counselling skills through the medium of TSR may promote young people's school resiliency and learning potential (Salmon, 1988). Such knowledge may help the teacher in her key role to mediate the curriculum so as to prevent manifestations of unease that disrupts learning.

So far a number of ways to use the innate potential of TSRs have been presented; however, those skills, techniques or programmes need some sort of base, a fertile educational ground, in order to be accepted and implemented. This is where the

paramount importance of teacher training comes in. The most consistent finding that comes out of the teachers' interviews was that their teacher training was inadequate for the circumstances they face in schools designated as disadvantaged. I scanned the information of all -thirteen- teachers, even those who were eventually not discussed in this research, and they all agree that the one-year 'Higher Diploma' course provided inadequate training for them. Two of those teachers, who had been teaching more than 20 years, replied that their training was good enough but only for the needs they faced around that time and they both added that teacher roles and student needs have changed enormously since then.

The need for teacher training commensurate to the needs teachers face in educationally disadvantaged settings has not only come up in this research. Similar findings came forth at a conference on preventing early school leaving in Ireland that took place while this thesis was written (Dublin Employment Pact, 2002). There, among other recommendations, it is suggested,

> That in-service training for dealing with disadvantage be provided for all teachers, with the priority on teachers in disadvantaged schools, *in order to increase awareness and sensitivity*. That similar modules be provided for all trainee primary and post-primary teachers.
>
> (My italics)

In other words, adequate training is needed not only for the provision of an appropriate curriculum but also for teaching of that curriculum in a way that is commensurate to the particularities of disadvantaged school settings. Tatto (1997) has advocated a teaching approach that incorporates elements of constructivist, cognitive and developmental theory when teaching poor rural children. Thus, she speaks of the transformative approach[46] and its basic premise which is that knowledge is socially constructed. Using such an approach requires that teachers help their pupils find meaning in what they learn. The emphasis on understanding and enabling the others' meaning-making processes is what brings such an approach in line with the basic

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[46] In contrast with the 'Transformative Approach', the traditional model of teaching is called 'Transmission Model'. According to the latter model, knowledge is 'transmitted' from the teacher to the learner under the assumption that the meaning of things in the world is immutable and independent of observer and circumstances.

premises of the present research. However, my research has something additional to contribute to the improvement and adaptation of teacher training programmes.

The importance of classroom management on the quality of TSRs and manifestation of behavioural difficulties has been portrayed here through the TSR cases and it has also been discussed in the literature (Galloway & Goodwin, 1987). Working simultaneously on the quality of TSRs and the quality of classroom management seems to be an ideal combination for building a classroom climate that combines both flexibility for the expression of the students' needs and adequate order for the containment of their behaviour.

Therefore, another way to make good use of this research is to develop its ontological, epistemological and theoretical premises in teachers' discussions about the specific needs of their students, their classrooms and themselves. Those discussions could begin with a theoretical introduction to the components of the cyclic transaction model (Fig. 1.3) and proceed with a more specific analysis of the way teachers may handle issues of emotional holding or potential space. The incorporation of specific examples from their teaching practice in conjunction with a discussion of the emotional holding qualities, as summarised in this research (pp. 56-58), could constitute the main framework for a TSR-oriented education module. Such a module could also be of pivotal practical importance as in-service training where teachers could be given the opportunity to discuss their current concerns, perspectives and relationship dynamics.

Apart from the elements described in the previous paragraph, a teacher education module focusing on the structure, quality and potential use of teacher student relationships could incorporate concepts like thoughtfulness and tact. Van Manen (1991) has explored those concepts at length. Since the term 'thoughtfulness' resembles that of 'emotional holding', I will here limit the discussion to presenting some qualities of tact. What is most interesting about this concept is that it focuses on a discussion of actions as they take place in the 'here and now'. It discusses embodied knowledge that is perhaps the most difficult kind of knowledge to cognitively explain and explore. In other words, discussing educational tact means taking into account the pre-reflective, phenomenological side of experiencing TSRs.

Ultimately, it is a concept that can help us overcome the problematic separation of theory and practice.

Tact is an elusive concept perhaps because it is less a form of knowledge than it is a way of acting. Its immanent purpose is to minister to the other; it is an expression of the responsibility with which adults are charged in helping children grow (Ibid.). Through the two lists that follow I will try to briefly present the nature of tact referring to its pedagogical manifestations and pedagogical praxis (Figures 7.1 & 7.2). Both lists are summarised points that are extensively presented and discussed in Max Van Manen's book (1991), 'The Tact of Teaching'.

Figure 7.1

Pedagogical Manifestations of Tact

1. Tact shows itself as holding back
   - Patience enables the educator to bring the child into harmony with the course of time required to grow or to learn something.
   - However it is wrong not to decisively step into a situation when the adult's active involvement is necessary.
2. Tact shows itself as openness to the child's experience
   - Never step into judgmental comments or criticism without experiencing the child's subjective reality.
3. Tact shows itself as attuned to subjectivity
   - Try to treat the other as a subject rather than an object.
   - See where the other person comes from and cross over to that point in order to successfully educate-'lead into' your world of increased awareness.

4. Tact shows itself as subtle influence

- Sometimes tact is so subtle we don't even realize we exercise it.

5. Tact shows itself as situational confidence

- Tact comes forth during changes but most in challenging situations.
- Tact manifests as successful management of challenges that is based on mutual trust and respect, not domination, popularization or authoritarianism.

6. Tact shows itself as improvisational gift

- Like a jazz musician charms one's audience by one's unique personality

Figure 7.2

Pedagogical Praxis of Tact

1. Tact preserves a child's space

- Growth and learning require space: For one's own control and exploration.
- It is false tactfulness to step out of the pedagogical relation altogether and leave the child "free" to make decisions for which he is not ready yet.
- Tact offers a balanced communicative/interactional relation.

2. Tact protects what is vulnerable

- Tact may "see but not take notice of" or may keep subtle "shared secrets".

3. Tact prevents hurt

- Tact makes hurt managed & thus forgettable. However not "disconnected".

4. Tact makes whole what is broken

- Children have tiny hearts that break easily by 'insignificant' daily matters.
- Tact is observant and sensitive to the whole person's affairs.

5. Tact strengthens what is good

- Tact is established on belief and trust in the child.
- The good must be good in the nature of things beyond one's passions.

6. Tact enhances what is unique

- Tact knows how to discern and evaluate the uniqueness of the child.
- A tactless teacher may use the principle of consistency or equal justice and mistakenly treat children as if they were the same.

7. Tact sponsors personal growth and learning
   - Personal growth is deep (whole engaging – time requiring) learning.
   - Tact shapes the teacher's presence to the students beyond technicalities

As a closing note I want to underline that even though I have recommended action for the promotion of the quality of the personal side of TSRs, I do that while acknowledging that the teacher's primary role is to teach and not to exercise some sort of psychotherapeutic role. It is therefore suggested that through the TSR-awareness educational module, teachers should be reminded that they are especially trained to deal with the cognitive and conscious part of their students' experiences, however aware they might be of their students' emotional needs. Helping a student to learn and giving him that sense of achievement and confidence that can be obtained from a growing ability to interact effectively with the world are some of the 'therapeutic' tools immediately open to any teacher.

A teacher education whose aim is to sensitise teachers to issues of emotional content also needs to warn them that the dividing line between understanding a child's problems and excusing pathological behaviour is not always easy to discern. Teachers need to be warned of phenomena of transference that may increase if their thoughtfulness and caring towards their students is sensitised. Problems may develop even in cases of 'positive' TSRs since the lure of idealisation is a powerful one. As Dykes (1987) notes, "*The teacher can, if unaware, be drawn into a collusion or even emotional seduction which can damage both parties. Similarly, a teacher unaware of the possibilities can be used by the child's need to split good and bad, and get drawn into manipulative manoeuvres between him and other staff members, or other children, that can be very subtle and very dangerous.*"

If such an educational module is implemented successfully it can ultimately boost teachers' personal resources in terms of analytic understanding and as Dykes (Ibid.) notes, "*There may be no immediate translation of such understanding into specific educational strategies, but its presence creates a great deal more 'space' for the teacher to think and deal with the child, without his own personality being directly threatened.*" I want to close this section with the same author's comment that very well summarises what such a course may offer in light of the compromises the structure of a mainstream school setting imposes:

…Mainstream teachers may feel that all this is irrelevant to their task. Indeed, a teacher's task can be simpler, if not necessary easier, if he ignores all this and just tries to control his pupils' behaviour by reward and punishment and teach them what is currently on the syllabus. Moreover, as already stated, it may never be necessary to make any understanding explicit in such a setting; nevertheless, insight into the dynamics of interaction can furnish the teacher with resources to cope with and/or change the situation which a disregard for them could never supply. It may well be that the need for consistency or deterrence of others over-rides the individuality of the case, but this applies to the action rather than the feeling involved. One can act in a consistent manner without conveying that specific understanding has no place.

Dykes, 1987

Epilogue: Teacher - Student Relationship, the Core of Educational Practice

The mission statement of the Department of Education and Science in Ireland speaks of an educational provision of the highest quality that will enable individuals to develop to their full potential as persons and to participate fully as citizens in society (DES, 2002). Helping individuals to develop their full potential and initiating them into active citizenship means providing them with those skills, knowledge and motivation that will lead to gradual self-formation from which autonomous and responsible individuals may emerge. Such an education seeks to engage the whole person as an active agent in the contexts in which they live. Neither knowledge nor skill alone is enough to develop a person's full potential and transform them to free, autonomous and responsible citizens.

