

**THE BEHAVIOUR OF EBD PUPILS AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS
OF THE FACTORS AND PROCESSES THAT ARE SIGNIFICANT
IN RELATION TO THEIR OWN BEHAVIOUR AND RESULTING
PLACEMENT IN SPECIAL EDUCATION**

by

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ABSTRACT

This research project involved the collection of data from pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD), who were not attending a mainstream school, in order to gain an improved understanding of their behaviour. The factors and processes that they perceived as having influenced their behaviour were explored and analysed from a broad theoretical base.

Data were collected through taped interviews with the pupils and analysed both within individual cases in order to better understand individual pupil's experiences, and also across cases in order to highlight common experience and perception.

The results revealed that EBD pupils perceive a wide range of factors and processes within the school system, wider social systems and their own individual selves, as significant in influencing their behaviour, and they are often able to describe the nature of and motives for their behaviours in some detail.

It is hoped that this research will contribute to the current theoretical debates concerning the behaviour of EBD pupils, and in addition that it will encourage professionals to value and respect the pupils' own perspective, to improve techniques and strategies for obtaining these perspectives, and to use them to ensure appropriate and successful support or provision for these pupils.

To Pat

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PART ONE
INTRODUCTION

Part One of this report comprises Chapter 1, which offers some important background to the present study. It is presented in four Sections, each of which includes an exploration and discussion of one aspect of the behaviour of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) and research into such behaviour.

The first Section explores the motives behind research that attempts to better understand the behaviour of EBD pupils and discusses the potential use and value of such research. In the second Section a summary of the various theoretical proposals concerning such behaviour is presented, whilst the third Section offers a critical look at methods of researching EBD behaviour. Finally, the fourth Section offers a review of previous research that has utilised the perspectives of the pupils themselves to gain insight into EBD behaviour and assesses the value of using such perspectives.

The present researcher acknowledges that the use of the conventional term ‘EBD pupils’ to describe students with emotional and behavioural difficulties may be open to criticism. Awareness of the limitations of such terminology in terms of stigma and stereotyping is essential for any reader. This issue is discussed further in Section 6.1.

Chapter 1

Background to the Research

1.1 The Behaviour of EBD Pupils: Why Study It?

This Section highlights certain important considerations regarding the benefits of research into the behaviour of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It attempts to explore the uses to which such research may be put, with a particular consideration of the subtle emphasis of benefits to systems versus the individual. The extent to which we choose to consider the pupils to be failing within the system, or the system to be failing the pupils, is an important debate that can have serious impact on how such research is used. As a result, some possible answers to the question, ‘Why study EBD pupils’ behaviour?’ are explored in this Section.

When seeking justification for research into a better understanding of the behaviour of EBD pupils, it is tempting to start with statistics which reveal the disturbing and rapidly increasing number of pupils who are being excluded permanently from mainstream schools, (Parsons & Howlett, 1996, Times Educational Supplement, 1996a,b). Before considering the impact of this on the individuals themselves, such facts reveal the significant financial responsibilities that excluded pupils create for any government’s education budget. It has been stated that educating a child expelled from school can be four or five times more expensive than mainstream schooling, (Parsons, 1996, Daily Telegraph, 1996c), and this may equally apply to the education of pupils such as school refusers and phobics also unable to attend mainstream school. Clearly, it would seem to be important, if not essential, for any government to encourage research which may allow the maintenance of more pupils within the mainstream setting, and reduce the need for ‘special’ facilities which place major strain

on the education budget. Such research includes a better understanding of the special needs pupil and his or her behaviour.

The government or society as a whole may also have another reason for understanding behaviour, in addition to money, and that is the need for control. Such control may be considered in a positive or negative light. Deviancy in any society is a threat to social calm, and social calm is usually considered important in the functioning of a society. However, Meighan (1986) cites Berger as describing the sociologist as a spy, and questions the potential use of sociological findings, suggesting that the findings of sociological inquiry may be used by anyone 'whose activities involve the manipulation of people...' (p8). Such beliefs may encourage us to question the behaviour of 'deviants', either in or out of schools, and to be aware that such revelations may simply become a valuable tool which enables a society to fulfil its desire or need to control its members. Clearly, an elimination of social deviancy, which certain researchers have described as 'individuality', (Schostak, 1983), is not only in the interest of those invested in a smooth running society, but may also reflect an acceptance of the society itself as not being in need of change. In other words, the individual must adapt to society, and not vice versa.

Interestingly, in terms of education, this desire for social control could be met either by attempting to maintain pupils in the mainstream setting, which is clearly financially the most economic option, or conversely by removing them from the system, regardless of financial burden. This latter option may be seen as better serving or meeting the pupil's own needs and the needs of the non-deviant majority. Many have doubted the true purpose of special needs provision. Tomlinson (1982) questions not only special education but also the role of schooling itself in our society, suggesting that its major function is that of maintaining social control. She suggests that our education system is purely a way of ensuring that individuals do not disrupt a smooth running society, or at least a sufficiently smooth running society. She also comments more specifically on

the role of special education, seeing it as not only a means of controlling troublesome children, and a way of removing children who impede the smooth running of the mainstream schools (p74), but also as a means to legitimise and ‘perpetuate the current social order.’ (p68). She considers that society needs an underclass or a ‘problem’ group, and special education maintains this by denying certain children access to normal education.

This leads to a consideration of what actually is ‘best’ for the ‘deviant’ individuals concerned, and Tomlinson (1982) provides a thorough discussion of such considerations. It would seem that, regardless of a society’s or government’s motives or concerns in terms of budget or control, if these motives also meet the true needs of the individual, then the use of social research to meet such ends may be considered of value.

The problem of course is to evaluate what decisions, actions, and provisions really are serving the needs of the individual. Underlying this debate is the problem of whether one actually believes that society as it stands, with its values and expectations, and its pressures to conform, is a system into which all individuals should be expected to adjust and fit. To reduce this argument to a more manageable size, we may ask the same question of the school or education system, which may be considered to reflect society’s wider values and attempts to maintain them.

Clearly we must recognise that we are accepting current social norms, values and expectations, and the role of our schools, when we use research to maintain them. If we attempt to change the pupils themselves, or their behaviours, to allow them to successfully integrate or remain in the system, then we are accepting social values and norms, and believe that the individual will benefit from fitting in with them. Of course, this may be the only way to ensure that a pupil has the best chance of succeeding in life, finding happiness, and fulfilling his or her potential, within the parameters, values and judgements set by society. However, we may also be able to assist the individual

in fulfilling this potential by using such research to reveal aspects of schooling, or perhaps other aspects of society and the systems within which the pupil functions, that may be suppressing or preventing the development of that potential. In other words, only if social research into behaviour acknowledges the role and influence of the systems surrounding the individual and the impact of these systems on the behaviour of that individual, and attempts to explore opportunity for change within these systems, does it move away from being purely a powerful tool for social control aimed at the elimination of deviancy through control of that individual.

It is difficult here to answer the question 'is it in the interest of the individual to conform to a society and schooling whose values may be imperfect?' We can only hope that by exploring behaviour, our improved knowledge will enable more pupils to retain their individuality, within systems which are more understanding and display the necessary flexibility to allow the needs of the individual to be met and their potential and talents to develop.

The present author believes that research into deviant behaviour, including EBD behaviour, can reveal a greater insight into the factors and processes within the individual, or within the systems surrounding the individual, that may be associated with certain behaviours and the motives for such behaviour. This greater insight may then be used to make adjustments or changes wherever necessary, whether in the individual or in the systems, which will enhance the pupils' happiness and chances of success in life. The decisions regarding the focus of such change are closely linked to the various theories of behaviour. These theories involve varying degrees of focus on the individual, or on the systems surrounding the individual, with which they interact. Such theories are explored in the following Section and also in Chapter 6 which presents pupils' perspectives of their behaviour.

1.2 The Behaviour of EBD Pupils: What Is It?

Categorising and defining behaviour is a dangerously subjective task. Behaviour is always open to interpretation, and often behaviour itself cannot be interpreted without consideration of its context. For many years those working in the education field have struggled with attempts to firstly find an appropriate all encompassing term for the behaviours being displayed by disturbed pupils, and secondly to better understand the nature of these behaviours using various theories and models of behaviour.

Throughout this report this issue will be developed, yet it is important in this Section to briefly introduce some of the background to the theoretical aspects of behaviour.

For some years the various theories of behaviour were consistently placed in clearly separate or discrete categories. These theories are comprehensively described in numerous publications (Charlton & David, 1993, Cooper et al, 1994), and will not be extensively described here. However, of significance to this present project are two particular proposals concerning the behaviour of EBD pupils. One is the importance of accepting that pupils interpret and make decisions based on their perceptions of situations, which is proposed within interactionist theories of behaviour. Such theories reject the somewhat more traditional psychodynamic or social learning theories of behaviour which suggest that behaviour is a result of subconscious forces or drives working to control the individual. In the case of psychodynamic theories, these forces work from inside, controlling the individual almost like a puppet, and they have resulted from earlier experiences particularly during childhood. Social learning theory focuses more on the powerful forces within society that control an individual's behaviour, again offering little opportunity for the individual to make conscious decisions.

Interactionism has been developed in various ways, and now presents itself in the shape of systemic or ecological approaches to behaviour whereby the contexts of behaviour, or the systems in which the individual lives, are involved in an interaction with that

individual and thus greatly influence his or her behaviour. These theories are presented comprehensively in previous publications with particular emphasis on the EBD pupil (Apter, 1982, Upton & Cooper, 1990). Such approaches encourage an awareness of the importance of the pupil's environment on his or her behaviour, without focusing solely on the individual. The systemic approach does not focus on the behaviour of an EBD pupil as being a result of an inner problem or conflict or as being a product of social learning, but sees problems as potentially lying within the systems surrounding the pupil, or at least in the interaction between the child and the systems. In fact Apter titles his book 'Troubled Children - Troubled Systems'. It may be that the child lacks the ability, knowledge or skills to meet the demands of his or her environment. Bricker, cited in Apter (1982) states that deviancy '...reflects a discrepancy between what the individual is capable of doing (his repertoire) and the demands made upon that repertoire by the various environmental situations in which the individual is located.' (p69).

Thus there are a number of different theories behind behaviour and an understanding of these different theories when working with EBD pupils is essential in deciding upon educational strategies and approaches and also interventions. Clearly a systemic approach offers increased opportunities for intervention including not only the child but also the environment itself and the attitudes of individuals who are involved with the child.

One's choice of theoretical base may also be significant in the terminology used to describe disturbing children, which is another on-going debate in this field, (Cooper, 1996), which is described in Chapter 6. There is also a developing view amongst certain researchers, that to limit oneself to a rigid belief in just one theory when interpreting or defining disturbing behaviour is dangerously limiting. Slee (1994) defends the use of a more eclectic approach, stating; 'Eclectic enquiry need not be dismissed as ill-considered or capricious.' (p148). He encourages the use of what

Furlong (1985) had previously described as 'integrative theoretical frameworks', (p148), to better understand and work with EBD pupils. Certainly many educational studies of recent years have focused exclusively on the sociological context of the behaviour, with their theoretical roots based firmly within theories of symbolic interactionism or other similar interactionist perspectives. Such theories claim that an individual's response to any given situation depends on an interpretive process going on within that individual. This interpretation, results in the individual giving meaning to that situation, based on past and present social events and interaction, and he or she acts accordingly. The individual's perception of the situation is therefore his or her own unique reality and decision making is a conscious and meaningful process. On the other hand there have been many other studies of young people's behaviour which adopt a more individualised, psychological stance. Such research has focused more closely on the pupils themselves and their internal drives or psyches, paying less attention to the context of the behaviour or the interaction of the pupil with the systems around them.

Yet Slee (1994) is not alone in his suggestion that we adopt a broad theory for understanding pupils' behaviour that does not adopt a primarily sociological or a psychological foothold. Furlong (1991) cites Connell (1987):

'A weakness of much academic research is the product of two forms of occupational blindness - the inability of sociologists to recognise the complexities of the person and the unwillingness of psychologists to recognise the dimension of social power.' (p193-194).

There certainly seems to be a danger in polarising and oversimplifying the theoretical starting points from which behaviour can be investigated. Apter (1982) encourages the acknowledgement of both the internal (psychological) and external (sociological) driving forces on a person, and proposes an ecological theory for behaviour. He states; '...it is the interaction between them which always accounts for behaviour.' (p16). Furlong (1991) proposes that sociologist should take '...unconscious

motivation and repression more seriously...’ (p296). The name he gives to this combined sociological and psychological understanding is the ‘sociology of emotion’, (p296), which is discussed further in Section 7.1.

It would seem that educational researchers in this field remain eager to find a theoretical framework on which to hang research findings and clearly are seeking a more eclectic and less polarised option than those offered by more extreme sociological or psychological perspectives. The present project is based on the belief that there is a need to acknowledge the important contribution made by the various sociological and psychodynamic theories in analysing and understanding the behaviour of EBD pupils. It is believed that the highly complex interaction of conscious, unconscious, internal and external driving forces must be studied. However, it is not intended that the results of this research should be too highly theoretical in nature, and of no consequence to the day to day problems encountered by both staff and pupils in schools. It is hoped that recognition and respect for the factors and processes which are significant to the pupils in relation to their placement in an EBD setting, and an enhanced understanding of exactly why or how these factors and processes interact and become significant, may result in improved provision for these pupils.

1.3 The Behaviour of EBD Pupils: How To Study It

Scherer et al (1990) describe human behaviour as having ‘...infinite variability and complexity...’ (pxiv). They explain how behaviour can remain totally unpredictable even when artificial situations are created and attempts are made to reduce options under experimental conditions. Still we remain dedicated to seeking patterns and being able to predict and understand behaviour. Certainly there are some aspects of a person’s social background and environment, and also some psychological variables that make predictions concerning behaviour quite feasible and much research has

vigorously sought out such factors. Such research has utilised many different methodological techniques. The choice of such techniques rests to some extent with the specific aims of the research. Wolff (1993) stresses that there is a difference in seeking reasons for behaviour as opposed to causes. Defined traditionally as positivist, (Woods, 1977a, 1977b), those theories which propose direct causal explanations for behaviour assume that universal laws determine social behaviour, that social facts are observable and measurable, and that research can reveal relationships between these facts and certain behaviours. These relationships allow causal statements about behaviour to be made, and future behaviour may be predicted using such patterns. Of course such theory removes any responsibility for behaviour from the control of the individual.

Reasons for behaviour may however be considered as quite different to causes. Those exploring reasons, basing their research on theories broadly described as interactionist, believe that a degree of interpretation is carried out by the individual prior to their actions. Thus, there are no predictable patterns of behaviour because each individual makes sense of his or her world and acts according to his or her own feelings and the meanings that they attribute to different situations. The individual in this case is therefore potentially able to account for his or her behaviour in terms of personal reasons or motives.

It is not the place of this research to dismiss either theory as invalid, and as Wolff (1993) states; 'Much confusion can be avoided if we realise that both approaches are valid, but that their premises, methods and applications are quite different.' (p216). Certainly, in terms of research into EBD behaviour, different opportunities and techniques exist depending on whether one is seeking causes or reasons.

The focus of this present research project lies in exploring the degree to which EBD pupils are able to attribute reasons to their behaviour and, where possible, in recording

and analysing these reasons using the pupils' perspective. It also focuses on gaining insight into the various factors that may have influenced this behaviour in some way. In order to do so, the emphasis has been on ethnographic methodologies, which attempt to unveil and record the individual's perspective. Details regarding the specific methods used in this project are described and discussed in Part Two. In particular, there is an extensive description of interviewing techniques which was the main approach utilised for data collection.

An interactionist approach to understanding behaviour and its associated qualitative ethnographic research techniques, has been criticised on a number of levels. Such criticism and the problems associated with ethnography are listed by Woods (1988). They include: (i) The micro/macro debate, concerning whether the individual creates society or vice versa, (ii) The difficulty that researchers have in not indulging in selective perception, (iii) That it can be abstract and timeless, (iv) That studies are not well coordinated, (v) That studies are done on groups of people in low power situations, and finally (vi) That there is a lack of empiricism.

This latter point is of particular importance to this project. For any interactionist study to be considered of value and to be accepted it demands that the subjective nature of the individual's reality be accepted. It also demands that generalisability of data not be considered essential to its value. Of course patterns in experiences may emerge, and similar interpretations of situations may be observed, but this is not essential to validate data from any one individual.

The existence of an objective reality, and the value of an individual's own reality has created much debate amongst those involved in researching deviant behaviour, particularly through qualitative methodologies. Some have doubted the value of perspectives gained from children, and in particular children displaying difficult or disturbing behaviours, whose perspectives they consider to have been altered by their emotional states. As Lubbe (1986) states; '...I have sought to show how powerfully

pupils' emotional states and conflicts constrict their perception of, and subsequent dealings with, teachers - and psychotherapists.' (p34). He describes certain 'disturbed' children's views on teachers as 'misperceptions' (p35), which suggests they are distorted in some way and therefore hold no real value.

Seeking another's 'reality' in research is of course a somewhat complex task. Cooper et al (1994) state that to truly understand behaviour there is a need to accept subjectivity. They quote the work of Speed (1991), who describes the traditional belief of therapists, that there exists a 'discoverable reality', that people have a 'real' inner world to be uncovered. (p16). This is disputed by many who do not believe in the existence of an objective reality. Cooper et al (1994) state that '...different people place different interpretations on what happens around them, according to their view of the world, and thus *construct* their own views of reality.' (p16). The existence of this personal reality is further qualified by Speed (1991), cited in Cooper et al (1994) who states that '...a structured reality exists...' but she recognises that '...the reality is constructed or mediated in the sense that different aspects are highlighted according to ideas that individuals or groups have about it.' (p16).

Certain researchers state their support for the value of individual perception as being important in understanding behaviour yet appear to still retain a belief in the existence of an objective reality. Thus they seem to differentiate between reality and perception. Apter (1982) for example states; 'The realities of the situation are less important than the individual's interpretation or perception of the surrounding environment, since perceptions serve as guides to behavior.' (p49).

Whether we consider it to be the individual's subjective reality or their perception that is being sought during research, any methodology chosen necessitates 'getting inside the reality of the actor in an effort to understand this reality as the actor does.' (Meltzer et al, 1975 p54). But there has yet to be discovered a method of enquiry that

allows the researcher to totally observe another's mind. As Woods (1983) states; 'Of course we shall never be able to get into another's mind to see exactly how it is working.' (p17). The closest we can get to this is to conduct informal interviews with those who are the focus of enquiry and to encourage spontaneous and open response. Cullingford (1991) states that 'What children say is the clearest and most revealing insight into their minds.' (p8). He does not attempt to play down the complexity of the mind, stating; 'Against the precision of a scientific experiment, ...the human mind is a complex, ungainly, difficult instrument,' (p7), but goes on to state that '...the most direct way to explore children's thinking is through language.' (p7).

This present research project also accepts the difficulties associated with exploring the mind and the realities of individuals, yet in terms of the behaviour of EBD pupils, believes that what goes on inside their minds is highly significant and should be explored. The language of the individual is of course also wide open to interpretation, and can be explored or recorded in a variety of different forms. Interviewing has for many researchers in this field provided the most suitable opportunity for pupils to share their perceptions, and this is the technique adopted in this present research. (See Part Two).

1.4 The Behaviour of EBD Pupils: Using the Perceptions of Pupils

'Children should be seen and not heard' is a familiar statement from Victorian times which clearly reflects the extent to which society at that time valued its children. In fact if we explore deeper into our history, we find not only a desire that children should have no voice and an almost total lack of rights for children, but also abuse and exploitation. Sadly in many parts of the world such attitudes and actions remain. Yet in the U.K. in recent years certain aspects of our society's attitude to children have changed dramatically. However, the true value of young people and their thoughts

and opinions, and the amount of power we should allow them to hold, even in terms of their own lives and decisions affecting their lives, remains controversial. The role they take in our society and the degree of status that we attribute to them is still an area of confusion for parents and professionals alike.

As a result of a few decades of developing and shifting attitudes to children, recently some serious steps have been taken to attempt to address these issues, both within the legislature and policies of Social Services and Education. Such legal changes possibly reflect a major change in the way children are viewed in our society. The 1989 Children's Act entitled children in care to see their files, resulted in booklets for the children themselves, stating their rights, and instructed courts to consider the child's own personally stated needs. In education some advances have also been made to extend such rights to all children, particularly through the 1993 Education Act, (DES,1993), although these remain less comprehensive than those of Social Services. However, documents such as DES (1983) which states that the feelings and perceptions of the child concerned should be taken into account, DES (1989b) which makes reference to seeking children's views on their education, and also certain OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) publications which require the views of the students to be sought, all reflect a positive change in our attitudes. The Code of Practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs, (DES, 1994), also describes the importance of involving the pupils in the assessment and learning process. The degree to which this involvement is possible is discussed in Rose et al (1996). Useful recent publications that present these developments in some depth include Davie et al (1996) and Davie & Galloway (1996).

These changes may reflect an important awareness of not only legal reasons for listening to children, but also as Cooper (1993a) states a moral obligation '...to *enable* pupils to articulate their views as effectively as possible.' (p129). An increase in

awareness of such obligation may have developed along with the Human Rights Movement as Gersch & Nolan (1994) state:

‘It is fair to comment that there has been a trend toward increasing the involvement of the pupils in the educational process, and indeed to listening to their point of view. Such a trend has paralleled the Human Rights Movement, and has pervaded a number of areas apart from education ...’ (p37).

Gersch et al (1993), also report on Article 12 of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states:

‘The child capable of forming their own views shall be assured the right to express those views freely, on all matters affecting him or her, and these will be given weight in accordance with the child’s age.’ (p38).

Despite its positive intentions this statement gives a clear illustration of how a subjective adult opinion may determine the true value of a young person’s statement. A judgement as to the ‘weight’ that should be given to certain perceptions suggests that certain perceptions are perhaps of less value than others. This has been briefly discussed in Section 1.3, and is of particular concern to those who are considering the use of pupils’ perspectives in educational research, policy-making and provision. Is there a danger that we pay lip service to the pupils’ opinions yet in practice do little to utilise it? Clearly there are certain standard procedures that now involve pupils in their education such as pupil profiling, Records of Achievement and special needs assessments. There are also numerous statements that stress the importance of obtaining the pupils’ perspective in various cases and situations.

Cooper (1993a) states that the pupils’ views ‘...provides us with a richly textured account that is available from no other source.’ (p129), and Branwhite (1994) agrees; ‘...the opinions which teenage children give are based upon first-hand experiences and sources of personal information not wholly available to professionals,’ (p66).

There is also an awareness that their perspectives are often very different to those of parents, teachers and other professionals and can therefore add to information being used in decision making and a better understanding of behaviour. For example Bird et al (1981) suggest that interpretations of situations made by pupils and their subsequent behavioural responses can differ widely from the perspectives of other involved parties. Cooper (1993a) states:

‘...the pupils’ perspectives taken in conjunction with other evidence can help us to identify models of good practice that enable us to develop deep insights into the nature and treatment of EBD.’ (p129).

Galloway et al (1982) attempt to eliminate the idea that differing perceptions mean that one is in some way wrong. They state; ‘The fact that pupils and teachers may describe the same event in different ways does not mean that either description is false.’ (p48). Cade (1986) also attempts to present this view. He cites Speed as seeing each of multiple viewpoints as a ‘partial’ picture, and she suggests that:

‘...a summation of all available valid viewpoints bring us to a “higher level which transcends” and leads to a more complete view of *the* reality, which is somehow there...’ (p55).

A denial of this right to contribute particularly where attempts are being made to bring about a change in the person and their behaviour may even be considered unethical. However, despite these positive statements concerning the importance of pupil perspectives and ethical concerns supporting their use in certain situations, there still remains a concern as to the true impact of such pupil involvement. Garner (1993b) acknowledges attempts to obtain pupil perspectives but expresses concern over the use to which they have been put. In his paper on exclusions and disruptive pupils he states that; ‘There has been little evidence that the views of these students, concerning their schooling have been used to develop or refine school procedures or professional practice.’ (p102). If this is the case, then reasons for this lack of impact should be discussed. It may be that we wrongly assume that by giving children the opportunity to speak we are empowering them and in some way changing their role. Troyna

(1994) points out that we should not be misled into believing that 'giving a voice' to suppressed or oppressed or disadvantaged groups is the same as empowering them. He stresses that empowerment does not follow automatically from giving a voice and there may be quite a difference between the two.

As described in Section 1.3, there are those who question the ability of young people to articulate or actually reveal perceptions that hold any value, and this may limit the desire to gain their perceptions, or to use them once found. Cullingford (1991) describes this as:

'...an ancient sense of egotism in adults. We know so much more than children and can explain so much more precisely that children are, in contrast, limited. This leads to an unexamined assumption that children do not really know what they think...' (p6).

He in fact believes from his own extensive work on pupils' perceptions of schooling that; 'Children reveal that they have the articulateness and honesty to analyse what they experience.' (p2).

O'Keeffe & Stoll (1995) question the ability of children to articulate thoughts, particularly concerning reasons for truancy. However, Cullingford (1991) again defends the child's ability and labels this as another myth. He states that many people believe that 'what children say cannot be trusted, that they are either so lazy that they cannot be bothered to articulate the whole truth, or they are trying so hard to please that they guess what the questioner wants to hear.' (p6). Of course this may simply reflect the imbalance of power in our society between adult and children and the low status of children's role. (See Calvert cited in Meighan, 1986 p34). If we expect children to say what we want to hear most of the time, then they may not feel comfortable to do otherwise in a research situation.

However, there are certainly examples of research where pupils have been very articulate yet their opinions are scrutinized in terms of their accuracy or objectivity.

As described in Section 1.3, qualitative research often suffers criticism concerning the value of subjective accounts by individuals. Qualitative research with young people or pupils who display disturbing behaviour may suffer more than any other, owing to an inability on the part of professionals to accept the subjective accounts of such pupils as being of value, (Lubbe 1986). The inability or willingness to accept the perception or subjective reality of the pupil, may be an important factor that is preventing the true value of pupil perception being recognised and utilised. Galloway et al (1982) explain this for disruptive pupils:

‘The importance teachers, sociologists and psychologists attach to pupils’ accounts of their own disruptive behaviour depends on their philosophy. At one end of the spectrum is the view that pupils cannot be sufficiently objective to give any valid or meaningful account of their own experiences at school.... at the other end of the spectrum is the view that only pupils’ accounts of disruptive behaviour should be taken seriously.’ (p47).

An example of this is revealed by Meighan cited in Galloway et al (1982), who sought the permission of some head teachers to allow pupils to give opinions of lessons given by student teachers. Although most agreed, one or two refused, ‘...claiming among other things that the pupils lacked the objectivity and maturity to make such judgements...’ (p47). Even those apparently committed to research that seeks pupil perceptions reveal contradictory statements concerning their true value. For example, Keys & Fernades (1993) who carried out a major study into mainstream school pupils perceptions of schooling, make the following statement:

‘Most of the conclusions of this study have been based on students’ perceptions of their schools and their teachers, which may not of course, always accurately reflect life in school.’ (pI-63).

They continue with:

‘However, it should be borne in mind that students’ perceptions of school and teachers are of paramount importance and are likely to be a major influence on their behaviour in school and attitudes towards education.’ (pI-63).

Further evidence of the reluctance or inability of the adult world to truly value the pupil perspective is given by Tisdall & Dawson (1994). They refer to the work of

Wade & Moore (1993) who found that in a survey of one hundred and fifteen mainstream primary and secondary school teachers, less than a third said that they took account of the views of their pupils. They state that ‘...many regarded consultation with pupils to be time consuming, valueless and irrelevant, leading to the creation of problems and a wasting of time.’ (p179).

Clearly there is an additional danger for EBD pupils that their perceptions will be considered to hold even less value, owing to their ‘disturbed’ or ‘emotional’ state. Tisdall & Dawson state that this may be the case ‘despite the child-focus claims by special education teachers.’ (p179). However, there may be other reasons as to why the child’s perspective is disregarded. Armstrong et al (1993) describe how the child’s contribution to the assessment procedure for special needs may be minimal. They suggest that this is not because those professionals involved in the assessment are unaware of, or unwilling to take into account the child’s perspective, but because there are adult clients (schools, parents, LEA’s) who have more power to affect the outcome of the assessment. In other words ‘...it may not be “poor practice” that leads to the child’s perspective being disregarded but rather the demands of a complex situation in which the needs of the competing clients ... determine the extent to which the child’s perspective is *allowed to be relevant*.’ (p130). Harris (1994) has similar concerns about the apparent opportunities for pupils to share views and perceptions as part of their Records of Achievement. She considers that their true value is limited by the greater concerns of schools, such as accountability, productivity and efficiency. She maintains that the pupils have ‘...little opportunity to exercise real autonomy over their learning...’ (p74), as they are so tightly controlled and managed.

It would seem that even if we accept the subjective reality of our pupils as being of value and not false or distorted in some way, we must also be prepared to consider them equally as clients within the system, along with the professionals, parents and schools. This is essential if we are to pay more than lip service to their opinions and

perspectives, and do more than just listen or record their views. We must value them if they are actually to be used. Perhaps it is the role of research to provide evidence to support these beliefs concerning the value of the judgements of pupils.

Research seeking pupils' perspectives is well documented, (Meighan, 1986, Kutnick & Jules, 1993, Cooper et al, 1994) and reveals a gradual increase in the amount of work being carried out in this field particularly in recent years. Although there are some surprisingly early relevant publications dating back to the 1930's through to the 1960's, most research worthy of particular note is more recent, including Hargreaves (1967), Blishen (1969), Furlong (1977), Tattum (1982), Schostak (1983), Reid (1985), Cronk (1987), Woods (1980,1990), and Ruddock et al (1995). The research in this field tends to either use pupil perspectives alongside a range of other perspectives and data as part of a particular enquiry into schooling issues, or concentrates totally on the pupils' views on one or more particular issues. Many are concerned with mainstream schooling and use the perspectives of pupils within the mainstream setting, where as fewer have been concerned with special needs pupils and their perspectives on schooling.

Interestingly however, despite these publications and what appears to be an increasing number of attempts to seek pupil perspectives throughout the 1980's and 1990's, particularly on issues of schooling, many researchers continue to state the lack of focus on such perspectives. Such researchers include Schostak & Logan (1984), Meighan (1986), Reid (1986), Scarlett (1989) and Cullingford (1991). Perhaps relative to other fields of research, that which seeks pupils' perspectives does remain under represented in the literature, or maybe its cumulative impact is simply unimpressive. Whatever the reason, many publications seem to continue to present attempts at finding pupil perspectives as a radical and innovative concept. (Independent, 1995).

It is the view of the present researcher that there is evidence for a significant amount of research having been attempted into exploring mainstream pupils' perceptions, and that

there is also an increasing interest in researching the perceptions of special education pupils, (Lloyd Smith & Davies, 1995, Davies, 1996). Indeed Tisdall & Dawson (1994) state that; 'Published investigations into exploring the views of pupils with SEN, ... have been increasing recently in their number, focus and range.' (p179). However, they do not specifically mention EBD pupils and appear to be more focused on other special needs areas. Clearly special education is a broad term, encompassing many varied needs, and there remains an inadequate interest in research that focuses on the behaviour and needs of EBD pupils and in particular research that seeks the perspectives of these pupils. However, increasing concern over the number of pupils being excluded from mainstream schools has resulted in some recent attempts to explore the perceptions of such pupils. (Johns, 1996, Cullingford & Morrison, 1996, De Pear, 1997). Nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether such publications will have any impact on policy and procedure, as earlier research does appear to have lacked serious impact, possibly for the reasons previously discussed.

It is the belief of the current researcher that the recording and analysis of the perceptions of school pupils who are being educated outside of the mainstream setting and have been described as having EBD, is an essential area of research. Only by respecting and analysing the pupils' own unique views and interpretations of their behaviour and by listening to the motives they give for that behaviour, will schools and other professionals be better able to understand their needs and offer them appropriate and successful educational support and opportunity.

This research project differs from other work that has focused on EBD pupils' perspectives, as it attempts to explore a wide range of factors that may have influenced these pupils' behaviour. Previous studies have focused specifically on the pupils' perspectives of the factors and processes that exist within the school itself that may influence the behaviour of the EBD pupil. In this study, informal interviews were carried out to encourage pupils to talk about any aspects of themselves or their lives

that they perceived as having impacted their behaviour and subsequent placement in a special education facility. It was also anticipated that a broad exploration of educational, sociological and personal factors and processes would reveal insight into the nature of the pupils' behaviour and the decisions and motives behind such behaviours.

Finally, it was an aim of this research to attempt to reveal the willingness and ability of EBD pupils to analyse their experiences and to articulate their perceptions of these experiences.

PART TWO

METHODOLOGY

As with many research studies which seek to better understand the behaviour of a group of people by enquiring into their own individual personal perspectives, this study is based firmly on interactionist theories as explained in Section 1.3. In order to meet its aims it therefore adopts methodological techniques which have been well documented and practiced in many previously published interactionist studies, including Woods (1977a,b), Tattum (1982), Cooper (1989). It attempts to utilise the methodological reports and insights presented by these previous studies in attempting to collect and analyse highly qualitative data in a way that maximises the value of this data and the conclusions drawn from it.

In Part Two of this report Chapter 2 describes the pupils who were interviewed and the educational establishments which they were attending at the time of interview, whilst Chapter 3 presents a detailed presentation of data collection techniques and analysis. In addition, despite the use of previously well established methodological techniques, new lessons were inevitably learnt throughout this study, and Part Two closes with a critical overview of the methodology used (Chapter 4).

The names of the educational establishments in which the research was carried out have been changed to ensure anonymity, as have the names of the pupils who were interviewed.

Chapter 2

The Pupils and Their Educational Settings

A total of 36 pupils, of which 31 were boys and 5 were girls, were interviewed in this study. Their ages ranged from 12 to 16 years old. They all attended one of two special educational establishments for EBD pupils, in which the researcher was working at the time of data collection. The first interviews completed took place at The Oakwood Centre, in which the researcher was at the time Teacher in Charge. During the following academic year a second set of interviews were completed at Southdown School, in which the researcher had been and was working regularly as a Supply Teacher.

These establishments were chosen as a result of the researcher having been employed as a teacher within both, and having been able to develop relationships with both staff and pupils. The importance of relationships for successful research of this nature is discussed and debated in greater depth later in the report.

Both educational establishments were educating young people with a wide range of experiences and difficulties manifesting themselves in a broad spectrum of disturbing behaviours. Thus for the purpose of the research, and in order to fulfil its aims, that of enquiring into the behaviour of EBD pupils, The Oakwood Centre and Southdown School were considered suitable sites for conducting pupil interviews for data collection. They both offered a potential sampling group from which valuable, pertinent data could be collected.

2.1 The Oakwood Centre

At the time of the data collection, The Oakwood Centre was a small Educational Centre, located in Southern England, and functioning as part of the a Home and Hospital Teaching Service for that area. There were approximately 25 to 30 pupils attending the Centre at any one time. They were boys and girls with ages ranging from 12 to 17.

The Centre had recently evolved from its former role as a hospital school, changing its location and its name. It had been located within the grounds of a local psychiatric hospital, where its original function had been to meet the educational needs of adolescents admitted to the adjacent adolescent psychiatric unit. With an increasing number of young people being referred directly to the school via the Schools' Psychological Service, and a dwindling number of patients being admitted to the psychiatric unit, the school had been gradually losing its hospital school status, and was providing more of a service to the needs of pupils in the wider community.

Consequently, when the adolescent psychiatric unit was forced to relocate to within a new hospital site, the hospital school became The Oakwood Centre, acquiring a community based site a few miles from the unit, and becoming a part of the Home and Hospital Tuition Service for the area. The Centre consisted of two buildings, one an old house and one a prefabricated purpose built unit. It was located in a primarily white, suburban residential area, consisting of large council housing estates and middle class green belt housing, close to a major shopping area. There were three full-time teaching staff, including the Teacher in Charge, two part-time teachers, and a small number of tutors, employed hourly by the Home and Hospital Tuition Service (HHTS), who supported individual pupils as required. An office for the HHTS was also located at this site.

At the time of interviewing, the pupils who were attending The Oakwood Centre were either psychiatric patients who were referred to the Centre via the HHTS as a result of their admission to the nearby adolescent psychiatric unit, or were young people from the local area, whose needs were not being met in the mainstream setting and who had also been referred to the HHTS.

Those who were patients at the psychiatric unit only attended the Centre from 10am - 12 noon each weekday, being transported to and from the Centre by bus. Their period on role was determined by their length of stay at the unit which was a decision taken by the psychiatrists involved. They could have been referred to the Centre for education at any time during the academic year, and their length of time on role could have been anything from a few weeks to a year or more. Upon discharge from the hospital, these pupils often returned to their own mainstream school, or in cases where education and schooling had been considered a major factor in their difficulties, they may have moved into a special education placement. Such pupils often remained at The Oakwood Centre for an assessment period during which time a special needs statement was written prior to a move into another special setting. For some who were housed locally, The Oakwood Centre was often considered to be the most suitable placement.

During the period of interviewing there were approximately 20 patients from the psychiatric unit attending The Oakwood Centre at any one time. They were girls and boys with ages ranging from 13 to 17 +. They had been referred to the unit, and subsequently The Oakwood Centre, from a wide catchment area determined by Health Authority boundaries, which encompassed suburban and city housing. These pupils had been psychiatrically diagnosed, upon referral, as psychotic, depressed/manic, suicidal, obsessional, phobic, anorexic/eating disordered, conduct disordered, and others. They displayed a wide range of difficult, disturbing behaviours, including withdrawal, self-mutilation, anti-social aggressive actions, and school refusal. Most of

these young people had been referred to the hospital by medical professionals or Social Services, and did not have a statement of special educational needs on arrival.

Given the potentially transient nature of their attendance at The Oakwood Centre, the minimal two hours of time allocated daily to their education by the medical staff, the varied and often severe nature of the problems experienced by these pupils, and their wide ranging academic ability, educational goals were difficult to set and achieve. For some, liaison with their own mainstream school was necessary in order that their time be spent completing GCSE course work. For others who were younger or for whom a return to mainstream school was unlikely, The Oakwood Centre timetable provided small group tuition, of approximately 8 pupils, in basic subject areas, such as Maths, English, Geography, History, Art and Personal and Social Development.

Those pupils who were not psychiatric patients, of which there were 8 to 12 in number at any one time throughout the period of the research, were either ex-patients from the hospital or referrals via the HHTS. These pupils were referred to the HHTS from Educational Psychologists, Educational Welfare Officers, members of the medical profession, or Social Services. They were in most cases living within the local area, yet some out of County referrals were also accepted. Those pupils attending during the research period reflected the mixed socioeconomic status of people living in that particular area of the county. They also reflected the lack of ethnic diversity in that area, all being of white, Caucasian background. They were boys and girls, of wide ranging ability, all aged between 12 and 16 years old. They were referred throughout the academic year, either with or without an educational statement of special need. Some of these pupils were referred specifically for a temporary period of assessment prior to statementing and a more permanent appropriate placement, which could include the Centre itself. Others were referred with a completed statement for them to attend The Oakwood Centre. These were generally pupils with less than two years of schooling remaining. Reasons for the statementing and for referral of these pupils

included exclusions from mainstream schools, school refusal, and in a small number of cases the placement of a care order on the child, resulting in need for revised education requirements.

These pupils attended the Centre from 9am until 2.30pm each day using public transport or transport provided by the LEA. At the time of the research the Centre was providing education for these pupils which included basic academic areas of study adhering as closely as possible to National Curriculum guidelines. The Centre was working towards offering pupils the opportunity to complete GCSE coursework and exams in certain subjects, yet without losing its emphasis on personal and social issues, raising self esteem and the opportunity to develop social and communication skills. The Centre was certainly not an academically orientated establishment at that time, but was developing under the guidance of the HHTS to limit academic disadvantage to pupils attending the Centre on a long-term basis.

Interview data was collected from a total of 16 pupils attending The Oakwood Centre, 5 of whom were girls. The youngest was 12, the oldest 16 years old. Selection of these pupils was made using the following criteria prior to commencement of the interviewing:

(a) Pupils at the Centre who were not currently patients at the psychiatric unit were invited to participate in the research. The reason for that decision was threefold. Firstly the basic practical difficulties involved in interviewing patients, given their very limited period of attendance each day at the Centre. Secondly, a concern for the patients' ability and willingness to participate in an in depth personal enquiry aimed at data collection, which may have led to confusion and anxiety when combined with the extensive therapeutic interviewing they were receiving as part of their treatment programme at the hospital. Finally, these pupils had not all been officially labelled as EBD by the education authorities, having been diagnosed and referred largely through

medical channels, although many were certainly displaying EBD type behaviours related to their schooling.

(b) All non-patient pupils who attended the Centre during the academic year in which interviewing was planned, were invited to participate in the research after one month on role. This decision was made in an attempt to eliminate problems associated with selection of specific pupils for interview. Thus, selection was primarily determined by which pupils were admitted to the Centre during the year in which interviews took place. Pupils were given every opportunity to refuse to participate, in which case potentially the perspectives of certain pupils could have been lost. However, all pupils invited to participate at The Oakwood Centre agreed to do so, eliminating that possibility.

(c) The parents or guardians of pupils eligible and willing to participate in the research were informed of the research aims and procedures in writing, and no pupil was interviewed if there was any objection from their carers. Letters were sent to parents or guardians of those pupils already attending the Centre at the beginning of the school year during which interviewing was to take place. For those new pupils admitted during the year, letters were sent one month after they commenced attendance. There were no objections from parents or guardians to their children participating, so the sample was not in fact influenced in any way.

2.2 Southdown School

Southdown School was an EBD day school, located in the South of England, educating 61 boys, with ages ranging from 7 to 16 years of age. The school was based in a purpose built building on a wooded site, yet central to extensive predominantly working-class council housing estates in an urban district. There were

11 full time teaching staff, including the Head, Deputy, School Counsellor, and a staff member responsible for each year group in addition to individual subject areas. Three members of staff taught the junior end of the school, year groups 4 to 6. There were also a number of Teacher's Assistants attached to specific year groups.

Boys attending Southdown School had all been statemented and referred to the school as a result of difficulties within the mainstream setting, often combined with other social problems. They could be referred and accepted at any time during the school year, and into any year group. Time on role for the boys who attended Southdown appeared to largely depend on the success or failure of reintegration to a mainstream school. For pupils of an appropriate age, and whose behaviour suggested the possibility of success, reintegration was planned and attempted. There were boys at Southdown who had been on role for almost the entire length of their school careers, and the majority of pupils at the time of the research were not attempting reintegration.

The boys lived either locally, making their own way to school on public transport, or were brought to school daily by taxi from homes in other towns in the area, yet within the County LEA boundaries. They were mostly from white, working class homes, and a small number were in care. The majority of the boys had been statemented as a result of disruptive and often aggressive behaviours in school. Some had been in a number of different mainstream settings, whilst others had been in other special needs establishments such as EBD residential or hospital/psychiatric schools and units. There were also a very small number of pupils who had been school refusers, but in most cases where truancy or refusal had occurred, aggressive, anti-social and disruptive behaviours had accompanied or preceded it.

The boys attended school from 9am until 3pm, Monday to Friday. The senior school day commenced with a staff and pupil meeting, with the remainder being entirely scheduled for National Curriculum subjects. The junior school pupils remained primarily with their own class teacher throughout the day, functioning almost

independently from the senior school staff and pupils. There were three junior school classes, and five senior school classes, one for each year group. The pupils were of very wide ranging ability. Some had learning difficulties and had previously attended other special school placements for MLD students.

20 from the school were interviewed from a total of 35 in year groups 7 to 11. All pupils in each year were invited to participate and although none refused, a number were not interviewed owing to being absent or unavailable at the time of interviewing. The sample was therefore influenced by availability. Younger pupils were not included in the interviewing as it was decided to concentrate on pupils of secondary school age. A letter was sent to parents and guardians of all year 7 to 11 pupils informing them of the nature and aims of the research, and although they were invited to comment if they did not wish their child to participate, none did so. Thus the sample was not influenced in this way.

Chapter 3

Data Collection and Analysis

3.1 The Interviews

Data collection for a qualitative, ethnographic study such as this one, often if not usually, involves some form of interviewing. (See Section 1.3). With its roots in anthropological studies of peoples' lifestyles and cultures, ethnography has also often involved participant and non-participant observation, in which the researcher closely observes or takes part in the social life he or she is researching (Davies, 1984, Woods, 1986). Additionally, in educational studies, interviewing and observation may also be accompanied, though rarely replaced, by questionnaires, (Cooper, 1989) or other written material such as essays (Kutnick & Jules, 1993).

In order to meet the aims of this particular study, the method of data collection used was interviewing. Although observation of pupils was an unavoidable aspect of the research as the researcher was involved on a daily basis within the schools, the source of data for the analysis came entirely from taped interviews, and a few untaped conversations. The reasons behind this choice of methodology are explained further in this Section. (p50).

Owing to the very broad aims of the project and the fact that pupils' perceptions of many varied and unspecific issues were of value in meeting these aims, the interview style adopted and its degree of structure had to be carefully considered. Interviewing, although extensively used in much interactionist research, is a more complex mode of communication than it is often given credit for, and Kvale (1996) provides a valuable comprehensive overview of the use of interviewing in qualitative research. As Briggs

(1986) states; 'Although interviews constitute the central mode of data collection in social sciences and linguistics, they are probably the least understood.' (p114). It is perhaps tempting to consider the interview as no more than conversation. Rich (1968) considers that we are not doing anything new when we interview people, that we have been interviewing since we were born. He suggests that in interviewing we need to modify our usual approach to people, without trying to develop a whole new range of behaviours. Others have even suggested that therapeutic interaction such as psychotherapy is little more than conversation. Cooper et al (1994) quote Brown & Pedder as saying that psychotherapy '...is essentially a conversation which involves listening to and talking with those in trouble with the aim of helping them to understand and resolve their predicament.' (p62).

Adelman (1981) however, believes that there are certainly important differences between conversation and interviewing, particularly in the fact that in conversation there are no fixed turns as to who speaks at what time. Briggs (1986) reinforces this point stating that 'interviews impose different kinds of constraints on speech than ordinary conversation does.' (p13). He considers that interviewees use a more 'careful speech' than their day to day casual speech.

Clearly there is a danger that interviewing can be an unsatisfactory way to obtain data, being artificial and contrived and making really authentic interpretation of what the interviewees are saying very difficult to achieve. However for the purpose of this research it was used as a tool for data collection and its limitation are recognised and discussed. Thus, for the purpose of this research, interviewing was selected as the most appropriate method of data collection, yet not without appreciation of the fact that the completion of successful interviewing requires certain preparation and skill, beyond that of casual conversation. In addition, the analysis of data acquired from interviewing demands stringent awareness of the context of the interview, and the interviewee's unique interpretation of questions asked. This awareness of the whole

context of the interview and the effect that the researcher is having on the situation from which he or she is extracting information is called reflexivity, and is an essential principal that should not be ignored by a researcher using interviews to collect data. (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983).

For the purpose of this study, a type of interview style referred to by Powney & Watts (1987) as an informant style of interviewing was adopted. This style of interviewing allows the interviewee the freedom to respond and give information as s/he sees fit, as opposed to being expected to respond more rigidly to a fixed set of questions, pre-set by the interviewer. This latter type of interview, Powney & Watts refer to as a respondent style. Others have attempted to describe and clarify different interview styles including Cohen & Manion (1980) who describe interviews in terms of a spectrum of different approaches. This spectrum ranges from formal and closed, where the interview is conducted rather as a verbal questionnaire, through to a more open, informal style, and finally into a non-directive interview style, based on a therapeutic (Freudian) style. With the intention of this project being to encourage pupils to openly talk about themselves, their feelings, experiences and opinions, clearly an informal, informant style of interview was appropriate.

A possible close connection between informal interviewing and therapeutic interaction with EBD pupils is raised by Cooper et al (1994). They suggest that ‘to gain an understanding of students’ phenomenological world’ (p111), some counselling skills of a humanistic nature would be useful. It certainly appeared throughout this research project that the whole process of informal interviewing has a potential therapeutic value for the pupils involved. The possible value for them in participating in this research, and the whole issue of how the pupils interpret the research process will be discussed in a later Section.

Defining the goal or aim of an interviewer in research of this nature is well described by Logan (1984), who states:

‘ The skill of the practitioner consists not in making him answer questions but in making him talk freely and thus encouraging the flow of his spontaneous tendencies instead of diverting it into the artificial channels of set question and answer.’ (p19).

However, spontaneous free flowing talking by the interviewee can result in immense difficulties when analysing the data, a task that is dangerously easy to underestimate. Such data would be obtained by the use of what Patton (1980) describes as a totally naturalistic approach to research that he calls inductive. Such an approach is open-ended and discovery orientated, with patterns, insight and theory being grounded in the data. This is opposed to a deductive approach whereby very specific issues are explored and the aim is more one of verification of already proposed theory. Research can of course move between these two extremes. For the purpose of this research an approach was devised whereby a number of broad areas of enquiry were identified, and a series of standard trigger questions associated with each area were devised. Such an approach may be similar to the ‘Interview Guide Approach’ described by Patton (1980), who suggests preparation of a list of issues or questions to ensure that basically the same or appropriate information is obtained from each interview. Sitton et al (1983) also describe the use of an interview guide, likening it to a shopping list, which helps the interviewer to obtain the important ‘items’ but without being too concerned about the order in which they are obtained.

The trigger questions in this research project were carefully worded to encourage pupils to talk about certain specific issues, yet also to drift in and out of various areas of enquiry as they saw relevant. (See Appendix). Trigger questions were used to begin an interview and then at appropriate points they were used to prompt pupils to talk. The broad areas of enquiry that were considered valuable were:

- (a) The history and nature of the pupils’ schooling difficulties.
- (b) Aspects of school and schooling associated with the pupils’ difficulties. (Including attitudes towards special needs provision).

- (c) The significance of social, family or life events in the pupils' difficulties.
- (d) The psychological or physiological aspects of the pupils' difficulties and their attitudes to treatment or professional support.
- (e) The behaviour of the pupils in response to their difficulties.

The order in which certain questions were posed was dependent upon the individual pupil and their initial responses. There was clearly a need to initially relax the interviewee and build some kind of rapport, both prior to and during the interaction and the appropriate, tactful use of questions was important in achieving this.

Spradley (1979) describes this rapport building during ethnographic interviewing as involving four stages, which ultimately lead to the interviewee becoming more and more involved in the interview process, requiring less and less prompting and guidance. The four stages that he proposes the pupil moves through are:

- (i) Apprehension, when there needs to be a careful use of descriptive questioning, with the goal of getting the informant talking.
- (ii) Exploration, during which period the interviewer should avoid too much pressure such as the use of 'Why?' or 'What do you mean?' questions.
- (iii) Co-operation, when the interviewee begins to understand the goals of the interview and needs less guidance or prompting.
- (iv) Participation, a period when if more than one interview is being carried out with a particular interviewee, that person actually thinks about the interviews between sessions and does some of his or her own analysis.

The extent to which the pupils in this present study were able to move through these stages was variable, but certainly the appropriate use of trigger questions and the sensitive exploration and introduction of specific areas of enquiry, was an important issue requiring judgement and sensitivity. No one interview was ever the same as

another in terms of questioning, consistent with the total individuality of each pupil and their own individual needs and responses. Trigger questions were refined and modified for individual pupils as interview schedules progressed. However, in each case the opening area of enquiry chosen was that of early memories of school, an area that most interviewees felt comfortable discussing. More difficult, sensitive issues were raised later when the researcher/interviewee relationship had developed. The relationship between each pupil and the researcher was also of significance to the outcome or success of each interview. In fact this important issue has been discussed at length by many whom have attempted to use interviewing to better understand pupils and their behaviour. Measor (1985) questions whether the quality of data is dependent on the quality of the researchers' relationship with the interviewee or whether in fact 'bias' in the data is avoided by there being a distance between them. However, Ball (1985) considers trust and a relationship with the pupils as essential. In this present research project no interviews were undertaken until a degree of relationship building had taken place. In both schools the researcher had been in daily contact with the pupils being interviewed for at least one month as explained in the following Section.

3.2 Interview Schedule and Procedure

The Oakwood Centre

The interviewing of pupils who attended The Oakwood Centre took place over a period of one academic year. For those pupils already established at the Centre, this interviewing commenced at the start of the Autumn term, but for new pupils who were referred at different times throughout the year, interviewing started approximately one month after their admission.

For each pupil, an introduction was given on an individual basis. The main purpose of the introduction was to give them the aims of the project in a relaxed and informal way, and to invite them to participate. They were informed that the interviews would be an opportunity for them to talk about the experiences that they had had in school, the reasons for the problems they may have had in school, their behaviour and their lives in general. They were encouraged to understand that their participation and what they had to say might help others like themselves in the future. Certain issues were also discussed during this introduction, including the pupils' right to not be interviewed, or to stop an interview at any time. Also, issues of confidentiality and anonymity were explained, as well as the role of the researcher as being very different to that of Teacher in Charge.

The pupils were told that the timing and location of the interviews could be negotiated, and that the researcher would suggest times but that they were not obligated to meet these times. The need to record interviews using a dictaphone was explained to the pupils along with their right to control the machine as necessary. Their joint ownership and access to the tapes was also explained. Finally, a written summary of each introduction was made during and immediately after each discussion, in order to record pupil reaction, body language or questions asked.

