Children Assessed with Behavioural Difficulties: An Investigation into the Effectiveness of a Solution Oriented Approach

Catherine McGlone

A Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to investigate the extent to which a pedagogical adaptation of Solution Oriented therapy was useful in supporting pupils with social emotional behavioural difficulties in mainstream schools. Five primary aged pupils and one pre- school pupil who were assessed as having social emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) were involved in the study. In the past ten years educators have been trained in approaches to behavioural problems which have their origins in Family Therapy and which are informed by a postmodern social constructionist epistemology. The theoretical point of view adopted in the research is that when educators adopt a social constructionist position in relation to ' problem' behaviour it necessitates a shift in thinking about the relationship between language, power and expert knowledge. A multi- case design was used and data was collected for over the period of one academic year. The study explored how parents, pupils and professional understood the 'problem' situation, their involvement in the Solution Oriented process and the extent to which they found their involvement in the Solution Oriented process worthwhile.

The findings illuminated how referral to Behaviour Support resulted in parents feeling anxious and worried. This suggests that the development of within school responses may prevent anxiety on the part of parents who already feel marginalised. The intervention resulted in the children becoming more articulate about voicing their preferred alternatives. Teachers and parents reported increased confidence in responding to children as a result of their involvement in the Solution Oriented process. Teachers reported that they reflected more on their practice. Headteachers and educational psychologists in the study acknowledged that involvement in the intervention had impacted on the behaviour of the pupils. Headteachers noted that it had helped the smooth running of the school. Four parents in the study perceived the intervention as effective in helping their children become more settled in school. Two parents saw the approach as having an effect on school behaviour but believed that their children needed help from other agencies.

The study revealed that in terms of fostering collaborative working practices the intervention was limited because the focus was on individual pupils their parents and teachers. Adopting social constructionist position foregrounds notions of equity and social justice. The study illuminated that social issues impact on behaviour and that adopting a Solution Oriented approach to problem behaviour provides an opportunity for those voices least listened in our society to be heard.

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List of Abbreviations

DES	Department of Education and Science
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DfH	Department for Health
DHT	Depute Headteacher
EBD	Emotional Behavioural Difficulties
EIS	Educational Institute of Scotland
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
HMIE	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education
NASEN	National Society for Special Educational Needs
SCCC	Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum
SE	Scottish Executive
SEBD	Social Emotional Behavioural Difficulties
SEED	Scottish Executive Education Department
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SOEID	Scottish Office Education and Industry Department
SRC	Strathclyde Regional Council
TES	Times Educational Supplement
TESS	Times Educational Supplement Scotland

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION, AIMS and CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the impact of adopting a Solution Oriented approach to the support of five primary aged pupils and one pre-school child who were assessed as having social emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD).[1] A Solution Oriented approach to behavioural problems is informed by a postmodern social constructionist epistemology and poses a challenge to mainstream psychological theorising. Social constructionist therapies assume that there are no absolute truths, no absolute realities and that people co-construct realities through language. Thus the objective 'reality' of psychological concepts such as personality, attitudes, intelligence and behavioural disturbance is questioned.

Over the last decade, educational psychologists working in schools in Britain have been involved in disseminating the ideas and practice of family therapists who work from a postmodern social constructionist perspective. Since 1991 the Brief Therapy Practice in London has been involved in working with professionals other than therapists to adapt the ideas of social constructionist therapies to different contexts. Teachers attended courses provided by the Brief Therapy Practice in London and therapists were invited to Scotland to conduct intensive training. The therapists from the Brief Therapy Practice in London, Chris Iveson, Harvey Ratner, Evan George and Jane Lethem were influential in introducing those who work as educational psychologists and support teachers to the Solution Focused Therapy of Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg; the Possibility Therapy of Bill O' Hanlon, and Brian Cade; and the Narrative therapy of Michael White and David Epston.

Lethem (2002, p192) noted that the links which were made among those therapists who adopt a postmodern collaborative approach to their work, led to "a mutual borrowing of ideas and techniques". These links are evident in the work of Furman and Ahola (1992, 1994), Durrant (1992, 1995, 1997) and O' Hanlon (1993, 1994, 1998). Educational psychologists, Rhodes and Ajmal (1995) noted that their work in schools, although referred to as Solution Focused, draws on the ideas and practice of O'Hanlon and was powerfully influenced by the Narrative therapy of White and Epston (1990):

> We have also been strongly influenced by White and Epston (1990, 1992) whose approach is termed 'Narrative'; these writers would not categorise themselves as Solution Focused but we have found their ideas to be related and compatible with this approach.
>
> (Rhodes and Ajmal, 1995, p8)

Stephenson and Johal Smith (2001); Kay, (2001); Mall and Stringer (2001), influenced by the

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[1] The term, social emotional behavioural difficulty (SEBD) is used throughout the thesis as it is the term in common usage in Scotland and is contained in the Education Scotland Act 1980 (as amended 1981). This term is often used interchangeably with that of emotional behavioural difficulties (EBD), which is used in England and Wales. Circular 23/89 (DES, 1989b).

ideas and practice of postmodern family therapists have incorporated their ideas and practice to their work. Mall and Stringer (2001) were interested in the extent to which:

> *The use of different language can affect how we think about events, ideas, thoughts and perceptions Sapir (1929); Wharf (1956) Vygotsky (1968, 1978). Thus when working with children who get angry, we have found a powerful way of engaging them and to pick up and track the metaphor that is offered to us to explain or tell their story.*
>
> (Mall and Stringer, 2001, p60)

Their position matches that of the author, who, influenced and inspired by the practice of postmodern therapists, aimed to incorporate their ideas into her pedagogical practice in order to respond in a socially just way to the pupils, their teachers and parents. The use of the word 'oriented' was intended both to acknowledge the influence of postmodern therapists on the work of the author and to distinguish between the practice of therapy and that of teaching. According to Besley (2001 p 77) orientation in therapy, "challenges the scientism of the human sciences and how therapeutic practices have often been situated within these". There is a parallel between therapists whose orientation seeks to unveil how therapeutic techniques serve to " subjugate persons to a dominant ideology," (White and Epston, 1990, p29) and those critical educational theorists such as Giroux et al. (1996), who highlight the role that schools play in reproducing inequalities. They propose that transformative education would involve developing pedagogical practices which would encourage critical reflection about those assumptions that are taken for granted in the practice of education. Educators who attend training which is conducted by family therapists do not wish to become therapists. Rather, they wish to use the ideas of postmodern family therapy in the context of school. The pedagogical intervention, which was used in this study, was influenced, not only by the ideas and practice of therapists such as Steve de Shazer, Michael White and Bill O' Hanlon, but also by educational theorists such as Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and Jerome Bruner who, in different ways emphasised notions of co-construction and dialogue in relation to pedagogy. Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, whose educational theories have informed teacher education for decades, valued notions of uncertainty and disequilibrium in relation to the learning situation. Therefore the 'not knowing' stance of postmodern therapies is familiar territory to teachers who, alive to children's curiosity aim to encourage continual dialogue.

Vygotsky (1978) proposed that the development of children's thinking is through the internalisation of symbolic tools, of which language is the most important. Central to an understanding of Vygotskian socio-cultural theory is that children, in relationship with others co-construct new knowledge. His views have influenced contemporary postmodern educational theorists Canella (1997) and Dahlberg et al. (1999). They are critical of the dominant modernist paradigm in early education, which seeks to categorise and assess children according to supposed norms. Instead, they acknowledged the complexities of development. The history of pedagogy differs from that of therapy insofar as there have been many influential educators who believed that through the process of education society could be transformed. Radical pedagogues such as such as Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux and Noam

Chomsky questioned the notion that there was a fixed body of knowledge which students had to learn. They also questioned the neutrality of education and considered that encouraging students to engage critically with their educators could transform communities. Freire (1972) argued that education is 'domesticating' when its aim is to strengthen those taken for granted assumptions about what constitutes appropriate knowledge. For Freire education should be about 'the practice of freedom' and is 'liberatory' when dominant assumptions are challenged. Giroux (1989, p150) called for an approach to teaching that validated the experience of students whilst assisting them to "challenge the very grounds on which knowledge and power are constructed and legitimated". Chomsky (1995) also believed that educators had failed to engage their students in critical dialogue. Instead, he saw much of what occurred in schools as social control and considered that psychological assessment was part of that process. Echoing the views of Paulo Freire, Chomsky (2000) argued that schools succeeded in 'domesticating' youth by functioning within a framework which distorts those ideas and information, which run counter to dominant neo liberal ideology. The ideas of radical pedagogues are not included in government policy documents. Those teachers who wish to work in ways which are transformative, recognise the need to collaborate with others whose work questions traditional assumptions about knowledge and behaviour. Thus many educators integrate the practice of postmodern family therapy into their work.

Guterman (1996) argued that postmodern therapies differ fundamentally from traditional clinical and psychiatric models. According to Guterman, adopting a social constructionist perspective entailed a fundamental shift in terms of the behaviour of clinicians. He believed the emphasis on assessment and diagnosis would have to be replaced by conversations. Although there is no single definition of social constructionism, Burr (1995) suggested that it is characterised by four key assumptions. First, social constructionist theory invites a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge which has resulted in questioning scientific understandings of the world. Secondly, social constructionists acknowledge that knowledge is culturally specific and influenced by history. Thirdly, a social constructionist perspective accepts that knowledge is constructed through social processes. Consequently time-honoured truths in any society are understood as products of the social interactions of that particular culture. It is also posited that knowledge and social action are interrelated and that negotiated meanings, or 'social constructions' carry a number of possible actions or responses. Although psychological theorising informs teacher responses to pupil behaviour, many educational theorists were critical of the way in which mainstream psychological ideas influenced the work of teachers. Most notably, the work of Vygotsky (1927) whose paper *The Historical Meaning of the Crisis in Psychology* argued that by attempting to legitimise different types of inquiry, psychologists were at risk of asking the wrong kind of questions about the construction of knowledge. He challenged the psychologists of his era to create a "new psychology of activity," which highlighted the relational aspects of how children construct

knowledge. His ideas on the development of a "cultural dialogical psychology" influenced many social constructionist theorists including Shotter (1995) and Gergen (1997) who noted:

The significance of this work is largely owing to its dislodgement of Psychology's longstanding investment in autonomous or self contained processes and its replacement underscore socialised conception of self. For the Vygotskian, to paraphrase John Locke, there is nothing in thought that is not first in society. Or to extend the implications, the concept of the autonomous agent is a myth; each of us is constituted by the other; we cannot deliberate or decide without implicating otherness.

(Gergen, 1997, p4)

Vygotsky proposed that knowledge is acquired through social interaction. Many educators considered that his concept of the zone of proximal development was more relevant to their experience of learning and teaching than the ideas informed by mainstream psychological theorising which emphasised critical stages and which did not see a pre-eminent role in the relational and creative aspects of learning. Vygotskian influences are evident in those educational environments, where both teacher and learner contribute to a learning experience which is grounded on language and action and supported by the notion of 'scaffolding'. According to Newman and Holzman (1997):

More experienced speakers neither tell infants that they are too young, give them a grammar book, nor remain silent around them. Rather, they relate to them as speakers, feelers, thinkers, and makers of meaning.

(Newman and Holzman, 1997, p112)

This approach to learning and teaching resonates with ideas which inform social constructionist therapies. Newman and Holzman (1993, 1996) saw the relevance of Vygotsky's ideas on the zone of proximal development for family therapists. Vygotsky (1978) defined the zone of proximal development:

The zone of proximal development defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state. These functions could be termed the 'buds' or 'flowers' of development rather than the 'fruits' of development. The actual developmental level characterizes mental development retrospectively, while the zone of proximal development characterizes mental development prospectively.

(Vygotsky, 1978, p 86)

Thus in relationship with a more competent and supportive other, effective learning can occur. Newman and Holzman (1993) considered that therapeutic work is similar to pedagogical activities, which occur in learning contexts. The notion that the ideas of therapy and pedagogy can be usefully fused is pertinent to this study which seeks to explore the extent to which adopting a Solution Oriented approach to school based problems, may facilitate further understanding of the relational aspects of co-creating solutions. This position necessitates a shift in thinking about how teachers, children and their parents work together. A possible consequence of working from a social constructionist perspective would be to reconsider aspects of teaching and learning. Pedagogy viewed as efficient instruction would be replaced with one in which pedagogy is understood as one which encourages dialogue. Thinking in this

way about teaching and learning would involve teachers becoming more uncertain and more aware of their role as learners as well as teachers.

1.2 Assessment of pupils with SEBD

From the 1960's those who emphasised the socially constructed nature of SEBD challenged the notion that behavioural difficulties were the result of individual pathology. In 1978 the Department of Education and Science produced the *Warnock Report* (DES 1978), which proposed that 20% of all pupils have some form of special educational need. The assessment of pupils with SEBD has been the focus of debate because of the ambiguity which exists in relation to assessment criteria. Laslett (1983) noted that the category 'maladjusted' was a broad label which often defined the difficulties which children faced in terms of individual pathology. Assessing pupils as having SEBD, suggests that the pupils thus categorised, form a homogenised group. It is widely accepted however, that the concept of SEBD is one which is socially constructed and that the criteria for assessing children as SEBD has been influenced not only by the context in which the behaviour occurs, but also by the personal bias of the assessor, and the influence of current psychological theorising (Chazan et al 1994; Connor 1994; Lloyd-Smith 1992; Lennox 1991; Evans 1989; Wilson and Evans 1980). Categorisation of pupils as having SEBD often results in them acquiring an identity which is considered 'disturbed' (Wilson and Evans 1980); 'disturbed and disturbing' (Lennox 1991); 'troubled and vulnerable' (Webb1994); 'disruptive' (Gray and Richer, 1992). As the assessment of pupils with SEBD focuses almost entirely on the reactions of pupils within the context of school, the assessment process can neglect the story behind the 'disturbing behaviour'. Behaviours, which challenge the status quo in schools are often considered deviant. However challenging behaviour on the part of young children often follows a harrowing experience. Connor (1994) noted that most children identified by teachers as having SEBD, fell into the category of 'conduct disordered' and Gray (1997) noted that in comparison to other areas of Special Educational Needs (SEN), the education of pupils with SEBD was the most contentious:

> There is a worrying and growing separation of SEBD from consideration of
> SEN issues in general, with resurgence in public discussion of concepts
> such as 'unteachable' which formally disappeared from the education
> vocabulary with the 1944 Education Act and has not even applied to
> those children with the most significant learning disabilities since 1970.
> (Gray, 1997, p22)

According to Gray, being labelled SEBD has more negative connotations for the pupils than other descriptors of special educational needs. He argued that labelling pupils as SEBD is related to the psychological assessment process. However confidence in the discipline of psychology was evident in The *Warnock Report* (DES, 1978), which saw a pre-eminent role for psychology in promoting collaboration between parents and schools. The *Warnock Report* (1978) recommended that psychologists and psychiatrists should remain foremost in helping teachers and parents deal with pupils assessed as having SEBD. The idea that there can be a meaningful communication between professionals, parents, and children is central to this

study which acknowledges that a power imbalance exists in professional discourse. Croll and Moses (1985) and Galloway, et al. (1994) argued that the power imbalance between parents and professionals was directly related to the way in which society has valued the "expert knowledge" of professionals over the experiential knowledge of parents. The impetus to examine the effects of adopting a social constructionist position in relation to pupils with problem behaviour stemmed from a growing disquiet on the part of the author about the value of applying approaches to working with pupils with SEBD which are informed by mainstream psychological theories.

In order to support pupils assessed as having SEBD, the pedagogical adaptation drew on Solution Focused Therapy: de Shazer (1980, 1985, 1991, 1994); de Shazer and Berg (1993, 1997); Possibility Therapy: O' Hanlon (1993, 1994, 1996); Narrative Therapy: Epston and White (1992a); Epston, White and Murray (1992b); White and Epston (1990); White (1989, 1995a, 1995b, 1997). The aim of a behaviour support intervention is to assist pupils in their mainstream schools. If a behaviour support intervention is unsuccessful, the child may be excluded from school or be placed in a special school for children with behavioural difficulties. Adopting a social constructionist position requires the adoption of a more quizzical and reflective stance to behaviour in order to challenge the taken for granted notion that there is something intrinsically wrong with the pupil. Adopting this position requires that those in authority grapple with questions of power and social justice. Freedman and Coombs (1996) described how our beliefs are shaped by taken for granted assumptions about realities:

> *Societies construct the lens through which their members interpret the world.*
> *The realities that each of us takes for granted are the realities which our*
> *societies have surrounded us with since birth. These realities provide the*
> *beliefs practices, words and experiences from which we make up our lives,*
> *or as they say in postmodernist jargon 'constitute our lives'.*
> (Freedman and Coombs, 1996, p16)

The next section of this chapter examines the challenge which social constructionism poses to mainstream psychological theories. This will be followed by an outline of the broad themes of the thesis in relation to the theoretical position. The subsequent sections describe the role of the researcher in relation to the study and provide a brief overview of Solution Oriented therapy. The final part sets out the research questions and outlines the remaining chapters of the thesis.

1.3 Social constructionism: a challenge to mainstream psychology

Despite the concerns of social psychologists (Ring 1967; Harre and Secord 1972; McGuire 1973) that the study of individual pathology was over emphasised, ideas about what constitutes 'normality' continue to dominate educational and psychological discourse and practice. The psychological models, which have been most influential in relation to how teachers respond to pupils with SEBD, are: psychodynamic theory, behaviourist theory and humanistic psychology. The psychodynamic theories of Freud and the neo-Freudians, gave rise to the Child Guidance Clinics to which pupils with SEBD could be referred for therapeutic

interventions aimed at exploring the extent of their emotional damage. The hope was to restore pupils to a state of emotional stability. Eysenk (1957) noted however, that the effectiveness of psychotherapy had been criticised by Landis (1938); Denker (1946) and that its effectiveness as a treatment model was questionable. In contrast to psychotherapeutic responses to pupils with behavioural difficulties is that of behaviour modification which developed from the work of Skinner (1957) who proposed that a process of operant conditioning could extinguish anti-social behaviours by the application of rewards and re-inforcement. The notion that 'appropriate responses' could be reinforced has resulted in the widespread practice of pupils being given stickers for achieving goals ranging from good handwriting to best speller. After thirty years of rewarding positive behaviour and trying to extinguish those behaviours, which are considered inappropriate, teachers are reported to feel less confident about the merit of advice from psychologists which is based on behaviourist psychology. The most recent survey by the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS 2003) on educational provision for pupils with SEBD revealed that 70% of teachers in Scotland were dissatisfied with current support.

Humanistic psychology began to exert an influence on how teachers respond to pupils with SEBD in the 1960's. The proponents of humanistic psychology (Maslow 1954; Rogers 1961) emphasised personal growth, self-actualisation, individual autonomy and the promotion of self-esteem. Critics of humanistic psychology argue that ideas of individual freedom and the focus on personal self are not relevant in collectivist cultures. They suggest that a preoccupation with individual freedom and the quest for the 'real self', fail to question concepts of adaptation and social control. Many programmes which have been influenced by humanistic psychology aim to promote emotional literacy and relate the ideas of high self esteem to good citizenship. It is questionable however whether there is a correlation between high self-esteem and good citizenship. It is widely accepted that people who are considered to have high self-esteem and are highly motivated, carry out tax evasion. Behaving in a respectful and way is not the prerogative of those who have high self-esteem. Nonetheless the views of Giddens (1994) illustrate the extent to which the notion that self esteem and 'good citizenship' is now considered interconnected:

> Individuals who have a good understanding of their emotional makeup
> and who are able to communicate effectively with others on a personal
> basis are likely to be prepared for the wider tasks and responsibilities of
> citizenship.

(Giddens, 1994 p16)

The language of neo-liberalism, which is evident in the views of Giddens, is also evident in the language of those psychologists who, whilst promoting the idea that people have a responsibility to become emotionally literate, fail to address issues of social justice and poverty. The history of psychology reflects a competition between two dominant philosophical traditions namely: the individual rights and responsibilities model and the community based social responsibility or collective model. Those who are critical of the neo-liberal position contend that the current state of psychology reflects a position in which issues of social justice

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are not sufficiently addressed. This tension is reflected in the work of those therapists whose practice is Solution Oriented. There are those therapists who openly espouse notions of social justice in their work, for example, White (1995b, 1997); Waldegrave (1990, 1994). Other therapists do not take into account issues of social justice and the political implications of therapy. Although problem resolution at the micro-level of the family is of benefit to society, the value of exploring the extent to which socio political issues affect the lives of those children with SEBD should not be underestimated. This study acknowledges that children who present schools with challenging behaviours often do so, because of issues related to social justice and social exclusion. The next section deals with the main themes of the study which relate to the role of expert knowledge in the construction of the pupil as SEBD, social control and social justice.

1.4 Behavioural change: social control or co-constructing change

Jones (1990), drawing on work of Foucault (1973,1980) proposed that the alliance between the discourse of medicine, psychology and education was forged in the early twentieth century in order to detect and deal with mentally defective children who were construed as 'sick' and 'needy'. He advised caution in accepting the 'truth' of objective assessments. Notions of neutrality and objectivity which are evident in the official discourses on special education often mask the lived experience of the pupils, their parents and teachers. The work of Narrative therapist Michael White (1989c 1992, 1995a, 1995b) is widely recognised as an attempt to put into practice Foucault's ideas with regard to the inseparability of power and knowledge. A key aim of this study is to explore the extent to which using an approach that is informed by postmodern thinking, offers an opportunity to work with children, teachers and parents in ways that acknowledge this power imbalance. Schools are considered difficult organisations to change. Often teachers hold strong views about what constitutes appropriate behaviour on the part of pupils. Those pupils who deviate from the norm are frequently labeled as mad or bad. Attempts at changing the attitudes and practices of staff are often met with resistance and any change that has been attempted is generally incorporated into existing practices that have allowed the organization to move back to stasis.

This research aims to explore the extent to which adopting a social constructionist approach to working with pupils and teachers, enabled teachers to begin to question taken for granted assumptions about pupils with SEBD. The involvement of parents in this process is considered crucial to its effectiveness. *The Warnock Report* (1978) recommended that professionals should carry out their assessment of a child's needs in partnership with parents and that parents should have full access to all information collected during the assessment. Warnock (1982) believed that the involvement of parents would improve education and asserted that parents have the right to demand that their child be educated. The experience of parents whose children are assessed as having SEBD does not reflect the position advocated by Warnock. They rarely make demands on the local authorities that their children be given a specific type of education. Their advice is seldom sought and their voices are

infrequently heard in the recommended texts on how to deal with pupils with behavioural problems. It is now an accepted 'truth' in Western societies that when children with SEBD grow up, they repeat the behaviour that they witnessed as children and inevitably set in motion a 'cycle of deprivation'. Winkly (1996), outlined the characteristics of children suffering from conduct disorders as a result of deprivation. According to Winkly, they were poor at making close relationships, suffered from low self-esteem, were not good at making judgments and were poor at taking responsibility. The voice of the parents and their children is absent from this text, which is written with the aim of educating educators about pupils who have social emotional and behavioural problems.

This study aims to foreground the voice of parents in order to understand better the perspective of those most involved in the problem situation. A personal aim of this study was to deepen my understanding about the process of co-constructing alternative stories with those involved. The position of the researcher is similar to that of Walter and Peller (1992), who are practising family therapists and whose practice changed because they had reflected on the social constructionist assumptions underpinning their approach. They stated:

> The language of conversation, Narrative, reflections and text has become more relevant to our approach than the language of observation, interview, information and feedback.
>
> (Walter and Peller, 1992, p 43)

Related to the adoption of a social constructionist position in therapy is the notion that the process of helping or supporting people is related to issues of social justice.

1.5 Consulting children: A Solution Oriented approach to problem behaviour

Solution Oriented approaches to behavioural problems in school has gained ground over the past five years. The ideas however, have been discussed in psychotherapy literature for over two decades. Efran and Clarefield (1992) suggested that therapists who wish to work from a social constructionist position should consider adopting a pedagogical relationship with their clients:

> Therapists are clear that they are simply working at an educational endeavour under the terms of a student-teacher contract. Authorisation to proceed does not come from having discovered objective flaws in the machinery, but from having negotiated a satisfactory agreement between participants that adheres to the limits established by the larger community.
>
> (Efran and Clarefield, 1992, p 211)

The notion that therapeutic and pedagogical ideas can be usefully fused is central to this study. Schools are considered part of the local community in ways that clinics are not. The possibility of holding Solution Oriented conversations in a local context was a notion worth exploration. Thus the possibility that teachers, parents and pupils could work together in their local schools so that the children could be better served, was a motivating factor in undertaking the research.

1.6 Social justice: social inclusion

The concept of social justice is important in this study as it relates to the way in which society responds to those children whose lives are adversely affected by deprivation. The conceptualisation of social justice which most closely identifies with that of social constructionist theorists (Gergen 1992, 1997) and those who attempt to practice a Just Therapy (Waldegrave, 1990) is that which is proposed by Young (1990) and which Gerwitz (1998, p 472) stated rests on, "a conceptualisation of injustice based on five faces of oppression: exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence". Gerwitz (1998) noted that adopting a socially just position, based on Young's conceptualisation leads to a questioning of educational policies and practices in terms of:

- *exploitative relationships.*
- *processes of marginalisation.*
- *the promotion of relationships based on recognition, respect, care and mutuality.*
- *practices of cultural imperialism.*

(Gerwitz, 1998, p 472)

In recent years therapists have begun to question their practice in relation to issues of social justice. This however, is a recent development, as therapists have generally considered issues of structural inequality to be outside their domain. Their detachment owed much to what Mair (1992) described as 'the myth of therapists expertise'. Critics of psychotherapy such as Masson (1988) attacked the foundations of psychotherapy as prejudiced and lacking integrity. He proposed that psychotherapists' preoccupation with professional survival and advancement has led their critics to charge them with neglecting issues of social justice. Kvale (1992) claimed that therapy is an inherently political activity, which has played a significant role in the reproduction of the dominant culture. His views echo those of Waldegrave (1990) and White and Epston (1990) who, influenced by the ideas of Foucault asserted that the very concept of 'therapy' is problematic as the term 'therapy' inadequately describe their practice. They invite people to consider the extent to which the problems, which bring them to therapy, are rooted in social injustice and aim to engage with the wider community. The views of those therapists who prefer to work with communities rather than individuals or individual families is pertinent to this study which acknowledges that schools, which are grounded in their local communities, may be more useful sites to hold socially just conversations. Whilst it is undeniable that the history of schooling can be interpreted as one which sought to control people, there are many educators whose theories and practice were directed at achieving a more socially just society. An alternative vision of schooling was proposed by Aronowitz and Giroux (1985); Giroux (1988, 1997) who considered that conservative critiques of schooling emphasised the reproduction of dominant conservative values and ignored the voices of those who are less powerful. Nonetheless they rejected the position of Illich (1971) who advocated the disbandoning of schools. Giroux (1997) claimed that Illich failed to take account of the struggle and conflict inherent in the educational process. The ideas of Giroux (1988, 1989, 1997) resonates with those of Freire (1972, 1974,

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1985); Apple (1982, 1993); Wexler (1995); Chomsky (1995) who considered education as being the art of the possible. Giroux believed that schools could become, "sites of possibility where notions of subordination and power could be questioned". He acknowledged the relationship between language and power and urged teachers and students to challenge those structures, which reproduce inequality.

Viewing the possibility of education as transformative differs from the conservative critique of schooling, which encourages compliance. This study seeks to challenge the view that pupils classified as having SEBD are abnormal and recalcitrant and explores the possibility of deconstructing the 'truth' of them as dysfunctional. Solution Oriented approaches to behavioural problems assumes that language and thinking are interwoven in creating different realities. The next section deals with the role of the researcher in this study and highlights the tensions facing a researcher who has the dual role of support teacher and researcher.

1.7 Researcher stance

The role adopted by the researcher was comparable to that which was advocated by Dahlberg et al (1999, p141) who, influenced by postmodern ideas, asked, "How can we conduct research about the child and his or her everyday life that recognises and values complexity and content". Gitlin (1992) believed that school-based research was valuable because it builds on existing knowledge and its findings can have real life applications. He wrote of the need to listen to the voice of the teacher in school research and distinguished between the notion of voice as airing a view and the more political connotation of voice. He stated:

> *The notion of voice can go far beyond the exploration of issues and the opportunity to speak; it can be about protest. Understood in this way voice is inherently political; its aim is to question what is taken for granted to act on what is seen to be unjust in an attempt to shape and guide future educational directions.*

(Gitlin, 1992, p23)

The possibility for conversations to become more socially just is acknowledged. It is the view of the author that in listening to, and working with the children, their parents and teachers, new learning will occur and her practice will be transformed. The present study was written from the perspective of an ordinary teacher who wished to reflect on her practice with the pupils, parents and her colleagues and be open to the contradictions which their insights might provide. A social constructionist perspective to research requires that the researcher does not aspire to discover the 'truth' of a matter, or to establish underlying cause but rather, the findings will contribute to an on going dialogue. In this study the notion of illumination is significant. Through the lens of social constructionism it was possible for the researcher to examine assumptions about education, research knowledge and language which had hitherto been taken for granted. Through his work, Foucault hoped to challenge the ways that we think and the commonsense rationality found in institutions such as schools:

> *My role - and that is an emphatic word - is to show people that they are much*

freer than they feel, that people accept as truth, as evidence, some themes that have been built up at a certain moment during history, and this so-called evidence can be criticised and destroyed.

(Foucault cited in Ball, 1990 p1)

The study represents an attempt on the part of the researcher to reflect on those aspects of her work which she is unable to change such as the language of the policy makers as reflected in the discourse of Behaviour Support (cases, referrals and observations). However the study also aimed to explore the extent to which people are indeed much freer than they think. The present study was written from the perspective of an ordinary teacher whose identity as a teacher and a woman has been shaped by powerful societal discourses about what it means to be an 'effective' teacher. Adopting a social constructionist perspective deepened the awareness of the researcher about the need to be alert to power relations embedded in the research process and to reconsider the use of language in the light of its creational properties. It was anticipated that the process would provide insights and contradictions which could become a focus for further reflection.

1.8 General aims, research questions and organisation of the thesis

Set 1

The two basic questions in this domain were:

How do pupils, parents, teachers, headteachers and psychologists construe the problem situation?

What is the effect of the problem on the lives of those most involved in the situation?

As noted previously, the notion of illumination is central to this study and there was an attempt to reflect on practice. At a time when there is an emphasis on the need for teachers to reflect and for parents to become involved in the education of their children, it seemed pertinent to explore with the headteachers, teachers, parents and educational psychologists about their understanding of the problem situation and about the impact of responding to a child with SEBD in a way which focused on competency rather than deficiency.

Set 2

This set of questions explored the extent to which those involved in the intervention considered that change had occurred, as a result of being involved in the process. Due to the systemic nature of the intervention, the focus was not just on the change in the pupil's behaviour, but related to attitudinal and behavioural changes on the part of those adults most involved in the process.

What if anything changed in relation to behaviour and thinking?

Which factors facilitated progress? Which factors impeded progress?

To what extent did the participants value their involvement in the Solution Oriented intervention?

Set 3

The third domain focused on the extent to which the process was understood as collaborative. The notion that expert knowledge and the power of professionals contribute to the construction of the identity of the pupil with SEBD is examined. In light of the social constructionist underpinnings of the approach, this domain focused on expert knowledge, collaboration, and the strengthening of client voice.

> With regard to notions of social exclusion and social justice, how did being involved in a Solution Oriented intervention assists those who are least powerful?

The process of exclusion was examined and the different ways in which participants understood the process was explored.

> To what extent did being involved in the process prevent the pupil from being involved in a process of school exclusion?

Organization of the thesis

Chapter One: Introduction.

This chapter introduces the aims and scope of the study with a broad exploration of relevant themes.

Chapter Two: Postmodernism, Poststructuralism and Social Constructionism

This chapter examines postmodern, poststructuralist and social constructionist thinking. Consideration is given to the notion that schooling and psychological theorising has contributed to the social construction of the identities and the marginalisation of pupils with SEBD.

Chapter Three: SEBD Pupils, School Exclusion and Social Justice

This chapter examines the social dilemma facing education providers who assess primary aged pupils as having SEBD and then fails to provide them with a socially inclusive education. It is argued that the exclusion of these pupils from school results in social and civic exclusion and is socially unjust. This chapter examines the implications of adopting an affirmative postmodern stance in relation to issues of inequality and social justice. Consideration is given to the transformative nature of education.

Chapter Four: Solution Focused and Narrative Therapies: Postmodern Approaches to Behavioural Problems

This chapter explores the challenges posed by postmodern and poststructuralist thinking in relation to traditional psychological interventions. It examines the origins and practice of Solution Focused and Narrative therapy, highlighting those areas of commonality and difference, both in philosophical positions and technique. Those aspects and strategies, which

were integrated into the school-based work are highlighted. There follows a description of the pedagogical adaptation of Solution Oriented therapy, which was used in the study.

Chapter Five: Methodology

This chapter describes the research design, procedures, methods and approaches to analysis of data which were used in the study.

Chapter Six: Results

This chapter outlines the case studies which constitute the results.

Chapter Seven: Analysis and Discussion

This brings together both the theoretical and empirical evidence gathered during the research study and examines the findings in relation to the research questions.

Chapter Eight: Discussion and Future Directions

This chapter reflects on the possible implications of adopting a social constructionist position in relation to developing ways of working with SEBD pupils who are often at risk of school and social exclusion.

CHAPTER TWO: POSTMODERNISM, POSTSTRUCTURALISM and SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

2.1 Postmodern family therapy and education

This chapter examines the assumptions which inform those approaches to Family Therapy, which have been influenced by postmodern, poststructuralist and social constructionist thinking. According to Beck (1993), there has been an increased interest on the part of philosophers of education in postmodernism which he considered was influenced by the thinking of Nietzsche and the later work of Wittgenstein. He considered that philosophical postmodernism represents a multiplicity of viewpoints and that the names most associated with postmodernism are Jean Francois Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and Richard Rorty. Although he recognised that Nietzsche and Wittgenstein wrote at a time that was considered the modern era, Beck (1993, p2) preferred to, "interpret postmodernism as embracing many approaches and insights, which were around before the last few decades and even before the present century". Beck believed that for most of his life he had been "something of a postmodernist".

Although most ordinary teachers are unfamiliar with the term postmodernism, it is likely that they, like Beck, might consider that their scepticism about current educational theories and their preference for a more dialogical approach to their work would admit them to the postmodernist camp. This chapter first examines the distinction between modernism and postmodernism. Secondly, the competing framework of structuralism and poststructuralism are examined, as it is not the intention of the author to conflate postmodernism and poststructuralism. Thirdly the development of social constructionism is examined and consideration is given to the notion that schooling contributes to the social construction of identities of pupils with SEBD. The opinion of Beck (1993) was useful in relation to the construction of this chapter as he advocated that educators should learn from their interactions with 'pure philosophers' and not be afraid of making mistakes:

> *I believe in taking pure philosophers seriously, but like us they make enormous errors. I feel that, in good postmodernist spirit, we who are in education should develop a positive image of ourselves as sensitive, knowledgeable people, working in our particular 'site' interacting with other scholars and learning from them, but having as much to offer as to gain and as in no way merely 'applying' the findings of pure philosophy.*
>
> (Beck, 1993, p2)

The philosophical interaction in relation to this study mostly occurred in libraries, after working with pupils who had been assessed as SEBD. This experience strengthened the belief that teachers and philosophers should be given more opportunities to meet and converse. Blase and Anderson (1995) noted that schools and colleges are 'sites' where teachers are expected to adopt a 'common sense' view of their practice without recourse to philosophical questioning. Humes (2000) observed that teachers are discouraged from asking 'why' questions and he was critical of the view of Chris Woodhead, the former chief inspector of schools in England and Wales who believed that:

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Training for headteachers ought to be practical...To suggest that they
would waste precious time sitting around pontificating on the rights
and wrongs of the latest political announcement reveals how ludicrously
out of touch and self-indulgent some academics, on occasion can be.
(Woodhead, 1998, p55)

Schools **are** places where people ask why? But their voices are not often heard. This study seeks to explore the extent to which adopting a postmodern social constructionist perspective may provide teachers and parents with opportunities to question those assumptions which have been 'taken for granted'. Notions of possibility and uncertainty are central to a dialogical approach to pedagogy as practised by Paulo Freire (1972). He advocated a form of education that was transformative. Although his ideas are considered to be informed by structuralist Marxist thinking, nevertheless, his ideas foreshadow many of the ideas held by those thinkers who advocate an affirmative postmodern position for example Young (1990); Jameson (1991); Giroux (1997); Milanovic (1995).