Skill is practical and useful, it can provide one's living but skill alone rarely cultivates the metaperspective and constant awareness needed to guide a person's self-reflective capacities that will in turn enable them to adapt in our modern, rapidly changing era. In the same way, an educational provision of pure knowledge, that is not given the means to be creatively expressed, cannot be enough in shaping active and fully participating citizens. Therefore, I believe that the aim of the educational provision the Department aspires to can only be realised when students are enabled to combine knowledge and skill into self-transformative will. That is, when students gradually become autonomous and critical citizens by learning how to recreate and improve themselves within the various contemporary contexts in which they live while maintaining the uniqueness of their personality. In other words, when along with knowledge and skill a will for openness, self-awareness, responsibility, constant change and progress is cultivated.

Everard and Morris (1990), put it this way, "*The most essential needs of tomorrow's citizens… will be those skills which are of general application… together with positive and flexible attitudes*". As it was shown and discussed, TSRs are often perceived differently by different individuals and may have a greater or lesser impact on their school experience at various moments in their academic career. However, at least in some

cases, TSRs can indeed constitute a pivotal medium in the educational process that may imbue students with that self-developing will.

> According to Martin Buber the educational process is in its essence relational. It's through relationships (interpersonal, aesthetic, social, of learning and teaching) that the individuals change, grow and mature. In order to define the nature of these relationships Buber clarifies the structure of the working mode of these relationships where at one end we have compulsion and at the other not freedom (as it is often wrongly stated) but communion. Freedom is a presupposition for communion and itself is not an end to education but a means. Freedom is the 'place' where fruitful communion or 'education' can take place… what we need to focus on is … the essence of this communion, the teacher student relationship.
>
> Daniel Murphy, 1988

This research constituted an effort to explore this essential communion as students, teachers and others perceive it in contexts where, according to the Irish Department of Education and Science, "*there are impediments to education arising from social and economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools*" (DES, 1998). While acknowledging the outstanding role social and economic disadvantage plays in the lives of students that were nominated here as 'at-risk' for early school leaving, we have clearly seen that the impediments are not an outcome solely of the students' background but of a multitude of factors.

To turn to the theoretical framework of this research, in accordance with the theories adopted by developmental psychopathology most maladaptation results from the active strivings of each individual to adapt to his environment (Sroufe & Rutter, 1984). In this research I have explored different TSR understandings and I assumed that they have developed from such a striving. Moreover if we take into account that we explore circumstances where individuals mostly come from different social backgrounds and are often involved in social interactions that entail alternative, if not incompatible goals, then we have to appreciate that non-optimal strategies of adaptation may be almost inevitable (Thompson & Calkins, 1996). In other words, to refer to the cyclic transaction model (Figure 1.3), if the classroom specific environtype

is not sensitive enough to the student's unique mental representations (subjectype), poor adaptation is expected.

Through this research, I tried to shift the focus from linear, generalised and sometimes simplistic explanations of the role TSRs play in relation to students' early school leaving to the interactive and phenomenological domain where both contextual and subjective factors are taken into account. This shift is highly challenging since the difficulties entailed are not restricted to TSRs' research but to the whole social research enterprise. Each teacher - student relationship has unique properties and, especially in the face of the variety of responsibilities a teacher has, often calls for moral choices to be instantly made. This moral quality partially derives from the fact that teaching practice does not allow taking into consideration all factors or repercussions one's actions may have. In this way, each teacher and student that was portrayed in this research made their own choices in the face of each unique moment of lived life. Therefore, if we are to explore TSRs adequately, if we are to educate teachers so that they may use TSRs to the best of their abilities, we need to take the elusive living moment of 'here-and-now' into account and at the same time humbly accept that we cannot prescribe how one may 'tame' it. We can however, point to the right direction by exposing the experiential nature of teacher student relationships.

Then, we may more successfully support and prepare educators to deal with the pedagogical situation using not only a number of skills or instruments but also what they most strongly bring into their teaching practice, that is, their own personality. This research indicates that we need to focus on educating and supporting teachers so that they may act based not only on their academic knowledge and practical skills but also on their mindfulness, relatedness and tactful action. It is teachers' personalities that are ultimately transformed into embodied lived experience and communicated through relatedness to their students. At the same time it is students' personalities that we seek to educate. The call to focus on the personal side of their relationships is stronger than ever.

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APPENDICES

RESEARCH PROJECT: FIRST YEAR

(October 1999 – September 2000)

Familiarizing, Breaking in and Piloting

From the moment I decided that I would carry out the fieldwork in disadvantaged school settings, I started looking for experiences that would familiarise me with that kind of setting. Therefore, in October 1999 I started voluntary work as a classroom assistant in a disadvantaged co-ed[1] secondary school that consequently served as the school where I piloted this research. Gradually I started to get an idea of what the average school day in a disadvantaged school could be like. I familiarised myself with the classrooms and staffroom atmosphere. I saw the different roles the staff might undertake apart from their teaching role. I got to know the basic resources used to teach different lessons; which lessons tended to be more or less structured due to their subject matter; and perhaps most importantly I got to familiarise myself with the language and accent that was used by the local people.

A few months later, at the beginning of March 2000, I had read enough literature and I had started to put together the first data collection forms and interview schedules of my research. It was time for me to start piloting that material. At that time I also started keeping a daily diary. Each day I wrote anything from a hundred to two thousand words mainly describing my experiences and thoughts from fieldwork. From that time till the end of the academic year I continued working as a classroom assistant in that school and piloted all material apart from the students' interview material and classroom observation schedules. During the same time I put together and piloted two information briefs whose aim was to provide both the principals and teachers with generic information about my research. That information was imparted in such a way so as to prepare the ground for further discussion of what my work would probably involve the following academic year (Appendices B1 & B2).

During the same period I had to find two inner-city, designated as disadvantaged schools were the main fieldwork would take place. The first person to contact and inform about my research would have to be the school principal. From the very beginning I would have to let the principal know of the goals and possible processes that my research would involve. I had to let them know of its demands and potential usefulness. I soon contacted a

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[1] In Ireland most schools are single sex schools. However there are some mixed, *co-ed*ucation schools.

well-known researcher who had already worked in such settings in order to facilitate that initial contact. After contacting the principals, he suggested three inner city schools for me to visit. All schools were Christian Brothers' boys' schools.

A factor I had to consider from the beginning was that of students' sex. I couldn't afford working with both female and male students due to the additional complexity that would involve; especially in the cross-case analysis. Therefore, I chose to work exclusively with boys. I made that decision not only because boys constitute the majority of children leaving school without any qualification (about 65%), but also because the pre- or early adolescent period they were going through might make it easier to identify with and thus disclose their perspectives to a male researcher. Moreover, there is evidence that adolescent girls who face difficulties tend to develop more depressive mood than boys (Petersen et. al., 1987), which is an additional factor that might have lead to extra difficulties in the elicitation of data.

It was the 7th of March when I first visited Ivory[2] school. I immediately felt welcomed by all the people I met, that is, the principal, the HSCL officer and 2-3 teachers that the principal introduced me to. Mr Burke, the school principal, thought my proposal was very interesting and we discussed the best way for me to introduce myself to the rest of the school. From that moment till the end of that academic year I had achieved my two main targets in that school. I had not only informed everybody of my research that would formally commence the following year but I had also managed to observe the class with the weaker students that I would most probably follow. That means that I managed to enter the classrooms while most teachers were teaching. In this way both teachers and students got to know me and get used to my presence. Again during that period I occasionally acted as a classroom assistant but only when the teacher suggested that she wanted me to do so. At that point I had no reason to decline that role since it was a more accepted role in the school system than that of the observer. Therefore acting like a classroom assistant helped me serve my priority which was to enter the classrooms and become involved in the teachers' and students' school days in a regular pattern.

It was mid March when I first approached the second school. A few days after a school visit that had left me suspect difficulties, the principal called back and declined my research proposal saying, "*I am afraid I don't have good news. I spoke with a number of teachers and... it is a difficult first year. They are having problems to stay on top and they believe that another person in the classroom might distract them even more.*" I replied that that is perfectly understandable and our contact ended. A few days later I visited a third school. This time it was me who had to decline cooperation since it had adopted a system

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[2] All names of places, schools or people are changed in order to serve confidentiality commitments

whereby the weak (and at the same time 'at-risk' for leaving school early) students were appointed one specific teacher for most of their subjects. The reason was 'relationships': "*Putting together the same teacher for a lot of time with the same students seems to create a better working atmosphere*", the principal told me. Even though that might have been a good idea for that particular school, it conflicted with the backbone of my research design. Therefore I was still looking for one more school.

It was only after the Easter holidays and less than a month before the end of the school year that I managed to find it. I arranged a visit and I spoke with the principal of Priory school who seemed extremely busy. However he managed to introduce me to the year head of the class that I would most probably follow the following year. I also spoke with a couple of teachers in the staff room and the initial reactions were mixed. My general feeling was that it was too busy a time of the year for me to proceed entering the classrooms. Such a move at a time that was quite stressful might jeopardize my further involvement with the teachers. Therefore I only introduced myself in the staff room and let most teachers know that I would return the following year in order to carry out a project with regards to students that might be 'at-risk' for early school leaving.

At that point the pattern of 'breaking in' the schools had become evident. Even though I might have thought of the possibility of completing the pre-data gathering phase before the end of this academic year in a simultaneous fashion among the two main research schools, that couldn't be achieved. Instead, in the light of the fieldwork difficulties, the pattern of getting in the schools had developed in a serial way. Therefore, during the first year of my study I managed to establish initial contact with all participating schools but I stabilized my presence only in the pilot and one of the main fieldwork schools.

During June and July 2000 I went on gathering student, parent and teacher pilot data. Since at that time, schools were closed, I got the chance to visit people in their own houses. In this way I got first hand experience of disadvantaged areas, I got a first impression of what visiting parents' houses might involve and I also got familiar with some possible reactions tape recording might cause. At the same time I begun working with the data management and analysis computer programme, NUDIST 5. That work was in a sense double piloting since for the first time I was getting acquainted not only with the data gathered but also with the way these data could be handled by that specific programme.