Following the introduction, each pupil involved in the interviewing was interviewed as often as time available allowed, coupled with their own enthusiasm. The number of interviews recorded with any one pupil, ranged from one to four, with each interview being of one half to one hour's duration. Various locations and times for interviewing were chosen. Usually interviewing took place during class time, rather than during breaks or afternoon periods, when less formal or less academic activities were taking place. This decision was made primarily as a way to encourage the voluntary participation of the pupils, although clearly it required negotiation with the teachers at the Centre. Additionally the use of class time was chosen as a way to emphasise the

seriousness of the research. Powney & Watts (1987) also recognise this important point when they state: ‘...interviews gained a certain prestige by being allowed to be conducted during working hours.’ (p109). This issue is in fact re-addressed in Section 7.3.

Each interview was recorded using a dictaphone, and written comments were also recorded immediately after each interview, with a particular emphasis on the pupils’ mood, body language and the context of the interview. The context included any particular recent events that had influenced the pupils’ attitude to the researcher, or the interview process. The overall atmosphere within the Centre was also recorded, as it was found that this could have a significant effect on the outcome of any interview.

Interviewing at The Oakwood Centre continued for three terms, concluding at the end of the Summer term.

Southdown School

The interviewing of pupils who attended Southdown School took place over a period of one term, in the academic year after the collection of data from The Oakwood Centre. The specific method of selection of pupils for interview has been described in Section 2.2.

In this setting the pupils were given the same introduction as were the pupils at The Oakwood Centre, but in year groups of approximately 7 pupils. This decision was made in conjunction with staff at the school who considered this less disruptive to the pupils and classes than individual introductions. All those issues described for The Oakwood Centre pupil introductions were included in the introduction to pupils at Southdown, including their rights as participants and the role of the researcher as different to that of a teacher.

Individual introductions were only given to the few pupils who were admitted to the school after the year group introductions had taken place. However, these introductions and the invitation to new pupils to participate were not made until they had attended for approximately one month. This time allowed the researcher to develop some form of relationship with the pupil prior to interview.

At Southdown a series of interviews was not possible due to time restraints and disruption to pupil study. Each pupil was interviewed once, with each interview being of one half to one hour's duration. Interviews were completed in various locations and at different times, but always during class time. As at The Oakwood Centre each interview was recorded using a dictaphone and in addition written comments were noted immediately after the interview. These notes were taken to minimise loss of important non-verbal information from the pupils, which Powney & Watts (1987), quoting previous research, estimate to be 60% of the information available from an interview. (p94).

3.3 Piloting and Validation of Interviews and Data

Following the drafting of trigger questions and prior to the commencement of interviews, two teaching colleagues were asked to assess the suitability of the questions. They were asked to place a particular emphasis on the potential of the questions to elicit responses from pupils that would reveal data relevant to the five areas of enquiry, and more importantly, the overall aims of the research. Comments were noted and minor adjustments were made.

Following this, one pilot interview was carried out with a pupil who was not to be involved in the study. The purpose of this interview was to simply check the functioning and use of the taping equipment, assess suitable positioning for the

interviewee in relation to the equipment and to gain some insight and confidence into the value of the trigger questions in generating appropriate responses. In particular it was used to give some indication of the range of responses to expect from the various planned questions.

The value of completing a longer pilot run for the purpose of perfecting trigger questions and for practicing interview technique, was considered at length by the researcher. However, despite acknowledging its value in improving certain aspects of the interviews and the quality of the data collection, it was decided not to pursue further piloting for the following reasons:

- (i) Interview skills could not be acquired quickly, or during the period of a brief pilot run. They would inevitably develop throughout the period of the research. Logan (1984) states ‘ ... and only through self-monitoring can s/he hope to improve practice.’ (p19), suggesting that improvement in interviewing skill is personal and an ongoing process.
- (ii) Each interview would be totally different to any other owing to the individuality of each pupil. This meant that the assessment of trigger questions or questioning style based on the responses of a small number of pupils would be of minimal value. Again, Logan (1984) explains:

‘So how much has been learned of interviewing technique? Never enough - each interview is new and one cannot rely on either previous assumptions or one’s complacency due to experience.’ (p24).
- (iii) Difficulty involved in gaining access to pupils for a pilot study who were not to be involved in the main study.

In addition to self-monitoring of interview skills, it was also considered important to obtain validation of the interviewing to ensure that bias or leading questioning could be eliminated and that the personal views and goals of the researcher were not interfering with the questioning. For this purpose a teacher colleague and also an Educational

Psychologist who did not know the pupils, were asked to listen to some early recorded interviews. The outcome of this was valuable as it helped the researcher to focus on a somewhat more direct approach to questioning, as opposed to being too open ended during the interviews. The comments encouraged the researcher to focus on the trigger questions and to be aware of the dangers of being so concerned with not leading the pupil and indulging in leading questioning that in fact the pupil was not being sufficiently focused on relevant issues. It was also useful to have someone point out the dangers of concentrating purely on the negative aspects of the pupils' life or schooling. It was made clear that it was important to offer the opportunity to the pupil to raise negative issues or experiences as they wished, yet not to make assumptions for them as to what they perceived as important for the purpose of the interview.

Logan (1984) writes of the inadequacy of many researchers:

‘...few people know how to pose relevant questions and allow meaningful response. Too often, it seems, the various pundits have their answers already and seldom *listen*.’ (p17).

With these criticisms in mind, interviews were commenced and technique was carefully monitored as the interview period progressed.

3.4 Data Analysis

In order to meet the aims of this research, analysis of data was based on a grounded approach or Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Such an approach allows a researcher freedom from existing theories or the necessity to propose a specific hypothesis. Any new theory resulting from the research must be explored and revealed from within the data, where it is ‘grounded’. Glaser & Strauss (1967) define

this as; 'The discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research.' (p2).

Cooper (1989) utilises a grounded approach through a systematic process of 'progressive focusing'. He describes this process as allowing the analysis of large amounts of highly qualitative data obtained from interviews, whereby recurrent themes within the data are categorised, tested against further data, and revised again, until all the data can be placed within specific categories. From this point theory can be proposed. However, for the purpose of this present research project, categorisation was initially introduced to the data by the defining of broad areas of enquiry and the use of specific trigger questions within these areas during interview. These areas of enquiry and trigger questions therefore provided a framework for the analysis, structuring the data, at least partially, to allow the pupils' perceptions to be focused towards the aims of the project. It is important to note, however, that the data collection and its analysis was an ongoing, evolving process, with neither being carried out independently of the other. The trigger questions were revised and reviewed as the data collection and analysis progressed simultaneously.

From each interview, data was selected which was considered relevant to each or any of the areas of enquiry. Each transcript or tape was scrutinised by the researcher in relation to each area, and relevant comments were recorded as full quotations, with a view to developing theory and using the quotations as necessary to reinforce any general conclusions drawn. As Glaser & Strauss (1967) suggest, Grounded Theory is '...illustrated by characteristic examples of data.' (p5). Selecting the evidence to actually display was not a straight forward issue. Cullingford (1991) summarises the difficulties that this selection poses. 'The question was how much repetitive evidence to give, and how to make sure that the actual quotations were as representative as possible.' (p12). In the case of this particular project, wherever possible all relevant

quotations were presented. Thus the number of quotations presented is possibly a good indication of the potential generalisability of the data.

The first interview completed with each of the pupils who were attending The Oakwood Centre at the commencement of the data collection period was fully transcribed, but as the analysis developed by categorisation of data within the areas of enquiry, data from further interviews were selected directly from tapes. Each transcript or tape was read or listened to many times over during this selection process.

At this initial stage of data categorisation, interpretation of data was kept to a minimum, although clearly even basic selection of data involved a degree of interpretation of the comments and their meaning. More detailed analysis and interpretation of data proceeded as the amount of data emerging under each area of enquiry increased. This increasing quantity of relevant data allowed the development of theoretical proposals and conclusions.

Clearly the danger with this style of data selection from interviews is that of selecting data which simply fits the researcher's needs. As Logan (1984) states:

‘I would suggest that educational researchers are guilty of falling into a ...trap. Specifically they use pupil data to fit pre-existing categories and theories.’
(p17).

To avoid such a problem and to ensure reliability, the data selected from three interviews along with the complete transcripts were given to a colleague. They were asked to assess the extent to which the researcher's selection of data was accurate, unbiased, comprehensive and relevant to the various areas of enquiry. Fortunately, no criticism of this data selection was put forward, although the uniqueness of each interview tape and the selection of data from it, did mean that there constantly remained the possibility of important data being overlooked, or a biased selection being made in certain cases. This is accepted as a criticism of this style of methodology.

There was clearly a need to avoid the problem as stated by Powney & Watts (1987) that; ‘The interviewer may only hear the responses that are compatible with the picture which is taking shape.’ (p37). Briggs (1986) further describes this problem by explaining how the researcher has to decide from the data what is correct and objective, possibly tending to favour responses from interviewees that bear a direct relationship to the ‘reality’ in question. Brigg’s concerns are further explained in Chapter 4.

The development of conclusions and significant generalisable statements from the data once categorised, was greatly influenced by the degree to which the frequency of similar statements or responses to trigger questions was considered important. In Cooper’s (1989) thesis, he considers ‘...an attitude does not have to be shared in order for it to be considered significant...’ (p164). However, most researchers attempting to analyse relatively large quantities of qualitative data using a grounded theory approach, do to a large degree consider the generalisability of data when constructing theory or conclusions. Powney & Watts (1987) ask the question; ‘To what extent can any one individual be said to be representative of a group?’ (p189). For the purpose of this project, internal validity, achieved by attempting to minimise personal views and bias in questioning on the part of the researcher, was considered essential. However, external validity or the generalisability of data, was not a pre-requisite for a particular perception or statement to be used and considered of value. Nevertheless, in order to clarify the nature of the data being presented, wherever possible a clear indication of the number of pupils making a particular comment or having a similar viewpoint was presented. It is also important to recognise that the non-standardised nature of the interviews, beyond basic trigger questions, did not make any degree of quantitative analysis particularly easy. Perhaps it is important to propose at this stage, that qualitative research by its nature does attempt to reveal and illustrate the value of individuality and uniqueness. Thus, this project attempts, with its analysis, to reveal

both the commonly held perceptions of more than one of the pupils, without rejecting relevant data given by individuals.

Clearly any cross-checking of data was difficult, particularly in a project where insight into individual's perception was the primary goal. Triangulation to check validity of data using a number of different perspectives was not attempted, as the subjective views of the pupils was taken as valuable in itself. (See Section 1.3). The only attempt at cross-checking that was possible was when pupils were interviewed more than once, and trigger questions relating to the various areas of enquiry were repeated.

Transcripts from these interviews provided valuable opportunity to validate the consistency of individual perception, but also allowed for a record of changing perception, particularly for pupils who were interviewed over a period of one whole year.

Further comment regarding the limitations of the methodology, and the concerns regarding the methodology that may influence the significance of the data and the conclusions drawn from it, are discussed in the next Chapter.

Chapter 4

A Critical Overview of the Methodology

It is accepted that there are major drawbacks, problems and criticisms associated with highly qualitative research and several limitations will be noted in this Chapter with special regard to this present research project. Interviewing itself offers extensive opportunity for criticism as a data collection technique. However, if as the researcher believes, the pupils' perceptions are a valuable resource in improving the chances of reducing the number of pupils labelled EBD, or improving provision for such pupils, then it is difficult to find a preferable alternative technique with no faults of its own.

Perhaps, as Measor & Woods (1984) suggest, there is a need to utilise more than one technique in attempting to obtain insight into pupils' experiences. They state; 'As regards the "depths" of pupil experience, to arrive at an appreciation of children's inner-most thoughts and feelings, and to gain a picture of their subjective experience, we must employ a range of ethnographic techniques...' (p3).

In fact during their research Measor & Woods used unstructured interviews and observation to achieve their goals, and also interviewed individual pupils a number of times. This they consider essential in avoiding the powerful influence of the context of the interview on the data collected. Their rationale was to be sure that they were 'not simply capturing a mood of the moment, dependent on a single context.' (p3).

Cooper (1993a) states similar concerns regarding the authenticity of data collected by interview. He states; 'We must be aware that the nature of the pupils' perceptions will be influenced by the circumstances that prevail when we ask for them.' (p129).

He provides a comprehensive list of measures to ensure authenticity of data that can go

some way towards accounting for the many variables which can influence pupil responses in interview situations. (Cooper, 1993a,c).

Kutnick & Jules (1993) advocate the use of an essay-based strategy as a less inhibiting method of obtaining data on pupil experience. Following their collection of one thousand six hundred and thirty three essays from pupils they state:

‘We conclude that only a free response such as an essay-based strategy is able to elicit the widest possible range of pupil concepts because it allows the child to reflect on experience before responding and because it does not inhibit various articulations within the face-to-face interaction between child and adult interviewer or teacher.’ (p402).

This is certainly an interesting proposal, which offers an opportunity for researchers to avoid pupils having to face the inhibiting and possibly intimidating interview situation. However it assumes that writing on a piece of paper is easier and less daunting than a conversation, which may not be the case, particularly for pupils of low academic ability. Kutnick & Jules do actually admit that; ‘An essay writing strategy assumes, however, that the child can effectively communicate his/her thoughts, feelings and ideas using this medium.’ (p402). More commonly utilised in this type of research are written questionnaires used in conjunction with face-to-face interviews. Cooper (1989) used pupil and teacher responses to questionnaires, after interviewing pupils, to add a quantifiable element to the data, and to test certain conclusions, to see if the interview data was generalisable.

After considering the value of written response approaches to research of this nature, both of a structured questionnaire nature and of an unstructured essay nature, and also recognising the value of informal observations of pupils, the present researcher decided that the use of interview would be the most efficient and appropriate way of collecting data for this particular research project. It was considered that a very open ended, free response essay would provide comprehensive data only from a percentage of pupils with adequate writing skills, which given the population being questioned was

not high. With regards to the use of a structured questionnaire, it was decided that this would serve only to create quantifiable data concerning pre-conceived theories held by the researcher. With the aims of this research being heavily focused on revealing the complex individuality of each pupil as well as seeking generalisable data, informal interviews were therefore carefully considered as being the most appropriate method of data collection. It is not denied that interesting data may have been obtained by written response techniques, but such data would possibly have served the purpose only of reinforcing the broader generalisable nature of the pupils' experiences. Thus it may not have allowed an expansion in the understanding of those aspects of the individual pupil's lives that they would possibly find more difficult to reflect upon without verbal prompting.

However, quality of data is not guaranteed from informal interviews. As previously described, interviewing is not an easy task. In Powney & Watts (1987) it is quoted as being '...a task of daunting complexity.' (p37). Throughout this research it was the intention of the researcher to be willing to constantly improve interview technique, in order to ensure validation, reliability and quality of data. Clearly the development of interviewing skills is an ongoing process. Despite careful planning of interview trigger questions, and extensive reading on the use of different interview styles, it became apparent as the data collection proceeded that no amount of preparation can alter the fact that the success or quality of the interview and its resultant data, lies with the researcher's ability to use his/her own personality to create a relaxed conversational style of communication. The ability to relax the interviewee, to subtly and sensitively link the cues and statements from them with the aims of the research, and to nurture relevant avenues of conversation, was central to success. In addition, being able to quickly and accurately judge the value of a statement or theme during an interview and to decide whether, or how to develop it with the pupil, was an essential skill. Such a skill is not an easy one to acquire considering that the true value of a particular

statement may not be obvious until later analysis. These skills are described by Logan (1984) who quotes Zweig as saying:

‘...the art of interviewing is personal in its character, as the basic tool of the interviewer is in fact his own personality ... he has to discover his own personal truth in interviewing, how to be friendly with people without embarrassing them, how to learn from them without being too inquisitive, how to be interesting without talking too much, how to take great interest in their troubles without patronising them, how to inspire confidence without perplexing them.’ (p19).

Clearly the aim is to record ‘authentic’ data, free from adulteration and as close to the pupils’ own thoughts, views and perspective as possible. The degree to which this is achievable, and was achieved in this project can only be a matter of speculation.

Briggs (1986) debates the possibility of acquiring Brenner’s Individual True Value (ITV) response in an interview (p21), which is basically a social ‘fact’, achieved when all independent variables, such as race, sex, political views, personality have been removed. Clearly it is debatable whether such ‘facts’ can ever be elicited from an interview and this poses one of the greatest problems for social researchers. This is a theme that has been explored to some extent in Section 1.3 where issues of reality construction and the ability of a researcher to reveal another’s reality, were discussed. Even with a well developed expertise in interviewing there still remains the unavoidable problems of interpretation of the spoken word, the limitations of pupil vocabulary and the manner in which any interviewee frames questions put to him or her. Logan (1984) quotes Piaget who considered ‘...the real problem is to know how he (the subject) frames the question to himself or if he frames it at all.’ (p19).

Each interview in the present research was analysed at least three times to attempt to ensure that analysis was comprehensive and accurate. However, accurate interpretation may have been affected even by the simple task of transcribing the spoken word to paper, and the loss of body language and intimation that results from

such transcription. As Kvale (1996) states; 'The interviews are living conversations – beware of transcripts.' (p182).

One of the problems with the analysis of the data was presenting the pupils' perspectives in a way that maintained their own account, yet also introduced the interpretation and understanding of the researcher. The pupil data from interviews loosely fell into two categories. Firstly, pure basic accounts of events and actions and the pupils' observation of them. Secondly, pupils' own analysis and interpretation of events, experiences and behaviour, often with a meaning or motive expressed. All levels of pupils' accounts were utilised in analysis and selected quotations were used to illustrate and represent the pupil voice. The most difficult thing was to ensure that the researcher's own analysis was not overriding the pupils' personal subjective reality. Faraday & Plummer (1979) make a useful attempt at describing the problem experienced by the researcher in attempting to probe beneath the surface of the data to gain a broader interpretation of the words spoken by the pupils, and its subsequent presentation. They state:

'The problem of analysis is ... the extent to which the sociologist progressively imposes his or her second order constructs upon the understanding of the subject, or the extent to which the subject's own rational construction of the world is grasped and apprehended in its purest form.' (p786).

They suggest that there is a continuum of 'contamination.' (p787). On this continuum, at one end the subjects' pure accounts are of value, without any imposition of analysis by the researchers. At the other end lies the researcher's pure account of theories generated, where use of subject material is almost non-existent. In this case the researcher generates theory independently, using only carefully selected quotations from the subject interviews to give, as they say, 'spurious support' (p787) to his or her own theories.

It was hoped in this present research to achieve a degree of analysis which lies somewhere between these two extremes. To carefully bridge the gap between the

academic world and its acceptable written genre and the pupils' own language. It was the aim of this research to tread that fine line and interpret and translate one language into another, with the minimum loss of the original voice of the pupil.

It may also be considered that contamination may not only be imposed by the analysis of the researcher, but also to some extent by the fact that the pupils were being asked to recall situations and events from the past. Hindsight and accounts drawing on memory may well be somewhat distorted. To what extent pupils had forgotten or repressed certain thoughts or were reluctant to express certain feelings or perspectives is difficult to judge. Few pupils openly expressed a reluctance or inability to share thoughts or perspectives. John, a 13 year old pupil at Southdown who had been stated as a result of continued disruptive and aggressive behaviour both at school and at home, and who had been receiving psychiatric treatment, had stopped one avenue of discussion regarding his family life with the comment:

“Well that’s getting personal isn’t it?”

Wayne was a 16 year old boy who was attending The Oakwood Centre. He had been referred following referral to an adolescent psychiatric and after experiencing severe social problems (bullying) in mainstream school. He had subsequently displayed disruptive and aggressive behaviours at home and at school, and finally refused to attend school. He was prepared to admit that his memory was somewhat selective, stating:

“I’ve got a good memory for some things and a bad memory for some things, especially things that I don’t like to remember. I find it difficult to remember because I blotted it out.”

He continued later by saying:

“I don’t wanna remember anything about school so I never do ... there are some things but I just don’t wanna talk about them. I can’t remember specific incidents very well. I can remember some things if I think very hard.”

Perhaps it was more common for the interviewer to simply hear ‘I don’t know’ or to get a long silence. Interestingly, a few pupils openly expressed a state of confusion in their minds when trying to answer interview questions. Susan, a withdrawn and shy 14 year old girl, referred to The Oakwood Centre by her psychiatrist, had experienced major turmoil and trauma in her home life and had demonstrated acute paranoia and anxiety in a mainstream school, stated:

“I can’t remember very far back, I get mixed up.”

Robert, a 13 year old boy, also referred to The Oakwood Centre following psychiatric treatment, was almost totally unable to describe past experiences, particularly at home. He explained quietly and untaped, that he had no recall of his father being at home before the break up of his parents’ marriage, or of his father leaving the home. Robert was a school refuser, saying very little during his days at the Centre, and reluctant to talk openly during interviews.

The impact of selective memory, and the distortion that recalling past events may place on the perspectives recorded is difficult to overcome, yet also too important to ignore. The use of interviewing as a methodological technique in this project certainly makes a basic assumption that pupils want to talk, can articulate their thoughts, and can remember events accurately from their past. All of these place extremely high expectations on the pupils and may be unrealistic. In addition, although few pupils were openly reluctant to be interviewed, it is very likely that there may have been a degree of conscious selection regarding the information they felt prepared to share. Issues of confidentiality and trust are very hard to overcome in a brief interview situation, and may have extensively affected the nature of the data collected.

In addition, although no pupils refused to participate, there were a number of boys at Southdown who were unavailable for interview throughout the whole interview period. Such pupils were regularly absent from school, or had been suspended and

removed from classes, and should be considered important as lost voices, and a possibly critical lost contribution. Also contributing to this lost perspective may be those pupils that Ball (1985) refers to as 'reluctants' (p41), who are under represented in this type of research, as we base our results and data analysis on the more articulate respondents, from whom the bulk of the data is acquired. We therefore may unwittingly arrive at somewhat distorted conclusions. The articulate respondents may also provide further distortion by their eagerness to please the researcher, or to say what they think the researcher wishes to hear. It would not be surprising to find pupils who have been conditioned to give the 'correct' answers, trying very hard to do the same in an interview situation, particularly when being interviewed by one of their teachers.

A discussion concerning distortion of data also leads to a consideration of the representativeness of the pupil sample for the goals of the research. Whilst offering a reasonable cross section of EBD behaviours, the sample did not include the perspective of many girls, nor minority racial or ethnic groups, and these limitations must be acknowledged.

Pupils at The Oakwood Centre may also have offered somewhat different perspectives to the boys at Southdown School for two main reasons. Firstly, a series of interviews over a period of one year offered different opportunities for building rapport and understanding concerning the research, between the researcher and the pupils, than a one off interview. Secondly, many of the pupils at The Oakwood Centre had been through extensive therapeutic treatment programmes prior to attending the Centre, which may have had a powerful influence on the pupils' own interpretation of factors and events affecting their behaviour. The extent to which these therapeutic interventions had created or moulded their own views and perspectives, and their interpretation of events, is difficult to determine yet important to acknowledge. Pupils having undergone extensive therapy appeared in certain cases to talk more freely and

with a more analytical insight of their experiences and behaviour and this again adds a further possible contamination of data, concerning the extent to which these were their own or a therapist's perspective of their difficulties. These pupils appeared to be more familiar with the one to one interaction they experienced in the interviews, and it is possible that their interpretation of the event was quite different to that of other pupils, which in turn may have affected the data they offered.

An interpretation of the interview event and its influence on interviewee responses has been described by Briggs (1986). He has analysed the way in which a group of women involved in a series of interviews regarding abortion decisions, potentially perceived their interviews. He considers that the women probably viewed the interviews as 'vastly different communicative encounters' (p122), with some seeing them as therapy, some as contribution to research, others seeing them as 'bureaucratic prelims to getting an abortion' (p122). Briggs considers that this interpretation of the purpose of the interview and also the role of the interviewee could potentially affect the respondents' self-expression.

Clearly the role of the introduction to the interview in this present research was important in trying to offer a standardised input to the pupils regarding their role and the purpose of the interviews. However, the interpretation of this introduction for each pupil inevitably varied, and in particular the degree to which the pupils could accept the new researcher role of their teacher or Teacher in Charge may have been an important variable. The confidence of their self expression and the nature of their responses could have been strongly influenced by the willingness of the pupils to accept this shift in roles, and to trust the proposed contract of confidentiality and anonymity, which is typically strongly denied in more formal teacher pupil relationships.

Certain researchers such as Cullingford (1991) may have an unjustified over confidence in believing that their data from pupil interviews is untainted by such concerns in the

pupils. He states that; 'Children in this survey spoke freely and openly about their feelings and ideas without trying to please or shock the interviewer.' (p8). This bold statement may be somewhat optimistic. It seems naive to assume that all pupils will without hesitation discuss their innermost thoughts and feelings without some concern for what will happen to the information, and why they are really being asked to share it.

A large number of pupils talked freely, yet certainly remained within their own personal safe boundaries. They appeared honoured and somewhat surprised to have been given the opportunity to talk, and this honour was enhanced by the use of a tape machine. Yet no matter how skilful the questioning, and how informal the relationship, a pupil's boundaries were his or her own. They appeared to have made their own judgements regarding the nature and extent of the information they considered it appropriate to share, having made their own interpretation of the meaning of the interview.

Roy, a 14 year old boy who had been referred to The Oakwood Centre by a psychiatrist who had been working with him on his anxiety and school phobia, stated that he found it easy to talk in the interview but:

"It depends what mood I'm in ... If I'm in a happy mood it's OK."

Only Neil, who was a 12 year old boy attending Southdown School as a result of his aggression with peers and disruptive and disturbing behaviours in a mainstream school, openly described his very own personal goal for his interview. He stated clearly that:

"I want the Headteacher to hear this, what I'm saying."

As he spoke he appeared to be releasing all of his pent up anger and frustration regarding his placement at Southdown onto the tape, and clearly saw a purpose for the tape beyond that of the research. He was anxious to have his own copy.

This whole issue of the meaning of the interviews for the pupils and the use of their time and perspectives for the purpose of research is important in discussing the ethics surrounding this type of research. It should be of serious concern to anyone working on educational research that involves pupils, to question the true rights of the participants they interview. This is true of adult interviewees and even more so for children and school pupils. Denscombe & Aubrook (1992) discuss at some length the true ability of pupils to refuse to participate in social research, and whether research carried out in school time can ever actually be voluntary. Powney & Watts (1987) similarly express concern over the vulnerability of interviewees in certain research situations. Interestingly they note that young people have stated a preference for interviewing over being observed, which is possibly because it allows them to retain more control over the information they disclose.

However, even within the open-ended interview, the researcher should question how honest s/he is being with his/her questioning. It is difficult not to admit to the manipulative use of questioning to get interviewees to talk and disclose information that even they themselves may not be aware they are disclosing. Homan (1991) actually suggests that the researcher's ability to put their subjects in a co-operative mood, so that they will be unlikely to exercise their so called 'right' to refuse to answer questions, is 'standard in the training of social researchers.' (p125). Logan (1984) frames and further develops this ethical issue when he states:

'One of the questions which arises concerns how far we adopt a questioning approach to allow response of an empathic "unstructured" nature, or to prod or prise open doors to "inner turmoil?"' (p21).

Similarly Cullingford (1991) discusses the 'subtle' attempts to get the children talking, without it being intimidating or direct. He describes his ploy to question children about school transition in order to indirectly gain insight into teachers and schools. Such subtle questioning could be deemed ethically unacceptable yet undoubtedly

comprises a large part of any research which probes individual perspective.

Disguising the true purpose of a question and its aim may be an ethical issue that is difficult to resolve. Further ethical issues relating to research which involves interviewing are discussed in Kvale (1996).

Finally in this Chapter, it is important to report on the simple problems, often of a basic practical nature, that arose particularly during the data collection period and that affected both the frequency and quality of the interviews completed. Firstly, simply finding the time to complete interviews was at times difficult. At The Oakwood Centre, where the researcher was Teacher in Charge, problems were different to those presenting themselves in the Southdown setting. At The Oakwood Centre pupils were largely interviewed at a convenient time for the researcher, following tactful and sensitive discussion with teachers. Of course justifying the use of time for research, as opposed to one's own professional duties is possibly another ethical issue. Generally co-operation from other members of staff was excellent, yet their right or ability to refuse to release pupils may be questionable in this situation, as are the rights of the children. This problem may be more easily overcome in a residential setting where pupils are available for research outside of school hours and in a potentially more informal atmosphere. (See Section 7.3). At Southdown the pupils were similarly restricted to interview during the school day. Ethical issues concerning the use of professional time for research purposes were not however a problem because interviews in this setting were performed outside of the researcher's paid teaching time. However, negotiations with teachers for pupils to leave classrooms still had to be made using sensitivity and tact.

In addition to time, space was also a major problem in both settings. Finding a quiet, private space in which to conduct interviews was often difficult. Interruptions were common and privacy frequently lacking. The implications of this are hard to judge, but should be considered as possibly placing some restrictions on the willingness of the

pupils to disclose certain thoughts and perspectives. Issues of confidentiality were possibly one of the most significant parameters on the data collected from the pupils and finding private space was just one of the practicalities affecting this parameter. At The Oakwood Centre particularly, the use of the Teacher in Charge's private office tended to engender a feeling of formality yet was often the only available private space. Also associated with the issue of confidentiality and possibly another practical necessity that affected the willingness of the pupils to disclose information, was the use of the dictaphone. Some pupils were clearly visibly daunted by the machine, although others apparently ignored it or rapidly forgot it. Other researchers having used this method of recording pupil perspectives may have underestimated the affect of a tape machine on a pupil's ability to relax and respond freely. For example Cullingford (1991) confidently states; 'All the interviews were carried out using a tape recorder (put to one side and quickly forgotten).' (p8). Interestingly, Rich (1968) suggests that the tape recorder actually inhibits the interviewer, who may have to play the tape back to colleagues, much more than it inhibits the child being interviewed.

Despite the obvious and inevitable limitations that a tape recorder places on an interview situation, no adequate alternative has yet been suggested. Its affect on the data recorded must simply be acknowledged, and analysis must recognise this affect. This last sentence applies to all of the methodological limitations of this type of research. The limitations must be acknowledged and the results and conclusions arising must be read within the boundaries created by the methodology. An extended discussion of the methodological insights and implications of this project for future research is presented in Section 7.3.

PART THREE

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Part Three of this report the results of this project are presented in two Chapters. Chapter 5 deals with the factors and processes that were perceived as significant to the pupils interviewed in relation to their behaviour, and Chapter 6 offers further insights into the pupils' perceptions of their own behaviour and the nature of this behaviour.

Chapter 5 is divided into three Sections, the first presenting school and schooling factors, the second family, sociocultural and socioeconomic factors and finally, the third revealing factors associated with the individual pupil's psychology and physiology.

Chapter 6 is also presented in three Sections, the first offering insight into the nature of the pupils' behaviour, the second looking at labelling and how behaviour patterns evolve, and finally a third which presents evidence that one aspect of the EBD pupils' behaviour is in seeking support and understanding.

Chapter 5

Factors and Processes of Significance to Pupils

It is the belief of this project that when attempting to better understand the EBD pupil and his or her behaviour, it is essential to explore all factors which may interact and contribute in some way to influence this behaviour. As explained in Section 1.2 different theories of behaviour have encouraged differing foci within educational research. Depending on the theoretical emphasis and beliefs of the researcher, the different factors that may have influenced the pupils' behaviour are explored to a greater or lesser extent. For example, previous studies have focused specifically on factors linked to schooling, some on the family or socioeconomic background and others on psychodynamics, and some have specifically utilised pupil perceptions to do this, as was described in Section 1.4. However, as Blythe & Milner (1994) state; '... there is a need for further investigation of the identification and interaction of relevant factors.' (p296). Other researchers have echoed these beliefs. Faupel (1990) for example, is quoted in Barrow (1995), as stating; 'Understanding problem behaviour will not be found by focussing on the child, nor by focussing on the school, but in the study and analysis of the *interaction between them*.' (p52).

This current project attempts to use the EBD pupils' own perceptions to illustrate the relative significance of all possible factors that may have impacted the pupils' behaviour. It attempts not only to explore the pupils' own view of the internal, psychological or physiological factors that they perceive as being of relevance to them and their behaviour, but also the factors which are a part of the various systems interacting with the pupils' lives, such as school and family life. As Armstrong et al (1993) state; 'The disturbing behaviour of children may arise from tensions in the home or school, as well as from personality or constitutional "disorders".' (p128). Recent

publications have criticised research that has focused too closely on single factors. For example, Pasternicki et al (1993) describe research that has investigated single factors relating to truancy, rather than seeking to explore the broader complexity of the reasons behind such behaviour. They state; ‘...the research studies examined the influence of a single possible causal factor rather than the interaction between a number of possible factors.’ (p3).

The results of this present enquiry into the importance of all possible factors, from the pupils’ viewpoint, is presented in this Chapter as three Sections, and a conclusion summarises the overall significance of the results. It is believed that the results will contribute to an increased understanding of the theories behind EBD behaviours, and also offer an enhanced knowledge of the various factors that affect the pupils’ behaviour. Each of the three Sections attempts to combine relevant literature in the field, with the data collected in this present study. The pupils’ perspectives are presented using their own words wherever possible, with accompanying analysis and interpretation to illustrate the significance of their statements. The initial contribution made by each pupil to this report is accompanied by a brief outline of their age and background. This is in order to give the reader some insight into the problems that each pupil had experienced and to be better able to assess the significance of their statements throughout the Chapter. (A few of the pupils have already been introduced in Chapter 4). The names of all pupils have been changed to ensure anonymity.

A more detailed analysis and discussion of the theoretical, practical and methodological insights and implications of the results, are presented in Part Four of this report.

5.1 Schools and Schooling Factors

A large percentage of the interview data collected from pupils was concerned with the role of schools and schooling processes as contributing factors to their behaviour.

The whole experience of schools and schooling and the various social and educational processes occurring within the mainstream schools that the pupils had attended, were clearly of significance for the pupils in relation to their behaviour and their subsequent placement in a special school.

These results offer powerful support to current developing beliefs that schools themselves may actually contribute to a pupil's problems. The previous decade has opened the doors of research into what constitutes effective schooling and the results of this study reinforce much of this research. The results of such research have illuminated the nature of an effective school that meets the needs of all of its pupils, including those displaying disturbing behaviour. The EBD pupils interviewed in this study certainly were able to reveal the important role that they perceived their mainstream schools had played in contributing to their difficulties.

Cooper et al (1994) give extensive details of research that has been carried out internationally in this field, including that from the USA and Australia. They draw from various sources to make important and far reaching statements suggesting that; 'The institutional arrangements in schools have a profound influence on the social and emotional adjustment of their students and that schools have it in their power to inhibit, or exacerbate, the development of emotional and behavioural difficulties and to function as effective therapeutic agents.' (p173). Kreft (1993) traces the evolution of school effectiveness research, and although he reports that in 1966 the Coleman Report stated that schools themselves do make a difference, most research at that time was focusing on the impact of socioeconomic factors on pupil achievement in school and not on the processes going on in the schools themselves that may have been impacting this achievement. Kreft (1993) refers to a second generation of research

that has considered the schools themselves to be highly significant in providing either effective or ineffective experiences for their pupils. This research is described by Kreft as no longer regarding schools as ‘... the black box in which something goes in and something comes out.’ (p105). Such research has gone some way towards changing attitudes to schools. It is well described in a quote by Tyerman who is cited in O’Keeffe & Stoll (1995) and refers to the ‘...fatally flawed psychology of years ago, which viewed school as an unproblematic good and anyone who recoiled from it as *ipso facto* deficient, or deviant or even proto criminal.’ (p10). However, O’Keeffe & Stoll also suggest that things may not have changed greatly, and they comment that certain people in positions of power still turn to the children themselves or their sociocultural backgrounds as being at fault:

‘Sad to say, this outlook is still apparent among many politicians and administrators. Either they regard children as possessing a disfigured psychology, or, if they do take a sociological perspective, this is solely in relation to childrens’ bad homes etc.’ (p10).

Nevertheless, much of the previous research has revealed very tangible aspects of the school itself that may have adversely affected pupil behaviour and relationships with certain pupils, and the results of this research cannot be overlooked or ignored. Such work includes Hargreaves (1967), Rutter et al (1979), Galloway & Goodwin (1987), Reynolds & Cuttance (1992). The work of these researchers revealed that the behaviour of individual pupils could not simply be attributed to social background, defective homes, or psychological damage through previous experiences. The role of the school itself was also important. In addition, this research began to reveal the importance of less tangible aspects of schooling, which have become known as the ethos, and have also led to an interest in the social aspects of schooling for pupils. This sociological research has revealed a better understanding of the pupils’ experience in terms of subcultures and groups which exist in schools, (Woods, 1980,1990), and their behaviour which is associated with such groups. The importance of these social

processes within the schools is given strong support by the pupils in this present study, who made a significant number of comments concerning social interaction in school.

In contrast to those who pursue school effectiveness research with a strong belief that it may ultimately provide the answers to our problems in helping EBD pupils, Angus (1993) offers some contrasting views concerning the role of school in the creation or maintenance of disturbing behaviours. He reviews three books concerned with school effectiveness, and criticises those who he describes as being obsessed with school effect, considering that they are, or have been, ignoring wider social issues. He states that they have a ‘...limited view of context...’ (p341). He continues by saying that those researching school effectiveness are not considering an ‘...interactive relationship between schools, culture and society...’ (p342). Clearly it is important that we do not allow school effectiveness research to overshadow the important impact of social background, possibly giving higher powers such as the government the opportunity to place all responsibility for the EBD pupils’ behaviour on the schools and their teachers.

This Section presents the results of the present study which refer specifically to school and schooling factors. The results are presented for clarity under four subheadings, although each heading is not mutually exclusive, and there is much overlap when pupils describe certain factors.

5.1(i) Size of School, Classes, and Teacher/Pupil Ratio

Analysis of the interview data from this research highlights an interesting mismatch between the perceptions of a number of the EBD pupils, and some of the studies into effective schooling, and their conclusions regarding the effects of school and class size on pupil progress and achievement.

Scherer et al (1990) discuss the research of Rutter et al (1979) on school effectiveness and state how it revealed that physical provision (size of buildings, class size, teacher to pupil ratio etc) were not of such major importance as other factors. These views are certainly held by many politicians and educationalists today, and debate over class size continues to be reported in the academic world and the press. (Pye, 1988, Education, 1995a, The Daily Telegraph, 1995a, Blatchford & Mortimore, 1994, Massey, 1997).

Interestingly the views of the pupils in this study who did mention class size as an important issue for them, are in accord with the views of parents electing private fee paying education for their children. In a recent report, (Education, 1995a), it is stated that; 'Educationalists and politicians argue whether class size matters. Parents don't; they want individual attention for their children and that means for many children, smaller teaching groups.' (p4). The report claims that 'class sizes and teaching groups were the first thing parents asked about when they came over the threshold...' and the article states that 'favourable pupil-teacher ratios' are a 'key selling point for the independent sector.' (p4). The significance of class size overseas is made apparent in a recent article published in the USA, (Education Week, 1996), which reports on the State of California's decision to appropriate '...nearly \$1 billion for new teachers, supplies and classroom space to bring down the nation's highest class sizes.' (p8).

Thus the subjective views of parents, the policies of certain overseas countries, and indeed some of the pupils in this study, indicate the importance of class size for success in school. However, these views are not necessarily in accord with the results of more quantitative research into effective schooling, possibly orientated towards academic outcome. One major problem associated with gaining agreement on this issue may be related to the fact that setting up empirical research into the effects of class size on learning is very difficult to do. (Blatchford & Mortimore, 1994). Thus, results from such experimental style research are rare. Massey (1997) reports on a number of

attempts to explore class size effects, including that of Glass et al (1982) in the USA, and more recently in the UK a report from OFSTED (1995). This latter report uses results taken from the inspection of schools to attempt to link class size to quality of education. Interestingly, although no direct measures of performance outcomes were attempted, the report suggests that there are no simple links between class size and quality of teaching and learning. Clearly this issue and also the impact of school size, demands further research and the results of the present study make a valuable contribution to the debate.

The perceptions of the pupils in the present study who did comment on this issue were particularly interesting because they varied in the actual way in which school or class size manifested itself in their problems and their inability to remain in a mainstream setting.

Size and nature of school buildings

One aspect of this issue for six of the pupils was the fear resulting from their subjective view of the size of the buildings themselves, and their institutional nature. This was a problem particularly for pupils who had entered special education as a result of poor attendance or school refusal. Phobia, physical illness, and depression were commonly diagnosed for these pupils and psychiatric treatment prior to special education had been provided in certain cases.

For different pupils, different aspects of the physical nature of the schools symbolised their institutionalised nature, and were perceived as having contributed to their fears. For example Robert, when asked why he had become scared of school, replied:

“Corridors probably...there was one long corridor that went through the whole school.”

Wayne, had a different yet equally vivid perception of his school:

“The school seemed to have a cage round it.”

Another pupil, Sarah, was a 13 year old girl attending The Oakwood Centre following psychiatric treatment for suicidal thoughts and school phobia. She had refused to go to school soon after transferring to the secondary setting. She was one pupil from those interviewed whose perceptions of the school buildings were recounted when she tried to describe the root of her difficulties:

“...it’s a hard school to get on with, it’s too big. I can’t see how any of them cope with it that size. So I used to stand in the corridor, I used to look ahead, and the corridor used to be, honestly you could put a train tunnel down it, it was miles. I used to stand there with all these girls crowding around me and I used to say ‘where the hell am I, what am I doing here?’ All the corridors used to look black. It was too big for me. I couldn’t cope with it. I used to burst out crying in lessons.”

Interestingly, such perceptions are not, it seems, unusual amongst many mainstream school pupils preparing for the transition from primary to the secondary setting.

Measor & Woods (1984) interviewed a number of pupils at that stage in their school careers, and found expressions about being frightened, worried, scared and nervous, not uncommon and in association with comments on the size of the new school they were to enter. Their pupils stated fears of losing their way in ‘the maze of corridors and classrooms.’ (p9).

Fear of getting lost was expressed by Roy who was clearly able to recall his experiences. He described both the size and institutional nature of the building:

“I kept getting lost a lot. It was a massive school and I kept getting lost.”

“It seemed I was small, you had buildings two storeys high everywhere, and all your bigger people all around you.”

“The size of the buildings and the dangers in them too. Corridors, ledges, stairs, doors.”

He felt he was ill prepared for the transition from primary to secondary school:

“The primary schools don’t prepare you for the change to secondary, the size. I think it would have helped if I knew what I was walking into. I was squashed in the corridors.”

Lengthy interview time with both Roy and Sarah revealed many other factors that they associated with their difficulties in addition to these perceptions of the school. It would however appear that unlike the pupils in Measor & Woods’ (1984) study for whom the fear of transition is an understandable yet passing fear, these pupils do not move through this fear. Instead it develops and contributes to a more complex web of difficulties, and as the interviews showed, these particular perceptions do remain with them as a significant contributory factor in their mainstream schooling difficulties. The comments that Roy made appear to suggest an enhanced insecurity and awareness of danger, which may typify the perceptions of certain EBD pupils.

Adding to the data that suggests the importance of school size as a significant factor for these pupils are the comments made by a small number of pupils regarding their experience of the special school setting. For these pupils the success of the special school and its appropriateness for their needs was closely related to the small size and less institutionalised nature of the school building in making their attendance easier:

“The building, no long corridors, human.”

“I liked the size of it.”

For pupils such as Sarah and Roy, their difficulties did seem to become more apparent on transfer to the secondary setting. This suggests that it is important to consider the often major differences between the physical nature of the secondary and primary school settings as being a significant factor in the inability of certain pupils to make a successful transition. An unsuccessful transition may then develop into more complex EBD behaviours. Linked to these physical differences, and possibly even dictating their existence, is the difference in the number of pupils being educated in one place. These numbers not only in themselves affect a potentially vulnerable EBD pupil, as will

be described in the next few paragraphs, but indirectly create institutionalised, intimidating school buildings, playing an important role in a school refuser's perception of his or her problem. To summarise, the number of pupils being educated in one place inevitably influences the physical nature of the buildings, and for a minority of vulnerable children this becomes an important factor affecting their behaviour.

Size and social problems

Five pupils commented directly on the number of pupils in a school contributing to their social problems. In addition to his comments regarding the physical nature of the school buildings, Wayne, expressed clear views that the large numbers of pupils in the mainstream school setting had contributed to his experiences of bullying and his subsequent problems in attending school:

“The main thing about that school - miles too big. They couldn't keep an eye out for everybody.”

Roy also commented on the number of pupils around him:

“I couldn't walk across the playground without a squash. Everyone crowding around in gangs. Really packed out.”

As Wayne's comment reveals, it was the inability of the staff to 'see' what was going on that was the problem for him. The sheer number of pupils in the secondary mainstream setting and high pupil/teacher ratios clearly left these pupils feeling vulnerable amongst their peers. Boulton (1993a) in his studies on playground fighting states that; 'Supervisors are often in charge of large numbers of children in the playground and the ratio may exceed 1:50.' (p199).

Clearly vulnerability increases outside of the classroom setting if this figure is accurate, and may support and justify the fears perceived by Wayne. He continued:

“There’s never anyone in charge around. There’s always so many people at school, they’re always flittering about, you can never get hold of them. It’s like if you’re getting hassle from anyone, you can’t see anyone.”

Johnny, another Oakwood Centre pupil, who was 12 years old and who had been expelled from a number of mainstream and special school placements as a result of aggressive and disruptive behaviours both towards staff and peers, also commented on the size of mainstream schools:

“They’re all too big. When the teachers aren’t there, they can’t keep an eye on you. Too many kids and not enough teachers.”

In addition to pupils perceiving there to be too few staff, Sarah also felt that staff were too busy to offer support, in a large school:

“Teachers never have time in a big school.”

Wayne added:

“No-one to talk to individually, and if you’re getting bullied ... they can’t sit and talk to you ... no individualisation.”

In these statements pupils are clearly commenting on the quantity and quality of contact with teachers or members of staff. Whether this is in the classroom or outside of it, the pupils’ observations and subjective views bring up issues of a qualitative nature, such as relationships, which emerge from quantifiable factors such as numbers of teachers. Teachers are perceived as the means to safety and protection for those pupils who are vulnerable to the social life of the school, and this protection is perceived by certain pupils as inadequate both in quantity and quality. Johnny summed up his perception of why size makes a difference, when he commented on a positive aspect of the special school setting:

“It’s small, so if there’s a little bit of trouble you can pounce straight away.”

Roy explained his ability to attend The Oakwood Centre whilst failing in mainstream as:

“I feel safe here.”

This feeling of safety appears to be linked to the pupils’ perception of the physical nature of the school buildings and the number of pupils in the school. A small number of pupils in the study clearly suggested that smaller numbers of pupils in a school allows social problems between pupils to be reduced by making them more visible and manageable, or by improving the quality of relationships.

This problem of the visibility of negative social interaction in the schools and its association with pupil numbers and inadequate staffing was also perceived by certain pupils to extend into classroom situations as well. Karen was a 16 year old girl attending The Oakwood Centre. She had been referred to an adolescent psychiatric unit following severe social difficulties in the mainstream setting, leading to school refusal, and also aggression within the family. She explained:

“Having thirty people in a class, teacher can’t keep an eye on everyone.”

Practical subjects appeared to offer excellent opportunities for bullying, where large classes were perceived as preventing teachers either seeing problems or dealing with them.

George was a 16 year old Oakwood Centre pupil who had suffered a great deal of bullying in the schools he had previously attended, and had been referred to The Oakwood Centre following his placement in a Children’s Home as a result of family difficulties. He described his experiences in a CDT class:

“Well, whilst he was helping someone else ... all the other lot would start throwing compasses and everything. If I’d go and tell Mr. Jenkins he’d just say ‘Oh well, ignore them’. It got to one time where I just walked out of the classroom.”

Karen generally perceived lessons as being the ‘safest’ part of her school day, often dreading and attempting to avoid the less structured periods such as breaktimes. As

Cullingford (1993a) states; 'The classroom can even become a refuge in times of stress.' (p57). However, Karen described certain practical classes as creating opportunities for bullying and feelings of vulnerability for her:

"Food studies was the worse, cause we had all the cookers around, and you couldn't see if anything was going on."

She continued:

"Science was where I was having a lot of problems... I had acid thrown at me."

Physical Education classes were also mentioned by a number of the interviewees. Six of the sample perceived this subject as creating opportunity for negative interaction. George related the problems he experienced to the number of pupils being taught together:

"And cause of all the kids, if you were playing football, they'd try and deliberately trip you up and throw the ball at you and bundle you."

Obviously such behaviour within classrooms can be associated with a number of variables, not only of class size, but Cullingford (1993a) considers that large numbers of people in the confined spaces of the school environment can affect relationships in a negative way. He states; 'Many of the relationships, in such confined spaces, are volatile.' (p59).

To escape from that confinement was for some a difficult thing to achieve. The highly social nature of the schools and the lack of provision for quiet, individual time were a problem for Sarah:

"I made myself a prefect because I didn't want to go outside and play with them so I didn't have to go out and play with everyone else. It was really a way of escaping and getting help."

Wayne also wanted to escape from social contact:

"I asked the teachers if they would put me in isolation, so I'd go up the hall, do all my work."

Harris (1994) deduces from her interviews with pupils in a mainstream setting that; 'It is difficult to be alone, an individual - for most of the time students are seen as part of a group ...' (p63). Perhaps some of the EBD pupils interviewed in this study reveal an enhanced vulnerability to this expectation to be socially involved and group orientated at all times.

Interestingly, the social vulnerability and the fear of social contact experienced by these EBD pupils, which they have perceived as being associated with the physical nature of the school, the number of pupils both in and out of classes, coupled with inadequate staff 'protection', does not support some of the major research on bullying that has been, and continues to be published. In a recent article Olweus (1994), based on his extensive Norwegian studies, states; 'There were no positive associations between level of bully/victim problems (the percentage of bullied and/or bullying students) and school or class size.' (p1177), although he admits that his research does in fact contrast with commonly held public views. He claims that '...the size of the class or school appears to be of negligible importance for the relative frequency or level of bully/victim problems', yet he goes on to say; 'It is, nevertheless, a fact that *absolute number* of bullied and bullying students is greater on average in big schools and in big classes.' (p1177).

An important focus of much of the recent research on bullying is the somewhat intangible and illusive 'school ethos', as a factor influencing aggressive social behaviour. It is generally believed that the ethos of the school can influence the attitudes and relationships of the people within it. Scherer et al (1990) referring to the school effectiveness researchers of the 1970's and 1980's present the conclusions of such research regarding the importance of the physical aspects of the school as being '...not as important as the less tangible aspects, or ethos, of the school.' (p14). What is surprising about such a statement is the consideration that the ethos is separable from the physical aspects of school and class size. If ethos may be considered to be

the school's social climate or atmosphere, then it is surely inseparable from the number of pupils within the school, or its classrooms, and the resulting physical nature or requirements of the buildings. Significantly, all of these factors have been clearly stated by the pupils in this study as being important factors associated with their behaviours. Effective pastoral care is generally considered to be a valuable contribution to the correct 'ethos' of a school, yet Reid et al (1987) ask; 'Is pastoral care equally effective in year groups of 250 compared with those of 75, 125 or 150?' (p79).

In other words, research which reveals the importance of the ethos of the school in contributing to that school's effectiveness, must continue to look at the close link between this ethos and the potential impact of school and class size on its positive development. The two issues appear to be inseparable. The following sub-Section further develops this proposal.

Size and discipline

A further development in the importance of school and class size to the EBD pupils' difficulties in the mainstream setting lies with their perceptions of discipline. For a number of the pupils in this study, the way in which they were disciplined and the discipline procedures within the mainstream schools, were perceived by them as having contributed in a variety of ways to their problems within that setting. Harris (1994) makes an interesting statement from her research, which brings discipline procedures into the debate on school/class size. 'The size of the population and the confined space justified in some teachers' eyes, the need for the strict and highly visible discipline regime...' (p 61).

Pye (1988) pursues this idea that it is large classes which result in the need for much punishment and discipline. He claims that teachers worry about controlling large

classes, and become stressed and insecure. This insecurity leads to less effective interaction with the pupils. He claims that; 'Smaller numbers would multiply parental relationships between teachers and pupils' (p165), and that in large classes the teachers' power 'to perceive individuality and complexity in pupils dies.' (p166). He also claims that teachers' insecurity is reflected in the pupils and they too become insecure. Overall he suggests that teachers become referees in the classroom. This point will be expanded in further Sections on teaching and curriculum but is certainly in agreement with a number of pupils in this study. These pupils praised teachers who knew them or their needs as individuals:

“She gets to know you, to know what you want.”

“Well listening and how she copes with you ... everybody's different.”

A pupil interviewed by Pye (1988) felt that smaller classes would allow pupils and teachers to relate to each other better 'as people, as human beings.' (p168). Sarah felt that teachers in special schools did try to build relationships, perhaps reinforcing Pye's belief that both teachers and pupils feel safer with the smaller numbers of pupils in the special school:

“Teachers are willing to listen to your problems, don't alienate you. Like in mainstream you're there to learn and that's that really.”

At a managerial level, where policies on discipline are constructed, the size of the school may also be reflected in the content and nature of the policy, which is drawn up. Harris (1994) notes; 'The size of the school's population has been of increasing concern to senior management mainly because of the pressures that such numbers place on simply "managing" the population let alone maintaining an adequate teaching and learning environment.' (p61).

Pupils described ineffective and frustrating methods of discipline that they perceived as doing nothing to help or alleviate the problems they were experiencing, nor to change

their behaviour. Wayne described the impersonal, ineffective nature of the discipline he experienced:

“I got thousands of detentions. People’d have a go at me, I’d tell ‘em to shut up and have a go at them. I’d get told off for talking. I’d usually get detention for that. We’d get things called microlines. They’d go off and have a cup of tea ... and they’d leave you and you’d never get a chance to tell your side of the story.”