The approach to working in schools with children assessed as having SEBD was informed by those family therapists who work from a postmodernist position. Since its beginnings, in the early 1950's the field of family therapy has been characterised by an expansion in different types of models and treatments. Currently, the European Therapy Studies Institute estimates that there are over 500 models of psychotherapy are practised throughout the world. According to O' Hanlon (1994) the practice of Family Therapy, can be located within three different 'waves'. The first 'wave', influenced by the ideas of Sigmund Freud resulted in therapists working with families which emphasised in-depth examination of their past life in order to interpret their current behaviours. The second 'wave' focused on therapist-initiated changes in order to help counter supposedly dysfunctional patterns of behaviour. Common to first and second wave therapies was the belief that the problems which people faced reflected either a dysfunction in the person or in the system. Convinced that working with families in ways that were scientifically informed would lead to progress, the neutrality of the therapist and the therapeutic discourse was seldom questioned. The 'third wave' represented a fundamental shift in relation to working with families who came to therapy. The third ' wave' began in the late 1970' s and 1980's as therapists, influenced in part, by feminist and cross-cultural critiques of psychology began to work with families from a competency base perspective. O' Hanlon (1994) believed that:

> *The focus on problems often obscures the resources and solutions residing*
> *with clients. We no longer saw the therapist as the sources of the solution, the*
> *solution rested in the people and their social networks.*
(O' Hanlon. 1994, p23)

There was a fundamental shift from viewing people as having problems to emphasising the role of language in co-constructing change. 'Third Wave' therapists work from a postmodern social constructionist perspective and are influenced by many ideas, which contribute to a postmodern approach to psychotherapy and psychology. Although there are distinctions between the different types of postmodern or discursive therapies, it is increasingly

recognised that many therapists who work in this way are eclectic and approach their work from an integrative perspective. It is less common for therapists to adhere to one particular mode of postmodern practice. Indeed it runs contrary to a postmodern spirit to stick to a rigid orthodox practice. Practicing therapists, social workers and educators combine techniques in their work with children and families. Lebow (1997) proposed that therapists prefer to adapt and combine techniques when working with families and Hennegler et al (1998) noted that responses to serious juvenile offenders and substance offending youths were based on a combination of strategies drawn from a variety of sources within Family Therapy.

An integrative position is adopted in this study, as the ideas and practice of Solution Focused and Narrative therapies are adapted to the requirements of a school-based approach. Doherty (1991) noted that eclecticism and diversity are in keeping with a postmodern epistemology. In similar vein, Goldner (1992) considered that instead of therapists adhering to one particular model or another it would be more useful, and more in keeping with the spirit of postmodernism that therapists should consider eclecticism as important to their work. Goldner's views echoed those of Hoffman (1990), who proposed that therapists adopt the metaphor of lenses in relation to their work with families. As a result of the influence of postmodernism therapists have been more inclined to integrate ideas from different models and are less interested in adherence to one specific model. The concerns which seem to preoccupy therapists about using either one model or another are less problematic in the field of education where ideas can be usefully incorporated within a pedagogical framework in order to respond to the different needs of children. However, practising teachers could usefully learn from family therapists about the need to interrogate the philosophical assumptions, which underpin their work.

Since postmodernism and poststructuralism are often terms, which are used interchangeably, consideration is given to their distinctiveness. Both terms are best understood in relation to modernism and structuralism (Peters 1999a). It is generally accepted that poststructuralist theory is understood in terms of the challenge, which is posed, to structuralism and postmodernism is more easily understood in relation to those tenets of modernism, which are rejected.

2. 2 Modernism: Postmodernism

Many social theorists consider that in the latter part of the twentieth century we are witnessing the emergence of a new type of society, which is described as postmodern (Taylor 1997). Magnus (1995) proposed that most philosophers usually agree that postmodern philosophy opposes "foundationalism, essentialism, and realism". The term postmodernity appeared in the 1930's but became increasingly used in literature and the arts from the 1960's onwards (Featherstone 1990). Postmodernity refers to a historical epoch in the development of society that follows the period known as Modernity. Modern societies were considered to emerge in Europe around the sixteenth century and were characterised by a questioning of many of the

established ideas, which represented the thinking of the middle ages. During this Renaissance period philosophers and artists were encouraged to re-examine the cultures of Ancient Greece and question the tenets of the Catholic Church. This period heralded the period of the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, which was probably the most important development in relation to producing a modern worldview. According to Taylor (1998) the Enlightenment is a term used to:

> Describe the new ways of thinking associated with science and rationality which challenged belief systems based on religion and superstition... Enlightenment thinkers believed that society should be governed by rational principle.

(Taylor, 1997, p15)

Taylor considered that the demise of monarchies in Europe was influenced by modernist ideas about rational governance. Consequently, the emergence of concepts such as democracy, citizenship, rights and personal freedom were directly related to the development of the Enlightenment thinking. This period also witnessed the development of a new kind of economic system known as capitalism. At this time European societies became more industrialised. Modern societies were characterised by a firm belief that scientific progress, linked to the operation of the free market, would result in progress on a global scale. According to Burr (1995), this era was characterised by the hope that the applications of scientific knowledge would lead to universal progress and individual autonomy.

A diverse group of different thinkers contributed to the development of those therapies, which are often referred to as postmodern. Hoffman (1990 p10) noted "the cybernetic systems metaphor" which influenced the practice of family therapists, had been replaced by one which was postmodern and anthropological. Those who embrace a postmodern social constructionist perspective to their work value the co-construction of meaning over that of diagnosis and pathology de Shazer (1991); Friedman (1993); Goolishan and Anderson (1992); Parry and Doan, (1994); White and Epston (1990). Pare (1995) noted that postmodern therapy was influenced by the ideas of Berger and Luckman (1967); Foucault (1980); Gergen (1991). He suggested that postmodern therapists:

> ...share a social constructionist orientation that eschews objectivist and essentialist formulations. Clients are viewed in terms of their creative world making potential and the emphasis is on possibilities.

(Pare, 1995, p 6)

Steve de Shazer who is considered the originator of Solution Focused therapy noted that his later work was influenced by the ideas of Wittgenstein (1953) who focused on the relational and generative features of language. McNamee and Gergen (1991) and Guterman (1996) considered that Solution Focused therapy was postmodern and social constructionist. Michael White, who practices Narrative therapy, acknowledged that the following thinkers influenced him: Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Clifford Geertz and Jerome Bruner. White was particularly interested in integrating the ideas of philosophy with his practice of therapy although he emphasised that he was not a philosopher by training. However he attempted to apply his understanding of philosophical ides to the practice of his work. For example in

relation to Derridean deconstruction he prefaced his discussion of how he used the ideas in practice by stating 'I am not an academic' and presented his 'loose definition of deconstruction' as 'procedures that subvert taken-for granted realities and practices' (White, 1992 p121). He admitted that his understanding of deconstruction could be criticised on the grounds that it may not have been in strict accordance with Derrida's understanding of 'deconstruction' but was related to an approach to knowledge that was based on critical constructivism. Deconstruction is premised on a 'critical constructivist' position which White (1992) saw as a:

> *Perspective of world which proposes that persons' lives are shaped by the meaning they ascribe to their experience, by their situation in social structures and by the language and practices of self and of relationship that those lives are recruited into.*

(White. 1992, p121)

Derrida (1983) in a *Letter to a Japanese Friend* stated that deconstruction is not a method and cannot be transferred into one. This differed from White's interpretation of deconstruction as a set of procedures. According to Norris (1988), however, Derrida considered deconstruction "must work to problematise habits of thought". This is what White aims for in his practice. Acknowledging the influence of Bourdieu (1988), White (1992) described how, in his practice of Narrative therapy he attempts "exoticise the domestic" (ibid p121). Convinced that the 'truths' that people have about themselves could be usefully renegotiated, White developed ways of conversing which helped people understand that problems are often better views as external to the person. He termed these conversations externalising conversations, whereby people are encouraged to challenge dominant taken for granted assumptions about themselves in relation to those problems which brought them to therapy. Thus, it would appear that White's application of deconstruction embodied what Norris (1988) considered was a principle characteristic of Derrida's deconstruction of language and text. White (1992) also noted that critical constructivist thinking influenced his view of deconstruction. Educators have been discussing constructivism for more than two decades and Schubert (1986) noted that it is the branch of philosophy that is most relevant to educators. From a constructivist position, new learning on the part of children is related to their previous experiences, which can impede or facilitate further learning. (Osborne and Freyberg 1985; Driver, 1988).

Carter (1991) proposed that critical constructivists should adopt the problem posing questioning of Paulo Freire (1972) who argued that traditional 'taken for granted' assumptions about teaching and learning were characterised by passivity on the part of students and the adoption of an expert position on the part of the educator. Influenced in part by Marxism, Freire emphasised the notion of dialogue in relation to pedagogy and considered that dialogical approaches to education could counter oppressive and unjust practices in societies. However, the Marxist ideology, which informed the work of radical educators, required revision in the light of postmodern thinking. This was because adopting postmodern position entails a shift in thinking about belief in the usefulness of committing to a particular ideology

or "grand Narrative". Giroux (1992) altered his ideas in order to accommodate the ideas of postmodernism and poststructuralism.

Convinced that postmodern poststructuralist ideas could provide a basis from which more socially just society could emerge, Giroux (1992), disagreed with those who saw postmodernism as representing a nihilistic force in society. He rejected the notion that adopting a postmodernist perspective necessarily meant that issues of poverty and inequality would become matters of discourse. Lyotard (1984), defined postmodernism as "incredulity towards metanarratives", which are grand theories that attempt to explain systems in relation to an absolute truth. Lyotard argued that in order to maintain a state of stability modern societies justify their actions in relation to their belief in a grand Narrative. Examples of these grand Narratives are democracy as an enlightened form of government or that with the eventual collapse of capitalism; Marxism will deliver an ideal socialist world. Postmodernism is sceptical of rejects the foundational premises upon which these theories rest. The focus of postmodern critique is to show the inconsistencies and the instabilities of metanarratives. Social and political philosophies of the modern era were, in the main, based on the assumption that individuals can achieve a better society based on personal freedom. It was believed that through the application of scientific principles individuals would be able to control their own destinies. Milovanovic (1995), an affirmative postmodernist thinker whose ideas resonate with those of Giroux (1992), outlined the postmodern differentiation between modernism and postmodernism in terms of a number of different propositions.

2.3 Society, social structure and social roles

Milovanovic (1995) considered that postmodern thinkers have been influenced by the insights provided by the *Chaos Theory* of Edward Lorenz (1963), which gave rise to a concept in Chaos research known as the *Butterfly Effect.* This emphasised the notion that small changes in a physical system have large effects in time. Milovanovic also considered that Gödel's (1962) theorem was influential in the development of postmodern thinking. Gödel proposed that the pursuit for a permanent stable order is an illusion. He proposed that a more natural state is one which is in flux. According to Milovanovic, notions of certainty, linearity and stability are contested from a postmodern position. In psychology, repetitive behaviour patterns have been understood in terms of personality traits, which are supposed to have a relatively stable structure. The modernist quest for structure and uniformity relates to the idea that for every effect there is a cause. The belief that there is an essential self which is discoverable and centred, is contested by postmodernism which proposes that the self is constantly in a state of flux and change. This proposition runs counter to the whole movement of psychotherapy, which cherished the notion of a stable self which was self-regulatory, and in harmony with the world. From a modernist position roles become dichotomised and people either accept or reject their given roles. Thus stability is maintained by establishing a binary opposition between order and disorder. Educational establishments function from a modernist

position, where there is a clear delineation of roles. Those in positions of authority do not encourage questioning of the status quo and conformity is valued Humes, (1994; 2000). Taken for granted truths about order relate to the highly specified roles accorded to teachers and learners in state organised schools and critical dialogue between learner and teacher is actively discouraged. The involvement of parents in the education process is often tokenistic.

2.4 Agency, rationality and social change

Modernist thought elevated the notion of the self-directing individuals. The notion that humans are essentially rational and self-directing individuals is challenged by postmodern ideas of the self or subject being decentred:

> In humanist discourse, the (ideal) person is positioned as a kind of prime mover, a metaphorical source of primary power. The well –functioning person in the humanist mode is one who is 'in control of her life' a person who has 'choices' and makes them consciously.
> (Drewery and Winslade, 1997, p 36)

From a postmodernist position the notion of the autonomous individual is contested. den Ouden (1997) proposed that Nietzsche described the 'self' as a recent creation. Nietzsche believed that there was value in questioning strongly held assumptions about core values and selfhood. Questioning whether a pupil is essentially disruptive, or that a parent is essentially incompetent, is contested in this study. From a postmodern perspective, there is an emphasis on contradiction and change in relation to human identity (Gergen 1992, 1997). This study foregrounds notions of change, possibility and hope. Adopting a postmodern position in relation to pupils assessed as having SEBD requires a fundamental shift in thinking about the usefulness of describing families and children as essentially 'disruptive, vulnerable or needy'. Adopting an affirmative postmodern stance invites educators to work with others in ways that are transformative. Critical educational theorists (Apple 1982, 1993; Freire 1972; Giroux, et al 1996) criticised schools on the grounds that they operated in ways that fostered social inequalities through the use of the 'hidden' and 'official' curricula. They considered that the authority of the dominant class remained unchallenged and the experiences of less dominant voices in society remained unheard. Giroux (1989, 1992) influenced by poststructuralist and postmodern ideas, encouraged critical educators to adopt an affirmative postmodern position in their attempts to challenge unjust power structures in schools. Cannella (1997), an early years educator, reflected on the influence of postmodernism in reshaping her thinking about child development. She challenged early years educators to reconsider whether the notion of child centred education was successful in helping to create more socially just communities. She agreed with the postmodern critique of developmental psychology and the universality of educational methods, believing that such approaches favour wealthy families. Her thinking about education, initially informed by Piagetian theory, which is largely deterministic, changed to accommodate a postmodern perspective. Her changed thinking led her to assert, "The construction of knowledge is rooted in power relations" (Canella, 1997, p4).

Modernist thinking associates social change as the history of progress. Modernist thought often relied on evolutionary theory, or on the dialectical materialism of Marx, in order to explain the process of social change. Social change, viewed as a linear process, with institutions adjusting to new demands in keeping with the findings of newer forms of knowledge, was influential. Postmodernist conceptualisations of social change focus on non-linear conceptions of historical change that include a language of critique and possibility as articulated by Giroux (1989, 1992). Milovanovic, (1995) suggested that some current trends in postmodernist analysis draw on the ideas of the critical pedagogy of Freire (1985) whose work, he considered, lay somewhere between a modernist and postmodernist analysis. Freire believed that it was through a process of dialogue with others that knowledge is constructed. He thus employed similar logic as those philosophers whose ideas are recognised as having contributed to the development of postmodernism.

2.5 Expert knowledge and assessment

According to modernist thinking, the production of knowledge was related to a quest for universal truths. Knowledge, which was gained through a process of rational and logical methods, was considered superior to Narrative knowledge. Thus, explanations based on linear and deductive forms of explanation were prized in academic circles and these explanations of knowledge became the basis of theories which could be empirically tested. Local or Narrative knowledge was considered bogus and non-legitimate. Postmodernist thinking eschews the primacy of knowledge gained through deduction and rational thought and views knowledge as always partial and contingent (Sarup, 1993; Lyotard, 1984). According to Milovanovic (1995) adopting a postmodern position in relation to knowledge emphasises the ideas of "possibility and pathos over that of logic and logos" (Milovanovic 1994, p23). Influenced by Gödel's (1962) 'Undecidability Theorem', Milovanovic believed that adopting a postmodernist position challenged notions of the quest for absolute truths and opened the possibility of the existence of many different truths. Hence, postmodernists celebrate local knowledge and propose that dominant and globalised forms of knowledge subvert those voices, which seek to be heard in a local capacity. For postmodernists, knowledge is always relational. For this reason those who adopt a postmodern position, make clear their relational and ideological position.

Postmodern thinkers acknowledge the relationship between power and knowledge. Those who adopt a postmodern position in relation to therapy are critical of the power imbalance which exists between the client and the therapist. They believe that therapy should recognise the wisdom of the clients who come to them for help. Most therapists, however, stop short of admitting that political issues are relevant to psychiatric disorders. Ideas, which are prevalent in postmodern therapy, resonate with those writers and thinkers who were critical of the relationship between psychiatric assessment and social justice. Foucault was influenced

by the anti – psychiatry movement which was influential in the nineteen sixties and seventies. A prominent critic of psychiatry was Thomas Szasz (1960) who claimed that mental illness was a myth. This critique was developed by Masson (1988) who charged therapists as a group, with failure to take a stand against socially unjust practices. This critique of therapists is mirrored in the critique of educators who work with children assessed with special educational needs. Tomlinson (1981) considered that special educators routinely fail to address issues of social justice and unwittingly collude with a discriminatory system. Gergen (1992) noted that the challenges posed by postmodernism should be embraced with honesty:

> *Postmodern consciousness does not invite scepticism regarding the potentials*
> *for psychological inquiry. Rather, by demystifying the great Narrative of*
> *modernism it attempts to bring psychology and society closer together the*
> *possibility for escaping from the pretences of the past, and more fully integrating*
> *academic and cultural pursuits, is one to which I feel greatly drawn.*
> (Gergen, 1992, p28)

The pretences of the past allude to the way in which the discipline of psychology relied on the application of natural science for legitimatising practice. Gergen (1992) rejected the methods of natural science as being capable of validating truth claims from psychologists and therapists. He proposed an approach to research, which was discursive rather than method centred. However, this shift in thinking about the validity of their research project entails a reconsideration of the relationship between cause and effect.

2.6 Causality, space and time

Positivism assumes that cause and effect are related. Postmodernist thinking stipulates that cause and effect are not necessarily related. Thus uncertainty and indeterminate effects are credible features of a postmodernist study. Milovanovic (1995) considered that two approaches within chaos theory related to postmodernism. The first approach suggested that order could exist in an otherwise disorderly state of affairs. The second approach proposed that out of chaos order could emerge. Milovanovic (1995) proposed that attention to the small changes in a system can make a profound difference and suggested that involvement in small local acts can have greater effects than previously anticipated. Translated into practice this can mean that people working within monolithic systems can be assured that their small efforts to affect change will have an effect. According to Milovanovic (1995), modernist thought in relation to space and time is predicated on Newtonian mechanics, which refers to absolute space and time. Related to this notion of absolute space and time is the concept of determinism within systems. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, social psychology has been involved in exploring the causes of behaviour. Milovanovic (1995) pointed to those postmodern thinkers influenced by recent thinking about space (Serres 1982a), and mathematics (Peat 1988). Their work is focused on the concept of alternative spaces. The notion of space is particularly relevant in this study as there is an attempt to create space in language for the generation of alternative realities. This position is important in relation to this study as an acceptance of this position permits an exploration of a multi-storied approach to working with children, their families and their teachers. The teacher, child and parent can

become involved in co-constructing narratives, which will affect each one of them in ways that cannot be predicted.

2.7 Language and reality

In conventional understandings of language, Taylor (1998) noted that the signifier (the words) and the signified (that which it expresses) are accepted as referring to an objective reality. Milovanovic (1995) pointed to the work of Bohm (1980) who contended that modernist discourse uses the noun forms more than the verb forms. Therefore, there is common usage of nouns such as prediction, objectivity, and replications, which, Young (1994) suggested are considered 'givens' in research investigations. The assumption that there are discourses which are dominant and which have been accorded an authoritative status is central to an understanding of a postmodernist position. Postmodernism assumes that there is no neutral discourse. At the core of postmodernist enquiry, is an effort to unmask dominant discourses. Thus notions of what is absent, of what is not said and of those voices that are excluded are significant. Milovanovic (1995) suggested that by a process of disruption postmodern analysis could assist in the unmasking of dominant discourses. He believed that postmodern disruption can be passive or active and that it was exemplified by a passive form of disruption which is termed 'dilire'. According to Milovanovic dialogically based pedagogy such as that proposed by Freire (1985) and Aronowitz and Giroux (1985) represent an active form of disruption. A key theme of the present study is to examine the extent to which the adoption of a postmodernist perspective in conversations with teachers, parents and pupils affords an opportunity to listen to those voices, which are traditionally silent in the dominant educational discourse of SEBD.

The next section examines the distinctive origins and features of poststructuralist thought, which shares many of the assumptions of postmodernism.

2.8 Structuralism: poststructuralism

According to Schrift (1995) poststructuralism is not a grand theory with a set of commonly held assumptions. Instead, it represents an interrelationship among thinkers who have been influenced from shared sources. Peters (1999a) considered that it was useful to think about poststructuralism as a particular philosophical response which was strongly influenced by the work of Friederich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger, and which challenged the scientific justifications of structuralism. He, like Schrift (1995), advised against attempting to use the term in order to put across the idea that there is an overarching idea or theory which is 'poststructuralist'. He asserted, "the very term poststructuralism is not uncontested". He acknowledged that there were different strands of poststructuralist thought. Peters noted that Sturock (1986) considered the movement as "neo-structuralism" and that Harland (1987) conceived poststructuralism as "super – structuralism". There are certain aspects of poststructuralist thinking, however, which are common to all those who eschew structuralist

principles. In order to understand what poststructuralists have in common with each other it is useful to examine those key assumptions which underpin structuralism.

2.8.1 Structuralism

By the mid-twentieth century there were a range of theories which could be considered structural. Taylor (1998) noted how the work of Ferdinand Saussure distinguished between meaning which could be uncovered through examination of a whole language and the focus on individual words. Saussure (1857-1913) considered the founder of semiotics, argued that language is a system of signs, which are used to express ideas. Linguistic signs were, he argued, made up two elements, the "signifier" and the "signified". Words which are spoken are considered signifiers which represent a particular idea or reality which is the signified. Saussure argued that the choice of signifiers is dictated by cultural norms. He distinguished between the ways in which we use language in our everyday lives which he called parole from langue which refers to the system of language which is passed on from generation to generation. This deals with grammar, syntax and vocabulary whereas parole refers to all that which a speaker might say or understand. Therefore langue is considered a code and parole relates to meaning in different contexts. This is an important distinction in relation to understanding structuralism as it is argued that all aspect of our culture reflect underlying deep structures which need to be uncovered by social scientists.

Taylor (1998) considered that structuralist thought was influenced by the ideas of Levi Strauss (1968), whose anthropological studies aimed to uncover the way in which the underlying structures of tribal societies governed their behaviour. Levi Strauss (1968) believed that the structures of society reflect universal structures of the human mind and that people, in both primitive and industrial societies responded in similar ways. In similar vein he argued that myths in different societies have universal themes. Social scientists began to develop ways of examining human behaviour based on a structural analysis of a culture. For example, sociologists such as Parsons (1966) adopted a structuralist-functionalist approach to sociology, which attempted to show how the elements of culture are made up of binary oppositions. The concept of binary oppositions was evident in the work of Levi Strauss and who explored the ways in which ideas are represented in human thought and in language. He proposed that thoughts are classified in the form of binary oppositions, for example life or death; nature or nurture. Those cultural theorists who had embraced Marxism were also influenced by structuralism. However, they emphasised the way in which aspects of culture reflected the economic structures of societies.

The work of Louis Althusser (1965) exemplified the fusion of structuralism with Marxism. He argued that culture is part of the superstructure of society and it has a role in the reproduction of social reproduction. A structuralist Marxist understanding of the education system would highlight the role of the education system in the socialisation of young persons to accept their positions within a capitalist economy.

According to Milovanovic (1995) feminist structuralist thought such as the work of Cixous (1975) argued that cultural terms are often gendered and that a superior value is accorded to those concepts which have a masculine association over a feminine association. Structuralism, by its focus on a system and its deep structures, accords less relevance to history and sees more value in the uncovering of universal structures. The quest for a scientific and objective way of finding out about these deep universal structures meant that structuralist thinkers upheld a scientific approach to their studies. Fiske (1990, p133) believed that "structuralism teaches us to look at the deeps structure that underlie cultural and communication systems, language, myths and symbolic systems". Lye (1996) considered poststructuralism is most usefully understood as a reaction to structuralism which is characterised by a rejection of essentialising foundationalist concepts. Following the postmodern critique of the autonomous individual, poststructuralist view emphasises the primacy of language and culture in the construction of persons. Consequently different contexts provide opportunities for different selves to emerge. Such a position challenges the very basis of humanist psychology which proposes that there is a stable self, which can be uncovered and understood. Humanistic psychology has informed educational practice for many decades and many courses are geared towards helping students get to know themselves and encourage the development of self esteem through interventions designed to promote self –actualisation. Poststructuralist ideas however, challenge the notion of a deep unified reality. Attention is directed away from master theories about human behaviour. In place of these theories, there is a heightened awareness of the relevance of specific and local histories. The implications for educators in relation to adopting a poststructuralist position could be far reaching in terms of working with people of different social groupings.

2.9 Poststructuralism power/ knowledge and educational practices: the influence of Foucault

Michel Foucault devoted most of his work attempting to understand the influence of culture on our identities. Understanding the work of Foucault however is not an easy task. Ball (1990, p1) described Foucault as "an enigma, a massively influential intellectual who steadfastly refused to align himself with any of the major traditions of Western social thought". Whilst much of Foucault's writings are considered obscure and inaccessible, the work of Michael White in his practice of Narrative therapy is considered as an attempt to translate his ideas into practice. Ball (1990) noted that Foucault's works such as *Discipline and Punish* (1979) were read not just by academics, but also by criminologists and criminals. He noted that a primary concern of Foucault was the relationship between the development of scientific thought in Western societies and 'modern technologies of power'. Throughout the twentieth century, Western societies have been at the vanguard in the development of scientific approaches to problem behaviour in children. Approaches to behaviour, informed by psychological theories, are legitimised because of the scientific basis of their claims. Dominant psychological discourses relate to notions of normative behaviour and individual

autonomy. To accept as truth the knowledge claims arising from psychological research legitimates the notion that certain behaviour is abnormal and that responsibility for change remains at the individual level. Such a position fails to acknowledge the societal structures, which impact on people's lives. According to Jones (1990), the value of Foucault's analysis of power and knowledge lay in his exposition of ways in which institutions such the school, the asylum and the prison were implicated in practices of power and social control. Central to an understanding of Foucault's thinking about power is the concept of discourse, which Ball (1990) understood as:

> *What can be said and thought, but also about who can speak, when and*
> *with what authority. Discourses embody meaning and social relationships:*
> *they constitute both subjectivity and power.*

(Ball, 1990, p2)

Thus the social context in which words are uttered influence what is said. Ball (1990) considered that educational discourse excludes many voices and he valued the insights which Foucault provided in relation to dominant discourses in education. Foucault proposed, "every educational system is a political means of maintaining or modifying the appropriateness of discourse with the knowledge and power they bring with them," (Foucault, 1971, in Ball, 1990, p13). A dominant discourse in relation to pupils assessed as SEBD is that their behaviour reflects a deficiency. In order to respond in a rational and effective way the "expert knowledge" borne out of scientific studies in psychology is applied on an individual basis to the child.

According to Foucault, psychological discourse is accorded a 'truth' status and is used in the exercise of power as power-knowledge. He argued that penal institutions, asylums and schools developed knowledge about people and their behaviour, which in turn was used to shape the behaviours of the people whom they claimed to serve. Ball (1990) noted that within these institutions dominant discourses achieve a 'truth' status. To challenge the 'truth' of a psychological assessment is difficult for teachers, parents and children. Teachers are expected to accept the findings of psychologists in relation to behavioural change even when they consider that the intervention is not effective. The reason for this is that the knowledge base of the psychology is considered legitimate because it is accorded a scientific status. Social constructionist therapies offer an opportunity to work in radically different ways. Not surprisingly the ideas of Foucault have been largely ignored by educationalists (Ball 1990), with some notable exceptions such as Walkerdine (1984), who adopted a Foucauldian analysis in her study of developmental psychology and child centred education. She suggested that a staged developmental approach to children had resulted in the further classification and normalisation of children. She considered that modern psychological discourse, instead of liberating children, has resulted in them being subjected to surveillance.

More recently, Besley (2001) considered that Narrative therapy offers a radically different approach to counselling in schools. She traced the influence of Foucault on the development

of White's practice of Narrative therapy and described how, through his practice he attempts to address the notion proposed by Foucault that power is constitutive of people's lives. According to Besley, (2001 p76) Foucault's understanding of power is not related to binary ideas of good and bad, but is immananent. She noted how Narrative therapists White and Epston (1990) had developed their therapeutic practice in the light of:

> *Foucault's understanding that power is not only repressive or negative, but*
> *also 'positive' not in the sense of being good or benign, or something to*
> *aspire to but in the sense of being constitutive of people's lives.*
>
> (Besley, 2001, p 76)

White and Epston (1990) proposed that therapists should acknowledge the power relations which are inherent in the therapist/ client relationship. They emphasised the importance of therapists acknowledging that the practice of therapy per se, could be construed as part of the machinations of social control. Payne (2000 p12) noted that the use of 'externalising language' in the practice of Narrative therapy aimed not only to help people realise that the person is distinct from the problem, but also to avoid collusion in viewing problems as caused by a persons 'psychology' or 'personality'. Thus insights can be gained into the socially constructed nature of problems such as depression or anorexia which are often alluded to in terms of supposed internalised aspects of a person's personality. Besley (2001 p 77) considered the 'externalising conversations' in which Michael White engaged with people were attempts to "gain a reflexive perspective on their life and to challenge the 'truth' as they explore new options".

Leonard (1997) noted that Foucault (1983) proposed that dominant discourses of modernity, such as psychology and psychotherapy, change human beings into 'subjects' through 'modes of objectification.' This is primarily achieved by the research practices of the 'human sciences' whereby individuals become the object of study and intervention. He also noted that Foucault described the process of categorisation and classifications of persons as 'dividing practices', which was a mode of objectification that separated people. Foucault suggested that when people see themselves as objects they become subjects. Thus the person who is challenging anorexia is often referred to as an anorexic. Psychological assessments and psychiatric diagnosis are accorded a 'truth' value. White (1997) suggested that questioning notions of objectivity in their practice could help therapists reflect on the ethics of their practice:

> *In deconstructing notions of expert knowledge and of neutral observation,*
> *therapists are freed to acknowledge and to embrace the ethical*
> *responsibility that they bear for their own work.*
>
> (White, 1997, p123)

Ball (1990) noted the ideas of Foucault are under theorised among educationalists and Peters (1999), in similar vein, noted that because of state funding, and the intrinsic conservatism of mainstream education, poststructuralism will be met with resistance. The ideas and practice of Michael White and other therapists who adopt a postmodern orientation have had an impact on the practice of teachers, psychologists, social workers and others. As an

approach to working with people, it is distinctive because it does not rely on any particular techniques or strategy. It is a set of principles that underpin how people relate to each other. Besley (2001) noted that:

> *It is not just a therapy but a lifestyle and a political project that involves speaking and listening respectfully and that is concerned with different ways of producing the 'self' that have a Foucauldian basis and orientation.*

(Besley, 2001, p78)

"Just Therapy" is another approach to therapy that has influenced this study in terms of orientation. (Waldegrave, 1990, p 5) described this approach as one which "takes into account the gender, cultural, social and economic contexts of the persons seeking help". It attempts to address some of the social injustices that occur in a society. Waldegrave (1990) addresses the issue of power relations in his practice by developing a non-hierarchical system of working whereby local knowledge and experiences are accorded equal value to the knowledge of trained therapists. The accountability of the therapist to the people who consult them is also emphasised by White (1992) who aims to works in ways, which are transparent. He shares his files and notes with those who attend therapy and encourages questioning from the clients in an attempt to redress the power imbalance in therapy. This practice impacted on the way in which the present study was conducted. It heightened the awareness of the author to the value of consulting with the child, the teacher and the parents about reports, which were to be delivered about progress, or lack of progress. In relation to the dissemination of professional literature teachers and therapists have a different history. The world of therapy has, for many years, been shrouded in mystery whereas the world of education has not. Therefore it was less of a shift in practice for an educator to share books, tapes and literature about how to work in ways that inform people about educational practice. However, despite the rhetoric of parental involvement in education, the power imbalance remains. The question, which arises in relation to the development of transparent and collaborative therapy, relates to a fundamental issue about therapy per se. Do these changes in practices fundamentally transform the power relations in therapy or is therapy inevitably a 'child of modernism' Kvale (1992), which emphasises individualism and expert knowledge?

This study seeks to explore whether having conversations in the local context of school as opposed to a clinic, may address some of the difficulties, which are encountered by therapists who wish to work in ways that are socially just. The postmodern shift in Family Therapy has resulted in the possibility for dialogue to ensue across all sections of society. Conferences about how to work in this way are attended by workers from many agencies. Ideas, which originated in Family Therapy now impact on diverse groups of people and central to their discussions is the need to question taken for granted assumptions about individual efforts to challenge problems and the usefulness of ' expert' assessment. Postmodern ideas about discourse and language are now evident in medical practice, Greenhalgh and Hurwitz, (1998); addiction counselling (Diamond 2000); the practice of social work Blyth and O' Byrne (2002).

For Foucault, the preoccupation in modern societies with the cult of individualism, did not equate with freedom, but was associated with the technologies of power and social control. Ball (1990) described how Foucault identified specific knowledges in the human sciences which he proposed were involved in social control and the objectification of persons through a process of normalisation:

> *Among these are psychological, medical, penitential and educational knowledges and practice. By normalisation Foucault means the establishment of measurement, hierarchy and regulations around the idea of a distributory statistical norm. Within a given population the idea of judgement based on what is normal and thus what is not normal.*

(Ball, 1990, p2)

This study seeks to explore what it means to be assessed as SEBD, given that such an assessment is often associated with notions of abnormality and deviance. From a Foucauldian perspective, those who are involved in assessing and supporting pupils with SEBD are involved in exercising power. Foucault's notion of power differs from that of Freire (1972) and those Marxist theorists who understand power in terms of how it is used to oppress. For Foucault, power pervades all social relationships and the notion of discourse is central to this exercise of power. Pupils assessed as having SEBD, and their parents, are seldom consulted. The views of parents are accorded less significance than the views of the psychologist or psychiatrists. They too are subjected to assessment, which in turn accords them a new identity.

Central to an understanding of a postmodern social constructionist perspective to working with children and families, is the acceptance that language is constitutive of our reality. Mainstream psychological theorising about problem behaviour mainly focused on individual deficits of parents and children. Approaches to working with children with SEBD, which are informed by social constructionism and influenced by poststructuralist thinkers such as Foucault, acknowledge the relationship between language and power. Adopting a social constructionist position requires that consideration be given to ways in which dominant discourses contribute to the construction of identity, and enables questions to be asked about taken for granted assumptions about pupils with SEBD. In the past, experiential knowledge was accorded less status than expert knowledge gained through scientific investigation. Accordingly, the knowledge of the psychologist in relation to behavioural problems is given more weight than the knowledge of teachers or parents. This position has relevance for the present study, as there is an attempt to work in ways that reflect a respect for those knowledges, which according to a Foucauldian analysis, have been 'subjugated'. This shift in thinking about 'expert 'knowledge requires critical reflection of the part of professionals about how they work with others.