By mid September I had reformulated all interview schedules and I had also put together the observation forms. During the second fortnight of September, my research was developing simultaneously at three different levels; each of them taking place in each of the schools. More precisely, I was spending one day of the week in the pilot school and two days in each of the main schools.

a) In the pilot school, I was piloting the students interview material and the observation forms. I was also dealing with difficulties that arose due to changes caused by the commencement of the new academic year. I had to deal with new teachers who started teaching the students I was working with and consequently I had to deal with the change of perception and preferences of those students. Things were not as stable as I would like them to be and students' opinions seemed to change more frequently than I initially expected. That was also the time when I first tried to enter, experience and discuss my presence in the teachers' classrooms not as an active classroom assistant but as a passive-participant observer.

b) In Ivory school, the school I had already made myself familiar with, I was ready to commence the pre-recording phase of my research design as developed that far and

c) in Priory school, the school I had only superficially made myself known to last May, I started to familiarise my self with the setting and eventually begin the pre-recording phase.

Although since March 2000 I had formulated a research design in my mind and I had begun my research steps based on that, it was only till September of the same year when I tested and reformulated that design. Only then did I feel ready enough to commence the main part of my research fieldwork. Here I want to clarify that that 'feeling of being ready' for the next research step is a decision with a strong arbitrary element. That was so because by that time I had spent enough time in a disadvantaged school to start distinguishing both those elements that provide some stability to the teacher-student relationships and those that seem to contribute to change. I will discuss both elements after the data presentation chapter.

However it is the element of constant change that I wish to underline here as a factor that characterises the data gathered and also influences the development of the research design. If I were to wait for the changes and unpredictableness to seize I would have never decided on a certain 'final' design. In other words, this dilemma was nothing less but a practical challenge of inconcludability. Woolgar (1988), defined as 'inconcludability' the fact that an account can always be supplemented further and will continually mutate as more is added to it. Thus, at a certain point an arbitrary decision has to be made. I believe that by September 2000 I had gained 'good enough' experience so as to settle on the design I present in this research.

BRIEF INFORMATION ON RESEARCH PROJECT
[For the Principal's Attention]

Researcher:

Name: Mark Rigos   *E-mail printed here*

Home address: *home address printed here*

Work Address: *work address printed here*.   *Work tel. printed here*

                                                    Fax printed here

Aim of research:

Exploration of the teacher-student relationship between teachers and students at risk for early school leaving.

Outcome of research:

Analysis and synthesis of the elements and processes that differentiate teacher student relationships perceived as supportive and non-supportive.

Possible benefits of the school and participants:

- Use of the researcher as a classroom assistant (or in other negotiable roles) within the school. *(I undertook a different role only after the data collection was completed)*

- An opportunity for the staff of the school to express/discuss their ideas and opinions on the problem concerned in a <u>confidential</u> and structured way.

- Generation of ideas and processes that may be helpful with regards to teaching students at-risk for early school leaving.

- A written report on the above issues that will be based on the school's specific needs and population. The final written report will include suggestions from two local schools, teachers, students, parents and other professionals.

- A report that could be used to:
  - Inform a relative school policy in accordance with the new education act.
  - Lead to effective actions commensurate to the needs of the school and its community.

- Since the research will involve interviewing school and family members of students at-risk for early school leaving, it may act as a bridge between the two systems and have positive effects on the specific students' schooling.

Process of research:

1. From the commencement of the project until the end of the present academic year *(June 2000)* the researcher may act as a classroom assistant. This period will be used for the school staff and students to get to know the researcher and vice-versa. No formal interviewing will take place.

2. The researcher will come back to the school the next academic year. The main interviews will eventually commence.

Possible interview participants [approximate interview duration]**:**

- Most of the teachers who teach the students in question. [1 hour]

- The principal of the school. [1 hour]

- 3-4 students who are considered to be at-risk for early school leaving. [2-3 hours]

- 2-3 classmates of the students in question. [1 hour] *(Idea eventually rejected)*

- 1-2 friends of the students in question. [1 hour] *(Idea eventually rejected)*

- Family of the students in question. [1 hour]

- HSCL or other professionals who have knowledge of the local community. [1 h.]

The interviews will take place at a time and place more suitable for the participants.

Other issues:

- All participants including the school itself will be treated confidentially.

- Participants may withdraw from the research project anytime, if they wish so.

- Over the period of this year (when no research-action will take place) all participants will be informed in detail about the research purpose and their involvement.

- Throughout the researcher's stay in the school there may be constant contact and briefing in accordance with the schools principles.

- All participants will be asked to sign written consents of participation.

- The researcher will be insured by Trinity College Dublin.

  ➢ **Thank you for your time in reading this information**

"STUDENTS AT-RISK FOR EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING"

Brief information on the project

Relevant background info:

The 'students at risk' project is the data collection phase of my PhD in Psychology thesis, Department of Psychology, TCD. There are two other secondary schools involved in this project.

I began my psychology studies at the National University of Greece. I was then admitted to the M.Ed. Educational psychology course in Exeter, England where I carried out a similar project. I also worked for one month at the psychological service in Clonmel, South Tipperary. Last year I worked as a classroom assistant and did some 1-1 work in an inner city secondary school.

Project goal:

The main goal is to collect information about the teachers' and students' school experience in an effort to discuss those classroom practices that seem to be more effective for 'at-risk' students' schooling and provide more work satisfaction to the teachers. In addition to this the difficulties that may be encountered by all participants will be discussed.

I believe that the people who are in the most suitable position to provide this information are those teachers who have experience teaching the students in question. Moreover the students themselves, as well as their parents and other professionals involved, can be valuable sources of information.

Brief outline of the process:

1. Information about those students who are considered at-risk for early school leaving will be collected.
2. Out of the initial sample two to three students will be selected for further observation and interviewing.
3. The teachers of the selected students may be interviewed.
4. The parents of the selected students may be interviewed.
5. Feedback will be given to all participants and all the information disclosed will be treated confidentially.

➤ You may leave the completed form at the school reception.
➤ Thank you for your time in reading this information. I look forward to receiving and discussing your feedback.

IDENTIFYING STUDENTS AT RISK FOR EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

- This is a form used to gather information about students who **despite their learning potential** are considered to be at-risk for early school leaving.
- Please complete this form **without consulting a colleague** since the goal is to collect as much and as diverse information as possible.

INSTRUCTIONS

The students should meet the following criteria:

- Currently attend the **second year** of junior cycle.
- Be **your** students.
- **Considered at risk** for early school leaving particularly while attending the Junior Cycle.
- **Do NOT have** specific learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia).

How to complete the form:

1. Identify up to seven students that you consider at-risk for early school leaving.
2. Arrange them in order of risk under the "Students at-risk" column.
    a. **Place the one that you consider most at risk on top** followed by the second student most at risk, etc…
3. In the "*criteria used*" boxes discuss why you think these students are at-risk.
    a. **Please give the reasons** why you think the nominated students are at-risk for early school leaving.
    b. Please **underline the factor that you think contributes most** to the "at-risk" status of the nominated students.
4. In the "*Learning potential*" column **comment on the potential** that you think the nominated students have.

STUDENT IDENTIFICATION FORM

Students at risk (That you teach)	Criteria used for identification (Discuss why you consider the students at-risk)	Learning Potential
1) **Most at risk** Full Name: Class:		
2) Full Name:		
3) Full Name:		
4) Full Name:		
5) **Still at-risk but not as much as the above** Full Name:		

STUDENT IDENTIFICATION FORM

Students at risk <u>That you teach</u>	Criteria used for identification (Discuss why you consider the students at-risk)	Learning **Potential**

6)
  Full
  Name:		

7) **Still at-risk but less than the above** Full Name:		

Teacher's name: _____// **Subject:** _____//

Second year classes you are teaching: _____//

Other role(s) undertaken: _____//

_____//

Thank you for your time in completing this form

STUDENT'S PREFERENCES

- Most liked subject: _____ Teacher: _____

- Least liked subject: _____ Teacher: _____

- Teacher who gives you the best help: *(Make sure in classroom situation)*

  - Why?

- With which teacher would you try harder?

  - Why?

- If you could chose one teacher to teach most lessons from now on, who would you chose?

  - Why?

- If you could chose one teacher not to have from now on, who would you chose?

  - Why?

  - With which teacher do you most like to be in the classroom with and learn?

  - Why?

  - With which teacher do you least like to be in the classroom with and learn?

  - Why?

If *(name of teacher chosen to teach all subjects)* would indeed teach most lessons from now on, would that make a difference in the way:

- You feel about school?
   In what way?

- You try to work at you lessons?
   In what way?

- Till when do you think you will stay in secondary school?

- Has anybody from your family spoken with any of the teachers?

- Who knows best how you get on in school?

- If you think of all the people you know: parents, brothers, sisters, friends...anybody.
   - Whose opinion is most important to you? (E.g. about school)

Student's name: **// Date:**

STUDENT INTERVIEW: OBSERVATION AND THOUGHTS

*Name:

*Title:

*Interview:

*School:

*Class:

*In relation to:

*Venue:

*Duration:

*Date:

1) Physical appearance:

1. Height:

2. Weight:

3. Hearing:

4. Sight:

5. Appearance (Body, clothing):

6. Complexion:

7. Posture while up:

8. Posture while sitting:

2) Activity level & attention:

1. Activity level (Speed, Variability, Continuity, Patterning-Cyclic?):

2. Focus on tasks:

3. Focus on interviewer:

4. Note changes over time:

5. Note changes according to discussion content (different teachers/themes):

6. Kinesics (body movements & posture):

3) Language

1. Fluency:
2. Elaboration (quantity):
3. Vocabulary- sentences (quality):
4. Persistence Vs Avoidance (thematic):
5. Speech, Schizoid elements (Incomprehensible speech, inconsistency, weird, flight of ideas):
6. Understanding of questions, directions:
7. Chronemics (Speed or responses, silences):
8. Paralinguistic (Volume, pitch and quality of voice):

4) General impression:

1. General initial impression:
2. Facial expressions:
3. Degree and way of involvement in interactions (over time):
4. Generally cheerful Vs sad:
5. Generally optimistic Vs pessimistic:
6. General impression at the end of the interview:
7. Changes over time:
8. Discrepancy between observations-subjective feelings and statements of child.