George described the lack of effectiveness of impersonal mass disciplining which appears to be adopted by many large secondary schools:

“If you’re naughty you get a little pink slip... take it to the Head’s office, and it goes on your file. If you get six you get suspended. If you get eight you get expelled. I used to flush them down the toilet. They never checked up.”

Other pupils perceived the discipline as uncaring and impersonal. Johnny described his experiences:

“He gave me a punishment. Stay in the library and do your work. I was there for about two or three hours and he didn’t even come back in three hours. I just walked out. They just don’t care, do they?”

The extent to which these forms of discipline and their perceived ineffectiveness by the pupils is a consequence of large numbers of pupils in schools and classes is obviously open to debate. However, some pupils clearly felt that the approach adopted in the smaller special school was more effective.

Colin was a 14 year old pupil at Southdown School, who had displayed highly disturbing behaviours within the mainstream setting, and been referred to Southdown for education and also to a counsellor for therapeutic support. In the interview he tried to articulate the differences between the approach of the mainstream school and the special setting in terms of discipline:

“Southdown School has been kind. In mainstream you do one thing wrong, chuck something or swear at a teacher, you’d be automatically suspended. At this school you can do things hundreds and hundreds of times and you still

don't get kicked out because they want to talk through your problems. They want to talk to you about it, and see if they can fix it for you."

Andy at The Oakwood Centre was a 14 year old boy who had been removed from mainstream school for disruptive behaviour and truancy. He made an interesting comment that perhaps helps to explain the subtle differences that a pupil who has experienced difficulties in the mainstream setting perceives between this and the special school:

"More relaxed. The atmosphere. In a mainstream school there's tension in the air. In a school like this there's no tension at all."

Interestingly the special school provisions with smaller pupil numbers were not perceived by EBD pupils in this study as being more successful, in terms of discipline, by adopting stricter regimes, but by showing a more personal caring approach, where justice could more clearly be seen to be done. As Gerry explained:

"At this school there is discipline when you've done something wrong, you can actually see when you've done something wrong."

William was a 13 year old school refuser attending Southdown School, who had learning difficulties and had been bullied within the mainstream setting. He expressed similar sentiments:

"This school is really caring for people's needs where mainstream they would say do this, do that and do this, and tough luck if you've got a disability, otherwise you get an hours detention."

Laslett (1995) neatly takes discipline and its potential association with school or class size into the area of relationships within schools. He refers to the staff who worked in the early special schools and how they knew that:

'...a reliance on punishing children militated against the goals of the schools and against the kind of relationships with children which the staff knew to be beneficial. They realised that punishment is a more complicated and potentially a more destructive intervention than those who advocate it realise.'
(p6).

Obviously the question here concerns the extent to which this more relaxed, possibly individualised caring approach is possible in a large school. Ken, a 15 year old boy attending Southdown, who had been in trouble for aggressive, disruptive behaviour in mainstream school, simply pleaded for a more understanding and personalised discipline system. He stated that all he wanted was:

“Someone to just listen to me really.”

He described one teacher who helped him:

“When I was in trouble she used to come down and sit with me and talk.”

Previous research has shown that pupils are quite able to recognise a need for discipline but are also clear as to what they consider to be effective. Quicke (1994) in referring to previous studies of pupils’ perspectives states that pupils; ‘...recognised the need for a disciplinary framework,’ (p105), but one which they expected to be exercised in a non-authoritarian and non-coercive way. When discipline does not conform to these standards it may be seen to add to pupil difficulties. Gerry was a 14 year old boy attending The Oakwood Centre. He had severe learning difficulties that had resulted in a special education placement but had also been expelled from both day and residential special schools following disturbing behaviours and truancy. He clearly saw the nature of the discipline at a previous school as exacerbating his behaviour problems:

“No school needs to be strict. When I was in ‘X’ school, I was so naughty ... and they had discipline there. It just makes you do more naughty stuff.”

Karen, explained the potential role of discipline procedures in offering the opportunity to increase peer group status and self esteem:

“Some children like to be told off ... I’m like big and cool.”

Stevenson & Ellsworth (1991) describe certain punishments as ‘counter productive’, quoting a pupil they had interviewed in a USA survey of truants as saying ‘like giving candy to a baby ...first I skipped, then they kicked me out.’ (p284). They suggest that ‘suspension for truancy “punishes” a student by ensuring that the behaviour being punished continues.’ (p283).

In this present study, Danny, a 14 year old boy at Southdown School with learning difficulties and a history of disruption and truancy, clearly described how he used the school rules to his own advantage:

“I wanted to get chucked out ... so I just mucked about everyday and didn’t do my detentions.”

It is tempting to suggest from this type of statement that impersonal discipline methods used in the mainstream school may be insufficient and inadequate for the EBD pupil who requires more time and patience on an individual basis, and may even be used by the pupils to their own advantage. Also, there may be many consequences in terms of relationships and the ethos of the school which are linked to discipline methods and in turn, the major parameters determining discipline methods in school are strongly bound to pupil numbers both in the schools and in the classrooms. Therefore if it is these numbers which dictate discipline methods, and the resulting spin-offs in terms of ethos and relationships, then we are looking at a significant factor for the effectiveness of mainstream schools for EBD pupils.

Size and academic problems

Of a more tangible nature than the effect of school and class size on the social interactions and relationships in a school is its effect on the pupils’ learning and academic progress. On this issue, the pupils’ perceptions revealed in this study clearly suggested that being in classes that they considered to have contained too many pupils,

had certainly influenced their lack of academic progress and their unacceptable behaviour. As previously described, some major research does not reveal class size as influential on pupils' progress. Yet, a recent NFER Study (Times Educational Supplement, 1995a) involving two hundred and sixty five primary school heads, revealed that nearly 60% of them said that their Key Stage 2 classes were too big to enable adequate teaching of the national curriculum. Eleven of the pupils interviewed in the present study supported this finding and directly described how they felt that they had not had sufficient help from teachers.

Six boys at Southdown School made comments clearly illustrating this point:

“Too many people in the class, you have to wait and by the time teacher gets to you, time's run out.”

“Too many people in a class, and you don't get the kind of help you need.”

“In mainstream school if you get stuck on a sum you may have to wait ages and ages and ages, 'cause there's like thirty two people in a class.”

“There was only one teacher and a class of thirty six kids, it was too much.”

“Because there's about thirty of them in a class and it's hard to concentrate 'cause there's only one teacher.”

“Too big a school for me to cope with, probably didn't get enough attention.”

The consequences for these pupils, of large class sizes and their feelings of inadequate help with work were varied. Boredom, frustration and humiliation were all described as arising within classrooms, with sometimes highly destructive behaviour resulting. (See Chapter 6). ‘Messing about’ was a term used by a number of the pupils to describe their own behaviour. Johnny at The Oakwood Centre who did not find academic work easy, and was expelled from mainstream school, stated:

“I mess about if I can't do the work. I can't do the work and none of the teachers helped me, so I'd just mess about.”

He clearly perceived his teachers as not helping him. It would be interesting to be able to assess the extent to which help was offered but was still perceived to be inadequate, particularly considering that at The Oakwood Centre Johnny required almost constant one to one tuition in order to do more than simple tasks. However, his perceptions of 'none of the teachers helped' is similar to the feelings of Ken at Southdown, another boy who perceived himself as being 'ignored' in a class that was too big:

“I think it was because I was getting ignored in my class, ‘cause it was such a big class and I just wanted help and they just ignored me the teachers. I just started messing about and the teachers sent me out of the room.”

The behavioural outcome for pupils finding inadequate classroom support in large classes will be discussed in Chapter 6. Further analysis of how the pupils perceived the demands of the curriculum and their teachers as significant problems in addition to the effects of large class size will also be continued in the following Sections.

Conclusion

Research on school effectiveness that stresses academic outcomes as a measure of success may correctly assess school and class size to be of less significance than other more important factors within the school. (Rutter et al 1979). However, if school effectiveness includes minimising school failure, little research appears to have focused on the contribution to school failure that school and class size may make. The results of this present research go some way to illustrating the possible significance of this aspect of schooling for certain EBD pupils. A significant number of pupils interviewed felt that in various ways the number of pupils within the mainstream schools and classrooms played a part in their difficulties. These pupils, unlike successful mainstream pupils, were unable to overcome the difficulties posed by these numbers in terms of social, academic or psychological demands.

There is clearly a recognised potential link between the much discussed ethos of a school and school effectiveness. This research suggests a further and more specific link between ethos and the size of the school and its classes. If this is recognised then the control of the size of schools and classes can offer a positive and practical way to improve the climate and relationships within these schools.

Charlton & David (1993) list pointers towards school effectiveness and causal factors for high levels of disaffection, using results of previous studies. Interestingly pointers such as ‘maximum dialogue between teacher and pupils’ and ‘intellectually challenging teaching’ are listed (p46), yet how to achieve these ideals and the fact that smaller classes would make such ideals more achievable is not addressed. How to achieve an effective school for pupils such as those involved in this study, has to be addressed at the roots. In this study the pupils’ perceptions of the size issue do suggest where the roots might be. As Karen at The Oakwood Centre stated:

“It has to be small to work.”

If an assessment of effective schools was, as Slee (1994) suggests, quoting previous research, ‘...perceived relative to their success in meeting the “basic needs” of young people (such as: belonging, security and safety ...)’ (p168), then perhaps the impact of school and class size would feature more prominently in our policy making and planning. Although class and school size may not be of importance to all pupils, this research suggests that there is clearly a need to recognise it as important to a significant number of those who are currently failing in the mainstream system. Unlike some of the other factors that are described further in this Chapter, class and school size may be of greater significance to EBD pupils than to the average succeeding mainstream pupil. As Rutter et al (1979) suggest, despite the conclusion of their work on school effectiveness stating that ‘...neither average size of school class nor pupil-teacher ratio seems to be consistently associated with school behaviour or attainment’

(p11), school size may be more important for certain subgroups of children. Increasing recognition and reinforcement of this point has recently been illustrated by an OFSTED (1995) report built from inspections of UK schools. Although as has been previously stated this report suggests that no simple links could be determined between class size and quality of teaching and learning, it does conclude that smaller classes are beneficial for early years pupils and secondary pupils with SEN. Such a statement should be of major significance for those concerned with supporting EBD pupils in the mainstream setting. However, it is first necessary for the needs of this minority group of pupils to be considered important enough to meet within that setting. Then, even if this is acknowledged as an important goal for the mainstream schools, the danger becomes one of the schools providing smaller classes merely for pupils who display difficult behaviours. This does not mean that they are recognising the potential impact of smaller classes in preventing these behaviours occurring in the first place or encouraging the integration of all pupils into the same classes. Of course cost effectiveness remains the major issue for most schools when making these decisions as is suggested in the OFSTED report.

5.1(ii) Teachers and Teaching

Teaching styles, and teachers' personalities and skills were factors which were perceived by a number of pupils in this study as having played a part in their problems within the mainstream setting. When describing 'in school' factors which had either created or contributed to their difficulties, their teachers frequently took criticism and blame. This significance that the pupils placed on teachers and their skills, supports the belief of Fontana (1984) who stresses the importance of teachers and their behaviours on pupils' success in school; '...more attention paid to the social environment in which children learn, and in particular to that environment as

represented by teacher behaviours, will lead to pupil learning that is more efficient and effective.’ (p114).

Pupils’ perceptions of teachers and teaching styles have been researched in some depth over recent years either as part of a broad enquiry into pupils’ views on schools and their effectiveness or with a narrower specific focus on teaching and teachers. The views of mainstream pupils on this issue have been sought and presented by, amongst others, Branwhite (1988), Munn et al (1990), Cullingford (1991), Times Educational Supplement (1992), Keys & Fernandes (1993), Kutnick & Jules (1993), and Ruddock et al (1995). These enquiries generally offer support and reinforcement to the results of earlier researchers in this field such as Blishen (1969), Nash (1976), Woods (1976), Hammersley & Woods (1977) and Marsh et al (1978), who all found that pupils were able to make clear and constructive statements about good and bad teachers, and about the skills or personality traits of such teachers.

Certain studies have concentrated more directly on the views and perspectives of disruptive, disaffected or disturbing pupils, although research with this emphasis appears not to feature prominently in the literature until the early 1980’s. Carnell (1983) reviewed the literature and research into the qualities and skills of teachers of disturbed pupils, and found that most research had focused on the perceptions of the teachers themselves, including Dawson (1980) and Wilson & Evans (1980). He does quote the 1970’s work of some of the researchers previously listed, who sought the opinions of comprehensive school pupils on their teachers, but claims that ‘...this type of investigation does not appear to have been attempted in this country with disturbed children who are in special education.’ (p22). Carnell himself did however interview ninety-two pupils from several special schools and units, who were specifically asked about the qualities of ‘a good teacher in their particular school or unit.’ (p22), and in addition to Carnell’s study, significant research has been developed by workers such as Reid (1985, 1986), whose extensive work in the 1980’s on absenteeism gives insight

into the pupils' views on their teachers perceived contribution to their disaffection with school. Other relevant studies include Tattum (1982) who interviewed disruptive pupils and published their views on many schooling issues including teachers, and also extensive work by Woods (1983), focusing on the sociology of schooling. Recent smaller scale studies include those carried out by Garner (1991) and Miller (1994), both of whom interviewed disruptive pupils who made statements about teachers and their perceived strengths and weaknesses.

Although this present research did not set out to specifically focus on the teachers' role in the pupils' difficulties, the results did reveal that some of the pupils readily introduced negative perceptions of teachers into their attempts to describe difficulties they had experienced in schools. These perceptions, although highly subjective, create a consistent message that largely supports the previous work in this field. Pupils in this and similar studies are very clear in stating how they perceive a 'good' or a 'bad' teacher and what they expect from their teachers. The same qualities are repeatedly described by pupils and interestingly the views that emerge from disruptive or disaffected pupils are consistent in many ways with those from mainstream pupils not displaying behaviour problems, a point that is also noted by Garner (1991). Obviously data differs depending upon whether positive or negative opinion is sought, although analysis and conclusions often point in the same direction. Munn et al (1990) claim that their research is unusual because it concentrates on positives rather than negatives. Their research, involving the written responses of five hundred and forty three pupils in mainstream schools, on teachers who were best at 'getting a class to work well' and 'what each teacher does to achieve this', led them to propose four categories or 'domains' relating to teachers. These domains are concerned with control and rules, clarity and quantity of work, interest and teacher help, and teacher/pupil relationships and encouragement. The work by Carnell (1983) and Garner (1991) shows that the views of EBD pupils in special provision could be, with little difficulty, placed within such domains. Carnell (1983) gave 'disturbed' pupils the opportunity to give free

responses in an informal interview and also to rate fifteen statements regarding the equalities and skills of their teachers in the special setting. Garner (1991) also investigated disruptive pupils' perceptions but using informal response interviewing. Both studies revealed statements by pupils consistent in many ways with those of the present and other research with mainstream and special needs pupils.

Cooper (1993a) in his article on learning from pupils' perspectives comes to the conclusion that there is a '...consistent *pupil agenda*' (p133), emerging from the use of pupil perspectives when enquiring into effective teaching and learning in schools. Although this is a broad statement referring to a wide spectrum of schooling issues, it certainly appears to be true for the more specific issue of teachers and their teaching, with the present research reaffirming this particular part of the agenda. Some specific aspects linked to teachers and teaching are expanded in the following pages.

Discipline and control

One item consistently emerging from this and similar research, and the first of the domains suggested by Munn et al (1990), is the nature of the discipline and control techniques adopted by teachers. Julie was 16 year old girl attending The Oakwood Centre as a result of school refusal following difficulties with academic work. She stated clearly that a good teacher was one who:

“ Can keep the class under control.”

Rick and Simon, both 16 year old boys attending Southdown School having been expelled from mainstream schools for delinquent, aggressive and disruptive behaviours in addition to truancy, made interesting comments about how lack of discipline from teachers and the school itself was in some ways to blame for the problems they had experienced in school:

“I blame partly myself, but the teachers have got to take some of the blame. They let me get away with murder.”

“The school shouldn’t have let me get away with some of the things that I shouldn’t have done.”

These statements illustrate how important the appropriate and effective use of discipline by teachers is perceived to be for certain pupils.

In this present study, forms of discipline that had been experienced stimulated clear statements from certain pupils. One form of control that was considered unacceptable by a considerable number of pupils was shouting. Eleven of the pupils interviewed mentioned shouting as a negative behaviour or strategy for teachers to use as a form of discipline.

For Robert, the experience of being shouted at as an individual in front of his peers was perceived as particularly disturbing:

“He was shouting at me right in front of the class and I was embarrassed.”

Two other pupils also commented with more general statements:

“I didn’t like the teachers, they always used to shout at you ...”

“They used to shout a lot. It’s all they ever seemed to do, shout.”

Interestingly there was no revealed awareness by the pupils of the suggestion that boys are shouted at more than girls, as was stated by the pupils in Cullingfords’ (1993b) work, nor that the gender of the teacher was in any way linked to their discipline techniques. The only comment made by a pupil on this issue was by Guy, a 14 year old boy with learning and language difficulties, which had appeared to manifest themselves as behavioural difficulties within the mainstream setting and resulted in a placement at Southdown School. He stated:

“I prefer lady teachers ‘cause they’re soft. They don’t shout as often, like men, they really shout.”

The dislike of shouting was common to a number of other research studies including that reported in the Times Educational Supplement (1992). In Munn et al (1990), some confusion is expressed as to the value of shouting in getting a class to work well. For the mainstream pupils that were interviewed in their study, shouting as a form of discipline received both negative and positive comment, which was certainly not evident from the EBD pupils in the present study.

The recognition by pupils in the present study of the need for teachers to maintain control and discipline in the classroom was in a small number of cases integrated with another requirement, which was that of the teacher retaining control of him or her self. Susan, described the qualities of one teacher whom she ‘liked’:

“He didn’t shout, he only gets angry when he wants to make himself angry.”

This statement appears to reinforce Fontana (1986) who describes the importance of a teacher being able to ‘...observe her own emotional states.’ (p167). He uses this statement in the context of explaining the importance of teachers refraining from imposing their moods on a class. Cullingford (1993a) also raises the issue of teachers’ self control, stating; ‘No children resent strictness but they do dislike the teacher who loses self-control’. (p59). Losing control may be exhibited by a teacher resorting to physical means of discipline, and such physical aggression by teachers towards pupils was something described by three of the pupils interviewed in this study. It was, not surprisingly, considered unacceptable to them as a means of control and discipline.

Their comments were:

“The teacher grabbed hold of me and threw me across the classroom.”

“Teacher got hold of my hair and pulled my head back.”

“He used to hold you, jolt you when he used to shout.”

The boundaries set by teachers, or their level of discipline, clearly had to be perceived by the pupils to be suitable to fit whatever the 'crime' had been. As one pupil suggested, a good teacher should be:

“... not too strict, or who can be strict but don't go over the limit, like tell you off for the slightest thing.”

It was interesting to note the pupils' demands for possibly incompatible or conflicting roles from teachers, and the ability of the teacher to judge the appropriateness of specific roles at specific times. For example:

“Kind but strict at the same time.”

“Gotta be strict, willing to have a laugh at the same time.”

Further comments from pupils in this study describing a 'good' teacher, which serve to illustrate these demands were:

“Not lenient but knowing when to get angry.”

“She knew when to stop being strict and when to stop being kind.”

As Cullingford (1991) states from his research, the pupils have a strong sense of the role of the teacher. Yet this role is varied and must according to pupils' perceptions be rapidly able and willing to change. Clearly pupils place strong demands on teachers which are sometimes contradictory. This contradiction combined with their expectation for a complex combination of humour, control and sensitivity may be even more significant for the EBD pupil, reflecting the need for exceptional qualities and flexibility in teachers who are to be successful with such children.

One such quality is humour, which appeared to be particularly significant for some of the EBD pupils in this present study. It appeared that discipline was important for the pupils but combined with a 'human' side. As Simon's comment about a good teacher suggests:

“Someone who can teach, but in a fun way. Have a laugh with them.”

Again this supports previous work such as Garner (1991) who states; ‘A sense of humour seems to be a prerequisite for teaching “disruptive” students.’ (p156).

Interestingly, this appears to be an important attribute for teachers in any situation according to research with mainstream pupils, not only EBD pupils. (Times Educational Supplement, 1992).

It would seem reasonable to take these comments as illustrating that pupils can put quite difficult and uncompromising demands on teachers. As Cullingford (1991) suggests, there may be a tension between the personality of the individual teacher and the impersonal authority of the position, possibly fuelled by large class sizes as proposed in the previous Section. Teachers may experience a conflict between the two, and pupils appear to be demanding that they deal with that conflict if they are to be successful, particularly with more disturbing or difficult pupils.

Consistency and fairness

As an extension to discipline, the ability of a teacher to be consistent and fair was certainly another agenda item for the pupils involved both in this present research and also for others in similar studies. Mike, a 13 year old at Southdown School who had been bullied in the mainstream setting and had responded aggressively and with truancy, described a teacher who he perceived as having achieved consistency and fairness:

“Helping the pupils in the class, not leaving them out. Not looking after some people and not the others. Looking after people equally, and making sure they each get the attention they need.”

Consistency was an important quality for Robert also, who was quick to recall one of his teacher's inconsistency with homework. Having described being told off for not completing some homework, he went on to say:

“I remember a few months later other people hadn't done their homework and he just said do it tomorrow.”

Similar perceptions were raised by Sandra, who was a sensitive and often defensive 13 year old girl attending The Oakwood Centre. She was a school refuser who had experienced difficulties with the academic aspects of the secondary mainstream setting, and she explained how she felt that her problems were rooted in the teachers' unfairness. She perceived that she may have succeeded in mainstream if there had been more consistency with support:

“ If they'd paid more attention to me like they did everyone else.”

She continued by saying:

“ I sat in the front row, but if I had my hand up she'd go to everyone else before she'd come to me.”

It could be that the EBD pupil has a heightened sense of injustice and responds quickly to any indication that they are being treated differently to others. Perhaps already feeling insecure and different, they experience a more acute awareness of this issue than those pupils experiencing success in the mainstream setting. For example Susan explained her feelings about teachers:

“I don't trust teachers. They always blame me for everything.”

Roy also added to this important aspect of the EBD pupils' perspective on teachers and injustice with this comment:

“Mrs. Smith irritated me, she believed everyone's story except mine.”

This lack of fairness on the part of teachers is an important perception carried by these EBD pupils and should be carefully explored in order to assess how it impacts on the behaviour of these pupils. The perception may be somewhat distorted or one-sided in the eyes of the professionals involved, yet it certainly exists as a major issue for these pupils. Some of the pupils clearly expressed that getting the help from teachers that they felt they wanted and needed in order to meet the demands of the classroom was of great importance and was impeded by a perceived unfair allocation of support.

Particularly for less able pupils, frustrations resulting from insufficient or inadequate support in lessons were frequently verbalised in the interviews. This important issue for these pupils is of course closely related to the previous Section and its discussion around the effects of class size on the ability of the pupils to be educated within the mainstream setting. Johnny's perceptions of the difficulties he had faced were varied but he focused consistently on his anger at wanting to work and succeed, yet obviously requiring more help than was available or offered:

“You'd call her up and she'd not help you a bit.”

Receiving inadequate support from teachers when it was needed, was also an important issue when security and feeling safe was in jeopardy, reflecting the social rather than academic aspects of the school and needs of the pupils. Two pupils vulnerable to bullying and negative peer interaction commented on their frustration at teachers who offered inadequate support or recognition of their difficulties:

“One teacher, who even knew it was going on, like in front of his face, didn't do anything about it...”

“They don't do anything, they just ignore it.”

These pupil demands on teachers relating to their social insecurities may reflect the distinct and special needs of the EBD pupil rather than those of the mainstream pupil,

as they appear to be less evident in the research involving those pupils succeeding in mainstream school.

Larry, a 16 year old at The Oakwood Centre who had been unable to remain in mainstream because of his 'disruptive' behaviour, felt a keen sense of injustice at the way he had been treated by a specific teacher:

"I really hated her. If there was any fights or anything she'd come straight to me and my mate and half the time it wasn't us."

Being 'picked on' was also an accusation aimed at a specific teacher by Sandra who revealed a complex combination of perceptions as to the reasons for her failure in mainstream schooling:

"She used to pick on me. She'd say I was skiving. She'd phone up my mum and tell her."

Sandra continued by illustrating a further criticism of teachers, that of colluding with other pupils:

"Like she used to tell my friends I was skiving ... When they used to get to the classroom she'd say to them, right Sandra isn't here, she's skiving again today."

Wayne similarly perceived a teacher to have been colluding with his peer group. The following statement suggests that Wayne perceived the teacher to have encouraged and joined in with pupils who were discussing Wayne in his absence:

"When I was away he'd actually take the Mickey out of me. He'd agree with everybody...and that didn't really help."

Cullingford (1993a) describes how he feels that experiences of injustice or unfairness, particularly that of being 'picked on' are very important experiences for pupils and remain 'seared in the mind.'(p59). In interviewing mainstream pupils he actually revealed that boys perceive themselves as being more likely to be 'picked on' than girls a point not reinforced by the present research.

The results of this present study suggest that experiencing difficulty in a relationship with just one particular teacher can potentially create a difficult and destructive situation particularly for an EBD pupil who may already be struggling with feelings of inadequacy or fear. This complexity of factors was illustrated by Sandra who was clear about her difficulties, pinpointing one particular teacher, her own weaknesses and the expectations of the curriculum:

“I think it was that teacher, the work, and ‘cause I thought I was thick, and I didn’t think I could do it.”

A focus on one particular teacher reinforces the findings of Galloway et al (1982), who concluded from interviews with disruptive pupils that hostility was often focused on one member of staff and not on the school as a whole, or on the teachers collectively. Galloway et al found that there were few pupils who were unable to discriminate between their attitudes to different teachers, with only 17% claiming to dislike all or most of the teachers in their schools. They discuss in some detail the role of negative teacher/pupil relationships in the development of particular pupils’ difficulties in school, and they are actually able to quote a figure of 32% of pupils in their study expressing an intense dislike or resentment of one particular individual teacher. They speculate that a long standing personality clash between a pupil and a teacher could be at the root of some pupils’ problems. These views are also in agreement with the work of Scherer et al (1990) who make similar observations from their enquiry with mainstream pupils. They however, suggest a more two directional flow of negative emotion, whereby an intense mutual dislike could at times be at the root of the child’s problems at school. They propose that once such negative relationships have been established they become hard to break. Larry was particularly aware of his ‘reputation’ in the eyes of certain teachers, and according to his perception of the situation he felt that his attempts to bring about change in his own behaviour, and the bad relationships with these teachers, were futile:

“We’d think we’d do our work today and we’d say where’s our work and they’d say you won’t do any anyway.”

“We wouldn’t do anything and they’d pick on us anyway.”

This important issue, often referred to as labelling will be discussed in more detail in Section 6.2. At this point it is important to simply be aware of the importance of specific teacher/pupil relationships, including teacher fairness and consistency, in the evolution of pupil difficulties in school, as reflected in the comments of certain EBD pupils in this study. The EBD pupil appears to require a high degree of fairness and justice in his/her relationships with teachers. However, descriptions of their own behaviour clearly illustrate how they often demand attention from teachers which may be quite different to that of their peers, thus creating the situation they describe as being unacceptable! This point will be developed in Chapter 6 when teachers’ responses to behaviours will be discussed.

Positive relationships

In contrast to the impact of negative teacher/pupil relationships, a number of the pupils in this study revealed the importance for them of positive relationships with perhaps one particular teacher or other adult in the school.

Johnny talked of a close relationship with the headmaster of a primary school he had attended prior to being placed at The Oakwood Centre:

“I wanted that headmaster to stay, so he could teach me all my life.”

Unfortunately, although such a relationship can be of great value to a pupil such as Johnny, and stabilise him within the mainstream setting, its loss can have devastating consequences, as he explained:

“The headmaster used to come in and give me help with my work and my sums, and my English, my handwriting, my reading. He used to come in and see how I was doing and help me. He had to leave, and a new headmaster came in. I got thrown out a couple of days after he came in.”

Johnny talked of many issues when asked about the possible reasons for his difficulties in school, including the breakdown of his parents’ marriage and the departure of his mother from the home. For his particular case it is tempting to suggest that positive relationships with adults within the school were vitally important. This is further illustrated by his description of a relationship with the school secretary, prior to his expulsion from mainstream:

“I went to a secretary when I had troubles. She helped me out a lot, talked to me. I used to help her with jobs.”

Gerry was another pupil who described positive relationships with specific adults in the school who had helped him to survive, albeit temporarily in the mainstream setting:

“Mrs. S she was most probably the best teacher there... She could understand about my things what I can’t do. Gave me maths in the lesson that I could cope with then at break time do a little bit of reading everyday.”

Gerry interestingly described the value of a relationship with another adult who was not a teacher, similar to Johnny’s support from the secretary:

“There was one teacher, she wasn’t really a teacher... and she used to listen, we talked about a lot of things.”

Jeremy, a 12 year old boy at Southdown School who had been expelled from mainstream school as a result of aggression towards peers, and other disruptive behaviours, also found some meaningful support from the school nurse:

“The school nurse, Joyce, she helped me.”

For these pupils, a person free from the role of teacher appeared to have offered valuable help of a non-academic nature. In some cases, that ‘special’ person could however be a teacher, as illustrated by Wayne:

“I could always talk to Mr. X, he wouldn’t shout and I could tell him everything.”

It would appear from these comments that the essence of these supportive relationships was the offer of time and a listening ear. Interestingly, only one pupil actually perceived that a member of staff who had been specifically employed as a school counsellor, had offered him meaningful support and that was in the special school setting. Colin described how the school counsellor at Southdown had played a significant role in enabling him to achieve some success in the special school setting

“Mr. W, he’s one of my best friends. He’s the school counsellor.”

Clearly this member of staff offered what Colin perceived as friendship, and was not restricted to working with this pupil within the confines of a teacher’s role, similar to the secretary or school nurse described by other pupils in the study. Significantly, the value of a counsellor within the mainstream school for potential EBD pupils is illustrated in Cooper (1993d), in his account of one school’s attempts to improve behaviour through curriculum development. The fact that Colin was the only pupil in this present study who referred to a counsellor as providing him with any notable support, may of course simply reflect the lack of availability of such support within schools, rather than it being perceived as insignificant by the pupils being interviewed.

These examples of successful support offer valuable insight into the perceived needs of the EBD pupils, possibly in contrast to those of the successful mainstream pupil. The role of the teachers and other staff and what these pupils require from them is clearly complex. Relationships between teachers and pupils actually appeared to be more important to some of the pupils interviewed, than the ability of the teacher to teach or discipline. Wanting teachers to find time to build relationships, to know them as individuals was particularly important to some pupils. Ten of the pupils interviewed simply wanted teachers to listen, perceiving this basic interaction to be what makes a

'good' teacher. A small but significant number of pupils in the study felt that teachers didn't have the time or didn't make the time to listen, or were unwilling to listen to them. Being misunderstood was a frustration certainly expressed by Wayne when his response to being bullied and teased was to fight back, yet this resulted in he himself being punished because:

“She wasn't willing to listen to your point of view.”

He perceived a good teacher to be:

“Talking to you, understanding you, asking why, giving you a chance to tell them.”

He clearly stated his need for teachers to give him time, and described one teacher whom he liked:

“She'd make time even if she didn't have time.”

This comment is in agreement with the work of Garner (1991) whose pupils talk of liking teachers who ‘...make time to talk to you.’ (p157).

Gerry described a 'good' teacher:

“She gets to know you, to know what you want.”

“Well, listening and how she copes with you ... everybody's different.”

It is tempting to suggest that the EBD pupil requires particular things from a teacher to help him or her with their intricate web of needs, yet research reveals that the succeeding mainstream pupil may not be so different. Kutnick & Jules (1993) investigated the perceptions of over a thousand 7 to 17 year old pupils in Trinidad and Tobago on 'a good teacher.' They sum up their findings with the following comment:

‘...pupils desire a sensitive and supportive relationship with their teachers, a relationship that is not so much dominated by curriculum presentation as by a knowledge of and ability to work with the pupil.’ (p412).

Branwhite (1994) supports this view suggesting that schools must be prepared to continue to see themselves as caring agencies as well as institutions for academic learning, ‘...especially so in the current U.K. climate of schools being cast by the government largely as a delivery system for the National Curriculum.’ (p67). In his own 1988 study he investigated the qualities valued by five hundred and ninety five, 13 to 16 year olds in their teachers. Empathy was very important, characterised by amongst other things, being friendly, listening, staying calm. This suggests that all pupils, not only EBD pupils, do place importance on the teacher as a carer. In fact Branwhite highlights an interesting observation made by Galbo (1989) that the characteristics and qualities that adolescents desire in their relationships with teachers are those that adults prefer with each other. This is similar to the comments of Kutnick & Jules (1993) who refer to pupils desiring a mutual respect between the teacher and the pupil.

Simon, at Southdown, was an articulate, intelligent boy, who summed up his ideas regarding relationships with teachers:

“Treat us like normal people, not like some little school kids.”

Miller (1994) throws interesting light on the way disruptive pupils perceive the teacher/pupil relationship. In her research with bright disruptive pupils in the mainstream setting, the pupils explained their disruptions as ‘...a rational response to the inappropriateness of the curriculum and the lack of attention and consideration they received as persons.’ (p252). The curriculum issue will be discussed in a later Section. At this point the importance of Miller’s work is the repeated perception of these pupils that they are not being given the opportunity to be known as real people within the school setting. She suggests that these pupils have quite different needs to slow learners who display behaviour problems, and that the bright pupils in her study are dissatisfied with the limited role of the teacher, who concentrates totally on getting

through the work, with their communication and interactions with the pupils being limited mainly to interactions about work, commands or threats. They also perceive their own role, as placed on them by the school, as mindless and subordinate. In keeping with the views of other school pupils, these pupils are also particularly sensitive to justice and hypocrisy.

In the present study, it was the pupils' descriptions of what was better or more appropriate about the special school setting compared to the mainstream setting, that appeared to link most closely with Miller's work. Her pupils' plea for a chance to lose the subordinate pupil role and develop a more intense perhaps collegial role with teachers was certainly echoed by a few of the brighter pupils in this study. Again basic communication was of significance to such pupils. Karen was very positive about the teachers at The Oakwood Centre:

“They talk and care a lot, they understand.”

The whole issue of pupil and teacher roles and the limitations that are placed on relationships as a result of these roles appears to be particularly significant to disruptive and EBD pupils. Miller's pupils seem to be pleading for an opportunity to develop relationships with teachers that allow them to be perceived as equals. Unfortunately, their behaviour often achieves quite the opposite, with Miller believing that teachers misunderstand pupils' behaviour and motives. (This issue is explored further in Chapter 6).

The use of first names with teachers is another interesting indication of the type of relationship that exists between teachers and their pupils. Quicke (1994) refers to Willis's 1970's study of working class boys in which one boy raised the issue of being able to use first names with teachers as his way of developing a different type of relationship with teachers. Interestingly this is often one major difference between the mainstream and the special school setting for EBD pupils, and was also raised by one

of the pupils in this present study as being significant in relationship building. 15 year old Dave stated that one of the significant differences for him between Southdown School and the mainstream schools from which he had been expelled, particularly in terms of his improved relationships with teachers, was:

“Being allowed to call teachers by their first names.”

Associated with this issue, Quicke (1994) also refers to Marsh et al (1978) and the results of their study which revealed pupils’ perceptions of what they didn’t like in teachers. These included; being distant, did not treat them like people, did not talk things over with them and didn’t know the names of individual pupils.

Meeting the individual’s needs

Perhaps unsurprisingly, some of the EBD pupils’ perceptions of a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ teacher were closely linked to whether that teacher met their own, very specific, individual personal needs and demands, or whether they created opportunity for those needs to be met, thus alleviating their difficulties. These needs were often concerned with the teacher’s ability to allow the pupil to make progress with the classroom work, give them praise, or simply to get by, or survive without failure or humiliation. Of course the pupils’ perception of progress or survival may not have coincided with the expectations of the teacher, and analysis of the comments made by the pupils does illustrate the importance of understanding the EBD pupils’ very own perception of survival in the classroom.

A good example of this was given by Sandra who was very clear about what a good teacher was:

“Good teachers are ones that let you chat to your friends in class about work.”

She admitted being unable to keep up with a lot of the class work and being frightened of getting into trouble as a result:

“I was so scared cause everyone else could but I was the only one who couldn’t.”

Sandra perceived that she had not had major problems in school prior to her transition to the secondary setting, where she appeared to have successfully used her friends to support her, and help her disguise her academic weaknesses. The secondary school however, had placed increased demands on her in terms of the curriculum, and removed the peer support structures that had nurtured and supported her through earlier schooling. This loss had created for her an unmanageable and perhaps frightening situation. She described her use of peers for survival:

“I had loads of people sit next to me and help me. I’m relying on my friends more than anything.”

Her happiness in the classroom, and whether the teacher was ‘good’ or not, depended strongly on whether that particular teacher allowed talking in class and pupils to interact. Her comments stress the possible significance of emotional ‘peace’ and survival for certain EBD pupils in school, as opposed to a concern with academic progress.

George, an insecure boy, of quite low ability, also felt more secure when he was able to use his peers for support in the classroom. Whether he made academic progress, or simply survived, is debatable, but it was his perception that a good teacher did not deny him his survival strategies. Only if he was allowed to talk to his friends did he feel that he could do the class work:

“He wanted you to do the work, but he didn’t mind how you did it... like you could talk and work at the same time ... If the teacher tells you to be quiet, you don’t get the hang of it.”

The statements made by these pupils appear to support some of the suggestions of Measor & Woods (1984) who propose the term 'co-operation groups' (p14), to describe the way pupils use peers groups to support themselves through the formal demands of the classroom. They describe these groups as being based on friendships, and containing a hierarchy that determines the roles of different pupils. Measor & Woods state that of the pupils they based their research on '...most found at least some consultation with their fellows indispensable to their learning'. (p15). When needed, questions such as 'Do you know?', 'I'm stuck', or 'Start me off' are considered by Measor & Woods to be acceptable pleas for help. Barrett (1984) also recognises the importance of peer support in certain situations; 'The freedom to use self help and that of other people without being accused of cheating or copying appear to create a powerful learning strategy.' (p36). However, it would seem that for some pupils in this present study, learning was not their concern as much as simply surviving. Using peer interaction in the classroom may be for the purpose of survival and the avoidance of humiliation rather than a concern with academic achievement. An understanding of these motives is obviously of great importance within mainstream schools if teachers are to successfully work with potential EBD pupils.

However, there do appear to be other motives for being allowed to talk in class, as Keys & Fernandes (1993) discovered in their research with non-EBD pupils. These pupils stated that they liked to work with friends because they found school work boring. Similarly Quicke (1994) refers to the work of Marsh et al (1978), who found pupils wanted to chatter and have a bit of fun, reinforcing evidence that certain pupils do not want peer interaction for the sake of learning or survival. Thus, teachers may have a difficult job trying to unravel the true motives behind these behaviours.

Unfortunately this confusion over motives may not help the slow learner in the classroom and teachers may not always respond appropriately, which can lead to the slow learner developing the EBD label. Of course even with knowledge of the motives for certain behaviours, the teacher still has the additional problem of deciding

whether the pupil does actually learn as effectively or successfully by the use of these informal activities and peer group interactions that they perceive as being so essential to their survival. As Measor & Woods (1984) go on to state, having a best friend would often mean being able to copy or get them to do the work for you. (p116) This was a problem recognised by Sandra:

“They used to assume because I was copying off my mates, that I could do the work.”

When she was denied this back up or survival strategy, Sandra did not have the courage to reveal her true weaknesses, and stopped attending:

“Cause I knew I couldn’t keep up with the work. I didn’t wanna get into trouble.”

The perceived humiliation that resulted from being unable to do the work, was certainly powerful enough to result in attendance problems for this pupil. Such humiliation can be created in two ways either directly as to what peers are thinking or perhaps in being told off by the teacher, a feared consequence of not doing the work. Roy was a school refuser who appeared to feel vulnerable to certain teachers who would tell him off for making mistakes or not being able to do the work. He described a teacher who:

“Would have a go at kids for doing things wrong.”

Later he described a teacher who gave him some English that he found hard, and was afraid that the teacher would:

“Have a go at him.”

As previously described the onset of the difficulties experienced by Sandra was perceived by her as being after the transfer to the secondary mainstream setting. Measor & Woods (1984) consider this to be a difficult time for pupils who have relied

on informal peer support within the classroom. They state that; ‘The change of school seemed to threaten this informal - but to pupils essential - activity for handling formal requirements.’ (p15). The secondary classroom requirements appear to allow fewer of the informal survival strategies that pupils such as Sandra have developed previously to disguise weaknesses. In her particular case Sandra appeared to develop a negative relationship with any teacher who denied her the survival strategies that she so relied on, thus exposing her weaknesses.

Interviews with Johnny revealed further insight into the fact that a pupil’s definition or description of a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ teacher relies heavily on the specific, subjective perceived needs of the pupil. Johnny needed close and constant support in the classroom:

“A good teacher is one who comes to me first.”

Roy was also able to verbalise his specific needs regarding teachers:

“Sets you work that is do-able and who compliments me.”

In a mainstream classroom these demands may not easily be met by any teacher, nor be acceptable. For example, Jeremy at Southdown was a pupil who readily exploded with anger when confronted with certain situations. His perception of a good teacher was one who:

“Lets you walk out.”

Clearly this is a highly personal and subjective view for that particular pupil’s needs, which although difficult to allow in the mainstream, should not be completely ignored when considering how to support this particular pupil in school. Such perceptions should be seen as reflecting the diverse and individual needs of the EBD child as very different to those of pupils who are able to remain in the mainstream setting.

Conclusion

Although many of the perceptions of the EBD pupils in this study concerning teachers and teaching skills do mirror mainstream pupils' views, there are also specific needs expressed that divide the EBD pupils from their succeeding mainstream peers. Perhaps it is the ability or willingness of teachers to be aware of these needs that enables certain teachers to be successful with EBD pupils or to be perceived as a 'good' teacher by these pupils. Laslett (1995) refers to the 'intuition' of such teachers or a 'special means of communication.' (p7). He believes that the intuitive teacher can reveal the child's feelings which are '...sometimes obliquely expressed.' (p7). Possibly this intuition is of greater importance for work with EBD pupils as it allows the teacher to explore the needs and motives behind pupil behaviour, something which may be difficult in a mainstream school given the size of classes and workload of teachers. Certainly this intuition appears to be what the EBD pupil is demanding from his or her teachers, revealed in many of the specific comments made by the pupils in this study. They appear to want teachers to better understand them.

However, this is not always easy for teachers and Branwhite (1994) describes the conflicting demands of teaching and providing individual support, '...teaching does not necessarily equate with individual support.' (p68). He goes on to say:

'...good teaching and classroom management in themselves may not be enough to assist all students to succeed and teachers are right to be concerned about their limited opportunities and resources for providing effective personal support in the present educational climate. It seems neither safe nor fair to assume that hard pressed subject teachers with limited training, time and resources are able to monitor students' personal relationships, to identify psychological problems, or to deliver an appropriate and effective quality of counselling for distressed students or their parents, when they are required to carry on a full timetable of teaching commitments themselves.' (p68).

It is clear from this study that the EBD pupils' perceptions of their teachers' inability to meet their demands and needs does seem to have contributed in certain cases to the failure of the mainstream school to educate them. Pupils made comments that were directed very strongly at teachers, and in particular emphasised their lack of time or willingness to deal with or explore pupil difficulties directly with the individual. (See p79).

The teachers' workloads and increasingly differing demands on his or her time appears to be interfering somewhat with the more personal and relationship orientated needs of the pupils. Successful mainstream pupils perhaps can survive with less individual time from teachers despite previously quoted research which reveals that they too would like improved relationships with them. The EBD pupil however, perceives the teachers' role with them in mainstream setting as inadequate in many ways and also at times threatening. They perceive their teachers as distant and as placing demands on them that they cannot meet. This issue is clearly very closely linked to the demands of the curriculum and the requirements placed on teachers to present nationally dictated curricula often to large groups of students. Thus an obvious extension of this discussion, concerned with the teachers' ability to meet the perceived needs and demands of their pupils, is to look at the curriculum and its role in the teachers' and pupils' difficulties, which will be attempted in the next Section.

5.1(iii) The Curriculum

The role of the curriculum as a significant factor contributing to the problems experienced by EBD pupils in mainstream schools appears to have received little attention in the literature. It is certainly difficult to find research that focuses on either how the curriculum is perceived by EBD pupils and how it may have impacted their behaviour, or what actually is effective curricular provision for EBD pupils. Lund

(1992) stresses this point, and Garner (1993a) points out that the main focus of literature that has attempted to gain the views of special needs pupils on appropriate curricular provision, (Wade & Moore, 1993), has been on those pupils with 'normative disabilities' (p406), rather than the EBD pupil.

Of the research that has been published on the curriculum, much has focused on pupils in the mainstream setting. Of this, perhaps the most valuable and relevant research for those concerned with EBD pupils is that which concerns itself with the views of disruptive or disaffected pupils in the mainstream setting. Garner (1993a) interviewed a small number of such pupils, who had been labelled 'disruptive' by their teachers in the mainstream setting, on their curricular experiences. He reports them to have revealed clear and categorisable statements indicating the importance of the curriculum in contributing to their difficulties. He also quotes other evidence for this, such as the research of White (1980), who revealed that for many pupils who do not attend school, the problems lie with specific lessons or their delivery, and not with the whole school. Garner (1993a) stresses that schools should have a vested interest in a curriculum that their consumers consider meaningful and rewarding. He states that it has been argued that pupils' exclusions are often for a serious misdemeanor '...which represents the final stages of a continuum that has originated in their dissatisfaction with the curriculum.' (p404). In addition, O'Keeffe & Stoll (1995) are also recent researchers in this field whose work on truancy from mainstream schools has revealed the curriculum to be a highly influential and important contributory factor in such behaviour. They claim that '...the main engine of truancy in our secondary schools is the curriculum itself.' (p9), and go on to criticise policy makers for ignoring this fact. They even go as far as to state that there is a '...deep reluctance of much of officialdom to recognise the truth about this grave inadequacy in the curriculum.' (p8). Whether this is true or not, amongst educationalists and researchers into disaffection and EBD behaviour, there remains an awareness that the curriculum does matter, and the views of the pupils themselves make important contributions to these arguments.

As previously stated, much of the published research that has sought pupil perspectives on this issue, has involved the questioning of disruptive and disaffected pupils in the mainstream schools as its source of data. Cooper (1993d) is confident that this research in the mainstream setting can be of value to those planning curricular for EBD pupils, and to those trying to raise standards of behaviour, attendance and educational attainment in schools. In fact his paper describes the successful attempt of one secondary school to adapt and change its curriculum in order to be more successful with all pupils.

The present study differs as a result of its focus on EBD pupils who have already been excluded from the mainstream setting, and therefore offers this area of research a potentially different source of data for analysis. This Section illustrates that some of the EBD pupils interviewed made statements referring to the curriculum as contributing to their behavioural difficulties and which supported much of the previous findings of earlier publications that stress the importance of curriculum issues for disaffected or difficult pupils. What is particularly significant for this research is however the degree to which curriculum issues were so intimately woven with other factors such as teachers, class size and peer interaction, and therefore this Section relates closely to other subsections of Section 5.1.

The curriculum and teachers

The statements made by the pupils at Southdown and The Oakwood Centre which focused on the curriculum were often either subject specific, teacher specific or a combination of both, which is similar to the findings of Garner (1993a). Comments concerning teachers and teaching styles have been described at length in Section 5.1(ii), yet they were so often blended with comments about subjects and class content that they must inevitably also be included in this Section. Some pupils described their

lessons and their success, or lack of, in class, with statements which included perceptions of teaching styles and teachers, suggesting a close, and perhaps confusing relationship between the teachers themselves and the curriculum material being presented. This point is clearly illustrated by two pupils who stated:

“ I used to hate most of the lessons because of the teachers.”

“ If I don't like the teachers I don't do the work.”

It would appear that not liking a teacher or teachers could be synonymous with not liking or co-operating with the demands of the curriculum in class. The extent to which the opposite may be true was not clear from the results of this study, although some subject areas were perceived as more unpopular than others for a variety of reasons. It is also not clear the extent to which a teacher's personality and professional skills can overcome the constraints of being associated with a certain unpopular subject area, but it would seem that some teachers are somewhat disadvantaged in terms of pupil approval by the subject that they teach. Another interesting observation made by Measor & Woods (1984), although not an issue raised by the pupils in this study, is that pupils place a differing degree of status on different subject areas. This resulted in certain behaviours becoming more serious in the context of specific classes than others, which poses interesting questions for further research into pupils' perceptions of curriculum and associated behaviours.

Unpopular curriculum areas

The results of the interviews with the pupils in this study revealed certain subjects to be particularly unpopular and influential in establishing behaviour patterns such as truancy. Other subjects simply appeared to enhance feelings of vulnerability for

certain EBD pupils, which manifested themselves in a variety of disturbing or unacceptable behaviours.

One particularly significant example of an unpopular subject was Physical Education, which has been related in a previous Section to problems with class sizes. In this Section it is raised again by pupils but with a different focus. Seven of the pupils commented on feelings of humiliation and inadequacy in the eyes of peers and teachers in PE classes. Robert, in an untaped interview, stated that one problem for him in attempting to reintegrate back into mainstream would be that he would not want to do PE. Karen was a large, shy girl, whose body image was negative and who had suffered from bullying. For her, PE offered plenty of opportunity for further victimisation and embarrassment:

“When it started to get to cross country, imagine me running round a field, people taking the Mickey out of you for your size and stuff. You have to wear those little shorts. If you slacked they made you do twice as much. Trampolining was the worst, everyone laughing, looking underneath saying ‘do you know how far it went down when you jumped?’. Spiteful things.”

Other pupils described behaviours that allowed them to avoid this subject:

“At Middle School always ill on games days.”

“Sometimes when I had PE, I used to deliberately hide my kit, so I wouldn’t do it. I hate it.”

Julie was another shy girl who mentioned PE as having been a problem for her in the mainstream. She stated that she, “hated it”, and went on to explain the humiliation of having to strip off in front of people to take a shower. Roy was another pupil commenting negatively about this subject:

“In PE, I wasn’t sporty, I got tired quickly and the teachers, I didn’t get on with.”

Wayne similarly linked his lack of ability to his dislike of this subject:

“And PE, I never liked it, no good at it.”

This particular subject appears to offer an illustration of the problems that a pupil may experience if he or she perceives him or herself as not being good at a subject, yet is forced to participate. The feelings revealed by the EBD pupils in this present study are consistent with the findings of O'Keeffe & Stoll (1995). In investigating truancy and school attendance problems within the mainstream, they found PE to be a lesson from which many of the pupils truanted. The importance of this is to become aware of the pupils' reasons. In O'Keeffe & Stoll's study of one hundred and fifty mainstream schools, the truancy which was subject specific was in the pupils' eyes associated with that subject being: (1) Boring / irrelevant, (2) Too difficult, (3) Providing too much coursework or homework that they could not keep up with, (4) Taught by a teacher they did not get on with.

Certainly the EBD pupils in this present study, such as Karen, agreed with these four points yet also gave more indication of the humiliation and embarrassment that they felt in certain subject areas that led to avoidance behaviours which isn't raised in O'Keeffe & Stoll's research. For the EBD pupils it is possible that this subject exacerbates other problems or difficulties that the pupil experiences, such as bullying, and is therefore perceived as a significant problem in its own right.

Other subjects which were specifically raised by one or more pupils in this study as being a problem were foreign languages, which again reflects similarities to the results of O'Keeffe & Stoll (1995), whose mainstream pupils highlighted languages as being unpopular. Larry, disillusioned with his experiences in mainstream, explains why having to study French, was for him irrelevant:

“They should give you lessons that help you about what you wanna be instead of chucking French and the rest of that crap at ya.”

He added later in the interview:

“I don't see the point of learning a different language if you're never gonna go to that country.”

Roy illustrated how perhaps subjects such as French are unpopular or create problems when a pupil is simply not good at it:

“I was alright in some lessons, but French really mucked me up. I don’t think the teacher liked me... I used to be hopeless at it.”

This is consistent with the pupils who specifically disliked PE because they considered themselves inadequate at it. It also introduces the fact that pupils may perceive teachers as not liking them because they are not good at the work.

Other pupils perceived the irrelevance of different subjects, including one who commented on geography by saying:

“I don’t see the point of it.”

Another perceived religious education as irrelevant:

“If you don’t believe in God then you shouldn’t do it.”

Irrelevant or boring was as previously stated one of the major curriculum specific associations made by mainstream pupils in connection with truancy, as revealed by O’Keeffe and Stoll (1995). Pasternicki et al (1993) also revealed boredom with the content of some lessons to be one of the major contributing factors given by the boys in their study in their decision to truant. Such results suggest that it is important for schools and policy makers to provide a curriculum that is perceived by pupils as relevant to their needs, and this may be a key area to be addressed if those pupils labelled as EBD are to remain in mainstream education. Before this can happen it is important however to attempt to better understand and to seek out the underlying origin of a pupil’s problems with the curriculum.