White and Epston (1990) considered that therapists and educators should acknowledge that their practice is inherently political. They suggest that professionals question accepted 'truths', which are taken for granted in their practice and also challenge the notion that their

professional knowledge is more legitimate than the experiential knowledge of others. They

believed that there was value in critical reflection on their practice:

> *If we accept that power and knowledge are inseparable…and if we accept*
> *that we are simultaneously undergoing the effects of power and exercising*
> *power over others then we will be unable to take a benign view of our own*
> *practices.*
>
> (White and Epston, 1990, p29)

This position resonates with Tomlinson (1981) who cautioned against benign professionalism

in relation to the social exclusion of pupils with special educational needs. Poststructuralist

thinkers contest notions of individual autonomy and hold that persons are discursively

created. Adopting such a position challenges those tenets of humanistic psychology which

inform responses to pupils with SEBD. Informed by ideas, which are integral to Humanistic

psychology, teachers routinely speak about attempting to raise a child's self-esteem. A social

constructionist perspective shifts the emphasis from self to self in relationship with others, and

foregrounds the role of language in the construction of identity. The next section describes the

development and assumptions of social constructionism, which is an epistemological position

within a postmodernist framework. Spivey (1997) noted that postmodernism and

poststructuralism share the foundations of a social constructionist epistemology where

meaning and interpretations are context specific.

2.10 Social constructionism: a postmodern framework

Guterman (1995) proposed that social constructionism is a framework which belonged to the

branch of philosophy, which is termed epistemology, and which is "concerned with the nature

of, and limits of knowledge". Burr (1995) noted that it is a theoretical orientation that underpins

new approaches in social psychology. Social constructionist ideas did not influence Family

Therapy until the mid 1980's when there was increased interest in the ideas of Berger and

Luckman (1966) who proposed a theory of reality, which was socially constructed. They

argued that humanness is a "socio-cultural variable", thus a person can adopt any number of

'actual' or 'true' forms". They believed that the notion of the essential self, like other ideas, is

open to reformulation and the "essential selfhood is a product of habitualization". They

considered notions of 'true' and ' right' ways to behave and think were the result of societal

demands, which were negotiated through language. Thus the role of language in the

construction of reality was paramount. According to Berger and Luckman (1966) language,

instead of reflecting an objective reality, was constitutive of that reality:

> *An understanding of language is thus essential for an understanding of the*
> *reality of everyday life… Language is capable of becoming an objective*
> *repository of vast accumulations of meaning and experience, which it can*
> *then preserve in time and then transmit to the following generations…*
> *through language an entire world can be actualised at any moment*
>
> (Berger and Luckman, 1966, 37)

Shotter (1994) also believed that adopting a social constructionist position emphasised the

creational, as opposed to the referential, nature of language. He, like other 'post' theorists,

acknowledged a variety of influences on the development of his thinking about a social constructionist approach to reality:

> *I have been influenced by a number of writers...all men, I am sorry to say*
> *...men like Vygotsky, Wittgenstein, Garfinkel, Bakhtin, and Mead. All of them*
> *have tried to break out he strangle hold of the idea that words work solely by*
> *'standing for things that heir function is reproductive; that they represent*
> *something already existing*

(Shotter, 1994, p 23)

In common with these thinkers Shotter recognised the creational features of language systems and challenged the view that language represented a given reality. The development of social constructionism was also influenced by the ideas of Mead (1932) who proposed that meaning is generated through symbolic interaction. Through the use of the imagination humans can understand the effect which symbols have on others. The ideas of Mead, in relation to the way in which we communicate, resonated with the work of Vygotsky (1934) in relation to how children acquire knowledge. He proposed that children gradually acquire an understanding of the world through communicating with others. Thus, it is in relationship with others that meanings are negotiated and renegotiated. Vygotsky suggested that it is through interaction with others that children can extend their limited understanding of the world. He proposed that in conversation with others they could exceed their 'zone of proximal development' and gain a deeper understanding of their world.

A further influence in the development of social constructionist epistemology is the work of Goffman (1959), who proposed that life is like theatre and that we have many selves rather than one core essential self. The notion that we have many selves and that there are multiple realities is important in social constructionist therapies. Berger and Luckman (1966) stated:

> *Every individual is born into an objective social structure within which he*
> *encounters the significant others who are in charge of his socialization. These*
> *significant others are imposed on him. Their definitions of his situation are*
> *positioned for him as objective reality. He is thus born into not only an objective*
> *social structure but also an objective social world. The significant others who*
> *mediate this world to him modify it in the course of mediating it. They select*
> *aspects of it in accordance with their own location in the social structure, and*
> *also by virtue of their individual, biographically rooted idiosyncrasies.*

(Berger and Luckman, 1966 p151)

Gergen (1973) influenced by the ideas of Berger and Luckman, proposed that social psychology was 'history' and rejected the positivist basis of research in the social sciences. He argued that that the findings of such research were not value free. Gergen (1997) proposed that ideas from postmodern and poststructuralist thinkers could be accommodated by adopting a social constructionist position. Burr (1995) identified four basic assumptions of a social constructionist position which has affinities with postmodern and poststructuralist thought and which include:

- a critical stance towards taken-for granted knowledge. Reality is created through language.
- categories used to classify things are negotiated and can be renegotiated.
- meanings are culturally specific.
- knowledge is sustained through our interactions with others.
- reality is socially constructed.

2.11 Schooling and the construction of identities

The next section examines the relationship between the history of schooling and the social construction of identities. It is argued that the assessment of pupils and their subsequent classification as SEBD, relates to issues of social control and social exclusion The history of the educational response to pupils who challenge the system is also the history of both the intellectual and structural constraints, which made it difficult for teachers to respond effectively when faced with pupils whose behaviour challenged the status quo. The construction of the identity of the effective teacher is directly related to the construction of the deviant pupil who is taken to task for not conforming. Jones (1990, p23), in a Foucauldian analysis of the urban schoolteacher, examined the relationship between the formation of the good teacher and the production of docile students. He traced the development of the urban school which, "regularised practice and formalised attendance, " from its beginnings in the Dame Schools which were characterised by an approach to schooling that was informal. Teachers in the Dame schools were unqualified. The schools were eventually condemned by the authorities as a "refuge for the destitute practiced by, amongst others, grocers, tobacconists, sailors, painters, housekeepers, and ladies maids".

The Dame schools gave way to the formation of schools which aimed at inculcating the poor to be obedient, servile and industrious. Jones showed how teacher-training manuals emphasised the pedagogic value of modesty, humility and service above critical thinking. Teacher training entrants in the nineteenth century were encouraged to be docile. Jones claimed that the trainers were more concerned about the moral character of the teacher than about matters pertaining to intellect. Intellectual teachers who disregarded authority were deemed unsuitable and construed as eccentrics. Those teachers who thought and behaved in ways, which differed dramatically from the notional norm, were eventually excluded, just like those pupils who too, differed dramatically from the notional norm. Jones noted that from the nineteenth century, both government inspectors and reformers argued that simply to teach basic education without recourse to morals would have adverse effects. By the early nineteenth century the disciplines of medicine and psychology were involved in the production of expert knowledge about the development of individual pathologies. The experiential knowledge of teachers and parents was considered unscientific and was thus of less value in relation to the formulation of educational policies, in response to pupils with behavioural difficulties. Teachers seldom disagree with psychologists or psychiatrists and this facet of their behaviour has its roots in the history of their professional development.

Jones (1990) noted that when the professional training of teachers began in the nineteenth century those in authority valued obedience in the behaviour of potential recruits to the profession. Indeed those who were intellectuals or dissidents were actively discouraged from entering the profession. The notion that obedience and compliance are sought in the teacher is still relevant today and prompted Humes (1994) to criticise the manner in which teachers who dissent are marginalised. He saw a need for those involved in education to have the intellectual courage to ask the right questions and to take issue with the prevailing orthodoxies.

The notion of questioning those taken for granted assumptions, which are associated with the assessment of pupils with SEBD, is pertinent to this study and is a central tenet of social constructionist thinking. Ball (1990) pointed to the relationship between power and language in the formulation of education policies and suggested that it is important that professionals become more questioning of accepted beliefs. A focus of this study is to explore the extent to which those involved in the process changed their thinking about the behaviour of the pupil. Ball (1990) noted how Foucault, throughout his life distanced himself from notions of universality and considered that people are much freer than they thought. There was an expectation after the Warnock Committee of Enquiry in 1978 (DES 1978) that the parents and teachers of children who have special educational needs would be able to work together in the best interests of the child. Tomlinson (1996) however, suggested that the smooth team-work advocated by Warnock (DES 1978a) has not been realised. She was also concerned that a market-driven ideology in education, would lead to the further marginalisation of pupils with special educational needs. She argued that since parents are not encouraged to question the assessment process, special needs professionals could be confident that disagreement from parents could be overcome. Galloway et al. (1994) considered that the development of categories of handicap was related to issues of social control and exclusion and pointed to the power of language in the construction of an identity. In 1886, The Idiots Act created the process whereby some individuals acquired the identity of idiot and were socially excluded. Galloway et al. (1994) noted that the twentieth century saw an increase in the official categorisation of individuals as deficient. **Table 2. 1** highlights the relationship between the official language of education and common understandings of the words used. The words in bold print are, or have been, part of the educational discourse. Common understandings of these words, according to Roget's Thesaurus (1982) are in italics. The official discourse of education accords a valued identity to those who succeed in reproducing the legitimate forms of knowledge. The prevalent model of understanding pupils assessed as having special educational needs is based upon their perceived deficits, rather than their strengths and competencies. Instead of the system being described as deficient, the recipient of the label is the pupil. The category of SEBD is distinctive because the assessment is based on inference rather than diagnostic procedures. When a teacher uses the adjectives 'disruptive' 'maladjusted' or 'delinquent' to describe pupils, then it must be assumed that there is a

relational difficulty as opposed to a physical or cognitive difficulty. **Table 2.2** serves to illustrate how a medical model, which in turn was accorded a status of truth, informed the language used to categorise and classify pupils.

Table 2.1 Descriptive categories of special educational needs and common understandings

The categories or descriptors connote deficiency. Other common descriptors, which are used in educational discourse, are more celebratory and denote value:

Idiot	*Foolish, silly, daft, senseless, stupid.*
Defective	*contaminant, fault, and weakness, inadequate, deficient, blemished.*
Maladjusted	*deviant, dysfunctional, out-with the norm*
Sub-normal	*below-normal.*
Nervous	*anxious, fidgety, restless.*
Challenging	*difficult, hairy, tricky: causing an obstacle, hindrance.*
Feeble	*helpless, powerless, inept, impotent, delicate, inadequate, insubstantial.*
Disturbed	*distressed, worried, concerned.*

Table 2.2 Common descriptors in educational discourse that denotes value

Honours:	*integrity, honesty, reverence, homage, respect, brilliance, trustworthiness.*
Masters:	*champion, ace, teacher, guru, wise man, dominant, authority.*
Excellence:	*value, calibre, goodness, merit, stature, worth, splendour.*
Commendation:	*acclaim, applause, praise, tribute, credit, recognition.*
Proficient:	*accomplished, experienced, capable, competent, skilled, qualified.*
Distinction:	*status, stature, prestige, rank, recognition, stance.*

The Warnock Committee (DES 1978a), which suggested the removal of the statutory categories of handicap of which maladjustment was one, proposed that the term maladjustment could remain as a descriptive term. Although the Committee did not endorse the phrase 'emotional and behavioural disorders', more than two decades later it remains the case that the category SEBD is not an authoritative definition and is open to different interpretations. Behaviour that might be construed as high-spirited behaviour in a private fee-paying school could result in a pupil being referred to the Reporter to the Children's Panel in a state school. Adjustment to school has been the subject of much research by educational theorists for three decades. Tomlinson (1982) argued the system of special education served the interests of professionals and that the concept of special needs was problematic:

Needs are relative, historically, socially and politically. The important point is that some groups have the power to define the needs of others, and to decide what provision shall be made for these predetermined needs. The unproblematic acceptance of 'special need' in education rests upon the acceptance that there are foolproof assessment processes which will correctly diagnose and define the needs of children. But the rhetoric of special needs may have become more of a rationalisation by which people who have power to define and shape the system of special education and who have vested interests in the assessment of, and provision of, more and more children as special, maintain their influence and interest. The rhetoric of special needs may be humanitarian; the practice is control and vested interests.

(Tomlinson, 1982, p 75)

Increasing numbers of pupils are categorised as having SEBD and are educated either in a special school or an off site unit despite evidence for over two decades that as a group, children from semi-skilled, unskilled or unemployed families are more likely to be referred to special units, SEBD schools or excluded from school. Studies indicate that since the 1970's the gap between rich and poor families has widened with grave consequences for children Howarth et al., (1999). Hayden et al.,(1996) found that in a study of sixty- five pupils excluded from primary school for behavioural difficulties, there was widespread evidence of child protection concerns and family disruption. Of particular importance in relation to the development of socially just responses to those children who are most marginalised in the education system, is the contribution of Freire (1972) who worked among the poor and dispossessed in Brazil. He was critical of educational practices which are based on technical and transmission approaches and proposed that education should be dialogical. He argued that educational practices which failed to be transformative when they invited learners to be passive. He termed this method of teaching as 'banking'. Freire's critique of adult education focused on the way in which this form of education alienated those who lived in poor communities and created a 'culture of silence' Freire (1972). The 'culture of silence' which is a feature of oppressed people in colonized countries, has parallels in western societies in relation to those pupils who are assessed as having SEBD. Unlike other categories of special educational needs the parents of children thus assessed do not form action groups nor do they readily complain to the Local Education authority about the type of provision, which is on offer. Instead, they accept that they and their children have failed. Poorer parents accept the judgment that their children are disruptive and seem unable to question the veracity of the assessment. Adopting a social constructionist perspective to working with pupils, teachers and parents foregrounds notions of co- construction and negotiation and is influenced by the work of Vygotsky, (1985) who suggested "the social dimension of consciousness is primarily in time and in fact, the individual dimension of consciousness is derivative and secondary" (Vygotsky in Wertsch, 1985, p 22). From this perspective learning involve pupils in a cooperative venture. By working together, it is suggested that children will acquire new strategies and new knowledge about their culture. In this view reality is co-constructed by individuals as they interact with each other. Notions of collaboration and co-construction of solutions are central to this study, which examines the extent to which adopting a social

constructionist position in relation to problem behaviour was useful to the children, their teachers and parents.

2.12 Assessment and the role of expert knowledge in relation to pupils with SEBD

Although the *Warnock Report* (DES, 1978) saw a pre-eminent role for psychology in promoting collaboration between parents and schools, this has remained largely unrealised as indicated by the increase in referrals to psychologists of pupils who have SEBD. Tomlinson (1995) observed that the role of the psychologist was more that of resource gatekeepers. She argued that the policy makers, whilst recognising the value of a multi-disciplinary approach to the question of special educational needs, have accorded the psychologist a significant role in the assessment process. Tomlinson (1981) pointed out that teachers have been disappointed in the expert knowledge of psychology. She considered that the work of psychologists is geared more to assessment and serving the needs of the local education authorities. In similar vein, Wexler (1995) claimed that psychiatry and psychology, although having contributed much to the understanding of human behaviour, have also contributed to the exclusion of others. His views resonate with Masson (1988), who challenged medical domination in the field of mental health and questioned the wisdom of putting faith in the expertise of therapists. Despite criticism, psychiatric assessment continues to be a dominant force in shaping opinion about behavioural problems. Winkely (1996) who is a psychiatrist, provided evidence that there had been an increase in mental disorder among pupils since the mid 1970's:

> *Conduct Disorder -11% among 10 year olds (Rutter 1975)*
> *Emotional Disorder 4. 5 5% of 10 year olds (Department of Health 1995)*
> *Psychotic Disorders 0. 1% (Department of Health 1995)*
> *Anorexia Nervosa 0. 55 -15 of 12 -19 year old girls (Department of Health (1995)*
> *Bulimia 1% of adolescent girls (Department of Health (1995)*
> *Encopresis 1.3% for boys 0. 3% for Girls (Rutter (1975)*
> *Hyperkinetic Disorder 1. 7% of primary age boys Department of Health (1995)*
> *Autism 0. 04% Wing (1980) found that children on the continuum of autistic disorders have been growing.*
> *Educational Difficulty Reading Retardation 19% of ten year olds (London Department of Health (1995)*
>
> (Winkly, 1996, p24)

Winkley (1996) attributed the emergence of emotional disorders to a lack of effective parenting, effects of divorce, depressed mothers, and lack of a father figure. She cited the opinion of Bowlby (1988) on the central importance of mothers in promoting the emotional well being of the child. In her summary Winkley (1996, p 23) proposed, "independence grows out of secure attachment, a strong and stable relationship with the mother which is consolidated over the first two years of life". Mothers are often viewed within the particular framework, which focuses on attachment and deprivation, as deserving of blame. The case studies cited by Winkly whilst emphasising the need for children to be given expert help, but provided no detailed account of how an intervention would proceed. There was no inclusion of education staff in the assessment process. Whilst it is indisputable that the discipline of psychiatry continues to influence the practice of many professionals, it is also true that those

professionals who are influenced by postmodern social constructionist thinking are challenging this view.

Currently, social psychologists, influenced by the thinking of Berger and Luckman (1966), and Gergen (1991; 1995; 1997) have adopted a social constructionist orientation in relation to their work with children and families. Stephenson and Johal-Smith (2001, p188), admitted that adopting a social constructionist position in relation to working in school "challenged some of the beliefs which we held to be at the centre of educational psychology particularly that of the psychologist as the expert problem analyst and solution provider". Their concerns suggests that there is a growing understanding of the implications of postmodern thought in relation to the work of educational psychologists in schools. According value to the experiential knowledge of teachers is evident in the work of White (1995) who noted:

> *I am saying that there are many teachers who already have the knowledges and the skills and the compassion, and the perseverance to profoundly influence children stories of identity. Such qualities would provide the foundation for further explorations of these knowledges and skills and for making this antidote more available to other teachers to participate in, and therefore to many other troubled children.*
>
> (White, 1995b, p 67)

White admitted however that regrettably these qualities are not 'sufficiently honoured' in the system. This study seeks to explore ways in which adopting a social constructionist perspective to working with children assessed as having SEBD may assist pupils' teachers and parents to collaborate in ways that are respectful and just.

CHAPTER THREE: EXCLUSION, INCLUSION and SOCIAL JUSTICE

3.1 Behaviour Support: social control or pupil advocacy?

This chapter begins with an examination of the evolving concept of Behaviour Support and illuminates the paradoxical nature of educational responses to pupils with SEBD. The extent to which the exclusion of pupils with SEBD from school could be considered a socially unjust response will be examined. It is argued that exclusion from school is related to social and civic exclusion and is socially unjust. The theoretical framework of justice, against which this dilemma is examined, is that of Young's (1987) theory of justice. This conceptual framework corresponds with the practice of Just Therapy (Waldegrave1990), which espouses a postmodern social constructionist position in relation to issues of justice. Adopting a social constructionist position in relation to behavioural problems involves questioning the value of normative measures of behaviour. It is proposed therefore that an approach, which questions the status quo, may provide an impetus to examine alternatives to exclusion. The educational community considers pupils who attend a Behavioural Support Unit to be disruptive. Their behaviour is often described as abnormal and disturbs the smooth running of the school. Often they are excluded from mainstream school and reintegrated on condition that they conform to the rules of the school. Rarely do schools make allowances in order that they can accommodate the child's worldview, which is considered deviant. Cohen (1985) believed that that the process, which occurs in behaviour units, is geared to the re-establishment of the status quo. He believed:

> Behavioural Units also, support classes, sanctuaries, withdrawal groups, educational guidance centres, rescue units, opportunity groups, havens, adjustment units, pastoral care unit, or special unit. These are all names used in Britain for places to send pupils who will not behave in the classroom.
>
> (Cohen 1985, p 277)

Cohen believed therapists, psychologists, and social workers were part of a massive social control programme, which saw psychiatry as replacing the older moral codes of right and wrong with a newer ethic of health and illness. He argued that the discourse of support is part of a political language, which ensures that there is conformity to the "right" worldview and that it exists to enable surveillance of those who were considered different. The notion that language is impartial and neutral, and that scientific knowledge in particular is objective, is critical to an acceptance of psychological and psychiatric truths. Diagnosis and assessments, which are believed to be the product of reasoned argument and objective inquiry, have been elevated to the realm of unquestionable truths. Jones (1990) noted that Foucault believed that the concepts of objectivity and essential truth were illusory. Foucault proposed, "Truth is a thing of this world. It is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint and it induces regular effects of power" (Foucault, 1980, cited in Jones, 1990, p102). From this perspective, the 'truth' that there are normal and abnormal behaviours is contested.

Value is accorded to the following behaviours in a school setting: sitting quietly; finishing work; not calling out; putting hand up in order to get the teacher's attention and not speaking

without being asked. These behaviours are considered 'normal'. This study seeks to challenge the view that pupils classified as having SEBD are abnormal and to question the 'truth' of the assessment of the children as dysfunctional Adopting a social constructionist perspective to working with the pupils, and their teachers does not attempt to recycle humanist ideas, nor is it a reformulation of psychodynamic theory, both of which focus on notions of, essentialism and personal autonomy. Approaches to behaviour which are informed by social constructionism, assumes that language and thinking are interwoven in the creation of different realities, all of which have validity and which are open to revision. White (1994; 1996; 1997) speaks of people being 'tyrannised' by professional knowledge and advised that professionals should be open to their possible complicity with dominant discourses which legitimate such tyranny. This stance makes sense to many people who work on a day-to-day basis with children who are categorised as having SEBD. Critical of language, which sought to categorise and objectify pupil experience, Galloway (1985) asked whether it would be acceptable to speak of deviant schools or maladjusted teachers.

3.2 Educational responses to behavioural disorder

Historically in Scotland, pupils whose behaviour was disruptive were considered criminals and in need of correction in order to purge them of their sins. McCracken (1991) described the fate of James Watt of Milne Square, Edinburgh, an 11year old boy with no previous convictions, who was sentenced in 1860 to 14 days imprisonment and 5 years detention in a reformatory school, for stealing a bottle of hair oil from a barrow. He noted that the Victorian response to the problem of the "perishing and dangerous children" described by Dickens and Chadwick was a punitive one, and that many Scottish residential schools can trace their origins to the reformatories:

> Many of the issues, which are still being discussed, have their origins in
> the 19th century: welfare or justice, care or control, sinner or sinned
> against treat, mentor, punishment, integration or segregation.
>
> (McCracken, 1991, p110)

The regime in reformatory schools was tough and oppressive. Hurt (1971) described how diet was deliberately Spartan aimed at "purging the pupils of their alleged defects, the evils of their home environment and the sins of their fathers". By 1932, the reformatory schools were given the status of approved schools, which meant that the schools accepted children who had been sentenced, by the court. With the exception of two, the schools were managed voluntarily, half of them by churches. The dominant view that this particular section of the pupil population were sick, sinful and in need of reform, was reinforced by the devolution of power to the churches and voluntary groups for their education.

The 1960's saw the emergence of research which indicated that many pupils were disaffected by what was on offer to them in schools. Research in the 1960's exemplified by Hargreaves (1975) emphasised the relationship between low expectations on the part of the school and the disruption of pupils. There was growing concern in Scotland that delinquent behaviour

was a result of an impoverished background. In 1964, the Kilbrandon Committee took the view that special educational measures should be adopted which might compensate for failures in a pupil's background. Subsequently the Social Work Scotland Act (1968) resulted in Social Work departments being more involved in the restructuring process of residential schools. Although the authoritarian and restrictive attitudes, common in Victorian times still persisted, McCracken noted that managers were forced to examine their methods of working because of the changing attitudes of the emerging social work profession and the general public.

The years 1968 -1986 saw the pattern of provision of education changing from residential schooling to local forms of intervention. Local councils came under pressure to obtain value for money in the services which they ran. Systems were established which emphasised integration. Resources were diverted from costly residential schools to the local school and community. In real terms this could mean that a child, who previously would have received an alternative day or residential placement, involving individualised work and a focus on care issues, could be either referred to an Off Site Unit, Behaviour Support or be excluded from school. McCracken (1991) stated:

> This is indeed the guiding principle of a number of regional youth strategies aimed at diverting resources away from the provision of alternative education and care and towards the child's own school. A corollary of this principle is that children should be provided with care and education in the least restrictive environment possible for them to achieve social emotional and academic growth and development.
>
> (McCracken, 1991, p113)

The notion of the "least restrictive environment" relates to notions of entitlement and rights. Pupils assessed as having SEBD, often have a restricted access to the full curriculum. The official report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate entitled *Choosing with Care* (HMI, 1990) acknowledged that effective educational provision is related to resources. This report criticised the lack of strategic planning and development of appropriate services. It noted that Local Councils were constrained by the demands of central government, which they claimed had ignored the particular requirements of pupils with SEBD. The concerns of Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) in 1990 about a lack of political will to respond justly to pupils with SEBD and a failure on the part of professionals to collaborate, still hold true more than a decade later:

> Even in the field of special educational needs, to which provision for pupils with behavioural difficulties is usually attached, national policy has not given prominence to this sector. Secondly, policy development was increasingly a joint-education – social work responsibility in which the basis for collaboration was still being explored.
>
> (HMI, 1990, p 8)

The Behaviour Support Service was formed as a result of a Strathclyde Regional Council joint social work and education initiative entitled Young People *in Trouble* (1986). The committee produced a report entitled the *Young People in Trouble Report* (SRC 1986), which made

recommendations to the Local Education Authorities in Strathclyde Region about the education and welfare of those children who displayed challenging behaviours and who were considered to be at risk. The title of the report *Young People in Trouble* located the problem with the young people and illustrates how the language used in official documents contributes to how policy is understood. Alternative titles e. g. *Schools in Trouble Report* or *Social Services in Trouble Report* would have shifted the emphasis away from the young people and located it in terms of societal deficits. However the focus of the problem was, and remains located, within individual pupils. The aims of this report were:

- *to produce an overall strategy for the coordination of services within the authority in respect of **young people in trouble.***
- *to produce practical strategies related to non-attendance at school*
- *to examine the relationship between schools and community based **treatment.***
- *to examine the role of **assessment** centres and school based facilities.*
- ***early diagnoses of problems** and the relationship between social work, education, and the Reporter in **dealing with these problems.***

<div align="right">(SRC, 1986, p1)</div>

The words in bold print suggest that the authors of the report entitled *Young People in Trouble* (SRC) understood problem behaviour from a medical perspective with attention paid to diagnosis and treatment. The language of social justice and the rights of the child are conspicuously absent from the stated aims. Local authorities were urged to devise a joint strategy involving education and social work which in order to provide counselling and support to those children who were considered to be at risk. Such a recommendation reflected a change in policy and emphasised that all pupils be taught in a local school. Financial, rather than ideological considerations were the driving force behind the initiative. The Secretary of State Scotland had transferred responsibility for List D residential schools from central government to the local authorities by March 31 1986. Consequently, the report indicated that this decision by the Secretary of State provided the stimulus for the authority to take action to devise:

> *A coherent and comprehensive interdisciplinary approach to the needs of young people in trouble. It was accepted threat the future of List D residential schools could not be considered in isolation from the future of List G residential schools, or the practices and functions of services which impinge on young people and particularly young people in trouble.*
> <div align="right">(SRC, 1986 p1)</div>

The authors of the report cited the recommendation of *The Warnock Report* (DES, 1978), which upheld the entitlement of children to be educated in their local school, as influencing their policy development in this area. A problem facing Strathclyde Regional Council was how to respond to the pupils who had previously been educated at List D schools, the funding of which had now passed from the state to the local authority. The cost of educating pupils in a residential setting is expensive. It is more cost effective to educate a pupil in his/ her mainstream school. With regard to the maintenance of a pupil in a mainstream school the *Young People in Trouble Report* advocated that, "smaller classes should be available and that senior staff assist teachers in the education of pupils who are considered disruptive". Units attached to schools were to be set up. The pupils who would previously have

experienced an expensive residential education could now be expected to be supported in a mainstream school or in an off site unit. The aim was that the pupil would eventually be reintegrated into his or her mainstream school. The speed of change was dramatic. In 1985 Strathclyde Region managed five residential schools and accessed thirteen. It became evident to those working in the field the difficulty of placing a pupil in a residential school or in an alternative day placement. The notion that most behavioural problems could be dealt with in mainstream classes gained momentum. Educational psychologists supported changes to the school systems, which acknowledged that behavioural patterns could change. McLean and Brown (1992) stated:

> Most behaviour problems are now assumed to be learned, transient and situation specific and that the school is to be regarded as the most appropriate agent for preventing, managing or resolving school related behaviour problems.
>
> (McLean and Brown, 1992, p 42)

McLean and Brown (1992 p 43) proposed that local authorities should provide a 'coherent range of integrated services to support staff and pupils'. The views of McLean (1992) echoed those of the *Young People in Trouble Report* (SRC, 1986), and the *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Discipline in England and Wales* chaired by Lord Elton and which is known as *The Elton Report* (DES 1989). This report concluded that the balance of advantage lies with the development of support teams. The need for Local Councils to devise structures, which would prevent pupils from going to alternative schools, was emphasized by HMI (1990). This strategy was produced in Scotland at a time when the education system in the United Kingdom was being reformed to accommodate the ideology of the market. During the 1990's school exclusion was on the increase and children with special educational needs were discouraged from enrolling in schools, which wished to appear marketable. Lloyd (1992) suggested that Scotland was insulated from the worst excesses of the market-led ideology, which dominated education at that time. She noted differences between England and Scotland in terms of educational responses to pupils with SEBD:

> In the move away from more specialist and residential schools towards more community-based responses, nevertheless there are identifiable differences. education and Social work are more homogeneous and centralised in Scotland. The national systems are smaller and while it is clearly possible to identify regional variation, still it may be argued that there is more standardisation of practice.
>
> (Lloyd, 1992, pvi)

Scotland was not immune however, from market pressure and School Boards often broached the subject of pupil indiscipline. Nevertheless, the *'Young People in Trouble'* strategy was significant for the following reasons:

- it established a frame of reference for education and social work staff that worked with children who were at risk.
- it endorsed the idea that collaborative working practices were important.
- it created structures in the system, which was locally responsive to the pupils, their parents and teachers.

3.3 Primary Behaviour Support: policy into practice

The Primary Behaviour Support Service was established in 1990 as an educational response to the recommendations of the *Young People in Trouble Report* (SRC, 1986). The service was accessed through psychological services and formed part of a staged intervention. The staff was considered specialists with expert knowledge whose aim was to develop alternative ways of working, in classrooms with individual pupils, assessed by the school educational psychologist as having SEBD. It was hoped that the involvement of Behaviour Support would avert the exclusion of pupils who displayed challenging behaviour. As a result, teachers who worked in the Behaviour Support Service liaised with colleagues in other agencies, namely: Psychological Services; Social Work; Learning Support Teams; English as a Second Language Service and Speech and Language Service. When the service was first established in 1990, there was one manager and three members of staff. When the study was conducted, there were five peripatetic staff, one teaching assistant and the manager of Behaviour Support. The resources provided in 1990 remained largely unchanged and consisted of two classrooms in a primary school one of which housed a unit for up to six children. A second classroom was used for the following purposes:

- staff room for 7 members of staff.
- an office for the staff.
- a "Time Out" room for the pupils.
- a designated area for parent meetings.
- a private area for consulting with staff
- a meeting room for referrals.
- a storeroom.

Access to a photocopier was negotiated with the headteacher of the primary school. There were no clerical staff and the staff shared one telephone. Although the Unit was placed in a mainstream school, the Behaviour Support staff and the school staff were managed separately. The manager of the Behaviour Support Service and one special needs assistant staffed the Unit, which the children attended on a morning's only basis. The pupils who attended the unit in the mornings exhibited behaviours which were considered extreme. In theory the children were expected to return to their mainstream schools in the afternoons. This did not always happen and some pupils remained at home in the afternoons because they were assessed as being unable to cope with the normal demands of a mainstream school without intensive support.

3.4 Staffing and procedures

The HMI Report *Choosing with Care* (1990) noted that SEBD establishments had a preponderance of women teachers working predominantly with boys and they noted that a sizeable minority had gained additional qualifications. These findings reflected the position in the Behavioural Support Service, as the teachers were all women who had extensive

experience in the field of mainstream and special education. The staff in the Behavioural Unit had volunteered to gain additional professional qualifications in order to equip them in their work with pupils who had SEBD. Their position reflected the concerns HMI (1990 p 20) who noted in their report that "few staff had formal training in dealing with pupils". When the Behaviour Support Team was first established, the members of staff were given a one-week induction alongside the Learning Support Teams who numbered approximately 80. The continuous professional development of staff was considered a priority and a senior educational psychologist was appointed in order to respond to staff development and training. and there was an emphasis on the value of teachers being involved in:

- *planning and decision-making.*
- *the creation of an atmosphere which encouraged reflection and encouraged. teachers to express their doubts and fears.*
- *acceptance of personal responsibility or ownership of the innovation.*

(Watters 1988, p 34)

At that time , Strathclyde Region promoted an approach to working in schools which was based on Behaviourist principles. Official policies on behavioural management emphasised adherence to those strategies which promoted Positive Behaviour (McLean 1990). It was widely accepted that the Behaviour Support teachers would develop strategies based on Behaviourist principles. McLean and Brown (1992) considered that the role of the behaviour support teacher was:

> *To assist the class teacher by identifying appropriate management strategies, developing individual behaviour and work programmes and resource materials for the targeted child or group.*

(McLean and Brown, 1992, p49)

The suggestion that the behaviour support teacher should identify appropriate management strategies and develop material for a targeted pupil implied that the teachers had a level of knowledge or expertise, which an ordinary class teacher would not possess. As a consequence of their links with Psychological Services and their experiential knowledge of working with pupils who had SEBD, the Behaviour Support teacher was viewed as an expert or specialist in the field of SEBD. There was a staged model of intervention and it was assumed that their work would be based on training, which had been received from the educational psychologist. There was also scope for innovative practice, which resulted in the author and her colleagues being introduced to innovative ways of working which challenged more traditional approaches and which included training in postmodern therapies.

The senior educational psychologist or the manager of the Behaviour Support Service chaired admission meetings at which the school psychologist, class teacher, and headteacher discussed the behaviour of the pupil who required support. The Behaviour Support team was present. In keeping with the recommendations of the *Young People in Trouble Report*, (SRC, 1986) it was considered essential to the success of any intervention that the class teacher be involved at the referral stage. This development was unique to this particular team and it was recognised by class teachers and many headteachers to be of benefit in the subsequent work

in school. The presence of a pupil who displays disruptive behaviour in class has, in the past, caused many teachers to feel disempowered. Their inclusion at the referral meeting validated their perspective and afforded them an opportunity to discuss the implications of including a pupil with SEBD in class activities. Each discussion lasted about 25 minutes and the support teachers were encouraged to ask questions about how the pupil behaved in class, with particular emphasis on the pupil's strong points. The focus of the discussions at this stage aimed to discover more about the capabilities of the pupil, the teacher, and the school. Examples of questions at this stage of the meeting would include:

What does the pupil do well in class?
What else?
How have you managed to work effectively with the pupil?

A secondary focus was the identification of what other supports might need to be instated to help the child and the school. It was explained that the support teacher would involve parents in their work and access support from other agencies, if required. Examples of questions at this stage of the meeting would include:

To what extent do you think that the pupil needs other support e.g. social work or speech therapy?
How have you involved his/her parents or carers?
What supports can be given to the teacher from the management team?

The average allocation to schools from the peripatetic services was two one-hour sessions per week. If input from the peripatetic service were insufficient to meet the needs of the pupil in the mainstream school, then the pupil would be considered for a placement in the unit, which operated on a morning's only basis. Concluding questions at the admissions meeting centred on realistic expectations of change and the willingness of school personnel to accommodate the need for consultation between class teacher and support staff. The manager of the Behaviour s would give a description of the role of the Behaviour Support teacher, and then directed questions to the headteacher examples of which were:

What are your expectations of Behaviour Support?
What arrangements can be made for the teacher and Behaviour Support teacher to consult about the joint work?