5) Affects and anxiety:

1. Different emotions the student presents throughout the interview:
2. Affects expressed at initial engagement:
3. Affects being negotiated within a specific framework of meanings:
   (Appropriateness of context-affect).

Anger / competitiveness / envy / rage / compassion / empathy / affection / caring / emotional hunger / emotions expressive aggressive feelings / emotions expressive passive yearnings

4. Affects presented in relation to different teachers:
   Supportive
   Non-supportive:
5. Degree of Anxiety:
6. Use of symbols or representations
7. Developmental level of affect expression & organisation
8. Clue points of anxiety

(Psychokinetic anxiety):

Sudden disruption / ongoing style of relating / mannerism / gesture / thematic looseness
regression to previous developmental level of expression / primary processes evident

9. Reaction to probing:

6) Human Relationship Capacity:

1. How did he great me?
2. Did he initiate contact at the beginning?
3. How often did he initiate contact?
4. How the child treats me as a person:
5. Cooperation pattern:
6. How the relationship develops:
7. Affectionate Vs withdrawn/aloof:
8. What feeling do his eyes convey?
9. What is the pattern of his eye contact?
10. How has the degree of warmth and depth in our relatedness fluctuated?
11. Does the student organise his relatedness in an intentional way (does he want to achieve something)?
9. Proxemics (throughout the interview):
12. Does the student make full circles of communication?
13. Autonomy - Dependency negotiations:
14. Limit-setting negotiations:
15. Curiosity expressed:
16. Any feelings towards interviewer:
17. Interviewer's feelings:

TEACHER INTERVIEW: OBSERVATION AND THOUGHTS

*Name:

*Title:

*Interview:

*School:

*In relation to:

*Venue:

*Duration:

*Date:

Especially, note the following; based on Gorden (1980).

Proxemic: interpersonal space,
Chronemics: pacing of speech and silences
Kinesic communication: body movements & postures
Paralinguistic: volume, pitch and quality of voice

A) General impression during interview:

1. The way the Teacher looks like (general initial impression):

2. Facial expressions:

3. Degree and way of involvement in interactions (over time):

4. Generally cheerful Vs sad:

5. Generally optimistic Vs pessimistic:

6. Note changes in mood according to discussion content (different teachers):

7. Note changes over time:

8. Note discrepancy between observations-subjective feelings and statements of

   Teacher.

B) Affects and anxiety:

9. Affects expressed at initial engagement:

10. Different emotions the teacher presents throughout the interview:

Anger / competitiveness / envy / rage / compassion / empathy / affection / caring /

emotional hunger / aggressive feelings / passive feelings

11. Degree of Anxiety:

12. Clue points of anxiety.

(Psychokinetic anxiety):

Sudden disruption / ongoing style of relating / mannerism / gesture / thematic looseness

/ regression to previous developmental level of expression / primary processes evident

C) Interviewer's feelings

18. Affects towards interviewer:

19. Interviewer's feelings at different stages of the interview

20. Subjective feeling at the end of the interview:

Initial Greeting
Tape-recorder introduction
Content elaboration
Language elaboration
Reaction to feeling-questions
My feelings

CLASSROOM CLIMATE[3]

*Desks, students, **T**eacher, door,
teacher's desk, board, **R**esearcher*

School: _____, Lesson: _____, D/d: _____

No. of students: _____ Critical Absences: _____

- Atmosphere upon students' entrance: (Focus on all)
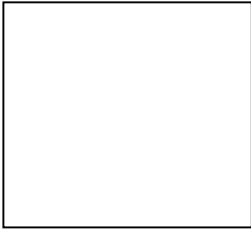
Time:

- How does the lesson unfold? (Focus on Teacher)

- Students' behaviour: (Focus on students)
  (Sound level, turn-taking, focus on task / teacher, questions asked,
  feelings expressed, fidgeting)

- Atmosphere 5' before and after bell rung: (Focus on all)

  Strong: _____

  Week: _____

---

[3] All 'E' and 'F' appendices were printed on A5 paper for their easier transportation. The dashed
rectangle that encompasses the content of these appendices approximates their original A5 size.

CLASSROOM CLIMATE: CLUES & KEY

0. Tidiness: desks/floor, special objects, wall and object decoration, notice board, library, special place

1. Students' Group participation
- 1.1   Group formation according to sts **needs**.
- 1.2   Group formation according to sts **interests**.
- 1.3   Whole classroom participation in **oral** activities.
- 1.4   Whole classroom participation in **written/applied** activities.
- 1.5   **Differentiated activities** assigned to small st groups.
- 1.6   Group activity **initiated by sts** after consultation.
- 1.7   Other, describe. _____

2. Individual student participation
- 2.1   Individual assignment (written or oral) **as part of whole** classroom, common assignments.
- 2.2   Individually **differentiated** assignment.
- 2.3   **St. initiated** activity after consultation.
- 2.4   **Tutorial** formation (1-1) between teacher-student.
- 2.5   Other, describe. _____

3. Description of any **special means** used by the teacher
4. **Expectation** clues given
5. Sts **esteem** boosts, **Confidence** displayed.
5b. Efforts to **level and scaffold** according to students' understanding.
6. Behaviour & Academic **responsibility & Support** clues
7. Displaying **trust**
8. **Mutual respect** attributes.
9. Methods utilised to get *all* sts *continuous* **attention & engagement**.
10. **Emotional resilience** displayed
    (Confident, relaxed, self assured and purposeful stance.)
11. Impact & Influence
12. Prevention - flexibility (strategies for st management)

DfEE criteria: Clarity, Order, Fairness, Participation, Support, Safety, Interest

CRITICAL EVENT PROFORMA

Student(s): _____   Date, day: _____

Subject: _____   Hour: _____

School: _____

Event No & St(s): _____

Lesson time	Real time OBSERVATION *Actor-Space-Activity-Object-Time-**Goal-Feelings***	Contextual Info
	What led up to the event?	
	What happened? ** *T-S* **	
	What was the outcome?	
	*Notes or questions to be further investigated:	

EVENTS LIST - GENERAL

* Student off the lesson

1. St. daydreams (Talks to himself or not)
2. St. plays with material-daydreams. (On his own)
3. St. talks with student next to him. (Initiated by:)
4. St. talks loudly to st. at least two desks away. (Initiated by:)

* Teacher - Student behaviour management

10. St. shouts answer without being asked.
11. St. shouts idea without being asked.
12. Teacher asks St. to stop talking
13. Teacher goes close to st. to calm him down.
14. Reinforcing behaviour by praise
15. Preventative talk or handling of possible misbehaviour
16. Oral reminders with regard to appropriate behaviour
17. Oral reminders with regard to inappropriate behaviour
18. Ignoring misbehaviour
19. Non-oral prompts to behave. (Face, movement)

* Co-operation

20. Teacher approaches student's desk to check his work.
21. St. put hands up to participate in lesson.
22. Teacher replies to st. having his hand up.
23. Teacher asks st. a question without hand up.

* In relation to others

30. Classroom-wide fuss St. still focused on work
31. Close fuss, st. still focused on work

Symbols denoting others' being influenced
by specific critical event:

Only those involved = ↺
Up to 1 desk away = ↔
Whole classroom = ᴈ

CRITICAL EVENTS

Note spontaneity (or not) in student's actions **(readily willing to...)**
Always describe both participants' actions

1. 1) Asked to share/show his work. Readily?
2. Student upset $\Rightarrow$
3. 3) When upset will accept comforting from teacher.
4. **The teacher is still speaking and the bell rings**: *(others?)*
5. **Teacher leaves the classroom**: *(others?)*
6. Asks to go out of the classroom: *(others?)*
7. **St. enters the classroom late**: *(others?)*
8. 18) Teacher's suggestions (not orders). Readily followed?
9. 19) Teacher asks student to go to her desk. Readily obeys?
10. 23) Teacher is paying **special attention to other** st.: *(others?)*
11. 24) Teacher upset with student. (Ashamed?)
12. Works unsupervised: *(others?)*
13. Works while teacher absent: *(others?)*
14. 27) **Teacher teases him: (laughs?)**
15. Easily angry with teacher.
16. 32) **Reaction to warning**: *(others?)*
17. 35) Teacher offers help.
18. 42) Recognises and respects **when teacher is upset**: *(others?)*
19. 54) Reaction when teacher offers 1-1 help.
20. 55) Mirrors teacher (behaviour, words, voice, facial, gestures)
21. 56) Reaction when activity might be difficult.
22. 60) **Reaction to encouragement**.
23. 65) Reaction at transitions between activities.
24. 72) Show-off episode: *(others?)*
25. 74) **Wants help, teacher not readily available**.
26. *80) Teachers' 1-1 facial expression to student.*
27. *80) Teachers' 1-1 gesture to student.*
28. 83) **Bored/finished work $\Rightarrow$ Tells to teacher?**
29. 86) Tries to get teacher to imitate him
30. 87) Teacher appraises student
31. 53) **Note any physical contact between t-s.**