Low ability pupils and the curriculum

Some researchers have attempted to analyse exactly why pupils become bored or find work irrelevant. Scherer et al (1990) have focused on those of less ability and propose that the pupils 'may regard striving for the meagre certificates they are likely to obtain as simply not worthwhile.' (p15). O'Keeffe & Stoll (1995) reveal that negative feelings described by the pupils in their study which related to certain subjects were simply a result of the subject being perceived as too difficult, which is consistent with a number of statements made by pupils in the present study. Pupils in the present study who found the work too difficult were clearly able to justify their behaviours as being a result of these academic difficulties, thus suggesting a major link between difficulties with the curriculum and disturbing behaviours. Norwich (1994) cites Hart (1992) as stating that '...learning difficulties arise when there is a mismatch between the curriculum that is provided and the abilities, interests and optimum learning styles of individual pupils.' (p291). In support of this in the present study Gerry stated:

“I would just sit there and not do it cause I wouldn't be able to unless it was easy... unless I could read it.”

He described various strategies that he used for dealing with work that was too difficult for him, which are discussed further in Chapter 6, including the following:

“I used to make up excuses, dropping my ruler and stuff like that. I've lost my pencil, I need a rubber, to get out of it, to stop being embarrassed.”

He also added:

“I only used to say I'm not doing it or walk out.”

He appeared to be adopting actions that avoided embarrassment or humiliation and perhaps regained a certain amount of control over the situation in his own mind. To state “I'm not going to do it”, for Gerry may have been preferable to “I can't do it”. The two statements carry different meanings to the all important peer group. It

appears that facing formal punishment such as detention was even preferable to admitting that the work was too difficult or trying and failing:

“I would just sit there, they’d give me a detention after school.”

Danny also preferred to choose unacceptable behaviour and the consequences of such behaviour, as opposed to having to do the work that he was being given:

“I mucked about so I could get sent out of class so I wouldn’t have to do the work.”

In certain cases pupils were simply resigned to the fact that the work was too hard for them. They did not blame the school:

“It was a good school, but the work was too hard.”

A few pupils were willing to blame themselves for their problems with the curriculum, and recognised that they had a problem with keeping up with expectations:

“In work I was behind all the time.”

Julie explained clearly the direct link she perceived between her difficulties with the curriculum and its expectations of her, and the behaviours which finally resulted in her being labelled EBD and placed in a special school:

“ I have trouble with reading. I was taken out of my English lesson for special help with my reading. But when I went to the next English lesson where they were reading big books, I fell so far behind with it because I also had to take it home and read it, and I never bothered to read it. Then I had to do all about it, and do loads of homework. I couldn’t do it. I fell behind on all my work so I stopped going to school.”

The pupils’ comments illustrate clearly how demoralised these EBD pupils may have become within the mainstream setting, and how resigned they are to accepting their difficulties. Sandra and Ken made the following statements respectively:

“I was just thick.”

“The teachers are just doing their job and if I don’t understand that’s my fault.”

Sadly, these pupils seemed resigned to locating their schooling difficulties well within themselves.

“I took the easy way out. If I’d tried it I could still be there.”

Marchant (1995) links the lack of reward from the curriculum to the pupils’ deep rooted lack of self worth and esteem. ‘These children were not convinced that we had anything useful to offer, the proffered activities held no interest for them, and they continued to focus on their own immediate interests which for them were their inner emotions of insecurity, fear and lack of sense of worth.’ (p42).

These feelings may be closely related to so many of the disruptive behaviours described by pupils in this study, and more closely analysed in Chapter 6.

The curriculum and able pupils

Another aspect of the curriculum which was raised by only two pupils in this present study, yet perhaps links in with the results of Miller (1994), refers to the impact on behaviour of a curriculum inappropriate to the needs of particularly able pupils. Miller describes the behaviour of the bright but disruptive pupils in her study as being ‘...a frustration with the inappropriateness of academic expectations...’ or ‘...an attempt to compensate for being unpopular with peers because of academic success.’ (p252).

The following statement was made by Ronnie, who was a bright 16 year old delinquent attending Southdown as a result of drug abuse and truancy. Although it does not specifically illustrate this point, it does show that the pupils’ behaviour and lack of co-

operation within the classroom can be an informed choice, and not always a result of a lack of ability:

“I always knew I could do it, I just didn’t wanna.”

Karen did not describe disruptive behaviour as a consequence of her high academic ability but was aware that being more able than others did make her different, which she did not enjoy. She described feeling lonely and different from an early age, and then explained how despite her being ahead of other pupils academically, her mother decided to try to keep her in line with other pupils:

“She thought she might as well keep me in that year rather than take me out, and then finishing before everyone, and being even more out of it, even more different.”

“The teacher would ask a question and I’d always be the one to put my hand up or answer the question and people would say ‘boffin’ and all that.”

This particular point highlights how the curriculum and its mode of presentation within the mainstream school, can contribute to uncomfortable feelings of being different, that certain EBD pupils may already harbour.

Homework

The results of the interviews in this study suggest that a further extension of the curriculum as a factor in these EBD pupils’ difficulties in the mainstream setting was homework. For pupils already struggling with work in the classroom, homework appeared for some to become another focus for conflict with the school and its expectations, or more specifically, with teachers. Seven pupils from the sample raised the issue of homework as a contributing factor in their difficulties. Some of their comments were:

“A teacher had a go at me cause I hadn’t done my homework, but I didn’t understand it.”

“I got really worried about the homework.”

“I found homework difficult.”

“I just couldn’t do the homework. I just couldn’t remember what I was being taught.”

“I got really worried about the homework in French.”

“The work was really hard, loads of homework.”

As these comments show, difficulties with the work, compounded by homework expectations, clearly created anxiety in certain pupils. Little research appears to have specifically focused on this issue from an EBD pupil’s perspective, although these results do show some similarities to those of O’Keeffe & Stoll (1995). Their study of pupils in mainstream schools linked truancy to schools providing too much coursework or homework that the pupils were unable to keep up with. George explained how his frequent absence from school as a result of peer group bullying, led to additional problems in the form of homework when he did attend:

“I never used to do it, cause then I used to find it hard. I never used to go, homework used to be like the lesson I’d missed, so I never used to know what we was doing and no-one used to tell me.”

His statement illustrates how it may become increasingly difficult for a pupil to return into the routine of attending school once a pattern of non-attendance had been established, with homework expectations, as in George’s case, contributing to this problem. He explained how his return to school simply increased his difficulties as a result of the school’s punishments for incomplete homework:

“If you didn’t do homework you’d get debits and detentions.”

Supportive parents could perhaps alleviate homework difficulties, and in Sandra’s case make homework an easier, or less threatening, activity than classroom work:

“It was alright if it was homework because I could ask my Mum to help me, but if it was like in the school, I’m relying on my friends more than anything.”

For Wayne, having to transport a piece of the school, which he hated, back to his home was just too much:

“The homework just reminded me of school, so I thought, I’m not going to do it.”

Whether these EBD pupils do actually experience greater difficulties with homework than mainstream pupils is difficult to assess. Epstein et al (1993) refer to previous work in this field and present some evidence that pupils with behavioural disorders or learning disabilities are in fact perceived by teachers and parents as having more significant homework problems. They do not however seek pupils’ perceptions on these difficulties, and recognise that their research may be affected by teacher bias and selection procedure.

Involving pupils in curriculum issues

Although some pupils in this study were willing to criticise the curriculum, they did not offer many suggestions regarding alternatives in terms of subjects or presentation.

The involvement of pupils in the development of appropriate curriculum is something being stressed by official documentation on curriculum issues. Garner (1993a) quotes The National Curriculum Council’s document ‘A Curriculum for All’ (1989), as stating that students have a strong need for ‘partnerships with teachers which encourage them to become active learners, helping them to plan, build and evaluate their own learning programmes wherever possible.’ (p405). However, despite this advice and research reinforcing it, such democracy appears to remain absent particularly in the mainstream setting. In the special school some differences do seem to exist and are commented on by pupils in the present study. Simon explained how he felt that the special school setting should and did differ to the mainstream school:

“This is a special school, so we should do special things, and have choices.”

This issue of choosing, and the possibility of the pupils taking more responsibility for their own work, was also raised by two other pupils at The Oakwood Centre. They commented positively about their special provision:

“You have choices. Choose what you wanna do.”

“You got to do your work and be responsible for yourself here.”

A number of researchers have stated the importance of involving pupils and encouraging co-operation between staff and pupils when planning curricula including Cooper (1993d), and Garner (1993a). Gabriel (1988) in her article on planning an AIDS programme believes that democracy must come into play in planning any curriculum or programme of work for young people. She advocates ‘putting the young people nearer the centre of their own development.’ (p173). Schostak (1983) also agrees that pupils themselves should have a say in the work that they do in schools, which he describes as a self elected curriculum. However, large classes and the difficulty of setting differentiated material for highly individual needs within a dictated curriculum cannot be easily overcome. Norwich (1994) describes this difficulty and the specific problems that schools face in attempting to bring together differentiation which stresses the needs of the individual, with equality, as dictated by a National Curriculum.

Conclusion

Those who believe that the curriculum is a factor involved in the failure of EBD pupils to successfully attend a mainstream school, are given support by the comments of some of the pupils in the present study, as presented in this Section. Specific subject areas were in certain cases perceived by pupils as being irrelevant or boring, others as

exposing a pupil's inadequacy or humiliating them in some way. Other pupils simply found the academic expectations of the mainstream classroom too great. Whatever the case, behaviour problems often resulted from such difficulties.

It is important that we carefully analyse any differences in the way that the EBD pupil perceives the curriculum and their own needs compared to the perceptions of mainstream pupils. For the succeeding mainstream school pupil, their perception of the curriculum may well be quite different to that of the EBD pupils or disaffected pupils in this and other studies. Keys & Fernandes (1993) found from their questionnaire research with non-EBD pupils that the pupils felt school should both help them pass exams and also teach them things that would help them get jobs and be independent. The comments from pupils in this present research suggest that curriculum needs for the EBD pupil may need to be considered somewhat differently, and in a broader sense if these pupils are to be successfully supported within the mainstream setting. To actually describe and define this broader curriculum is difficult although research is attempting to better understand and present it. (Lund, 1992, Cooper, 1995, Hughes, 1996). This difficulty is expressed by Laslett (1995) who states; '...children with emotional and behavioural difficulties need to have opportunities to learn a great deal which is difficult to encompass in curriculum terms.' (p8). Such difficulty is apparent when one considers that for EBD pupils the curriculum should try to address issues such as improving pupils' self esteem, creating varied opportunities for success, and involving pupils in their own learning. Pupils in this study additionally clearly demanded the opportunity for relationship building and care from teachers.

The National Curriculum has clearly caused some problems for those who attempt to implement a broad curriculum, which is flexible enough to meet the widely varied and individual needs, both academic and personal, of all pupils. A compulsory curriculum by its nature struggles to bring together two differing goals, that of equality for all, and

recognition of individual differences and needs. Individuality is perhaps of most significance in the case of EBD pupils, who for many reasons require more support on an individual basis, both from the curriculum and from school personnel, than those pupils succeeding in mainstream settings. It seems to have become the role of the school to attempt to marry the two and meet the needs of the individual at the same time as meeting the demands of the government. Harris (1994) finds the notion of a National Curriculum 'flawed' and 'does not seek to celebrate the multi-ethnic population of many schools nor the special needs requirements of large numbers of students.' (p64).

Some of the pupils in this study made valid statements linking their difficulties and behaviour to the nature of the curriculum and its presentation in the mainstream setting. It is important however to state that the curriculum as a factor for these pupils was rarely described in isolation from other issues and this is reflected in the somewhat lower number of comments from pupils that are presented in this Section, compared to other Sections. Perceived faults in the curriculum were often closely linked to teachers and teaching skills and styles. In fact the curriculum itself was commented upon less than the teachers themselves and their perceived inability to offer support. The pupils' perceptions of faults within the school system are somewhat complex and inseparable, but all led to frustration and apparently limited choices as to how they should respond, particularly in the classroom. Fear of failure and the punishment or humiliation resulting, or a continuous lack of positive reward from the curriculum, ultimately seems to have led to behaviours commonly associated with the EBD pupil.

It may be that the mainstream schools do not consider certain pupils to be their responsibility, or possibly they feel unable to offer certain pupils what they need given the confines of certain parameters such as the National Curriculum and class size.

Johnny recalled a comment made by one of his teachers in mainstream that may reflect the significance of this point:

“I told them, ‘can you slow down a bit?’ and he didn’t. He said you ‘shouldn’t be at this school then.’ My hands were hurting.”

If as previously suggested there may be a mismatch between what the pupils need and what the curriculum offers, then the issue to be addressed must be where schools can begin to make changes that will minimise this mismatch. The attitudes of individual schools in attempting to fulfill the National Curriculum demands, compete in league tables, yet also to provide a broad enough curriculum for every pupils’ needs, is crucial to the success of EBD or potential EBD pupils in the mainstream. If the pupils alone are considered the only flexible component in the system, then pupils that are labelled as EBD will continue to be rejected by the mainstream schools.

5.1(iv) Social Interaction

A significant number of the pupils in this study were articulate in expressing views regarding the role of the social aspects of schools in the creation and evolution of their difficulties and their subsequent placement in special education. In addition to the school factors such as curriculum, school and class size, the nature of school buildings and the attitudes and skills of teachers, a number of pupils also demonstrated a high level of comprehension and awareness of the social world of the school and its significance as a problem for them. They offered valuable insight into factors within the schools that may have nurtured such problems and their descriptions of behaviour and motives for behaviour were in some cases unhesitatingly associated with experiences of negative social interaction with peers.

Awareness of the school as a social institution and not exclusively an academic one, has been developing since the early 1980’s. At this time research into the sociology of

schools and schooling (Tomlinson, 1982, Woods, 1983, Furlong, 1985, Meighan, 1986), began to point out the importance of social roles and informal pupil cultures within the school. Such research raised awareness as to the extremely important social nature of the whole schooling experience for children and its impact on their behaviour. Observation and interviewing within schools began to reveal the complexity of relationships that exist inside these academic institutions and certain studies stressed the importance of seeking the pupils' own perspective on these relationships and the sociology of schooling. Bird et al (1981), Tattum (1982), and Schostak & Logan (1984) all sought insight into the pupils' views on schools and also their behaviour in relation to the peer group and the existence of informal pupil cultures. Their studies produced revealing results which demonstrated the pupils' ability to rationalise and describe socially motivated behaviour and behaviour patterns. Work in this field has continued and evolved from these studies and has encouraged educationalists to accept the powerful pressures that pupils experience in schools, which originate in a social context. The fact that pupils are expected to survive, often without respite, in the highly social and group orientated environment of the school was an issue raised in Section 5.1(i). This point is acknowledged by other researchers such as Harris (1994) and also by Cullingford (1991) who revealed from analysis of his interview data with pupils in mainstream school, that certain pupils felt a need for '...some quiet place where they could be undisturbed.' (p37). Interestingly he suggests that it may be the classroom that offers a place to be free from the highly social aspects of the school environment, thus emphasising the intensely social nature of school life outside of the classroom. He also describes the toilets or library as being perceived by some pupils as their only opportunity for respite.

This present study further validates such research, offering support to the belief that social interaction and dynamics within schools have an important role in the behaviour of certain pupils in school. The EBD pupils interviewed in this study add insight into not only the extent but also the nature of social factors within schools that contribute

to certain pupils' inability to remain within the mainstream setting. Their perceptions draw attention to potentially unrecognised or underestimated social challenges that such pupils face throughout a school day, in addition to those of an academic nature that the curriculum generates. They also illustrate how the schools themselves may contribute to such challenges through the day to day processes of schooling.

Research in mainstream schools, suggests that these social and academic challenges exist for many pupils, yet the majority of pupils clearly are somehow able to cope and remain within the system, unlike the pupils interviewed in this study. It would appear that for the pupils in this study, these social challenges, with or without academic pressures imposed by the school, created greater stresses than they were able to manage, and often resulted in disturbing behaviours.

Clearly, a broad awareness of the extent and complex nature of these challenges and the way in which they impact on a pupil's behaviour is important for professionals working in both mainstream and special schools. This Section offers data that attempts to increase such awareness and in Chapter 6, further analysis of resulting behaviours and motives is presented.

The social world of the school is clearly a complex and challenging experience for many pupils. The pupils in this present study, through their perceptions of school, suggest that the demands of their schooling may have made the process of adaption too difficult, particularly when social and academic survival called for certain specific acceptable behaviours. As will be described in Section 6.3, in a number of cases pupils expressed frustration at a perceived lack of support and understanding by schools and a lack of assistance from the schools and teachers in helping them find safe and legitimate behavioural options. They perceived that such support would have allowed them to deal with the demands being made.

Before discussing this further, along with specific aspects of schooling which may have contributed to the social pressures on pupils and which have proved so critical to their problems in school, it is important to first clarify the nature of the social pressures perceived by EBD pupils in the study. The most frequently used term in the interview data was bullying. This present Section attempts to clarify the nature and extent of such behaviour as perceived by the pupils and to assess the reasons why it has developed such significance for them as EBD pupils.

The nature of bullying

Despite our familiarity with the word bullying its definition can be somewhat vague. It is hoped that the pupils' perceptions presented in this Section will contribute to further clarification of this type of behaviour, which appears to play such a critical role in the failure of many EBD pupils in mainstream school.

Following extensive pioneering research in this field, Olweus (1994) defines bullying with the following sentence; 'A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions, on the part of one or more other students.' (p1173). He states that a negative action is one that intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict injury or discomfort upon another. This negative action may involve physical contact, words, making faces, obscene gestures, or intentional exclusion from a group. He believes that for bullying to occur there must be an imbalance in strength, in line with other forms of abuse. In fact, he sometimes refers to bullying as 'peer abuse'. This term does tend to exclude the possibility that bullying may not be exclusively limited to behaviours between pupils in schools. Galloway (1994) broadens the concept of bullying with his definition; 'Bullying occurs when one person, or group, deliberately causes distress to another person or group. It can involve any form of verbal, physical, psychological or sexual abuse.' (p19). He

develops the belief that behaviour amongst staff and between staff and pupils may equally well fall under the ‘bullying’ umbrella. This issue is developed using pupil comment from the present research later in this Section, when discussing reasons why social pressures become so significant in schools. In addition to the definitions quoted here there are undoubtedly numerous other available definitions of bullying offered by researchers in the field who following the pioneering work of Olweus in the 1970’s, in Scandinavia, have more recently provided a rapid surge in publications on bullying. (Besag, 1989, Tattum & Lane, 1989, Francis & Jones, 1994, Tattum & Graham, 1997).

A number of the EBD pupils interviewed in this study were able to offer interesting descriptions of behaviours that they classified as bullying. Some had been responsible for these behaviours, whilst others had been on the receiving end as victims. Descriptions comprised a range of activities and incidents, both in mainstream and special education settings. Stealing and destroying personal possessions was one activity described by a minority of the pupils. Gerry described incidents that occurred at a residential school prior to his arrival at The Oakwood Centre:

“... people used to come in and break my Walkman, take my stuff and that used to annoy me.”

Karen explained her experiences in mainstream:

“They used to nick your bag, pens and your coat, and throw your stuff on the floor.”

Roy also experienced stealing as a form of bullying in the mainstream school:

“Money going missing, shoes and clothes.”

George described extortion as a behaviour he had adopted and which he described as bullying:

“Give us your money or sweets or we’ll beat you up.”

He did however also describe his own victimisation:

“Name calling and stuff like that, nicking books.”

Actual physical aggression from other pupils was described by six pupils in the study, but this did not include numerous accounts of fighting which are described in more detail in Chapter 6. Karen described two different aggressive incidents that she had experienced in the mainstream school:

“There were loads of them, they grabbed me from behind and she stuck all her nails in and started punching my face.”

“They would sit behind you and stick compasses in you.”

Wayne also described physical aggression that he had experienced:

“I was walking down the corridor and people grabbed me, rammed me up against the wall, and this person was hitting me.”

Roy had also experienced physical violence:

“A boy called Rick who found it amusing to hit me in the stomach.”

He went on to explain other actions:

“Even the little kids, spitting and swearing at me on the way home ...gobbed on my back.”

“I was being hit, pushed, called names, hung up by my bag over a post and pinned up against a wall.”

Bobby, a 15 year old boy at Southdown, who had an aggressive history of bullying and delinquency, described his experiences:

“I was up against the wall, ‘You’re gonna die at lunchtime’.”

Michael, a 12 year old pupil at Southdown School, who had been living in care for most of his life and who had shown particularly extreme emotional and behavioural difficulties within the mainstream setting, reported how he had seen friends bullied:

“They push my friends down the drive. They push them over.”

Mike explained his play time experiences with peers:

“At play time they used to come over and kick me and push me under the huts. They used to push you and keep you under there and it wasn’t very nice.”

Interestingly these aggressive, threatening behaviours were often not restricted to the school environment. Bullying was described by three pupils as extending beyond the school itself. Wayne recalled a trip to a fair ground during which he perceived his vulnerability to be greater than in school:

“They said go away boring, and smashed my head against the Waltzer.”

George recalled an incident where an abusive letter was put through his letterbox at home:

“After school, one of the kids who lived across the road, wrote a letter and he stuffed it through the letter box and ran down the road.”

Karen tried to attend a youth club but found the same problems with bullying to be present there too. She said:

“I stopped going to youth club because of it. I took my bike and someone let the tyres down.”

These pupils seemed to be aware that they could be potentially more vulnerable out of school than within. George and Karen respectively, continued by stating:

“If you can stop it at school, you can’t really stop it at home.”

“At youth club it was easier for them there, no teachers.”

The descriptions of actions given by the pupils in this study that were of a threatening or physical nature, were similar to the results of other studies. For example, Arora (1994) lists unpleasant actions given by pupils in mainstream as ‘tried to kick me, threatened to hurt me, demanded money from me, tried to hurt me, tried to hit me, tried to break something that belonged to me.’ (p157). Such consistency between the

results from different research which has used pupils' perceptions to determine what constitutes bullying actions, is interesting when one considers the difficulties being experienced by researchers in defining bullying. The pupils themselves appear to have no problem with this, and their descriptions are certainly not limited. As will be discussed later in this Section, such problems may result from the differing perceptions of bullying that adults or professionals have compared to pupils, possibly owing to the fact that so many actions are not observed directly by teachers or researchers.

Also in agreement with previous research on bullying, (Sharp, 1995), pupil comments in this present study revealed that threats, verbal or mental bullying, had often played as large a part in the pupils' difficulties and unhappiness as actual physical aggression.

Wayne explained how destructive such behaviour was to him:

“Mental bullying is awful. Physical bullying OK, you can take it, a few bruises OK, naffed up leg, a few black eyes, OK you can take that. But when it's mental and it's not about me, about my parents and my family, it's just I can't take that.”

Sharp (1995), who researched the effects of bullying on seven hundred and twenty three secondary aged students, found 'indirect, verbal bullying ... causing the most distress.' (p86). Interestingly it was not demonstrated from the results in this present research that verbal or mental bullying was more prevalent for girls, as opposed to the combined mental and physical bullying preferred by boys, as proposed by both Jones (1994) & Pervin et al (1994). The latter suggest that females use more emotional and verbal abuse, whereas males use more abuse of a verbal and physical nature. Olweus (1994) reinforces this argument but describes the girls as using more 'subtle, indirect ways', and boys using more 'physical means.' (p1177). In the present study of EBD pupils there was no apparent difference found between the descriptions of bullying behaviours given by the girls and boys interviewed. Both described physical and mental bullying experiences, although it should be noted that very few girls were actually interviewed compared to the number of boys in this study.

Another form of bullying that fits into the category of subtle indirect emotional abuse is social exclusion. Karen described this type of bullying as particularly disturbing to her:

“She’d make excuses like, ‘there’s not enough room at the table’.”

“They say ‘why don’t you just get out, we don’t want you here’.”

Perhaps it is the shrewd and indirect nature of this type of action that makes it so unpleasant and almost undetectable by teachers or adults. It appears to attack the individual’s sense of self worth. Siann et al (1994) describe this with clarity when they state; ‘The subjective experience of feeling bullied relates... to being made to feel personally inferior and inadequate - it is a powerful assault on one’s level of self esteem.’ (p132). They also make the point that verbal bullying may involve comments that ‘...strike at the individual’s private core of self...’ (p133). Karen recalled her experience of such wounding comments:

“Someone comes up to you and says, ‘what is the meaning of your life, why don’t you just die?’ ”

As was discussed previously, it is clear that the term bullying is difficult to define in general terms despite the clarity of pupil comments regarding their experiences. Perhaps the problem lies with the difficulty that any observer, or even victim, has in attempting to interpret the true intent of an action, which becomes a purely subjective judgement, and readily deniable by the perpetrator. This is clarified if we return briefly to definitions of bullying. Francis & Jones (1994) present two of the many definitions of bullying from the literature; ‘The wilful conscious desire to hurt, threaten or frighten someone,’ and ‘any action or implied action, such as threats or violence, intended to cause fear or distress.’ (p113). Such definitions clearly illustrate the subjectivity of interpretation of behaviours owing to their use of the words, ‘wilful’ and ‘intended’. In many circumstances an intention is very difficult to prove or detect.

However for some pupils such as Karen, even a perceived fear of such an intention appeared to be sufficient to cause her distress. She explained her feeling:

“Even when I wasn’t, it was the fear of getting bullied.”

Galloway (1994) actually believes that some schools do have a lot less bullying than others, and this may be due to some having created a climate which is ‘relatively free from the fear of bullying.’ (p25). This subtle, intangible feeling amongst pupils is an undercurrent of fear of which schools should be aware, despite the potential difficulty they face in detecting or dealing with it. A report in the Daily Telegraph (1996a) presents the results of a large survey carried out by the Exeter University School Health Education Unit, which revealed that bullying makes more than one third of 12 year old girls afraid to go to school. Evidence for this fear of being bullied even before it happens is provided by Measor & Woods (1984). The pupils they interviewed, who were moving from middle to secondary school, claimed that at this point of transition their main worries were losing one’s friends and ‘...the prospect of being bullied.’ (p9). Francis & Jones (1994) quote research that states that even the word bullying itself evokes fear in many pupils. They attempt to find a common thread running through the many definitions of bullying by stating; ‘The fundamental attitude underlying victimization is that of fear.’ (p113). This fear is confirmed by Larry who referring to another boy, stated in one interview:

“I used to be really scared of him.”

It is important that the fears of certain children are not perceived as irrational by adults. Whitney et al (1992) quote a Head of a centre for young people with ‘school phobia’ as saying that ‘...although a phobia such as school phobia is classified as an irrational fear, there are many aspects of schooling where a fear reaction is not at all an irrational response....’ (p4). Francis & Jones (1994) describe some of the behaviours and emotions resulting from this fear, such as poor attitudes to school, fear of coming to school and truancy. They also describe extreme cases where the fear of bullying leads

to physical injury, attempted suicide and even successful suicide. To illustrate this point consider the case of a boy who died of a brain haemorrhage in 1991 after being beaten by two school bullies (The Times, 1991), and a more recent report concerning the suicide of a boy following bullying (Daily Telegraph, 1996b).

This Section has so far attempted to reveal the nature of bullying as perceived by previous research and some of the pupils in this study. Clearly definitions are varied and subjective. The power of the word is immense, yet its true meaning remains somewhat elusive and Siann et al (1994) describe such inconsistency in the definitions of bullying. This is interesting when one finds that pupil interviews reveal consistently common threads in their own descriptions and perceptions of bullying, both in this and other research. However, moving on from definitions, what is clearly significant from the results of the present study are the numbers of EBD pupils who felt that bullying had made school life very difficult for them. It is the prevalence of these difficulties, particularly for EBD pupils, that is explored in the following Section.

The prevalence of bullying

The total number of pupils in this study who perceived bullying to have been the major factor in their failure in mainstream school was difficult to assess, owing to the complex way in which different factors had interacted to create their problems. However there was certainly a significant number of pupils who expressed particular concern over negative social peer interaction, and their comments regarding the nature of bullying, bullies, victims and how schools perpetuate or deal with this issue are expressed throughout this Section. Negative peer interaction was described by twenty eight pupils as an experience that had contributed to their school difficulties, but in total thirty three pupils were able to comment in a general sense, having experienced or observed it, without necessarily stating its importance to them personally. In addition

to specific comments regarding their own experiences, certain pupils showed a more general awareness of the extensiveness of bullying within schools. Simon and Bobby were both boys who appeared resigned to the fact that bullying was an intrinsic part of schooling. They stated respectively:

“Bullying is a way of life.”

“If they expelled everybody who did something cruel, the school would have one pupil or a few people in it.”

This type of comment is not exclusive to this present research, or to EBD pupils. As Arnold's (1994) study of pupils' and teachers' perceptions of bullying in a middle school reveals, both groups used words and expressions such as 'normal' and 'getting used to it,' (p184), to describe their perceptions of bullying. Such research shows how accepted these negative social behaviours have become. Cullingford (1993a) suggests that perhaps it is because bullying merges so 'inextricably' with the whole experience of schooling, that it has been so much ignored. (p54). He states it is '...the way that bullying blends into the everyday life of the school, that makes it so worrying.' (p54). If an act of bullying can take on so many different forms, and can so easily disguise itself as acceptable 'normal' behaviour within schools, then clearly this explains why statistical reporting of bullying incidents in schools may create problems and be inconsistent. Research must carefully consider not only the definition of bullying it uses, but also the site of the research and the method of data collection. Whom the researcher is asking may also make a difference depending on the interviewee's personal perception of the situation. However, with this in mind a number of researchers have produced interesting and disturbing results, some of which are referenced here to illustrate the possible magnitude of the problem within our schools.

The national help-line for children called Childline reports that 75% of all their callers from its bullying line are reporting experiences and personal problems involving

bullying, (Branwhite, 1994, Times, 1991). Smith (1991) quotes from a number of studies on the incidence of bullying, one of which states that 1 in 5 pupils in England have experienced bullying and 1 in 10 have inflicted it. Kidscape in 1986 reported 68% of children aged 5 - 16 had experienced bullying. Pervin & Turner (1994) report the results of a major DES study carried out by Sheffield University in twenty four Sheffield Schools in the early 1990's, which revealed 27% of pupils in Junior / Middle schools reported having been bullied occasionally, and 10% being bullied once or more than once per week. In the secondary schools, 10% of pupils reported being bullied occasionally and 4% being bullied once or more per week. Pervin & Turner (1994) do however dispute these somewhat low figures, claiming that in their own study of one hundred and forty seven year 8 pupils, 50% of the boys and one-third of the girls claimed to have been bullied. In fact there is now even more recent evidence for numbers being higher than those quoted by Pervin & Turner. (Daily Telegraph, 1997). It is interesting to compare these mainstream figures with those from the present study in which 78% of the pupils raised social interaction with peers, as one of the factors contributing to their difficulties in schools, possibly reflecting a greater incidence of bullying for EBD pupils.

It would appear that little previous research has been carried out with EBD pupils specifically, as to their experiences of bullying or the degree of importance that bullying holds in relation to their behaviour and special needs placement. It is also difficult to find or use statistics, particularly from any large-scale study, which allow a comparison of quantitative data for mainstream and EBD pupils. One study that has attempted to contribute to this apparently poorly researched area was carried out by Whitney et al (1992). Following the DES funded Sheffield University study previously discussed, Whitney et al (1992) went into five special schools in the Sheffield area to investigate whether bullying issues were different in SEN schools. Heads of schools and centres involved in the research are quoted as commenting on the high level of involvement of pupils with learning difficulties (MLD) and EBD

pupils in bullying incidents and behaviours, and Whitney et al quote other research which has suggested that SEN pupils are over represented as victims. This type of research and the results from it appear to point to how crucial it is to gain a better understanding of the role and significance of negative social experiences in the failure of EBD pupils in mainstream schools. A development of the research completed by Whitney et al that correlates well with the results of the present study, is the analysis of factors that enhance the risk of a child being a victim. This is discussed in the following sub-Section.

Who are the bullies and victims?

If there is a significantly high level of involvement of EBD pupils in bullying incidents in schools, as Whitney et al (1992) and the present research suggests, then naturally it is of interest to researchers in the EBD field to explore the characteristics and potential factors which enhance the risk of a pupil being a bully or a victim. Some of the pupils in this present study offered clear perceptions of these characteristics and factors, also showing at times a high degree of understanding of the underlying motives behind certain behaviours.

One of the factors related to victimisation and bullying which has been described by a number of researchers in this field, including Measor & Woods (1984), Cullingford (1991), and Olweus (1994), and supported by pupils in the present study, was that of a pupil's group membership or friendship. Whitney et al (1992) believe that victims '...lack the protection against bullying which friendship gives.' (p6). Roy certainly perceived his victimisation as resulting from a lack of identity with a group, by stating:

“I didn't really hang around in a gang.”

Security was closely related to being popular and having friends, and Susan perceived that 'being popular' meant:

“Hanging around with the hard lot.”

When asked to define 'the hard lot', she stated:

“They go around bullying people.”

It would appear that those safe from bullying, or those who adopted the bullying role, were perceived as always being part of a group, or having friends. They were perceived by pupils as never being isolated or alone, unlike the victim. This group membership and having friends seems to play an important part in the informal culture of the pupils. Olweus (1994) believes that bullies do usually have two or three supporters who like them, and that they are rarely loners. Wayne described bullies as:

“Being in with the crowd.”

He described one bully:

“He was never strong, it was the fact that he had three or four people who were bigger than him to back him up.”

He added:

“I was never scared of him in the first place, it was just that he had friends.”

This statement suggests that bullying is closely linked to groups of pupils and not individuals. As Cullingford (1991) observed from his pupil interviews in mainstream; 'Security derives from a sense of cohesion within a group...' (p53). Measor & Woods (1984) revealed that pupils generally felt that having friends around protected them from being bullied, and they felt that bullying was less likely to happen when 'your mates are there...' (p14). This may explain Rick's comment that:

“Most new people are bullied.”

Perhaps he perceived there to be vulnerability in being isolated and without friends particularly in a new school environment.

However, to be part of a group was perceived by some pupils to require certain degrees of social conformity, particularly in terms of appearance and behaviour.

Whitney et al (1992) suggest that particular characteristics such as clumsiness, dyslexia or other disabilities leave certain pupils vulnerable to victimisation. Susan provided an even broader perspective on this by stating that victims could be:

“People who are really intelligent people. People who are really thick. People who’ve just got something different about them, that they, the bullies, haven’t got.”

Cullingford (1993a) agrees. He states; ‘...anything that makes someone stand out, is a potential hazard.’ (p58). Karen supported this argument further by stating:

“Anything, if it’s slightly different to anyone else.”

George blamed his bullying experience on his surname, which carried a negative personal connotation. His parents had decided to change it, yet he perceived his victimisation problems to have started:

“Because of what my name used to be.”

Even a simple issue such as wearing glasses could be sufficient to provoke an attack, as Sarah stated:

“Everyone was laughing at me behind my back... and when I started to wear my glasses that was horrible.”

Karen offered a slightly different perspective by suggesting that no matter what you wore or what you looked like, if you were not in the majority, the majority being seen as the bullying group, then you would be victimised:

“So it’s like it doesn’t really matter what you do. If one person’s got nice clothes they’re gonna pick on you if you’ve got horrible clothes. Or if they’ve

got horrible clothes they're gonna pick on you if you've got nice clothes. That's why I agree with school uniform."

It was also possible for just one specific incident to be perceived as being sufficient in certain cases to trigger bullying. Karen again described an incident that she perceived as having started her fear of other pupils bullying her:

"The teacher was telling a story about a girl getting a needle stuck in her knee. I just went plonk. Apparently I had a fit on the floor and foam was coming out of my mouth ... I was so embarrassed when I woke up, everyone was laughing. I didn't go to school for about a week. I was too scared of what people would say."

The self-esteem and self-image of the victim appears crucial to the development of the role of victim. Many researchers have tried to link certain personalities to victimisation, and have used personality theory to explain and explore the types of children who may adopt bully or victim roles. (Mynard & Joseph, 1997). Francis & Jones (1994) describe comprehensively the work carried out in this field in the last twenty years. They list from these research projects some 'frequently cited descriptions' of victims. These include depression, anxiety, insecurity, low self-confidence, shyness, preference for own company, few friends, avoidance of social occasions, comparative social isolation. They also describe lower levels of aggressiveness, lower dominance, greater powerlessness and higher sensitivity and submissiveness. Finally they mention lower levels of intelligence and maturity, and often a more positive attitude to school. Olweus (1994), interestingly, disputes theories that suggest that feeling or simply looking different results in victimisation. He believes that there is little evidence to support the widely held belief that victimisation is caused by 'external deviations.' (p1178). Instead he turns to personality traits such as anxious, insecure, cautious, sensitive and quiet, as evidence as to whom may become a victim. Such people, he maintains, have low self-esteem, are lonely and without friends, and feel unattractive, failures, stupid or ashamed, and he has labelled such victims as passive victims. There is certainly evidence from the interviews in this present research to support his results, and to support the views of

Pervin & Turner (1994) who see victims as often blaming themselves for their role.

Roy was one pupil who offered such support. He stated:

“I must have looked irritating to them. They didn’t like the way I looked, the way I walked.”

George simply stated:

“Like at school everyone didn’t like me much.”

Another pupil explained the reason for his victimisation:

“I was very very quiet.”

Roy’s comment perhaps supports Olweus’ (1994) theory that these victims ‘seem to signal to others that they are insecure and worthless individuals, who will not retaliate if they are attacked or insulted.’ (p1179). In addition, the issue of the height or size of the victim was also perceived as important to a number of the pupils in this study, and will be described in Section 5.3. Six pupils in the present study blamed being smaller than the bullies as a reason for being victimised:

“I was too small ...”

“I was smaller, they could pick on me and get a way with it.”

“I don’t look my age. I’m small.”

“Bullies bully because they’re bigger.”

“I used to be small. You get shit on.”

“I was one of the smallest. I used to be really small.”

With his extensive research, Olweus (1994) confirms that bullies are in fact generally physically stronger than average boys, creating an imbalance in strength or an ‘asymmetric power relationship.’ (p1173) However, not all of the victims in this study were able to give any kind of reason as to why they had been or were being

victimised and bullied. They were often surprisingly unaware of personality traits or appearance, that may have contributed to their difficulties and were particularly unaware of any behaviours which may have provoked bullying. Interestingly behavioural traits that provoke bullying are a factor listed by Whitney et al (1992) relating to enhanced risk of victimisation. This is supported by Olweus (1994) who has also labelled a different type of victim called a provocative victim. He explains; 'These students... behave in ways that may cause irritation and tension around them.' (p1179). Such pupils lose their temper easily and defend themselves when attacked. Stephenson & Smith (1989), cited in Boulton & Smith (1994) suggest that provocative victims may even 'provoke antagonism amongst their peers, and actually enjoy aggressive situations.' (p326). The extent to which this is true or not is given little support from the pupils interviewed in this present study. However, certain pupils' reports of behaviour fitted very neatly into the role and descriptions of provocative victim. Mike for example was clearly caught in a cycle of behaviour in which his own response to peer aggression or teasing simply provoked further attack:

"They picked on me because I was the easiest to wind up ... I lost my temper quickly."

Wayne also talked of his own retaliation to bullies and recognised that this provoked further attack:

"That's how I knew they could get at me."

These statements are analysed further in Chapter 6. However, despite these comments, pupils such as Wayne tended to adopt descriptions of themselves as passive victims, or alternatively, to see no cause or reason at all for their victimisation. They rarely perceived their own actions as provocative, preferring to ascribe victimisation to more passive, perhaps inescapable reasons, for which they were not responsible. Interestingly, a minority of the bullies interviewed by Pervin & Turner (1994) blamed

the victims for being bullied, reinforcing the concept of the provocative victim. Only Ronnie expressed such direct blame on his victims:

“You’ve got little kiddies, they’ve got attitude problems ... I just walk up to a kiddy, and if they’re looking at me, my attitude is I freak ‘em out, I make ‘em cry inside their head. I’ll say to them ‘If you don’t fuckin’ stop lookin’ at me like that, I’m gonna bust you up.”

In summary, it does appear that there are victims who display distinct physical or personality traits that to an outside observer may initiate victimisation within the social dynamics of the school, yet who choose consciously or unconsciously not to acknowledge such traits. Cullingford (1991) found that the pupils that he interviewed were either perfectly clear why they were disliked or did not know at all why they had been selected as a victim. Teachers in a study by Siann et al (1993) clearly perceived victims in terms of ‘deviation from some social norm.’ (p320) in appearance, ability, or ethnicity. Their results suggest that we should take a close look into the powerful forces in our society that mould and structure our values and norms, including the media and advertising, which may be playing an important role in the behaviour of our young people in school, and fuelling bullying behaviours. The social norm is an important standard by which the pupils appear to judge themselves and others, and it is often reflected in a competitive attitude to appearance, including clothes.

As previously stated it appears that the pupils perceived that being an outsider or not part of a group, or being low in the pecking order of the informal cultures that exist, would leave them vulnerable to bullying. Joining the group was one way to avoid victimisation, yet to become a group member certain criteria needed first to be met. These criteria were very clearly perceived by certain pupils. Wayne was certain that bullies were:

“Up to date with clothes, big, have friends, going out.”

This statement supports the work of a number of other researchers. Arnold (1994) states that leaders of groups had ‘...more sophisticated physical appearances.’ (p186).

Olweus (1994) also describes the boys who were bullies in his studies as physically stronger than average. Karen described what she perceived as the 'competitive' aspect of the social experience of school, and the pressure to compete and conform or be isolated and possibly victimised:

“The way you wear your hair, the trainers you’ve got for PE. It’s like so much competition, it’s like who’s gonna be the best?”

She added, that pupils are vulnerable to victimisation:

“If you haven’t got the right names on your trainers, or the right labels.”

These views were not exclusive to girls. Boys were in certain cases equally as vulnerable to the pressures of maintaining an acceptable image in the eyes of their peers. Fitting in with the expectations and norms of the peer group was perceived as essential if bullying was to be avoided. Wayne was aware that uniform was meant to eliminate such competition but failed:

“Uniform’s supposed to be like so everybody wears the same. Doesn’t work. People go out and buy £100 blazers and £200 shoes. I just couldn’t keep up with it.”

This perceived pressure to conform to the socially acceptable images of the dominant culture may be deep rooted in the media and its messages. These messages, and their subtle yet powerful influence on young people, can have far reaching effects in terms of pupil behaviour in school. Johnny described the importance of his self-image in relation to his ability to conform to school expectations. The seemingly simple issue of the school’s requirement for a certain type of shoe to be worn, conflicted with his perceived socially acceptable image. The power of this image and its importance to Johnny, completely outweighed the benefits of conforming to the school rules and his priorities were so very different to those of the school:

“I ain’t gonna learn cause I don’t wear shoes ... I don’t wear black shoes. They told me to wear them but I still won’t wear them. The rest of the uniform is OK its just the shoes. They hurt my feet, and if I get a size bigger they fall off. I look stupid in shoes.”

Obviously these pressures on pupils to maintain an acceptable social image with their peers may be fuelled by a consumerist society, driven by advertising and the media.

Wayne offered further evidence for this view and its contribution to his victimisation:

“We weren’t that well off. Our car wasn’t the latest car. We lived in a council house.”

This statement illustrates how the victimisation of this pupil involved his personal background and issues over which he often had little control, centring around the social status of his family. The pupil’s family was certainly a sensitive subject, and one frequently chosen by bullies to provoke a victim. As Mooney et al (1991) report from their interviews with mainstream pupils, a provocative comment would often be aimed at the victim’s family or parents. They illustrate their point with a quote from one pupil who explained that it was sufficient to say ‘Your Mum’ to provoke an attack. (p110). They go on to say ‘...it was evident from their comments that insults about their family were regarded as a particularly serious form of teasing, which often led to a confrontation.’ (p110). Kelly & Cohn (1988) are quoted by Mooney et al (1991) as saying ‘the single worst form of name-calling was family.’ (p110), but they emphasise this as being for pupils aged 11 - 14 and not younger children of 7 years old. This type of teasing or bullying was consistently described by Wayne as being an important part of the problems he experienced:

“They knew how to torment me. It was through my family. My Dad is 65, he’s an old man, older than their Grandads even.”

Johnny was also aware of his Dad being an older man, and how this resulted in provocative comments from peers:

“It really winds me up about my Dad. Taking the Mickey out of my Dad, he’s an OAP.”

In Cullingford’s (1993a) study of fifty five mainstream pupils, he found that some victims knew they were not popular and tended to describe things like ‘previous

reputation' or 'obvious abnormalities', as the reasons. (p58). He claims that children are conscious of the reputation that they bring from previous schools, and they would prefer a fresh start, in a new school environment. This was certainly reinforced by certain pupils in the present study, including Wayne who appeared to feel trapped within his reputation, stating:

“The thing is, they knew everything about me cause they’ve known me all through the years.”

He expressed, more than once, a feeling of helplessness, and an inability to lose the role of victim once established. He perceived the only answer as lying in the hands of the authorities. The answer did not lie in changing behaviour, but in changing schools. His solution was expressed as:

“Transfer of school, fresh start, clean start ... where they wouldn’t know anything about me.”

George seemed to need a chance for a new identity, suggesting with the following comment that he experienced bullying because it had become the norm for his peers to behave in that way towards him. In a new environment he felt he would escape the victimisation, as those surrounding him would not be familiar with him in that role, nor with what his name had been, (his own perceived root for his bullying problem):

“I suppose they wouldn’t know what everyone, how everyone treated me before.”

Karen saw the answer lying not just in moving schools, but in the family moving away to live in a new area:

“I think if we moved and went to a different area.”

This issue and some of the comments are developed and discussed further in Section 6.2 when pupils’ perceptions are used to gain a better understanding of behaviours which result from labelling and reputations. These rather desperate statements by

pupils appear to reflect a loss of hope. Pupils appeared to no longer believe that the schools themselves or the supportive people in their lives could actually prevent bullying arising. They were in many cases disillusioned with the ability of schools to prevent or deal with negative social interaction and often spoke clearly about aspects of school and schooling that did little to help them with these issues. In fact they described numerous aspects of schools and schooling processes that they perceived as having nurtured their social problems, and this is developed in the following Section.

The school environment and bullying

This Section concerns pupils' perceptions of situations or processes within the school that may have contributed to negative social interaction with their peers. In fact there is a close interweaving with the factors described in previous Sections, including those on class and school size, and teachers and teaching, and these Sections did include some analysis and insight as to how these different aspects of schooling can impact on social relationships. For example the negative social interaction between pupils in schools is perceived by some pupils in this study as being a result of the number of pupils both in the school as a whole and in classrooms, with insufficient staff to monitor and oversee activities. Bobby had resigned himself to the fact that bullying would happen as a consequence of the number of pupils in one place:

“There's so many people, it's bound to happen”

Additionally, the nature and layout of the school building had also created difficulties for a minority of pupils. For some of the pupils this aspect of schools had led to no physical difficulties, only a psychological anxiety, as described in Section 5.1(i). However, there also appeared to be in a small number of cases, a physical threat resulting from the institutional nature of the buildings, and the mass movement of the

pupils through the building at certain times of the day. Siann et al (1993) in their study of teachers' views on bullying and school effects, state that the physical environment of their school presented particular problems because '...its corridors are very narrow, so that in the brief periods between lessons, there is considerable congestion ...' (p319). They continue by suggesting that this contributes directly to high levels of bullying. Arnold (1994) similarly states that 'bottle necks on corridors, cloakrooms and wash areas' (p187), created opportunity for aggressive behaviours. Comments made by Roy have described such fears in Section 5.1(i) but he also stated:

"They run through the school, knocking all the 1st years over. It was scary."

Dave was another pupil who commented on this difficulty, referring to the size of the school:

"Too big. You couldn't hardly move in the corridors. You had to squeeze past them."

Jeremy also commented:

"I couldn't cope with school. Just being around everybody. The school was cramped."

A number of pupils in the present study, equated high numbers of pupils with inadequate supervision, feeling that much bullying occurs when and where teachers cannot see it. Their feelings of vulnerability were again described in Section 5.1(i).

Siann et al (1993) stress the importance of high quality supervision in improving school ethos and reduction of bullying incidents. Besag (1989) also comments on the teachers' responsibility towards pupils, suggesting that '... all take responsibility for all pupils all of the time...' (p115).

However, it would seem that even with the best intentions and supervision plans, teacher awareness and ability to see all social activity is unlikely and unrealistic. There certainly does seem to be evidence for a mismatch between how pupils experience the

nature and extent of bullying in a school, compared to the perceptions of teachers. Pervin & Turner (1994) investigated staff and pupil knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about bullying in one inner city school, and revealed high numbers of pupils reporting experiences of bullying, yet lower teacher awareness. Galloway (1994) supports this result, quoting research that provides 'extensive evidence that teachers do not get to hear about the majority of bullying in the schools.' (p21). It may be, as Cullingford (1993a) proposes, that the majority of bullying behaviour '...takes place out of the sight of teachers,' (p57), owing to inadequate supervision. However, other explanations have been suggested by pupils. Many complained that reporting incidents to teachers was not an effective means of controlling the problem or being safe, and they elected not to involve their teachers. Either the pupils felt that teachers had no idea how to deal with bullying or they trivialized incidents and therefore ignored any complaints. Other pupils perceived their attempts at support as simply making social situations worse.

Karen voiced her disappointment and frustration at the lack of support offered by one teacher after she had reported a bullying incident in a class:

"I'd go and tell Mr. Jones, he'd just say 'Oh well, ignore them'."

This kind of advice was also offered to Wayne who was adamant that it was not possible to ignore bullies and was not a means of dealing with bullies, despite what teachers or other adults might suggest:

"Rubbish. Not possible. They just carry on and on until you break."

He also added that shrugging bullying off was:

"One of the most impossible things you can really do."

Karen also described an incident when acid was thrown at her in a science class, and on reporting it to the teacher, was told:

“Well it wasn’t that strong anyway.”

Mike experienced a similar lack of concern from teachers:

“I didn’t used to do anything. I used to leave it with the teachers who usually didn’t sort it....”

Karen was able to analyse the reason behind one of her teachers adopting such a passive stance to her problem:

“...I think he was scared of the other people as well.”

Clearly she perceived fear within teachers as accounting for their reaction. This interesting insight, illustrates the fact that fear induced by pupils who bully others in school may not be experienced by pupils alone. Teachers may also experience fear or perhaps just uncertainty, particularly without the support and strategies they need to confidently deal with aggressive behaviour. Boulton (1997) explored teachers’ views on bullying and found that they ‘...were not confident in their ability to deal with bullying and 87 per cent wanted more training.’ (p223). Cullingford (1991) reports of finding pupils expecting little support from many teachers. Those who mentioned bullying seemed to assume that teachers would not take the problem seriously, even if they wanted to. Of course it is possible that teachers genuinely do not perceive the incidents reported to them as important, or simply do not have the time to deal with them.

Much research on bullying in the last 10 to 15 years has involved asking the pupils themselves for their perceptions and experiences and this has allowed comparisons with the perceptions of other professionals to be made. Branwhite (1994) carried out research with eight hundred and thirty six adolescents in their first year at secondary school, and as a result states that what the pupils said about stress in schools and the things that cause stress, vary a lot from the views of parents and professional. This may account for certain teachers’ attitudes towards reports of bullying and their apparent unwillingness to offer support. They may simply not perceive certain

situations as requiring their intervention, being unaware of the amount of stress being experienced by certain pupils.

A further reason why teachers may be unaware of the extent of bullying is proposed by certain pupils in the present and similar studies. These pupils were concerned that reporting incidents to teachers would lead to punishment for the bullies that would either have no effect on them or in fact increase their level of aggression towards the victim. George talked of the result of his reporting bullying to the headmaster:

“The head actually went into class ... he said to the kids how would you feel if you were being bullied by him and all his friends. They all said ‘Yeh, Yeh’ ... but as soon as they got outside the lesson it just started again.”

Wayne also felt that punishments for bullies were ineffective, and made this resigned comment:

“Whatever they did, they’d come back and do it again.”

However, of apparently greater concern than ineffective or futile punishment, was the fear of repercussions from the bullies as a result of the involvement of teachers and subsequent punishment of the bully. Pervin & Turner (1994) propose fear of revenge, intimidation or lack of confidentiality as reasons for pupils not reporting incidents to teachers more frequently, and pupils in this present study strongly supported these proposals. Wayne was one pupil who made comments to this effect:

“Trying to punish them just made them more angry with me.”

He added further detail:

“She got these people doing litter duty. She was trying to punish them but she’s stupid ... it made them more angry with me.”

Michael and Roy had similar perceptions, and chose to deal with difficulties alone:

“I hit ‘em back. I didn’t bother telling... I’d get my head kicked in.”

“I didn’t wanna tell the teachers, cause they don’t care, they tell ‘em off, and it just gets worse and worse. Then there’s no point.”

This fear of seeking support was also expressed by three pupils who had been witnesses to bullying, yet not victims themselves. Their statements illustrate the potential consequences of telling on others, or ‘grassing’, perceived as an unwise thing to do for fear of reprisal:

“I didn’t wanna grass on anyone.”

“I didn’t know if I told on them whether they’d come back and have a go at me.”

“Richard spread rumours that I was a grass. They started to have a go at me.”

Clearly this is an important issue for schools to deal with as inadequate management of social problems such as bullying in school appears from these pupils’ perceptions to be pushing bullying under the surface, making it less visible to staff. Pupils may in fact be placed in a situation when experiencing bullying where they simply do not know what to do. (Sharp, 1995). If as Cullingford (1993) states from his research with mainstream pupils that; ‘...in children’s eyes teachers will not or cannot cope with the problem.’ (p57), then they are therefore forced to adopt their own survival strategies.