The need for the Behaviour Support teacher to build a respectful relationship with the pupil, parents and teachers was made explicit at this stage. Implicit in the description of the role was an understanding that the specialist teacher would be able to affect change. It was expected that the Behaviour Support teacher would arrange a meeting with the parents as soon as possible after the admissions meeting. It was explained that in school there would be a period of observation, which involved the Behaviour Support teacher observing the pupil in different contexts. The purpose of the observation period was to gain insight into how the child responded to the demands of school in terms of the learning situation and the social context. Following the observation period meetings were arranged with the class teacher in order to discuss the Behaviour Support findings and negotiate a plan.

The approach adopted by each teacher is best described as eclectic. It was expected that staff would attend training which was in accordance with official policies and which were recommended by the educational psychologist. The support teachers were encouraged to apply for formal training in different types of approaches to working with children who display behavioural problems in school. These included courses on Rogerian Counselling; Solution Focused therapy; Play Therapy; Assertiveness Training; Behavioural Management techniques

3.5 Role of the educational psychologist

The role of the school psychologist in relation to the work of Behaviour Support was, "to arrange the initial case conference and subsequent reviews of support; the educational psychologist will arrange transport arrangements for the child, if necessary" (Appendix A). Reviews with the educational psychologist were arranged by the headteacher and usually occurred once per term. Educational psychologists were not involved in the day-to-day work with the pupil, the teacher and the support teacher as their role was consultative and advisory. This practice reflected the recommendations outlined by the Scottish Executive Education Department Report, *Better Behaviour, Better Learning* (SEED 2001) which saw the key objectives of the educational psychology service as the assessment and evaluation of support programmes; the fulfilment of statutory duties in relation to the recording of children with special educational needs; the provision of training courses for teachers; conducting research and contributing to school policies. The educational psychologists also accessed support from other agencies, and consulted with staff and parents about next steps. Joint training of psychologists and support staff in Solution Oriented approaches to behavioural problems was given, thus, providing a shared theoretical framework for support staff and psychologists. Formal assessment of behavioural difficulties was out with the remit of the support teachers as it is was understood that there are occasions when a child displays behaviours, which indicate organic disorders. White (1995) believed that claims to neutrality masks the pro-cultural assumptions underpinning the work, and alerted those who are in caring professions to be vigilant about how their work can help uphold the suppression of the other. The notion of being attentive to the voice of others is central to working in a Solution Oriented way.

3.6 Absent voices

A primary recommendation of the Warnock Report (DES 1978) was that professionals should carry out their assessment of the child's needs in partnership with the child's parents. In order that such a process be facilitated, it was deemed necessary that the parents have access to all information collected during the assessment. Although the principle of parent partnership was emphasised by the Warnock Report, the exact nature of how this principle was to be translated into practice was never clearly explained. Relationships between teachers and parents, when discussing the problem of a pupil's behaviour, are often heated and feelings

can run high. Rutter (1975) indicated that in the Isle of Wight study only 1 in 6 of group whose behaviour was considered deviant was identified as having similar problems in each setting. Tomlinson (1982) suggested that the rhetoric of 'partnership' failed to address the unequal balance of power between parents and professionals. In practice professionals, not parents, have the power to define and categorise pupils as having SEBD. Parents were not invited to the initial referral meetings which were termed 'admission meetings'. The language used draws a medical model with connotations of admission to hospital. Adopting an approach that is informed by social constructionism compels those who work with children to listen to their voices and requires attendance to issues of power and social justice. Thus the assumption that parents or indeed children need not attend 'professionals meeting' must be reconsidered in the light of the social constructionist underpinnings of the approach.

3.7 Consulting the child: The Children (Scotland Act) 1995
Education policies are influenced by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) (UNCRC), which was ratified by the UK in 1991. The United Nations Convention stated that that the best interests of children are to be a primary consideration. It also stated that children's own views should be given due weight and consideration. The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 integrated aspects of family and childcare law, and amended adoption legislation. The Act sought to incorporate three main principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child namely: non-discrimination (Article 2); a child's welfare as a primary consideration (Article 3); listening to children's views (Article 12) into Scottish legislation and practice. Courts were obliged take children's welfare as the paramount consideration in making decisions about parental responsibilities. The Children (Scotland) Act (1995) was an attempt by government to fulfil its obligations to implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and its obligations under the European Convention of Human Rights. It is now mandatory that Local Councils prepare Children's Services Plans, which focus on the entitlement of children to appropriate services. The Children (Scotland) Act (1995) also represented a shift in emphasis from a view of parental rights to that of parental responsibility. The key principles outlined in the *Manual of Good Practice: Special Educational Needs in Scotland* produced by the Scottish Office for Education and Industry Department (SOEID, 1999) emphasised:

> *The welfare of the child should be the paramount consideration in making*
> *decisions affecting the child. Due regard should be given to children's*
> *views, so far as practicable and subject to their age and maturity. Children*
> *aged 12 and older are generally presumed to have sufficient age and maturity*
> *to express a view, if they wish to do so. In relation to provision of services for*
> *children by local authorities due regard should be given without discrimination*
> *to a child's religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic*
> *background.*
>
> (SOEID, 1999, p4)

The principle of paramouncy has implications for those children who are assessed as SEBD. It remains to be seen how provision for children with SEBD will be affected by legislation informed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. There exists a growing

awareness among professionals of a need to work together so that assistance to children and families can be made available. In recent years there have been indications that the government takes the notion of supporting pupils with SEBD seriously due in part about public concern over the rise in school exclusions and increased violence to staff. The Scottish Executive Education Department produced a report entitled *Better Behaviour Better Learning* (SEED, 2001), which indicated that support for children should be integrated into a "single overall framework in order to achieve a more holistic approach to supporting the needs of all children and young people," (SEED 2001, p14). The words in this report echo the recommendations of the *Young People in Trouble Report* (SRC 1988) and the Scottish Office report *Choosing with Care* (HMI, 1990). More than a decade later issues of indiscipline and social exclusion remain. This study seeks to discover whether adopting a social constructionist position in relation to consultation with pupils, parents and teachers offers an opportunity to understand more fully what it means to be excluded from school and be assessed as having SEBD. Excluding pupils with SEBD remains an option open to schools. The next section examines the extent to which such a response is related to social and civic exclusion.

3.8 Inclusion: exclusion

The terms integration and inclusion are often used synonymously. The term integration applies to a situation whereby a pupil is included in a mainstream school but follows an individualized plan, which adapts the curriculum to the needs of the child. The term inclusion refers to a process whereby the organization and curricular content is restructured in order to reflect the range of needs and abilities in the pupils. Ainscow (1997) considered that through the process of inclusion the school community builds its capacity to respond to all pupils who wish to attend the school and reduces the need to exclude pupils. According to Parsons (1996) exclusion from school is related to the notion of social exclusion. He argued that justifications for excluding pupils involve constructing the pupil as a 'culprit' rather than a 'victim', which justified responding to their 'bad' behaviour by exclusion from 'normal' schools. Bennathan (1992) alerted those in power to the possible wider social costs related to such a response:

> *Some of them become psychopaths, the criminals, the thugs, and the hooligans that lower the quality of life in our towns. They also become a serious burden on services for adults, in prisons, in hospitals, and in the trail of social disaster they leave behind in their family lives. There is at present, great public concern about drug and substance abuse, about vandalism, joyriding, public disorder, burglaries, homelessness, prostitution and alcoholism in the young. These are not disconnected phenomena. They are the end result of systems, which have failed to protect properly, to nurture, to educate.*
> (Bennathan, 1992, p7)

Parsons (1996) claimed that many people considered that Bennathan had overstated the case until "the horrors of the Bulger case were visited on the nation". Serious debate ensued about the implications of young children being out of school without careful planning of their care. Parffrey (1994) believed that apportioning blame to the different subsystems which are

involved in the process of exclusion was not a helpful way forward, and urged people to adopt a co-operative approach to solving the problem of pupil exclusion. It is reasonable to question the feasibility of cooperation if there does not appear to be a willingness on the part of politicians to admit that there are gaps in the educational provision for many thousands of children. Hayden (1997) highlighted the potential dangers of excluding primary aged children who could be put at risk:

> *Young children who are not properly supervised are at risk of harm in a whole range of ways, not least, from accidents in the home or elsewhere, but also through the possibility of becoming involved with older children out of school whose disaffection may be more marked.*
>
> (Hayden 1997p. 33)

Blyth and Milner (1993) argued that excluding children from primary school was ineffective and that the negative aspects of exclusion outweighed the advantages. Most pupils who are excluded from school understand this process as one of being suspended or expelled. The pupil is barred from entering school and understandably may feel ostracised and discriminated against. It is a school-based decision, which seeks to punish pupils whose behaviour seriously challenges the school staff. Despite governmental hype about school accountability, parental involvement and inclusive education there has been a lack of precise information about pupil exclusion. In her examination of official statistics on school exclusion Munn et al. (1997) found that there was a failure on the part of government to collate and analyse school exclusion statistics. The lack of accurate reporting masks what is for some pupils, the experience of being socially excluded. Blyth and Milner (1996) referred to school exclusion as the beginning of a civic exclusion.

Although local authority officials, teachers and parents express concern about the perceived rise in exclusions, no effective action taken to stem the tide. The extent of the problem of pupil exclusion is hidden from public scrutiny and Blyth and Milner, (1996 p3) commented that "accurate comprehensive national data concerning exclusion have not been readily available". Since 1992, schools have been obliged to publish information relating to pupil absence. Before 1994 schools classified exclusion as an authorised absence because only details about unauthorised absences had to be published. If a pupil truanted from school, then that pupil could end up as excluded because then he/ she would be classified as an authorised absence. The category of exclusion is now categorised as an unauthorised absence. The 1995/96 *Report on Attendance and Absence in Scottish Schools* issued by the government defined unauthorised absence as:

- *temporary exclusions arising from incidents in the class.*
- *truancy, an application having been made to the education authority in relation to an attendance order.*
- *truancy, an appeal having been made to the Sheriff in relation to an attendance order.*
- *family holidays where attendance is otherwise unsatisfactory.*

- *truancy defined as unauthorised from school, for any period, as a result of premeditated or spontaneous action on the part of the pupil, parent, or both. unexplained absence.*

(SOEID, 1996, p91)

Children in the care of the local authority numbered the majority of cases who were unofficially excluded from school. Stirling (1992) understood school exclusion within a framework of disempowerment and advised that future research in this area should explore the views of those most affected by the process. The official discourse in relation to the justification of the exclusion of a pupil from school privileges the opinion of the education authority. The mention of dialogue and resolution is absent from the regulations about school exclusion. Before 1995 Education Departments were not obliged to publicise the exclusion figures. Nonetheless they collated the figures and the following data shows that in Strathclyde Region that exclusion from school was routinely used as a response to challenging behaviours. After 1995 the collation of data became more difficult to understand because the language had changed. The statistics collated information in terms of day instead of pupils, thus depersonalising what for many children could be the beginning of a process of civic exclusion

Table 3. 1 Exclusions recorded 1986-1995: Strathclyde Region The Educational Institute of Scotland Report of The Ad Hoc Committee in Scottish Schools (EIS, 1995).

	INFORMAL EXCLUSIONS	2 WEEKS OR MORE.	OVER 6 WEEKS	TRANSFERRED
1986/87	9284	3014	1069	495
1987/88	9338	3050	549	451
1988/89	1083	3081	1114	325
1989/90	9408	3141	1024	49
1990/91	9630	3240	1063	421
1991/92	9702	3390	355	345
1993/94	9799	3432	866	345
1994/95	14232	3772	230	N/a

The present study seeks to illuminate how schools and parents can collaborate in order to avoid excluding primary aged pupils. Stirling (1992) suggested that there was value in finding out how the experience exclusion impacted on children. This study is an attempt to examine the different perceptions of those involved so that a fuller picture can be gained about how to avoid excluding primary aged pupils.

3.9 Combating social exclusion

The right of children to have access to education in their local community is supported by article 29(d) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Blyth and Milner (1993, 1996) warned of the dangers of understanding exclusion as a purely educational issue arguing that there was a link between school exclusion and social exclusion. Pupils who are excluded from school are likely to be poorer, more vulnerable and less supported than their

peers. It is rare for middle class pupils, regardless of their special needs, or behavioural patterns to be sent home from school for long periods of time. Many children in Scotland are adversely affected by poverty. There was a general expectation that New Labour would recognise the scale of the problem and help create a more just response to those pupils and their families who are already socially excluded. However there are those who contend that New Labour has failed to address the welfare needs of the growing categories of poor people. Hewitt (1999) claimed that some aspects of the welfare policies of New Labour differ little from their predecessors and he noted that:

> In treading a similar path to the Tories New Labour will have to make its mark in a different direction if it is to fulfil its vision of being a radical government of welfare reform. The dilemma facing New Labour is that its claim to be pursuing a radical agenda, the Third Way could result in a less than radical outcome if it fails to modernize the rundown welfare system and to reduce the growing ranks of the poor.

(Hewitt, 1999, p154)

Among those who make up the ranks of the poor are lone parents, people with disability and unemployed. Hewitt noted that 2. 7 million live in lone parent families and that 6 out of 10 lone parent families live in poverty. There seems to be a gap between policy and practice in relation to combating exclusionary practices. Specialist provision for pupils with SEBD is increasing and a significant number of pupils receive their education in alternative settings, the limitations of which have been well documented (McLean and Brown, 1992). The main criticisms of specialised off site units for children with SEBD relate to the limited access to the full curriculum, lack of facilities, artificiality of the environment and the social marginalisation, which is attached to those pupils who are sent to special schools. The reintegration rates are low and there are no official statistics about the reintegration rates of pupils who are sent to specialist SEBD provision. During a Scottish Parliamentary debate on March 22nd 2000, the education minister reaffirmed the commitment of the government to policies which promote an inclusive society. He stated the intention of an amendment to the Standard in Scotland Bill (2000) was to establish a presumption in favour of mainstream education for all young children and young people in Scotland (www. scottish parliament. uk.). He then qualified this commitment by stating:

> However, let us not be confused; this bill is not about structures. We cannot expect legislation alone to secure improvement on which the future of our young people depends. That will require the continued hard work of and commitment of everyone connected with our schools.
> (Scottish Executive, 2000b www.scottishparliament.uk p8 06 /5/00)

Doubt was expressed about the value of the legislation notably from the opposition parties. The legal opinion of Tom Mullen, a prominent legal expert at the University of Glasgow was sought and it would appears that the language of raising standards, masks further injustices which children with SEBD may soon face:

> Local Councils have no obligation to meet the underlying goal of legislation which is to raise standards. In theory, they -ministers and local authorities could meet their legal obligations, even if educational standards go down". He, (Tom Mullen) goes on to cast serious doubt on whether the duties are enforceable, given that they are discretionary. It is not the job of parliament

to pass meaningless -legislation that is not enforceable by parents-
just to give the impression that ministers are raising standards.

(www.scottishparliament.uk. p. 11 6/5/00)

The criticisms of New Labour policy reflect a growing suspicion that those pupils who are already marginalised may be further disempowered. The Education Act (1944) established 'Disruptive Units' which have been reconstituted under the Education Act (1993) as 'Pupil Referral Units'. Pupils may remain on a mainstream roll, which means they are not 'officially' excluded. Pupil referral units became part of the initiative known as 'education otherwise' advocated by New Labour as providing an alternatives to school exclusions. Blyth and Milner (1996) suggested that alternative forms of provision away from mainstream provision might be of dubious quality. The type of education on offer to the pupils is likely to include input from the voluntary sector and the role of mentoring is an option. There does not appear to be a fundamental difference between the thinking of Conservative governments and that of New Labour with regard to working with pupils who are at risk of exclusion. The Social Exclusion Unit, (SEU) produced *The Truancy and School Exclusion Report* (SEU, 1998), which recommended that the best provision in such pupil referral units involved, "a clear learning **plan** with **objectives** and **targets, time scales** for **achievement overseen** by a named **worker**". (SEU, 1998, Section 2. 27 emphases added). Concepts of negotiation, education and teaching are absent in the document but the language of industrial output is apparent. With regard to younger pupils, it recommended:

> There should be a very clear plan and time scale with good links back to mainstream provision. A key **worker** who takes a special interest in the child and who has responsibility for following up progress helps a great deal

(SEU, 1998, section 2. 27)

At a time when there is concern about a shortage of teachers, it is notable that the word 'worker' is used instead of 'teacher', which suggests that pupils may be educated by someone other than a trained teacher. The word 'responsibility' has resource implications. If the responsibility for the education of pupils lies with agencies other than the local council or schools then different standards may apply. 'Education otherwise' may mask the process of further alienation for those groups already marginalized. In Scotland two reports highlighted the relationship between inclusive education and attitudinal change. *The Report of the Beattie Committee* (Scottish Executive, SE 1999a), entitled *Implementing Inclusiveness, Realising Potential* advocated that inclusiveness in education would entail prioritising the needs of young people over that of organisational considerations. They recommended that local and national network support groups be set up to monitor effectiveness and give leadership to those parents and pupils who are often marginalised in the education system. *The Report of the Advisory Committee on Educational Provision for Children with Severe or Low Incidence Disabilities: The Riddel Report* (Scottish Executive, SE, 1999b, recommendation 4) emphasised the importance of listening to young people.

The recommendations of this report resonate with the views of Giroux (1989) who spoke of the failure of education systems to 'develop a language that engages schools as sites of possibility'. He argued that liberal educational theories which seek to compensate for deficits, also silence dissident voices and can cast the experience of the 'other' as 'deviant', 'underprivileged' or 'uncultured'. If teachers and parents are to find ways of working together in the best interests of children, the relationship between a socially inclusive education and social justice should be considered.

3.10 Social inclusion and social justice

Social inclusion, according to Baron (1998); Gerwitz (1998); Hatcher (1998) is linked to notions of social justice. The concept of social justice, however, does not have a single unitary meaning. A particular stance on social justice can have profound implications for education in terms of resource allocation and educational decision-making. Baron (1998) contended that under consecutive Conservative governments a vision of the 'good society' emerged which involved the "the celebration of individualism, competition and the decentralisation of planning and decision-making". Schools and parents became the subject of scrutiny. Better examination results and strong discipline were allegedly the hallmarks of the good school. Schools, which did not meet the criteria of the 'good' school, were blamed. Baron (1998) noted that at the same time as non-interventionist policies were implemented, which freed commerce from governmental control, a record number of acts were passed which regulated the provisions of education. Education became the focus of interventionist policies and the past two decades have seen unprecedented governmental involvement in education. Increasingly parents, pupils and teachers have been subjected to scrutiny. The discourse of targeting, achievement, and excellence is common to all schools. It is also common to all corporate business. Pupils and teachers are exhorted to aim higher, do better and achieve more. Critics of conservative and neo-liberal thinking highlighted the failure of New Labour to address the concept of Social Justice. Brown and Lauder (1996) and Gerwitz (1998) considered that the language of official policies reflected changed thinking on the part of government on issues of social justice. The discourse of 'access' replaced that of equal opportunity. As this study highlights the creational aspect of language, it is worth noting the distinctions embedded in this shift. Access refers to admittance and right of entry whereas opportunity refers to freedom and life chances. Teachers have to engage with officially sanctioned responses to social justice, therefore examination of official readings, on matters of social justice, informed by affirmative postmodern thinkers such as Young (1990) and Gerwirtz (1998, 2000) might prove illuminative. Gerwitz (2000) considered there was strength in Young's conceptualisation of social justice because it offered an opportunity to "combine what is good in Liberal Marxist and postmodernist conceptions of justice whilst overcoming their limitations".

Young (1990) understood social justice in relation to a conception of injustice and proposed a theory of justice, which is considered just, if it frees people from oppression. Oppression is conceived of as a plural concept as Young did not distinguish between different forms of oppression. This concept of social justice supports a "politics of difference", which recognises and values group differences. Accordingly the causes of injustices are seen as a combination of unequal distribution of goods and acceptance of entrenched norms and habits, which serve to marginalise and exclude others. Critical of theories of justice, which focus exclusively, on the allocation of goods or the redistribution of social positions, Young emphasised the significance of social structure in the reproduction of inequalities. Consequently Young's conception of justice begins with the concept of oppression which is defined as "the institutional constraints on self development" Young (1987, p37). The 'five faces of oppression' which were identified by Young (1990) are exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence:

Exploitation: This is believed to occur through the transfer of the results of labour from one group to the benefits of another.

Marginalisation: This refers to the process whereby groups of people are marginalised and constructs them as dependent. Young emphasises that marginalisation is harmful since it affects both the economic and social aspects of people's lives.

Powerlessness: This is defined as having to take orders but being unable to have the right to disagree with those who are in a position of power. It relates to workers being disrespected usually because of their low occupational status.

Cultural Imperialism: This refers to the way in which the dominant group in society establishes their cultural norms as universals. Consequently the norms of the oppressed group are considered deficient deficiency and their experience, accorded less value.

Violence: This face of oppression relates to the particular social context, which contributes to conflict between groups of people.

Critical of the concept of Social Justice advocated by New Labour, Gerwitz (2000) argued that their policies were likely, "to exacerbate rather than disrupt the injustices". She proposed that New Labour remain committed to 'marketization, managerialism, and pedagogic traditionalism'. *The Report of the Commission for Social Justice: Strategies for National Renewal* was published in 1994 and viewed people in terms of social capital. Riddel et al. (1998) outlined four key principles, which the commission adopted in relation to social justice:

- *the foundation of a free society is the equal worth of all citizens.*

- *everyone is entitled, as a right of free citizenship, to be able to meet their basic needs for income, shelter and other necessities.*

- *self -respect and equal citizenship demand more than the meeting of basic needs; they demand opportunities and life chance.*

- *to achieve the first three conditions of social justice, we must recognise that although not all inequalities are unjust (a qualified doctor should be paid*

more than a medical student) unjust inequalities, should be reduced and
where possible eliminated.

(Riddel, et al. 1998, p 534)

Riddel et al., (1998) claimed that the criteria for judging what constitutes unjust inequality are not made explicit in the report. They warned that polices which are based on such principles may serve to increase injustices. In particular, they highlighted the fact that the report opposes a concept of social justice, which endorses radical redistribution and condemns such a position as:

> *A subtractive and inhibiting force which busies itself for reasons ranging from*
> *asceticism to sheer envy, in taking things away from successful people and*
> *giving them to the unsuccessful (minus the considerable bureaucratic cost*

(Riddel et al,1998, p534)

Riddel et al. (1998), in a similar vein to Gewirtz (1998), and Young (1990), highlighted the limitations of a concept of social justice, such as that encapsulated in clause four of the Labour Party Manifesto, which focused on "conditional welfare" with rights being related to responsibilities. This is exemplified in the educational rhetoric of New Labour, which seeks to punish those parents who fail to fulfil their responsibilities. Crozier (1998) suggested that such prescriptive tactics would further alienate those parents whom the government sought to include. Language and power are implicated in the social construction of pupils assessed as having SEBD. They are frequently excluded from school and subsequently blamed for not being able to access the curriculum. The parents of the children are often construed as deficient and their voices excluded from official education documents. Influenced by Iris Marion Young's conceptualisation of Social Justice this study seeks to question the extent to which educational practices and policies help teachers respond in a socially just way, to children assessed as having SEBD.

3. 11 Solution Oriented therapy and social justice

Traditionally, therapy was concerned with individualised clinical applications of various approaches to problem solving. Therapeutic ideas developed with little heed of the broader political framework in which therapists operated. In recent years, influenced by postmodernist thinking, there are those such as Waldegrave (1990); Kvale (1992); White (1992, 1995b) who claim that therapy is an inherently political activity which has played a significant role in the reproduction of the dominant culture. Waldegrave (1990) and White (1995) influenced by the poststructuralist theorist Michel Foucault, acknowledge the constraints of political and social power which impinge on people's lives. According to White (1995) therapists should not ignore the contribution of powerful discourses such a therapy and psychology to the social construction of a 'spoiled 'identity which, in turn leads to social exclusion on a grand scale. He stated:

> *I think that some of the key words are exclusion, objectification, subjectification*
> *and totalisation. The ways of speaking about oneself and others, and the*
> *practices of relating to ones self and others-those that are associated with*
> *internalising discourses-are all very much about the objectification or*
> *'thingification' of persons. Over the past few hundred years, in our culture*
> *this has been achieved, in part, by the exclusions of persons and groups of*

persons by ascribing to them a spoiled identity. Of course there have been many great exclusions in the history of the world's cultures. But this modern exclusion was a different sort of exclusion not based on the absence of identity, not an exclusion based on absence of membership, but a grand exclusion based on the assignment of an identity. A marginalisation of person through identity.

(White, 1995 a, p 44)

Therapists who adopt a postmodern orientation to their work question 'taken for granted' assumptions or truths which people have about themselves and which may have contributed to the construction of their 'spoiled identity'. Influenced by a Foucauldian analyses about power and knowledge White (1995, 1997) questioned the need for therapists and psychiatrists to keep files or case notes, which are not available to the client, He described files as 'modern instruments of power' and chooses to work in ways that were transparent. In doing this, he challenges the notion that the 'expert' knowledge of the therapist, which has been informed by psychiatry and psychology, is more legitimate than that of the person who attends therapy. White's ideas in relation to the power relations in therapy correspond with those of Young (1990) in terms of his commitment to challenging unjust structures. White (1995) believed that oppressive practices could be countered in the context of therapy:

> *We can make it our business to structure the context of therapy so that it is less likely to reproduce dominant cultural forms of organisation including those that perpetuate hierarchies of knowledge and other oppressive practices.*

(White, 1995a, p. 47)

His attempts to work in transparent ways are reflected by his practice of sharing professional literature with clients so that the therapist's privileged position is challenged. He considered that this was "bringing the world into therapy". This study seeks to illuminate how the 'world' of school and the 'world' of therapy could usefully merge so that the efforts of people to challenge dominant stories of failure could be supported. White (1995b) envisaged the possibility that schools could become 'communities of acknowledgment' where the contribution of ordinary teachers is valued. The views of White (1995b) resonate with critical theorists such as Freire (1972; 1974; 1985) who considered teachers as 'cultural workers' and Giroux (1992) who made the case for teachers as 'transformative intellectuals'. Waldegrave (1990) and his colleagues who practice 'Just Therapy' explicitly link theory and practice to the cultural, social and psychological factors which have impacted on those with whom he meets in the course of his work:

> *The struggle to address the injustices to the indigenous Maori of New Zealand. The marginalisation poverty of people on low incomes, as a result of deregulated economic and labour markets; and the attempts to address the inequities that persist between men and women as the rigidities of patriarchal webs of meaning are loosened.*

(Waldegrave, 1990, p 6)

Like White (1995), those who practice a 'Just Therapy' value the experiential knowledge of the people who come to them for support. Their practice of therapy is akin to the pedagogical approach of Paulo Freire (1972) who proposed that through a process of 'conscientization' learners could critically respond to dominant oppressive practices in their societies. The practice of Just Therapy involves taking into account the micro level of the family and the

social structures at the macro level. Waldegrave (1990) noted that the practice of Just Therapy values not only the knowledge of trained therapist, but also the local knowledge of those who live in the community:

> It can be practised by a wider range of people including those with skills and community experience or cultural knowledge. These people may lack an academic background, but nevertheless have an essential ability to effect significant change.
>
> (Waldegrave, 1990, p10)

In Scotland, parents are legally obliged to send their children to school and schools have a responsibility to respond to all children in ways that are just and respectful. For large sections of the population in Scotland their experience of schooling has resulted in them believing that they are deficient. Psychological theorizing has legitimated the way in which teachers and parents respond to children who have behavioural problems. This study seeks to explore whether an approach, which challenges the authority of traditional psychological discourse, may provide a more socially just and respectful way of responding to children whose behaviour is considered disruptive.

CHAPTER FOUR: NARRATIVE and SOLUTION FOCUSSED THERAPIES: POSTMODERN APPROACHES TO BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS

4.1 Psychological interventions and postmodernism

This chapter is divided into three parts. First there is an exploration of the challenges posed by postmodern and poststructuralist thinking in relation to traditional psychological interventions. Secondly there is an examination of the philosophical underpinnings and practice of Solution Focused and Narrative therapy, highlighting those areas of commonality and difference, both in philosophical positions and technique. Aspects and strategies, which were integrated into the school-based work, will be highlighted. Thirdly there will be a description of the pedagogical adaptation of Solution Oriented therapy. At the time of Enlightenment the religious dogma of the medieval period was supplanted by a belief that scientific knowledge would lead to progress. This resulted in an expectation in Western societies that reality or truth could be uncovered by a process of empirical investigation carried out by people who had received extensive training in scientific methods. Burr (1995) noted that:

> It was now up to individuals to make judgments (based on objective,
> scientific evidence about what reality was like and therefore what were
> appropriate moral rules for humans to live by.

(Burr, 1995, p13)

Kvale (1992) believed that Psychology represented a secularised religion replacing God with a belief in one objective reality, which would be unquestioned. The findings of psychological inquiry have, in the main, provided policy makers with a rationale for intervening in the lives of those who became the targets for improvement. This position had major implications for teachers and parents whose real life experience was considered subjective and who were expected to adopt practices based on the findings of research. The conviction that the application of modernist principles represented the advancement of the human condition had wide-ranging influence in the realm of education, particularly in relation to the education of those pupils who were construed as maladjusted or deviant. The rise of the expert who spent many years training in order to gain in-depth knowledge of the human psyche and who communicated in ways which excluded ordinary people could provide an adequate description of those who practiced psychology.

Ball (1990) proposed that knowledge and practices drawn from educational sciences, including educational psychology and the sociology of education led to some pupils being construed as sub-normal. According to Ball (1990 p 4) a pseudo-scientific vocabulary emerged from these disciplines which provided teachers with, "justifications for the predictable difference in intellectual performance between social classes". He considered that the increase in profiling and records of achievement in relation to pupils, although masked by the "humanitarian rhetoric of reform" is yet another form of classification and categorization. His views in relation to education resonate with those postmodernist therapists who now

acknowledge that therapy is intrinsically political. Currently psychology is undergoing shifts in perspective from a modern view of the world and of persons, to a postmodern multifaceted view (Parry and Doan, 1994). A central tenet of this shift incorporates ideas associated with social constructionism, and which are principally concerned with identifying those processes whereby people come to understand themselves and their world (Gergen 1985, 1991, 1992). Coupled with the notion that people create reality through discursive interaction is the notion that culture creates mind (Bruner, 1986). Adopting a postmodern perspective accepts that psychology is distinctively rooted in European culture. Gergen (1991) proposed that Western individualism had a biased effect on the development of social psychological theory. He argued that in Western culture, the "self", is construed as an "endogenous bounded entity" which is the core of our individuality. Consequently, modernist responses to 'problem families' or ' problem children' failed to take adequate account of the socially constructed nature of the problems and focused on individual deficiencies. Postmodernism rejects the notion that there is an objective reality 'out there', which can be assessed by 'experts' in the field of psychology. Armstrong (1993) described the growth of psychological and psychiatric assessment of children as a form of 'policing', which goes under the guise of help. Although postmodernism invites questioning of knowledge based on 'expert' professional assessment, experts are reluctant to be questioned and increasing numbers of children are subject to assessments which assign them a label of disordered or abnormal. Hoffman (1991) noted that a shift to a postmodernist perspective involved therapists challenging the basic tenets of psychodynamic, behavioural and humanistic psychology.

Cooper, Smith and Upton (1994) noted that the origins of educational responses to pupils with SEBD are mainly based on psychological and psychiatric models despite concerns being voiced by Szasz (1960), who influenced by Gilbert Ryle's (1949) analysis of the concept of mind as a 'ghost in the machine' described mental illness as a myth. Critical of the stigmatizing labels assigned to people diagnosed with mental illness, Szasz questioned the authorial power given to psychiatrists. His ideas were considered controversial and were met with opposition from mainstream psychiatrists and clinical psychologists who, like Applebaum (1994), believed that his work justified the neglect of people who were mentally ill. To others in the anti- psychiatry movement however, Szasz influenced the way in which people diagnosed with mental illness were treated and scepticism about the value of coercive treatment intensified. The assessment of pupils as having SEBD does not take sufficient account of the wider social context. It is recognised that poverty is associated with educational failure, ill health and family break down (Social Exclusion Unit 2004). Bennathan (1992) believed that the development of mental health problems in young people was connected to issues of poverty and social exclusion. Educational responses to children who exhibit behavioural problems, however, have been influenced by psychological theories which focus on individuals as deficient or in need. As outlined previously schooling and the

construction of some pupils as deviant is linked to discourses of power. Interventions, which aim to help pupils become more cooperative, draw on psychodynamic, behavioural, humanistic and ecosystemic approaches to behaviour, all of which are predicated on modernist principles. Only rarely will a whole school subscribe to one particular approach. Such instances tend usually to be in special schools or units, where the size of the institution enables a single model to be operationalised more easily. The next section examines the main approaches which have influenced the education of pupils who are assessed as having SEBD.

4.2 Psychodynamic approach

At the beginning of the twentieth century, prominent practitioners of psychoanalytic therapy saw it as something which could be completed within a relatively brief space of time. Many of Freud's interventions were completed within the time span of a few weeks or months, yet Smail (1978) noted that Freudian theory grew in complexity as his treatment became more protracted. Budman and Gurman (1990, p2) noted that Freud met any criticism of his work with antagonism and how " great innovators such as Ferenzi, Rank, Adler, and Strebel, who expressed concern about the development of more efficient models of analysis, were ignored by Freud". There emerged a rigid orthodoxy relating to psychoanalytic practice. Masson (1988, p67) explained how Horney, a respected psychoanalyst and writer was pressurised to resign from the New York Psychoanalytic Institute after the publication of her book *New Way in Psychoanalysis* (1925). She and her colleagues, in their letter of resignation, complained:

> *Reverence for dogma had replaced free enquiry. Academic freedom had been abrogated, students had been intimidated and scientific sessions had deteriorated into political machinations.*
>
> (Masson, 1988, p 67)

Masson claimed that an adherence to dogma still exists in the training establishments today with criticism being met with disfavour. He questioned the complacency with which psychotherapists sometimes perceive themselves as wounded healers because they have undergone training analysis. This theme is echoed by Mair (1992), who criticised the idea of the therapist as an expert and pointed to the plethora of differing approaches, each of which claim to have a unique way of helping people understand their problems, in the light of a particular theoretical framework. A psychodynamic approach to working with children assessed as SEBD emphasises the inner world of the emotions. Psychodynamic psychotherapies are based on the assumption that a child's behaviour and feelings will improve once inner struggles are brought to light. There is an effort to identify a child's typical behaviour patterns, defenses and responses to inner conflicts and struggles so that the child is more able to cope with the demands of the outer world. Approaches to behavioural problems informed by psychoanalytic therapy emphasized a medical model of intervention. Laslett (1983) noted that when the category of 'maladjustment' appeared in the regulations in 1945, pupils assessed as maladjusted were placed in special schools which were situated close to hospitals. There was an emphasis on social rehabilitation and less emphasis on learning and teaching. Challenging behaviour was considered symptomatic of an underlying

illness. The notion that special schools could provide a place for children to 'act out' disturbed behaviour as a form of catharsis, was dominant. Cooper Smith and Upton (1994, p33) noted how " the school served as it were an outpatients department of the medical model, with special schools acting as something like an observation ward". Wills (1960) noted that in schools which operated as 'therapeutic communities', conventional education was only for the children who were considered sufficiently recovered to receive it. Strategies involving a psychodynamic orientation are extremely complex and usually require long-term training; therefore there has been considerable reluctance, even prejudice, regarding its widespread adoption in educational settings. A postmodernist perspective contests the notion that a trained 'expert' therapist can interpret the difficulties which a person faces. An emphasis on the individual as the locus of the problem is also challenged. Although immensely influential, psychotherapy has attracted criticism on the grounds that it largely ignores issues of oppression to do with gender and class. Garner and Gains (1996) noted that teachers viewed psychotherapists as experts who were highly trained in relation to behavioural problems and believed that teacher expertise was less relevant to helping children who display challenging behaviour. Such a positioning stands in direct contrast to a postmodern perspective in relation to behavioural problems where the therapist is construed as a co-constructor rather than an expert. Although behaviourism takes a less essentialist view, it still has its origins in clinical psychology. Cooper, Smith and Upton. (1994) believed that the popularity of behavioural approaches is due in part to its pragmatism and lack of interest in the need to explore causality.