CRITICAL EVENT PARTICULARS

Interaction Characteristics	Participants & Information
Body language	
Posture	
Proximity	
Mirroring / Adjustment	
Body	
Face	
Voice	
Boundaries&Tolerances	
Inflexible	
Flexible	
Loose	
Feedback Loops	
1.Responsivity	
2.Coordination	
3.Mutuality/Synchrony	
4.Sensitivity	
Selective Attention	
Filtering (Ignoring)	
Triggering (emphasising)	
Student regulation	
No Regulation	
Self Regulation	
Emotional Reg. Management	
Emotion - **C**ognition Link	
Emotion - **A**ction Link	
Dominance/Submission pattern	
Control of unfriendliness	

E-C Regulatory Processes
1. Accept subjectivity (ED132134)
2. Talk about E-experience
3. Use selective attention
4. Use problem solving
5. Rationalise

E-A Regulatory processes
1. Talk about E-experience
2. Behavioural management
3. Moderate arousal
4. Modelling management
5. Teach coping skills
6. Arrange supporting interactions

EVENTS QUERY: *TEACHER*

Date & Day: _____   School: _____

Event No. & St.: _____ T: _____

1. Any comments on your interaction
    with _____ today?   ☐

2. What about *(mention critical event)*?   ☐

3. Do you think _____ would be
    the same if I weren't present?

4. Since last week, was there any interaction between you
    and _____, Either negative or positive,
    that you feel is worthy to mention?   ☐

EVENTS QUERY: *STUDENT*

Date & Day: _____ School: _____

Event No. & St.: _____ T: _____

1. Is there anything that happened in _____'s class that you'd like to talk about?

2. What about *(critical event)*? □
    • Why did that happen?

3. Did my presence change anything?

4. Administration of 'Feeling Faces'

Right now I feel...

Relaxed feeling face

drawing

was inserted here

Stressed feeling face

drawing

was inserted here

Relaxed   **Stressed**

Very   **Quite**   **A little bit**   **A bit of both**   **A little bit**   **Quite**   **Very**

IMAGINARY INCIDENT

Use active listening: Repeating, mirroring

1. Relaxed atmosphere established.

2. Imagine that it is (Day/time the student has the lesson of the nominated teacher) and you are in school. *(Pause)*

   Imagine that you are in the classroom along with all your other classmates and _____. *(Pause)*

   The lesson has started fifteen minutes ago and now _____ gives you an exercise but you cannot understand something about that exercise so you cannot do it. *(Pause)*

   Imagine that a couple of minutes later _____ notices that you are still not doing the exercise s/he has asked you to do, so... *(Pause)*

3. What do you think will happen then?

   - Describe what is going on. (If not already discussed)
     Describe the whole situation and your experience in as much detail as you can.

   - Imagine that _____ is coming up to you.

   - What does s/he look like?

   - What _____ saying... [both participants]

   - What _____ doing... [both participants]

   - What are you thinking?

   - How do you feel?

   - What do you feel like doing?

Taking teacher's perspective

- How do you think _____ is feeling at that time?

- What do you think _____ thinks at that time?

- What are the other students doing at that time?

STUDENT INTERVIEW: OPEN SPECIFIC

As I have already let you know this information will remain strictly

[Nominated Teachers]

1. Let's say that I have never seen _____ before, what can you tell me about him/her?

2. [Did you have _____ last year?] How did you get on with _____ at the very beginning, during the first few lessons?

3. What is it like to have _____ as your teacher?

4. How do you get on with each other? *(Elaborate)*

5. Is there anything that you like about _____. *(Prompt for more)*

6. Is there anything that you don't like about _____. *(Prompt for more)*

7. What do you think _____ thinks of you personally?

8. How is _____ getting on with the other students?

- **Complementary questions**

  Tell me about:

9. The way s/he teaches you. (Teacher's instructor role)

    9.1. How does that affect your learning?

10. The way s/he helps you with your work.

11. The way s/he is in charge of the classroom. (Disciplinarian role)

    11.1.   How does that affect your learning?

    11.2.   How does that make you feel when you are in the classroom?

12. His/her personality. (Teacher's personality)

    12.1.   How does that affect your learning?

    12.2.   How does that make you feel when you are in the classroom?

13. The way s/he helps you for stuff besides work. (Guide & Counsellor role)

    13.1.   How does that affect your learning?

    13.2.   How does that make you feel when you are about to go to her/his lesson?

<div align="center">Written Exercise</div>

14. Could you give me three sentences that best describe your relationship? (Prompts: Try to take your time and think generally! Let's say that we hadn't spoken about her/him at all and you want to write the three most important bits down for me)

15. How do you feel when you are with _____?

    15.1.   *After elaboration is exhausted, repeat question and introduce 'Feeling Faces'.*

FEELING FACES

Instructions:

- We are going to go through the feeling faces and after I've put them all on the table you may choose the ones that best describe your feelings with (*Teacher's name*), Ok?

Once some feelings have been selected, ask:

- So, you say you are feeling _____, with (*Teacher's name*) can you tell me more about it?

A	**B**	**C**
Negative Extroverted (10)	**Positive (10)**	**Negative Introverted (12)**
	Proud	
Jealous	Loved	Disappointed
Mischievous	Playful	Discouraged
Anxious	Happy	Shy
Furious	Curious	Helpless
Shocked	Ecstatic	Worried
Annoyed	Confident	Indifferent
Surprised	Interested	Sad
Angry	Focused	Alone
Impatient	Relaxed	Bored
Frustrated		Hurt
		Scared
		Skeptical

STUDENT INTERVIEW: STRUCTURED

1. **Provision of a well-bounded container for the student's feelings & actions:**

1.1.   What do you think of the way _____ is setting the rules in the classroom?

1.2.   Does _____ treat you more or less as everybody else?

1.3.   Do you think you can, in any way, control the classroom when _____ is teaching?

1.4.   Do you think you can, in any way, scare _____ ?

1.5.   What would happen if you liked to go out of the classroom?

1.6.   What would you do if other students picked on you?

    1.6.1.   Would you consider asking for the teacher's help?

2. **Containing anxiety whilst giving space for autonomy:**

2.1.   How do you usually feel while you are with _____?

    2.1.1.   Do you think the teacher understands how you feel?

    2.1.2.   What do you do when you feel like that?

    2.1.3.   What does the teacher do?

2.2.   What does _____ do when you don't understand something?

2.3.   Does _____ usually see you when you put your hand up?

2.4.   Does _____ discuss your work with you?

    2.4.1.   Has _____ ever talked to you about your progress over time?

2.5.   Tell me some reasons why you work in _____'s class.

2.6.   What makes you work in _____'s class?

2.7.   Can you work your own way in _____'s class?

2.8.   Do you feel you have a say in _____'s class?

2.9.   Does _____ ever ask the students' opinion when s/he wants to decide something in the class?

3. **Demonstrating reflection and understanding instead of immediately responding to projections**:

3.1.   What would happen if _____ saw that you misbehave?

3.2.   What would his/her voice be like?

3.3.   What would his/her facial expression be like?

    3.3.1. How do you feel then?

    3.3.2. What would you think?

    3.3.3. What do you think is_____ thinking?

    3.3.4. How do you think is _____ feeling?

3.4.   Does _____ do the same thing every time you misbehave?

3.5.   What does _____ do when you keep on misbehaving?

3.6.   Do you think _____ holds a grudge when you do something inappropriate?

4. **Provision of mirroring [*complementary to observation*]**:

4.1.   Have you ever seen _____ imitating bits of what you are saying or doing? (In what way?)

4.2.   Would _____ ever describe or show to you how you behave?

    4.2.1. How do you feel after she had done that?

        _____

4.3.   Does _____ do anything that you'd like to do as well?

4.4.   Is there anything you'd like to imitate of _____'s personality?

5. Provision of safety net:

5.1. Is _____ paying enough attention to you?

5.2. What does _____ do if, lets say s/he sees that somebody is picking on you in his/her classroom? (Elaborate for both participants)

   5.2.1. Outside the class?

5.3. Do you think _____ is interested in you? (E.g.)

   5.3.1. Does _____ try to listen to you? (E.g.)

5.4. If you need help, for any reason, do you think that _____ will be available for you?

5.5. Have you ever spoken to _____ about something that doesn't have to do anything with the lesson?

5.6. Would you like to talk to _____ about something that doesn't have to do anything with the lesson?

6. Management of beginnings and endings:

6.1. Do you remember anything special that happened in the last lesson? *(Before last long break)*

6.2. Do you remember anything special that happened in the first lesson? *(After last long break)*

6.3. What do you think _____'s last lesson, at the end of the year will be like?

7. Communication of the teacher's realness:

7.1.   How do you think is _____ generally getting on with your
        classmates?

7.2.   To what extend do you feel that _____ is sincere/honest with you?

7.3.   Does _____ ever greet you when you meet in the school corridors or
        in the yard?
        7.3.1. In what way?

7.4.   Do you ever greet _____ if you meet in the school corridors or in the
        yard?

7.5.   Do you think _____ would greet you if you met outside the school?
        7.5.1. What would you do?

7.6.   Does _____ talk to the class about stuff besides the lesson?

7.7.   Do you think that _____ is showing her/his true self in the
        classroom?
        7.7.1. How can you tell that?