It would seem that such survival strategies can become the behaviours that escalated problems for some of the EBD pupils in this present study, who were unable to balance the social demands of the school with acceptable behaviours. Their behaviours appeared limited to either suffering, avoiding a victim role, or joining the aggressors, in which case survival became the motive for bullying, ironically perpetuating social problems in the school. This issue will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, but a few brief comments here illustrate the pupils’ ability to justify their behaviour. George explained the choices he made in his mainstream school:

“We used to hang around with the bullies, they don’t turn around and bully you so we used to hang around with bullies.”

This point was further developed by Karen who had been able to analyse her own and others' behaviours in some depth:

“If someone's picking on someone they go with the bully not with the victim. Maybe it's because they're scared because they're gonna do something to them...”

She described how she herself participated in bullying for a while, giving the reason as:

“Everyone knew if you weren't with her you got beaten up by her.”

Olweus (1994) has referred to this type of bully as a passive bully, henchman or follower, (p1180). Karen described joining in with a girl who bullied, but considered it to be against her usual behaviour:

“It's like if you saw someone in the street you'd carry on with her. It's like I didn't know what I was doing at the time, and afterwards I thought 'why the hell did I do that? It's not what I'd usually do.' ”

These perceptions give some interesting insights into how and why bullying appears to involve those who are in fear of standing alone or being victimised. Once the seed of bullying has been planted a cycle of support is created that is hard to break.

In addition to teachers' inability to satisfactorily deal with bullying, it is important to include in this Section some degree of analysis of the manner in which schools may inadvertently encourage bullying by their day to day practices involving competition, discipline, and adult models of bullying. Although pupils' awareness of such influences was not directly verbalised or analysed to any extent in interviews, a small number of comments do indirectly encourage an inclusion of these issues at this point. Aspects of competition in schools may, as Besag (1989) believes, provide a legitimate opportunity to generate inferiority or distress. She describes ‘...a highly competitive approach to academic, sporting or social success, which by intent makes others feel inferior or causes distress.’ (p4). Certain comments given by pupils in Section 5.1(iii) could be evidence to this effect, and more directly Tom , a 14 year old boy at The

Oakwood Centre, provided an interesting comment concerning competitive grouping of pupils:

“Because he was really getting on my nerves, and he was on the other side. Like we had Vikings, Saxons and Normans, he said something nasty to me so I hit him.”

PE was certainly an unpopular subject with a number of pupils in the study as previously discussed in Section 5.1(iii). In support of this, Arnold (1994) describes football for boys as providing ‘a screen for high levels of negative coercive behaviour: competition and rivalry between the boys ... , physical and verbal abuse within the game itself...’ (p185). Thus schooling activities may actually encourage behaviours that would readily fall into the majority of broad definitions of bullying.

Discipline issues and adult models of bullying have been illustrated to some extent in Section 5.1(ii) in which pupils’ perceptions of aggressive teacher actions towards their pupils were presented. In addition to such obviously aggressive physical actions, Arnold (1994) proposes that adults in schools may model bullying behaviour by shouting and giving autocratic commands, and this was one of the behaviours that pupils in this present study most frequently claimed to dislike in teachers. Further developing this point, it is not difficult to view many attempts at discipline within a school as being examples of bullying. Interestingly Galloway (1994) considers from his observations, that schools with the highest rates of bullying were those most likely to deal with bullying by corporal punishment. Clearly the whole issue of discipline within schools and the way punitive measures are implemented, may have strong implications for the incidence of bullying. Ironically, even the content of an anti-bullying policy may unwittingly contradict its own goals if methods of discipline within it are not carefully scrutinised.

Although he believes that pupils would ‘not think of teachers in terms of bullying,’ Cullingford (1991) recognises that teachers’ relationships with pupils can create some

fears similar to those experienced through bullying by peers. Certain behaviours that are perhaps associated most frequently with pupil interaction and bullying could also be viewed as potential bullying behaviours between teachers and pupils. As described in Section 5.1(ii), being 'picked on' is a common phrase associated with playground bullying, and also classroom experience. It may be that this sense of being singled out and isolated unfairly from the group readily falls under the broad definitions of bullying that have been suggested and can result from peer or adult behaviour. One pupil stated:

“I used to get it from the teachers too. If I was sitting in the class and someone was talking, I used to get the blame for it.”

Teasing or 'taking the Mickey' as it is referred to by pupils is described by Mooney et al (1991) as another behaviour that does not appear to belong solely between pupils. They state; 'Teasing is not solely the activity of children.' (p111), although pupils in this present study did describe teasing and taking the Mickey as being primarily actions of their peers. However, it is important to recognise that the words teasing and being picked on can very easily be interchanged with bullying in certain situations, and that such actions can equally be attributed to adults or pupils in a school. For example, this comment was made by one pupil about his teachers:

“They always picked on me, not others.”

Galloway (1994) suggests that bullying cannot be tackled in isolation, and that there are implications for the everyday relationships between teachers, between teachers and pupils and between parents and teachers. He attempts to take the whole issue of bullying beyond pupil/pupil interaction, and suggests that all types of relationships within a school influence each other. With critical analysis it is not difficult to see that certain behaviours involving adults can very easily be termed as bullying.

If bullying is a learned behaviour as Galloway (1994) suggests, and learning takes place in all aspects of schooling and society as a whole, then the issue of bullying may

be closely linked to the behaviour of adults in society, including schools. If this is the case, it therefore becomes a community problem, not one solely the responsibility of schools. (Randall, 1996). Two interesting articles (Education, 1995b, Times Educational Supplement, 1995b), suggest that we must start looking particularly at aggression between adults in society and within schools if we are to truly understand why pupils behave the way they do. The TES article suggests that; ‘At least 10,000 teachers in Britain’s schools are victims of serious bullying: threatened physically and verbally by colleagues, governors or parents.’ (p12). In Education a member of the NASUWT, suggests that teachers are equally as bullied as the pupils within a school; ‘Bullying was usually perpetrated by heads using a dictatorial management style, though governors, parents and even pupils abused their power over teachers.’ (p6). The concept of pupils bullying teachers was only recognised by one pupil in the present study, who was aware of the way his actions towards teachers in the classroom could be interpreted as bullying. John stated:

“I bullied you really, didn’t I Miss?”

One executive member of the NASUWT in the previously mentioned article, takes the idea of bullying to an even further extreme, believing that the government itself is a bully by initiating unreasonable demands on schools. It is suggested that the pressure created by these demands results in a ‘trickle down effect’, with pressures being passed down the line. Perhaps bullying behaviours have become so much the norm within schools and even within society as a whole, that a great deal of it goes unnoticed or unreported. However, the EBD pupils in this study were certainly not unaffected by such behaviours and appear to be a very special group for whom the nature of social relationships within schools are of extreme importance. In the next Section their perceptions of the motives behind bullying are presented.

Motives for bullying

Pupils who had themselves been bullies and also those who had been victimised were equally able to contribute with comments regarding motives for bullying behaviour. Those who had experienced being bullied included Jeremy and also Chris, a 13 year old boy at Southdown, who had learning difficulties and had become a school refuser following incidents of bullying in the mainstream school. These boys had the following perceptions of their attacker's motives:

“To get a thrill. Some people get an adrenalin rush off cars, motorbikes, some people get it out of bullying, smoking, stuff like that.”

“Some people do it for a laugh.”

“They just hit for pleasure.”

Ken perceived that more than a simple pleasure or thrill was being gained by the bullies. His own personal analysis had led him to believe that:

“It makes them feel good about themselves, makes them look big and tough.”

These perceptions are in close agreement with those of mainstream pupils interviewed by Mooney et al (1991) who gave reasons for teasing as including enjoyment for the teaser and also prestige for the teaser. Provocation was another reason given in Mooney's study and this was reinforced by the pupils in this present study. A number of pupils described such provocation as being 'wound up' by bullies. Mike was clear that the motive for the bullies that he had seen and experienced was:

“To wind people up.”

Simon agreed, and emphasised the repetitive nature of such behaviour:

“People pick on one kid for a week, just digging him, digging him.”

Wayne also recognised this need to continue provocation until the victim gave the desired response. He explained:

“I’ve been told they know you’re getting upset by it. If I could just ignore it they wouldn’t. Rubbish. I tried it. It don’t work. They just carry on and carry on until you break. You can’t ignore it that long. Impossible.”

There certainly appeared to be a desire on the part of the bully to provoke until a reaction to the provocation was secured. That desired reaction was usually an aggressive one. Chris described how he responded:

“If he called me names, I tried ignoring it until a certain point... then I retaliated, nearly knocked his ... done the same to him as he done to me.”

Interestingly this shows how the victim may ultimately display more physically aggressive behaviour than the bully. In that case the more covert tactics of the aggressor are overlooked and it is the victim who is caught up in the discipline system of the school.

The expression ‘being wound up’ was used by a significant number of the pupils to describe their feelings, or to justify their actions. Johnny believed that the aim of the bully was to wind up the victim until the response of the victim resulted in they themselves getting ‘into trouble’:

“They would try and wound you up very badly so you’re the one who gets in trouble.”

Neil and Karl, a 16 year old boy at The Oakwood Centre, also commented:

“He would wind me up so much to the point where he was asking to be hit. Sometimes I would just lose my rag.”

“... but most of the time I get provoked. I’m easily wound up.”

The art of provocation or ‘winding up’ appeared to rely heavily on the ability to identify and probe the victim’s weak, sensitive inner core of values. This was often described by pupils as being some aspect of their family, as previously suggested in this Section. Karl and Wayne both commented on this:

“Somebody might say something about my mum and I’d say ‘what you saying?’ ”

“I’d stick up for my parents and my brother.”

Susan also explained her reaction to such provocation:

“And one time [she] turned round and said something about my Mum and Dad or something ... I wasn’t in a particularly good mood that day, so I turned round and I got a chair and I lugged it at her.”

Provocation was not always for a physically aggressive response. Tom, a physically small boy, was provoked into stealing by comments that clearly touched his inner insecurity:

“They started calling me a wimp and a chicken so I nicked a bar of chocolate because they told me to.”

It would appear that both the need to provoke and the need to respond or retaliate have their roots in protection of self esteem and an overt display of self esteem, according to many peer group values, is in the form of an aggressive or antisocial behaviour. If the response is aggressive, the ability to separate the bully from the victim in terms of observed behaviour is often marred, unless there has been intensive observation. With retaliation being described by a very large percentage of the pupils interviewed as being their reason for aggressive behaviour, this suggests that professionals need to look more comprehensively at such behaviours, and seek to understand the need for such retaliation. As Simon explained, aggressive behaviour is a vicious circle:

“It’s passed on. If it’s happened to me then I’ll do it. Eventually you get pushed so far you turn round and do it back.”

Tom supported this belief:

“People bully because they get bullied themselves.”

Some pupils explained their reasons for bullying younger weaker children as a reaction to the fact that they could not retaliate to those who were bullying themselves.

Although not analysed in depth by the pupils themselves, this does suggest that there was an inner gain for the bully that had nothing to do with the perception of their peer group. Interestingly, bullying younger children or siblings does not appear to be a valid way of enhancing self-esteem or status within the peer group. It suggests that bullying is more than just a purely group orientated activity, linked to social image and that it may be associated with a more personal, inner need. Danny described such behaviour:

“People push them around, and they can’t hit ‘em back so they start on little ones.”

Wayne’s following statement illustrates the confusion and frustration felt by these pupils with regards to the behaviour choices they actually have in response to bullying:

“I battled it. I had a go at them. I couldn’t hit ‘em cause I’d get in trouble, so when I had a go at them I’d swear and stuff. That’s how I knew they could get at me, getting me into that state. That’s why I got into trouble, if they hit me, I’d hit ‘em back, then I got into trouble.”

Such pupils described attempts to avoid confrontation and to conform to the rules of the school, yet at the same time their status and self-esteem was being threatened by not retaliating. As Measor & Woods (1984) state; ‘Once more it is status ...that is at stake.’ (p12). Retaliation is clearly concerned as much with emotional or ego protection, as it is concerned with physical survival.

Jeremy described the importance of being able to ‘look after’ himself:

“I don’t like fighting but if I have to I will. I can look after myself if I have to.”

‘Looking after’ oneself may have physical or emotional implications, with the possibility of needing to look after one’s fragile self-esteem being equally if not more important than looking after one’s body.

George's status amongst the peer group was clearly low, as revealed by previous statements, as was his self-esteem. He described responding to invitations to fight, almost as the only way to survive mentally:

“They just gang up and say do you wanna fight ... Everyone was saying like ‘go on George you can do him easy’, so I did.”

Clearly an important consideration for educators, as revealed by the pupil statements presented in this report, is the number of pupils being labelled EBD, whose aggressive behaviour may start as simply self defense, being fuelled by a particularly fragile ego and low self-esteem created by complex personal and social issues:

“Then I started to fight back, and I hit a boy in my class.”

“Yeh, if they took the Mickey out of me, I used to bash everyone, and get in more and more trouble.”

“He used to tell lies about me. One day I went up to him and smacked his head against the radiator.”

Danny explained a similar aggressive response to peer harassment:

“Because they were annoying me, annoying me all day, and at dinner time, when all his friends started to annoy me, I went up to him and just hit him. I nearly killed him.”

Possibly even harder for professionals to assess, is the extent to which aggressive behaviour pre-empts attack, or attempts to deter further or more serious attacks by peers. Where aggression has put down roots in a school, fear breeds further fear and further aggression. As Boulton (1993b) suggests, if the child does respond aggressively to teasing it ‘might deter the perpetrator from teasing them in the future or from using more serious forms of attack.’ (p242).

Tom added strength to this suggestion by stating that to avoid being bullied:

“You have to be a good fighter.”

Feeling justified to be aggressive, possibly supported by the attitudes of parents (See Section 5.2), is just one reflection of the conflicting expectations and values often facing these pupils. Appropriate responses to stressful situations may not be as clear as we imagine for pupils whose personal value systems have yet to develop, and are vulnerable to the values of more significant individuals and groups around them. This includes those pupils who described their own aggressive or threatening behaviour as being related to the influence of peers. One boy, Bobby, perceived his behaviour as being very different when he was with people, compared to when he was alone:

“I think it was the kids I mixed with. When I’m on my own I’m alright ... it’s just when I get around people, bad people.”

This getting involved with the ‘wrong crowd’ was also a motive expressed by John. He explained his behaviour to be a result of the influence of a bad group of peers:

“I used to hang around a lot with all the people who weren’t the right people to hang around with.”

Pressure to join in with the dominant peer groups certainly appeared to be an important issue for these EBD pupils.

In addition there was evidence that aggression breeds aggression. A small number of pupils described how they adopted bullying behaviour having previously been victims. Ivan, a 15 year old boy at Southdown expelled for disruption explained:

“I used to get picked on by some of the older kids. When those kids left I got on, and I started bullying a bit, with kids of my age.”

Rick also explained how he changed from victim to aggressor:

“I used to be bullied, that’s why I bully now I think ... you just pass it on.”

Mooney et al (1991) found that one of the reasons given by pupils for teasing was that the teaser was envious of the teased. This motive was not overtly presented by any of the pupils interviewed in this study, yet interpretation of certain statements could lead

to this conclusion. For example, Ronnie described how he would sit in lessons not wanting to work and obviously not wanting anyone else to work either:

“I banged their fingers on the tables so they couldn’t get on with the work any more.”

It is certainly tempting to suggest that aggressive bullying behaviour is strongly linked to a pupil’s need to dominate others in order to boost his or her own feelings of self-worth and self-esteem. Ronnie made an interesting statement to this effect, stating:

“I’m the Daddy of the school.”

However, although Olweus (1994) describes a need for power and dominance (p1180) as one of the psychological motivational sources underlying bullying, he interestingly claims to have found little evidence to support the common view of bullies, that they have low self-esteem and are anxious and insecure. The reason for this misconception could be linked to the previously discussed issue of who the actual bully is, as so many of those displaying aggressive, bullying behaviours appear to be the ‘secondary’ bullies, responding to provocation, or attempting to pre-empt attack. If this is the case, then the underlying motives for bullying may be quite different to those of a pupil whose personality or needs actually initiate an aggressive encounter, although it still remains difficult to separate such behaviour from self-esteem issues. Much remains open to interpretation, particularly if the pupils themselves are able to offer little in the way of self-analysis. It is obviously essential that with bullying playing such a significant role in the behaviours of EBD pupils, that their perceptions are sought and that they are encouraged to self-analyse their own behaviours.

Conclusion

In recent years, schools have gradually become more aware that there is a social aspect to schooling that needs to be acknowledged and taken care of in terms of policy and planning, just as there is an academic aspect. In particular, it has been an increased awareness of negative social behaviours and more specifically the highly publicised yet poorly defined term of 'bullying' that has pushed schools in this direction. This awareness is apparent when one considers the publicity and attention that has been given to bullying in recent years, not only in the academic press but also in the media. (The Times, 1991, Times Educational Supplement, 1991, Daily Telegraph, 1996a,b, 1997). Bullying is of particular importance in the understanding of pupils with difficulties and this point is reinforced by the results of this study, in which a significant percentage of the EBD pupils interviewed raised problems with social interaction in schools as an important factor in the development of their difficulties. The Elton Report (DES, 1989a) expressed concerns about bullying including the suffering it causes to individual students and the damage it can have on the atmosphere within a school. In fact bullying policy is now an important consideration for all schools, which is a reflection of how seriously this issue is being considered. Certainly the EBD pupils interviewed in this study reinforce and justify such policy initiatives. Bullying is by far the most publicised and discussed aspect of social interaction within the school, particularly in relation to disaffection from school, truancy and school refusal.

However as Arora (1994) suggests, the complexity of bullying itself makes any attempt at intervention equally as complex and this has also been illustrated by the pupils' comments in this Section. In recent years researchers have turned from defining and quantifying the extent of bullying, to more of an interest in how to tackle the problem, (Besag, 1989, Tattum & Lane, 1989, Smith & Thompson, 1991, Tattum, 1993, Randall, 1996). Arora (1994) reports the results of some of the large-scale intervention projects undertaken in recent years, including work resulting from the

Sheffield study previously described. Other projects include the Safer Cities/Safer Schools Project (Smith, 1991) and overseas projects, including a nationwide intervention project in Norway (Olweus, 1993) and in Toronto (Pepler et al, 1993). According to Arora (1994) results from these studies do show that ‘the overall incidence of aggression and bullying in a school can be reduced quite substantially over time’ (p161), but also adds that such intervention does need to be maintained and that a reduction in bullying will not continue without ongoing intervention programmes. Clearly such intervention must utilise the perceptions of the pupils themselves, to be truly effective.

However, Galloway (1994) believes that because of the complexity of bullying behaviour and the fact that it ‘...lies towards the end of a continuum of essentially normal behaviour...’ (p25), that it is unrealistic to try to eliminate it completely.

Interestingly, this is in agreement with a comment made by Roy:

“No they can’t stop it, can’t stamp it out. Bullies are like ants, you kill one off, there’s the other one running away, and you get that one and there’s another one. Can’t be stamped out.”

Galloway believes teachers and children must ‘actively co-operate in rejecting the destructive and debilitating effects of bullying.’ (p25). Unfortunately, his optimism regarding co-operation between various members of the school community in reducing bullying may hit its first hurdle when research reveals that pupils do not always define the problem in the same way as other professionals, as previously described in this Section. It is clearly essential that this problem is overcome before policy and planning proceeds and the perceptions of pupils themselves are recognised as possibly being crucial to the success of intervention and policy. As was suggested in Section 1.4, to truly understand pupils’ social difficulties in schools and the extent of these difficulties, we must listen to their own opinions, and not solely to other professionals. (Branwhite, 1994). This research has attempted to do that, and in particular in a field which until now has been largely ignored in favour of research with mainstream pupils.

Although the perceptions of the EBD pupils in this study appear to differ little from those of mainstream pupils it is important to consider, as Whitney et al (1992) have done, whether mainstream policy on bullying based largely on mainstream research is actually effective in the special educational needs (SEN) setting. They do however, focus largely on the MLD pupil rather than the EBD pupil, and their focus appears to be on policy within the SEN setting and not the social problems that the SEN labelled child experiences within the mainstream setting prior to placement.

It is by researching the significance and nature of social problems for EBD pupils in school that we will reveal how the EBD child can be helped to remain in a mainstream setting. This present research has gone some way towards a better understanding of these issues using the perspectives and opinions of EBD pupils on social interaction in schools, and has revealed the significant role of such interaction within the school setting as a factor influencing pupil behaviour.

5.1(v) Conclusion to Section 5.1

From the results of this study it is apparent that schools themselves have played a particularly important role in the behaviours of the EBD pupils interviewed. Their demands on these pupils, of an academic, social and emotional nature, appear to combine, often with other factors, to create difficulties for these particular pupils that manifest themselves in EBD behaviours.

In agreement with much previous research on school effectiveness, the statements made by the pupils in this study reinforce the concept that schools can make a difference. Such a concept is suggested by Tattum (1984) who states; 'I would argue that schools ... need to change so that they become less rejecting of certain categories of pupils.' (p95). Many aspects of the school and its processes were raised by the

pupils as having contributed to their difficulties, and despite the results in this Section being presented under different headings to simplify reading, it was not easy to separate the different factors. In particular, the pupils' identification of school and class size and teacher/pupil ratio was intimately linked to a perceived lack of academic support and feelings of social insecurity.

Of particular significance was the number of non-academic factors that were seen as critical to the pupils' lack of success in the mainstream school. The Section on social interaction revealed that the majority of pupils had experienced social difficulties of some sort, and this result should be of concern and interest to those working to maintain these pupils in mainstream settings. This issue is raised by Fad & Ryser (1993), who refer to the schools' need to respond to American students' social as well as academic problems. They stress the importance of developing social skills alongside academic skills in order to reduce failure. Certainly the pupils in this present research appeared to lack the skills to deal with the stresses they encountered in the mainstream school and the following Chapter describes this in more depth.

Interestingly, the views of the EBD pupils interviewed were similar in many ways to those of mainstream pupils, whose perceptions have been sought regarding their schools and effective schooling in previous studies. The present research therefore reveals that when looking into specific factors such as teachers, the curriculum, and social interaction in schools that may influence behaviour, the EBD pupil may not present vastly differing views to that of the succeeding mainstream pupil. Clearly there are however differences in the way EBD pupils respond to these school factors compared to pupils who remain in the mainstream setting and the major significance of this present research is in its identification of the way in which these factors combine to create stress for the pupils. Furlong (1991) has tried to analyse why schools become the focus for unacceptable behaviours for certain pupils and explores what the emotional demands of schooling actually are. He shows particular interest in the

emotional state of certain pupils and proposes that the demands of schooling actually create 'emotional injuries' in some pupils. This emphasis on the emotional state of these pupils may be the missing factor which distinguishes them from the mainstream pupil who may also express dissatisfaction with aspects of the school and schooling but who continues to survive within the system.

The following two Sections present aspects of the EBD pupils' lives and experiences that may contribute to a better understanding of the creation of their predisposing emotional state. They present factors other than schooling factors that the pupils perceived as being important in influencing their behaviour.

5.2 Family, Socioeconomic and Sociocultural Factors

In this Section an attempt is made to present and discuss the pupils' perceptions of factors outside of school which they perceived as having influenced their behaviour. These include factors associated with their families and personal biographies, and also their socioeconomic and sociocultural experiences. For a number of the pupils interviewed in the study, their lives out of school had presented them with difficulties that they perceived as having contributed in some way to their behaviours relating to school, and their subsequent placement in special education.

Much research has been carried out and published regarding the contribution of family and parenting experiences to children's behaviour, and the association between social class and culture and anti-social, disruptive or deviant behaviour. Charlton & David (1989) describe and discuss a large amount of research into factors such as parental separation, inadequate parenting, bereavement, abuse, disturbed family, divorce and social class differences. They clearly illustrate the extent of interest in this issue, yet overall the results of such study often remain inconclusive. There is certainly

disagreement and evidence of inconsistencies, particularly in attempting to associate socioeconomic factors with behaviour, although links between behaviour in school and stressful family or home backgrounds are often harder to dispute. Even as far back as the 1940's, (Wills, 1941, 1945), attempts were made to link learning difficulties and maladjustment to personal problems resulting largely from family disturbance. More recently the influence of schooling itself, as described in Section 5.1, has been recognised and researched, yet as Charlton & David (1989) state, family influence is still unavoidably an important issue for special needs pupils. '...the range, duration and quality of family experiences are likely to make significant contributions, adversely or otherwise, to children's behaviour.' (p24).

The early researchers, eagerly pursuing the use of positivist styles of investigation into this issue, were certainly confident in linking the nature of the family, or its social class, to the behaviour of disruptive children. In the 1960's and 1970's links between home background, including socioeconomic status, and the child's success or failure in school, were eagerly pursued. As Galloway & Goodwin (1987) state; 'Until the mid 1960's tensions arising from family background and from disturbed relationships within the family were seen as the principal cause of maladjustment.' (p46). They state how personal, child centred problems, were the focus for most maladjustment and learning difficulties, and such problems were closely associated with family composition and difficulties and also social class. Research that considers these factors and reveals a high degree of agreement as to their significance is described by Upton (1983). Such a focus was a move towards recognising that social and family pressures could influence a child's behaviour, which was an important step away from the more traditional medical, psychiatric or psychodynamic theories of behaviour, which stress the importance of unconscious processes within the individual. Yet these new correlations and patterns that were being sought still fell short of exploring the interactive pressures between internal and external processes that were possibly associated with behaviours, and which gave any credibility to the ability of the pupil to

make decisions about his/her own behaviour or to be able to express motives for behaviour. In other words, they were concerned with correlation but not cause. They may have created a general awareness of the different environmental factors affecting a pupil but they still largely supported the belief that maladjustment and problem behaviours were products of external impact on the child, which still lay firmly within a scientific paradigm.

Such research has continued through the 1980's and into the early 1990's with behaviourist researchers pursuing such correlations, despite the parallel development of more humanistic research into interactionist theories of behaviour. Galloway & Goodwin (1987) quote Ford et al (1982), who studied information about the social class distribution within schools for the maladjusted. Their results showed that the majority of children were from social class 4 and 5. They also explored family composition and stated that for the pupils in three schools for the maladjusted 22.5% of cases had fathers who were dead, absent or unknown. Other work linking class to disruption and truancy includes Davie et al (1972) and Farrington (1980), and there is a great deal of other research that reveals patterning and correlation between EBD behaviour and social variables.

The pioneers of humanistic research included Rogers and Maslow in the 1960's, as described in Cooper (1989). The true concerns of this group of researchers only slowly emerged in the 1970's and 1980's when the value of the statistical evidence from the behaviourists was questioned in favour of a consideration of the uniqueness of the individual. Thus the humanists strove to look beyond the patterns of data into why the patterns were appearing and began to investigate the nature of the behaviour as a rational response to certain conflicting social pressures and circumstances. Conflicts between home life, the child's sociocultural value systems and the values and expectations of the school, as possible causes for disruptive behaviour, began to be considered. There was increasing knowledge regarding the subcultures of deviant

pupils, both in and out of school, and the values associated with these cultures.

Deviance was also being strongly proposed as being a result of formal or informal pupil cultures existing in schools. These proposals included the pro-school and anti-school cultures revealed by researchers such as Hargreaves (1967) and Lacey (1970), which were strongly related to social class and are described in Woods (1983). Willis (1977) argued slightly differently on the same theme, that pupils do in fact have well established cultural values and ties based on their social class backgrounds that do not evolve from a conflict with school, yet contribute to failure within school. Bird et al (1981) actually showed from a pupil perspective that cultural values alien to those of the school were important in the rejection of or disaffection with school displayed by certain pupils.

The work of Rutter et al (1979) investigating the role of the school itself in the failure of certain pupils, brought the school under the spotlight and school variables began to be considered alongside family or social variables. This trend has continued, as described in the previous Section. This research into the importance of schooling factors began to suggest that a more complex combination of factors may influence pupil behaviour. Although the developing spotlight on the school did not displace the importance of psychological and sociological factors, certain results did put a question mark over some of the previous research. Interestingly, Rutter et al (1979) found no relationship between pupils' behaviour within London secondary schools and their social backgrounds. Similarly, Galloway et al (1982) could find no direct correlation between exclusion rates in secondary schools and the social class of their pupil intake. In 1994 he maintains this belief (Galloway, 1994) and stresses the importance of avoiding making simple statements regarding correlations between behaviour and social variables in the child's background stating:

'It is by now well established that schools vary widely in the prevalence of disruptive behaviour and that these variations cannot be attributed simply to the social background of the pupils they admit.' (p20).

Similarly Charlton & David (1989) suggest that it is risky to always link disadvantaged homes with disturbed children. However, such statements must contend with past and continuing research. In a National Child Development Study, Wedge & Prosser (1973) and Wedge & Essen (1982) found a relationship between family disadvantage and educational attainment, where disadvantage was defined as; (1) Had only one parent and/or five or more children, (2) Lived in an overcrowded house or a house with no hot water, and (3) Received means-tested welfare benefits on account of their low income. Even more recently there are others whose work continues to produce significant evidence to reinforce such correlation. Ashford (1994) refers to media coverage in the Daily Telegraph, 14 October 1994 and Panorama BBC1 7 February 1994, which claimed that the make-up of the family was directly linked to potential exclusion from school. According to this research, children from single parent families or families with a step-parent were more likely to suffer a range of health, behavioural and educational problems. For example a reconstituted family was reported as being ten times more likely to have a child with behavioural problems, and a one parent family, twice as likely than a nuclear family. Ashford's own research in rural comprehensive schools reinforced these findings, by showing that there were indeed greater numbers of exclusions from one parent or reconstituted families in these schools. Further evidence is provided by Olweus (1994) who includes family factors and in particular parenting styles in his conclusions as to where aggressive bullying behaviours are rooted. He refers to negative emotional attitudes of the child, a lack of clear limits being set by the caretaker, and the use of power assertive child rearing methods, such as physical punishment and violent emotional outbursts. (p1182). He does however state clearly that he finds only a very weak relationship between these childhood factors and the socioeconomic conditions of the family, which is an important consideration.

It would appear that research which attempts to investigate the family and social factors that may contribute to a child's behaviour, provides greater opportunity for

quantitative, statistical data than research into school based factors, which are often less tangible. Yet although correlations between social background or family structure and success in school may be measurable, the variables are often so closely linked that such research does need careful interpretation. The development of interactionist theories of behaviour have encouraged a closer look at this interaction of variables and have helped to illustrate the way in which different factors, including school, may combine to maintain or even nurture inequalities based within the social background of the child. Additionally, they have encouraged the belief that individuals do in fact try to make sense of all interacting social systems, and for this reason it is of value to try to investigate the perception of the individual if we are to fully understand behaviour.

Interestingly however, although researchers continue to debate the importance of social background and family life in the success or failure of school pupils, little interest has been shown in the pupils' own perceptions of this issue. Unlike investigations into the role of the schools themselves and schooling factors, for which there has recently been a real upsurge in interest in what the pupils think, (Ruddock et al, 1995, Davies, 1996), the pupils' own perception of the importance of their family life and social backgrounds as factors in their behaviour difficulties appears to have been less of a focus and more poorly researched within an educational context. Investigations of a more therapeutic nature may reveal children's own subjective attitudes and views regarding the impact of these out of school factors on their difficulties and behaviour, but educational research attempting to assess the relative importance of these factors for an EBD pupil, and from their perspective, is apparently scarce. One statistical piece of recent research, Branwhite (1994), does however describe work carried out in five overseas countries with nearly two thousand children aged between 8 and 14, who were questioned regarding sources of stress. Interestingly, it was reported that 90% of the participants described experience of family discord and many of the pupils ranked parent related stressors higher than school related stresses.

In the present study pupils were given the opportunity to discuss or describe anything out of school that had affected their school life and behaviour. Seventeen of the pupils made statements which suggested that their school difficulties were in some way linked to family or broader social issues, although of these, many described school factors in addition. This clearly indicates the interactive nature of the factors for the pupils, and again highlights the difficulty in attempting to isolate factors.

Loss of parents

In agreement with Montgomery (1989) and Frude in Fontana (1985), a small number of pupils in the present study described family breakdown as being disturbing to them and their behaviour. Robert spoke very little in the interviews and apparently had been reluctant even in therapy to attempt to address his problems. He did however state:

“I think it was when my father left the problems started.”

He was however unable or unwilling to elaborate on how or why this event had affected him. Johnny also made statements which gave a clear indication of the perception of the role his parents’ divorce had played in his difficulties:

“If my Mum had stayed with us I’d have been in normal school now. My Mum would make sure we were in school. I’d have been alright at school if my Mum had been there.”

Johnny was certainly frustrated by the loss of his Mum and stated clearly and simply the emotional problems that this loss created for him:

“I didn’t want my Mum to leave, definitely not. Things ain’t going well now since she left ... I tell my Mum that I want her back but she doesn’t listen. I say things aren’t working with me and me Dad, having arguments all the time ... she doesn’t do anything about it.”

He continued with a description of some of the simple, practical problems that the loss had created for him that affected his social life within the school:

“I was unsettled then. I was used to my Mum’s cooking. My Dad’s cooking wasn’t as good. My clothes dye. My Dad doesn’t know how to wash them properly ... this affects the way I look. I don’t like to look scruffy.”

Such simple concern for a 12 year old boy may seem trivial in relation to the deeper and complex emotional results of a parental break up that we as professionals may identify. Yet clearly, ‘looking scruffy’ can be of enormous importance within the social life of the school and acceptance within the powerful, and threatening peer culture, as illustrated in the previous Section.

For another pupil the divorce of his parents was perceived as a release of tension and unhappiness within the house, and conflict which the pupil had been experiencing was dissipated. As Ivan cheerfully stated:

“My Mum and Dad got divorced in the end. I was happy about that.”

Dave offered an interesting insight into the way that a professional opinion can differ from the pupils’ own perspective. Concerning his parents divorce he explained:

“My Mum and Dad, they’re divorced, and they said, it’s all to do with that. It’s not, because I still see my real Dad everyday. I call my step dad ‘Dad’. They just use that as an excuse.”

Family relationships and role models

Six pupils described conflict with one particular parent or step-parent that had caused problems for them in their home. Jeremy described his relationship with his mother:

“Mum used to whack me, the only thing she used to do was whack me constantly. She’s a bitch.”

Another pupil described his relationship with his mother:

“She was always annoying me cause we never got on.”

Other pupils, Neil, Karl, Ivan and Karen had negative relationships with their fathers or step-fathers. Some of their comments were:

“I’m always having arguments with my Dad. My Dad got me in the shower and went to punch me.”

“I can always remember my Dad beating me up, just because he thought I weren’t his kid. I don’t look like him.”

“I don’t think I hate anyone that much except for one person ... my Dad.”

This last comment from Karen was supported with further comments about her father including accounts of physical violence:

“It was bruises and black eyes.”

She described her feelings as:

“Every time I see my Dad I throw up. I get shaky and hot. I have trouble hearing his voice. I have trouble being in the same house as him.”

She described having no-one to talk to and not wanting to be at home or at school:

“I had no-one to talk to about it ... I didn’t wanna go to school, but when I was at school I didn’t wanna go home ... my Mum wasn’t going to say anything against my Dad.”

She continued:

“My Mum would lie about it to protect my Dad about what was going on at home.”

Interestingly it was not always physically violent relationships with one or more parent that pupils found destructive to them emotionally and influential to their behaviour.

Some pupils made comments which reflected how parents could readily lower their self-esteem and affect their self image with certain comments:

“Dad sometimes puts me down. Calls me thick and stuff.”

“My Dad used to call me stupid.”

Danny was very specific about the affect his father’s behaviour had on his own moods:

“Really it’s my Dad’s fault for annoying me. He annoys me which puts me in a bad mood before I even come to school in the morning. He hits me, calls me names, it don’t hurt, it’s only mucking about, but if I’m trying to watch TV or play on the computer - he just turns it off. When my friends are round he turns the electric off.”

Perhaps significantly Danny explained how it had been his father hitting a teacher that resulted in him being expelled from school:

“A teacher hit me and me Dad went up there and hit the teacher.”

This behaviour by a parent and comments such as Rick’s below concerning the advice given to him by his father, give insight into the important and powerful role models parenting can provide, and the way conflicting messages and values confront pupils:

“I learnt to bully. I stood up for myself. My Dad told me to, he said you’ve gotta hit ‘em back.”

It would seem that inappropriate adult role models and guidance could be quite significant to the behaviour of some of the pupils interviewed in the present study. These proposals are in agreement with the work of Mooney et al (1991) who found that some of the pupils in their study gave the impression that; ‘...retaliation was legitimate and, in some cases, suggested or sanctioned by parents.’ (p111). Some pupils in their study felt ‘justified to fight’ (p109), even as the initiators of the aggression.

The influence of parental behaviour was particularly significant for Danny who described how he left home very early in the morning, and hung around with his friends in the bus shelter, in order to avoid his Dad, returning home only when he hoped his

Dad would be in bed asleep. He also described how this arrangement had resulted in delinquency and his involvement with the police in the local area.

Karen experienced conflict between her parents that she then perceived as directly affecting her:

“There was a lot of pressure at home and my parents were arguing all the time, and taking it out on me.”

She also felt pressured by her parents:

“The pressure of telling me what to do all the time, like do this and do that.”

Only one pupil discussed or raised the issue of sexual abuse within the family during the interviewing. Roy described his experiences:

“And then everything happened with Dad, when I was at X school, and everything went down hill again. I was beginning to get a little better and then my Dad left. I visited him in prison. I felt I had to. I don’t think that helped.”

Roy became a school refuser, and explained this in terms of his relationship with his mother:

“I didn’t want to leave Mum ... that’s why I didn’t go out much. I didn’t like leaving the house.”

A further example of family events being perceived as contributing factors to the difficulties experienced by a pupil, was Simon’s description of losing both his parents:

“My Dad died early in my life when I was five and that never really hit me until my Mum died in 1990, then I suddenly realised, I ain’t got no parents here.”

Simon considered these losses to have had a considerable affect on his own behaviour, yet admitted that he had only recently equated his behaviour to their loss. As a young boy he had been in a lot of trouble and his behaviour was very disturbing, but he described not knowing why at that time. However, when interviewed he readily

linked his behaviour to these events. When asked what he felt were the most important factors contributing to his behaviour he replied:

“The break-up of my life really, my parents dying, getting into trouble with the police, going to prison ...”

He described his life as changing dramatically when his mother died and continued:

“I never used to drink before. I started going out getting drunk at night, hanging around in a group, getting arrested, robbing people, beating up people, nicking cars. Then I started getting kicked out of foster homes, kicked out of children’s homes. I ended up in prison. Prison calmed me down a lot.”

Looking into the past and linking family events or experiences with behaviour was not something many pupils were able to do. However, two boys at Southdown School did recall early events in their childhood, although it was unclear to what extent they were actually their own memories and feelings or issues that had been discussed and analysed during counselling. Michael recalled:

“My Mum and Dad split up apparently, and my Dad didn’t really look after me and neither did my Mum, so they put me in care.”

It is not clear to what extent Michael associated recollections of family break up and difficulties with school problems. Although he raised these issues as being important to him, he also made numerous statements regarding the school itself and its role in his difficulties.

Neil similarly recounted his family problems from an early age:

“I’ve been screwed up quite a lot during my life with problems, family problems from the day I was born. Since there was always rows when I was a baby, with Mike and my Mum. Then they split up and we were on our own.”

These pupils obviously perceived such experiences as being important to them and their behaviour, but were not able to expand directly on how or why such experiences affected them.

Siblings

In Montgomery's (1989) list of potential factors within the social or family background of children which may in some way contribute to a display of disruptive behaviours in school, one factor is that of a family in which certain siblings are shown favouritism above others. Interestingly this was also an aspect of family life that was described as significant by a small number of boys at Southdown. Danny expressed feelings of injustice within his family, where a younger sibling was perceived as receiving preferential treatment. He angrily explained:

“The other thing that annoys me is my sister, spoilt little brat, whatever she wants she has to get it.”

Danny revealed a deep dislike of his father, which has been previously described. He clearly laid the 'blame' for his problems on his father. Quite perceptively he related his treatment and the unfairness in his family to the fact that he believed his own father was spoilt when a child and was himself the youngest sibling in the family.

Ivan also perceived unfair treatment within his home:

“I had to sit there and say to him ‘Dad, Dad, Dad’, about twenty times, but if my sister went up to him, and said ‘Dad’, it would be straight away, ‘yeh what do you want?’ ”

Sam was a 15 year old boy at Southdown School, who had been removed from mainstream as a result of social problems with peers and truancy. He described feeling victimised by his siblings. He explained:

“They're nasty to me too. They try to get me into trouble. Something gets broken they tell my Dad it was me.”

Similar problems were expressed by Ken:

“I get told off at home, even if it's not my fault.”

Clearly these are problems that many young people experience, yet for these particular EBD pupils they were perceived as significant issues contributing in some way to their overall behaviour patterns. Jeremy described how he perceived his sister to have received favouritism within his family, and reveals how his placement in the special school had affected his own self-concept:

“My sister is Mummy’s little girl, never had to put up with anything. I’m Mummy’s little shit face, the one who’s in a mental school.”

Clearly Jeremy’s own personal perspective of himself and the attitude of his family was affecting him, and his placement at a special school appears to have contributed to that negative perception.

The importance of competitiveness within the family and particularly sibling relationships as a factor contributing to the difficulties experienced by the EBD pupils, was also illustrated by Gerry. He was a twin, and his brother had been able to continue in a mainstream school while Gerry had not. Gerry was very low ability and explained:

“I was jealous of my brother as well, because he was at a different school to me and he was with all my mates and his mates and we always hang around together, and that really did split us up.”

In addition, Gerry had an elder brother who had been sent to a residential EBD school. He perceived his parents as wanting to do the same with him:

“They liked the idea of sending me away to a boarding school because I weren’t getting on at home. They’d done it with my brother John.”

It would seem that Gerry had a complex combination of family and school problems to deal with:

“I got suspended for smoking in the school bogs. I didn’t care what Mum and Dad thought of me. My Dad used to call me stupid when I got suspended. I used to have fights with them, he used to say you’ll get put in a home.”

Gerry simply perceived his home-life as unjust. He repeatedly complained of being grounded for his behaviour when his twin brother was not.

Karen also added significant comments concerning sibling rivalry and parental pressure to succeed:

“A lot of pressure from my Mum to do good.”

She added:

“I was always being told I should be more like my brother.”

She also described a feeling of injustice, of being blamed for things happening in the family, particularly emotional events:

“Anytime anything goes wrong it’s my fault.”

“If someone’s upset, I did it.”

Two other pupils also mentioned older siblings as having influenced their behaviour. William at Southdown claimed that his reason for being at that school was:

“I wanted to follow in my brothers footsteps.”

Johnny described smoking as a specific activity, unacceptable to his parents and school that his older brother encouraged him to do:

“He’s the one who got me to smoke, ‘cause he is my brother ... I thought to smoke was good, to be like the same as him.”

Family and school

It was difficult for some pupils to know where their problems originated, and they were unclear whether problems in the home had created school problems or vice versa.

Karl stated:

“It did affect my home life, so I was always getting in fights at home.”

Karl did however, also state the opposite:

“Things that happen at home affect the way I am at school I think.”

Ken stated:

“Because of problems at school, it led on to start them at home.”

He described initial support from his family following problems in school, but then a frustration from his parents. He perceived injustice and lack of support:

“At first they were helpful, then they started to get annoyed with me, when I kept coming home, they started shouting at me. Then I get sent to my room anytime anything happened. It’s still a bit like that now. I get told off at home, go to my room, even if it’s not my fault.”

Two pupils interestingly admitted to bringing difficulties at school back into the home.

Their personal experiences of bullying at school manifested themselves in the home in the form of bullying of family members or friends. Karl recalled:

“When I get home I bully people at home ... I didn’t use to do it, but since I’ve been bullied I do it to other people now ... my brother, brother’s friends. It doesn’t make me feel better.”

Karen also admitted to behaviour that she was not proud of, following her own experiences of being victimised in school:

“I’d come home and thump my sister, and I’d feel really bad. I tried to explain to her the way it is, I didn’t really mean it, but she just ignores me. I used to just pick a fight with her over nothing. I can see that now. It’s kinda the

same sort of thing, isn't it? Like if you're having a hard time you're gonna take it out on someone else. It's like I wasn't gonna go up to the bullies and thump them one was I? I was gonna take it out on someone defenceless."

These statements illustrate the way in which the different social systems making up the pupils' life interact, and problems in one system often create problems within another. Where the root of the problem lies, in the family, in school, in the self, is then an ever more complex issue.

Finally it is important to recognise the immense responsibility held by some of these EBD pupils concerning events within their families. These pupils perceived their own problems to be far reaching within the family. For example Karl took the blame for parental disharmony in his family.

"I was always making my Mum and Dad argue."

Susan, in an informal interview which was untaped, perceived that her problems within school, which largely consisted of panic attacks and running away, had created such tension within the home that her step father had committed suicide as a result.

Family and bullying

In contrast to those pupils who felt that their own difficulties created problems within the family, others perceived their families as having created problems for them. As previously discussed in Section 5.1(iv) becoming a victim to bullying in the school setting may have many contributing factors, but to two of the pupils interviewed the reasons were clear. Wayne seemed totally ashamed of not only his parents' age, but also their appearance and economic status:

“It was my parents fault ... too old, too poor, wear awful clothes.”

His own father appeared to have reinforced Wayne’s beliefs:

“Dad says don’t have kids when you’re that age. He reckons that’s been half the problem.”

Johnny had experienced similar problems, having a father who he perceived as not fitting the socially acceptable norm that he described as resulting in teasing.

“My Dad was too old for my mum.”

For both boys this provocation had demanded retaliation and defense of their family members. John also experienced a similar need to defend his family:

“I’d lose my rag when people say things about my family.”

Dave also made this very clear:

“I thumped him because he called my mum a name which nearly everyone in school would have done. I don’t care if they’re twice the size of me, or if I win or lose.”

Support

Where relationships within the immediate family were problematical, a small number of pupils described supportive relationships with extended family members as being important to them. A grandparent, uncle or aunt, were mentioned as offering refuge or support from stress within the home.

Danny, who has previously been introduced as having problems relating to his father, described the support of other family members:

“I always have dinner at my Nan’s and go on holiday with my Uncle.”

Simon explained how he had tried to find respite from home for a few months:

“I tried going to live with my Nan for five months.”

Tom and Ivan received material support when the closer family was unwilling or unable to do so:

“My aunt spoils me.”

“My Nan helps me out a lot, she buys me things and lets me borrow money.”

These close supportive relationships were clearly of great value to these boys, yet the loss of an important, caring family member was also in a few cases perceived by pupils as having been a trigger for difficulties and problem behaviour. Such important life events were described by Jeremy:

“My Grandad died two years ago. That affected me badly. I was kicked out of school every other week.”

Gerry also recalled:

“It was the time my Grandad died, so everything was going cock up then.”

Another pupil, Roy, equated school problems with the death of his grandfather, amongst other factors:

“Then my Grandad died. Things just got worse and worse.”

Pupils as carers

A small number of the pupils interviewed had been able to analyse their experiences at home sufficiently well to perceive themselves as carers, which in certain cases had created problems for them. Sarah analysed her own problems as follows:

“My mum says I’m 13 going on 18. That’s the way I’ve been brought up, in the pub. I do sometimes feel I’ve got to take control of Mum, like when she’s ill. I took control of the house really, that made me grow up a lot. I think that’s why I can’t socialise with people my own age, cause I find them too immature. I find it easier mixing with people like Karen.”

The role of the child in the home, and their responsibilities, particularly as carers for other family members, either physically or emotionally, is something that should perhaps be seriously considered by professionals dealing with EBD pupils. An interesting recent article, Fox (1995), discusses absenteeism from school related to anxiety about parents or other home based factors. Fox introduces the idea of CHR, or children with home responsibilities. (p222). Roy provides a potentially interesting example of such a child. As previously described (p181) his father was found to have been abusing his sisters and he clearly felt a responsibility for his mother and sisters that had affected his behaviour:

“I think I didn’t want to leave my mum, like when I first went to school, she was in hospital. That’s why I didn’t go out much, I didn’t like leaving the house ... I was confused ... I worried about my mum. Everything added together. I had all the trouble at X High School.”

This supports Montgomery (1989) who considers ‘...fear of separation from mother as a key issue’ in school refusal (p50), yet the depth of Roy’s own analysis may be a result of his extensive therapeutic help during previous months.

The pupils’ perceptions indicate the importance of professionals being aware of the responsibilities that the pupils’ home lives may thrust upon them, and work to accommodate these emotional ties that children may have. It is very important as Fox (1995) suggests that we do not allow schools to become detached from the communities they serve.

Social class and socioeconomic status

Interestingly, despite the extensive research often linking low social and economic status to disruptive behaviour, the majority of pupils' perceptions of their socioeconomic environments and social living conditions did not suggest for them an important correlation with their behaviour. Just a minority showed an indication that they had been in any way influenced by these aspects of their lives. For those who did attach some importance to these factors, the greatest impact for pupils of low economic status was that of their own personal image in the eyes of the peer group, and the associated vulnerability to victimisation. This point was developed in Section 5.1(iv). Wayne was clear in his perception of why he had been a victim of bullying in school, associating it directly with his family's social class:

“It's usually background ... being different to all of them. I lived in a council estate, and that was it ... I was less well off. Dad lost his job, his finances went down. That affected me quite a lot. I was less fortunate.”

It was of course unlikely that Wayne's family were the only ones living under such conditions, yet for him this created significant perceptions of being different to his peers.

Ivan also perceived lack of money within his family as affecting his own image:

“But I wish I had another Dad kinda thing. I can't stand living on income support with my Mum cause I don't have any clothes.”

It is interesting and important to note the way the pupils' fear of deviating from the peer group norms is so closely related to socioeconomic status. This again illustrates how important 'being different' can be for certain pupils.

George bluntly described the motives for his aggressive behaviour at school, as being based upon lack of money and food:

“We didn’t get much pocket money then ... we was hungry. I was always hungry.”

“We’d nick people’s dinner money.”

If George’s statements are accurate then clearly this is evidence that a simple link may exist in certain cases between poverty and unacceptable behaviour, although to separate this from self-image and self-esteem issues would be an over simplification.

A small number of pupils were able to look beyond immediate family, and described their broader social environment as having influenced their behaviour. Simon stated:

“It’s just my background, the way I was brought up. I mean, I was bullied into petrol bombing in the stadiums, breaking into people’s homes.”

He explained his behaviour:

“ ... because of where I lived and the people I mixed with.”

Simon certainly appeared to be linking the violence and criminality in his immediate environment to his own problems. George also perceived his difficulties to have been compounded by the area in which his family lived. Problems involving neighbouring families had resulted in George being threatened and having to live in a Children’s Home:

“I had to come out [of school] cause of some trouble down my road, then I was put in care. I wasn’t allowed in the area. The area we came from it’s really rough.”

Alan was a 14 year old boy who was attending The Oakwood Centre. He had been expelled from previous mainstream schools as result of difficult disruptive behaviours and had also been in trouble out of school. He described teasing and bullying that resulted from his family and their lifestyle. In particular he was considered a gypsy by school peers:

“They called me Pikey.”

He also described how his mother couldn't afford to send him to a good school in the district:

“My mum couldn't afford to pay for all the things X School asked for.”

These statements clearly illustrate the potential impact of a pupil's socioeconomic and cultural status on their behaviour.

Conflicting goals and values

A minority of pupils did hint at a mismatch between the goals of their schooling and their wider social and cultural values, although a direct clash in the value systems of the pupil and the school was rarely expressed. In fact in many cases the interviewee expressed positive thoughts regarding the value of schooling and regrets as to their lack of success within the system. Surprisingly just one pupil openly expressed a complete rejection of school. Ronnie described the inability of school to provide him with anything of value, preferring to subscribe to the value system of his peer culture out of school, which primarily appeared to revolve around drugs. He explained:

“There hasn't been school ... I couldn't give a shit.”

Simon interestingly placed his own unique value on the special school he attended, almost as a refuge from the outside world:

“I saw coming here as somewhere to doss during the day, so I wasn't stuck at home all the time. I don't really do much work ... I come into school to chill out.”

He hints at one possible reason why the special school setting may support EBD pupils in a way that a mainstream school does not. A place offering more than academic opportunity, but actual respite from the demands of the pupils' family or social

existence. This is in agreement with Cooper (1989,1992) who investigated at length the EBD pupils' perception of their residential special schooling, and respite was clearly an important part of the provision for them.

Conclusion

Clearly the contribution made by a pupil's family, socioeconomic and sociocultural background to their behaviour is an important consideration. It is apparent from years of research and statistical evidence that there are underlying patterns which link these factors to a child's behaviour, although open debate continues regarding these correlations, and research continues to attempt to explain how or why these trends exist. Each individual pupil obviously presents a unique combination of factors, of varying significance, which could be used to explain data patterns. To ignore all possible factors and focus solely on the family and related issues would be to oversimplify the problem.

To conclude this particular Section it is important to comment on the willingness and ability of the pupils to discuss factors lying within their home and social background that had been of significance to them. It was noticeable upon analysis of the data, that pupils were making fewer comments on these factors than on schooling factors. Family and social issues generally followed lengthy detailed perceptions of school factors and when they were revealed, did in certain cases, result in distress and termination of the interview.

There was therefore less interview material, and fewer pupils giving indication that family or social background was an important factor than pupils who considered schooling factors important. However it is unclear to what extent the quantity of data reflects such factors as being unimportant to pupils, or simply indicates that they are

more difficult to discuss and disclose. A quantitative assessment of the relative importance of schooling factors in relation to other factors is difficult to make where so many other variables, including the confidence of the pupil to discuss issues with the interviewer, play a part in the data collection. Certainly, amongst the interviewees there were pupils for whom their files would suggest that home life and relationships had been difficult and would undoubtedly have contributed to their problems and special needs placement, yet who did not disclose any such factors as being important.