4.3 Behaviourist approach

Interventions, which are most familiar to schools in relation to behavioural problems, are based on the behaviourist paradigm. This assumes that most behaviour is open to change and that through a process of reinforcement and rewards, behaviour which is deemed appropriate will become more frequent than those behaviours, which are considered anti social. Behaviourism is based on the presumption that human behaviour is predictable and that persons are nothing more than simple mediators between behaviour and the environment. Behaviourist approaches focus on overt behaviours and are outcome based. There is a belief that behaviours can either be reinforced, or extinguished, by building up associations with positive or negative stimuli. A behaviourist approach focuses on the contingent aspects of behaviour and aims to weaken undesired behaviours. Such approaches generally place emphasis on the role of adult or social approval and have resulted in an emphasis on the development of extrinsic rewards of which certificates, badges, point systems and happy face charts are examples. A common application of behaviourist principles is 'time-out'. This involved a pupil being placed in a different, less-rewarding situation or setting whenever he or she engages in undesirable or inappropriate behaviours. The pupil is excluded from the class in the expectation that removed from the attention-seeking situation; the incidence of inappropriate behaviours will lessen. This is a form of

internal exclusion which usually translates into a group of children from different classes, sitting outside the headteacher's office, supposedly doing work.

Behaviourist approaches are often criticised for being mechanistic and limited in what can be achieved. Nonetheless the application of behaviour modification strategies continues unabated, despite criticism from within the discipline of psychology. Behaviourism has dominated the field of education as a rational answer to behavioural problems. It is now, however, facing increased criticism from parents and teachers, for failing to help them respond effectively to children, whose behaviour is considered extremely challenging. Claims that behaviourist interventions are value free are inaccurate. Notions of structural inequalities, which impact on the behaviour of a child, are largely ignored. In effect, what may be happening is that by being rewarded for compliance, a pupil who is facing difficulties is expected to accept their lot. Thus the crucial question remains unanswered. Is it better to change an individual than challenge the status quo? In relation to behaviour modification programmes in schools it goes without saying that the status quo forms the baseline for assessment and that compliance with the rules is accorded a success rating. The *Warnock Report* (DES 1978) cautioned against using behaviour modification to the exclusion of all other methods of responding to pupils with SEBD as it implied that the teacher always acts in the right way. Other concerns relate to the lack of consultation with the child about whether the goals to be achieved, are indeed achievable.

4.4 Humanistic approach

Humanistic psychologists argued that behaviourist psychology treated human beings exclusively as objects. In 1954, Maslow, a leading theorist and organizer of humanistic psychology, created a mailing list for "people who are interested in the scientific study of creativity, love, higher values and autonomy" (Misiak and Sexton, 1973, p. 111). According to Maslow, humans are motivated to discover their 'real self'. Adopting a perspective to education, informed by humanistic psychology would emphasise the notion that children learn because they are inwardly driven to do so. Rewards are thus derived from the sense of achievement experienced through engaging in the learning process. There is an emphasis on feelings and motivation. Phrases 'such as being in touch with your self' reflect a humanistic approach to working with emotions. Goleman (1995) attributed many of evils of American Society to a lack of 'emotional literacy', which is defined as the ability to express one's emotions. He suggested that teachers should accord emotional literacy the same value as their efforts to teach pupils to read and write. Most teachers now ascribe to the notion that teaching is linked to the development of self esteem. Cruickshank (1999) in her study of the self esteem movement in the United States proposed that many social problems are now attributed to a lack of self-esteem on the part of individuals. This can distract attention way from the social - structural factors which can impact on behaviour. The discourse of humanistic psychology emphasises empowerment, freedom and individual autonomy. Humanistic approaches assume that those Western notions of normality and self-fulfillment

are universally accepted. Adopting a social constructionist postmodern perspective, however contests traditional modernist notions of the autonomous rational individual. As a result those whose work is informed by a social constructionist epistemology question the assumptions underpinning practice, which is informed by modern psychology. Reliance on psychodynamic humanistic or behavioural psychological approaches to behavioural problems however remain strong as noted by Canella (1999 p 36) who considered "the scientific notion of the child has been fully accepted and continues to dominate practice". The next section examines the development of Solution Oriented responses to pupils with SEBD in schools

4.5 Ecosystemic approach

By the 1990's the notion that behaviour is best understood in the context of the situation in which it occurs influenced many educators. Cooper, Smith and Upton (1994) proposed that educational psychologists and teachers adopt an approach to behavioural problems which was informed by systems thinking. They described the approach as 'ecosystemic' which understands human behaviour as the product of ongoing interaction between influences in the social environment and internal motivations. They attributed the theoretical underpinnings of this view of human behaviour to the ideas of Gregory Bateson (1972) and the clinical practice of de Shazer (1982, 1985); Molnar and Lindquist (1989). They outlined the influence of Von Bertalanffy (1950, 1968) who formulated a *General Systems Theory'* which proposes that elements within a system are interconnected and that there are connections between systems. Cooper Smith and Upton (1994 p 88) considered there was value in adopting an ecosystemic theoretical framework in relation to problem behaviour in school as it emphasises " the way in which changes any one part of the system will reverberate throughout the system and may lead to reverberations in allied systems". They suggested that educators could usefully incorporate the ideas of systemic family therapy to their work in schools and proposed that the ideas and practice of family therapists Selvini (1988); Minuchin (1974) and de Shazer (1992, 1985) could provide insights into how to interrupt problem patterns of behaviour. Cooper Smith and Upton (1994) described how Molnar and Lindquist (1989) encouraged teachers to analyse their own behaviour and reflect on the meaning that they ascribed to the behaviour of the pupil. According to Cooper, Smith and Upton (1994) central to an understanding of an ecosystemic approach, is the practice of reframing which involves ascribing different meaning to behaviours. They stated:

> *The very act of developing a new perception of the negative behaviour can itself remove the teachers desire to change the behaviour though, more often, it is the projection of this new perception which leads the pupil towards a conscious decision to change the behaviour pattern.*

> (Cooper, Smith and Upton 1994, p96)

Gardner and Gains (1996) considered that adopting an ecosystemic approach to behavioural problems in schools would enable professionals to look to contexts other than the school in order to understand the behaviour of a child. They pointed to the influence of Bronfenbrenner (1979) in the development of an ecosystemic approach. Bronfenbrenner outlined four

interlocking systems, which he believed influence the development of individuals. These comprise the 'micro-system', which he proposed was the level within which a child experiences immediate interactions with other people. The second influential system is the 'meso-system', which refers to the interrelationships among those contexts that a developing individual inhabits such as the relationship between the home and the school. The third system is the 'exosystem', which refers to those systems in which an individual does not necessarily participate but which, nevertheless can impact on their life. These may include social work and parental workplace. Finally for Bronfenbrenner the 'macro system' refers to the broad societal influences which impact on an individual. Cooper, Smith and Upton (1994 p 84) noted that although the ecosystemic approach originated in the field of family therapy, it is "informed by a specifically educational perspective". They locate it within the humanistic tradition of British education which "emphasises the need for schools to be run on democratic, person- centred lines, with their ultimate goal being the development of autonomous self-directing individuals". Thus Cooper, Smith and Upton (1994) whose ideas are influential in the area of teacher education associated the Solution Focused practice of de Shazer (1982, 1985) with a humanistic approach. They highlighted the difference in the 'expert knowledge' of therapists and the knowledge of teachers:

> *The approach does not propose any kind of simplistic analogy between the classrooms and the family. It is also important to emphasise that it is not suggested that practicing teachers can or should develop the level of skill and expertise possessed by trained family therapists. The approach simply proposes that it might be possible for teachers to make profitable use of systemic insights, and particular intervention techniques which follow from these insights, in their everyday interactions with students, parents, families and colleagues.*
>
> (Cooper, Smith and Upton 1994, p87)

Although an ecosystemic approach to problem behaviour on the part of pupils supports the notion that schooling contributes to the construction of some pupils as deviant (Hargreaves 1975), those who advocated that teachers adopt an ecosystemic approach failed to address the influence of postmodern and poststructuralist ideas which were evident in the work of de Shazer (1991, 1994). His practice eschewed the tenets of modernism and the evolution of his work reflected the notion that language is constitutive of reality. Strong (2000 p25) noted, " the postmodern revolution had spawned a new group of therapies". He proposed that the Solution Focused Therapy of Steve de Shazer (1985); Narrative therapy of White and Epston (1990) and Collaborative language systems (Anderson and Goolishan 1997) shared a postmodern orientation. Pare (1995) also located de Shazer's practice within a postmodern framework. The application of postmodern social constructionist ideas to the education of pupils with SEBD is not widespread in schools in Britain. Long (2000 p 281) whose text book *The Psychology of Education* is used in pre- service training courses for teachers describes a Solution Focused approach to managing behaviour as " congruent with effective problem solving techniques". He described the approach as allied to traditional counselling approaches such as Rogerian counselling. The extent to which postmodernism and poststructuralism might impact on how teachers respond to pupils is absent. The writer

focuses on behaviourist, psychodynamic and humanistic approaches to ' managing ' pupil behaviour. This study seeks to explore the extent to which adopting an approach, which is informed by postmodern ideas in family therapy may assist teachers, parents and pupils to engage in more socially just dialogues. Two approaches to family therapy, which influenced the present study, were the Narrative therapy of Michael White and David Epston and the Solution Focused therapy of Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg. The differences and commonalities in each approach are described and those aspects of each approach that influenced the pedagogical adaptation are highlighted.

4.6 Narrative and Solution Focused approaches to therapy: origins, commonalities and differences

Influenced by Berger and Luckman's (1966) treatise about the social construction of reality (1966), Gergen (1985) considered that social constructionism had wide-ranging implications for psychological practice. His views resonated with those of Anderson and Goolishan (1992) who changed their practice as family therapists after reflecting on the implications of social constructionism. They began to emphasise the co- creation of meaning.

> *The aim of the social constructionist view is to generate an alternative way*
> *of talking about a problem and therefore an alternative definition of the*
> *problem that ultimately renders the problem non-existent. The focus is*
> *on the individual definition of the problem and the development of*
> *individual answers.*
>
> (Anderson and Goolishan, 1992, p34)

Hoffman (1990) understood social constructionism as rooted in postmodernism and accepted that it involved questioning the existence of universal truths and eschewing the relevance of unitary scientific theories of social reality. According to Hoffman (1988, 1990) adopting a social constructionist position in relation to family therapy involved a shift from a structural 'expert' model of working with families to one which was collaborative and which affirmed the voice and experience of the client. Solution Focused and Narrative therapies share common assumptions: there is no single knowable reality; each person's view of knowledge is subjective (Gergen 1994, Hoffman 1992); understanding is historically and culturally relative; knowledge is constructed through interactions with others (Burr, 1995).

Hart (1995, p181) noted that approaches to therapy "do not exist in a vacuum but are influenced by the social values and ideas which legitimate their ways of practising". Despite the tendency for Solution Focused and Narrative therapists to highlight the differences in their practice, Chang and Phillips (1993) believed that there were enough similarities between the two models to make them comparable and complementary. Both models reject the notion that problems are the result of pathological structures within families and embrace a poststructuralist position with regard to the role of language in the creation of realities.

Although there are similarities between the two approaches in terms of their postmodern position with regard to language, both therapists challenge the view that their work is closely related, de Shazer (1993); White (1993). A major difference between the two approaches is that de Shazer focuses on the solution to the presenting problem. He does not explicitly

address issues of structural inequalities, which face those who come to therapy. Nor does he address issues of gender, race, culture and power in his writings. White however, addresses the way that the processes of power become internalised. He maintains that failure to address these issues means that therapists inadvertently condone the status quo. In a British context, the *Brief Therapy Practice* (http://www.brieftherapy.org.uk) has been influential in disseminating the ideas of therapists whose practice is informed by postmodernism. Training is available not only for therapists, but also, educators, social workers and health professionals.

The following section traces how different thinkers and practitioners influenced the development of Solution Focused and Narrative therapy. Durrant (1997) noted how Solution Focused therapy developed from the strategic family therapy as practised in the Mental Research Institute (MRI) in Palo Alto California by Weakland et al. (1974). Weakland was a founder member of the MRI and who believed that therapeutic interventions should be brief and based on common sense. He was influenced by the work of Milton Erickson who believed that therapists were 'symptom oriented' and suggested that an overemphasis on pathology on the part of the therapist served to exacerbate symptoms. de Shazer (1985) acknowledged the contribution of the ideas and practice of Milton Erickson to the development of Solution Focused Therapy. He said the history of solution-focused therapy could be traced from Milton Erickson's (1954) paper *Special Techniques of Brief Hypnotherapy*. However there was a difference in emphasis between the work of Weakland and de Shazer. Instead of focusing on the problem and exploring possible solutions, de Shazer chose to amplify with clients their unique competencies, and focus on those times when the problem was less dominant. Thus his practice became future oriented. de Shazer also began to use the language and ideas which the client brought to the therapy room.

Although a Solution Focused approach is considered a pragmatic one which emphasises solutions over stories, the role of Narrative in weaving the solutions together is evident in the practice of de Shazer and that of Insoo Kim Berg. Their skills as therapists allow a solution oriented story to emerge. Their respect for the unfolding story and the unique voice of the speaker is in evidence in their work. Berg and de Shazer (1993, p9) considered therapy as, "concerned with inventing, discovering and applying solutions and or results; a mutual cooperative conversation between two or more experts". The emphasis on adopting a collaborative, non-expert position is characteristic of a postmodern position. Hence Solution Focused therapy eschews notions of pathology and deep structures in relation to problems.

The early work of de Shazer was described as goal directed and ecosystemic (de Shazer 1982) and was characterized by its focus on pragmatic interventions which emphasise the future rather than the past. By 1991, influenced by Buddhism and the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1980), de Shazer shifted his emphasis to the creational impact of language on the development of problems and solutions. He considered that 'language is and creates

reality' and proposed that acceptance of the constitutive and creational aspects of language meant that engaging in solution talk could change the 'reality' of the problem. Drawing on Wittgenstein's use of the phrase "language games" de Shazer (1991, p92-93) described Solution Focused therapy as solution talk which can be understood as ' progressive narratives' which help " clients to elaborate on and confirm their stories, expanding and developing exception and change themes into solution themes". Walter and Peller (1992) outlined the main characteristics of Solution Focused therapy as a non-pathologising, future oriented and positive approach which revolves around how to construct solutions. Common to both Solution Focused and Narrative therapy are questions which are designed to reflect the epistemological position of the therapist.

Solution Focused therapists engage people in problem free talk (de Shazer 1988) with a view to discovering those times when the problem is less dominant in a person's life. By asking 'exception questions' (de Shazer 1988, 1991) therapists are encouraged to persist in being curious about those times when the strengths and competencies of a person is evident. 'Scaling questions' (Berg and de Shazer, 1993) and the 'miracle question' (de Shazer 1988) are asked in order to obtain a detailed description of a future when the problem is resolved. de Shazer (1993) suggested that a focus on language games could result in shift in emphasis from problems to solution. Challenging traditional thinking about pathology, de Shazer (1993, p89) asserted, "there is only talk about wet beds, talk about voices talk about depression". Although such a position may have been interpreted as neglectful of people's lived experiences, in practice de Shazer uncovers, through his questions those strengths which people possess despite facing difficulties. Solution Focused therapy is considered a powerful and unique approach to assisting people who face problems of alcohol and drug addiction.

Narrative therapy is often associated with Solution Focused therapy (Chang and Philips, 1993), as both approaches focus on human resourcefulness and strengths in contrast to a 'deficit model' which focuses on individual pathology. Commonalities exist between Solution Focused and Narrative practice in terms of the non-expert positioning of the therapist and an explicit acknowledgement of the resourcefulness of those who come to therapy. However the work of Narrative therapists Michael White and David Epston (1989, 1990) is distinctive because of their attempts to apply the ideas of the French philosopher Michel Foucault to their work. Payne (2000, p 39) noted how the influence of Foucauldian ideas about power and knowledge influenced the development of Narrative therapy insofar as therapy is understood as a means of assisting people to acknowledge and counteract the effects of power in their lives. White uses 'unique outcome' questions in order to highlight that the positive outcome could not have been predicted by the dominant story of failure. Once it is established that there exist unique outcomes, White (1988) influenced by Jerome Bruner's (1986) ideas about the dual landscapes of action and of consciousness also asks 'landscape of action questions' to encourage people to explore their present, past and then move to a preferred future. Landscape of consciousness questions inquire into the meanings which actions can

have on their perceptions, thoughts, beliefs, speculations, realizations, and conclusions (White 1988).

Narrative therapists like Solution Focused therapists, adopt a stance of curiosity. This facilitates the re-storying process. Narrative therapists often speak of themselves as co-authors or co- constructors of an alternative reality. Parry and Doan (1994) describe Narrative therapy as away of thinking rather than a particular treatment. This position has relevance to this particular study as the practice of teaching differs from that of a therapist or counsellor. However the practice of teaching is enriched by assimilating ideas from postmodern family therapy. The ideas of Steve de Shazer and Michael White in relation to therapy parallels ideas about pedagogical practice in relation to the following: knowledge is co- constructed (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner 1986); curiosity is valued (Dahlberg et al, 1999); the knowledge of experts is questioned (Freire, 1972; Giroux 1997). The work of teachers and therapists is conducted through language and they share a common interest in learning through dialogue. Adopting a Solution Oriented approach offers an opportunity for educators to challenge the dominant practices which affect schools. Schools are hierarchical organisations which privilege adult authority. In schools it is common practice to classify and compare children against pre- ordained developmental categories. Adopting a Solution Oriented approach in schools facilitates conversations which respect all views. Questions relating to preferred futures can be directed not only to children but also to adults. Consequently the possibility exists for a more just and dialogical approach to the learning situation. Wexler (1995 p100) was concerned that in schools there "is no engagement of the kids attention because they are not in conversation". Opportunities for teachers to reflect with therapists whose practice reflect a commitment to social justice would be a fruitful development. This study draws not only on Michael White's use of 'externalising' conversations and 'documents of support' but also on the use of de Shazer's miracle question; exception questions and scaling questions. As such it has adapted the ideas for use in classrooms and is of necessity a hybrid. What is common to the pedagogical adaptation and the therapies is a commitment to the epistemological premises of social constructionism.

Although there are commonalities between Solution Focused and Narrative therapies, different thinkers have influenced Narrative therapy. The next section will outline the broad development of some of the key ideas of Michael White with particular attention paid to those aspects of his work and philosophy that influenced this study. Carr (1998 p 486) noted that narrative therapy occupies a central position within the field of family therapy and this is due in large part to the influence of Michael White and David Epston. He noted, "the narrative approach rests on the assumption that narratives are not representations of identities, lives, and problems. Rather narratives constitute identities, lives and problems". Narrative therapists propose that the process of "therapeutic re- authoring of personal narratives changes lives, problems, and identities because personal narratives are constitutive of identity" (Carr, 1998, p486).

The term 'authoring' is drawn from the work of Myerhoff (1982) who was an anthropologist, which suggests that Michael White was influenced by a diverse group of thinkers in his development of Narrative therapy (Hart 1995). According to Hart (1995) Michael White's practice of Narrative Therapy developed in three phases. Munro (1987) considered that the early work of Michael White showed evidence of the influence of Bateson (1972) who in turn had spent eight years at the Mental Research Institute (MRI) studying the work of Milton Erickson. Therefore common to both Solution Focused and Narrative therapies was the influence of Erickson who is recognised as having influenced the ideas of Bateson and his wife the anthropologist Margaret Mead. The approach at this time was considered a strategic approach. Hart (1989) noted:

> His earliest work, developed from cybernetics, used the idea of virtuous
> and vicious cycles with problems being caused by "Deviation Amplifying
> Feedback". Applying ideas developed from Bateson (1972), White looked
> at "Restraints"; (i.e. what was stopping or restraining change occurring) as
> opposed to what was causing the problem. He used "double description"
> by contrasting the problem lifestyle with a possible new radical lifestyle.
> He then raised the dilemmas of the alternative descriptions with the family
> and established experiments through which the new description is highlighted.
>   (Hart, 1989, p182)

The late 1980s heralded the second phase of his work which emphasised meaning construction and narrative whilst concurrently developing a deeper understanding of issues of social justice. By the beginning of the 1990's the influence of poststructuralism is evident in his writings and his practice. The following table is adapted from the work of Hart (1995).

Table 4. 1 The development of the ideas and practice of the Narrative therapy of Michael White

Year	Practice	Influence	Evidence
1984- 1986	Negative Explanation Double Descriptions Restraints Externalisation of the problem. Rites of Passage Deviant Amplifying Feedback	First Order Cybernetics Bateson Strategic Family Therapy Anthropology Bateson Haley Van Genap Turner	**1984** 'Pseudo- Encopresis' From avarice to victory, from vicious to virtuous circles. 1986a Anorexia Nervosa: A Cybernetic Perspective. **(1986b)** Negative Explanation, Restraint and Double Description: A template for Family Therapy. **(1986c)** The Ritual of Inclusion: An approach to Extreme Behaviour in Children and Uncontrolled Adolescents.
1987	Re-authoring of Lives Text Analogy Dominant Narrative Documents of Support Alternative Stories Power/ Social Justice Transparent Working Practices Externalising Conversations	2nd Order cybernetics Poststructuralism Social Constructionism Interpretive Anthropology Anderson and Goolishan Myerhoff B. Bruner J. Bruner, E. Turner V. Goffman. E. Foucault Deconstructionism	**(1987)** Family Therapy and Schizophrenia: Addressing the 'in the corner style'. **(1988)** The Process of Questioning: A Therapy of Literary Merit. **(1988/99)** Deconstruction and Therapy. The Externalising of the Problem and the Re-Authoring of Lives and Relationships.
1990	Narratives and Deconstruction	Derrida Ricoeur.	**(1991)** Deconstruction

Hart (1995, p182) suggested that the practice of therapy by Michael White broadly falls into three phases. Hart (1995) proposed that White's therapeutic practice developed in three phases. Up until the 1980's it appeared that his work reflected the influence of Gregory Bateson who applied a system of 'Strategic Therapy' and was interested in the notion of cybernetics. Hart suggested that White began his use of "externalising the problem" which focused on helping people solve particular problems. By the late 1980's Hart considered that White moved to an approach which emphasised meaning making, construction and narrative. It is at this time that there is evidence that his work incorporates notions of social injustice. Tomm (1989) explained that White cited two major influences on his work at that stage. The first was Gregory Bateson (1972, 1979). White was interested in Bateson's emphasis on the importance of epistemology. Tomm (1989 p 54) noted that White was interested in the contribution of Bateson's ideas in relation to, " how we know what we know and of the basic differences that make a difference in living systems and of the ecological patterns that connect". White also acknowledged the influence of Michel Foucault (1965, 1973.)

4.6.1 Externalising conversations: consulting with children
White's (1986) earlier work with children involved them identifying a problem as external to themselves and seeking support from significant people in their life to help them in their challenge. The problem was personified into another character or object such as *Sneaky Poo* (White 1989). White described how a child who is referred to therapy because of encopresis identifies the problem as external to him and gives it the name *Sneaky Poo*. Subsequent to the successful challenge of the 'externalized' problem, White created "news of difference" whereby the efforts of those involved in the challenge were documented. White (1986a) used this news of difference to create a 'rite of passage' whereby families were invited to mark the different stage of their family life family when the problem was not present. He noted that after being involved in conversations which highlight their competencies and strengths, people found it difficult to hold onto those stories which challenge the negative story of self. His practice was to write down these therapeutic conversations. He noted that:

> *Practices of written word, which has for a long time been a theme of Narrative therapy, contribute significantly to the visibility, substantiation and endurance of the sparkling events that are identified in Narrative conversations.*
>
> (White, 2000, p6)

In the present study externalising conversations with children were documented in the presence of their friends and teachers. A Golden Book was used so that the stories of the pupil's challenge could be documented. Problem solving is a part of the school curriculum and Vygotskian principles about the significance of social interaction with a more capable peer as well as adults is familiar to teachers. The voices of others whom the child respected were included in the book and the child was consulted about whose words they wished to include. This practice is in accordance with the principles of the Children Scotland Act (1995), which requires that children be consulted in all matters that affect them.

Narrative conversations aim to identify those times when people resisted being influenced by the problem and did something different. The use of questioning is common to both Narrative and Solution Focused therapy. Jerome Bruner (1986) proposed that our understanding of the world develops through a narrative mode which has the dual properties of "landscape of action" and "landscape of consciousness". White (1988a) adapted the ideas of Bruner and devised questions, which invited an exploration of the meanings, which people accorded to their unique abilities to challenge difficulties. He devised "landscape of action" questions which invited people to consider the actions that they took in order to stand up to problems. "Landscape of meaning" questions invited them to consider how their perceptions of themselves had changed as a result of their actions. White (2000, p5) described those times when people tried to stand up to the problem, which brought them to therapy as 'sparkling moments' or 'exceptions'. Thus he uses the same terminology as Steve de Shazer. Conversations which seek to discover sparkling moments, or noticing exceptions are very similar. However White's belief in involving the larger community and in documenting the stories of support and change are fundamentally different from the practice of Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg.

Inspired by the writings of Michael Foucault and the ideas of deconstruction and poststructuralism, Michael White aimed to illuminate how identity can be shaped by dominant discourses His later work is characterised by an acknowledgement of the political nature of therapy. In contrast the development of Solution Focused therapy continued to refine the original practice. Michael White sought to examine with his clients the cluster of negative symptoms surrounding the problem. White and Epston (1990 p102) drawing on Foucault's analysis of power and knowledge aimed to "liberate subjected knowledges and life stories". White and Epston (1990) also invite those who come to therapy to identify an audience of supporters to witness and validate their efforts. Furthermore, certificates and public celebrations of transition are also used in renegotiating the identity of a person. White and Epston (1990 p188) proposed that documents have been accorded an elevated status in Western society and that professional disciplines rely on documentation to validate their roles in peoples lives. They noted that the focus of professional documents is the person who submits to evaluation whereas the "author of the document is a person skilled in the rhetoric pertaining to a specific domain of expert knowledge". They also believed that the documents not only shape the identity of person who is the focus of the report, but also the author of the report. The belief of White (1995b) that schools could become communities of Acknowledgement has been influential in this study, as has their examples of working in ways that are transparent.

4.7 Power and social justice

White and Epston (1990) recognised that therapists face a difficulty in linking the micro-world of therapy to the world at large. They acknowledged that therapists are relatively isolated from the local community. In order to counteract this, members of the community were recruited as

supporters of clients who came for therapy. Letters about client's achievements and their preferred futures were co-written by therapists and families to those people who were considered significant. White described those who were invited to support others as 'outside witnesses' (White, 1997). By a process of telling and retelling an alternative account can emerge which serves to challenge dominant accounts which people hold about themselves. Thus the identity of a person as essentially "disruptive" or "disturbed" contested. White and Epston (1990 p79) believed that "persons generally ascribe meaning to lives by plotting their experiences into stories and these stories shape their lives and relationships".

Central to a social constructionist perspective in therapy is a belief that people have within them, the resources and competencies to face challenges. In this way, it is a hopeful endeavour. Cade and O' Hanlon (1993 p109) referred to the words of St. Columba of Iona who lived in the twelfth century. Apparently his views resonate with those who emphasise language and hopeful stories in relation to the creation of realities. It is believed that Columba said, "Since the entire world is but a story, it were well for thee to buy the more enduring story than the story that is less enduring". Columba believed that people should invest their love in things that last. Although Columba was alluding to the difference between what is ephemeral and what is eternal, it would appear that his words are apposite in relation to a Solution Oriented approach. Cade and O' Hanlon follow their reference to the words of Columba by describing the value in the exploration of a hopeful future. In societies where an oral tradition is still strong, and where the allegiance to scientific or expert knowledge is tokenistic, a storied approach to problem solving is well received. In the recent past children in Scotland were told that it was wrong for them to speak in their local dialect and they were required to use formal English. They became bi-lingual, using formal English for school or work, and then entering a different linguistic reality at home. School came to be associated with formal language and their homes as places where their stories and voices were valued. Freire (1972) proposed that oppression is linked to the silencing of people. It could be argued that by devaluing the language of groups of children, formal educators have been complicit in a process of marginliasing those children. The oral Celtic tradition differs from the dominant educational discourse which privileges rationality and expert knowledge. Thus there is value in educators reflecting on the practice of postmodern family therapy which encourages a curiosity and respect for difference and local understandings in language.

Solution Focused and Narrative therapy requires that professional knowledge is not considered superior to that of the knowledge of the client. The conversations reflect this position and there is a hope that on completion of therapy the client will realize their unique resourcefulness and strengths. Narrative therapists openly address the notion that personal problems are intrinsically linked to oppressive structures in society. Although White's Narrative therapy has much in common with Solution Focused therapy in terms of being a 'resource model' as opposed to a deficit model, Narrative therapists aim to highlight practices,

which contribute to a person believing the 'truth' that he or she is essentially deficient. Difficulties can arise when therapists and psychologists do not know the language and customs of a community. The questions, which are used in Solution Focused and Narrative therapy are elegantly designed. Therefore they stimulate conversation and create a framework on which to build new understandings. Simple questions can generate diverse understandings. By privileging notions of uncertainty and curiosity, respectful relationships can be established. Adopting a social constructionist perspective invites a respectful curiosity about local meanings alongside those more commonly held assumptions about what constitutes 'normal' behaviour. Conversing in this way celebrates cultural diversity and creates a space for 'thick' descriptions of a lived experience to unfold. Inspired by the writings of Foucault and the ideas of deconstruction and poststructuralist thinking, White and Epston (1990) aimed to illuminate how identity can be shaped by dominant discourse and acknowledged that process of therapy is not neutral They advocated a 'therapy of inclusion' which would involve "the recruitment of others in the celebration and acknowledgment of the person's arrival at a preferred destination or status in life"

Durant (1992) and Cade and O' Hanlon (1993) used questions from Narrative and Solution Focused therapies in their work. The clinical map **(Fig 4.2)** corresponds to the questions used in the study. The next section outlines a clinical map adapted from Durrant (1992). This is followed by the final part of the chapter which describes the pedagogical adaptation used in the study.

4.2 A Clinical Map (adapted from Durrant 1997)

Socialising general conversation-establishment of a cooperative relationship

Validation more important than diagnosing.

Setting the Agenda

Do not assume or prescribe what the client wants from therapy.
What will be helpful?
How does the client wish things behaviour etc. to be different?
How will you know when things are better?
What will be some of the signs that show you are standing up to the problem?
What will be happening differently for you when your life is going smoother?

Understanding the Effects of the Problem

In what way has this problem had an effect on your life?
In what way is the problem still affecting you?
In what way has this problem kept you from moving forward in a way you would like?
How would your best friend say this problem has had an effect on your life?

Identifying exceptions to problem dominated perceptions and behaviours and exploring the difference

Are there times when you would expect the problem to happen, but it does not?
How do you get that to happen? Was there a time recently when the problem could have gotten the best of you but you did something to fight it off ? What did you do?
What are you doing differently when you stand up to the problem?

Externalising the problem

What is happening when you challenge 'Temper'?
What helps you when you are challenging Temper?
Whose words help you?
When you are winning what is happening?

Making sense of the exceptions: making exceptions meaningful

How do you account for your ability to do this?
Is this something that surprised you? What helped you to do this?
What would your friend say if I were to ask them how they think you did this?
Would they say they are surprised that there are times when you outwit this problem?

Future Orientation : Miracle Question; Preferred Futures Questions

If a miracle were to happen tonight while you were asleep and tomorrow you awoke
to find that this problem was no longer a part of your life, what would be different?
How would you know that this miracle had taken place?
How would other people be able to tell without you telling them?
How will other people be responding?
The aim is to make the picture as real as possible.

Therapeutic Documents

These documents are a challenge to a problem saturated stories of people's lives and
the deficit – centred accounts of their identities.
These documents can take many forms, including certificates, letters,
announcements, position statements, verse song and transcripts of therapeutic
conversations.

Video description question (a version of the miracle question)

If I had two video tapes one of when you are standing up to the influence of the
problem, and another when the problem is getting the best of you what would I notice
about the when you are in charge?
What would I notice about you in that video?

Scaling Questions

On a scale from one to ten with one being pretty bad and ten being pretty good how
would you rate how you are doing now?
And when you are at what will be happening? What will it look like when you are 7
say?

Building on the story of competence

Observational tasks: Asks the client to observe and take note of things that go well in
the next week or so or to look out for examples of particular exceptions.

4.8 A pedagogical adaptation of a Solution Oriented approach to working with pupils with SEBD

4.8.1 A strength based assessment

A recognised part of a Behaviour Support intervention is the period of observation during
which the teacher is expected to observe a referred pupil in different contexts. Traditionally
this implicated the observer in assessing the extent of the problem and its impact.
Approaching the task of observation from a Solution Oriented perspective R was influenced
by Berg (1994) and Durrant (1995) who contend that assessment and intervention are

interconnected. Before observing the child in class, the support teacher/ researcher (R) conversed with the member of the staff in the hope of forging a relationship, which emphasised a pedagogical role as opposed to the role of behavioural expert. It was hoped that the teachers would perceive R as a co-worker. The need for the teacher to speak about the effect of the problem on her life was respected. A genuine interest in how the teacher managed to work with the child formed the basis of the subsequent conversations. The assumption that the teacher would continue to collect information about the problem situation, as deemed appropriate by the school, was made explicit. There was an attempt on the part of R, to convey to the worker a genuine curiosity about the situation. There followed an explanation of the approach to be used. The explanation emphasised the role of language and stories in helping children, teachers, and parents arrive at solutions to problems. Teachers tended to be intrigued by the role of narrative in relation to behavioural change, as they accepted that a focus on language is an integral part of the curriculum.

4.8.2 Golden Book: challenging the 'problem' story.

The teacher was introduced to the idea of the **Golden Book,** which aimed to transform the traditional observation with its emphasis on diagnosis and cure to one characterised by curiosity and collaboration. Traditionally observation records were mainly problem focused and used language which Harre (1985) termed ' file speak' and which focused on apparent deficits. The preferred approach of R was to start documenting a story which described, not just the strengths and competencies of the pupil, but included a story which challenged notions of schooling being a process which excludes. Miller et al (1997) noted the similarity between the use of de Shazer's 'exceptions' and that of White's 'unique outcomes'. In the literature of Narrative therapy, the latter emphasizes the process whereby the therapist and client build a story around those times when the problem is either being challenged or is not dominant. Influenced by the work of White (1995) whose use of documents and letters to clients contributed to them becoming stronger at challenging their problem dominated identity, the **Golden Book** aimed to illuminate what is hopeful and respectful in the day to day life of pupils and teachers at work in school. The **Golden Book** was an exercise book (covered in golden paper), which was used to document an alternative to the problem story. The stories were grounded in actual experience and testified to the way in which apparently simple things could help a child to overcome difficulties.

The books were used in the following ways:

- it was a record of those times when the problem was not present and the child was witnessed challenging difficulties.
- significant people could become involved in co-authoring the story.
- Solution Oriented conversations with the child were written in the book thus making their preferred alternatives known.
- the voice of the child was respected and their need for support validated.

4.8.3 Stance of curiosity

When it was agreed that the support teacher's time would be more profitably spent recording exceptions to the problem story the notion of exception finding was tentatively approached:

> *I am wondering about N, you know, those qualities which he/ she has shown that assist him him/her challenge the problem?*

Anderson and Goolishan (1992) claimed that adopting a "not knowing" position can open up spaces in a conversation from which "newness" can occur. Adopting a dialogical position can lead to mutual exploration. However care was taken to validate the experience of the teacher. By the time a pupil with SEBD is referred to the Behaviour Support system, teachers are usually tired or stressed. It is perhaps because of their commitment and sense of optimism in the educational process that many of them are able to continue to converse about exceptions to the problem.