7.8.   What do you think you will remember of _____ once he is not your
        teacher any more?

8. Acceptance & holding:

8.1.   Do you feel you can trust _____? (Why/E.g.)

8.2.   Do you think that _____ trusts you? (Why/E.g.)

8.3.   Do you think that _____ cares about you? (Why/E.g.)

8.4.   What do you think _____ thinks to have you in his/her class?
        (Elaborate)

8.5.   What do you think _____ expects of you?

8.6.   Do you think you are special for _____ in any way?
        8.6.1. In what way?

9. **Understanding**:

9.1. Can _____ understand you?

     9.1.1. How much of the time?

9.2. Do you think _____ is ever trying to guess or understand how you feel? (What makes you think so?)

10. **Provision of resources**:

10.1. Can you generally understand _____ when s/he is explaining things?

10.2. What do you think _____ can give you by being your teacher?

10.3. Can you get anything out of your relationship with _____?

MANY THANKS
FOR YOUR CONFIDENCE AND PATIENCE
TO SHARE ALL THOSE THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS WITH ME

STUDENT INTERVIEW: IDEAL TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

As I have already let you know this information will remain strictly confidential.

1. What does school mean to you?
2. What are the most important things for you in the school?

3. Imagine that you are the Principal of this school. What kind of relationship would you advise the teachers to have with their students?
4. Fill in 10-adjectives exercise.
    4.1. What does it mean to be... [repeat for each item]
    4.2. Give example [repeat for each item]
5. Prioritise
    5.1. Explore thinking behind hierarchy of top 30% of items.
6. Define opposites [withdraw original adjectives]
7. What would you like that teacher's personality to be like?

8. If the school had only good teachers, as you just described them would that make any difference to you?
    8.1. In what way?

**I will eventually transcribe our conversation at which point I will give it back
to you to make any clarifications or amendments if you wish.**

DESCRIBE WHAT YOU WOULD LIKE A RELATIONSHIP
WITH A GOOD TEACHER TO BE LIKE
(10 adjectives exercise)

- Write down **ten things that are important for you** in a relationship with a good teacher:

- Arrange what is important for you in a relationship with
  a good teacher in order of importance:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

Most important

↓

Not so important

PCP: DEFINING OPPOSITE MEANINGS

Descriptions of a **good** Teacher-Student Relationship	Tell me a difference to... (How would a teacher that's not _____ be?)
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

WHERE DO YOUR REAL TEACHERS FIT?

(Use a "✓" for the most-preferred teacher and an "✗" for the least-preferred teacher)

3: Relationship with teacher is **always** as described

2: Relationship with teacher is **usually** as described

1: Relationship with teacher is **often** as described

0: Relationship with teacher can be either way

| Descriptions of relationship with good teacher | Always-Usually-Often | | | | Often-Usually-Always | | | Opposite descriptions |
	3	⇐ **2**	**1**	**0**	**1**	⇒ **2**	**3**	
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								

- In what way do you find *(both nominated teachers' names)* different?
- In what way do you find *(both nominated teachers' names)* similar?

STUDENT INTERVIEW: FOLLOW UP

0. About two months ago we met a few times and you talked to me about
_____. Do you remember some of the things you told me?

1. I want you to think of the last couple of months since we last talked and tell
me **if anything happened** between you and _____ that you can
remember.
   (Prompt: before Easter and after Easter break)
   a. Anything that you liked/enjoyed
   b. Anything that you didn't like/got in trouble

2. You told me about the way she is **teaching**, how do you **feel** in her
classroom and what kind of **relationship** you have with her.
   Has anything changed since then - even a little bit?
   a. Teaching
   b. Feelings
   c. Relationship

STUDENT INTERVIEW: THE LAST THING![*]

When we talk to each other about things that happened or about people we sometimes exaggerate. Sometimes we say things as happened but sometimes we may add something on top just to make it sound better.

So, do you think you can give it a try and tick which of the following sentences was true for you?

Remember our discussions and think about them, were they:

1. All lies, not a single truth.
2. Mostly fairytales.
3. A couple of true bits.
4. Almost half of it was true.
5. Half of it was true.
6. More than half of it was true.
7. Most of it was true with some exceptions.
8. Perhaps one or two things were not exactly true.
9. Everything was true.
10. Absolutely true, I didn't change or made up a single thing.

---

* This form was originally hand out on an A5 sheet.

TEACHER INTERVIEW: GENERAL

As I have already let you know this information will remain strictly

1. Background:

    1.1. Qualifications

    1.2. Teaching experience/roles.

    1.3. Why did you originally chose to work as a teacher?

    1.4. When you originally applied, why did you choose to work in this school?

2. Describe what you think the role of a teacher, working in this school, should involve.

3. What do you think the role of students in this school should involve?

4. In what way are teachers and students different from each other?

5. In what way are teachers and students similar?

6. What do you see as the major general developmental goals and challenges for boys who currently attend the second year in junior cycle?

7. How do you feel all that time that you have been dealing with 'at-risk' students?

8. In the light of the students we're discussing, which would you say are your teaching goals?

    8.1. How could you best achieve these goals?

9. What advice would you give to a new teacher who is about to work with students at risk for early school leaving?

10. How would you ideally expect teachers and students to relate to each other in a school setting?

Community & Parents:

1 How would you describe the relation between the community, where most "at-risk" students come from, and the school?

2 How would you describe the attitude of "at-risk" students' parents towards the teachers?

3 What would you say are the expectations of these parents from a teacher?

4 Can you identify any pattern emerging from your interactions with "at-risk" students parents?

Support systems:

1. Teaching 'at-risk' students can be a very demanding task. How do you go about dealing with any difficulties that may arise?
2. Where do you draw energy from to continue teaching?
3. How far do you feel adequately supported in your work with 'at-risk' students?
   1.1. By the school procedures.
   1.2. By the staff.
   1.3. By the students.
   1.4. By external input.
4. What do you think of the way the school decisions are made?
5. To what degree do you feel that your role in this school is clearly defined?
   5.1. By yourself □
   5.2. By others □   {Expectations}
6. To what degree do you feel the teacher training you had is adequate for the roles you currently play?

- We just went through the whole interview schedule. I wonder if there is an outstanding point with regard to all that we have talked about, that you'd like to emphasise.

I will eventually transcribe our conversation at which point I will give it back to you to make any clarifications or amendments if you wish.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

TEACHER INTERVIEW: SPECIFIC STUDENT

As I have already let you know this information will remain strictly confidential.

- **This time we will speak about a specific student. Which student would you like to start with?**

1. When did you first start working with _____?
   1.1. What impression did _____ give you at the very beginning?
2. What do you think _____ thinks of himself?
3. How do you think _____ feels about school?
   3.1. About teachers?
4. How would you describe your experience being _____ teacher?
   4.1. If you can take _____'s perspective, how do you think he would describe his experience being your student?
5. What kind of image do you think he would portray of *(teacher's name)* to his parents?
6. How would you describe _____'s attendance now?
   6.1. What do you think his future school career will be like?
   6.2. Is there anything you feel a teacher could do towards improving _____'s attendance?
   ---------------- Specific Incidents -----------------
7. Was there a time when you and _____ really weren't getting on well?
   7.1. Tell me more about what happened.
   7.2. How did you feel?
   7.3. How do you think _____ felt?

8. Was there a time when you and _____ really "clicked"?

  8.1. Tell me more about what happened.

  8.2. How did you feel?

  8.3. How do you think _____ felt?

9. Teachers often wonder about how much to push a child to learn versus how much not to push. Tell me about a time that this happened for you with _____.

  9.1. How did you handle that situation?

  9.2. Why did you decide to take such course of action?

10. Comment on _____'s motivation to work.

  10.1.   What do you think in _____'s case is the most effective way a teacher could use to improve his motivation?

11. How would you describe your relationship with _____?

  11.1.   What kind of overall relationship approach would you say is more appropriate in _____'s case?

  11.2.   Why?

12. To what degree do you feel that your efforts to teach _____ are appreciated by him?

13. Does _____ ever come into your mind while you are not at school? *(Elaborate)*

14. Do you feel that _____could affect your reputation as a teacher? *(Elaborate)*

15. How do you usually try to manage _____'s behaviour?

  15.1.   What if it doesn't work?

  15.2.   How do you feel when you have to manage his behaviour?

  15.3.   How do you think he feels?

16. What do you think of _____ outside of his 'student' identity?

17. Any comments about the questions and what we generally discussed so far?

18. Anything else to add or briefly underline?

[Parents-focused]

5   Have you met either of _____'s parents?

IF YES:

6   Could you describe the meeting you had?

   6.1 Where did you meet?

   6.2 Why did you meet?

   6.3 What did you talk about?

   6.4 How did you feel about the meeting?

   6.5 What impression did you get out of _____? *[Student's parent(s)]*

7   Do you think anything has changed after that meeting?

8   What do you think _____'s parents expect of you?

IF NO:

2. Why do you think you haven't met?

3. Do you think _____'s parents would be interested to meet you?

4. Since neither of _____'s parents has initiated contact so far, can you see a point in meeting them?

5. What do you think _____'s parents might expect of you?

I will eventually transcribe our conversation at which point I will give it back to you to make any clarifications or amendments if you wish.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

HOME, SCHOOL, COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICER'S INTERVIEW

As I have already let you know this information will remain strictly

1. How long have you been a HSCL officer in this school?
2. Why did you choose to work at this post?
3. Tell me very briefly of your working background.
4. Tell me of your experience working as a HSCL officer in this school.
5. How would you describe the relation between the community and the school?
6. How would you describe the attitude of "at-risk" student's parents towards the school?

   6.1. Towards the teachers? (Also vice-versa)

7. What would you say are these parent's expectations of teachers?
8. Do you think the parents convey any messages to their children with regard to their attitude towards the teachers?
9. From your experience so far, do parent - teacher relations seem to have repercussions for student's school engagement? Discuss.
10. Can you identify any particular elements in the teacher-student relationship that may be especially effective with regard to enhancing "at-risk" students' school engagement?
11. What could best work in this school to improve the quality of teacher-student relationships for the benefit of both?
12. If these measures were to be introduced would you anticipate any difficulties?