The value of the pupil data therefore lies in considering each individual pupil's perception of his or her own circumstances and accepting the limitations of the methodology.

5.3 The Individual: Physiological and Psychological Factors

This Section deals with the pupils' perceptions of personal or individual factors, of a physiological or psychological nature, that they considered to have in some way influenced their behaviour. As part of this Section, the pupils' perception of therapeutic treatment and its affect on their behaviour will also be addressed.

As noted earlier, in attempting to make sense of human behaviour, particularly that of a deviant nature, many theorists and researchers have considered contributing factors or problems as lying within the individual. They have viewed the person themselves as being an important component of the problem. In other words, certain physical and psychological variables within the person may predispose them to behave in a deviant fashion, regardless of their social experiences. Such internal factors may be of a purely physical or medical nature. For example there is an early study (Graham & Rutter, 1968) that shows that 34% of epileptic children had behaviour problems. Problems may also be seen to be of a psychodynamic nature, that is, based on the

quality of early relationships, or a psychomedical nature, resulting from disturbed developmental processes. According to those who support such theories of behaviour, both of these could potentially lead to unconscious emotions and conflicts, or abnormal personalities. There are also possible psychometric factors that are seen to contribute in some way to low intellectual functioning and subsequently to some behavioural problems. In terms of genetic foundations for behaviour, researchers attempting to link disturbed behaviour to genetic roots using twins, have yet to produce evidence that confidently confirms a link between genetic make-up and a predisposition to behaviour problems. (Scherer et al, 1990).

The extent to which such endogenous factors are responsible for the behaviour of EBD pupils is an issue of ongoing debate. Perhaps the reason for this is that so little concrete evidence exists to verify the presence of such factors. Charlton & David (1989) consider that little research has been carried out into the biological factors associated with disturbed behaviour. They propose that biological factors manifesting themselves in behaviour are hard to analyse, with few immediate clues of a visible nature. The only option for researchers is to deduce a disorder within the individual by observing their behaviour. They suggest that the main factors that fall within this Section of the present study, that are actually well researched and so seem to provide some evidence, are the psychodynamic factors, such as the influence of family experiences and relationships during the early years of development. Such factors are thought to manifest themselves as subconscious motives for behaviour. Research into deviant or 'extreme' personalities also continues but remains somewhat inconclusive. (Fontana, 1986). For example since the 1960's work has been carried out trying to investigate the life histories of deviants, such as criminals and other offenders. The nature-nurture debate remains difficult to answer and even research of a highly scientific nature, such as that which showed the skin responsiveness of psychopaths to be different to that of 'normal' adults, could not discount the affect of socialisation on the skin responses. (Lykken, cited in Morynomy, 1989, (p34)). It is clearly difficult

to totally separate a psychologically or biologically based reason for behaviour from social influences.

However, despite the lack of solid research evidence many professionals have for many years, been quick to adopt the concept of a biologically or psychologically based disorder, from which to 'treat' the EBD child. Scherer et al (1990) though aware that such traditional approaches tend to ignore the social context of behaviour and over estimate the consistency of certain behaviours in different situations, do suggest that to ignore them completely could be wrong. They describe evidence of some cross-situational consistency, and also of disruptive behaviour having been shown to be related to individual and background characteristics. Galloway & Goodwin (1987) similarly state that 'we should not, however, overlook the possibility that physical factors may also play a part.' (p47). Even in the last few years a psychiatric diagnosis from the USA has established itself in this country called Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), or Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), without the Hyperactivity. (Hinshaw, 1994). This disorder covers a wide range of symptoms including the behaviour of disturbed and uncontrollable children, and that of children who have difficulty concentrating, processing or retaining information. Cooper (1994) writes a comprehensive editorial on this issue and introduces a number of other papers from workers in this field who describe it and who express varying opinions on the value of such a medical diagnosis for EBD workers. Additionally, an article in The Daily Telegraph (1995b) presents the outcome of a conference of Neuroscience in San Diego, during which studies of ADHD were presented. The research reveals that there is some concrete medical evidence of such a syndrome existing, yet there are strong concerns as to the extent to which it is becoming a convenient label for certain students that can be used to explain away a number of behaviours which could be considered from a non-medical perspective. The Daily Telegraph article discusses the use of drugs to treat the syndrome, and the ethical questions surrounding their

prescription is questioned. According to the article, in the USA four million children have been diagnosed as sufferers and in most cases drugs are administered.

Ideus (1994) traces the development of the disorder back to the 1970's and 1980's in the USA. In her article she strongly presents her belief that the Americans are conditioned to accept the authority of the medical professions on issues such as ADHD, and therefore have not been prepared to accept or investigate a sociological analysis of the problem. However, much research continues on ADHD, and the advocates of the various theoretical models of behaviour continue to interpret it within their own belief structures.

The tendency to use a medical model for explaining disruptive or disturbing behaviour of children in schools is not new. Dyslexia, although more associated with learning difficulties, could be considered a similar example of another frequently used and possibly abused term which offered the professionals a similar convenient explanation for certain children's inadequacies. It is interesting that in the 1990's we are still pursuing the tangible explanations for EBD behaviours offered by the medical profession, in order to find a means of controlling it. Ideus (1994) suggests that this reflects the unwillingness of our society to accept that cultural factors may play an important role in deviant behaviour. The convenience of a medical label far outweighs any desire to seek out answers that may reveal or lie within the weakness of society and its values. Corbett & Norwich (1997) link medical labelling of difficult children to political forces and a need to obtain certain resources. They also see parents as exploiting certain special needs diagnosis, presumably of a medical nature, to gain privileged services for their children.

Of particular interest to this study is the extent to which the pupils themselves perceive their behaviour problems as being a result of their own physiological or psychological malfunctioning. Also, the extent to which society's tendency to use medical

terminology and labelling of disturbing behaviour can influence the pupils' perception of themselves, and the level of responsibility they accept for their behaviour. Before addressing this in relation to the results of the study, it is important to point out that the current educational literature appears to reveal little interest in the pupils' perceptions of these factors. As previously described, the research interest in the pupils' perspective has focused primarily on their perception of schools and schooling factors. Of course therapeutic interaction with children displaying disturbing behaviour, which often sets out to expose and work with the individuals' underlying reasons for their behaviour, may under certain circumstances be considered to be an enquiry which utilises pupils' perceptions of the psychological factors associated with their behaviour. However it does not set out with the specific goal of assessing the pupils' perception of the relevance or importance of factors, its aim being more to offer support and change behaviour. It does not therefore set out to, or claim to, contribute to research seeking a better understanding of EBD pupils.

It is not the intention of this Section to add weight to any specific theoretical argument on behaviour. The results presented simply illustrate the nature and extent of these EBD pupils' perceptions of themselves as contributing factors to their difficulties, and the extent to which they believe their own bodies, minds, personalities or temperaments can take responsibility for their behaviour.

Pupils' perception of self

At a very basic level, a simple physical trait was perceived by some pupils in this study as influencing their social interaction with other pupils, creating social pressures and hence indirectly playing a part in their behaviour choices. As previously discussed, deviance from the socially accepted norm of the peer group had potentially created

stress for certain pupils, and this deviation could be in the form of their physical make-up or appearance.

Six pupils interviewed linked their problems to their small physical stature and their statements are given in Section 5.1(iv). Interestingly these comments were all made by boys, and were linked to bullying or teasing problems in school, suggesting that a simple factor like size can greatly influence a pupil's experiences in school.

Another boy, John, included other aspects of his appearance in his perception of why he had problems:

“I'm small, fat, ugly.”

These comments regarding physical traits, do not include the importance of pupils' perceptions regarding the impact of their clothes and hair, which in addition to their own bodies were perceived crucial to their social status and acceptance. (See Section 5.1(iv)) Karen commented:

“If you haven't got much money and if you haven't got the right clothes and shoes, or don't have your hair done the right way, it's like you're different.”

As Karen's comment reveals, these factors are perceived as socially controlled, relating to money and the socioeconomic status of the family life, yet they unavoidably become a part of the individual.

Whereas the boys displayed concerns regarding their physical size, Karen offered a different perspective which although not reinforced by the small number of other girls, does suggest that girls experience concerns about their bodies of a different nature:

“Also when you go through puberty, you start developing before other people.”

Sarah also added that feeling different was enhanced by other physical factors:

“I was the first person with glasses... first person with braces.”

Clearly the physical appearance in itself is not the problem it is the resulting social pressures that are of concern to the pupil in these cases. Three pupils also perceived themselves as different to others in terms of their attitudes. Sam stated:

“I’m different to the others, different points of view and stuff.”

In addition to her own physical differences that Karen perceived, she added comments regarding her attitude:

“I was kind of different. I didn’t like playing the games they were playing, doing the things they were doing. I didn’t join in much.”

These feelings were also verbalised by Mike, who simply stated:

“I couldn’t communicate with people my own age.”

For these pupils a pursuit of their own individuality may have been risky in terms of peer group acceptance, and as Karen stated:

“If you weren’t in a group, you weren’t worth talking to.”

Those pupils who had experienced academic difficulties within the mainstream school setting were often quick to blame the system i.e. the teachers and the curriculum, as shown in previous Sections. However, there were a small number of pupils who perceived themselves as being responsible for their inability to manage classwork and meet academic expectations. They were readily prepared to locate the problem within themselves. Four pupils commented:

“It’s only my fault for not understanding.”

“I can’t write properly. I can’t read properly.”

“I didn’t know how to read. I didn’t know how to do anything then.”

“I don’t know much. I’m thick.”

The perceptions of these pupils could suggest links with labelling theories, which are discussed in Section 6.2.

Karen expressed an interesting view of the school combined with her own self as creating the problems:

“It wasn’t just the school it was me as well.”

“It wouldn’t have been the school’s fault if I’d stick up for myself.”

She tried to accurately define her problem in terms of which aspect of the school impinged on her own inadequacies, describing the social aspect specifically:

“It wasn’t actually the school, it was only the people.”

Two pupils felt that their behaviour had been within their control and hence took responsibility for subsequent problems. Rick stated:

“I blame myself. If I’d behaved and hadn’t messed about all the time, I wouldn’t be here now, would I ?”

Certain pupils did not hesitate to lay the reasons for their behaviour squarely on the shoulders of certain uncontrollable personality traits. Bobby described himself as ‘disruptive’ and stated:

“It’s out of my control sometimes.”

Temper was one of the most frequently described reasons for behaviour:

“I couldn’t control my temper.”

“I lose my temper easily.”

“My temper’s hard to control.”

“I had a shorter fuse than anyone else.”

John stated that if he could change anything:

“I’d change my temper if I could. Once I lose my rag, I lose my rag.”

Although rather hard to define, these pupils, interestingly all boys, appeared to perceive this part of themselves as controlling their behaviour. Another pupil, completely handed over the responsibility for his behaviour to an inner driving force, stating:

“I couldn’t help being naughty.”

Therapeutic treatment and perceptions of self

One interesting aspect of the way the pupils perceived their problems and in particular their own selves as contributory factors, was linked to the nature of the support, or in many cases treatment, that they had received or were receiving. Many of the pupils interviewed had received or were receiving treatment or support from a range of professionals. It is difficult to assess the extent to which this treatment had influenced pupils’ perceptions, yet in some cases it would appear that there had been some introduction of a medical vocabulary. Slee (1994) refers to the work of Armstrong et al (1993) who suggest ‘...the students come to see themselves in terms of the medical discourse.’ (p159). For example words such as phobia, paranoia, claustrophobia, agoraphobia were used by some of the pupils.

Sarah was quite clear in her perception of what her own problem was:

“I’ve got a school phobia.”

Karen similarly had labels for her difficulties:

“Being on your own in a large space, agoraphobia, that’s always been a part of me. The claustrophobic part came when I was at school ‘cause there was so many people.”

In a later interview she also described her fear of school and bullying as paranoia:

“I built up this thing in my mind that I knew it was going to happen, so I couldn’t go. Being more paranoid than it actually happening ... I was getting really paranoid. I couldn’t walk down the street without looking behind me.”

Other comments, although less specific, do suggest that labels may have been presented by adults that had implanted themselves well within the child’s beliefs about him or herself:

“I’ve got attitude problems.”

“I’ve got an addictive personality, it gets carried down through the genes.”

To what extent the pupil felt the problem had become their own responsibility as a result of these labels is unclear. Clearly the labelling of a child places the problem firmly within the child, and the child is likely to perceive it as such. Yet although this may anger certain professionals who believe that it simply relieves the need to seek answers within a wider social context, and offers greater and more powerful opportunities for controlling deviancy, some pupils’ comments tended to suggest a sense of relief to themselves at having a medical term equated to their behaviour.

Sarah welcomed the opportunity to become a psychiatric patient following her refusal to attend a mainstream school and suicide attempt:

“I liked people saying I was getting psychiatric help ... I wanted everyone to know I had a problem ... Being in a psychiatric hospital told everyone I had a problem.”

It appears that the psychiatric treatment gave validity and credibility to her problem.

She continued:

“I wanted to shout to everyone ‘God help me’, and the only way I could do that was to be in a psychiatric unit.”

Clearly being labelled 'sick' may remove responsibility from the individual. In fact it may remove responsibility from everyone apart from the 'experts', as Slee (1994) suggests; 'Responsibility becomes the privilege and prerogative of the "expert" .' (p159). For this reason Slee also suggests that parents may welcome such labelling and treatment. He suggests that if they are '...used to having their child seen as *bad*, the status of "impaired" is frequently preferred.' (p159).

Not all pupils agreed with Sarah however. They appeared more angered by the fact that there were suggestions that they may 'have a problem' and need help. Those like Jeremy who has already been quoted as perceiving his relationship with his mother and family tension as being a major factor in his behaviour, certainly did not welcome the suggestion that he may be the problem, and the use of psychiatric treatment to 'cure' that problem:

"I went to this crappy thing ... all I used to do was beat the living daylights out of a punching bag and that was it. Lock me in a room ... I didn't see the point of it, supposed to be stress relief. As if I was under stress!"

Jeremy continued by saying:

"When I had to talk it lasted for about three hours. It really got to me."

The decision of others to seek treatment for them as individuals clearly frustrated and confused a number of pupils. Susan had been admitted to The Oakwood Centre as a result of admission to a psychiatric unit. Her perceptions of herself were obviously different to those of the professionals who had diagnosed and referred her:

"Maybe I have got problems, but I haven't known any anyway."

Two other pupils perceived that control lay within themselves and attempts to change them were futile:

"What was going on in my mind was going on in my mind. No one could change that. No one could change the way I was feeling."

"It's up to me, just me. I'll change sooner or later."

One negative consequence of medical intervention is well illustrated in Roy's case.

He stated:

“And I was under pressure at the time to find out what was wrong.”

Armstrong et al (1993) interestingly report on how they believe there is a lack of information given to pupils receiving treatment about the purpose and outcomes of psychological and medical interviews. Roy reinforced this view. He stated:

“It was quite confusing really. I didn't know who my doctor was, or who I was supposed to talk to.”

In general, the majority of pupils who raised the issue of psychiatric treatment in their interviews were negative about the process and its success. Roy had been a school refuser, admitted to a residential psychiatric treatment unit as an alternative to a boarding school. Fearing that the boarding school option would do little to alleviate his problems, he had elected to try treatment. His perception after having left the unit yet continuing his education at The Oakwood Centre was:

“The Unit didn't help at all ... made me more angry ... no it didn't do nothing for me at all.”

Karen also expressed negative perceptions of the value of psychiatric treatment in helping with school problems:

“I don't know why I was in there.”

Following her period in the psychiatric unit she unhesitatingly stated:

“Problems with school I don't think psychiatrists can help at all.”

She added:

“I think being in [the psychiatric unit] was a waste of time ... The only therapy we had was large group therapy and art therapy, that was a waste of time anyway. If no one wanted to speak no one spoke. If you didn't wanna

answer anyone's questions you didn't have to. And you didn't actually talk about what was going on, or how you needed help. Basically the anorexics they could feed them and the depressed they could put on medications."

Two other boys at Southdown had similar perceptions. Bobby summed up his experience of psychiatrists:

"That's all they do, sit and talk to you. No if you ask me they don't do any good at all. They just sit there and ignore ya."

Simon, who had seen a number of different psychiatrists and other professionals for his violent and delinquent behaviour, considered none of it to have helped:

"They just sit there and ask deep questions."

The ineffectiveness of such treatment, combined with feelings of confusion and anxiety, were also recounted by Susan. She received psychiatric treatment following recurring panic attacks in school and the suicide of her step-father:

"Dr X just talked all the time. He didn't do much. Then they moved me onto this other man, it was hard. He did this relaxation with me and I just pretended I was doing it. I didn't like doing it at all. Couldn't never do it anyway. I don't know why but he used to scare me. They used to say, don't be stupid but when he stood up, breathed in and out it scared me. The more I got to see him, the more he was alright, until he started to do the relaxation thing ... I haven't seen any of them for ages. I don't want to."

For Wayne there appeared to be a stigma attached to his treatment, and a certain amount of fear:

"People would go in there and were scared ... it was so bleak, it looked so much like a hospital. It scared the hell out of you ... old geriatrics running around, people that are gone in the head."

Wayne perceived that the adolescent unit for psychiatric treatment should not have been in the middle of a psychiatric hospital.

For a number of the pupils who dismissed psychiatric treatment as being a waste of time, their perceptions of the value of the small supportive special school was quite the

opposite. It would appear that they perceived the school as offering more appropriate and valuable support than a medically or psychologically based treatment programme. The basic needs of the young people in this study seemed to correspond with the research quoted by Slee (1994) in Chapter 5 (p86) and were simply addressed by Johnny who described The Oakwood Centre as important for him because:

“Here they care.”

Such needs, echoed by other pupils too, clearly did not reflect a perceived need for medical placement or treatment. Any mainstream school should perhaps question whether it is meeting those needs, or whether it is leaving that responsibility to others who require a medical label to do so, or a special school where academic goals may make room for relationships and emotional support. Should such pupil needs be considered a specialised area?

Conclusion

As was concluded in Section 5.2 the pupils were certainly less inclined to talk of personal factors as contributing to their behaviour than they were to describe schooling factors. To what extent this is a reflection of their own perceptions of the problems, or an indication of their lack of willingness or confidence to talk openly about these issues is unclear. Any analysis of one's own behaviour and one's physiological or psychological contribution to that behaviour, is potentially difficult for anyone, whether a young person or an adult. Yet some valuable comments were raised by the EBD pupils in this study indicating for some a significant consideration of themselves as damaged or unacceptable individuals, or at best deviant in some way.

5.4 Conclusion to Chapter 5

Chapter 5 has attempted to present all of the factors and processes that the EBD pupils interviewed in this study perceived as being significant in relation to their behaviour. These factors and processes have been presented under three main headings, schools and schooling factors, family, socioeconomic and sociocultural factors, and factors relating to the individual of a physiological or psychological nature. Each set of factors was significant to different pupils to differing degrees. By far the most prevalent set of factors lay within the mainstream schools, although as will be described in Part Four there are aspects of the methodology that may have encouraged more feedback from pupils on schooling factors than other more personal or social issues. It is also important to recognise the potential impact of these deeper societal and psychological issues and factors on the ability of the mainstream schools to ‘satisfy’ the needs of the EBD pupil.

Each pupil presented a unique case study of their own experiences and difficulties and it is important to cross reference their statements within different Sections, to create an accurate overall picture of each case and the significance of the various factors within it. It is the impact and complexity of this combination of factors for the EBD pupil that appears to make them different to the mainstream pupil and enhances their vulnerability to failure in the mainstream setting. Furlong (1991) describes the ‘multiplicity of factors that may influence children in their rejection of schooling.’ (p295). He writes of a need to accept both the sociological and psychological aspects of behaviour, and to utilise a broad theoretical base for our understanding of EBD pupils. These views are supported by Molnar & Lindquist who are cited in Cooper et al (1994), as saying that ‘...divergent explanations of problem behaviour’ (p99), may be essential if we are to better understand the EBD child, and they specifically refer to the use of an ecosystemic theoretical approach to encourage this divergent thinking.

Thus, the results of this study that are presented in Chapter 5 have attempted to achieve the difficult task of offering insight into the unique individuality of the pupils, yet at the same time presenting their common, generalisable views. The two are somewhat incompatible but both aspects of the data provide important conclusions for theory and practice, as described in Part Four.

Chapter 6

Pupils' Perceptions of Behaviour

In Chapter 5 those factors that were perceived by pupils as having made a significant contribution to the difficulties they had experienced and their behaviour were presented. In the presentation of those data inevitably a certain amount of the discussion was concerned with specific behaviours and motives for behaviour, as in many cases the factors described were themselves perceived by pupils as direct reasons or circumstances accounting for their behaviour. This present Chapter is therefore in some ways an extension of Chapter 5. Using the pupils' perceptions it attempts to develop a greater understanding of the different forms of EBD behaviour that were displayed by the pupils in this study by describing and categorising them. It also attempts to better understand the meaning of the behaviour as perceived by the pupils themselves, by exploring and presenting pupils' motives for their behaviour. The existence of patterns in the data, possibly reflecting links between certain behaviours and motives, and the way in which specific behaviours may result from the different factors or experiences presented in the previous Chapter, is also assessed. The role of labelling is analysed using the pupils' perspective, and the way in which behaviour patterns evolve and develop is discussed using pupils' accounts of their own case histories. Finally, the pupils' attempts at finding support and understanding within the system are described.

6.1 Types of Behaviour and Motive

It is hoped that the results included in this Chapter may contribute to a field of study into behaviour that adopts an interactionist approach popular with sociologists throughout the 1970's and 1980's, and recently developing into systemic or ecological

approaches as described in Section 1.2. Personal motive or rationale behind difficult or disruptive behaviour in schools was not of interest to many of the earlier researchers who were more concerned with equating behaviour with social or psychological factors. Such factors were believed to directly stimulate the individual to behave in a certain way, crediting him or her with little control over his or her actions. This positivist approach has given way however to interactionist studies which have had quite an impact on educational research and our understanding of EBD children. Interactionist approaches propose that human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them and that individuals use an interpretive process to create and modify meaning. Obviously this equates with humans being able to reflect on themselves, and having a degree of control over their behaviours; they make decisions. Meltzer et al (1975) define the interactionist stance:

‘In the interactionist image, human beings are defined as self-reflective beings. Human beings are organisms with selves, and behaviour in society is often directed by the self. The behaviour of men and women is ‘caused’, not so much by forces within themselves (instincts, drives, needs, etc) or by external forces impinging upon them (social forces, etc.) but what lies in between, a reflective and socially derived interpretation of the internal and external stimuli that are present.’ (p2).

It was with a belief in such theories that researchers such as Bird et al (1981), Tattum (1982), Woods (1983), Schostak (1983), Schostak & Logan (1984) and Measor & Woods (1984), set out to seek more insight and a better understanding of disturbing pupils’ motives for their behaviour. Various theories emerged built on early theories of symbolic interactionism, which further rejected the positivist belief that deviance was irrational and simply a product of circumstances. Furlong (1985) describes the evolution of theories that allowed for the belief that people’s behaviour, including that of deviant pupils, is actually an attempt to adapt to the expectations that society places on them. He presents Merton’s theory of Anomie or Strain theory (p76), as a mismatch between the goals of a society and the means to achieve them, thus creating strain and a need to adapt or survive. As Furlong (1985) explains, such adaptations may

be deviant in the eyes of society but are rational responses to the people themselves. Two 'deviant' ways of responding to such strain according to Merton's model, would be (i) Retreatism, whereby given goals and means are rejected and not replaced with any alternatives, such as is the case with truants or drop outs, or (ii) Rebellion, whereby 'acceptable' goals and means are rejected but replaced with others which are 'unacceptable', perhaps within a peer group sub culture. These theories were developed by researchers such as Woods (1983), who specifically looked at pupils' modes of adaption to the demands of their comprehensive school environment. Woods proposed that pupil subcultures evolve, in this setting, from sets of common values that the pupils may hold. The existence of these pupil subcultures helps individuals deal with their own personal needs by providing the offer of alternative value systems to that offered by the school. Hargreaves et al (1975) also worked with the idea of pupil subcultures existing, and the belief that they provide much needed answers for pupils experiencing problems as individuals in school, offering opportunities for the acquisition of status, role and self esteem where the school provides none.

Confirmation that behaviour may be strongly influenced by the existence of value systems within subcultures, and that disruptive or deviant pupils did make rational, logical decisions concerning their own behaviour, was pursued by researchers who attempted to gain the pupils' perspective directly. (See Section 1.4). Such work includes Bird et al (1981) and Tattum (1982). Tattum interviewed boys and girls from a special unit for disruptive pupils, and constructed five vocabularies of motives for behaviour from the interview data. These vocabularies of motives were given as (i) It was the teachers fault (ii) Being treated with disrespect, (iii) Inconsistency of rule application (iv) We were only messing- having a laugh, and (v) It's the fault of the school system. Tattum found the pupils to be very able to justify their actions and to be aware of their consequences. Bird et al (1981) revealed similar links between behavioural motives and school factors. In addition they used disruptive pupil

perceptions to show that the school environment created a perceived conflict of values between home and school for these pupils, and also a clash of roles between being a pupil in school and an adult out of school. Goals for their future also appeared to be at odds with those that the school held for them.

A more recent article by Quicke (1994) describes work in the 1970's and 1980's which explored these and similar issues relating to pupil culture, and in particular discusses the work of Willis (1977) and his study of working class boys. The pro-school 'ear oles' and the anti-school 'lads' in this study illustrate the pupils' own creation of labelled, well defined pupil groups, reflecting differing value systems in relation to those of the school. Woods (1983) suggests that these subcultures are quite distinctive, with specific ways of speaking and doing things, and although they are not always formal, they do have rules, codes and regulations.

In addition to school based studies, some research has attempted to search the minds and motives of 'deviants' in other social contexts. Marsh et al (1978) interviewed football hooligans and revealed them to be very able to theorise about their activities and the meanings of their actions. The work clearly displays the existence of what Marsh et al describe as an 'internal logic', with which those interviewed explain and describe their behaviour. Such logic was certainly also revealed by some of the pupils interviewed in this present study, supporting interactionist theories of behaviour.

Their perspectives can be best illustrated in the context of the behaviour itself, and for this purpose the behaviours described by the pupils will be loosely categorised.

Defining and classifying the behaviours of EBD pupils has been an ongoing issue for educationalists for many years. There has always been a problem categorising behaviour that is so open to subjective interpretation. (See Section 1.3). To label a certain behaviour as 'deviant' or 'disruptive' involves taking into account the context of that behaviour, including the values and attitudes of the observer. (See Section 6.2). Galloway & Goodwin (1987) quote from a report compiled in 1985 for the

ILEA that stated; 'Disabilities and difficulties become more or less handicapping depending on the expectations of others and on social contexts.' (p24). It is therefore very difficult to define exactly what constitutes a 'problem' behaviour. It is also difficult to find suitable terminology for such behaviour. Words used in the past such as 'handicapped', or 'maladjusted' were well established as far back as the 1940's and 1950's in documents such as The Handicapped Pupils and School Health Regulations (DES, 1945) and The Underwood Report (DES, 1955). Other terms have included 'disorder' and 'disturbance', which originated largely amongst the medical personnel who were involved in diagnosis. Such terms certainly suggested that the child required treatment of some sort and seemed to pay little regard to the social context of the behaviour.

The Warnock Report (DES, 1978) and the Education Act (DES, 1981) helped to redefine these stigmatising terms, and a broader concept of Special Educational Needs was introduced. The old terms of handicapping conditions were abolished although the term maladjustment was in fact retained, despite the fact that its popularity had been fading during the 1970's. Other new categories were also introduced defining learning difficulties as mild, moderate, severe and specific. The large number of pupils with special needs within the system was also recognised with the introduction of these new broader definitions. Yet it was emphasised that although 20% of children could be defined as having special needs at some time in their school career, only 2% needed special schooling at any one point in time.

Since then the disruptive, disturbed, disturbing, antisocial, or disaffected child has continued to create problems for those concerned with labelling or defining behaviour. (Cooper, 1996). The term maladjusted has been replaced by EBD, or pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. A formal definition of this term is given in DES Circular 23/89 as cited in Cooper et al (1994); 'Children who set up barriers between themselves and their learning environment through inappropriate, aggressive,

bizarre or withdrawn behaviour' and who 'have developed a range of strategies for dealing with day-to-day experiences that are inappropriate and impede normal personal and social development, and make it difficult for them to learn.' (p20). Perhaps it is unfortunate that the term maladjustment has been lost as it actually expresses a valuable contextual, sociological aspect to the behaviour, suggesting that behaviour is an adjustment to a particular context, which is in line with current systemic theories of behaviour. However the term had acquired a psychiatric feel, suggesting a disorder, in line with a medical model for disturbing behaviour and so has been considered inappropriate by many working in this field. Attempts to locate reasons for disturbing behaviour within the child, with minimal consideration for external influences have however been pursued and continue to be pursued. Major researchers like Rutter have long suggested that such behaviour may be a result of emotional disorders, and continue to explore those avenues. (Rutter & Smith, 1995). Even today, as Section 5.3 shows, the medical profession remains highly influential in its diagnosis of pupils who display disturbing behaviour, particularly with the concept of ADD or ADDH currently influencing thought.

However, even the now widely accepted EBD term has been scrutinised and subdivided further in recent reports. Vivian (1994) recalls a DES draft circular (DES, 1988) as identifying two broad categories used to describe the behaviour of EBD pupils; (i) Withdrawal, neurotic responses, anxiety states, depression and similar manifestations, (ii) Aggression, violence, delinquency, and socially unacceptable conduct. (p218). He also recalls the earlier work of Dawson (1980) who proposed three categories; (i) CD for conduct disorder, (ii) ED for neurotic or emotionally disturbed, (iii) a mixture of CD and ED. Clarizio (1992) also proposes that two categories are necessary for appropriate schooling and educational placement, doubting that the two are compatible. From his research in the USA he proposes there is a difference between those young people who are socially maladjusted (SM), yet free from emotional disturbance, and those who are seriously emotionally disturbed

(SED). A further development of this debate is proposed by Conner (1994), who interestingly suggests that 'a range of conditions' exist, which form part of an 'EBD spectrum.' (p5). His spectrum includes; (i) Nervous disorder, which includes fears, anxieties, phobias, depression, withdrawal, apathy, compulsions and obsessions, (ii) Habit disorders, including, speech, sleep, movement, eating, and psychosomatic disorders, (iii) Behaviour disorders, including school refusal, truancy, temper loss, aggression, attention demanding, (iv) Organic disorder, including physical disorders like epilepsy, diabetes and physical or sensory handicap, (v) Psychotic disorder which includes extremes of behaviour, (vi) Educational disorders, including poor concentration, being unable to stick to task, dyslexia. It appears that such a spectrum encompasses all children who in some way warrant a special needs label, and moves away from the rather narrow group that we currently refer to as EBD. Interestingly, despite this very specific categorisation, he does comment on the dangers of identifying and defining children as EBD as it perhaps allows them to be removed from the system, making homogeneous groups that are simply easier to teach. He also comments on the highly subjective nature of the identification of EBD children, and how this subjectivity is reflected in the level of tolerance of the person observing the behaviour. With the introduction of LMS, and government pressure on schools to display league tables and truancy statistics, it is suggested that tolerance of certain behaviours has been reduced. A further development of this theme is offered by Vivian (1994) who questions whether a professional diagnosis is affected by changing perceptions of particular behaviours over time. For example, he suggests that a 'desensitising' (p222) of teachers takes place when they work with EBD pupils each day. Hence, whether a child is diagnosed as a behaviour disorder or an emotional disorder becomes purely subjective.

Clearly, categorising behaviour is no easy task. Terminology continues to change, and statistics remain based largely on subjective analysis. Cooper (1996) certainly reinforces the fact that there remains a need to develop clearer and more precise

terminology, stating; 'EBD is not a satisfactory category' and is '...a crude, ill-defined and not very useful descriptor. Current definitions of the terms are vague and undeveloped.' (p147). Scherer et al (1990) cynically urge us to be careful with the words that we use, saying that labelling is alright as long as '...whenever we use words that are relatively meaningless we acknowledge the fact.' (p26). Whatever terminology we use it is important that we are clear why we are using it. As Blyth & Milner (1994) suggest, we may be enhancing the social control functions of education by this obsession with categorisation and labelling, and Schostak (1983) warns that we may even be considering individuality itself as deviancy. Schostak sought the views of EBD pupils in search of an understanding of their behaviour, and looked beyond labelling the behaviour itself, instead attempting to categorise the meaning of the behaviour, similar to the work of Tattum (1982). Schostak describes four pupil strategies which he considers to comprehensively account for their range of behaviours; (i) Becoming like others, (ii) Manipulating others, (iii) Deceiving others, (iv) Avoiding others, and then proposes a fifth strategy that he describes as 'the violent solution'.

In this present study detailed analysis of the pupils' statements regarding their behaviour also revealed certain strategies and underlying motives behind overt behaviours. Two broad categories of behaviour are used to facilitate the presentation of the pupils' perceptions; fight and flight. No attempt is made to propose a new means of categorisation, or to suggest that behaviours fit neatly into either of these two categories. They have been used in order to present the pupils' behaviours clearly and where possible to link those behaviours with given motives and justifications. Fight and flight are two behavioural strategies which in scientific terms have been proposed as natural responses to stress or fear, (Moskowitz & Orgel, 1969, Lewis & Peterson, 1974), and the majority of pupil behaviours have been loosely allocated into one or other of these categories. In presenting and discussing the data an attempt has been made to show the extent of the pupils' own interpretation of his or her own

actions, and wherever possible this is analysed further within a framework of knowledge about the pupils' specific case history.

6.1(i) Flight

Behaviours described by pupils in this study which are included under the term flight include those behaviours which appeared to be, or were described as being, attempts to withdraw from problems, as opposed to confronting them in an aggressive manner or by acting out. Pupils who described this type of strategy had often been influenced by many of the factors described in Chapter 5, including problems with social interaction such as teasing, and bullying, or problems associated with the academic nature and expectations of the school. Withdrawal was not always exclusively a response to one particular factor.

Within school withdrawal

Flight or withdrawal was initially attempted by some of the pupils actually within the school itself. It appears that a minority of pupils who did not want to break school rules or defy expectations of attendance, did try to use strategies that would enable them to survive within the system. This was generally the case for those pupils who perceived themselves as experiencing social problems, yet academically were functioning without difficulty. Such pupils sought ways of avoiding peer interaction, taking the limited opportunities offered to them by the highly social nature of the schooling system. Thus, this particular behavioural strategy appears most closely linked to the school factors associated with school and class size and negative social interactions, and certain pupil comments presented in Chapter 5 illustrate this point.

'Joining in' seems to be an expectation of pupils within school from an early age, yet such an expectation and the pressures within school to be part of a group or to identify with group activities, may create problems for certain children. Comments by Wayne and Sarah (See p76) illustrate this point and describe how they sought isolation from their peer group. Other pupils recounted their own personal strategies for avoiding peer interaction. Karen described having to be close to teachers:

"I didn't join in much ... I used to sit with the teachers, cling to them."

Another pupil, Roy, adopted his own personal strategy for being able to separate himself from the social pressures of the classroom:

"I started to tell rubbish jokes, so everybody wanted me to be put on a different table. I worked much better on a table on my own, cause nobody could have a go at me."

In conclusion to these few comments, it would appear that schools need to recognise the perceived needs of certain pupils to be able to take 'time out' from the social pressures relentlessly forced upon them in the school setting. Legitimate opportunities to escape the social melee should perhaps be provided in order to prevent pupils having to choose unacceptable alternatives such as truancy or running away.

Withdrawal from school: running

A need to withdraw from the school itself and to avoid stressful situations within the school appeared to be important for some pupils and the pupils described above illustrate legitimate attempts to escape pressures within school. However, for these and others who were interviewed, ultimately it had been attempts at avoiding the school completely that appeared to be the only way to escape their own perceived problems. For some, attempts were made to minimise conflict with the school by

finding ways round the attendance registration procedures. As Pasternicki et al (1993) found with their study of truants; 'The accuracy in recording and detecting student absences ... proved variable.' (p5). Three pupils in this present study reported their ability to beat the system. Karen described how easy it was to register then to leave school:

"Go out after first register, come back again at dinner, and do the register, then go out again."

For Karen, who was a bright articulate girl, problems had been primarily with her peer group and she had not wanted to miss classes. She described trying to cope with class time but leaving just prior to periods of the day where social peer interaction would be inevitable:

"I'd register then I'd go to half hour lesson, then I'd say 'can I go to the loo, I need my bag?' and so, goodbye."

Sandra described registering in the morning then leaving for the rest of the day, as a way of dealing with her academic difficulties:

"Go to register in the morning then in the afternoon they'd think I was just late, cause I went home to lunch. I missed register nobody said anything."

Alan also found a loophole in the system to deal with his social and academic problems:

"Some days I went, then left after lunch."

When interpreting these comments in relation to the pupils' perceptions of their problems as a whole, it seems that such withdrawal behaviours are rational responses to problems for which these pupils were receiving inadequate support or recognition, and for which other legitimate behaviour options were lacking.

A more spontaneous option for dealing with school problems was to literally run away from the pressures. Sam described his behaviour in response to peer pressure and bullying:

“I ran home. They stopped me from doing my work so I had to make it up during PE and everyone started laughing at me, so I just got right on my bike and went home.”

Mike explained his response to bullying:

“I used to run away a lot of the time ... sometimes I used to run away during play times.”

Susan also ran away from peer pressure. She perceived her only other options as being aggression or seeking support, both of which she rejected:

“And I did get wound up and ever since that happened I couldn’t handle it any more, so instead of turning round and hitting them, and I couldn’t tell the teachers cause they don’t do anything, I ran out.”

Clearly Susan illustrated the three behaviour options that she perceived as being available to her when she was experiencing difficulties: fight, flight or find support. In this case she described flight as her chosen option. Mike was also aware that flight was preferable to a more violent alternative:

“I lost my temper, I got fed up, and I didn’t want to come to school.”

He explained why he ran away:

“Because I was threatening people, I was losing my temper because of those boys bullying me.”

Gerry was able to explain how the loss or denial of one form of ‘escape’ from his problem simply resulted in an alternative having to be found. He described how his learning difficulties had embarrassed and frustrated him, resulting in him truanting from school. When an attempt was made to ‘remove’ this behaviour problem by placing Gerry in a boarding school, he simply resorted to running away.

“... because of that school, I couldn’t bunk off, so that was a problem ... I used to run away.”

It would appear that for Gerry the real problem was not being addressed. Instead his behaviour options for dealing with the problem were being limited, resulting in other alternatives having to be found. He was aware of the fact that he was caught in a ‘no win’ situation, whereby every behavioural option for him created more problems. A vicious circle.

“ ... to cope with a problem I used to run away from it, instead of getting in trouble, but I got in trouble for that as well.”

Clearly flight does not provide the long term answers for these pupils. This feeling of frustration that Gerry described was evident in many of the pupils’ accounts of their behaviour and problems.

The previous statements were from pupils who had experienced peer pressure, bullying and learning difficulties. Johnny chose running away from school as his only option when conflict with teachers in the classroom arose over his work. Such conflict does not so readily allow the physical response option that conflict with peers may allow. (See Section 6.1(ii)). If a teacher’s efforts at support do not meet a pupil’s perceived needs, often closely related to the number of pupils in a class, (Section 5.1(i)), then for pupils like Johnny, flight again appeared to become the only option. He often chose withdrawal as opposed to a more aggressive response under these circumstances:

“Cause I didn’t know what to do, so I left it there, and she told me to do it and I didn’t know what to do. She’d shout at me and I’d get up tight and then I’d run out of school. I don’t like people shouting at me. If they get up tight I start shouting at them.”

Other statements revealed that Johnny’s classroom difficulties were rooted in academic difficulties. His motive behind this flight behaviour was perceived as lack of support. He described his feeling as ‘getting up tight’, which could equate to a number of different things including anger, frustration, embarrassment, humiliation or fear. His

description seems to suggest that running was the way to avoid the escalation of difficulty that would have resulted from choosing 'fight', or for him, shouting back. Guy, also a low ability pupil who had academic problems, described his flight response:

“I kept walking out the classroom. I went home once ...”

He was able to link his academic problems to teasing and peer conflict, illustrating how closely academic and social pressures can be connected:

“People calling me names and that, and I couldn't take it so I walked home They kept calling me names cause I don't know much ...”

In summary, it would appear that running away was a behavioural choice made by pupils to escape from difficult situations and used as a preferable alternative to more violent, antisocial options. It was chosen as a solution to problems of both a social and an academic nature.

Withdrawal from school: school refusal and truancy

A further extension of these withdrawal or flight behaviours was of course total school avoidance, refusal, or truancy. A number of reasons for truancy were revealed. Tom was clear about his motives for not attending school:

“I thought I better not go into school, I might get bullied again.”

Mike also explained why he did not want to go to school:

“I didn't go to school cause I was scared to go into school.”

Michael also described fear as a motive for not attending:

“I didn’t go to school four times once, ‘cause I was too scared to go to school.”

Another pupil explained:

“I didn’t go into mainstream school because of bullying.”

For these pupils, anxiety and fear about being in school were clearly a greater motivational force than their concern for the problems or punishment that could result from non-attendance.

Other pupils described truanting but their motives appeared to be quite different. Unlike those fleeing as individuals from threatening social interaction or academic pressures within school, others appeared to be motivated by the potential rewards of conforming to the actions of a ‘deviant’ peer group. Such actions, often termed ‘bunking’, involved missing school and indulging in other activities with peers, many of which were antisocial and delinquent. Bobby explained:

“Good the first couple of months then got to know a couple of people, you know, some of the bad ones, started skipping.”

George explained:

“Me and my friends used to bunk off school. We used to go down [town] and spend our dinner money down the arcade and stuff. Walk around McDonalds.”

Gerry offered further valuable insight into the manner in which truanting may be a learned behaviour, fuelled by peer pressure:

“I didn’t know much about bunking off. One of my mates done it and I done it with him ... I bunked off about three weeks in a row.”

Dave had a similar story:

“He said do you wanna go to school. I said, no not really. We done it once, then the second time about forty of us done it, and that’s when we got caught.”

Both Gerry and Dave were boys finding the academic demands of their schooling difficult and the factors that they perceived as causing problems for them, were related to the academic expectations of the school. It would seem reasonable to propose that both boys lacked self-esteem and reward from being in school. They appeared to seek rewards, a sense of belonging or even a certain degree of self control by rejecting the school and its goals, replacing them with those offered by membership of a deviant pupil sub-group. The pupils themselves were not readily able or willing to analyse the motives for such behaviour to this extent, so this conclusion is speculative based on the researcher's knowledge of the pupils. However, it is not difficult to understand a pupil who misses school in favour of a day with friends, when one considers the relative personal gains and losses from each situation. One only has to consider Dave's description of his typical behaviour in school. He described messing around in lessons:

“I didn't get on with lessons. I messed around.”

His reason for messing around was:

“If I was stuck I couldn't do it.”

Finally, he described the consequences for his actions:

“Sent me to the Headmaster's office and I had to stand out there all day.”

However, learning difficulties and lack of academic stimulation or compensation for attending school do not account for all truanting. A further motive for truanting may simply have been a desire to avoid schoolwork. Such avoidance was described by Ronnie and Julie, although these pupils appeared to have had very different sub-motives. Ronnie appeared to find the curriculum and the goals of the school meaningless and irrelevant to him (p193), and he was confident that he could leave school and get a job regardless of school success:

“I’ll get out. I’ll start working. I’ll earn £150 - £200. I’ll have loads a nice clothes. That’s all I think about.”

Julie was a good example of a pupil not attending school for being unable to deal with the academic expectations and the subsequent humiliation or punishment that she feared would result. In contrast to Ronnie who appeared to see no value in school, Julie did want to learn but could not meet the demands placed on her. (p119).

All of the pupils mentioned in this Section throw valuable light on the many varied yet rational responses given by EBD pupils when asked to give motives for truancy.

Much research has been carried out on truancy and absenteeism. In the mid-1980’s Reid (1985) was particularly interested in this issue and pursued avenues of research, including pupils’ perceptions, which moved away from more traditional beliefs that truancy was a result of social background and class. His research revealed the importance of schooling factors in particular, and encouraged educators to seek answers within the institutions. Other research has attempted to provide correlation between truancy figures and factors both inside and outside school. Pasternicki et al (1993) made a more recent study of in school factors linked to pupils’ decisions not to attend. One interesting result was that they found it to be a solitary activity rather than a result of group pressure, although those pupils who had not truanted did report having to resist group or peer pressure to do so. (p6). The pupils in this present study who described ‘bunking’, truanting or missing school were both solitary and in groups, thus not supporting the results of Pasternicki et al. Whether truancy is solitary or in a group appears to depend largely on the source of the pupils’ disaffection with school. Whether the pupil is isolated from his or her peer group socially or identifies with a group, combined with other factors linked to the pupils’ value system and ability to meet the academic expectations of the school, all are important considerations. However, each case is the individual’s attempts to deal with a complex mixture of fears, needs and values.

Truancy or phobia?

When taking into account the pupils' perspectives on their motives for not attending school it becomes apparent that such behaviour is far more complex than a simple decision to miss school. One particular problem for professionals is to determine the extent to which a pupil is simply choosing to not attend, perhaps in order to achieve some benefit from alternative actions, or considers him or herself unable to attend. This also leads to issues of whether to punish or empathise. This labelling problem is well illustrated by the use of the word truant in certain cases and phobia in others. It is interesting to consider the way these two words carry different connotations in terms of the pupils' difficulties and level of responsibility for their behaviour. Truancy and particularly 'bunking' implies that the pupil has control and is electing to miss school possibly without 'good' reason. It is perceived as a 'deviant' action, where as phobia is a term insinuating an illness allowing for a more sympathetic attitude to the pupil and his or her ability to attend school. In Montgomery (1989) truancy is described as; 'Wilful non-attendance at school often associated with social factors and alienation from school.' (p50) Phobia is described as follows; 'School phobia as the name signifies has as its base an emotional problem or state of emotional illness in which the pupil cannot attend school for fear of distressing, and even catastrophic emotional reactions which he/she cannot control.' (p50).

One's beliefs regarding such issues is possibly linked to the theoretical stance one takes in terms of behaviour. Clarizio (1992) suggests that the extent to which we believe emotional disturbance to have played a part in a child's behaviour affects how we label them. As previously described (p216), he debates and proposes that a different attitude and education may be needed for socially maladjusted pupils as opposed to the seriously emotionally disturbed, a belief echoed by Vivian (1994). Section 5.3 dealt with the way a label suggesting an emotional illness, psychological or physiological problem can be a useful escape route for professionals, parents and pupils alike.

Analysis of the pupils' comments regarding their avoidance of, or flight from school through illness or psychosomatic symptoms, provides interesting insight into the extent to which such behaviour does differ from truancy in terms of loss of self control.

Five of the pupils interviewed described illness as a means to avoiding school. Their comments reflect the rather confusing nature of their physical state and in particular the extent to which they felt they actually controlled the symptoms or were 'really' ill.

Gerry and Sarah both admitted to creating or using their illness:

"I used to get up in the morning and say I don't feel well."

"I made myself ill."

Roy was not so sure of the origins of his illness each morning. He stated:

"I got mysteriously ill."

He continued:

"I'd wake up in the morning. I'd think about school and I'd feel ill. I was sick, my stomach felt like it was a lead weight."

Roy described his mother trying to get him to school:

"In the morning I'd try to go back to sleep. My mum used to drag me out of bed, carry me down the stairs."

He described the confusion of his mind and the feelings of panic he experienced:

"I can't really remember my feelings, they were just a jumble, a mess. When I got in a panic at the bus stop and phoned my mum, my mind was in a mess."

Wayne tried to explain his own subjective reality of his physical state, as opposed to how the rest of the world perceived it:

"You feel physically ill, but you're not in real life. It was real to me."

The need to avoid school at certain times or to miss certain lessons was described by a few pupils as was previously explained. (p115), although not all pupils were able to rationalise their fears or specify exactly what had triggered or created anxiety. For Sarah the whole school in itself created the problem and she defined the problem as a phobia. (p203):

“It’s the fact that it’s a school that had that affect on me.”

Although she had described some minor peer problems and analysed her fear to include the size and nature of the buildings, she remained unable to rationalise her behaviour. Her relief came with psychiatric treatment which as previously described in Section 5.3, was for her a label, which removed her responsibility for rational analysis, possibly shifting the locus of control for her behaviour from internal to external. (p204).

Karen’s non-attendance at school had also resulted in psychiatric treatment and had been generally accepted as a phobia, involving peer interaction. She herself had further analysed her problems with attendance as evolving into a fear of what may happen to her even before anything actually did. (p136).

This Section certainly suggests that professionals should carefully consider the motives behind truancy or school refusal with a particular awareness for how different labels can strongly influence attitudes to different pupils and expectations of them. This labelling can significantly influence perceptions of the degree to which pupils have control over their own behaviours.

Self harm

A serious form of behaviour and one that is somewhat difficult to categorise involves actual or threatening self harm. Four of the pupils in the present study described this as a behavioural response to their feelings. Susan described her response to anger:

“I cut myself, when I got annoyed, when people annoyed me ... it gets all the anger out of me ... I don’t do it to anyone else, I do it to me when I get angry.”

Karen described her overdose, yet did not disclose completely why she did it:

“I took an overdose ... that was something personal I never tell anyone why I done that.”

Two other pupils, Sarah and Wayne, described threatening suicide to their families, but did not describe in any depth why they had done so:

“I told my mum I had suicidal feelings.”

“I said I’d commit suicide. I wouldn’t but I said I would.”

Connor (1994) comments on the work of Malcolm & Haddock (1992), who stress the importance of recognising withdrawal and self-injurious behaviours. (p9). They suggest that it may be girls who use such ‘under-reacting’ behaviours, as opposed to boys who ‘overreact’ when distressed, and that girls tend to be ignored because their behaviours have less impact than acting out behaviours. It is certainly not possible to extend this discussion based on the few comments raised by pupils in the present study. However, if extreme actions such as self harm are in any way closely related to school problems, and the pupils are resorting to such actions for lack of alternative outlets for their feelings and emotions, then clearly educational professionals must look at the opportunities that can be made available for such pupils to more safely communicate and find support for their difficulties.

Conclusion

The behaviours described in this Section are all responses to the pressures and feelings that these EBD pupils had experienced. If statements made by the same pupil are traced back throughout the Section, it can be seen that the factors which they each

personally perceived as being significant to them were varied. The pressure underlying their behaviours, the motives, the origins, were not all identical, yet their behaviours were similar, and categorisable to a certain extent. What was common to many however, appeared to be feelings of helplessness and frustration. They expressed a perceived lack of legitimate acceptable and safe behavioural options with which to deal with their situations and emotions.

Where support was lacking, their need in each case appeared to be an escape from the perceived problems or difficulties. It would seem that there was no gain and no relief perceived by the individual in trying to remain in the system. The promise of academic or social reward was outweighed by the fear and anger that had resulted from a mixture of factors unique to that individual. For some pupils an irrational fear was perceived as having played a major role in their inability to attend school. Yet for many, social and academic based motives and justifications were described. These EBD pupils not only lacked sufficient positive reward for attending school, but faced instead, frightening and negative interaction with peers and teachers. Perhaps Stevenson & Ellsworth (1991) have a valid point in describing certain pupils as not belonging; 'A feeling of not belonging discourages the student from coming to school and creates the additional problem of truancy.' (p284). 'Not belonging' would seem to have a close association with 'not gaining' from a situation. It can have both academic and social connotations for pupils in school, and ultimately may result in a pupil's decision to stop attending.

To summarise, it would appear from the pupils' perceptions that the withdrawal behaviours displayed by them, were motivated in many cases by feelings of not belonging and fear, both of which appear to be very closely linked. Belonging and having a group identity may be essential basic needs that are not being met for these pupils. Behaviour involving flight was perceived by pupils as an attempt to deal with these inner feelings and fears and not a mere desire to avoid the rigours of the school's

academic expectations. Simon neatly presented his view on these issues and closes this Section by clearly illustrating the importance of hearing and respecting the pupils' perspectives:

“There's always a reason behind everything and I'm not sure if the school really looks at all those reasons why it's happening. They only hear one side of the story and that's it.”

6.1(ii) Fight

For the purpose of this Section fighting is used to denote a behavioural response that may be aggressive, anti-social, disruptive or unacceptable to the expectations of society and specifically schools. Although the word suggests an aggressive physical action, in this Section it is also used to represent behaviours with which the pupils reject or fight the system with disruptive actions. The pupils' perceptions of such behaviours are presented and wherever possible their own interpretation of the behaviour and their motives or rationale behind it are given. As in the previous Section on flight, the pupils' ability to interpret and rationalise their own behaviour varied a great deal. Some were only able to make simple descriptions of events and their own actions, whilst others had developed insights into situations and events, and showed awareness of why something had happened and the motivational forces behind actions, of their own and others.

The behaviours relevant to this Section have been categorised for presentation under two sub-headings based on the degree of aggression associated with those behaviours. Those that were physically or verbally aggressive and those that involved no actual aggression yet were disruptive.

Aggressive Behaviours

This Section is closely linked to Section 5.1(iv) on social interaction in schools as pupils' accounts of aggressive behaviour frequently focussed on problems associated with their peer group, including bullying. In addition, fighting is also discussed in this Section, as it was a behaviour that was described by a high number of the pupils in the present study.