Crucial to the process of re-storying is an acceptance that the documents of support are distinct from the prompts to achieve associated with positive behaviour strategies. To use the Golden Book as a ' Positive Behaviour Book' book would not capture the power of the narrative and the role of language in challenging a deficit view of the child. An example of how a first page might appear is shown below:

> *Today I met Miss B and she said N works hard at maths and likes to complete his work. She also said he tells good jokes. I visited his class. I enjoyed watching group B making a model. I noticed that N passed the scissors safely to J. It seems to me that he respects other people because I heard him say, 'Thank you' when I offered him one of my pencils. Before interval I noticed he listened to the teacher who was telling the pupils where to put their models.*

Time can be requested with the pupil and teacher so that subsequent conversations can be scripted in the Golden Book. The notion of **preferred futures** is helpful in negotiating a plan of action which can take the shape of a light-hearted exploration of life without the problem. Elements of a solution-oriented conversation are introduced as appropriate. Important in this exploration of the problem free future is the use of the word **when** instead of **if.**

When denotes notions of belief and hope. **If** suggests notions of contingency, incertitude and scepticism. It has long been recognised by those who educate pupils who display extreme behaviours that saying **"if you do"** can lead to an escalation of difficult behaviour and conflict. Future oriented questions offer an opportunity to convey a genuine interest and a real curiosity about a pupil's preferred future. There is an attempt to avoid getting the ' right' answer:

When things change what will be happening?
Who will notice?
Who else?

In school, the pupils can invite significant people to notice, document and support their efforts. Each member of staff will have a unique relationship with the child. Headteachers often represent certitude and security, janitors, and administrative staff often 'look out ' for the child. On occasions, the stories of janitors and clerical staff have proven powerful in countering the 'bad name' which some children acquire.

Whose words will you enjoy reading in this book?
Why?
What do you think she/ he will say?
Draw a picture / cartoon of what it will be like when things have improved?

White (1995b) cautioned those who work with children to be alive to the dynamism of language. He emphasizes the creational elements of language. Once the child voices his or her description of life without the problem, subtle changes in the relationship between the child and the teacher can emerge. Sometimes the teacher takes on the role of advocate for the pupil. As an alternative story of a pupil unfolds, others can be invited to strengthen a different story of the pupil and assist in the creation of a new reality:

When this week has you noticed N behave in a way, which tells you that things, are changing for him?
When else?
Who else in the school will have words to say about which he will enjoy hearing?

These conversations provided a basis for future planning and are significant in helping the child challenge problems which may have seemed intractable. The use of individual educational plans is currently being advocated in education and the information contained in the Golden Book helped to shape a response to pupils who, when consulted, devised unique solutions to the problems which they faced.

4.8.4 Externalizing conversations

This work derives from the practice of Michael White (1995) who claimed that by engaging pupils in externalising conversations:

> They are introduced to ways of speaking about their lives that don't implicate
> their relationship with the problem. These externalising conversations are
> a powerful antidote to contemporary 'problem speak ' and to the 'modern
> problem identity practices'.
>
> (White, 1995b, p57)

Generally, descriptions about a pupil's behaviour take the form of locating the problem within the child. The child often describes himself as being bad tempered or lazy. Some pupils describe themselves as 'big trouble'. Externalising conversations locate the problem outwith the child by asking that the pupil consider opposing a problem which is named: The following excerpt illustrates the type of conversation, which can occur in a busy classroom between a teacher (T) and a pupil (P):

T: *What will you call this problem?*
P: *"Temper"*
T: *When you are challenging "Temper" what is happening?*
P: *Well I can feel jumpy but I don't throw my books about*
T: *Whose words help you when you are challenging "Temper"?*
P: *My teacher says, "You are beating temper again -look at your work it's great".*
T: *Will you draw a picture about what is happening when you are challenging, "Temper".*

When conversing with a pupil about temper or anger it is important that the child is given sufficient space to explore those circumstances which contribute to anger becoming stronger. This gives the pupils an opportunity to speak about those circumstances which may adversely affect their lives, and enables those who have responsibility for the child's welfare to examine

how the child could be better supported.

4.8.5 Consulting with children: problem solving and support

Conversations with pupils can often be light-hearted and hopeful; emphasizing the idea that learning and problem solving are lifelong activities. The children were sometimes introduced to a problem which the researcher (R) faced called "messy handwriting". Teachers in primary school know the importance of good formation of letters in their work with children. Their handwriting should be able to be modelled and understood by the children. Admitting that her handwriting in their Golden Books fell short of their teacher's expectations of good handwriting had unexpected results. Subsequent support from the pupils and teachers related to speaking in a supportive way to R and becoming interested in her pencil collection. Teachers supported their co-worker's efforts to do something differently, whilst the pupils used language to support her efforts to challenge difficulties. The teachers and pupils were interested that the problem which R faced was affected by factors such as being in a hurry or forgetting a pencil case. The pupils' stories of challenge had similar elements to that of R.

4.8.6 Matching language

A teacher or parent may, in the course of conversation, describe a pupil as **defiant, wilful, or disobedient**. In response, there was an attempt to use language, which mirrored the feelings of those involved but which opened up possibilities for the emergence of alternative descriptions. Anderson and Goolishan (1992) described conversations which were informed by social constructionist ideas as 'linguistic events':

> *The therapeutic conversation is a mutual search and exploration through dialogue, a two-way exchange, a criss crossing of ideas in which new meaning is continually evolving toward the dis -solving of problems.*
>   (Anderson and Goolishan, 1992, p126)

4.8.7 Miracle question

The miracle question compels those who are in a problem situation to focus on solutions rather than problems. de Shazer acknowledged the contribution of Erickson (1954) to his development of the miracle question:

Suppose that one night there is a miracle and while you are sleeping the problem that brought you here is solved.
How would you know?
What would be different?
What will you notice the next morning that will tell you that the miracle has happened?

de Shazer (1990) noted that 'clients frequently are able to construct answers to this 'miracle question' quite concisely and specifically.' The use of the miracle question in relation to this study is confined mainly to work with the parents and the teachers.

4.8.8 Scaling question

A scaling question can be useful at the end of a session with both pupil and teacher.
On a scale ranging from 1-10 where 1= is when interval times are not good and 10 = you are

having fun with your friends and playing safely. Where are you now?

The scaling questions were used to ascertain the differences in perceptions about how the pupil is managing, to clarify the next steps and to enlist support.

The following questions can be used after this has occurred.

What will you be doing when you are at ---?
Will you notice those times next week when you see--------- doing this?

Scaling Questions can be helpful because:

- the differing perceptions of the teacher and pupil can be ironed out.

- a plan can be negotiated and re negotiated. Noticing tasks can be incorporated.

- other supports can be enlisted (parents janitor, other pupils)

Working from a pedagogical perspective encouraged teachers and pupils to become involved in a dynamic process of learning. Thus it is accepted that the stories and solutions of individual pupils will impact on the development of others. Schools are creative places to work in. When teachers are asked for their advice about helping a child access the curriculum better or collaborate on a playground game, the results are often wonderful. Giroux (1997) argued that schools have fallen short of "developing a language that engages schools as sites of possibility" and he stressed the inter relatedness of student and teacher voice. He views educational theories, which seek to compensate for deficits as contributing to the silencing of dissenting voices. Such a view is embodied in some educational approaches which are more prescriptive and which seek to emphasize control rather than dialogue.

CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY

The research was undertaken in order to investigate the effectiveness of adopting a social constructionist approach to the support of children who were assessed as having emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). A multi-case design was used in order to explore in depth, the differing perceptions of professionals, parents and pupils. The specific objectives were:

- to illuminate the differing perspectives on the problem from the point of view of the pupils, class teachers, parents, headteachers and educational psychologists.
- to explore the tensions between the social constructionist assumptions of the approach and its application in an educational context.
- to evaluate the relative usefulness of the approach so that it could be adapted for further use in an educational context.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section describes the methodologies which were selected for the study and discusses the following issues in the research design:
- the case for selecting qualitative methods with particular reference to multiple-case research.
- the influence of illuminative evaluation.
- the value of researcher reflexivity in relation to the social constructionist underpinnings of a Solution Oriented approach to the support of pupils assessed as having SEBD.

The second section describes the procedures for carrying out the study, the instrumentation, the conceptual framework and the way in which the data was analysed.

5.1 Qualitative methods: multiple case studies

Solution Oriented therapies are informed by social constructionism, which insists that "all forms of knowledge, including scientific knowledge produce images of the world that then operate on it as if it were true" Bannister et al (1994, p9). Gergen (1985) noted that adopting a social constructionist position necessitates scepticism about notions of 'objectivity' in social research. A shift in thinking about the 'truth' of scientific knowledge affects professionals whose practice is informed by the findings of traditional modernist psychological research. Hoffman (1993) reflected on the poststructuralist paradigm shift and its impact on the practice of therapy:

> *The change from a hierarchical to a collaborative style in psychotherapy is a radical step. It calls into question the top-down structuring of this quasi-medical field called mental health and flies in the face of centuries of traditional Western practice. There is no, repeat no, school of psychotherapy-psychodynamic behavioural, family or otherwise –that is based on an assumption of expertise, a series of respected texts, and a code of practice. To challenge these elements is to challenge the whole citadel.*
>
> (Hoffman, 1993,p4)

The paradigm shift from a positivist perspective to one which values notions of uncertainty alter how inquiries are undertaken. Gergen (1985) advocated that social constructionist inquiry should be primarily concerned with illuminating those processes by which people come to explain or account for their lived experiences.

Since social constructionism holds that people construct their realities through discursive practices and that these realities are not fixed and quantifiable, it was decided that a case study method of research would provide an appropriate way of investigating the impact of a Solution Oriented approach to supporting pupils with SEBD. Adopting a multiple – case design framework allows the researcher to acknowledge that realities are socially constructed and that the research process is essentially subjective (Berger and Luckman, 1966; Blumer 1969; Rosenwald et al 1992). The position of the researcher in relation to the research process is one which challenges notions of neutrality and objectivity. These ideas are given a pre-eminent value in positivist research. Adopting a qualitative methodology recognised that the researcher is a part of a social relationship through which knowledge and meanings are constructed. Burgess (1989) asserted that at its most extreme:

> *The assumption of the constructedness of reality and the inevitable*
> *subjectivity which follows leads to the solipsist conclusion that the researcher*
> *and the participant are locked into social worlds and no shared understanding*
> *is possible.*

                                                                        (Burgess, 1989, p4)

Although Gergen (1991) accepted that the experience of two individuals is not exactly the same, he also emphasised the notion that there are connections between individuals which enable meanings to be shared or renegotiated. To adopt an approach which was informed by logical positivism and which attempted to fit individual experiences into 'predetermined response categories' (Patton, 1988) would have been contrary to the exploratory and illuminative focus of this study. According to Bogdan and Taylor (1975) researchers should not try to reduce the behaviour of participants to 'isolated variables' but should attend to the actual words and actions of those involved in the research. Yin (1989, p130) believed that "when questions which focus on the 'how' or ' why' of a contemporary phenomenon with some real life context, then case study research is the recommended mode of research." Kvale (1996) proposed that adopting a postmodern position in relation to the research process challenges notions of linear evaluation and attempts at universal understandings. He endorsed what Schon (1983), termed "practitioners' knowledge" and which Polkinghorne (1992) described as an ability on the part of educators to engage in constant revision of ideas in the light of previous knowledge. The context of the study influenced the choice of method, which was the case study method, and which Robson (1993, p5) considered as, "a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence". The research design was influenced by the researchers interest in the extent to which a Solution Oriented approach to behavioural problems, which is informed by social constructionist epistemology, was perceived by those who were most affected by the problem situation. A second consideration related to a commitment on the part of the researcher, that her work was

evaluated in a way which would provide insight into how to work in more socially just ways with pupils, parents and teachers. The particular research questions, which guided this study, were:

- how did the different participants in each case understand 'problem' behaviour of pupils ?
- to what extent did participants become involved in the Solution Oriented process?
- which factors facilitated involvement?
- which factors impeded involvement?
- what changed in terms of behaviour and thinking in those involved in the process?
- to what extent did the participants value the process? Why was this so?
- to what extent did being involved in the process prevent the pupil from being involved in a process of school exclusion?
- to what extent was involvement in the Solution Oriented process effective in helping parents, pupils and teachers to work in ways which are socially just?
- what can be learned in terms of future implementations of Solution Oriented approaches in schools or other contexts?

Vulliamy and Webb (1992) proposed that the most popular approach to teacher research was case study methods and that most teachers engaged in research in the hope of bringing about change in their classrooms. Their findings indicated that teacher research could contribute to:

- attitudinal change in relation to pupils as learners.
- becoming more critical and reflective practitioners.
- personal and professional development.

Historically, special educational needs research was influenced by the discipline of psychology and concentrated on in depth studies of the unique characteristics of pupils with differing diagnostic labels. The context of the school and the wider political considerations were given less prominence. Vulliamy and Webb (1992) suggested that special needs educators, influenced by teacher research in areas such as curriculum evaluation and the study of classroom practice, have challenged the dominance of the positivist model of research into their work:

> We believe that teacher research based, as much of it is on case studies
> of the processes of teaching and learning, is particularly suited to the area
> of special needs, where teachers are often concerned to understand pupils
> with learning difficulties and yet with very few exceptions this has not been an
> approach which has been generally encouraged by the special needs
> community.
>
> (Vulliamy and Webb, 1992, p3)

Vulliamy and Webb question the usefulness of a positivist paradigm and disagree with the tacit assumptions which influence such studies. The dominant assumptions about the category of special educational needs which is classified as social emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) include:

- behaviour is fixed and quantifiable.

- pupils can be categorised or reduced to a behavioural type by expert assessment.
- the problem is located within the individual assessment has a benign function aimed at the restoration of normality.

Walker (1980) proposed that the scope for case study research in an educational setting is wide and can range from the study of an individual pupil or educator, to the impact in a school of a particular innovation. He claimed that questioning the usefulness of the case study method on the part of the research community raised the issue of the relationship between research and decision-making. Believing that practioners often made judgments based on their experience of particular events, rather than research findings, Walker thought decision makers should take evidence from case-study research seriously. In his opinion, the distinction between practitioners and researchers was blurred. He stated:

> Many educational practitioners are in fact 'natural' case study workers,
> teachers, advisers, heads, administrators, and curriculum developers. They
> tend to make judgments on the basis of knowledge of the particular instance.
>
> (Walker, 1980, p34)

Concerned that the research community did not value the experiential knowledge of practitioners, Walker (1980) suggested that researchers "try to improve such research rather than condemn it". Walker noted that critics of case study method focus on issues of confidentiality, researcher bias and the difficulty which audience's face, in terms of distinguishing between interpretation and description. He considered that adopting a democratic mode to case study research as advocated by MacDonald (1975), would help to counter criticisms about the trustworthiness of case study research. A democratic approach requires that the researcher respects the interests and needs of the participants and that consideration is given to the fact that the research report will be available to multiple audiences. In order to qualify as democratic research Walker, suggests that at the outset, the case study worker should consider:

> Who has access to the data? (Who is excluded or denied?)
> What is the status of the researchers interpretation of events vis a vis the
> interpretations made by others?
> What obligations does the researcher owe to the participants, his fellow
> professionals others?
> For whom is the research?
>
> (Walker, 1980, p 40)

Attending to the above questions commits the researcher to consideration of how involvement in the research process may affect participants. This responsibility can weigh heavily on the researcher. In this study there was an ever-present awareness on the part of the researcher of her privileged position with regard to the nature of the information that the participants were willing to disclose. Walker, however points out a major limitation which can result from democratic studies and which he describes as 'inherent inertia'. He stated:

> Any proposal that requires support of multiple audiences before decisions
> are made is likely to lead to complication, if not confrontation... the negative
> aspect (inertia) is inherently conservative because it offers support, perhaps
> even unthinking support to the status quo.
>
> (Walker, 1980, p38)

Walker (1980) cautioned researchers who, because of their concern about the requirements of democratic research, fall short of providing evidence of inadequacies in a system and thus contributes to the maintenance of the status quo. In this study, which seeks to explore the impact of adopting a social constructionist approach to working with pupils who have SEBD, there is an attempt to reconcile the requirements of democratic research with a need to illuminate those aspects of the lived experience of the participants. At the forefront of the researchers mind was a concern about how her writing would be judged in terms of fairness, justice and honesty on the part of those whose experience was being studied. The word' inertia' as used by Walker (1980) suggests inactivity, lethargy and disinterest. These words do not convey the impact of the emergent data on the researcher involved in this study. On the contrary, the process of reflecting on the emergent data increased the understanding of the researcher, in relation to issues of injustice.

Choosing a multiple-case design involved an acceptance that the differences and ambiguities, which emerge during the research process, are recognized. Rosenwald (1988) noted that the multiple-case method brings individual case –studies, 'into conversation with one another through the researcher '. This, he believed, had the advantage of highlighting unique and shared experiences of individual participants. According to Burgess (1989) multiple-case research typically involves a sample of between 8 and 20 participants who represent unique perspectives on the issue under consideration. This study explored the impact of adopting a social constructionist approach to individual pupils, in six different primary schools. A sample of this size makes it possible to consider individual perspectives whilst making comparisons, thus illuminating not only similarity of themes, but also points of difference. Yin (1989) considered that carrying out multiple case studies was analogous to the process of carrying out multiple experiments, insofar as there is an attempt on the part of the researcher to build upon the first experiment, or to focus on an aspect of the study which was not covered in an initial study. However Robson (1993, p 161) noted that multiple case studies are not concerned with statistical generalization but rather are concerned with 'analytic generalisation'. Although the first case study in a multiple case design can provide evidence, which may be supportive of a theory, subsequent case studies will serve to confirm or disconfirm the initial theories.

Stenhouse (1975) saw the benefit of using case study as a means of illuminating the process of learning and teaching. He made a distinction between the anthropological and the educational case study, the main difference being that teachers are not strangers in the field. Stenhouse argued that teachers should be significant evaluators of new innovations in their own classrooms and schools and disputed the value of established evaluation by objectives. He believed an overemphasis on learning outcomes limited the scope of a study. Central to the aims of this study were notions of illumination and evaluation. Adopting a Solution Oriented approach to working with pupils, teachers and parents involved working within a

framework informed by social constructionist ideas. Thus, the study attempts to explore the extent to which working in this way had meaningful consequences for those most involved in the problem situation. Furthermore there is an attempt to examine aspects of involvement in the approach which differed from what had been the previous experiences of the participants.

5.2 Illuminative evaluation

The notion of illumination is important in this study and the tension, between the constraints of working within a system that is informed by a medical model of functioning is acknowledged. The language of the clinic is embedded in the Behaviour Support service. Hence pupils were routinely spoken of as **cases** whose **referral** to an educational psychologist resulted in a **staged intervention** after consultation with the parent. If it were considered appropriate that the Behaviour Support service were to be involved the case was presented at an **admissions** meeting which professionals involved in the work attended. When a pupil was referred to the Behaviour Support Service, it was expected that following a period of observation, a behaviour support plan, which would be negotiated with the support teacher, class teacher and headteacher. Educational reviews, chaired by the educational psychologist were held each term. The role of the educational psychologist was to monitor and evaluate the support in terms of its effectiveness in helping the pupil to behave in a more appropriate way. The influence of modern psychology on the development of Behaviour Support is undisputed. The words in bold print highlight how the linguistic framework of Behaviour Support has the potential to 'objectify' the experience of those involved in the problem situation. By legitimising the process of observation the voices of pupils, parents and teachers is suppressed and the work of the support teacher is altered. Gergen (1996 p3) suggests that psychologists who adopt a social constructionist perspective to their work have the possibility of inviting critical deliberation about "the potentially strangulating and oppressive potentials within the taken for granted assumptions of the discipline". A key aim of this study is to explore the extent to which working from a postmodern perspective affected both the researcher and those who participated in the study. In educational contexts, teacher researchers are seldom free to assert that decisions, with respect to choice of methods, are entirely driven by questions of method. Adelman (1984) noted that decisions made by researchers in relation to methodology are informed by practical, as much as theoretical considerations. The following influences affected the decision of the researcher in terms of the illuminative evaluation of the Solution Oriented process.

Social constructionist approaches to supporting pupils with SEBD were untried by staff who worked in the Behaviour Support team. Those who adopted a Solution Oriented approach tended to incorporate the strategies of the approaches into a Humanistic or Psychodynamic paradigm. There was recognition on the part of the researcher of the power imbalance in a therapeutic or professional support relationship. Behaviour Support teachers were considered specialists in the educational system and it was decided that the research participants should

be given an opportunity to evaluate the process, with minimum interference from the researcher, who had been immersed in the work.

Stake (1995) considered the importance to researchers of selecting a particular approach, within which the study is operationalised. Illuminative evaluation was chosen as a framework from which the Solution Oriented approach could be assessed. Illuminative evaluation is an approach to approach to programme evaluation, which focuses on qualitative methods, inductive analysis and naturalistic enquiry and was initially used in educational settings by Parlett and Hamilton (1972, 1987). Vulliamy and Webb (1992) proposed that this approach provides an alternative approach to evaluation. It contrasts with the traditional paradigm, which is criticised on the grounds of:

- *the impossible task of controlling all the parameters in an educational context.*
- *the disregard of how change is an inevitable feature of an innovation*
- *there is an overemphasis on what is measurable and on expected outcomes.*
- *the use of large samples for adequate statistical control leads to the neglect of atypical cases, which may be of great interest.*
- *such evaluations often fail to address type concerns of both the participants in the innovation and its sponsors.*

(Vulliamy and Webb, 1992, p32)

Traditional evaluation research was considered limited by Parlett and Hamilton (1972, 1987) who maintained that evaluative research should emphasise interpretation and illumination, rather than measurement and prediction. Two major focal points of illuminative evaluation are the instructional system and the learning milieu. According to Parlett and Hamilton (1972, 1987), the instructional system is concerned with the curriculum intention and relates to the 'idealised specification' of the programme. They noted that curriculum interventions undergo modification in the implementation process. With regard to the Solution Oriented programme or intervention, the curriculum objectives related to changed behaviour and compliance with school rules. Parlett and Hamilton contend that an illuminative evaluation of a programme may be 'reordered, redefined, abandoned or forgotten' (Parlett and Hamilton 1972, 1977). They were critical of traditional evaluative design because of an over -emphasis on what is measurable and they questioned the assumption that the standards set by educational systems represent normality. Parlett and Hamilton (1977, p32) suggested that by highlighting the aims of particular educational programmes, an opportunity is provided for elements of the programme to be," emphasised or de-emphasised, expanded or truncated, as teachers administrators and students interpret and re-interpret the instructional system for their particular setting". They stressed the need for illuminative evaluation to take account of those features of an educational intervention, which were of value, and those aspects of a 'learning milieu' which facilitated this process. Parlett and Hamilton believed that what was of more importance than the programme to be evaluated, is the educational context in which the programme or intervention develops.

5.3 Learning Milieu

The 'learning milieu' refers to the system of cultural social institutional material and psychological influences which impact on the educational context. In contrast to the traditional forms of evaluation, an illuminative evaluation accepts that it is necessary to take into account those variables which were absent in traditional forms of evaluative research. According to Parlett and Hamilton (1977) an illuminative paradigm takes into account the interaction of numerous elements which include:

- constraints such as resources or financial impediments.
- pedagogical considerations, including pedagogical philosophies or curricular demands.
- individual teacher qualities, attributes and attitudes.
- student perspectives and pre-occupations.

Parlett and Hamilton (1972, 1977) claimed that the purpose of illuminative evaluation is to shed light on a person's experience of being involved in an educational intervention. However, they stressed that illuminative evaluation is not a research model, which is prescriptive, but should be considered as a set of principles adopted by the researcher, according to the circumstances. In the present context it seemed appropriate that given the researchers involvement in the Solution Oriented process that consideration should be given to an evaluative component which was standardized and which someone, other than the researcher should conduct. The reasons for this are twofold. Consideration was given to the possibility that since the researchers work was being scrutinized, it seemed more honest that the researcher, although wishing to know how the process was received, did as much as was possible to ensure that the participants felt free to be critical. There was an attempt to aim for what

Lincoln and Guba (1985, p301), term 'trustworthiness' which focused on the extent to which, " an inquirer can persuade his or her audiences that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of ". The criteria for trustworthiness include credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that peer debriefing is used in order to improve the probability that findings and interpretations produced through naturalistic inquiry will be credible. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described this process as:

> Exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic
> session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might
> otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirers mind.
>   (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p301)

For the purpose of the evaluative component of the study, this role was undertaken by an experienced member of the Behaviour Support team who was familiar with Solution Oriented approaches to behaviour problems and who was respectful of the rights of the pupils, parents and teachers.

5.4 Researcher reflexivity and the role of the researcher

5.4.1 Research Bias:

The interest of the researcher in the topic from a personal and professional standpoint and her status as a participant researcher meant that the relationship with the research process was not detached. The approach adopted by the researcher in this study matches that of Mellor (2001) who conceptualizes research as his 'simple curiosity, about current work and a wish to study it'. The impetus to carry out this study stemmed from a curiosity, on the part of the researcher, about whether those who were involved in the Solution Oriented work experienced the process in a way that reflected the social constructionist underpinnings of the approach. A Solution Oriented approach is not widely used in classrooms at present, and staff who work in schools are unfamiliar with it. It was likely that the understanding of the approach, on the part of the participants, would focus on strategic aspects, rather than theoretical underpinnings of the approach. Notwithstanding the fact that a Solution Oriented approach to human behaviour draws on social constructionist ideas, (Gergen 1992, Kvale, 1996), there is still a tendency within the educational community to emphasise a skill based model when training teachers in the approach. James, et al p9 (1998) educational psychologists working in a Scottish context, recognised the importance of highlighting the philosophical underpinnings of the approach. They did not see their training as 'just technology', but proposed that when introducing teachers to Solution Focussed approaches should "focus not just on the pupils' progress but on a broader system change namely the teachers' perceptions and their overriding belief system". They saw a significant role for psychologists as 'critical thinkers' in relation to the development of the approach and its subsequent evaluation, as there were concerns that "too narrow and simplistic an overview would develop to the detriment of all".

This study sought to explore the extent to which using an approach, which is influenced by social constructionism was understood by teachers, parents and children. Consequently there is an acknowledgement on the part of the researcher that her views will be influenced by the experience of the participants. Central to this study is an appreciation, on the part of the researcher, that the experiences of the participants in the Solution Oriented work would entail reflection and revision of her practice. Consequently, the theme of change is significant in terms of the experience of both the researcher and the participants.

The social constructionist underpinnings of Solution Oriented work required a methodology that would both allow the freedom to explore and be sensitive to the possibility of multiple interpretations of meaning. Bannister et al. (1994) noted that the role of the researcher is central to the sense that is made out of the subjective data, which emerges during a qualitative study. Thus the role of reflexivity is one, which is of paramount importance in attending to the process of meaning making. The researcher in this study was influenced by

the need to engage in what Miles and Huberman (1994) termed, anticipatory data reduction. This meant that initial conversations with the participants were reflexive and influenced the initial framing of the study. In this way the methodology began to 'emerge'. Burr (1995, p161) influenced by social constructionism considered "reflexivity is used to draw attention to the fact that when someone gives an account of an event, that account is simultaneously a description of the event and part of the event". Adopting a social constructionist position requires researchers to acknowledge their relatively powerful and privileged position of and demands that the experience of the research participants is respected and acknowledged. The metaphor of the narrative, or storying, is given credence and the researchers account is considered as only one reading of the experience. Threadgold (1990) noted that the stories and narratives which emerge during a research process are 'temporary audience specific constructions'. In a similar vein, Burr (1995) cautions against the researchers voice being privileged over that of the participants:

> *There no longer appears to be a good reason to privilege the account or*
> *'reading' of the researcher above that of anyone else and this puts the*
> *researcher and the researched in a new relationship to each other.*
> *Subjects own account of their experiences can no longer be given an*
> *alternative interpretation by researchers who then offer their reading as*
> *truth.*

(Burr, 1995, p161)

This study seeks to examine the perceptions of those most involved in the problem situation, namely the pupil, the teachers and the parents. The professional practice of a behaviour support teacher was also a focus of the study. As a teacher the researcher was, and continues to be influenced by many of the values which shaped her opinions about normality and education. This study required the researcher to reflect on her taken for granted assumptions about the meaning of problem behaviour, the involvement of parents in the work of the school and the apparent benevolence of educational practice. Gitlin (1992, p2) believed that listening to the voices of teachers would facilitate change in oppressive practices in schools. He asked, "If teachers voices would be heard, would these voices encourage school change and challenge the narrow and oppressive features of our school system"?

Gitlin echoed the views of Stenhouse (1975) who argued that teachers systematically studying the processes of teaching would promote the professional development of teachers and learning. He criticised the way in which teachers were expected to adopt the 'proven outcomes' of research. Instead, he advocated that they use the findings as working hypotheses. Foster and Parker (1995) emphasised that the 'reflexive' character of qualitative research should become salient at the beginning of analysis. They warned researchers to be aware of their own agenda and cautioned against modifying the data to suit their own values. They advised that researchers should be alert to different perspectives, attend to the contradictions and differences in the data and reflect on whether there were changes in thinking on the part of the researcher as the research unfolded. The next section of this

chapter describes the procedures and instrumentation used during the course of the research study.

5.5 Procedures and instrumentation

The research was conducted between the years 1995 – 1997 in the context of a Behaviour Support Service. The time allocated to each school was on average two one hour sessions per week over the period of an academic year. Behaviour Support teachers, on average, work in seven schools. At education reviews decisions were made about the continuation of support based on either pupil progress or the need for the educational psychologist to access different forms of support. Although the intervention of a Behaviour Support teacher in a school might accelerate change for the better, on average the length of time in a school was approximately 18 months. After that time it was hoped that the need for support would be diminished. Review meetings were convened in schools and chaired by the educational psychologists who had an authoritative role in terms of evaluating the input from Behaviour Support and in directing discussion about the child's future needs.

Consent was obtained from the Education Department, the headteachers, teachers, staff, parents, and educational psychologists about their involvement in the study. (Appendix B). Six children, six parents, five teachers, five headteachers were involved in the study. The sample reflected the number of pupils which a behaviour support teacher is expected to support on a weekly basis. However, those pupils who were in the care of the Local Authority at the beginning of the research were not included in the study, as access to their parents may have had an effect on the children. In this study the unit of analysis was the pupil who was referred to the Behaviour Support Service who had been assessed as having SEBD. The research design was influenced by the work of those family therapists who recognised that there was a 'remarkable fit' between family therapy and qualitative research (Atkinson, Heath and Chenail 1991; Gale 1992; Moon, Dillon and Sprenkle, 1990).They considered that the activities of family therapists are, in some ways comparable to those of qualitative researchers and proposed that well designed qualitative research assisted clinicians to learn about their work. They noted that those therapists who adopt a social constructionist position in relation to their work endorse a qualitative paradigm. Gale (1992) noted that qualitative methods are useful in the context of a social constructionist approach to therapy because discourse, stories and conversations are considered important facets of both processes.

Table 5.1 shows the number type and roll of each establishment, which was involved, and a brief description of the participants in each school. The confidentiality of all the participants was respected; therefore all names are initialized and names of schools are anonymised. As indicated in chapter four the author is referred to as (R).

Table 5.1 Summary of information about the schools and the key participants

Case Study 1 L 4-year-old female.	L aged 4 attended Greenbank Nursery, which was located within Greenbank Primary school. The school is a large Victorian building, which is located within reach of the town centre. The school roll was 160. The roll of the nursery was 60. The following participants were involved in the study. L; her mother; the headteacher; the nursery teacher; two nursery nurses; the educational psychologist and R. Reasons for referral: the staff in the nursery faced difficulties responding to L who did not wish to cooperate in certain activities.
Case Study 2 Y: 9 year old male	Y attended Melfort Primary school, which was located on the outskirts of a large industrial town. The school roll was 324. Reason for referral: Y had spent his first year at school in a Behavioural Unit. His reintegration into his local primary school had been unsuccessful. There were concerns that he might return to special educational provision. His behaviours were considered unco-operative. He often shouted out and was observed wringing his hands. The following participants were involved in the study: Y; his mother and father; the class teacher; the depute headteacher; the educational psychologist and R
Case study 3 H: 8-year-old male.	H attended Rowantree Primary School; a large Victorian building in a town centre The roll of Rowantree Primary school was 131. The reason for referral of H: H often lost his temper. He did not concentrate on his work. His parents believed that he suffered from a medical condition, which resulted in violent behaviour. They sought medical intervention. The following participants were involved in the study: H; his parents; the headteacher; the class teacher; the special needs assistant; the educational psychologist and R.
Case Study 4 B: 8-year-old male.	B and H were in the same class at Rowantree Primary school. Difficulties arose when both children behaved inappropriately when relating to each other. The reason for referral: B sometimes overreacted when the teacher asked him to correct his work or when he lost at football. He seemed very angry. His mother was concerned that her divorce from his father had affected him. The following participants were involved in the study: B; his mother; the class teacher; the special needs assistant; the headteacher; the educational psychologist and R.
Case Study 5 A: 8-year-old male.	A attended St.J's Primary school which had a school roll of 201. Reasons for referral: He showed violent behaviours when he felt annoyed. Unable to concentrate on his work, A sometimes shouted out in class, or ran around the class, in order to gain the attention of others. At playtimes or in corridors, his behaviour caused problems. He explained violent behaviour as 'just playing'. There were concerns that he mixed with older youths who influenced his behaviours. There was also growing concern, among professionals that he was out with parental control. A stayed out overnight. The following participants were involved in the study. H; his parents; the class teacher; the headteacher; the educational psychologist and R.

Case Study 6	W attended Sunnyside Primary School. The school roll was 324 pupils.
	Reason for referral: W had reacted violently to another pupil. He disturbed other pupil in class.
W 7 year old male	There had been parental complaints. The headteacher was worried about the possible escalation of his violent behaviours.
	The following participants were involved in the study: W; his father; the headteacher; the class teacher; the educational psychologist and R
	Total Number of participants in the study. 6 pupils 9 parents 4 headteachers 1 depute headteacher 4 educational psychologists 1 teacher in charge of nursery. 2 nursery nurses. 1 special needs assistant researcher

The sample of participants reflected those whom Behaviour Support teachers commonly meet during the course of their work. It is acknowledged that the Behaviour Support teacher is likely to have regular contact with the pupil, teacher, headteacher and parents. Whilst the educational psychologists are important in terms of monitoring the work, it is less common to have weekly contact with them.

The case studies were divided into three distinct parts, which followed the chronology of the involvement of the R in the work.

Part 1 This section deals with an exploration of the problem from the perspectives of the headteacher, the educational psychologist, class teacher, parents and the pupil.

Part 2: This section describes how the Solution Oriented work was carried out in each school focusing on the work with the teacher, parent and child.

Part 3: This section seeks to gain feedback from the participants about their understanding of the process and its impact on their lives and work. It also explores the extent to which the participants were conscious of the philosophical assumptions, which underpin the approach. Gale (1992) advised that those involved in qualitative research should understand that their research is a social construction and that attention to the following issues, should help produce a more balanced research study.

5. 5.1 Power and Action

Gale (1992) advised that researchers should, when gathering and analyzing data, keep in mind the questions. *"How do stories change? How are actions justified?"*

Attention to this question from the beginning of the research investigation resulted in the re - examination of initial understandings. Patton (1988) noted that as a case study unfolds the original proposal is often dissimilar to the emergent data. During the course of the study, the meanings, which different participants gave for their behaviour and actions, were noted and reflected upon. Focus on what was changing and the different understandings of change helped provide a deeper understanding of the socially constructed nature of SEBD. It alerted

the researcher to the possibility that an apparently benign approach, such as Solution Oriented therapy, may have the potential to contribute to the social construction of the pupil as SEBD.

5. 5. 2 Labelling

Gale suggested that researchers become more acutely aware of how labelling a person can affect their research findings and alerted them to keep in mind how issues of gender and culture stem from the categorization of people. This is particularly pertinent to this study as labelling a pupil as disturbed, a parent as dysfunctional, and a teacher as ineffective is common to the discourse of responding to pupils who are assessed as having SEBD.