    12.1.   From the teacher's perspective [How could these be overcome]

    12.2.   From the student's perspective [How could these be overcome]

    12.3.   Community issues [How could these be overcome]

Nominated Students

1. Give me a description of _____'s home background.

2. How would you describe _____'s parents' influence on his schooling?

3. How would you describe the attitude of _____'s parents towards the school?

4. Describe the relationship between _____ parent's and his teachers.

   4.1. Do you see any differences in their attitude towards different teachers?

5. Could anything, specifically for _____'s parents, be of help in order to improve their relationship with the teachers?

- **Fill in School Case Information schedule** (*reminder*)

I will eventually transcribe our conversation at which point I will give it back to you to make any clarifications or amendments if you wish.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

SCHOOL COUNSELLOR'S INTERVIEW

General

1. How long have you been a counsellor in this school?

2. What is the ethos of the teacher-student relationships in this school?

    2.1. What repercussions are there for the teachers?

    2.2. What repercussions are there for the students?

3. Could you identify any particular elements in the teacher-student relationship that may be especially effective with regard to enhancing "at-risk" students' school engagement?

4. What could best work in this school to improve the quality of teacher-student relationships for the benefit of both?

5. If these measures were to be introduced would you anticipate any difficulties?

    5.1. From the teacher's perspective [How could these be overcome]

    5.2. From the student's perspective [How could these be overcome]

Nominated students

1. A brief outline of _____ social life in school.
2. Is _____ getting on the same with all teachers?
3. What kind of teacher - student relationship do you think will be most suitable specifically for _____?
   3.1. Motivate and engage _____ in school.
4. Do you have any direct experience with _____ parents?
   4.1. Are you aware of anything that you believe might have influenced _____ behaviour in school?
4.2.   His academic performance?

<div style="border:1px solid black">

I will eventually transcribe our conversation at which point I will give it back to you to make any clarifications or amendments if you wish.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

</div>

CLASS TUTOR'S INTERVIEW
(& Missing info)

1. Can you give me a description of _____.
   One that includes, what you feel are the most important issues about him.
   If not discussed probe:
   - *As a student*
   - *As a person*

2. Is there any particular information that you, as their class tutor, know
   that might be relevant to _____'s 'at-risk' status?

3. What is your impression of _____'s parents?
   - Their attitude towards school
   - Their attitude towards various teachers

PRINCIPAL'S INTERVIEW

As I have already let you know this information will remain strictly

1. Discuss catchment area, enrolment criteria.
2. Which are the major goals the school seeks to promote?

    2.1. Where do you see the place of "at-risk" students within the school goals?

3. Is there any special support for the students that seem to be at-risk for leaving school early? Discuss.

    3.1. What about the whole school ethos?

4. From your experience in this school, which would you say are the key elements that define teacher effectiveness with regard to 'at-risk' students?

5. How would you describe the teacher-student relations in the school?

    5.1. What repercussion do these relations have for the students?

    5.2. What repercussion do these relations have for the teachers?

Eliciting Suggestions:

6. What could best work in this school to improve the quality of teacher-student relationships for the benefit of both?

7. If these measures were to be introduced would you anticipate any difficulties?

    7.1. From the teacher's perspective [How could these be overcome?]

    7.2. From the student's perspective [How could these be overcome?]

    7.3. Organisational issues (school) [How could these be overcome?]

I will eventually transcribe our conversation at which point I will give it back to you to make any clarifications or amendments if you wish.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

PARENTS' INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Remind confidentiality

CASE INFORMATION:

Family:

- Who else is currently living in the house?
    - Sex and age

  With regard to all family members:

- Education
- Current work (How long?)

Student:

- When was _____ born?
- Do you talk with _____ about school? (elaborate)
- Are there any important events in _____'s life that you feel might have influenced how he gets on in school?

- **GENERAL**

1. How is _____ getting on in school?

   1.1. Until when would you like _____ to stay in school?

   1.2. Until when do you think _____ will stay in school?

2. Does _____ have set homework?

   2.1. How much?

   2.2. When does he do his homework?

   2.3. How long does he spend doing his homework?

   2.4. Is _____ getting distracted when doing his homework?

3. Have you ever visited the school your son attends?

   3.1. What for?

4. What would you like_____ to do when he leaves school?

5. What could best help _____ to get on well in school?

6. What do you expect of _____'s teachers?

7. How could a teacher best help _____?

8. How is _____ getting on with his teachers?

9. How do you think the teachers generally get on with _____?

10. How would you like the teachers to treat _____?

SPECIFIC x 2

1. Have you ever met _____?

IF YES:

2 Can you describe the meeting you had?

   2.1 Where did you meet?

   2.2 Why did you meet?

   2.3 What did you talk about?

   2.4 How did you feel about the meeting?

   2.5 What impression did you get of _____?

3 Do you feel anything has changed after that meeting?

4. What do you think (teacher's name) thinks of _____?

   4.1.How do you think s/he gets on with _____?

5. What do you expect of _____?

   5.1.What would you prefer their relationship to be like?

IF NO:

6. Do you have anything to say about any specific teachers?

   6.1. Anything you liked about any specific teachers?

   6.2. Any complaints?

7. How come you have never met (specific teacher) ?

8. Could you tell me one or two reasons why you might meet with any of

   _____'s teachers?

   8.1. Do you see any point in meeting with _____?

I will eventually transcribe our conversation at and give it back for you to make any clarifications or amendments you wish.

<u>THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME</u>

ALEX

Stress state:

4/12: A bit of both   **6/12:** Very relaxed   **11/1:** Very relaxed

19/1: Very relaxed   **2/3:** Very relaxed

Tickets given for misbehaviour:

19/9 - Conway: Very bad attitude towards me when corrected. Argument with other pupil. Numerous warnings given.

10/10 - Conway: Involved in fight with another pupil in my class. Had told another pupil he was in his seat. When pupil hit Alex, he hit him back and fight begun which I had to break up.

23/10 - Conway: Begun to argue with pupil over a seat interrupting me continuously. Asked to move to another seat and refused to do so. Called pupil 'a big sap' and took offence with me when corrected.

11/01 - Conway: Constantly interrupting my class Not following instructions and making faces today as I was speaking. Talks and laughs instead of doing work. When told ticket was being issued he made a comment that I was giving 'ticket for nothing'.

6/02 – T1: Alex was messing outside the door as he was being allowed into class. Refusing to line out properly, continued to mess talk and disrupt the class. When told to stand outside the door he turned and said to a pupil 'I will box you'. When told to keep quiet he turned and said to me, 'I will box you too'.

6/03 – Other teacher: In class I supervised yesterday Alex addressed me in a very brazen and cheeky way. He was very disrespectful. He also had no books which made him more difficult to control. He behaves like this for me at PE also.

3/5 - Tutor: Very aggressive attitude and behaviour outside in the yard at PE. I called him in to question him regarding his behaviour and he was aggressive towards me. At one stage he refused to answer me and the proceeded to shout at me. He told me that he didn't care if I gave him a ticket out of the school. Has been given many chances but has thrown them back to me.

N/A– Indiscernible signature: Not working wasting his time and most important our time.

N/A - Conway: has improved in recent weeks. Participates in class. Behaviour has improved since first term.

N/A – Tutor: Very disrespectful attitude towards myself and another teacher. Aggressive attitude cannot take any correction without arguing about things, he takes everything personally. Attitude affects work as he tends to sulk. Feels that he is above being corrected. Very bad attitude at the moment.

First term report:

48% - capable of much better – Tutor

30% - Doing nothing – Conway

45% - Should be far better – New teacher

25% - Needs to make an effort – T1

N/A - Very Cheeky, makes very little effort – N/A

Additional tutor's comments:

Alex has 4 tickets now and needs to improve attitude to ensure that he doesn't get any more. Plenty of potential and ability.

TIMMY

Stress state:

9/10: N/A   **24/11:** A bit of both   **1/12:** Very relaxed

11/1: Quite relaxed   **18/1:** Quite relaxed   **22/2:** Quite relaxed

Tickets given for misbehaviour:

None - No notes

First term report:

03% - Making no effort at all – Tutor

57% - Maths

0% - Wrote nothing on paper – Conway

20% - Seldom makes an effort – New teacher

10% - Seldom comes ready for class – T1

Additional tutor's comments:

Timmy is making no effort with his school work. Late for school on a regular basis – out of full uniform. Very difficult to get notes for being absent or out of uniform.

GARRY

Stress state:

15/1: Very relaxed   **23/1:** N/A   **30/1:** Very relaxed

5/2: Very relaxed   **26/2:** Very relaxed

First and Second Term Progress

29/11 & 8/2

Punctuality: 6   &   6

Attendance: 6   &   4

Working with others: 6   &   6

Working alone: 6   &   6

Homework: 6   &   6

MATHEW

Stress state:

10/10: N/A   **22/1:** Very relaxed   **30/1:** Very relaxed

1/3: N/A   **5/3:** Very relaxed

First and Second Term Progress

29/11 & 8/2

Punctuality: 8   &   8

Attendance: 8   &   6

Working with others: 8   &   7

Working alone: 7   &   7

Homework: 8   &   6

Date: _____

Attached is the content of the interview transcribed.
Some errors may have occurred during
the transcription process.

Please feel free to make any amendments,
additions or elaborations on the text.
After looking through it you may decide that
no alterations are necessary.
In any case please let me know when
you are happy with the transcripts and
have signed this form so that I may
collect them both.

CONFIRMATION

I hereby confirm that I have looked through the attached transcripts and I find that they reflect the content of the tape-recorded interview I had with Mr Markos Rigos on the theme of "students at-risk for leaving school early".

Interviewee's Name: _____

Interviewee's Signature: _____

The information on this page will only be accessible to those who will be supervising or evaluating Mr Rigos' work as part of his PhD degree, TCD.