The interview data suggests that one way of achieving power, dominance, and status or to establish oneself comfortably and safely at the top of the unwritten hierarchy within the peer group was through fighting. Although closely linked to bullying, interpretation of the comments made by the pupils in the interviews revealed that fighting is not always synonymous with bullying. Of thirty six pupils interviewed in the study, twenty described fighting as a behaviour in which they had been involved, and which had contributed to their difficulties. It was however, a behaviour primarily described by the boys, as none of the small number of girls interviewed revealed it as relevant to their situation. Campbell et al (1997) offer some interesting insights into how gender relates to types of aggression used. The present research is in line with both this and other research which is more closely related to the behaviour of pupils in schools, such as Mooney et al (1991) who found that more boys than girls fight. The acceptance and commonality of fighting for boys, and its place as the norm in school settings, was pointed out by Simon:

“Kids fight, boys fight, it’s natural.”

Perhaps this is linked to the male need to be regarded as tough and hard, as Boulton (1993b) suggests, referring to several other studies. He suggests that fighting can be an ‘...overt demonstration of these qualities.’ (p235). Boulton also refers to research which reveals that ‘...children looked positively on peers who use aggression to stand up for themselves...’ (p240). Such results illustrate the very close similarities between

bullying and fighting. If fighting enhances popularity then it may achieve the same as bullying, as Olweus (1994) states ‘...bullies do not reach the low level of popularity that characterizes the victims.’ (p1180). However, although objective observation may suggest that fighting and bullying are the same and achieve similar goals, an interpretation of the pupils’ statements regarding their behaviour suggests differences in motive.

Sam described his behaviour and motives:

“Fighting makes you popular with all the others. When I beat up R.B., I started to get respect from all the fifth years.”

Sam does not describe repeated aggression towards one person, or an obvious desire to damage or hurt his victim. His action appears to be essentially concerned with his own popularity and status in the eyes of his peers. Dave was another boy who offered evidence that fighting may not be as malicious as bullying, just primarily concerned with status:

“When I see other people having a fight, I get stuck in, like showing off.”

Karl also described the role of fighting as a means to establish himself within the pupil hierarchy:

“I used to like fighting. I used to think I was really big. I wanted to be top dog of the school which like I was at the time. But I wanted to prove it. Every time a new kid came in, if he looked pretty hard I’d challenge him and smash him up. It was just a challenge. I did enjoy it, but it’s not a good thing to do. It’s like a boxer with his title.”

Karl’s behaviour does not seem to have the goal of hurting someone else at a deep emotional level but simply to prove supremacy of a physical nature. It is debatable to what extent such behaviour fits some of the current definitions of bullying, such as that suggested by Francis & Jones (1994) (p135). Despite the aggressive nature of Karl’s behaviour, he does not appear to have a great interest in the response of the victim, or a need to repeatedly, subtly or painfully destroy another person’s ego or emotions.

His own ego and success overrides those needs. Karl did not expand on his deeper motives for needing to be 'top dog'. Boulton (1993b) refers to these hierarchies within pupil cultures as 'dominance hierarchies' (241), and Measor & Woods (1984) describe a 'pecking order in the informal culture' (p9), of pupils in school. Clearly the aggressive behaviours that have been described within this Section have close associations with the existence of these social hierarchies and boys particularly describe bullying and fighting as behaviours used to establish status within the respected hierarchy, and possibly to assert masculine identities. (Dixon, 1996). There do however appear to be subtle differences in the extent to which bullying and fighting comprise a desire to distress and wound another. Clearly, the highly subjective interpretation of the motives for aggressive behaviour makes it difficult to assess without consulting the individual concerned. One example of the problem surrounding interpretation of pupils' aggressive behaviour is the extent to which it is a normal aspect of development and from which all parties are gaining from the activity. There certainly seems to be a type of fighting, often referred to as play fighting which falls short of being aggressive. Boulton (1993c) suggests that most fighting is clearly playful or clearly aggressive but can transform from one to the other. However, it would seem that interpretation by observation alone is somewhat difficult. Simon gave an interesting example of how his own subjective interpretation of his school behaviour differed from what others may have perceived:

“Sometimes I bully kids, although I don't look at it as bullying. What I call bullying is like when I was younger, my mum used to have to pay the kids a pound a week not to beat me up. That is a form of bullying. If she didn't pay it I'd be riding along on my skateboard, I'd feel this baseball bat on the back of my head. They knocked me out cold. That's what I call bullying.”

However, the willingness and ability of the EBD pupils in this study to reflect on their actions and give accounts of motives and reasons behind them, should encourage professionals to seek pupil perspective prior to passing judgement on certain behaviours. This is particularly important if we consider the number of pupils for

whom aggression was perceived to be driven by fear, insecurity or retaliation to provocation. The significance of such behaviour in the exclusion of pupils from mainstream schools, according to this research project, should also fuel our desire to better understand it. In support of this statement, Imich's (1994) three year study shows that exclusions are going up, that four times as many boys than girls are being excluded, and nearly half of all exclusions are for verbal or physical offences against peers.

Aggressive behaviours were described by the pupils in the present study as being primarily within the peer group. Aggression aimed at the system itself, including teachers, was much more unusual. Dave was a boy who admitted to being aggressive with peers and a teacher:

“I hit people. I pushed a teacher.”

Jeremy, Michael and Brian, who was a 14 year old boy with learning difficulties, attending Southdown School as a result of disruptive and aggressive behaviours, also all described incidents involving aggression against teachers:

“I thumped the Head too.”

“I kept on being naughty, throwing stuff at the teachers and all that and one of the teachers I threw a pair of scissors at her and they hit her.”

“I used to chuck chairs at teachers.”

These boys all explained their actions as being a result of frustration in the classroom, and all were boys with some learning difficulties. Michael explained why he threw chairs:

“Work was too hard for me, and people winding me up and taking the Mick.”

When he was asked why people ‘took the Mick’ he explained:

“I can't write properly, I couldn't spell properly.”

Although this small number of boys described aggressive behaviour against teachers as their reaction to frustration in the classroom, it would appear that more pupils avoided this violent option, electing to adopt disruptive, acting out type behaviours in those situations. These behaviours will be discussed next.

Disruptive Behaviours

This Section is included under the category of fight as in many ways the behaviours described by pupils, intentionally or not, involve a conflict with the rules and expectations of the school. In other words they appear to represent a fight with the system. Some examples of the behaviours termed disruptive have been described by pupils in Chapter 5 as for many their perceptions of the significant factors associated with their behaviour were closely linked to behaviours and motives. This Section attempts to develop the data and analysis from within this previous Section by describing the pupils' perception of behaviour in more detail particularly in relation to motives.

As previously explained, the degree of interpretation that the pupils themselves were able to reveal with regards to their own behaviour, and their ability to assign motive to that behaviour, did vary. Wherever possible the results are presented in a way that makes clear whose interpretation is being presented, either that of the pupils themselves or that of the researcher. One important observation is that some pupils could give a reason or motive for behaviour but were not necessarily able to give any detail regarding the way in which their behaviour actually alleviated or dealt with the problem, or in other words what was gained by their action. That clearly required a level of analysis and self-reflection that was not easy for them and it is left to the researcher to assess from the results the possible relationship between the behaviour and the problem. In the previous Section on withdrawal or flight it was easier to

interpret exactly what the behaviour was achieving. Clearly its goal was to put distance between the pupil and the immediate problem. Disruptive behaviour is harder to understand, leaving analysis to find the missing clues to what exactly links motive and behaviour. As behaviours in this Section include disruptive actions and rule breaking or non-co-operation, perhaps they are further from our own adult rationality, and therefore more difficult for us to understand and identify with. Thus, the value of seeking pupil perspectives is to enable us to gain a better understanding of EBD pupils, without relying on observation alone. To illustrate the importance of this, Miller (1994) reveals significant discrepancies between the teachers' understanding of motives for behaviour of bright disruptive pupils in their school, and the motives given by the pupils themselves.

Firstly, it is important to describe the behaviours that may be termed disruptive. A term frequently used by the pupils to describe their behaviour was 'mucking about' or 'messaging about'. Larry described his attitude to school:

"I'd go for a laugh, muck around."

However Robin, a 16 year old boy at Southdown School who had been in a number of previous special needs facilities, including a psychiatric hospital, and who had displayed a variety of disturbing behaviours, made a statement which revealed how closely disruptive behaviours may be linked to aggression. He described his behaviour in class:

"Throwing things around. Swearing at teachers."

It was not difficult to get pupil accounts of what they had done. Some of the boys in the study offered the following descriptions of their behaviour:

"In science I turned on a gas tap and put a match in front of it."

"Throw rubbers at people and annoy them."

“Mucking about dancing on tables.”

“I kept being naughty, throwing stuff at teachers and all that.”

“I used to get told off quite a lot for playing jokes and not paying attention in class.”

“I used to make noise, throw things about ...”

“I used to muck around in class a lot. I used to chuck rubbers, little bits of rubber, flicking at people, on a ruler.”

There were also other types of behaviour which were not termed ‘messing about’ but involved rule breaking and lack of co-operation. Cooper et al (1994) use the word ‘oppositional’ to describe ‘deliberate repeated infringement of classroom rules.’ (p95). For the pupils in the present study these behaviours involved not doing homework or not wearing the appropriate uniform. Sandra described her behaviour:

“I used to go into school in jeans. I used to wear my school uniform and my trainers which you’re not supposed to do.”

Other pupils described further behaviours of an unacceptable nature, yet ones that were not openly aggressive. Smoking was a particular behaviour that had created friction between the pupil and the school. Andy, Gerry, Larry and Ronnie all raised this as an issue for them whilst they had been in the mainstream setting:

“In them sort of schools you’re not allowed to smoke. I used to go behind the science block. Teachers used to come round quite a lot and catch us.”

“We were allowed out at lunchtime, teachers go for a cup of tea, we would go behind the huts.”

“In the fourth year people started smoking in school...”

“I got suspended because I started smoking puff in the bogs.”

Dave actually commented that being allowed to smoke in the special school setting had reduced his school problems. When asked about the differences between mainstream and special provision, he replied:

“You can smoke.”

Other modes of behaviour which were not aggressive but antagonised teachers and appeared to fall under the ‘disruptive’ umbrella were refusing to work, ignoring teachers and destroying work. Larry explained his behaviour:

“We were in it for a laugh. If we didn’t like a lesson we wouldn’t do it.”

Other pupils described similar actions, yet there were quite different reasons behind them such as not being able to do the work. (See Section 5.1(iii)). Sandra also described destroying work:

“Well once I did my work and I screwed it up cause I didn’t want it. She told me off for not doing any work.”

Johnny was another low ability pupil who reacted in a similar way to Sandra:

“I just stopped doing my work, and when they told me I just couldn’t do it. I just used to sit there and she’d tell me to get my maths book out, I’d just sit there. She’d grab me.”

Of the different disruptive behaviours described, it is interesting to note that the boys in the study were the ones to describe ‘mucking about’, and not the girls, although clearly there were far fewer girls interviewed. This observation agrees with the proposal made by Measor & Woods (1984), that these behaviours are ‘male preserves’ (p116), and that strategies used by girls are less disruptive and more ‘invisible’.

Defining ‘disruptive’ behaviours has been attempted and carried out by a number of other researchers and reports. The Elton Report (DES, 1989a) acknowledged the fact that disruption is not always in evidence as conspicuous, indisputable events, rather it may be ‘a persistent low-level disruption’ (p67) which actually wears teachers down and frustrates them. More recently, Miller (1994) also refers to such behaviours which may be perceived as trivial if taken in isolation, yet their persistent use results in

problems. The pupils in this study were certainly able to describe their overtly 'disruptive' actions but were not apparently so aware of any more subtle behaviours that they may have displayed which teachers would perhaps classify as disruptive. Their perception of behaviour as being disruptive appeared to be limited to the more overt or obvious actions.

Perhaps demanding behaviours should be considered differently to disruptive behaviours, although certain behaviours that could possibly be classified as demanding rather than disruptive rapidly become the latter when repeated frequently over time, and in the context of a large class. This point is made in Miller's (1994) study of bright disruptive pupils' and teachers' perceptions of their behaviour. She found teachers describing 'mounting irritation' to pupil actions such as calling out, which had 'a cumulative effect.' (p247). She also describes constantly asking for help with no patience or consideration for others in the class, inappropriately challenging the teacher, or regularly commenting on the nature or quality of the class work and the teacher's ability, as disruptive behaviours in the eyes of the teachers. However, for the pupils these actions were perceived as having very different meanings. Interestingly such behaviours, that could well continue at a certain level in most schools, were not described by the pupils in this study as being significant although they are clearly significant for teachers. Perhaps these behaviours develop over time into the far more obvious disruption described by pupils, fuelled by the responses that teachers have towards them. These responses may be altered if there was an improved understanding of the pupils' behaviours and the reasons why disruptive behaviours continue, evolve and escalate until exclusion becomes the only answer. It is clearly valuable to explore such behaviour from the pupils' perspective, with the motives behind their behaviour containing valuable information for preventative school and classroom management strategies.

Having categorised and illustrated disruptive behaviours as perceived by these pupils, in terms of mucking about, rule breaking and lack of co-operation, it is also possible to do the same with the motives that they described. Taking their motives independently to their actions, motives can be placed in various broad categories. Firstly, some of the pupils did reveal a basic and possibly understandable need to socialise and have fun.

As Bobby stated:

“I just wanted a bit of fun at the time, just like nowadays really. If I wanted fun I’d just go out and cause a bit of mischief.”

Ronnie also stressed the importance of fun in his life:

“But I enjoyed myself, that’s why I can’t really regret my life at all so far because maybe I was a shit... and things did happen, but don’t worry... I still enjoyed myself, it was quite a laugh.”

The need for a social life, to interact and ‘have fun’ with other pupils, could be considered a legitimate human need. As previously described, (p213), Tattum (1984) includes, ‘Everybody messes about- only having a laugh,’ as one of his vocabularies of motives for behaviour. He suggests that the behaviour is not malicious, and is defined as disruptive only within a strongly rule bound institution. He also questions whether schools give enough consideration to the amount of time given to the social side of a young person’s development. Barrett (1984) provides evidence from her work with pupils’ perceptions of school to support these criticisms. She found that the pupils want laughs. One pupil described how they were expected to ‘sit in silence for the whole day, ... and because you can’t talk, you do talk- and you don’t learn.’ (p38). Miller (1994) similarly found that the disruptive pupils she interviewed considered that taking opportunities for socialising were ‘entirely reasonable and appropriate’. (p238).

Apart from a motive rooted in the simple human need to interact with others and laugh, the pupils revealed other motives for their ‘messaging around’, talking, joking and laughing. The words boredom and frustration are frequently used by school pupils,

whether EBD or not, when describing schooling experiences. Andy ascribed the following motive for some of his behaviour:

“I used to get bored with school.”

Clearly boredom is popularly perceived as a justified motive for certain behaviours in school. Yet it is a surprisingly poorly defined term, apparently covering many different emotions, feelings and experiences. School may be described as ‘boring’ by even the most successful student, not only those displaying difficult behaviours. However, it is clear that for some of the pupils interviewed in this present study that boredom or frustration resulted from difficulties with classroom work. Either they perceived themselves as having too little to do, being under-stimulated and unable to do the work owing to inadequate teacher support, or simply unwilling to work, claiming irrelevance of the material. These curriculum related issues were discussed in Section 5.1(iii). The pupils’ choice of behaviour in dealing with these feelings clearly provided some relief or replacement with preferable emotions although this seemed difficult for them to analyse and articulate in interview. Bobby related his actions to needing attention:

“It’s when the work is really boring ... you wanna get attention. You get distracted especially when you’re sitting there doing nothing.”

He also described his inability to remain focused on work when other peer group related incidents distracted him, apparently offering some greater gain than the work itself:

“Sometimes I think ‘gotta get my head down’, then as soon as something arises, like Ian broke the leg of a chair, that’s it, I just get up, my concentration’s gone.”

Although the exact nature of what he gained from such behaviour was not given by Bobby, it is possible to suggest that the social interaction was offering more reward than the completion of work. It is not clear whether Bobby could do the work or not,

he simply preferred the outcome of other activities. Other pupils such as Dave and Johnny, as previously described, did have learning difficulties, and ascribed their disruptive behaviour to a lack of support from teachers. Dave was quite specific about his motives for messing about:

“If I was stuck, I couldn’t do it.”

Johnny explained:

“I just wanted help and they just ignored me the teachers. I just started messing about.”

Not being able to ‘do’ the work seems to lead to boredom or a void which needs to be filled. The pupils’ perception of not being able to do the work is often inseparable from a belief that teachers do not offer enough support, ignore them, or that the work is inappropriate for their ability. Ken directly associated his behaviour with lack of time and attention from staff:

“If they did help me, I still didn’t understand then I’d mess about then. They just went and I’d mess about.”

He supported the fact that his behaviour was closely related to the amount of support he received from teachers, by adding later a comment about the special school setting:

“... smaller classes ... They don’t ignore you so much as in other schools, so you don’t have so much opportunity to mess about as much.”

Defining what is actually achieved by messing about remains unclear from the statements. To fully understand it and interpret motives at a somewhat deeper level requires further speculation and analysis. Montgomery (1989) describes the desire to relieve or replace unpleasant feelings of boredom or frustration as seeking ‘cognitive exhilaration.’ (p38). She quotes Reid (1986), in saying that; ‘Excitement is probably the greatest spur to misbehaviour in classrooms for all our pupils. The more boring

the lessons and the less involving they are, the more likely the pupils will feel alienated and need to seek other forms of excitement through disruption.’ (p38).

Seeking such excitement may be perceived as relatively uncontrolled in certain pupils, as Ken explained:

“But if one person plays up, then I think about joining in. I don’t know why it is. Some magnet just drags me into trouble, I just can’t help myself but to join in.”

However, the curriculum and its inability to stimulate and reward, is unlikely to account alone for all disruptive behaviours. The pupils’ need for excitement and stimulation is also closely linked to status and respect within the peer group which was previously described in depth as a motive for fighting and aggressive behaviour. In terms of the disruptive behaviours being discussed in this Section, acceptance within certain peer sub-cultures is perceived by some pupils as being achievable through making others laugh, and making jokes. Behaviour that breaks the rules also appears to give status to the perpetrator within certain pupil groups, as Karen has previously explained. (p82).

Interestingly only John used the common expression ‘showing off’ as a reason for his disruptive behaviour, although Karl also used the expression to explain his need to join in fights, as described previously. Both suggest a need for recognition from others as a result of that behaviour. However, George revealed an even more honest self-analysis of the reasons behind his behaviour:

“ ... if I was not happy ... I was trying to hide it by acting and everything like that. They were acting the class fools and everyone liked them, so I thought if I acted the class fool everyone will like me.”

Measor & Woods (1984) believe that joking is ‘...one of the chief survival mechanisms’ (p111). They suggest that there are ‘bids for status and control, in the use of joking...’ (p109). George, who had been bullied, certainly appeared to have

been attempting to escape negative feelings and survive by becoming popular with peers through joking. This is similar to the observations of Miller (1994) who describes pupils she interviewed as undertaking ‘...the role of “class clown” in order to appear “normal”...’ (p241). The need to be perceived as ‘normal’ is clearly closely linked to the need to identify with the majority and not stand out in isolation as an individual or deviant, an experience that holds the potential to trigger victimisation, as described in Section 5.1(iv). Larry’s description of his experiences on starting at a new school following bullying problems at a previous school, illustrates how powerful the behaviour of well established peer groups can be on individuals who are anxious to conform:

“At T. School when I first went there everyone was pissing about so I thought it’s OK to piss about. It seemed like the normal thing to do.”

Johnny described disruptive behaviour in the classroom in terms of peer pressure and conforming to the norm:

“Because you used to get a ruler, put a piece of rubber on it and fire it over. I used to do that all the time. They got me to do it. They didn’t make me do it, but I felt I was being left out. So I done it.”

Other rule breaking behaviours, such as stealing, smoking or drinking also appear to be attempts to gain acceptance from peers, and to maintain self-esteem under peer pressure. Tom described drinking alcohol in school as part of a group who encouraged him to do so:

“I thought I’d try it, everyone thinks I’m a weed and so I thought I’d try it.”

Smoking has been described earlier in this Section as a rule breaking activity for many EBD pupils. Michell & Fidler (1993), studied the social significance of smoking to boys in an EBD residential school, and found not only a high percentage of smokers (93%) but also that smoking helped define these boys as ‘...tough, aggressive anti-establishment.’ (p58).

The need to retain or gain self-esteem did not appear to involve only the peer groups and their values or opinions. There appeared to be a need for recognition and respect from teachers and the school system itself, and in a number of cases this was perceived as missing in mainstream schools. Larry described how his behaviour reflected his frustration at not being involved in choices or consulted on decisions in school. He described a dislike of the formal procedures of the school, such as sitting in alphabetical order, and being told what to do:

“He thought he could say ‘you do this’ and we’d do it like robots ... He doesn’t realise that you are people.”

He continued:

“They try to manipulate ya, ... try to intimidate ya.”

Larry appeared to describe a feeling of losing control in school, reflecting a lack of status and respect for pupils. This perceived removal of the pupils’ autonomy may be reflected in their behavioural attempts to regain it. Larry’s subsequent descriptions of his behaviour illustrate how these attempts can simply create further loss of respect in the eyes of teachers and tighter discipline. He described his relationship with staff as:

“It was like a constant fight.”

He continued:

“It’s just when they say you have to work. It feels like you’re being bossed about, then you start doing the opposite to what they say. It becomes a habit really.”

Doing the opposite to what you’re told, in Larry’s case seemed to be a misguided attempt to regain some control over his own actions. Unfortunately such disruptive behaviour usually achieves quite the opposite. Such is the case when certain behaviours are misinterpreted by teachers. This may occur when pupils attempt to

gain attention or respect from school staff. Miller (1994) describes the way disruptive behaviours such as calling out answers are explained by bright disruptive pupils as being simply ways of letting the teacher know that they knew the answers. They did not seem to be aware of the disruptive nature of their actions. The teachers themselves however described it as 'showing off' or 'just being clever.' (p246). Misinterpretation of behaviour and motive is not something only teachers alone are guilty of. Some of the pupils themselves gave examples of motives for behaviour based on very subjective interpretation of teachers' actions. For low ability pupils, being corrected or helped by a teacher could create an aggressive response, as Brian described:

“Teachers got on my nerves. If I did something wrong and they told me to do it right or something, so I just got annoyed with them and started taking it out on them.”

It would seem that such teacher interaction could result in an undermining of the pupils' self-esteem and status. Clearly this should not be the teacher's intention but the perspective of the pupil is what dictates his behaviour.

As was raised in both Sections 5.1(ii) and 5.1(iv), dissatisfaction with their relationships with the adults in the school, and a lack of opportunity to be seen as equals, was also considered an important issue for some pupils and this frustration appears to lie behind certain behaviours. The willingness of teachers to relax traditional roles and build adult type relationships with pupils can it seems make some difference to a pupil's attitude and behaviour. However, it remains debatable the extent to which lower ability pupils can benefit from this more informal teacher role or are frustrated by this issue, as it was the brighter pupils both in the present and other studies who raised it as being important to them.

Another motive for disruptive behaviour raised by one pupil, was an attempt to alter one's reality, and lose negative or difficult feelings. This was put forward by Roy who described 'mucking around' as a way to escape and to forget his problems:

"I muck about to forget things."

Measor & Woods (1984) may help understand exactly how such behaviour helps a pupil when they suggest that mucking about is the pupil's attempt 'to disrupt the official reality and redefine situations.' (p113). In fact this idea may usefully help explain a great deal of the pupils' behaviour presented in this Section, offering an answer to 'how' the behaviour itself actually takes care of the problem. However, only Roy as quoted above raised this point specifically.

There may however, be much simpler and obvious motives that should not be overlooked in a search for an understanding of the more complex side of disruptive behaviour. For example the use of a school's discipline procedures to achieve a goal was raised by Danny (p83), who was honest and rational about his behaviour, describing how by not doing detentions he achieved his goal of being thrown out of school.

Similarly Dave's motive for the start of his bad behaviour in the last year of Middle School, was his fear of moving into a new school:

"I didn't want to go up. When I first heard about it from my mates a little older than me, I didn't wanna go there."

These boys' clear and direct motives for certain behaviours demonstrate how behaviour can be used to achieve very specific goals. For Dave, disruptive behaviour was perceived as a way to prevent a move to another school and for Danny, it appeared to be a way to achieve exclusion from a school situation that he perceived as

offering little chance of success or reward, and in fact was often humiliating and frustrating.

Danny's attempt to manipulate the system and be officially removed from the school may represent the desire of a small number of other pupils, which was an opportunity to 'start again' and be moved to a different school. Whether suffering pressure from peers of a social nature, such as bullying, or whether experiencing conflict with their schools' and teachers' expectations, the need to escape and regain a new identity in another place was perceived by some pupils as their only answer. (Section 5.1(iv)). This desire to make a new start appeared to result from the fact that some of the pupils perceived themselves to have been labelled within the institution. Expectations of them and their behaviour, had become fixed in certain ways, and were driving or controlling their behaviour and interfering with change. These ideas are well documented as labelling theories and recent research has continued to reveal them as important when considering the behaviour of EBD pupils in schools. The importance of these theories, from the perspective of the pupils interviewed in this present study, is discussed in the following Section.

Conclusion

This Section has attempted to present the pupils' perceptions of their behaviours that have been categorised broadly as 'fight'. They included aggressive and disruptive behaviours and could be associated with a variety of motives. As in the previous Section on 'flight', factors that the pupils associated with their behaviours varied depending on the individual. Although their behaviours were somewhat similar and categorisable and their choices clearly limited, the interaction of factors influencing their behaviours were closely linked to the pupil's own unique individual needs.

In contrast to the previous Section in which withdrawal had been selected by the pupils, in this Section pupils described their choices to adopt behaviours within the school system to achieve their goals. These goals do however remain ones of survival and self-preservation as are revealed by their statements. Understanding the motives behind such behaviours may prove essential if schools' and teachers' responses to such students are to be both appropriate and effective with EBD pupils.

6.2 Labelling and Evolution of Behaviour

As an introduction to this Section it is of value to consider some significant pupil statements. Andy gave an interesting and valuable perspective on how he had begun to feel within the mainstream school prior to attending The Oakwood Centre:

“I knew I'd bodge it all up ... I thought that the slightest thing I did wrong I'd have to go up to the head of year's office and be chucked out straight way.”

He perceived his only escape to be a new chance:

“I'd wanted to leave and go to a different school.”

Harris (1994) discovered that students, particularly in bottom sets, had ‘...internalised negative messages from peers and teachers,’ (p65), and in the present research Dave gave a good example of this:

“They used to tell me I was thick so I thought I was thick.”

He proudly explained how his move to a special school has since proved this ‘label’ to be wrong:

“My old school told me I was behind, I was stupid and things like that. I came here and I'm on G4 [Maths]. My cousin who's older, she's on G4.”

Alan felt that his reputation within the school had resulted in the teachers turning to him whenever bad behaviour or a problem occurred:

“As soon as something went wrong he’d come to me first.”

Scherer et al (1990) also comment on this from their own research and state ‘...pupils considered to be deviant will be regarded with suspicion and their behaviour closely monitored.’ (p110). Larry added to this argument:

“We wouldn’t be doing anything and they’d pick on us anyway ... we’d think we’ll do our work today and we’d say ‘where’s our work?’, and they’d say ‘you won’t do any anyway’.”

It would seem that the reputation that Larry and his friends had developed resulted in teachers’ expectations being very low and perhaps a cynical attitude had also developed in teachers, which could interfere with serious attempts by pupils to lose or change their disruptive behaviour.

It is possible that one result of a pupil being labelled as deviant, is that they may decide to live up to their reputation. This was supported by Larry who explained his reaction to what the teachers at his school had said to him:

“They’d say things like, ‘you’re not worth the time’ ... that’s when I started to get suspended etc, or I’d bunk off just to avoid the hassle.”

Larry supports Scherer et al (1990) who suggest that ‘labelling may produce a self fulfilling prophecy.’ (p11). They continue by saying; ‘A child who is aware that the ‘deviant’ label has been applied may behave especially well in order to have the label removed, or may accept the label and behave accordingly.’ (p11)

Karen considered the discipline procedures in schools as creating reputations for disruptive pupils, which then escalated their behaviour:

“It gives people a reputation, and they’re gonna do it even more, or maybe they think, well if that’s the way they think I’m gonna act, I will.”

As previously explained in Section 5.1(iv), some pupils perceived the only way forward to be a new start, perhaps a new school, allowing them to leave a certain reputation with peers or with the school behind them. In Cooper's (1989) work on EBD pupils and residential schooling the word 'signification' is used to describe the way an individual's identity becomes fixed in the eyes of others. He suggests that one of the roles of the EBD residential school is to offer an opportunity for 're-signification', that is changing the old, often negative identity in the case of EBD pupils, to a new positive one. In Cooper's study, and in the case of some of the pupils interviewed in this present study, the special school setting was perceived by the pupils as offering a welcome opportunity for re-signification. Their reputation, as fixed in the eyes and minds of teachers and peers as disruptive, aggressive, bully, victim etc., would be left behind when they moved to a new school because it was the pupils' perception that nobody would know them in that new environment. (See p149). Their behaviour would not then be dictated or influenced by expectation. Bobby appeared to illustrate this point when he described how he felt people responded to him in the mainstream setting:

“At my old school, once people get to know you, the way you really are, they don't wanna know you really.”

Alan described one of the differences in the special setting compared to mainstream as being in the way teachers treated the pupils:

“Everyone being treated equal. The teacher not having favourites.”

Karen also tried to convey her positive feelings about the special school and what made it different, but interestingly she perceived that the familiarity with her problems and difficulties in that setting was in fact important not a hindrance to her progress. This may be in contrast to other pupils who wanted to lose reputations:

“Everyone knows you, everyone knows that this is your problem ... they know that you’ve got a problem, they’re not gonna hassle you by giving you more. I think it’s just a bit more thoughtful.”

Interestingly, there are those pupils who did not accept the concept of re-signification as being achievable by moving from one mainstream school to another. Alan did not find any support following his move:

“I went there with a reputation.”

He then continued with his experiences of the new school:

“Everybody knew me, like all the prefects ... I’ll be top of the list. When I went there I was top of the list to get expelled. ... I didn’t like it but I was stuck with it.”

These comments support the findings of Gersch & Nolan (1994) who published the results of interviews with a small number of excluded pupils. ‘They sometimes felt that the teacher took an immediate dislike to them and then interpreted everything they did negatively. This happened particularly when the pupil was going into his/her second or third school and thus arrived with an “excluded” label.’ (p39).

These problems refer to mainstream transfer, yet even transfer to a special school must be carefully questioned with regards to truly enabling the pupil to lose his or her previously established label. In fact the actual placement itself clearly establishes the label of EBD and makes it official. Just as the formal structure of the mainstream school plays its part in labelling in the form of streaming and grouping, so a special school placement could be considered as being at the extreme end of a spectrum of labelling measures providing negative identities for certain pupils. It may also be significant that if the placement is made with the involvement of ‘experts’, often including medical personnel, then the impact of the label on the pupil may be even more powerful.

A number of pupils commented on the stigma attached to being placed in a special school. Julie stated:

“You go to a special school, you must be thick.”

Gerry had been moved into a special school when he was at Junior School. At that stage he had severe learning difficulties but had soon developed behaviour problems too. His comments during the interview suggested that he had been confused and upset by the decision to move him into special education. He had until that time been with his twin brother in school and described how he felt losing the support that his brother gave him, both socially and academically. (See p184). He also described the stigma and embarrassment he felt at attending a special school:

“I used to hate that school so much ... We used to get off the bus right outside R. School, and everyone used to know me there and it was so embarrassing.”

For Gerry the placement created a stigma and a feeling of isolation that did not appear to alleviate any previously established feelings of inadequacy, or of being different.

He stated:

“I do feel left out ... They seem to get all the fun, because it’s a bigger school, there’s more of them.”

The social disadvantage of the special setting was also recognised by Sarah and Roy. Sarah travelled daily to The Oakwood Centre from her home and felt distanced from her local community:

“There’s no friends nearby to come around.”

Roy felt that the small size of The Oakwood Centre limited his social opportunities with friends:

“I miss out on friends.”

Susan also described how she perceived her placement at The Oakwood Centre to have affected the attitudes and behaviour of others towards her:

“Cause it’s a special school and it’s different. They think there’s something wrong with you, then they start feeling wary and then the teasing starts.”

As Cooper (1989) suggests, it seems that a special school placement can alleviate many of the difficulties that these pupils experienced in a mainstream setting. However, The Oakwood Centre and Southdown School were not residential schools and therefore perhaps lack the same opportunities for ‘respite’ and ‘re-signification’ that Cooper’s and other ethnographic studies describe. Nevertheless, these opportunities should continue to be researched through detailed observation and should attempt to reveal the processes, often of a subtle nature, which contribute to making the special school ‘special’ for these pupils, and assist in making a successful placement (Cooper 1993b).

In contrast, the special school placement may also have the potential to contribute significantly to the labelling process, contributing to the pupils’ already negative perception of him or herself. There certainly are those who maintain that special school provision has more to do with the goals of educators, in removing disruptive elements and gaining ‘homogeneity’ of pupil groups, rather than actually meeting the needs of children. (Conner, 1994 p8). The statements made by the pupils in the present study could support both arguments. They certainly do offer some support to those theorists who believe that labelling can play a part in maintaining certain pupil behaviour. Scherer et al (1990) describe two concepts that they believe are represented by labelling theory. One is ‘mirroring’ in which ‘people tend to accept as part of their self-image a view of them which is presented by powerful others.’ (p12). Alan’s comment appears to offer some support to this theory:

“The only thing I was good at was running ... Then they said I wasn’t any good at that so I stopped that.”

The second concept is 'cognitive consistency', whereby a person interprets 'future behaviour ... in line with an original view' (p11) of that person. Clearly teachers may be those powerful others, and may interpret pupil behaviour based on their previous knowledge or perception of a pupil. Johns (1996) similarly found that the excluded pupils that she interviewed were aware of reputations they carried. George described his experiences after moving to a new school, which seem to reinforce this second concept:

“Mr. S. the Deputy Head, if there were any fights or whatever at school, he always used to blame me and my friends ... It's like the area we come from is really rough. My mate, my friends, none of us like had a good report from before.”

Like George, Alan was also aware of the reputation he had. Interestingly he linked his social life out of school to the way he was treated in school. Coming from a rough area of council housing, he stated:

“I've got a name around the streets.”

The significance of these comments is reflected in the fact that a whole theory of behaviour has developed which explains deviance in terms of labelling. Labelling theorists, often referred to more generally as interactionists, have questioned the extent to which deviance can be defined by the act alone, without consideration of context. Fontana (1985) brings such theory into the classroom by stating that '...problem behaviour is only problem behaviour because it appears so to the teacher.' (p359). He continues by saying; 'And since teachers are all individuals, what may appear to be a problem to one teacher may not appear so to another.' (p359). Thus, a deviant act is only deviant in a specific context, where the rules and expectations of that context, possibly even of a whole society, define it as such. As Fontana (1985) suggests; '...problem behaviour...is in a sense in the eye of the beholder.' (p360).

As a theory, labelling was originally developed in the 1960's by Kitsuse (1962) and Becker (1963) and has been adapted and developed since, putting across the importance of contextual consideration for behaviour and the fact that its interpretation is largely subjective. The theory has also been used extensively to explain the evolutionary nature of EBD behaviour. In fact Scherer et al (1990) propose that labelling theories can account for the development of certain behaviour patterns more readily than they can account for their origins.

Hargreaves et al (1975) describe one illustration of the concept of labelling theory, that is Lemert's (1967) theory of 'secondary deviance'. This theory considers that the social reaction to a deviant act creates a new problem for the person committing the act, which he or she attempts to resolve by further, or secondary, deviant acts.

Importantly, motives change. The secondary act does not have the same motives as the first act, it is more an attempt to find a solution to the problem created by the social reaction to the first act. This social reaction may be punishment, stigma, isolation, creating feelings of embarrassment, anger or fear. Such feelings demand a behavioural response from most people to restore some balance or self-respect. In the case of EBD pupils such responses are often limited and inappropriate. As Charlton & David (1993) state, this creates '...a circular chain of increasingly negative interaction' (p115) which neither teacher or pupils can readily escape. The circular nature of these interactional patterns is also described by Cooper (1989) as 'a circle of negativity.' (p47). He suggests that the chains of causation for behaviour are complex and 'create difficulties for those who attempt to understand and cope with the outcomes of the chain.' (p47). As Charlton & David (1993) say, it is difficult to know where to try to punctuate the circle.

The circular nature of these behaviours and the frustration resulting from them, were recognised and described by Larry who stated:

"It's a vicious circle really."

A pupil such as Larry appeared to be trapped within a negative spiral of evolving behaviour, from which he had neither the skills, knowledge, or opportunity to escape. He described how he was given detentions for his behaviour in school. He then missed school to avoid them, was given further detentions until the number of detentions he had to do increased so much that he stopped going to school. Of course the beginning of, or the trigger to, the chain of behaviours may have been long lost amidst the escalating secondary behaviours. Yet it would seem that to identify this trigger early on could prevent problems evolving, and is therefore a very important issue.

As we have seen by analysing pupils' reasons for behaviour, there are many complex and deep-rooted motivational forces behind certain actions. It is short sighted to ignore these motives given by pupils in favour of simply dealing with the impact on social harmony that these behaviours may have. However, Chapter 5 which outlined factors, shows how difficult it is for the pupils themselves, or outside observers, to identify just one factor which had precipitated or triggered the pupils' problem behaviours. Charlton & David (1993) agree '...it is difficult- if not impossible- to isolate a *single* factor which was the sole cause of *all* the problem behaviours. While it may be possible to point to one particular factor which triggered the problem initially, others were certainly contributory.' (p22).

However, George did have a clear perception of the triggering factor for his problems, and gave a valuable case study illustration of how one triggering factor may initiate a chain reaction of 'deviant' behaviours, each attempting to alleviate problems created by the school or social response to the previous action. The trigger was his surname as previously described, (p142), which had a negative social connotation, leaving him vulnerable to ridicule:

“Half the kids at school didn't like me much ... ”

He had not perceived problems associated with his name at a younger age:

“I don’t think anyone really bothered at Middle School. They just thought a name’s a name sort of thing.”

“When younger, too young to know what the word meant...”

This point interestingly illustrates the way in which certain factors that may trigger difficulties for a child in school, particularly of a social nature, may only begin to take effect when the social values and expectations of the peer group have established themselves, possibly a point demanding further research. The norms established by our society, in terms of appearance, mannerisms, clothes etc, as described in Section 5.1(iv), may become more powerful as pupils get older. Wayne tried to explain this idea in relation to his experiences of bullying, which he felt had escalated as he got older:

“It was like Middle School when it started to hit, cause people like didn’t understand, you know when you’re young you don’t really do bullying, people don’t know what it is. But when you start to hit Middle School, you start getting attitudes, that’s when it starts.”

He explained:

“I was getting older, and as I got older, I understood what they were saying. Before I didn’t know what the hell they were talking about ... they didn’t know what the hell they were talking about, but then they got things that they knew would hurt me, about my parents, definitely about my parents.”

Interestingly these perceptions of Wayne’s do not support the work of Smith & Levan (1995) whose research with younger children on bullying, supported by other major studies in bullying, suggest that being bullied appears to be happening more frequently to pupils of a younger age. They suggest that when younger children are asked about being bullied they may use a broader definition than older children. This does not agree with the comments made by Wayne and George, who suggested that at that age there is a lower awareness of the social norms and deviancy that so often trigger bullying incidents.

George's case story continues with his transfer to a secondary school. Clearly someone had become aware of the problems he would encounter or had been encountering owing to his last name:

“Got my name changed just before I went there.”

However, it appears that a reputation had already been established and there were other pupils from the Middle School also transferring to the new school:

“Cause I knew some other children ... and they told everyone in my class about what my name was and things like that, and it just started from there.”

George was teased about his name and his subsequent behaviour reflected his attempts to deal with this problem. His descriptions of attempts to become part of a popular peer group, and to join the bullies rather than be victimised, have been documented in previous Sections, particularly 5.1(iv).

George described numerous attempts to belong, be liked, and to protect himself from what Cooper (1989) calls ‘the ultimate social failure of isolation.’ (p53). However, in the eyes of teachers, George was simply and clearly a disruptive and difficult pupil. His attempts in school to alleviate his social difficulties were generally unacceptable to the school, resulting in the evolution of punishment and detention. All his attempts to avoid bullying and isolation appeared to escalate conflict with the school itself, and he recalled the peer problems also increasing:

“It just got worse and worse. Got to the stage where I didn't wanna go to school.”

“I used to ignore them half the time, then it used to get under my skin and really annoy me. Then I never used to go to school. They'd take the Mickey out of what my name used to be.”

George's case illustrates well the evolution of an EBD pupil's school career and clearly shows how a triggering factor can result in a chain of well motivated, rational

behaviours, which themselves then become the problem. Other pupils' behaviour could equally well be analysed and a similar pattern of evolution may be revealed. Interestingly, triggering factors that were child centred were not always apparent to the pupils themselves. Wayne was unable to locate a personal reason for severe bullying:

“I don't know why they started bullying me, they just did.”

It appeared to be easier for those pupils of low ability or with learning difficulties to describe their triggers for secondary deviant behaviours. Michael explained:

“I threw chairs, the work was too hard for me, and people winding me up and taking the Mickey ... I can't write properly, I couldn't spell properly.”

The initial trigger or 'deviancy' could be of many forms, either social or academic. As Cooper (1989) suggests, even 'an assertion of individuality' (p51) may be considered as deviance. Yet the pupil's initial deviation from the norm becomes insignificant in relation to the school's response to the behaviour that pupil adopts in dealing with his or her initial problem. In other words it is this secondary deviance that becomes the issue for schools in many EBD cases.

Conclusion

This Section has endeavoured to present significant pupil comments pertaining to the importance of labelling and the responses of schools to certain behaviours in the evolution of their difficulties. Labelling is a broad concept referring not only to teachers' own specific attitudes and responses to pupils but also the statementing procedure and the placement of pupils in special schools. Only by increasing the awareness of schools to the impact of labelling, and training teachers to be more aware of the way in which their responses to problem behaviour can in fact reinforce such behaviours or create secondary problems (Fontana, 1985), can effective help be

provided to help EBD pupils in the mainstream setting. The willingness and desire of the schools and teachers to understand their pupils, particularly those displaying anti-social behaviours, is crucial to their success with such pupils. The following Section uses pupils' perceptions to describe their need for such support and understanding.

6.3 Support and Understanding

From the work so far presented in Chapter 6 it has become apparent that professionals must be willing to seek out, accept and understand the motives behind pupil behaviour. Unless they are prepared to do so, there is a danger that they will continue to deal with the chain of behaviours that often exist for EBD pupils, at the wrong point and in the wrong way, with little empathy for the reality of the individual. Miller (1994) openly states from her research with teachers and bright but disruptive pupils (BBD), '...that none of the teachers seems to understand the motives and attitudes of BBD pupils.' (p245). Bird et al (1981) found similar discrepancies between teachers' and disruptive pupils' perceptions of certain behaviours, and in particular the motives behind them. (See Section 1.4). It is very difficult to accept that teachers and other professionals can successfully work with EBD pupils when they do not understand the behaviour involved from the perspective of the pupils themselves. There appears to be much that can be done to prevent certain behaviours occurring or evolving and escalating in the ways described in the previous Section. However, for this to happen, professionals in education must be prepared to explore more enthusiastically the motives for behaviour, and in particular the role of secondary deviant behaviours resulting from conflict with the school itself. Such a conflict can dangerously overshadow the underlying difficulties that the pupil is experiencing.

The results of this study produced strong evidence from a number of pupils that they themselves would certainly be willing participants in any attempts to communicate

about their behaviours, feelings and difficulties. Many described attempts they had made to seek support and talk to someone about their problems prior to, or during the evolution of their behaviours that resulted in an EBD placement. The data revealed that these pupils had in many cases not stepped directly from a problem into a deviant action. Legitimate attempts to survive and to 'solve' the problems in an acceptable way were described as preceding more deviant withdrawal, aggressive or disruptive actions.

As was described in Section 5.1(ii), a small number of pupils described their attempts to seek support from teachers or other school staff in informal ways. Whether this informal support is chosen in preference to more formal counselling support structures within the school is difficult to assess. The pupils rarely talked of any provision of formal support in the mainstream school so it is quite possible that none existed, forcing them to seek a more informal relationship. Susan found the school nurse a helpful support:

“The school nurse, she would always see me and talk to me.”

Johnny found his only ally in the form of the school secretary:

“There was a school secretary. I used to be really good friends with her and when I used to get into trouble, sent out of class, get sent to the secretary's office, I used to help her undo the boxes and that.”

Wayne managed to find a relationship with one of the teachers, whom he felt comfortable talking to:

“I went to Mrs. E., who was one person I could always talk to.”

Pupils seeking support expressed quite simple needs. Someone to talk to, or someone who had the time or took the time to listen. Chris was a slow learner and he described

his frustrating mainstream experiences, which finally resulted in him becoming a school refuser:

“... if you get too much pressure on you, you think I can’t do this. I’ve told the teacher loads of times. Why does he not listen to me?”

Julie described her frustration at trying to talk to teachers about her academic problems in class, yet felt that it made no difference to her situation:

“People didn’t listen to me. They didn’t listen to what I was saying. When I was saying it was too hard they were just ignoring me. That’s what it felt like anyway.”

She stressed the importance to her of finding someone who would listen:

“All of the teachers, none of them really listened.”

Julie was also frustrated by promises of support that never materialised:

“The headmaster was supposed to be sending me to another school for a few days a week to help, but that never went through.”

“They said they’d give me less homework but it seemed to be the same.”

She continued by explaining how her problem began to escalate, with her getting into trouble for not completing work and also feeling stupid:

“... they didn’t explain nothing to ya. Then you had to take it in the next couple of days. If it wasn’t done then you used to get into trouble.”

“I felt stupid cause I couldn’t do the work.”

Julie, finally became a school refuser:

“I fell behind on all my work, so I stopped going to school.”

Previous Sections have revealed how pupils perceived the size of schools and classes and the number of teachers and their willingness or perhaps ability to take on a caring role, as factors all of which limited the availability of the support they perceived themselves to need. Stevenson & Ellsworth (1991) found that school drop outs, particularly from working class families, perceived there to be a clear lack of support or assistance ‘(...either informally from teachers and administrators, or more formally from programmes and services) for dealing with personal or academic problems.’ (p284). Interestingly their results reflect the way pupils with more middle class backgrounds who fail at school are reluctant to blame the system for their failure, resorting to self blame. Stevenson & Ellsworth propose that these differences result from the differing value systems of working class people who are less willing to accept social value and norms than middle class people, and are thus more willing to criticise systems such as education.

Some of the pupils in the present study were undoubtedly unhappy with the level of support they had received. When suffering peer problems, Susan stated:

“I couldn’t go and tell the teachers, ‘cause they don’t do anything.”

Sarah criticised the teachers’ lack of willingness to adopt more informal relationships with pupils from which the pupils could gain support and understanding:

“Most teachers tend to alienate you, treat you as if you’re there to learn and not as anything else. Teachers are not human, they may be out of school but not in school.”

Finally Wayne criticised teachers’ time management:

“Always something else to do.... you can never get hold of them.”

Some of the pupils in the study perceived peer support as having been important in certain situations, for maintaining them in the mainstream setting. Where adult

support had failed or was perceived as unavailable pupils utilised their peers instead. One particular example of peer support was described in Section 5.1(iii), in which the curriculum as a factor contributing to pupils' difficulties was discussed, and pupil strategies for dealing with such problems were described. For pupils unable to cope with the academic pressures of the school system their peers were often perceived as a valuable resource. Using peers for support may have either solved the problem of inadequate contact time with the teacher, or may have disguised weaknesses and prevented humiliation or vulnerability. For pupils such as Julie and Sandra their peer support was an essential mode of survival, within a system that is driven by competition and success, and in which failure or the admittance of weakness is difficult and possibly risks social judgement from peers. Sandra explained:

“It depends who’s actually in the classroom. There’s a girl the same age as me, having the same difficulties as me, so we used to try and help each other. If we were having any difficulties we’d tell the teacher. But she never used to be in my class all the time, I used to have all the brainy ones... I didn’t wanna say nothing.”

Julie explained how her problems in school had not been evident in her early schooling, when she always had friends to support her:

“Cause I used to have help then. Always someone with me.”

She described the support she received:

“It’s nice when your friends explain it to ya.”

“If I couldn’t do it they used to help me, or I’d sit and copy the work.”

It seems that for pupils like Julie and Sandra, academic learning and progress may have been less important than simply surviving. The consequences of not completing work or of revealing problems were perceived as more of a concern than the possibility of failure to succeed academically.

However, the nature of the secondary school teaching techniques and testing procedures seemed to ultimately remove the opportunity for peer support structures that may have previously nurtured pupils such as Sandra and Julie through earlier schooling. Sandra explained how things changed for her a few months after going to secondary school:

“Cause if you’re stuck and you chat to your friends they can help you. But sometimes you can’t do that, you’re not allowed to chat to your friends, if they can help you. Or if you’re working in two’s, you’re not allowed to talk. I don’t like that.”

For both girls, missing school was perceived as preferable to facing humiliation or punishment for not doing the work. Both stopped attending.

Conclusion

Clearly it is important for teachers to gain a thorough and deep understanding of their pupils’ needs and abilities. Pupils should not have to hide their difficulties or feel the need to do so. They should not need to resort to peer support to compensate for lack of teacher support, only to complement it.

What is clear from the pupil interviews is that in certain cases EBD pupils *do* seek support. They ask to be listened to, and they ask for time to be spent understanding their needs and problems. Only when such support is denied do certain behaviours evolve, often as misguided attempts to retain self-esteem, deal with fear or humiliation, or avoid failure and punishment. Legitimate options for behaviour are very limited when guidance and support are lacking and it is possible that the EBD pupil lacks the skills of the succeeding mainstream pupil to develop such alternative behaviours without adequate support. Subsequently, deviant behaviours, such as to withdraw, fight, or disrupt are the chosen ways to survive.

6.4 Conclusion to Chapter 6

This Chapter has endeavoured to build on the results presented in Chapter 5 which focused on factors influencing pupils' behaviour, and has presented an analysis of the pupils' own perspectives of their behaviour. It has focused on the pupils' descriptions of their own behaviour and their ability to describe and analyse this behaviour in terms of motives and goals.

A particularly important outcome of the results presented in this Chapter is the clear evidence that EBD pupils are in most cases able and willing to describe and discuss their behaviour. This supports the previous work of researchers seeking pupil perceptions in mainstream schools and also adds much needed support to research which is less in evidence, involving the perceptions of EBD pupils. This project has revealed that both the knowledge gained from the pupils concerning their behaviour and also the actual process of talking with pupils, hold significant potential for schools and professionals trying to meet the needs of these pupils. (See Section 7.2).

Broad categorisation of the pupils' behaviour in terms of flight or fight was used in this Chapter, not only to enable clear presentation of the results, but also to highlight the importance of survival for these pupils. As previously described, fight or flight are two behaviours presented in many basic psychology books to describe the actions of living creatures under certain stressful conditions. (p218). For these EBD pupils, their behaviours appeared to loosely fit into one or other of these categories. Interestingly, it was difficult to find any consistent patterns or consistent links between specific behaviours and specific factors or situations. For example, not getting enough help or support in the classroom was perceived by a number of pupils as being a problem, but their response to it varied. Individual pupils clearly shared similar behaviours that fell under the fight or flight headings, but they did not necessarily respond to factors or combinations of factors in the same way. It appeared that there were a limited number

of behavioural options open to these pupils, but as many different situations and combinations of pressures as there were individuals. Thus, pupils described similar behaviours but their motives or goals varied depending on their own highly individual needs.

The extent to which individual pupils were able to make rational and logical statements about their behaviour was not consistent and they showed widely varying ability to analyse their own behaviour and rationalise it in terms of what they were gaining from it, or their motives. It is important to discuss the variance in this ability and it would be misleading to present this data without any reference to those pupils who were clearly confused by their own feelings and behaviour, and who were unable to analyse behaviour beyond basic reporting of their actions. Some were able only to describe their behaviour or the behaviour of others using simple language based on observation associated with their immediate environment. They perceived just simple relationships between their actions and specific events that had occurred around them. Others were able to perceive and describe wider systemic interactions and relationships as being important factors influencing their behaviour, and appeared more aware of their own underlying stresses. Of course language may have been a limiting factor as there are certainly words and expressions used in the professional world that pupils themselves would be unable to verbalise. This is where the role of the researcher becomes one of interpreter and translator, in attempting to put pupils' perspectives into a written document that can be of value to professionals, yet without losing or making too many assumptions about the pupils' own individual reality.

However, it may also be possible that not all behaviour *is* logical and rational, and as Furlong (1991) suggests; 'We need to see human behaviour as motivated by both consciousness and unconsciousness.' (p304). Such a view of behaviour may not encourage those working directly with the pupils to seek their perceptions, yet few pupils in the present study perceived their own behaviour to be without some reason or

motive. For many that motive was survival under some form of stressful situation and was either described directly or was more subtly hidden in their accounts of behaviour and experiences. Their behaviours and motives may alternatively be described as a need to find an equilibrium. This word is useful in describing a system in balance or harmony and the pupils in this study appeared to be seeking ways to maintain or achieve an emotional equilibrium through their behaviour. It is proposed from the results of this Section that the behaviour of EBD pupils may be attempts to find safety and to establish some form of equilibrium in environments that threaten and intimidate them.