5. 5. 3 Curiosity

Gale advised that in order to sustain the curiosity of the researcher, a diagrammatic representation, in particular a Venn diagram be used so that there is a visual representation of relationships among different concepts. This process enabled the juxtaposition of ideas, which in turn guided the literature research. Since a particular aim of the study was to investigate the impact of an approach, which is informed by social constructionism, it was important to examine the data from this particular position.

Fig 5:1. Inter relating factors in the investigation of the impact of a Solution Oriented approach to supporting pupils with SEBD

Community **Change** Social Control

Behaviour support teacher Social Construction
Solution Oriented approach
Social Justice **Pupil assessed with SEBD**. Legislation
Family Teacher /Class
Psychological Assessment

Other agencies
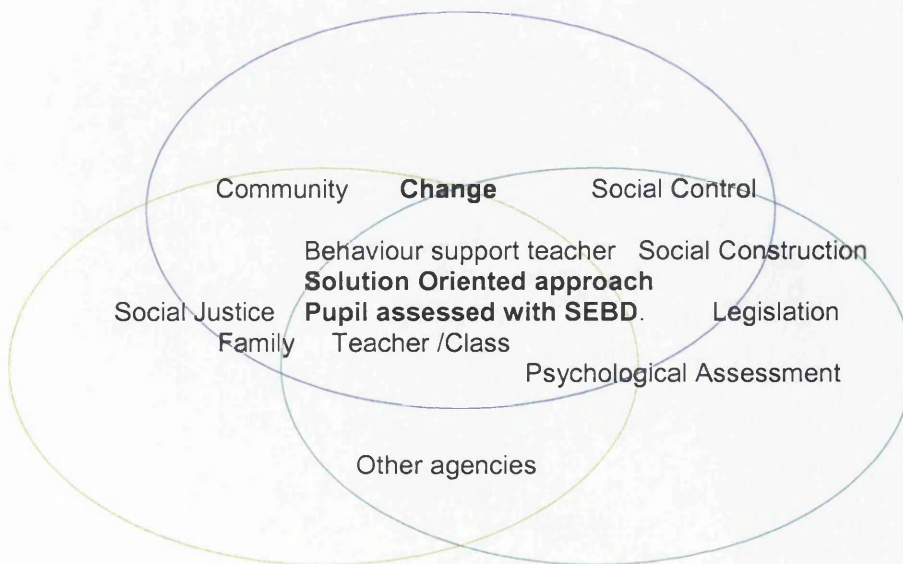
5. 6 Data Collection and Analysis

Yin (1994) proposed that there are six main sources of data collected in case studies:

- documents
- archival records
- interviews

- direct observation
- participant-observation
- physical artefacts

The advice of Merriam (1988) was valuable in terms of collecting data in respect of each case study. She suggested that 'checking, verifying, testing, probing and confirming collected data,' is important in qualitative studies so that unexpected themes, which emerge during the process, provide an element of surprise. There was a commitment to the notion of narrative with respect to data. Clandinin and Connely (1994) considered

> Stories are the closest we can come to experience as we, and others tell
> our experience. Experience in this view, is the stories some people live.
> People live stories and in the telling of them they affirm them, modify them
> and create new ones.
>
> (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994, p 415)

By adopting a narrative perspective with respect to the data, it was hoped that a multi-storied perspective would emerge. Although Feigin, Orum, and Sjoberg (1991) suggested that using more than one case study might dilute the purpose and meaning of the individual case study, the possibility of exploring different perspectives informed the choice of a collective case design. In order to counter the possibility of dilution it was decided that the time spent collecting data was a maximum of one year for each school. It was hoped that this would enable an in-depth exploration of participant involvement in, and assessment of, the Solution Oriented work. The main data techniques used in this study were participant observation, semi – structured interviews and document analysis. The next section describes the instruments and the procedures used in relation to data collection. The description will follow the storyline of each case and is divided into three parts, which described

a) the problem situation and its meaning.

b) The Solution Oriented process.

c) feedback

Table 5: 2 Instrumentation and Procedures

Part 1	
Different perspectives. on the problem situation.	Referral Forms, which outlined reasons for referral. Participant Observation, in class and in other contexts, using a narrative observational schedule. Semi Structured Interviews were conducted with a parent, teacher, pupil and headteacher, which focused on their understanding of the problem behaviour and the impact of the problem on their lives. Class Teachers were asked to complete a standardized Behavioural Checklist (NFER Nelson) Researcher Diary
Part 2 **Solution** **Oriented Process**	Participant Observation in class and other contexts, using a narrative observational schedule. Entries in the Golden Book. Transcripts of Solution Oriented conversations with the teacher, parents and pupils. Transcripts of Solution Oriented conversations with the headteacher Minutes of Review meetings Behaviour Support Reports for Review meetings. Researcher Diary
Part 3 **Illumination and Feedback.**	Semi Structured interviews conducted by two teachers other than the R, with each pupil, parent, headteacher, teacher, and educational psychologists. The reason for this choice on the part of R was an attempt to address issues of power in the research / researched relationship. It also aimed to minimise the possibility that the researcher, by asking questions of an evaluative and probing nature could exacerbate the already existing power imbalance. This choice was made so that the researcher could identify more closely with the notion that she was being researched. Researcher Diary

The next section describes the different instrumentation involved in each case study.

5. 6. 1 Documents

The reasons for referral of the pupil to the Behaviour Support Service were available in the form of a Psychological Assessment, thus these documents represented the official categorization of the pupil as SEBD. Through the process of psychological assessment, the child's intellectual functioning, perceptual abilities, academic achievements and family history contributed to the final assessment as a pupil with SEBD, who was considered in need of Behavioural Support. From a social constructionist perspective the 'truth' of these assessments is challenged.

Other types of documents, which were available to the researcher, were:

Minutes of case reviews and pupil curricular assessments.

The Golden Books which were based on White's (1990) Therapeutic Documents.

School handbooks.

Policy Documents.

Behaviour Support Referral Procedures.

5. 6. 2 Participant Observation

Simpson and Tuson (1995) claimed that there are three main types of systems of recording observations, which include fixed schedule, descriptive and narrative records and the use of cameras and videos. Given the complexity of the classroom interactions in school and the role of narrative in relation to the study, it was decided that the observational aspects of the research study would be both descriptive and narrative. Simson and Tuson (1995) considered that descriptive and narrative observation offered researchers opportunities to:

> *Deal with broad segments of events or processes within naturally occurring*
> *time spans, and they can take account of the time sequences of events,*
> *and their complex and subtle interactions.*

(Simson and Tuson. 1995 p5)

Adopting such an approach to observation allowed the researcher to use the naturally occurring events as the starting and finishing points of the sequences, which were recorded. Thus this facilitated the broadness and flexibility of descriptive observations to which Simson and Tuson (1995) referred. The observations for each pupil focused on specific behaviours and contexts. Behaviour Support teachers are experienced at observing children in class and this experience was used to good effect in the research process.

An Observational Record was prepared. When the data was transcribed, it was colour coded in terms of behavioural responses of the pupil to his peers and to the adults in class. This was initially done using different coloured pens and thereafter was highlighted in a corresponding colour on computer. Thoughts and views on what was happening were handwritten next to the observation. This facilitated reflection with the pupil and the teacher and provided the foundation for the Solution Oriented work.

Fig 5. 3 Segment of an Observational Record

OBSERVATIONS	REFLECTIONS
9. 30	
W Starts a maths task. He opens the book.	*W listens to his teacher. Starts his work (book opened)*
W looks a little confused, lifts his perspex ruler, taps it then waves it to no one in particular. His pencil rolls from his desk. *Looks around shouts out to teacher*	*Is the work too demanding?*
Miss B, I cannae dae this. I jist cannae dae these sums.	*Confident about approaching teacher. Use of the Scottish vernacular.*
Takes pencil from pupil C. Pupil C says, "I am telling the teacher".	*Did not ask for pencil. Other pupil did not fight with him*
9 35 W mimics "I am telling the teacher". Other children are looking at him. Three boys begin to laugh *Teacher gives W a pencil. She says.* *Say sorry to C and take my special pencil* *Now I would like you to do your best work*	*Does he like to get the attention of the others?* *Relationship with the teacher seems very positive.* *Smiles a lot at his teacher.*
9. 39. W looks delighted at getting the teachers special pencil and says to I am awfy awfy sorry C C :(smiles). It's alright do your best work OK *W: I will*	*Interesting use of vernacular*

In this specific segment of class life with the pupil W, various features of his behaviour were recorded, thus maintaining the sequence and continuity of the events, as they occurred. The times were related to the natural activities of the situation and were not pre – set fixed time intervals, as is the case in a categorised system. In this study the records were utilized both from a research perspective and from a Solution Oriented perspective, which aimed to highlight those aspects of behaviour, which challenge the dominant story of the child as deficit.

In the retelling of this observation for the purpose of the **Golden Book,** the researcher was able to emphasise the following behaviours to the child and the teacher, upon which his alternative story of competence would emerge:

W likes to ask his teacher for help.

W's teacher knows that he likes a special pencil.

When W is reminded to say "sorry", by his teacher, he does so.

W's friends seem to want him to do well in class

Descriptive records were used, not only to describe what was done, but how it was done. Because they provided a thorough, unambiguous, chronological, sequence of events the records could be opened to re analysis. The coding was influenced by the school-based context and focused on the presence or absence of how the pupil engaged. Different coloured

pens were used to underline the exceptions to the problem-dominated story of W and other pupils in each observation. Descriptions of behaviours which differ from the dominant problem descriptions, included 'on task' behaviours such as concentrating on the completion of work; sharing; sitting safely; respecting the other children's right to work and putting up his hand to attract teachers attention. Relational and linguistic aspects of behaviours were underlined in a different colour and this assisted in the interpretation of the data. In the example above, the conversations between W and his classmate showed that he felt comfortable using Scottish vernacular He also used it in relation to his teacher. A key focus of the study is about the emergent relationships, which are constructed through language. Thus the conversations of the child with others in the school were noted, attended to, and reflected upon, with the pupil, the teacher or the parents.

The descriptive observations were carried out at the initial stages of the involvement of the researcher in the Solution Oriented process. These descriptive observations were supplemented by Narrative systems or Field Notes which in turn were guided by nature of the study, and guided by the research questions which sought to understand the differing perspectives in relation to the problem behaviour, and the impact of the Solution Oriented process, on both the researcher and the participants. This data collection technique facilitated the collation of descriptive accounts of what happened, over time both to the researcher and the participants.

5. 6. 3. Semi-structured interviews, which focused on the differing perceptions of the problem situation
These interviews were conducted with the participants in order to gain insight into their understanding of the problem situation. These interviews took place after the observations had occurred and were exploratory in nature. An opportunity existed within these initial interviews for the Solution Oriented process to begin. The questions focused on discovering:
- the pupil's unique qualities and competencies across different contexts. (School, home, playground, hobbies, friends etc).
- difficulties which were faced in relation to the problem situation
- different understandings of why the pupil had been assessed as having SEBD.
- exceptions to the problem dominated account.
- changes which were hoped for.
- supports required.

In addition to the above exploratory questions the class teacher was asked to complete a Behaviour Checklist (NFER NELSON APPENDIX C) and to follow the school procedures in relation to completing entries into School Behaviour Records. The parents, teacher and pupil involvement in the **Golden Book** and commitment to meeting with R was arranged at this junction. It was hoped that everyone would be able to keep to their initial arrangement.

When completed, the interviews were transcribed onto a computer, with a margin at the side for notes so that a process of reflection could ensue. The data was transcribed as soon as possible after interviews and there was an attempt to become familiar with the data. Whilst transcribing data with the research questions in mind, there was an increased appreciation of the interconnectedness of description, analysis and interpretation as suggested by Wolcott (1990). The explicit aim, which was to examine the intervention in relation to the social constructionist principles underpinning the approach, facilitated the analytic process. A thematic analysis was adopted and initial codes began to emerge. According to Ely et al (1997) there are often misunderstandings about the emergent nature of thematic analysis. They contended that themes instead of being emergent, "reside in the head of the researcher" and that all "analysis is about sorting lifting and reflecting". They defined a theme as a "statement of meaning that runs through all or most of the pertinent data" or "one in the minority that carries heavy emotional or factual impact". The advice of Miles and Huberman (1994) was useful in terms of coding

The coding began immediately. It was dense and initially there were too many codes. Miles and Huberman suggested that clarity would follow and there would be less need to have so many codes. This was achieved by the following:

- comparisons were highlighted.
- similarities and differences were noted.
- initial impressions were retained. Contradictory impressions were inserted near the initial impressions.
- the categories were open to revision as different insights emerged.
- the verbatim reports were linked to the categories and were re-examined in the light of the emergent themes.

At Part 2, the intention of the researcher was to observe and record how the participants responded to the Solution Oriented intervention. At this stage the dual role of a researcher and that of a teacher who is implementing a particular approach, required careful consideration. As a support teacher and professional who is construed as a 'specialist' in the field of problem behaviour, there was a growing awareness that the situation was one which hooks (1994) described as 'essentially unequal. ' She referred to the 'potentially oppressive status' of researchers. Being attentive to this possibility alerted the researcher to the need for care in respect of the analysis. The role of the Behaviour Support teacher is not clear-cut and there is an implicit understanding that they act as advisors to parents, and consultants to teachers. Hence, their contribution to the lives of pupils, parents, and teachers could arguably be that of preserving the status quo in education. Of critical importance was awareness, on the part of the researcher, of the possibility, that this approach, despite its grounding in social constructionist postmodern theory, could be seen as another method of controlling the pupils.

At this stage the main sources of data were descriptions of the involvement or non-involvement of teachers, parents or pupils. Entries in the research diary proved an important tool for the researcher so that her reflections could be revisited in the light of the responses from the participants. Influenced by the ideas of White (1995) in relation to transparent ways of working, there was an effort on the part of R to develop ways of communicating with the participants, which countered the potentially oppressive status described by hooks (1994). Solution Oriented interviews with the parents, teachers, and children were documented and focused on:

- highlighting the special skills and qualities of those most involved in the problem situation.
- highlighting hose times when the problem was less dominant and documenting the accounts in the Golden Book.
- involving others in the school community as co-authors in the story of change.
- involving parents in their support of their child by requesting their involvement as a co-author of the story of change.
- finding out if the pupil, staff or parents needed more support.

The following questions were used in each school.

What are the pupil strengths?

Who will notice these changes and document them in the Golden Book?

Who else, in school will support the pupil in his/ her challenge?

Who will enjoy hearing these stories?

What else needs to happen to support the child in school?

5. 6. 4 Participant Observations

During the Solution Oriented work, participant observations were also used in order to describe the non-verbal behaviours, which were occurring Stake (1995) noted that.

> *During observation, the qualitative case study researcher keeps a good record of events to provide a relatively incontestable description for further analysis and ultimate reporting...The story often starts to take shape during the observation but sometimes does not emerge until write –ups of many observations are pored over*

(Stake, 1995, p62)

5. 6 5: Feedback

The final part of the study involved the researcher's work being the focus of investigation. The decision to enlist the support of two colleagues, other than the researcher was guided by the wish to strengthen the voice of the participants and to learn from the research process. Although the researcher did not conduct the interviews, the interview questions revisited those areas of the study that had been covered in the course of the year. The intention was to

facilitate reflection on the part of the participants. This would help the researcher learn more about how to develop her practice and that of others.

5. 6. 6 Interviews

The data collected at this stage was more standardized than at the preceding stages. Someone other than the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with six parents; four headteachers; one depute headteacher; one headteacher of a nursery; four class teachers; one nursery nurse. Each interview was audio taped. The children were informally interviewed in the presence of their parent or teacher and asked about their views on the Golden Book and their work with R.

The interview schedule for the parent was replicated for use with the class teachers and nursery staff and consisted of 55 questions which focused on the following themes: (appendices F; G)

- the problem and its meaning.
- perceptions of the process.
- behavioural change.
- attitudinal change.
- school exclusion and inter-agency support.

With hindsight these interviews could have been shorter. There was a concern on the part of R that full a description of the experience of the teachers and parents should be gained.

Headteacher Interviews appendix D

In this particular study five senior managers completed six interviews. In one school the depute headteacher was the interviewee. In the nursery, the nursery teacher in charge of the nursery was interviewed. The themes, which were addressed with management, (appendix H) corresponded to those which were addressed with the teachers and parents:

- the problem and its meaning.
- perception of the process
- behavioural change
- attitudinal change
- school exclusion and inter agency support.

Psychologist interviews. (Appendix I)

The educational psychologists were not involved in the day-to-day dealings of the Solution Oriented work with the children, their teachers and parents. During the course of the study staff changes resulted in educational psychologists being allocated different schools. The effect of this was that the educational psychologists who were involved with W and A, although supportive of the approach were disinclined to comment in detail about work in which they were not closely involved.

Those who were interviewed did so in a face-to-face manner and the interviewer wrote down their responses. The themes which were addressed related to:

- psychological perspective on the problem.
- what had changed?
- relative value of the approach in relation to other approaches.
- school exclusion and inter-agency support.

5. 7 Data Analysis

Miles and Huberman (1994) noted that there does not exist a set of conclusive rules with regard to qualitative analysis and the conclusions which are reached. Nonetheless, the aim of analysis is the generation of meaningful data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) considered that naturalistic inquiry is idiographic as "different interpretations are likely to be meaningful for different realities" (Lincoln and Guba 1985, p42). As previously noted the analysis of the data occurs as an interative process whereby there was a movement between the literature and the emerging data and back to the literature again. Yin (1994) emphasised the fact that the set of case study questions are 'the heart of method' and that the primary function of questions is to keep the researcher focused. Thus the research questions guided the analysis. Trough the lens of social constructionism the main aims of the research study was to discover how the participants understood the ' problem ' situation and how they understood the Solution Oriented process. In this study principal data were derived across and the different aspects of the experiences were coded. Miles and Huberman (1994) described thirteen strategies for generating meaning from qualitative data and these range from descriptive to explanatory. The following table is adapted from Miles and Huberman (1994). The strategies which are written in italics were used in the analysis of the data.

Table 5. 3 Strategies used in the data analysis:

What goes with what	*Noting Patterns*	*Clustering*	Seeing Plausibility
What is there	*Making Metaphors*	Counting	
Sharpen our Understanding	*Making Comparisons*	Partitioning Variables	
See relationships more abstractedly	*Subsuming particulars into generals*	Factoring	Noting relationships between variables

A stated aim of the research was to discover the different perspectives that emerged during the process. This required that the researcher admit to uncertainty with respect to analysis. Lenzo (1995) discussed the challenges which researchers face when they introduce their doubts into the research study. She writes

The traditional forms of closed narrative with tight argument and structures
give way to the possibilities of more open forms with holes and questions
and explorations of situatedness and partiality.

(Lenzo1995, p18)

She also proposed that researching from a poststructuralist context " incites us to reflect upon our method and explore new ways of knowing. Mellor (2001, p 3) considered that it was preferable to speak about the strengths of research rather than its validity. Mellor (2001) believed that as a result of the research process he became more suspicious of ' hygienic ' accounts and believed that the research process involved was ' messy'. He saw errors, blind alleys and uncertainty in the research process as "rendering the text more believable, not less; in so far as believability is a measure of authority, they lend authority. His views resonate with those of the researcher. During the process of analysing and sifting through the data there was a heightened awareness of the justification of those who advocate a participatory form of research. There is also an acknowledgement that the interpretation of the researcher was just that – a single interpretation of events. However it is hoped that the accounts are respectful to all involved.

CHAPTER SIX: CASE STUDIES

6.1 Introduction

The chapter reports the research findings relating to the research study. The six case reports are presented individually. Each case report begins with a brief description of the pupil who was referred to the Behaviour Support Service. The case reports follow the chronology of events in relation to R meeting with the different participants. Different perceptions of 'problem' behaviour and the subsequent involvement of participants in the Solution Oriented process is described. The extent to which they valued the Solution Oriented process is also considered, as are the views of the participants about educational responses to pupils with SEBD. Postmodernism asserts that all writing reflects the personal perspective and philosophy of the author (Doherty 1999). Thus it is acknowledged that the experience of all involved in the study has been shaped by dominant cultural discourse about the nature of schooling and the education pupils with SEBD. The researcher's point of view does not prevail over that of those others who are involved in the study but is treated as just one more interpretation.

6.2 Case Study 1: L at Greenbank Nursery

L, aged 4 years and 3 months is the only child in her family. She attended Greenbank Nursery which is situated in the centre of a large industrial town in the west of Scotland. Her father worked in a restaurant and her mother chose to remain at home during L's pre-school years. L's maternal grandparents collected L from nursery when necessary. Described by staff as uncooperative and unwilling to socialize, L was beginning to acquire the label 'disruptive' before going to school. L was assessed as being of average ability. However the nursery staff considered that the main barrier to her learning was her behaviour. Attempts to involve L's mother in the work of the nursery had been counterproductive and she had begun to avoid meeting the staff. She agreed to the involvement of the educational psychologist who accessed the Behaviour Support Service. Ordinarily children in pre-school establishments were not referred to the Behaviour Support service. However in recognition of the concerns of the staff, the educational psychologist hoped that involvement of Behaviour Support might avert future difficulties for L in primary school. It is recognised that Behaviour Support teachers may be invited to consult with individuals or groups of individuals in order to explore possible solutions to difficulties that are faced within the context of school or nursery. From this perspective it is understood that all involved in the situation can have an effect on the situation. As noted previously the adoption of a Solution Oriented approach to schools evolved from an ecosystemic approach to education, which proposes that changes in one part a system, will impact on other elements of the system. The Solution Oriented work which was conducted in the nursery focused on engaging with the parent and the nursery nurses about how they understood L's behaviour. Conversing with the adults from a Solution Oriented perspective about their understanding of L's behaviour was also consistent with Vygotsky's views on the nature of language and thought. He viewed language not only as providing a way of describing the world but also enabling interpretation and action. Consequently there was an acceptance that the basis for change "can be located in a difference in how people

come to view their situation ('new viewing') or through it to do something different ('new doing')".
Ajmal (2001, p12)

6.2.1 'Problem' behaviour and its meaning: the nursery teacher's perspective

The nursery teacher Ms. U was enthusiastic about her work and had a reputation for being supportive of children who had behavioural difficulties. She was recognised as being skilled at working cooperatively with parents who required support from the Social Work Department. She was worried that experienced nursery nurses described L's behaviour as 'disturbing' and that they felt stressed by the situation. She explained that despite her extensive experience, she had not encountered behaviour that was so unmanageable. Of primary concern to the nursery teacher was that L had little awareness of road safety and that the staff found it 'hard work' when she refused to comply with reasonable requests on their outings. The nursery nurses who worked with L were highly experienced and the nursery teacher believed that if L's behaviour posed problems for them, then the situation was serious. She would have preferred that there was more access to the expertise of the educational psychologist:

> I think that was one of the frustrating things for me and my staff. We felt that the
> help from other agencies was not sufficient. I would have liked it if psychological
> services could have come in more to see L.
>
> (Nursery teacher)

Deeply aware of the impact which unemployment and poverty had on the lives of some of the children and their parents, the nursery teacher was eager to involve parents in the work of the nursery. Each morning she and her staff welcomed the children and their parents into the nursery. Her effort to involve L's mother in the work of the nursery however did not go as planned. She later reflected that her invitation to L's mother to become involved with the nursery staff had, "pushed mum away from the situation". The nursery staff noticed that L's mother no longer accompanied L to nursery. The nursery teacher thought that L's mother was "very embarrassed" by her daughter's behaviour.

The nursery teacher viewed a primary role of the nursery as preparing pupils for the demands of school:

> In the nursery session there has to be unstructured times and structured times
> because we are trying to get the children into routines. L just wasn't complying
> with that. She just wanted an unstructured session. She did not want the
> structured path at all.
>
> (Nursery teacher)

Ms. U thought the other children were afraid of L whom she believed showed "very attention seeking behaviour which caused a lot of chaos". She thought L "was not coping in nursery". The nursery teacher conscientiously followed a behavior modification intervention, which had previously been successful with other children. She explained that the staff "used little stickers and certificates when she was compliant to reinforce the compliant behaviour". The staff introduced a 'Happy Face Chart' which divided the day into 'Welcome Time', 'Playtime' and 'Story Time'. At each time of the day when L was seen to comply with the rules, she was rewarded with a happy face sticker. This tried and tested approach did not work. Perplexed at the failure of previously successful strategies, the nursery teacher was convinced that not only the staff but also L and her parents needed expert help.

6.2.2 The educational psychologist's perspective

According to the educational psychologist, there was no apparent organic reason for L's behaviour. Able to cope with the curricular demands of the nursery, L did not mix with the other children except on her own terms. The psychologist thought that there might have been confusion between L's understanding of what was expected of her and the demands of the staff. He described her behaviour as unusual and advised the staff to keep an open mind about other possibilities as to why L responded in such a way. He saw his role, however as "assessing the situation and collecting information which he would provide to another agency". He said that this was all that could be done within the time available to him. He asked the staff to complete a behaviour checklist which contained thirteen items. The profile that emerged was of a child who was easily distracted; had difficulty turn taking; had difficulty following instructions and who followed her own agenda regardless of the views of others. The staff received a handout on strategies which assist pupils to become effective learners. The handout suggested that teachers give pupils a signal to begin working and provide them with immediate feedback and encouragement. In order to assist pupils to stay on task teachers were advised to minimize distractions in the work area, increase the frequency of reinforcement and build success into the tasks. To enable pupils comply with class rules it was suggested that the rules should be made explicit and that staff should be consistent in their expectations of pupil behaviour. Consequences for breaking the rules should be consistently applied. The handout suggested that when pupils were inattentive, it was useful to have the pupil repeat instructions aloud and ensure that the pupil sit at the front of the room near where the teaching is conducted:

In addition to the strategies outlined, the staff were advised to reward positive behaviour. In consultation with L's mother, it had been agreed that when she was in a temper that she would be removed to another room until she was calm. It was anticipated that that by making changes to the learning environment L's behaviour would undergo a change. The nursery staff were convinced that advice from the educational psychologist would resolve the problem, whereas the educational psychologist saw his role differently. Interested in how a Solution Oriented approach would work in nursery, he was supportive of an approach which would encourage the staff to try something different in response to L's behaviour.

6.2.3 The nursery nurses' perspective

Two nursery nurses, E and I were initially involved in the support work and were given time to reflect with R on the work. E, the more experienced worker explained that they had agreed to share the workload as it was anticipated that I would soon be in a new position in another area. Both E and the nursery teacher were surprised that L's behaviour could cause so much chaos and alarm in the nursery. E described L's behaviour as uncooperative seeing the main difficulties as, "just her bad manners, her lack of concentration and she is just a child who does her own thing and is disrespectful of any one else around her". "Doing her own thing" was construed as dangerous. On outings the staff said that "it was hard work" as L was non compliant. They worried that she would run away from them. They noticed that she did not tend to mix with other children and preferred solitary play. They

believed that her behaviour was ' abnormal' for her stage of development. They considered that by age four, L should be able to socialise with the other children in ways that were more agreeable. They described how, if other children interrupted her in the house corner, she shouted at them. E was concerned that her level of hostility could result in her hitting one of the other children.

When L was upset, E said she could become verbally aggressive to adults and other children. She frequently threw tantrums and shouted at the nursery nurses to get away from her. They said that she liked to choose her own activity but would not be directed. E noted that:

> She loves baking time but then if we ask her to tidy up she just says 'No'
> and goes to the house corner. If another child is playing with something
> that she wants she just goes into a massive temper.
>
> (Nursery nurse E)

Waiting, taking turns and sharing her toys with other children were problematic. According to the nursery staff her defiance made them appear incompetent. Of particular concern was her defiance when she was asked to change activities. If she did not wish to change her activities she would resolutely refuse. This meant that the smooth running of the nursery was affected. They were concerned about the impact of L's behaviour on the other children felt that their professionalism was challenged. They looked puzzled and disappointed that they had not been able to come up with a solution to L's behavioural problems because they prided themselves on their teamwork and commitment to the children in their care.

6.2.4 Listening for strengths

During the first conversation with the nursery nurses, R had listened in silence, recalling how de Shazer (1997) valued the space between words that he claimed, created a space for alternative meanings to emerge. He recommended that adopting a position of naïve curiosity facilitates this process. Epston (1992, p176) noted that in conversation with others, "expressing curiosity and wonderment rather than employing conventional evaluative assessment classificatory formats" increases the other person's belief in the legitimacy of their experiential knowledge. R explained that she would be using a Solution Oriented approach which focused on language and stories. She then asked permission from the nursery nurses to document the Solution Oriented conversation and explained that their words would be of value in relation to the work which was to be done.

Adopting an approach that is informed by social constructionist thinking seeks to minimize power differential Hoffman (1990). Educational establishments are hierarchical organizations and nursery nurses, like teachers are expected to defer to those who have been accorded a 'specialist' status. For R it was important that she conveyed to the nursery nurses her respect for their skills and knowledge in relation to working with pre-school children. R attempted to distance herself from an expert position by acknowledging her lack of experience in a nursery setting. She asked that the staff guide her and told them that she looked forward to exploring with them about whether the approach which she used in primary schools would be useful in an early years setting. Initially, it appeared that the nursery nurses expected to be given a list of strategies for dealing with "a problem child".

When R explained that a Solution Oriented approach emphasised attention to meaning, language and documenting stories, they seemed to become more curious. The possibilities of working with R rather than passively accept expert advice from her seemed to capture their attention. To R it appeared that their interest and curiosity heralded the start of a relationship based on cooperation. R explained that she had heard of their reputation as experienced and skilful at their work. She expressed a hope that they would learn from and with each other. It was useful for R to be able to retell the words of the nursery teacher in relation to the staff as it provided an opportunity for her to compliment the nursery nurses. O'Connell (1998, p64) distinguishes between compliments and manipulative flattery and believed that the sincere use of compliments helps to motivate people. The view of O'Connell (1998, p64) in relation to the giving of compliments resonates with the position which R strived for in developing a mutually respectful relationship with the nursery nurses. He proposed, "the giving of compliments, in a non patronizing way, helps reduce the power gap between the client and the therapist and often increases the sense of collaboration between them". Although the nursery nurses and R were not in a therapeutic context, nonetheless the relevance of the views of O'Connell about the use of compliments is valid in any context where there is a wish to foster a collaborative relationship.

6.2.5 Problem- free talk: exploring exceptions

Exploring those times when the problem occurs less is central to working from a Solution Oriented perspective. When asked to recall those times when the nursery nurses noticed that L cooperated with them and seemed calm, E noted that "L loves the house corner, dressing up, and she is terrific at jigsaws". Her colleague nodded and smiled in agreement. Linked to exploring the exceptions to a particular problem situation it is recommended that a Solution Oriented practitioner reflects on the particular qualities, which people possess. After listening attentively to the nursery nurses description of the problem which they faced, R asked how they managed to deal with such a strong-minded child. They laughed and E said, "Well when she's in a good mood she is fine but we just get on with our work and manage to calm her". When the nursery nurses elaborated on 'getting on with their work' it emerged that they were skilled at communicating with the children and working in a collaborative way. They noted that L concentrated when she was drawing and listening to stories which she seemed to enjoy. They attempted to avoid temper tantrums by engaging in activities which L enjoyed. When they were asked to share their unique ways of responding effectively to L, the conversation took a more upbeat turn and they laughingly agreed that L was indeed seemed strong–minded. They also agreed to document those times when they noticed L behave in a calm way and to notice when she concentrated on particular activities.

6.2.6 'Problem' behaviour and its meaning: the parent's perspective

R had not received any written documentation from the parent relating to L. The only reports were those which had been compiled by professionals. Omitting the voices of parents from a formal assessment process such as referral to a Behaviour Support Service reinforces a dominant assumption that blames lies with the parent or the home when a child's behaviour is considered

disruptive. It is generally accepted among Scottish people that referral to a psychologist is associated with an inability to cope. Mrs. L belonged to a community, where it is usual for women to shoulder the responsibility for the behaviour of their children. It is likely that the story of L at nursery would be well known to the women who took their children to nursery. Mrs. L's quiet agitation during the introductory meting with R, contrasted sharply to the way in which the professionals spoke about the challenge they faced. Mrs. L later described how she had avoided speaking to other parents, ashamed that her daughter was causing trouble in the nursery. She described how she had felt as if her nerves were shattering. Her competency as a mother seemed to be in question. Her husband worked shifts and was unable to attend meetings in the school. They worried that L would not be able to cope in the local primary school. She relied on the support of her parents when she went shopping because L ran away when asked to take her mother's hand. She described how she had temper tantrums at meal times or when she was asked to put away her toys. Mrs. L was unsure why her daughter had tantrums in the nursery. She said that L was a stubborn child who could "dig her heels in and wild horses wouldn't get her to do things if she didn't want to do them". Often there was a 'shouting match' when she asked L to tidy up. Worried about her daughter's behaviour in the nursery and shocked when she heard about the extent of the nursery staff's concerns, L's mother agreed to meet again with R. Before leaving she said that she would do anything to help her child. L's mother's reactions reflected the views of Epston (1992 p 44) who noted how mothers have been affected by 'mother blaming' and often consider themselves as failures. In order to counter a dominant view of personal failure on the part of L's mother R was guided by the idea that it is the meaning which persons attribute to their experience that is constitutive of their lives (White, 1992, p123).

6.2.7 Noticing strengths

When R next visited the nursery, it was just before the end of the morning session when parents were already beginning to assemble outside in the waiting areas. R was invited to sit in a corner near L and the other children who were working with E. L was engrossed in a painting activity. She looked up at E, who smiled and complimented her on her painting. L looked intently at E and returned to her work. Her mother appeared in the nursery and R remained sitting in a corner of the nursery. L and her mother smiled at each other and stayed close to one another.

Mrs. L   *Oh what a lovely picture for my kitchen wall*

L: *Yes another one for the wall right?'(Smiling)*

L's mother gave L directions and advice.

Mrs. L: *Put the picture in my bag. Look do it this way, Watch mummy do it L.*

L moved away when her mother told her to watch her. She came close when she wanted either to get something, or to gain information. When it was time for L to leave, her mother said, "Right L, coat on you're going to Gran's". L shouted, 'No I'm doing my jigsaw' then she ran and hid under tables. When she realized that she could not be caught, she ran out into the corridor. The chase began and a member of staff returned her to the nursery. L was in a temper tantrum. The nursery staff settled L while R arranged to meet with L's mother.

6.2.8 A strengths-based report

Central to the practice of a Solution Oriented approach bringing to light resources in the person which have been neglected or undervalued. Sharry, Maddon and Darmody (2002 p306) suggest that listening from a Solution Oriented perspective allowed words to "pass through a strengths – based filter which, if it is effective should allow for new and different understandings to emerge". They believed that working in this way required subtlety on the part of the practitioner who has to be alert to the verbal and non-verbal communicative acts. R asked Mrs. L if she would like to hear what R had written in her report of the observation in the nursery. Mrs. L looked anxious and whispered 'alright.' R focused on those areas of the interaction which showed strength and competency.

Working from a Solution Oriented also involves attending to local ways of understanding. Strong (2000 p34) proposed that collaborative ways of working with people is best achieved when the therapist "joins with clients in their ways of relating to their worlds, while expanding on those worlds from within the client's local ways of knowing". The description below is an attempt to respect a local understanding of behaviour and to focus on those strengths in the relationship between L and her mother which had been evident in the interaction. There was an attempt on the part of R not only to convey an honest account of what she had witnessed but also to distance herself from a position of advice giver or expert:

> *When you came into the nursery yesterday, I enjoyed watching you and L speak to each other. I would like to tell you what I saw and understood. If I have got it a bit mixed up, just say so… I won't know your daughter like you do, so keep me right and then we can get on with the work.*

> *I know there was a wee stooshie (skirmish) but I saw that you and L smile a lot at each other…I saw that she seems to want you to know what she had been doing. I noticed you made sure she would know that the pictures would be put up in the kitchen and that you thought that her pictures were very important because I heard you say 'Put the pictures in the bag, Look do it this way Watch mummy do it". That was lovely. I think that she knew that you thought her pictures were very important.*

It appeared to R that Mrs. L became a little more relaxed when she heard this version of events. When she was asked about other times when she and L got on well together, she described how she loved singing with her child and telling stories that she 'just made up by herself '. The use of the exception question allowed R to hear about how L's mother, like the nursery nurses, created a positive learning environment for her child. Storytelling has been a feature of Scottish life for centuries and there is now renewed interest in the value of the oral tradition of storying. R explained to Mrs. L that many educators believed that what she was doing in terms of inventing stories was of great importance in helping to develop children's literacy. The conversation had moved from focusing on the problem of L's behaviour to the contribution of Mrs. L to her child's language development. She said that L liked to help her with her chores and explained that she valued hard work.