Date: _____

Attached is the content of the interview transcribed.
Some errors may have occurred during
the transcription process.

Please feel free to make any amendments,
additions or elaborations on the text.
After looking through it you may decide that
no alterations are necessary.
In any case please let me know when
you are happy with the transcripts and
have signed the form so that I may
collect them both.

CONFIRMATION

I hereby confirm that I have looked through the attached transcripts and I find that they reflect the content of the tape-recorded interview I had with Mr Markos Rigos about the secondary school my son attends.

Interviewee's Name: _____

Interviewee's Signature: _____

The information on this page will only be accessible to those who will be supervising or evaluating Mr Rigos' work as part of his PhD degree, TCD.

CONFIRMATION OF INTERVIEW ERASURE

Date: _____

       As part of the data collection for Mr Markos Rigos' Ph.D. Research in Psychology, at Trinity College Dublin, two interviews with _____ were conducted and tape-recorded.

       It is hereby agreed that after the PhD degree has been conferred to Mr Rigos and is no longer necessary to keep the above-mentioned tape-recorded interviews, all the content of the tapes with the above participant will be erased.

_____   _____

    Mr Markos Rigos   (*Teacher's name)*

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              APPENDIX L2                      │
│         PARENTS' CONSENT FORM                 │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Dear _____ ,

I am a postgraduate student at Trinity College carrying out a research in Psychology under the supervision of Dr Sheila Greene. The goal of my research is to collect information from students, teachers and parents with a view to make suggestions as to how school can be a better place for all.

Mr *(principal's surname)*, the School Principal, has already agreed that I may carry on with this project. I have already spoken with _____ and he seems happy to chat with me about his school experience. In order to go on meeting with him I have to have your consent. Our meetings will involve a number of questions about your son's attitude to school.

At the same time it would be very useful if you could spare some of your time to discuss what you believe is helpful for your son's education. Please bear in mind that all our discussions; both with you and your son will be strictly confidential. No information will be imparted to anybody; either teachers, students or other participants. In any publications arising from this research all participant names will be altered to prevent individual recognition.

Yours Faithfully,

_____
Mark Rigos

I agree to my child's participation in the project.

Student's name: _____

Signed Parent/Guardian: _____

Signed School Principal: _____
(Principal's full name)

➢ Throughout this project I am in continuous contact with the Principal of C.B.S *(school's and principal's name, school's telephone number)*

➢ In case you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me *(researcher's telephone number)*

TRANSCRIBER'S
CONFIDENTIALITY AGGREEMENT

The undersigned, as part of the 'Teacher-Student Relationships in Disadvantaged Schools' project, has undertaken a number of tape-recorded interviews to transcribe. This project is carried out by Mr Markos E. Rigos, under the supervision of Dr Sheila Greene, Department of psychology, TCD. The undersigned agrees NOT to disclose any names or places or events that s/he may hear on these interviews.

The undersigned also agrees to erase all the transcriptions typed as part of the above project, once they are handed or transferred to Mr Markos E. Rigos

I agree to the above statement

Signature: _____

Name printed in block capitals: _____

PARTICIPANTS' INITIALS & MSWord AUTOMATIONS

TRANSCRIBING NOTATIONS EXPLAINED:

How to set them:
Go to: Tools ⇒ AutoCorrect ⇒ AutoCorrect Tab.
Then insert respectively as in the following list.
After every insertion press **add.**
In brackets you see the number of spaces
that should be inserted in each case.

Replace:	With
int	Int: (3)
ih	Int: (3) hm:
iy	Int: (3) yea
io	Int: (3) ok
st	St: (3)
ss	ST: (3)
ns	NST: (2)
p	P: (5)
c	C: (5)
h	HS: (3)
m	(.)
n	((nods))
sh	((shakes head))
sm	((smiling))
ch	((chuckles))
la	((laughs))
sn	((sniffs))

- Pauses in speech:
  - …   [Less than 0.5 seconds]
  - (.)   [Between 0.5 & 1.0 sec.]
  - (x.x)   [Seconds of pause]

- ((xxx))   [Transcribers' comments]
- //xxx xxx// [Overlapping speech]
- :   [Extended sound]
- ::   [Extended sound, 2.0 secs+]
- -   [Abrupt cut]
- $xxx   [Counter number, when speech is incomprehensible]

PROJECT: TSR-PhD, User Mark Rigos, 21:05, 14 Jun, 2002.

Due to the large number of nodes, instead of the graphical presentation of a nodes-tree, I present a nodes report. This report is not exhaustive but limited to a depth of two levels. In other words, only first order categories and their sub-categories are presented.

(1)	/Open Interviews
(1 1)	/Open Interviews/If I hadn't seen T before?
(1 2)	/Open Interviews/First impression?
(1 3)	/Open Interviews/Have T as your teacher?
(1 4)	/Open Interviews/Get on with each other?
(1 5)	/Open Interviews/Anything that you like?
(1 6)	/Open Interviews/Anything you don't like?
(1 7)	/Open Interviews/T thinks of you personally?
(1 8)	/Open Interviews/Getting on with other students?
(1 9)	/Open Interviews/The way T teaches you?
(1 10)	/Open Interviews/Helps you with your work?
(1 11)	/Open Interviews/In charge of the classroom?
(1 12)	/Open Interviews/T personality?
(1 13)	/Open Interviews/Helps besides work
(1 14)	/Open Interviews/Three written sentences
(1 15)	/Open Interviews/How do you feel with T?
(2)	/Feeling faces
(2 1)	/Feeling faces/Alex & Timmy
(2 3)	/Feeling faces/Garry & Mathew
(2 99)	/Feeling faces/Process notes - Garry
(3)	/Pheno Int
(3 1)	/Pheno Int/Garry Pheno Int
(3 2)	/Pheno Int/Mathew Pheno Int
(3 3)	/Pheno Int/Alex pheno Int
(3 4)	/Pheno Int/Timmy pheno
(4)	/Perceived Classroom-Holding Interview
(4 1)	/Perceived Classroom-Holding Interview/Container for feelings and actions
(4 2)	/Perceived Classroom-Holding Interview/Containing anxiety - promoting autonomy
(4 3)	/Perceived Classroom-Holding Interview/Reflection instead of projection
(4 4)	/Perceived Classroom-Holding Interview/Mirroring - Student culture
(4 5)	/Perceived Classroom-Holding Interview/Safety net
(4 6)	/Perceived Classroom-Holding Interview/Beginings and Endings
(4 7)	/Perceived Classroom-Holding Interview/Teacher's realness
(4 8)	/Perceived Classroom-Holding Interview/Acceptance and trust
(4 9)	/Perceived Classroom-Holding Interview/Understanding
(4 10)	/Perceived Classroom-Holding Interview/Provision of resources
(5)	/Ideal teacher
(5 1)	/Ideal teacher/Garry: Ideal
(5 2)	/Ideal teacher/Mathew - Ideal
(5 3)	/Ideal teacher/Alex - Ideal

(5 4)	/Ideal teacher/Timmy - Ideal
(7)	/Comparison by student
(7 1)	/Comparison by student/Garry - Comparison
(7 2)	/Comparison by student/Mathew - Comparison
(7 3)	/Comparison by student/Alex - Comparison
(7 4)	/Comparison by student/Timmy - Comparison
(8)	/Perception of context
(8 6)	/Perception of context/Classmates
(8 8)	/Perception of context/About School
(10)	/Self verification
(12)	/Student specific Data - Discussion notes
(12 1)	/Student specific Data - Discussion notes/Mathew
(12 2)	/Student specific Data - Discussion notes/Garry: inherent concepts 1-6
(12 3)	/Student specific Data - Discussion notes/Timmy
(15)	/Preliminary interviews
(15 1)	/Preliminary interviews/Preliminary: Ind'l Summary
(15 2)	/Preliminary interviews/Chosen: Mr Porter
(15 3)	/Preliminary interviews/Chosen: Subject
(15 4)	/Preliminary interviews/Chosen: Ms Rose
(15 5)	/Preliminary interviews/Chosen: Ms Curtis
(15 10)	/Preliminary interviews/Will stay in school?
(15 11)	/Preliminary interviews/Home contact with school
(15 12)	/Preliminary interviews/Important Opinion
(20)	/Follow up
(20 1)	/Follow up/Mr Porter
(20 2)	/Follow up/Ms Curtis
(20 3)	/Follow up/Ms Conway
(30)	/Crystalisation informants
(30 1)	/Crystalisation informants/Parents
(30 2)	/Crystalisation informants/HSCL & Counsellor about Students
(30 3)	/Crystalisation informants/Tutors about specific students
(40)	/Teacher's perspectives
(40 1)	/Teacher's perspectives/Teacher Interview notes
(40 2)	/Teacher's perspectives/Teacher's general
(40 3)	/Teacher's perspectives/Teachers about Specific Students
(50)	/Classroom observations
(50 1)	/Classroom observations/Teacher atmosphere vignettes
(50 5)	/Classroom observations/T-S incidents to further REFLECT upon
(50 10)	/Classroom observations/Beginning of the lesson
(50 11)	/Classroom observations/Work management
(50 12)	/Classroom observations/General Atmosphere
(50 13)	/Classroom observations/Ending of the lesson
(50 14)	/Classroom observations/About my presence
(50 20)	/Classroom observations/Individual Students
(60)	/School & Community setting
(60 1)	/School & Community setting/HSCL general
(60 3)	/School & Community setting/Principal general
(80)	/Base Data
(80 3)	/Base Data/Students
(80 4)	/Base Data/Teachers
(A)	//Document Annotations
(F)	//Free Nodes
(T)	//Text Searches
(N)	//Node Searches
(C)	//Node Clipboard.

APPENDIX M2:

REFERENCES THAT INCLUDE SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING

TEACHER – STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

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