Of course finding this equilibrium may be something that all human beings strive for in life, and interestingly research shows that the perceptions of the pressures experienced by mainstream pupils and their perceived needs regarding such things as teachers, the curriculum and social interaction with peers, do not differ widely from those of the EBD pupil. They want the same things and experience similar difficulties. However, where the EBD pupil does seem to differ from the successful mainstream pupil, is in their apparent lack of coping skills or strategies, and their subsequently limited and often inappropriate behavioural choices. Arllen et al (1994), attempt to explore these important reasons why the EBD pupil may respond differently to stressful situations in the school setting, and they consider that; 'These children lack the ability to regulate their behaviour, especially in stressful situations.' (p19). They believe that; 'Aggression stems from efforts to escape from or avoid adverse stimulation or to gain positive consequences.' (p19). From these statements it is clear that the needs of the EBD pupil are possibly no different to those of other people who experience stress. What is significant for the EBD pupil is their inability to choose or find acceptable behavioural options, and possibly the somewhat more complex combination of stresses that they experience. Furlong (1991) believes that certain pupils are already 'emotionally vulnerable' and '...even the most mundane demands of school may be too much and may become the focus of conflict and rejection.' (p305).

The behavioural choices made by the EBD pupils are significant in that they can lead to responses from teachers that reinforce or fuel negative behaviours and attitudes, setting up cycles of disturbing behavior. These EBD pupils also appear to differ from successful mainstream pupils in that they suffer a more complex combination of stressful factors which impact with possible predisposing factors associated with their personalities or temperament, referred to as their internal psychology by Charlton & David (1989). Thus, the predisposing factors, the lack of adequate coping skills, combined with the reinforcement from responses to their behaviour, can result in escalating difficulties for these pupils in the school environment. Their own survival behaviours therefore become the problem, and the initial stressors may be overlooked. Similar theories have been presented by Charlton & David (1989) who describe in some detail their belief that there are predisposing causes for EBD behaviour which are child based, then there are precipitating events happening in the environment which may trigger certain behaviours, and thirdly there are reinforcing factors, created by the social responses to the child's behaviour.

With particular reference to the role played by reinforcing factors, it is hoped that results from research of this nature will encourage teachers and other professionals to consider the pupils' behaviour in more depth, and to be willing to explore the motives behind it, thus reducing the likelihood of reinforcement. The process of 'reframing' the pupils' behaviour, and being able to analyse the desired outcome of the behaviour more accurately, is described by Cooper et al (1994), who express the importance of teachers developing a new perception of negative behaviours. By doing so the teacher may lose or change his or her somewhat predictable desire to set about changing this behaviour, or as Cooper et al propose, they may find that this change in perspective brings about an important change in the way they project themselves towards the pupil. This change may then indirectly affect the child's own inner desire to change. In this way the actual act of creating an alternative meaning for the behaviour in itself gives

the behaviour a different focus, possibly removing the assumption that it is merely disruptive.

This present research offers strong support to those who are encouraging an increased recognition of the importance of reframing, as it illustrates how readily EBD pupils will describe and discuss the reasons behind their behaviour. If it is accepted that pupils are acting with a goal in mind, then seeking clues as to exactly what this goal is and what the pupils are gaining from the behaviour, becomes an important responsibility for the professionals working with them. This process has been termed 'sleuthing' by Milner & Lindquist, who are cited in Cooper et al (1994) and Smith & Cooper (1996). A willingness and desire to seek pupils' own perspectives on their behaviour, should encourage professionals to respond more sensitively to difficult behaviour, and to create more acceptable alternatives for these pupils which help them to achieve the same goal. These alternative behaviours are referred to by Neal & Cessna (1993) as 'replacement behaviors' (p36) and are defined by them as '...behaviors that achieve the same intent as that achieved by the problem behavior.' (p36). Neal & Cessna consider that; 'When students act, even demonstrating behaviours that we view as disordered, they act for a purpose.' (p33). They refer to this purpose as 'behavioral intent', and describe how it can be inferred from analysis of overt behaviours. However it is clear from this present research that pupils' own perceptions can substantially enhance our understanding of this intent, and we do not need to rely only on observational analysis.

It remains the conclusion of this present research that the intention of many of the EBD pupils in this study, in terms of their behaviour, was to find an emotional equilibrium and that they were primarily seeking some form of safety and survival. Furlong (1991) believes that schooling 'is a highly demanding experience which inevitably gives rise to many emotional injuries.' (p305). What the EBD pupil appears to do is to minimise these injuries through behaviours that are unacceptable to the

school system, often as a result of a lack of acceptable options. Clearly these pupils need the opportunity to achieve their equilibrium, their safety, in appropriate ways, and they need help to do this. This is the challenge to be faced by schools and professionals and it is essential that they are prepared to respect the reality of the pupils themselves, and acknowledge that it is the individual's unique perception of a situation that generates behavioural choices. It is a conclusion of this present research project that we must seek to better understand the pupils' realities, without considering them impaired or invalid in some way.

PART FOUR

OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS

This research project was motivated by the fact that there appeared to be little evidence of previous studies of EBD pupils which had attempted to explore their own perspectives of the multi-factorial influences on their behaviour and lives. Certainly a number of studies have been published for both mainstream and special needs pupils that have focused on pupils' perspectives of schooling. However, the EBD pupil specifically has received inadequate focus in research of this nature and certainly a very broad enquiry allowing pupils to give free responses to questioning regarding the range of factors that may have influenced them and their behaviour, appeared not to have been published.

The results of this project have implications for both the prevention of disturbing behaviours in schools, and also for the nature of the support offered to pupils who display EBD behaviours. Part Four of this report presents in Chapter 7 information and insights from the results that may be interpreted and utilised at a theoretical, at a practical and at a methodological level.

At a theoretical level it offers support to certain theories of behaviour and reveals the complexity of the factors associated with the behaviours of EBD pupils and this is presented in Section 7.1. At a practical level it provides valuable insight into the ways in which schools, teachers and other professionals can work more effectively either together or as individuals with these pupils to support their needs. It does this by highlighting certain aspects of schooling that appear to contribute to the difficulties experienced by EBD pupils in the mainstream setting, and also by describing pupils' behaviour and motives for such behaviour. Section 7.2 offers a discussion of these practical insights and implications.

In addition, this project is able to offer some increased understanding of the problems and difficulties associated with the practical aspects of obtaining pupil perspectives. In recent years there has been a major appeal for more involvement of the pupils themselves in research and also directly in educational practice and decision making,

yet little has been published regarding the true practicalities behind such involvement. As described in Section 1.4 there has been an encouraging increase in the number of publications describing the pupils' perceptions, yet the impact of these results appears to have been of limited and somewhat unconvincing practical value. Section 7.3 reveals some of the difficulties that may need to be considered when attempting to gain accurate, in depth, pupil perspectives, particularly from EBD pupils, offering a much needed assessment of the practical implications of a research methodology that may be more complex than has yet been acknowledged.

Chapter 7

Insights and Implications

7.1 Theoretical Insights and Implications

The results of this project appear to validate the ideas and theories behind an interactionist approach to behaviour. In particular they verify the applicability of systemic theories and labelling theories to the behaviour of pupils displaying emotional and behavioural difficulties. Given the opportunity to talk about their behaviour, the pupils in this study revealed that there were many factors and processes within the systems interfacing their lives that had been highly influential with regards to their behaviours. The pupils' statements recorded in Part Three of this report reveal comprehensive evidence that the school system, and the broader social systems involving their families, peer groups and wider economic and cultural environments, were all perceived to have contributed in a variety of ways to their difficulties. It was possible from close analysis of the data to unveil the perceived significance to these EBD pupils of a number of specific factors and processes within these systems that they believed had made a particular impact on them.

Of particular significance to many of the pupils were schooling factors. For example, Sarah (p71) considered the size of the mainstream school itself as an important factor in her difficulties, which contributed to her refusal to attend school, depression, suicidal thoughts and ultimate placement in a psychiatric facility. In the case of Robert (p70) it was the nature of the school buildings that he considered threatening and he too became a school refuser, receiving extensive psychiatric support. Others, including Ken (p85), commented more on the impact of large class sizes on their ability to cope in the mainstream setting. Such size related factors were generally of

significance for these pupils as a result of their implications in terms of both social and academic difficulties.

Ken was one of a number of pupils for whom a perception of inadequate support for academic needs in the classroom, from teachers dealing with large classes, appeared to manifest itself in a cycle of disruptive behaviours, discipline procedures and ultimately exclusion. Other pupils perceived school and class size as having more impact on their social survival rather than academic needs. An example of such a case was clearly presented by Wayne (p73). He perceived himself to be vulnerable due to a lack of understanding and support from his teachers during extensive periods of bullying, and he associated this with the large numbers of pupils being present in the mainstream school. He considered this to have resulted in poor school attendance, aggressive, defensive attitudes to peers and placement in a psychiatric facility.

Certain pupils were perceptive in their ability to equate ineffective or threatening discipline procedures within schools, with school or class sizes, providing an example of the far reaching effects of this issue. Both Colin and Gerry (p80/81) interestingly commented on the appropriateness and effectiveness of disciplinary procedures that had been adopted in smaller special schools, as opposed to the often ineffective and self-defeating procedures used within mainstream schools.

Other data concerning school factors that had affected pupil behaviour included many consistent and generalisable cross-case comments regarding teachers and teaching. Mike, Sandra and Roy were just three of many pupils who made comments regarding their perceptions of good teachers as being consistent and fair (p94/95). Others, including Simon (p93), commented on the need for teachers to have a sense of humour, and Guy contributed to data that illustrated the need for teachers to adopt very specific approaches to discipline if they were to be acceptable (p91). A number of other aspects of successful or unsuccessful teachers and teaching were also highlighted in Section 5.1(ii) including the importance of the pupil/teacher relationship

and the ability of teachers to meet the pupils' perceived individual needs. In particular, Johnny (p109) commented on how his problems related to teachers giving inappropriate work and inadequate support in class, thus denying him the possibility of meeting their expectations. They were therefore perceived as not meeting his needs. His disruptive behaviour appeared to be closely linked to this issue, although combined with a number of other factors. Johnny at 12 years old had already been expelled from a number of mainstream and special education facilities at the time of interviewing.

A further 'in school' factor which was considered important by some of the pupils in relation to their behaviour was the curriculum. Some pupils such as Larry commented specifically on the irrelevance of particular curriculum areas (p116), whereas others appeared to closely equate curriculum difficulties with a perceived inadequacy in their teachers in their presentation of the curriculum. Both low ability pupils, such as Gerry and Julie, and a minority of higher functioning pupils such as Karen commented on difficulties with the curriculum or its presentation. Both Gerry and Julie (p119,121) expressed particular concern with curriculum issues and lucidly described their own personal strategy for dealing with these difficulties, such as disruptive behaviours or non-attendance. Karen (p121) provided interesting insight into curriculum related problems that an able pupil may experience in school which for her were closely linked to social problems. Such cases all illustrate the importance of further research into appropriate curriculum content and presentation for EBD pupils.

The social aspects and processes of schooling were revealed by a large percentage of the EBD pupils interviewed to be a significant factor in their difficulties in school. Bullying in particular was highlighted as a major factor contributing to the need for a special education placement for some of these pupils. Two pupils who contributed particularly extensive and valuable data to the present study concerning their own personal experiences, were Karen and Wayne. These pupils were able to describe not only actual examples of incidents relating to their own behaviour but also gave their

own analysis of the more subtle aspects of bullying and victimisation in schools. Both Karen and Wayne reflected with surprising insight on their own and other's behaviour in Section 5.1(iv). In both cases negative relationships with peers had made a major contribution to their non-attendance at school which, combined with other factors, had resulted in their placement in a psychiatric facility and finally special education.

Karen and Wayne actually provided excellent case studies of how schooling factors are frequently coupled or intricately interwoven with factors and processes active within the pupils' other social systems, such as their families. For these two pupils and a number of others in the study, their family systems included factors linked to the dynamics of relationships between parents and siblings, as well as to the economic or cultural status of their families. For example, both Danny and Ivan provided valuable insight into the potential impact of sibling rivalry on their behaviour (p183) and in Danny's case he also described at some length, the problems he had experienced in his relationship with his father (p180). He was able to describe with surprising awareness some of the more subtle affects of his father's behaviour on his own feelings and behaviour, and how this may have affected his schooling.

The significance of the divorce of parents was also an issue for some pupils, including Robert and Johnny (p177), and the need or search for extended family support was an interesting point raised by Danny (p188). Roy provided some comments concerning the affect on his own behaviour of abuse within his family. He interestingly also gave insight into the potential role of the child as carer within a family, a role he himself perceived himself to adopt when his own father was in prison, and the impact of such responsibility on school related behaviour (p190).

There were a number of other specific factors within the pupils' family system that were also revealed from the data. In particular the family's economic class or cultural status was perceived to have impacted some pupils. To pupils such as Wayne and

Alan these factors were perceived to manifest themselves as social problems with peers within school, by contributing to their perceptions of being different and thus increasing their vulnerability to bullying (p191/192). Alternatively other pupils such as George and Simon (p192) perceived social background and the environment in which they lived as encouraging or necessitating certain aggressive or delinquent behaviours. One of the more subtle influences on the pupils' behaviour that factors related to family life may have had, was a clash of values for pupils between the expectations and goals of schooling and their own wider cultural values and aspirations. This point was illustrated by Ronnie (p193), who had been expelled from mainstream schooling and had served a prison sentence following extensive delinquent activities both inside and outside of school.

In addition to those factors within the pupils' social systems that had influenced their behaviour, the results also revealed important insights into factors related to the pupils' own personal, individual system. Although of a somewhat different nature to factors within the social world of the school or family, it is of course the physiological and psychological aspects of the individual that interface with their immediate social surroundings or systems. Thus the pupils' perceptions of factors relating to themselves were important in order to determine the extent to which they perceived personal or internal factors to be significant to their difficulties. Such factors included the pupils' perceptions of their physical appearance, as illustrated by Karen, who was fully aware of being a large girl, and of being unable to present the necessary acceptable and fashionable image to her peers. (p200). She perceived these physical differences as having played an important role in her social difficulties. Others were aware of their personality traits as making them different, which again negatively influenced peer relationships, (Sam p201), or their perceived lack of academic skills and abilities, (p201), which impacted their ability to function adequately in the classroom. In addition, certain pupils such as John, Rick and Bobby (p202/203),

blamed themselves for a lack of control over their own behaviours and in particular their tempers, which had resulted in school problems for them.

Certain pupils were even prepared to label themselves with medically diagnosed terms, such as phobias, perceiving factors within themselves or their own malfunctioning as being highly significant in their difficulties. Sarah (p203) gave an excellent example of such perceptions, but her case did illustrate how psychiatric treatment may impact a child's perception of themselves, and how limited their perceptions may be concerning the systemic roots of issues such as phobia, for which they take personal responsibility. This is a point demanding further exploration and research.

In summary, the results of the present study are clearly encouraging to the advocates of systemic or ecosystemic approaches to behaviour because they provide clear evidence that from the pupils' perspective it is indeed possible to identify aspects of various interactive systems which may have motivated certain behaviours.

Interestingly however, significant factors described by pupils were not distributed evenly between the social or personal systems comprising the pupils' lives. Factors associated with schools and schooling, including the social factors, were the most comprehensively and lucidly described both in many individual cases and for the pupil group as a whole. Factors other than those that were school related school, such as those pertaining to family life and socioeconomic or cultural background, or to personal, physiological or psychological issues, were raised by some pupils, yet discussed less frequently and in less detail. In fact certain pupils focused almost exclusively on schooling factors such as Larry or Rick, whereas others described a broader spectrum of difficulties such as Karen and Simon. Larry and Rick described numerous social and academic aspects of mainstream school that they were unhappy or dissatisfied with, but made no mention of family life in their accounts of difficulties. Karen and Simon, however, had much to say about how school had contributed to their difficulties, but also discussed family dynamics and relationship problems, as

being highly significant. Some pupils, such as Ken, described schooling difficulties at length and then described problems within the family that he perceived as having developed as a result of his school behaviour (p186). This case reflects the important possibility that problems in one system may filter into other systems, although in most cases school was the system in which difficulties were perceived by the pupils to have been generated, and where blame was frequently laid.

This imbalance in the way in which factors were distributed between systems cannot immediately allow conclusions to be drawn regarding the relative significance of these various factors and systems to the individual. Clearly there may be a number of reasons why a large number of pupils raised and discussed schooling factors more extensively and with greater insight than other factors. Most importantly, the fact that interviewing took place in school and that trigger questions initially asked the pupil about school behaviour, may have encouraged pupils to focus their thoughts, at least at first, on schooling factors that they associated with their behaviours. It may also be unsurprising that school factors were extensively described if we consider the mainstream school to be a safe and easy focus for the pupils' anger, frustration and criticism when describing their experiences. To comment on factors within their more immediate family or personal systems may have been more of a risk. In contrast, the school may have been perceived as an impersonal 'enemy', and in the case of the EBD pupils interviewed, one from the past that has been left behind, and cannot retaliate. It is also important to accept that the school itself has been the stage for many of their conflicts, despite the importance or potential contribution of factors working outside the school which may have contributed to the pupils' behaviour. It had been the school itself that had set its rules and expectations for each individual within it, had been the focus for confrontation and the place where behaviour had been labelled as unacceptable. These may be reasons why it is therefore schooling factors that appear in the pupils' eyes to play the most significant role in influencing behaviour.

Nevertheless, whatever the reasons are for the pupils focusing on the school, it remains a significant conclusion of this report that EBD pupils make extensive critical comment regarding the mainstream schooling they experienced, and that they considered these schools to have failed to meet their needs or adequately support them. Such perceptions are of value and significance to professionals working in education, and in other fields.

Interestingly, the EBD pupils interviewed did not reveal themselves to have widely differing opinions or perspectives on schooling issues than those pupils succeeding in mainstream, whose perspectives have been presented in other publications. Possibly the main differences arise when one explores more thoroughly the complex combination of factors influencing these EBD pupils, and the apparently unmanageable stresses on them that are produced by these combinations. The EBD pupil appears to lack some of the skills and resilience needed to survive these stresses, particularly given the lack of adequate support structures available for them.

The degree to which different pupils were able to describe factors not associated with school which were of a more personal nature, both in their family or individual systems, varied greatly, and the true importance of factors other than those associated with school is difficult to assess. In addition to the reasons given previously it is possible that such factors were less frequently discussed in interview because the methodology did not allow for sufficient time between pupil and researcher to enable or encourage the more subtle or sensitive influences on behaviour to be disclosed. Given the somewhat limited interview time with certain pupils it is not surprising that relating behaviour to more personal or sensitive issues, such as family or perceived psychological issues, was difficult for the pupils. For pupils to gain enough confidence and trust in a researcher to reveal personal aspects of their lives or past experiences may require a more therapeutic approach and a different kind of relationship. In addition, the role of the researcher as Teacher in Charge of one of the

research locations and teacher in the other may have affected the pupils' attitude to confidentiality, despite assurances given by the researcher.

The pupils' own background and experiences may also have affected their perceptions of the effect of systems outside the school on their behaviour, although the study was not large enough to draw definitive conclusions. Some of the pupils who had been psychiatric patients certainly revealed more extensive analysis of their own behaviour, possibly reflecting the treatment they had received. Apart from this experiential impact on perception, sociocultural differences and gender impact on perception may also have been significant, although this was difficult to analyse owing to a lack of true diversity within the group. Clearly this is an area demanding further research.

However, despite these possible limitations resulting from the methodology, some pupils did reveal psychological and physiological aspects of themselves which indicated that factors other than school or family had been influential to them. Clearly it is important that these factors are closely analysed and not overlooked in favour of social factors which support interactionist theories. For example, Sarah (p203) was willing to describe herself as being at 'fault' in terms of her functioning physically or academically and her subsequent school refusal, although as previously suggested, it may be significant that she had received extensive therapy which could possibly have impacted her perceptions. On the other hand there were also pupils, such as Jeremy and Susan (p205), who were somewhat unconvinced that problems lay within themselves, and who expressed negative attitudes to their referral to psychiatrists. Pupils such as Sarah illustrate that although it may be tempting to use the results to support interactionist theories of behaviour, particularly when relating behaviour to schooling factors, it would be an over-simplification to disregard the potential support that the pupils' statements offer to other theories of behaviour. The relatively small number of comments suggesting physiological, psychological or even subconscious influences on behaviour cannot be used to make an accurate judgement of the degree

of significance or importance of such influences on the pupils as there are too many reasons why they may not have communicated them. Certain pupils were clearly reluctant to talk completely openly on sensitive issues, and there were incidences where pupils became withdrawn or even upset and asked to terminate the interview at a point where more personal issues were being discussed (Ivan, Ken, Sam). Others may have simply lacked the ability to articulate their thoughts on these issues, whereas talking about school and schooling may have been easier for them to do. Perhaps it is important to recognise that even as adults it is sometimes very difficult for us to describe our own behaviour and its motives. It is very likely that we may focus more readily on tangible factors and experiences, rather than attempt to explore the more subtle, sensitive or subconscious reasons behind it.

What is certainly apparent from the analysis of the perspectives of the pupils interviewed in this study, is that there is a complex combination of factors associated with the behaviour of EBD pupils, and it is this complexity that must be acknowledged and explored further. Attempts at placing behaviour neatly into sociological or psychodynamic boxes where it is considered to be motivated purely by external, sociological factors and logical decision making or internal subconscious drives, may be an oversimplification and of little benefit to helping such pupils. There appears to be an interface between these theories of behaviour for the EBD pupil and possibly a complex interweaving of factors that combine to provide a complicated blend of motives, both conscious and unconscious, for their behaviour.

Typically, in the analysis of results derived from interview data of this nature, the tendency or even necessity is to seek out generalisable statements from the subjects that are then categorised for presentation. In fact, it is clear from the results of this present project that this is just one facet of the data and just one way to approach it and present it. A second facet, which demands reflection and presentation, is the extent of the individuality and complexity of each subject. As described previously,

many pupils in this present study not only revealed different factors from different systems as being significant to their difficulties, placing varying degrees of emphasis on each of these factors, but in addition each pupil appeared to be totally unique as to the actual way in which these different factors impacted them and their behaviour. Johnny provided an excellent case that illustrates this unique complexity and only a highly detailed case study presentation would allow the reader to fully understand this pupil and his behaviour. From his own accounts he clearly perceived his own behaviour to be influenced by his family history and dynamics, his schooling and learning difficulties, which were closely related to class sizes, curriculum and peer pressures, and finally to the impact of his own self and personality. It would seem that each of these many factors, within each different interacting system, contributed to his subsequent behaviour patterns in some way. This makes the use of one theory of behaviour alone, or a simple attempt to equate causes with behaviour, inadequate for an understanding of this particular boy and his needs.

Some researchers have attempted to present the importance and benefits of acknowledging that there is nothing to be gained by focusing entirely on one theory of behaviour for EBD pupils. For example Arllen et al (1994) describe the importance of recognising the interplay between biological and environmental factors. Charlton & David (1993) consider that the complexity of the interacting factors for the pupil can be explained by breaking down the factors into three different groups as described in the conclusion to Chapter 5. Firstly the internal, psychological factors within the child that may predispose them to certain behaviours. Secondly the precipitating factors that are located within the systems which interact with the pupil, and thirdly, those factors which reinforce the behaviour, which are usually provided by the responses of certain people to the pupil's behaviour. Certainly pupils such as Johnny in this present study reinforced these proposals, describing factors which fell into each of these three categories to varying degrees, supporting the view that their behaviour cannot be considered in simplified sociological or psychological terms. Furlong (1991) has

attempted to encourage theorists from both the sociological and psychological camps to adopt a more flexible attitude to the complexities of behaviour. As introduced in Section 1.2, he describes a 'sociology of emotion' which allows for both the conscious and subconscious drives behind behaviour to be considered. He considers that; '...in their enthusiasm to explore the social dimensions of deviance, sociologists seem to deny that there are important psychological questions to be addressed as well.' (p295). Ball is cited in Slee (1994) as saying; 'The sociology of emotion provides a theoretical "tool box" which allows Furlong to move beyond totalising "single theory explanations"'. (p148). The meaning of the word 'totalising' is somewhat unclear, but it appears to stress that the use of single theories to explain behaviour may be misleading, possibly reinforcing the false belief that one theory can explain the total picture and can alone adequately explain behaviour. Perhaps single theory explanations are like using a tool box containing just one tool, whereas the pupils in this present study suggest that a multi-theoretical tool box is essential in understanding their behaviours, considering the extreme individuality and complexity of the factors combining to affect these behaviours.

Certainly in this present project, although many of the pupils were undoubtedly able to express clear motives for their behaviour, the extent to which they were influenced by emotion and subconscious drives and may in fact have been irrational in their choices, cannot be ignored. We must remain wary, and accept that their views in interview are 'one dimension of the truth.' (Furlong, 1991, p296). With this in mind, it would be foolish to assume that pupils' perceptions can simplify the debate on behaviour. Instead this project proposes that we begin to accept the complexity of it and use pupils' perceptions to illustrate, better understand and accept the immense individuality of each case. Theories of behaviour may need to expand to accommodate this individuality, particularly for the EBD pupil and theoretical debates should be fuelled by this present research rather than solved.

7.2 Practical Insights and Implications

In addition to their contribution to the theoretical debates around behaviour, the results of this study also offer a valuable contribution to those working on practical ways to prevent disturbing behaviour or to support EBD pupils who display such behaviour. It is however important to acknowledge that the theoretical debates also have a major impact on the ways in which schools and teachers work with EBD pupils, and that the theoretical stance that is adopted with such pupils translates directly into school policy and classroom management techniques. It is also important to recognise that the impact of such debate is not restricted to the work of professionals in schools or education alone. There are many other professional groups for whom theories of behaviour and their implications should be reflected in the practical aspects of their work.

However, if we do consider schooling specifically at this point, given the number of pupil comments that were directed at negative aspects of their schooling, practical opportunity for change may be considered to lie at three levels.

At the highest level, administrative and political bodies concerned with educational policy or funding may use such results to identify factors such as curriculum or class size that can potentially impact the behaviour of certain pupils. In addition, the emphasis and goals of effective schooling, as determined by policy makers, and in particular the degree to which schools should be expected to adopt a therapeutic role and offer emotional support to their pupils, will be discussed further into this Section. As the results of this present study have clearly shown, such issues appear to have significant consequences for many pupils, but particularly for the EBD pupil, often in subtle and social, as well as academic ways.

Secondly, at an institutional level, within schools, many factors were revealed by pupils that they thought had contributed to their difficulties, particularly in terms of the ethos of the school and its support structures. Their perceptions revealed potential areas of good practice for schools and professionals, and also gave insight into current practice that appears to increase the probability of problem behaviours. Although the complexity of each individual pupil's case should not be overlooked, there were consistent cross-case examples of current schooling and professional practice, particularly within the mainstream setting, that were perceived as having contributed to the difficulties of the pupils. Many were closely linked to aspects of schooling that individual schools themselves, or the professionals within them, are unable to readily change, such as the number of pupils in any one school or class, and the ratio of staff to pupils. Putting these crucial and potential areas of change aside, perhaps of more immediate significance to individual teachers and professionals are their responsibilities in terms of relationships, classroom management and curriculum presentation, and their willingness and ability to work on these areas within the restraints imposed on them by class sizes. The EBD pupil clearly does not appreciate autocratic styles of discipline, inconsistency, and lack of fairness or classroom support. Many demanded adult style relationships based on mutual respect, and wanted teachers to understand them as individuals, to get to know them and to listen to them. Some perceived that there was value and comfort in peer support within the classroom and they wanted this support to be recognised by teachers as important to them.

In terms of the curriculum, pupils often revealed more concern over delivery and the skills of teachers than the failings of specific subjects and content, but there was an interestingly high number of pupils commenting on physical education, and other practical subjects as creating opportunity for victimisation or humiliation. Irrelevance of certain curriculum areas was also a concern for some pupils, but this is again a difficult area for teachers alone to change and must be explored at a higher level.

On social aspects of schooling, a high number of the pupils were frustrated by a lack of support from teachers when faced with negative peer interaction. They expressed vulnerability in certain situations, perceiving inadequate support by teachers to prevent incidents or in dealing with reported events. They wanted schools to be more able and willing to both acknowledge and attempt to eliminate bullying, but were somewhat doubtful as to how or even whether schools could do this. They appeared resigned to bullying as being a part of their social existence.

These institutional factors are closely related to the third level of practical opportunity for change in schools, one that concerns the relationships between professionals and pupils, and in particular the nature of such relationships. The results from this research point to the importance for the EBD pupil, of the way in which teachers and professionals interact and build relationships with their pupils on a day to day basis. (p102). They offer valuable insights particularly into the value of listening to pupils and the importance of seeking the empathic understanding of these pupils. (Cooper et al, 1994).

The value of listening may be described in three different ways. Firstly, pupils may simply feel valued and respected if they are given the opportunity and time to talk or discuss issues with a teacher or other professional on a one to one basis. Even without any overt attempts to change behaviour or offer counselling, the simple fact that someone is making time for them, possibly making them feel special, may alter a pupil's perspective and attitude to his or her schooling and teachers. Such an attitude change may have a positive impact on the ethos of a school and be reflected positively in the behaviour of certain pupils. The pupils in the present study appeared to illustrate this point to some extent. Clearly the research interviews were not attempting to alter them or their behaviour in any way, yet it was certainly the experience of the researcher that most of the pupils invited to be interviewed were enthusiastic and somewhat honoured to have been asked. They were clearly surprised

that their own voices were to be recorded and utilised, possibly a sad reflection on how undervalued their experiences, opinions or thoughts had previously been considered. Interestingly, their co-operation and involvement was achieved even without any offer of personal reward or benefit, apart from the opportunity to miss a lesson or two. It would be interesting to explore further the pupils' own reasons for participating.

A second way of viewing the value of listening to pupils is to consider its impact on those pupils who do display problems possibly of an overt nature, such as disruption or aggression. Listening may involve gaining an understanding of the motives of EBD pupils when they behave in disturbing ways. This may be seen as an essential step in respecting individuality, being able to meet the specific needs of individuals, and being prepared to offer opportunity or skill development enabling such pupils to adopt alternative behaviours. This present research indicates that EBD pupils are in many cases able to attribute clear motives to their actions, proving there is a significant degree of conscious decision making involved in their behaviour. This ability to express motives and give reasons for behaviour should be acknowledged and used in schools. Teachers themselves can use the information from pupils to 'reframe' (Smith & Cooper, 1996) their own perspective and provide intervention strategies to break chains or cycles of destructive behaviour. (See Section 6.4). Acceptable alternative behaviours that meet the motivational needs of the pupils may then be encouraged if a clearer understanding of the pupils' perspective has been found. As previously described, pupils' perceptions or their behaviour do not always agree with those of their teachers, and this is of course potentially a major factor contributing to cycles of disturbing behaviour.

Thirdly, the value of listening to pupils may have a more therapeutic focus. However, having stated this, if such communication with pupils in schools is to be improved, the common perception held by teachers that therapy is a highly specialised area of expertise will need to be reformed. Cooper et al (1994) stress the importance of

teachers avoiding the need to feel that they have to be experts in psychotherapy to be able to involve themselves in some degree of therapeutic interaction or communication with their pupils. It would seem that interaction between teachers and pupils in schools tends to remain largely focused on teaching and classroom management and any interaction which is more concerned with problem solving linked to behaviour or other personal issues is something that many teachers feel uncomfortable with. Perhaps they perceive such communication as a specialised area, or just simply do not have the time to involve themselves in such relationships with pupils. Whatever the reasons for this apparent lack of 'therapeutic' involvement, there is clearly a need for schools to explore this issue further. Although there has been a gradual move away from a therapeutic role for schools (Laslett, 1995), this present research suggests that such an approach may be considered vital for certain pupils struggling with the complex academic, social and emotional demands of the school and other social systems influencing their lives. In the present study there were specific pupils such as Chris and Julie who stated clearly that their problems may have been alleviated simply by being listened to, or having the opportunity to give their point of view, both on academic or social problems (p266). They felt that they had been denied a missing support link or some deeper relationship with a helping professional, despite having sought one.

The EBD pupil clearly demands something in addition to that needed by other mainstream pupils, and possibly even other SEN pupils. Although the perceptions of mainstream school pupils and those of special needs pupils are often similar in terms of how they view the school and the factors within it that are important in creating difficulties, there is obviously more complexity involved in the needs of the EBD pupil. These pupils' needs demand more from their schools and teachers.

From the present study, Simon provided an interesting case study of such a pupil. At 16 years old Simon had spent almost his entire school life in special schools. Whether

he could have been supported in a mainstream school and whether his behaviours could have been different will not be known now. However, it is possible that if the factors influencing his behaviour and his needs had been recognised early on, and his behaviour better explored and understood, that this may have been achieved. Simon's life experiences included the early death of his father, later during his teens the death of his mother, and his subsequent move into care and various Children's Homes. He lived in low-income council housing whilst his mother was alive and reported enormous pressures to conform to the cultural demands and expectations of this environment, such as stealing, drinking and drugs. His delinquent behaviours ultimately resulted in a prison sentence.

The extent to which schools and teachers alone can maintain such a boy within their system is a major issue on which this report is based, and it produces no definitive answers. What it does propose however, is the following summary of the needs of any young person in school and in particular those of an EBD or potential EBD pupil. It should be noted that none of these needs can be met without emphasis on the first.

- i) Someone to listen to them.
- ii) Constant professional support, emotionally, academically, and socially.
- iii) A professional awareness of their motives for behaviours.
- iv) A professional understanding and awareness of the complex web of factors which interact to create stress for them.
- v) A professional empathy with and knowledge of the internal psychological or physiological factors which may contribute to certain disturbing behaviours.

What may be necessary to meet these needs could simply be for teachers and professionals to feel more comfortable with a more therapeutic style of interaction with pupils, and to be given the time to do it, (Rose et al, 1996). However, it is also possible that this role should not be one expected of teachers, given the methodological difficulties and constraints revealed by this present project and the

specific skills necessary, even without a demand for major expertise. (p110). (Smith & Laslett, 1993, p51).

In an attempt to resolve the issue of who should take the responsibility for such communication, the present researcher proposes that all professionals should see the value and gain confidence in talking with their pupils. However, at the same time there should be an acknowledgement of the need to develop their skills in order to do so. Lane (1996) presents research and publications that deal with the role of teachers as counsellors and specifically discusses the need for training of teachers in this area. It is certainly the present researcher's belief that successful communication is an art and communication with pupils, particularly EBD pupils, is an art requiring skill development. It requires training and practice, yet if perfected not only by teachers and other professionals, but also by parents, has the potential to change certain pupils' lives.

However, the degree to which this enthusiasm and skill acquisition is achievable must be carefully considered, and the ability to utilise information from a conversation to help a pupil must be recognised as an additional skill in addition to that of the conversation itself. Having used interviewing as the main methodological technique in this project, the researcher became aware of the differing roles that the interviewer develops and adopts, and the complexity of this role. Apart from being a conversationalist, the interviewer requires expertise in listening, a demanding role, followed by interpreting what has been said, without distortion. As described in Section 1.3 there is a crucial need to accept the subjective reality of the individual being interviewed, without imposing one's own beliefs on the account given. The complexity of this role and its skill requirements lead to the following proposal related to the methodology and approach used in seeking pupil perspectives and communication with pupils in a practical environment.

For schools or other environments planning to utilise all possible opportunities for exploring pupils' perspectives, the present researcher believes that a semi-therapeutic relationship of a non-medical, non-judgmental, non-threatening and if possible non-power based nature should be developed by specific professionals. It is proposed that such a relationship actually comprises a completely different set of goals and ethics (Lane, 1996), and demands a very different professional role than that of a researcher, teacher, or therapist. Conflicting roles in schools may be something that certain professionals, particularly teachers, are unfairly experiencing and being asked to adopt, which may do little to support the most disturbing children, despite good intentions. (Fontana, 1985, p341). Thus, a new type of skilled professional may be needed who can act almost as an interpreter, allowing pupils to communicate their needs and feelings. Such professionals cannot be the academic researchers, nor the teachers, educational psychologists, therapists or parents, although clearly there is a role for these people in terms of communication with pupils. Instead they must be trained and skilled people with the necessary personal attributes and skills to explore, acknowledge and weave together the pupils' stories in a manner similar to that attempted and presented in this project. Their role should be to act as an interpreter between the pupils and those professionals who need to know about the pupils' needs and to advise on or build multi-systemic support structures. Current attempts at seeking the pupil voice are often inadequate and come too late. For example, placing a pupil in a meeting where the power imbalance is well established, and then expecting him or her to believe that he or she has an equal voice, is deceptive to the pupil. Expecting the pupil to speak with a counsellor or psychiatrist, again in a relationship with a total imbalance of power, simply reinforces the pupil's perception of being 'at fault' and 'needing help'. Expecting teachers to find time to explore pupil motives for behaviour and their curriculum needs is an unfair demand given their often difficult relationships with such pupils. Finally, relying on the academic researchers to seek the views of young people may lead only to more generalisable, theoretically orientated statements serving no purpose for the immediate needs of the individual pupils.

The current lack of impact of the pupils' voice on policy and practice and the pupils' perceived lack of support from professionals, may be accounted for by the use of these inappropriate or ineffective channels to seek their perspectives, in answer to the plea for more pupil involvement. What pupils need is a more appropriate means of communication. They need a bridge, a translator, or a trusted interpreter to give them their necessary voice to truly share their perspective. People to fill this role need careful selection and exceptional skills and it is the responsibility of the government and the schools to accept the importance of funding and training for such people, but to do so they will first need to accept the pupils' perspective as essential listening. Such proposals possibly reflect a need for a re-assessment of the 'therapeutic' role of schools, particularly in their support of EBD pupils.

As proposed in Section 6.4, EBD pupils appear to struggle to maintain an equilibrium within the complex demands of their interacting social and personal systems. Clearly they need skills and support within schools, which their own perceptions suggest they are lacking. Perhaps the major difference between these pupils and succeeding mainstream pupils is that the EBD pupil lacks the skills to maintain an equilibrium, and their behaviours which attempt to do so simply create more problems. A more therapeutic approach to their needs may allow them to be better understood, make their motives clearer and allow opportunities for acceptable alternative behaviours to be explored and presented. In addition, the systemic contributions to their behaviour may become more evident allowing a wider choice of intervention strategies.

The proposals suggested in this report, regarding the value of an increased therapeutic approach for schools, do not apply to the EBD pupils in special needs settings alone. They may be important for all pupils within the mainstream setting to a greater or lesser extent, depending on individual need. Whether the mainstream schools are able to offer such an approach, given their size and academic focus, is debatable.

However, with increasing numbers of pupils displaying EBD type behaviours, meeting such needs for all pupils may be of growing importance for mainstream schools, without relying on the 'expertise' of the special school to do so.

The existence of such 'expertise' is interestingly reflected in some of the comments made by the pupils in the present study who do suggest that the special schools were going some way towards satisfying their needs. Significantly, such comments were made primarily by pupils attending The Oakwood Centre with its very small number of pupils, its historically adopted therapeutic approach, and reduced emphasis on academics, rather than Southdown, which was larger, adhering more closely to National Curriculum requirements, and more concerned with minimising academic disadvantage to its pupils.

The nature of the provision at Southdown may reflect the changing emphasis on provision for EBD pupils over time. In tracing the history and development of special needs provision, particularly for those pupils now labelled as EBD, it is clear to see that there has been a gradual move away from a therapeutic approach to such children. This move may have been the result of a growing awareness and well meaning concern with discrimination, and the subsequent focus on the quality and content of teaching and learning has been an attempt to minimise disadvantage for these children in an academic sense. However, the results of this present study suggest that policy makers and those involved with standards, inspection of schools and training of professionals, with their emphasis in recent years on learning, may have overlooked a critical 'therapeutic' element in successful provision for certain children. The value of therapeutic activities and support, both of an indirect nature as part of the curriculum, or more directly from professionals, should perhaps be re-evaluated and not considered as being less important or less relevant to the pupils' needs. The pupils should not be considered disadvantaged by exposure to this aspect of education. A broadening

perception of education is thus being proposed as a result of this present study, which possibly demands a reversal of current trends.

As previously suggested, such a therapeutic facet of educational provision may be important for pupils in the mainstream setting as well as those in special education (Cooper et al, 1994), and future policy, inspection and guidance for schools may need to seriously include a therapeutic element. For example, the need for policy to combat bullying, which has been given much emphasis in recent years, may be alleviated by, or perhaps such policy should incorporate, a close look at the possible support structures, counselling and therapeutic aspects of schooling. As previously suggested in this Section, this may involve the training of specific personnel but may also have major implications for the size of schools and classes, the training of teachers and the professional skills that are considered appropriate for teaching, and finally curriculum content and its mode of presentation. Recognising the potential and possibly essential therapeutic role of schools and schooling is clearly one way of addressing the current concern over behaviour problems in schools and rapidly increasing numbers of exclusions. Such a therapeutic role will constitute an acceptance of the complexity of factors involved in EBD behaviour and may go some way to ensuring that clumsy, ill-informed decision making concerning the placement and provision for such pupils in educational, social and psychiatric facilities does not occur.

7.3 Methodological Insights and Implications

Much has been written in previous publications concerning methodology for obtaining qualitative data from interviewing and recently there has been an attempt to focus specifically on the methodological aspects of researching the perceptions of school pupils. (Cooper, 1993a, 1993c). It is hoped that the methodological insights gained from this present project will contribute to this previously published material.

In addition to the observations and comments presented in Part Two of this report there were some significant insights gained from this study which may have implications for the future exploration of pupil perceptions by those working in this field. Of particular significance, given the small number of previous studies that have successfully explored the perceptions of EBD pupils, are the implications for those researchers exploring the perceptions of such pupils. This relatively new field of research possibly demands an awareness of somewhat different methodological techniques and skills to those needed when researching with succeeding mainstream pupils, and it is intended that these differences should be presented in this Section. Finally, this Section highlights certain methodological issues that may be of significance to those working full time as teachers, yet at the same time taking a part-time researcher's role. (McHardy, 1996).

Firstly, some comments concerning data collection through interviewing which is a choice of methodology not without its drawbacks and pitfalls. At a purely practical level there may be problems associated with finding a quiet and private place in a school setting and this may be particularly significant in a non-residential facility. It was the researcher's experience that the environment in which the interview took place could potentially influence the attitude and willingness of the pupil to discuss certain issues. For example a noisy location lacking privacy did little to encourage a pupil to concentrate and really consider some of the potentially more complex aspects of his or her behaviour, nor to disclose more personal issues. However, as was described in Part Two of this report, a more formal setting for an interview, such as an office, did not allow for the degree of informality that encourages pupils to relax and converse openly with the researcher. Previous publications such as Cooper (1989) may have overlooked this as a methodological concern owing to the fact that the pupil interviews were carried out in residential facilities. This could impact the interviews in two ways. Firstly, such facilities may offer a greater number of informal yet private locations in

which to carry out interviewing owing to the nature of the facility and its buildings. Secondly, the amount and quality of time available in which to carry out interviews with pupils may be greater, offering more opportunity to utilise the informal atmosphere of the pupils' evenings or free time. This would not only allow for longer and possibly more frequent interviews, an issue potentially relating to the quality of data acquired, but also alleviates some of the problems associated with removing pupils from classes, tactful negotiations with staff, and the problem for teacher/researchers of having to use professional time for research purposes.

These potentially significant aspects of the methodology may be particularly relevant for the EBD pupil. Researchers should be aware that these pupils, unlike those in the mainstream, are often involved in fragile or volatile relationships with their teachers and/or family and may be somewhat reluctant to openly share views on certain matters, (See Section 7.1), without building a longer term relationship with the interviewer. Such a relationship involving the development of trust and confidentiality between the pupil and the researcher must be acknowledged as possibly being closely related to the amount of time they can spend together. Further to this point, it is the view of the present researcher that it would be misguided for a teacher/researcher to believe that his or her previously well established relationship with a pupil is sufficient to guarantee successful data collection in interviewing. It may be that the success or nature of the researcher/pupil relationship is unrelated to the pupils' previous relationship with the researcher as a teacher, although it is the present researcher's belief that a positive relationship must be in place prior to any attempt to obtain data through interview. This is not however the same as assuming that a prior relationship is necessary for research of this nature, and this remains an issue for further debate.

One final point regarding the researcher's need to carefully consider the location for interviewing, is the potential value in attempting to interview pupils outside of the school environment or school time. As previously described in Section 7.1 it may be

that in exploring the wide range of factors and processes that can influence the EBD pupils' behaviour, the information they perceive as being relevant to the interview is strongly influenced by the environment in which they are being interviewed, and future researchers may wish to pursue pupil interviewing in a variety of different environments to find out how or if this impacts their perceptions.

Researchers in this field should also be aware of the fact that interviewing as a method of data collection can pose problems in terms of analysis. Transcribing and categorising a large quantity of highly qualitative data should not be underestimated, as it can prove to be a long and time consuming process, particularly for a part-time researcher. This problem is exacerbated when the interview is largely unstructured. The present researcher would suggest that future researchers consider a higher degree of discipline in presenting trigger questions than was adopted in the present project, particularly when a limited amount of interview time is available. The importance of this is not only to aid data analysis, but also to obtain more data relevant to the research aims. The importance of recognising the impact of the order in which trigger questions are presented to the pupils must also be given recognition, as the present researcher believes that this may significantly influence the pupils' perceptions of what is relevant to discuss or disclose.

Although in the present research a pilot run was not carried out, it is a conclusion of this research that a substantial pilot run with a number of pupils, not directly involved in the project, would have been valuable. In the present project, the trigger questions, their presentation and the categorisation of data were all adapted as the interviewing proceeded. Thus total consistency when interviewing the different pupils was not guaranteed, as there was an evolution in the data collection and analysis throughout the project. Clearly such inconsistency between pupils may make authenticity of the data somewhat questionable. However, the researcher equally feels that any attempt to standardise questioning to ensure authenticity may interfere with reaching the more

complex perceptions of the pupils. This may be of particular relevance for those researching the intricacies of the EBD pupils' viewpoints. The EBD pupil may demand a higher degree of sensitivity in any communication compared to the mainstream pupil who is perhaps more likely to be questioned on issues which are less emotive for them. The EBD pupil may be more likely to be the focus of research requiring him or her to discuss issues that are emotionally challenging to them. Thus, although it may be tempting to seek authenticity by standardising the questions given to pupils during interview, and to ease the burden of analysis by minimising flexibility within the interviewing, researchers working with EBD pupils should be wary of losing data which may only be obtainable with careful regard for the individual and his or her chosen paths of discussion. These paths, perceived by the individual to be relevant to each question, should not be diverted simply for the convenience of the researcher.

This leads to a further important insight gained from the present research. Even the most well thought out questions can be widely interpreted by different pupils and in planning trigger questions it is important to be fully aware of the many possible ways in which the pupil may frame the question. It was the experience of the present researcher that trigger questions had to be very clear, non-threatening or intimidating, and worded to allow the most expansive answers. If they were correctly thought out and sensitively presented to the pupils they could help to elicit lengthy, appropriate and relevant statements from pupils. However, the wrong question, put at the wrong time, could easily destroy an interview.

Although it remains the belief of the researcher, following completion of the project, that talking is the only truly effective method of gaining the perspectives of the majority of EBD pupils, it is also considered important to recognise the minority for whom it may not be successful. As described in Part Two, there were pupils in the present study who were certainly reluctant to participate in interviewing and whose perspectives were in the researcher's opinion, inadequately explored and included in

the results. It is likely that this problem is of greater significance to research with EBD pupils than with mainstream pupils owing to their enhanced emotional vulnerability, and in research of this nature an important consideration should be made to the exploration of these particularly hesitant or unwilling pupils. The present researcher suggests that there may be value in offering a written response option to certain pupils who have adequate writing skills. Another option for pupils with poor literacy skills, which could offer them a less threatening situation, may be one of a group discussion involving the researcher. However, it is unlikely that such an approach would encourage disclosure of personal issues. Thus it is proposed that a wider variety of methodological approaches than was used in the present study could be considered when seeking EBD pupils' perspectives, but such approaches require further refinement and exploration.

Following on from this last point, it may also be important to consider ethical issues if we become so determined to pursue even the most emotionally vulnerable or perhaps unstable EBD pupil in the name of research. Should researchers accept the withdrawal of a potential interview subject without pressing for their involvement, particularly when such research offers no direct reward to the pupils themselves?

Finally, there are undoubtedly numerous criticisms that could be aimed at a research project such as the present, as were discussed in Chapter 4. The researcher is aware of the difficulties associated particularly with authenticity of data, and some suggestions for overcoming such difficulties are listed by Cooper (1993a). The present researcher proposes that such suggestions are utilised when attempting research of this nature and in addition, future researchers who involve EBD pupils should carefully consider the insights gained from the present research. Future researchers should not underestimate the complexities of what may on the surface appear to be research demanding relatively standard methodology. It could be that unless these complexities are acknowledged and methodological techniques are refined

to incorporate them, that research of this nature may continue to offer opportunity for criticism, thus lessening its valuable and essential impact on understanding the EBD pupil.

APPENDIX 1

Interview Trigger Questions for Areas of Enquiry

Each of the following trigger questions was designed to elicit pupil perspectives that would be pertinent to one of the areas of enquiry (see page 37). The five areas of enquiry were proposed using information gained from an extensive review of the literature and previous research concerning various aspects of the behaviour of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, including theoretical proposals (see Section 1.2). From this review emerged a number of recurrent themes pertaining to the behaviour of EBD pupils, particularly relating to their experiences of schooling. These topical issues represent important areas that appear to influence the pupils' behaviour and are in many ways associated with the various systems that impact on that behaviour. Thus in order to allow some degree of focus on these relevant topical themes, they were utilised by the present researcher in the construction of the five areas of enquiry. The researcher anticipated that by allocating pupil statements to each of these areas of enquiry that the data could then be further analysed to provide a richer source of information relevant to significant issues reflected in and currently being raised in the literature.

Analysis of the pupil interview data was effectively carried out in three stages with an increasing degree of focus on the data at each stage. Firstly, a collating of statements under the five different area of enquiry headings was carried out, with all pupil statements that were considered in any way relevant or insightful to a particular area of enquiry being selected. Secondly, statements were scrutinised more closely to ensure that they were appropriately assigned to an area, which was followed by a further analysis of these statements to identify different themes that were emerging within the areas of enquiry. Finally, a further refinement and expansion of these emerging

themes and preliminary ideas was undertaken, with a particular emphasis on placing them and the present research within the framework and context of previous and current literature and research concerned with the behaviour of EBD pupils.

The results of the analysis are presented in Chapters 5 and 6 of the report.

a) The history and nature of the pupils' schooling difficulties

What are your earliest memories of school?

Can you remember when you first had difficulties of any kind in school?

Can you describe the problems that you experienced?

b) Aspects of school and schooling associated with the pupils' difficulties

Can you talk about the sorts of things that happened in school that you found difficult or that were a problem for you?

c) The significance of social, family or life events in the pupils' difficulties

Do you think that your problems in school have anything to do with your life or things that have happened out of school?

What would you describe as the most important things that have happened to you in your life so far?

d) The psychological or physiological aspects of the pupils' difficulties and their attitudes to treatment or professional support

How would you describe yourself to someone who didn't know you?

Can you tell me about any help or support that you have had from people?

How do you feel about having been placed in a special school?

e) **The behaviour of the pupils in response to their difficulties**

When you were having difficulties or problems in school what did you do or how did you behave?

Can you say anything about why you behaved in certain ways?

Do you blame anyone or anything in particular for your behaviour and placement in a special school?

Why do you think you are in a special school?

APPENDIX 2

PUPIL DATA

<u>PUPIL NAME</u>	<u>GENDER</u>	<u>AGE</u>	<u>SITE OF INTERVIEW</u>
ALAN	M	14	Oakwood
ANDY	M	14	Oakwood
BOBBY	M	15	Southdown
BRIAN	M	14	Southdown
CHRIS	M	13	Southdown
COLIN	M	14	Southdown
DANNY	M	14	Southdown
DAVE	M	15	Southdown
GEORGE	M	16	Oakwood
GERRY	M	14	Oakwood
GUY	M	14	Southdown
IVAN	M	15	Southdown
JEREMY	M	12	Southdown
JOHN	M	13	Southdown
JOHNNY	M	12	Oakwood
JULIE	F	16	Oakwood
KAREN	F	16	Oakwood
KARL	M	16	Oakwood
KEN	M	15	Southdown
LARRY	M	16	Oakwood

MICHAEL	M	12	Southdown
MIKE	M	13	Southdown
NEIL	M	12	Southdown
RICK	M	16	Southdown
ROBERT	M	13	Oakwood
ROBIN	M	16	Southdown
RONNIE	M	16	Southdown
ROY	M	14	Oakwood
SAM	M	15	Southdown
SANDRA	F	13	Oakwood
SARAH	F	13	Oakwood
SIMON	M	16	Southdown
SUSAN	F	14	Oakwood
TOM	M	14	Oakwood
WAYNE	M	16	Oakwood
WILLIAM	M	13	Southdown

Total number of pupils interviewed	36
Total number of girls interviewed	5
Total number of boys interviewed	31
Total number of pupils interviewed at Oakwood	16
Total number of pupils interviewed at Southdown	20
Total number of pupils aged 12	4
Total number of pupils aged 13	7

Total number of pupils aged 14	10
Total number of pupils aged 15	5
Total number of pupils aged 16	10

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