No attempt was made by R to give Mrs. L advice. Particular heed, however was paid to local understandings of language. In Scotland the word 'stooshie' means a temporary set back in behaviour which usually blows over. The use of the adjective 'wee' aimed to convey to Mrs. L that such

behaviour was of minor significance in terms of disruptive behaviour. The word stooshie was chosen over the more commonly used word 'tantrum.' Stooshie has a different shade of meaning and allows for a particular understanding among local people. A person who causes a stooshie about things is a force to be reckoned with and is often covertly admired. The conversation did not centre on the possible organic causes of L's behaviour. Rather there was an attempt on the part of R to adopt a position which would facilitate the development of a mutually respectful relationship. As a teacher it had always seemed to R that parents lacked the power to negotiate about those aspects of the educational setting, which might influence how their children learn. She explained to Mrs. L that when she had taught in class, she had always been curious about how children preferred to learn. The suggestion that an exploration of L's preferred way of learning in nursery might prove useful in relation to resolving behavioural difficulties seemed to surprise Mrs. L. She had never considered that L's behaviour could have been affected by environmental and curricular demands. Once she began to understand that there was value in teachers consulting with parents about how children learn, it seemed to R that Mrs. L was more wiling to engage with R about future possibilities.

6.2.9 Miracle question: describing a preferred future

The use of a "miracle question" allows people to visualize a future when a problem is less dominant. It also provides a description of a detailed and concrete description of that future. (Berg and Miller, 1992:13) consider this question "orients the client away from the past and the problem and toward the future and a solution". It also facilitates an examination of particular resources, which a person might possess. Mrs. L's response to this question clarified for R the impact of the problem on Mrs. L and it served to describe life without the problem. It also provided a framework for working towards a solution.

R: *Mrs. L, if a miracle happened tonight and things changed completely while you were asleep what is the first thing you would notice that has changed in relation to this problem?*

Mrs. L: *A miracle, a miracle would be me coming here and not having my stomach in a knot. I am so stressed. They (the nursery staff) would not be meeting me at the door to tell me about her being bad. They would be smiling. At home, she would listen to me and I'd be able to go shopping with her. I need to take my mum and dad with me just now because she just won't do as she is told and it is too dangerous. She runs away from me. Just... Just going shopping. That would be some miracle*

(Parent)

With Mrs. L's permission, R wrote the details of L's 'miracle' entry into nursery and her preferred future of a shopping day with L. Mrs. L agreed to write in the Golden Book about those times when she noticed L listening attentively and behaving in a calm way. She said she would write about when L listened to stories and how she enjoyed their singing together.

Of principal concern at that junction was that R and Mrs. L establish a working relationship, based on mutual respect and trust. R explained that there was much that the professionals could learn from Mrs. L about her daughter's preferred way of learning and that it was likely that by working together everyone would learn something new. Construing all those involved in the situation, as learners

seemed to create an alternative space for different types of conversations to emerge. Mrs. L looked more curious and less worried and agreed to meet with the nursery nurses and R.

6.2.10 Developing a non–expert position

The nursery nurses were keen to understand more about what a Solution Oriented approach involved. R explained that adopting this approach would involve them using their professional expertise to notice and document those times when L was playing and interacting in a calm way. R explained that by attending to those times when the problem was less dominant, and making detailed notes about the child's unique competencies could contribute to solution building. By adopting a stance of respectful curiosity and focusing on exception questions, the nursery nurses had begun to view of themselves as competent professionals who were engaged in a learning process rather than failing. They were interested in the notion that attending to language and stories could have an impact on behaviour and were eager to meet with Mrs. L and R in order to find out more about how a Solution Oriented approach might work. They also asked for literature about the approach One week elapsed between meetings with the parent and the nursery nurses. During that time the nursery nurses had documented those times when L was calm. These descriptions were of her drawing and playing in the house corner. They also explained however that sometimes she had been uncooperative and continued "to do her own thing when she wanted to".

The Solution Oriented conversations with the parent and staff aimed to challenge the view that Mrs. L was not coping and that L was deliberately defiant. It also focused on uncovering the particular talents of the nursery nurses. R asked permission from Mrs. L to retell her account of what she had witnessed between L and her mother. This account highlighted the special qualities of warmth and care of the child, which Mrs. L had shown towards her daughter when R had met them in the nursery. Mrs. L agreed. The nursery nurses smiled at the description of the 'stooshie' as they had been involved in the chase. R said she though that L seemed to be strong-minded and the nursery nurses and her parent agreed. When asked to identify special qualities, which were often associated with strong-minded people Mrs. L, the nursery nurses and R were in agreement that people who are describes as strong-minded usually had qualities of loyalty and tenaciousness. Mrs. L said she was quite stubborn and the nursery nurses and R admitted that they too could be strong-minded.

R then sought to further explore with Mrs. L her unique knowledge of her child in the presence of the professionals. During the course of the conversation, Mrs. L explained how she and L enjoyed singing together and that L particularly enjoyed listening to the stories which her mother ' just made up'. The nursery nurses were asked, " What did telling stories and singing songs with her child tell them about Mrs. L's special skills as a parent?" They were delighted to expand on how the activities which she engaged in with L promoted language development in children and that Mrs. L was particularly creative. Mrs. L also said that she and L liked to be organized and be in a routine. She valued tidiness. The nursery nurses explained that they believed in the importance of consistency for young

children and that being organised helps to create a secure environment. They both admitted they too liked to be organised. As the notion of preferred ways of learning had previously been introduced, R explained that she was curious about how they thought that people who were strong – minded might prefer to be consulted. When asked if she were invited to a party would she not bother if it were sprung on her, or would she rather know in advance, Mrs. L said that if she was going out for an evening she would plan what she was wearing and that it would be very important for her to know exact details of things. She added, "it's just that I'm a stickler for things like that'. The nursery nurses described how they too, like Mrs. L. preferred to know about things in advance. The notion of having a choice within a situation was explored by them. It was suggested that from L's perspective it might be more meaningful to introduce the notion of choice into the conversations as strong-minded people like Mrs. L, the nursery nurses and L liked to know in advance what was happening. The staff and the parent reflected together on the ways in which they made requests to L. Mrs. L. explained she would usually say, "Right L coat on we are going to Gran's". The nursery nurses said that they would sometimes say "Right children tidy up time". After reflecting on their preferred ways of being consulted, the nursery nurses and Mrs. L discussed ways of introducing choice into their conversations with L.

6.2.11 Future oriented language: possibilities and change

R explained to Mrs. L and the staff about how, in her work with children who displayed behavioural difficulties, the use of language could affect how the children responded. She explained how the use of the future tense over that of the conditional or imperative sometimes impacted on how the children responded. The notion that educators need to regain a sense of curiosity and wonder is highlighted in the work of Malaguzzii (1993) who adopts a social constructionist view to early years education and who emphasises the relational and experimental aspects of learning. Reconsideration of the Vygotskian ideas on the development of the growth of sociability, with its emphasis on language provided an opportunity for the conversation to shift from one which focused on an individual child to one whereby the problem behaviour on the part of L provided an opportunity to become more curious about the use of language with a young child. Instead of saying 'Right L, tidy up time' the staff and the parent agreed that L might prefer to be consulted before being asked to do something different. They decided that they would experiment with language in the following way. They would include future oriented language and insert choice:

When it is time to tidy up **will** I see you putting away the crayons or the paints L?

Mrs. L seemed interested when the nursery nurses questioned R about the difference between this approach and their customary approach to behaviour which was based on rewards and reinforcement. R explained how narrative therapists used documents to heighten a child's awareness of their unique strengths and competencies. Interested in the idea that writing a story based on exceptions to problem-dominated description could possibly influence behaviour, the nursery nurses and parent listened while R explained about the use and origins of the **Golden Book** which, influenced by the work of Michael White involved telling and retelling children about those

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times when significant people noticed them behaving in ways that challenged a dominant problem view of themselves.

6.2.12 Documents of support

Narrative therapy assumes that we become who we are through relationships and that we organize our lives through stories. R explained to the nursery nurses and the parent that the main 'story' that people had about L was that she was being troublesome and defiant. The position of Narrative therapists Freedman and Coombs (1996) resonated with that of R. They believed that:

> *Narrative therapists are interested in working with people to bring forth and thicken stories that do not support or sustain problems. As people begin to inhabit and live out the alternative stories, the results are beyond solving problems. Within the new stories, people live out new self images, new possibilities for relationships and new futures.*
>
> (Freedman and Coombs, 1996, p16)

It was emphasised that the stories in the Golden Book would describe those times when L behaved in ways that challenged the dominant story of her being outwith control. The nursery staff had agreed that they would notice when L was enjoying her activities in the nursery and was responding calmly. They agreed to feed this back to L and her mum. As a result of her description of the miracle question, the staff assisted Mrs. L to document her preferred alternative (White 1995a), as a story which could be read to L and which was entitled " L and mum go shopping"

> *L and Mum like to go shopping. L's mum says, "We like to go to the market to buy cakes. Sometimes we buy a birthday cake and sometimes we buy our favourite biscuits. Nana and papa like to join us. Sometimes L wears her shiny red shoes. Sometimes she wears her blue shoes. L's mum knows she likes to skip. When they go to town L's mum likes to take L's hand when she is skipping so that she will be safe. L's mum cares about L being safe. Nana and Papa care about L being safe. When mum says 'Stop here please". L listens and does not play hiding games in town because she knows that it is dangerous. When all the shopping is finished, they go to the park where it is safe to run and play.*
>
> (Parent)

Experienced teachers and storytellers know the value of rhyme and repetition in the stories for young children. The child listened to the story at her normal story times at home and the nursery staff used it in their nursery curriculum. L's mother wrote in the **Golden Book** accounts of L behaving in cooperative ways such as helping to bake; L helping mum to put the toys away; L and mum singing songs. She shared these experiences with the nursery staff who, in turn collaborated with the parent by incorporating these positive experiences into their curricular activities.

L's stories of change were incorporated into drama and language activities by the nursery staff. The following excerpt shows how the nursery nurse used Mrs. L's account to reinforce to L the importance of walking safely with her mum. L was learning a repertoire of safe behaviours through the medium of language and drama. The nursery nurse explained:

> *I was L's mum in the game. We held hands and pretended to go to the café. On the way home we stopped at the pavement because the road was really busy. When it was safe we crossed together still holding carrier bags.*

The use of the Golden Book facilitated an alternative story of L to emerge which challenged the view that she was 'disruptive and uncooperative'. Those aspects of Mrs. L's experience as a competent parent, which had hitherto been unrecognised, were highlighted in the stories. Their reflection on their practice resulted in the nursery nurses introducing future oriented questioning into their dialogue with L. The excerpt below illustrates the small changes that they made in their attempts to incorporate choice and future oriented language. The words in bold highlight the future oriented language:

E: *L **when** you are hearing your story **will you** be sitting on the red or the blue chair?*

L: *I will be in the blue chair*

E: ***May** I write in your Golden Book about that for your mum and dad?*

L: *Yes*

Writing the story of L's decision to sit in the blue chair at story time meant that the nursery nurses had called attention to a story of L as cooperative. They were developing a more consultative approach with L and with other children. They had revisited the theoretical basis of their work and became more reflective about their use of language. An example of a story about L's positive nursery experience was:

L. at nursery

> *When L comes to the nursery in the morning she comes and sits in her chair beside J. Her group is called the Buttercup group. L waits her turn and when she has finished baking she likes to keep her cake until her mum arrives because she wants to show it to her.*

The following report is one which a member of the nursery staff made two weeks after the initial meeting.

> *I took L outside into the corridor and read her story. We sat on the chairs and went over her story about shopping. She sat and listened intently and seemed to be enjoying it. She seemed to totally understand it as she was nodding in agreement all the way through it.*
>
> (Nursery nurse, E)

As L began to see a relationship between the stories of the nursery and the story of home, her behaviour began to be more settled. The nursery teacher described how she " was happy when she saw L enjoying herself on an outing to the park. She walked safely along the road holding her friend M's, hand". The nursery context provided R with an opportunity to learn with and from the other people involved. Solution Oriented conversations with the parent and professionals facilitated reflection on how the Vygotskian ideas of co-constructing change through attention to language and story could be merged with the ideas and practices of postmodern therapy. In line with Vygotskian (1978) thinking the problem situation identified for the educator, what the next steps might be in the learning process. In their cooperative work with Mrs. L, it appeared that she was no longer viewed as a passive bystander in the process, but was constructively involved.

6.2.13 Feedback: the nursery teacher

The teacher noticed that that L "was listening more which was lovely to see" She said she now had " eye contact with the teachers and the other children. She seemed more confident about naming the other children. For the teacher it was important that L was more sociable. She noted that as a result of

the work L could be more frequently heard asking others to play with her. She considered the change was dramatic and that L" began coping with the curriculum". The nursery teacher noticed that Mrs. L came to the nursery more regularly. She noted that both staff and the parent had mutually benefited from their involvement in the process. Conscious that Mrs. L's initial involvement in the nursery had been problematic the nursery teacher was pleased that L's mother became actively involved in the process. She observed that "it was a learning experience for mum and it was things that she could do. That was really nice and it was things that she could feed back to us. I think that that can happen sometimes". Although the nursery teacher was committed to the development of professional practice of the nursery nurses and was eager to involve parents in the work of the nursery, she seemed surprised however at the extent to which Mrs. L and the nursery nurses had cooperated.

6.2.14 The educational psychologist

When the educational psychologist requested that Behaviour Support become involved he had hoped that "staff could be reassured that their skills were equal to the task because they had been disempowered". The psychologist hoped that collaborative work with Behaviour Support teacher would be fruitful. By airing the problem facing them in the nursery context, prevalent misconceptions about early years education were questioned. These misconceptions relate to notions that:

- it is easy to work with very young children - anyone can do that.
- behavioural problems do not exist in nursery
- staff in nurseries do not require time for staff development and reflection
- parental involvement is simply a matter of an open door policy

The educational psychologist pointed out that the time spent focusing on the positives had countered the negative effects which problem-dominated talk produces. He thought that the process was of value because "talk of progress gives promise and possibilities The main actors work together unlike other approaches. There is a shared direction and a better understanding of where they are going". He noted that L attended nursery more regularly after her mother and the nursery nurses became involved in the Solution Oriented work.

6.2.15 The nursery nurses

Involvement in the process had changed the way in which the nursery nurse E approached her work:

> When I see children who are showing signs of behaviour problems I look at
> them and I observe them for a while and I try to work out where they are
> coming from, what is making them tick, in order to decide what I am going to
> do, what language I am going to use.

(Nursery Nurse E)

At one point there was a suggestion that L may have had a specific learning difficulty. Adopting a Solution Oriented perspective however did not preclude consideration of other influences on the child. It was hoped that an exploration of the child's unique competencies would shed light on L's preferred learning style. Nursery nurse (E) reported that she became less concerned about controlling and managing the children in the nursery and more interested in understanding what makes them tick. She spoke about "seeing with new eyes" and her interest in the relationship between language and

problem solving was revitalized. This in turn affected how she worked with other children. She believed that the work was specialised and that she had learned a great deal from her involvement with R. She said, "I have really learned a lot from her and yet, she says that I'm the expert but really she is the expert really. She brought out skills in me that I didn't know I had". E explained that as a result of her work with L and her mother she had begun to adopt a Solution Oriented approach at home with her son. The nursery nurses said that they had not worked with any other professionals before in that area. They expected an expert to come in and do the work, get the problem sorted out and they would watch how she did it.

Mrs. L and the nursery nurses initially thought that what they were being asked to think about, and do seemed too simple. Laughter and light heartedness characterised their work and although they thought the process simple, they were surprised at the consequences. Comments like "I did not think it would work" were commonly heard. The nursery nurse said that her involvement in the process had " changed my way of thinking. Now I change my language. I think before I speak. The other members of staff have also picked up on the way that I act towards the children". Unknown to R, one of the nursery nurses, E had been feeling a lack of confidence in her work. She believed that working in a Solution Oriented way helped to revitalize her professional interest. She explained how she willingly shared her experience with other members of staff but resisted giving advice.

6.2.16 The parent

Although it seemed to R that the first meeting with L's mum had got off to a good start and that things were beginning to move forward, the research process afforded R a possibility to reflect on how Mrs. L had really felt when she when she was to meet with R. She later said:

> When I heard about it I pictured a behaviour expert, at first I was embarrassed.
> Secondly, I didn't know what was to be expected. At first I said I didn't want
> anyone involved like that, I didn't want any behaviour support.

<div align="right">(Parent, Mrs. L)</div>

She spoke about being 'crabbit' and not being able to sleep. Her description of what she felt like when things were at their worst illustrated the complex interplay between school and home. Taking L to nursery had become associated in Mrs. L's mind with a sense of personal failure. She described it as "Nerve racking, pulling the hair out of her head". She said that it got so bad that she used to come in and just grab L and run out of the school. She had known that the nursery teacher was concerned and had seen this happen. Aware that the other mothers were avoiding her she was powerless to do anything about it, as she had felt ashamed of her child's behaviour. She believed that although she did not hit the other children, when L said, "Stay away fae me", it appeared to threaten the other children. She said, "The mothers actually were more relaxed when they knew that she was not in the same room". Mrs. L enjoyed using the **Golden Book** and sharing her success stories with the nursery staff. She read the stories which she wrote in the book to L who listened more. She said:

> We sit and tell each other stories and then she will sit for about half an hour
> Telling me a story that she has made up all by herself. It is great...The Golden
> Book worked wonders. We used to make stories up before we actually done any
> activities so this helped.

<div align="right">(Parent)</div>

Mrs. L said that after things settled in nursery she joined an Aerobic class, which she would not have considered when things were difficult. She mixed with the other parents because she no longer felt ashamed. She was able to take L 'down the street' safely. She said that she just pops into the nursery if she needs to. Her pride in her daughter's achievements was obvious. Mrs. L did not describe the intervention in terms of strategies. She described the work as "stories which worked". Mrs. L reflected on other aspects of change:

> Well I had to change my attitude completely because the way I approached her
> was head first and then think. So it was a case of right I need to change the way
> I am talking to her because we are very alike the two of us, very alike.
>
> (Parent)

Mrs. L, although initially sceptical, about the work became enthusiastic about using the **Golden Book**. Her perception of herself as not being able to cope changed over time. She spoke about getting back her 'sanity' rather than relying too much on her mother for assistance. She began to advise her mother about how to use the Golden Book. She said:

> She goes round to shops and even my mum was saying to her, "Right where do
> you want to go first L?" and I am saying to mum, 'Remember to ask her'. ...When
> I read out the stories in her Golden Book then I could see her smiling. I wouldn't
> have thought of using it to be honest.
>
> (Parent,)

Gratitude characterized Mrs. L's approach to R and it seemed that her respect for R was tinged with a sense of deference. Mrs. L said "I wouldn't have thought of it myself but as I started to use the advice like the story of going up the street – it worked". She believed that she would have been "stuck with the problem" if R had not been involved and was unaware of any other options available to her. When things improved she felt relief:

> Mostly it was relieving because when I spoke about the support I needed it
> was as if a weight had dropped off my shoulder... I use to be harassed, nervous,
> stressed couldn't sleep but as the problem eased I was told not to worry but I
> am a worrier.
>
> (Parent)

Although L had not been excluded from nursery, she had been educated for a limited amount of time in a different room from the others. At one point Mrs. L haltingly attempted to speak about something that had occurred, possibly at the school gate.

> But when they found out that she was in the main room. This was them (the staff)
> weaning her in so to speak, with the story, well there was a bit of commotion that
> (pause) Ach I can't talk about it now, I mean it is a thing of the past.
>
> (Parent)

Mrs. L did not talk about it. One can only surmise that it was difficult for her. Mrs. L. believed in the value of education and she wanted her child to be included in the process. She found it hard to describe what it would be like if the school had "turned its back" on L and her family by excluding her.

> If (exclusion) happened it would be... (pause). I would not have had the nerve
> to ask for the help then, because a school, an authority, was actually just turning
> their back on me (pause)...You expect the schools to be able to help you...
> I would have tried to get her into another school but then, and she might have
> got turned down again. I would not have liked that.
>
> (Parent Mrs. L)

Her trust in the education system had been strengthened by the work which had been done by the nursery staff. It seemed that she could go forward secure in the expectation that she would be helped

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in the future. She said that she would advise a friend to go to a Behaviour Support teacher if she was experiencing difficulty because it was so simple.

6.2.17 Postscript

L moved into Greenbank Primary and is progressing well. Her mother became involved in the school activities and when R last saw her she spoke about how happy she was. Behaviour Support was no longer needed.

6.3 Case Study 2: Y at Melfort Primary School

Y, aged 9 years 3 months was the elder son of Mr. and Mrs. V who had one other pre- school child. Y was referred to an educational psychologist when he was at nursery because his behaviour was considered inappropriate. His subsequent failure to settle in school resulted in him attending the Behaviour Support Unit in the mornings and his local school in the afternoons. It was anticipated that this would be a short term plan and that Y would eventually be educated full time in his local school. This did not happen. Anxious about the lack of progress in relation to his full integration at his local school, his parents enrolled him at aged 8 in Melfort Primary. A teacher from the Behavioural Unit supported him in school for three sessions per week. This input was reduced because of changeover of staff and at the time of the study R worked in Melfort School for one session per week.

Mr. and Mrs. V believed that Y had Attention Hyperactivity Deficit Disorder (AD/HD) and requested that Y be put on a waiting list for a diagnostic assessment by the specialist team at a City Hospital.

6.3.1 'Problem' behaviour and its meaning: the depute headteacher's perspective

Melfort School was situated in a small village in the centre of what used to be an industrial heartland of Scotland. Concerned about the reduction in the allocation of support staff to a child who had, in the recent past been educated in an off site unit the headteacher and the depute headteacher were alert to potential difficulties which could impact on Y's progress. At the Behaviour Unit, a special needs assistant and a class teacher supported a maximum of six pupils not only in class but also in the playground. In the playground at Melfort Primary, there were over one hundred pupils and two, or sometimes three, members of staff. The depute headteacher explained the concerns which the senior management in the school faced:

> *When Y and his parent came to school with the intention of moving Y here in primary*
> *three, it did give us some concern because at that time there were two other potential*
> *behaviour problems in the class that Y may have joined and we had to look very*
> *carefully at where we could place him.*
>
> (Depute headteacher)

The headteacher made positive links with Mr. and Mrs. V and encouraged them to talk to her whenever they were concerned about anything. During the course of the study the headteacher was on a long-term absence. The depute headteacher, however following her lead, was supportive of Y, his class teacher and the parents. Aggrieved at a lack of systematic assessment of Y, his parents felt powerless and blamed. Nonetheless the headteacher of Melfort Primary had tried to reassure the parents that everything would be done to help Y and his parents and had arranged that the class teacher attend a conference on how to respond to children diagnosed with AD/HD.

6.3.2 The educational psychologist's perspective

The educational psychologist noted that the behaviours which gave cause for concern, were consistent with those behaviours displayed by children who have been diagnosed with AD/HD. Supportive of the work of R and the school staff he described his role as an intermediary who would hopefully provide an objective role in relation to examining those factors which influenced Y's

progress in school. Aware of the need for a multi-disciplinary approach to working with pupils who displayed behavioural difficulties, the educational psychologist explained to Y's parents that a diagnosis of AD/HD was the domain of the medical profession. The possibility that Y could be diagnosed as having AD/ HD influenced the way in which the Solution Oriented work was carried out. It was important that the parents, teacher, and Y were introduced to ways of thinking about behaviour, which would not be fundamentally at odds with those specialists working in the field of AD/HD. R consulted with the educational psychologist about the appropriateness of adopting a Solution Oriented approach instead of the more usual behaviour modification. The educational psychologist said he was supportive of an approach that "focused on the behaviour, not the individual" and believed that the staff of Melfort Primary would do their utmost to support Y and his parents.

6.3.3 The class teacher's perspective

The class teacher, Mrs. C attended a conference in order to deepen her understanding of how to teach children diagnosed with AD/HD. She explained that the conference proceedings were based on an American educational context, which highlighted the usefulness of low pupil teacher ratio. She said she already used many of the strategies suggested by specialists and praised the way in which American educators had changed the layout of classrooms and employed additional staff so that the children with AD/HD could be better supported. Melfort School is a nineteenth century two story building, with class sizes of 30. The class teacher has a legal responsibility for the care and well being of the pupils in her class during the school day with the exception of intervals and lunch breaks. Committed to the education of pupils in her charge, Mrs. C was puzzled that there was less support for Y in her class than there had been in previous contexts. She also questioned the notion that AD/HD caused Y to be inattentive. She believed he would progress if he took more responsibility for his actions.

> *He can choose not to follow instructions if he does not want to do the task in hand. Yet if it is something which he wishes to go to e.g. basketball training, he listens carefully. This might throw some light on the Attention Deficit syndrome. Is it selective?*

(Class Teacher)

She said Y often failed to listen when he was at Physical Education or Drama classes. She said "He could not play a game at playtime without someone complaining about him". It annoyed her that Y did not seem to be bothered about whether he "got into trouble". She noticed however that when Y was anxious he wrung his hands in an almost involuntary way. When he was engrossed in an activity he became calmer and it was at those times that Mrs. C was able to speak to him about his behaviour. When she positioned Y in a group, he often made loud noises and fidgeted. Reminders to stop had limited effect. He sometimes denied the fact that he made noises and blamed others for making him do it. Concerned about the delivery of the curriculum she said, "The amount of time a child like Y takes up; it robs the rest of the children of your time". Having to share her time with more than twenty children in a class was a big problem. She was of the opinion that " the curriculum is so tight with what we have to teach… I think we need time for laying down the ground rules for how we behave towards

each other". Mrs. C was critical of a "quick fix" approach to children with behaviour difficulties believing that time for reflection was important. She explained:

> *You need TIME. Sometimes the class teacher feels like the bottom of the pile about what other people think. These teachers have to deal with it strongly. Yet you know the things that you have to log before anything else happens are monumental.*
>
> (Class teacher)

Aware of the difference between the rhetoric of policy makers and the reality of the situation which face teachers on a daily basis, Mrs. C nonetheless agreed to try a different approach.

6.3.4 The parents perspective

Mrs. V and her husband hoped that both their sons would go to university. They had worked hard to become homeowners and Mrs. V was proud that she kept her home "looking like a new pin". They lived in a community where the identity of women is still closely associated with their ability to organize a home and rear well behaved children. In the recent past, there had been high levels of employment in the steel industry, which resulted in families becoming accustomed to a high standard of living. Mrs V's high hopes for her son had been dashed when at aged five it was recommended that he be sent to a Behavioural Unit. She recalled the experience of being referred to a psychologist with Y when he was four years old and how she had felt on her guard because she did not know what the psychologist was thinking. She explained, "I first saw the psychologist in a wee room watching how I coped with Y. I just felt so intimidated".

Two years after their request that their son be assessed for AD/HD, Mr. and Mrs. V were still waiting for an appointment with the Department of Child and Family Psychiatry. Exasperated at the lack of information available to them from both medical and educational professionals they went to their local library to find out more. The assessment of her son as having SEBD was for Mrs. V, synonymous with a sense of personal failure:

> *I felt suicidal… you just want your kid to go to school. You are so proud of them. Y was such a lovely wee boy, which he still is. I kept him looking well. He is always so nice in his uniform…But getting this put upon you. You know you just cannae (Mrs. V became silent)*
>
> (Parent)

Y's mother believed that the decision of those in authority to categorise Y as having SEBD resulted in his exclusion not only from his local school but also affected him in his local community:

> *People put a label on kids and when that label is on it sticks. It takes so long to get it off. It can go through a kids whole lifetime that label and that's the way it has been with me and people in the community who were talking behind my back about my kid.*
>
> (Parent)

Hopeful that enrolling Y in different school would give him a fresh start, his parents employed a tutor in order to help Y catch up with his work. Mrs. V described his behaviour in school as, "Fidgeting and making silly noises. He just wasn't concentrating and he needed a bit of help". Behaviours, which are common to many children, had resulted in Y having to attend a Behavioural Unit. Mrs. V often looked fearful and she worried constantly that Y would be sent back to the unit. She repeatedly asked

whether she was doing things "wrong". and had attended a parenting group which had been organised by the Behaviour Support Service. She cooperated with the previous support teacher in the use of Behaviour Charts and the withdrawal of privileges. When the headteacher informed his parents that Y faced difficulties at lunchtime, his father agreed to meet him and take him to a café for his lunch. This meant that he had to rearrange his work schedule. Although exasperated that she was called up to school because of her Y's behaviour, Mrs. V was quick to acknowledge the difficulties which teachers faced:

> *The phone calls for the silly wee things or silly wee things to us but still big things in school, which I can understand because his behaviour can be so irritating*
>
> (Parent)

Her readiness to "do anything to help her son" reflected a mixture of doggedness and impotence. Concerned that Y would 'fail' a psychological assessment and return to the Behavioural Unit Mrs. V had advised Y to remain calm and had told him, "If you fidget and fidget and fidget you will make the psychologist stay". Not only did she think that professionals were critical of her as a parent, she also felt judged as inadequate by their extended family:

> *We were the ones that worried all the time...Grandparents...they are not helping you. They are making (silence). They don't understand so they come across as 'I don't like that wean' even though they do. So we stopped going.*
>
> (Parent)

Y's mother said his behaviour was "wearing her down" and that she was really stressed

6.3.5 Acknowledging strengths: describing a preferred future; miracle question

Convinced that that there should have been additional resources on offer to the school so that Y could succeed, Mrs. C was perplexed at a reduction of input from the Behaviour Support Service. After her attendance at a conference on AD/HD she was aware that what was on offer to pupils with behavioural problems in Scotland compared unfavourably with other countries. Because Y 's behaviour disturbed other children, he sat near the teacher's desk. In order to help him develop better habits and behaviours, she chose specific behaviours for him to work on and monitored his progress on a chart by using happy face stickers. She hoped that by rewarding positive behaviour he would be motivated to change. Y often failed to get a happy face sticker.

The class teacher seemed to realise that R shared her sense of dismay at the disparity between the support available to Y in a special unit and what was on offer in school. After having listened to the difficulties which she faced, R wryly invited the teacher to respond to the miracle question, which according to Berg and Miller (1992 p13) "orients the client way from the past and the problem towards the future and the solution". It seemed to R that Mrs. C looked askance when asked the question and she responded with a hint of irony.

R: *If a miracle happened tonight Mrs. C and you went into class what would be changed in relation this problem?*

CT: *Apart from Y getting on with the tasks on hand, the children will not be telling me after intervals, or when we are going to music that he's done this or he's done that.*

R: *So what will they be saying?*

CT: *Well not anything special, just getting along with the others and perhaps to hear good things instead of a list of complaints. Even at assembly time, which is important to the class. He just makes loud noises and draws attention to himself. So, I suppose that the silly type of behaviour would be lessened and the other children would not have cause to complain about him.*

Her response to this brief question clarified for R the importance of working not only with Y but also with the wider school community. R explained to the class teacher that the approach, which was to be adopted, focused on the role of language and stories in helping pupils challenge difficulties. R explained that as part of her work she would document when Y was able to challenge the difficulties, which he faced. She believed that such information might provide insights into what other supports were needed. It seemed that the teacher's professional interest was stirred by the notion that instead of rewards and reinforcements the focus of the work was on language stories and consulting the child. She agreed that he seemed dispirited by the lack of success of the behaviour charts and accepted the possibility that he may benefit from hearing accounts of his successes. In an attempt to offer practical support to the teacher, R agreed to teach a maths group each week and to document in the Golden Book the 'Solution Oriented' account of Y in the maths group.

6. 3.6 Curiosity; compliments; uncovering strengths

A major difficulty facing R was that she was aware that pupils who have been educated in an off -site Behavioural Unit often fail to be reintegrated into their local school. When R met with Y, he became animated when he described his favourite television cartoons, but was downcast when the conversation turned to how he was doing at school. The fresh start at Melfort Primary showed signs of failing and the behaviours which caused him trouble in his previous school, were present once more. Y seemed prepared to accept that he would not make it in Melfort Primary. Happy and sad face stickers were used on the charts, which were designed to heighten Y's awareness of the consequences of inappropriate behaviour. Sad faces dominated Y's charts. Y explained that he did not get happy faces because he fidgeted, rubbed his hands together and made noises. He said he could not help it and that other children made him behave in this way. Y understood that R was employed to help him 'behave well at school'. Although he was desperate to do well in school, it seemed to R that Y was almost resigned to failure. As yet there had been no formal diagnosis of AD/ HD. The school reports indicated that he displayed the main hallmarks as outlined by Holowenko (2000).

> *AD/ HD has three main hallmarks: Inattentiveness, an almost reckless impulsiveness and in some cases a **knee jiggling, toe tapping hyperactivity**. Such children have difficulty paying attention, **sitting still, controlling their emotions, and thinking about what they are going to do before they do it.** They can be **fearless** and accident prone, have **difficulty waiting their turn, blurt out answers in class, and fail to follow rules and have difficulty staying on task.** Because of their impulsive and frequently inattentive behaviours they are at risk socially and have difficulty forming relationships.*

(Holowenko, 2000, p14)

Y displayed the behaviours, which are in bold print, and he displayed them in different contexts over a long period of time. Thus it was possible that he could have been considered for eligible for a

prescription of Ritalin. Child (2000), a Scottish psychiatrist cautioned against General Practitioners diagnosing AD/ HD without seeking advice. He was critical of the way in which the media coverage of the problem simplified what was a complex phenomenon by suggesting that there was a wonder drug that would cure children with impulsive behaviours. He strongly supported an approach which involved parents, children and teachers and which he believed could often remove the need for medication.

Working with teachers, parents, and children in a Solution Oriented way recognises the importance of consulting the child about his or her preferred way of resolving difficulties. Influenced by de Shazer (1985) who valued 'utilizing' what the client brings to therapy in order to facilitate change and conscious that Y seemed to be weary of charts most of which mapped his failure to succeed, R engaged with Y in a problem – free conversation that focused on his passion for cartoons.
This conversation revealed Y's talent for recalling in detail complex storylines. R complimented him admitting that she had difficulty in remembering cartoon stories. He volunteered to draw some of his favourite cartoon characters for R This provided R, not only with an opportunity to further compliment Y on his skills but also to introduce him to the way in which she would be working. R explained that although the teacher and the headteacher might continue to use behaviour charts, she preferred to write in a special book about those times when she noticed Y concentrating and doing well as she was curious about how he managed to do so well at different things like basketball and drawing cartoons. She asked his permission to write about his special skill at drawing and about his good memory for stories. Y set about producing wonderful drawings of cartoon characters. Influenced by the ideas of White and Epston who used externalising conversations to establish a framework in language whereby people experience themselves as separate from the problem, R then asked Y if he could name and draw a particular problem which he challenged in school. Y named the problem "Fidget" and created a spiky cartoon figure.

It seemed to R that Y was already distrustful of behaviour charts and home school diaries. Although he agreed to R writing about when she noticed him challenging, 'Fidget', he needed assurance that she would only document those times when he did well and that his permission would be sought before it was read to anyone. Y then seemed to become more attentive and a little less guarded. When R said she would like to be **Golden Detective** who would notice all sorts of things about Y that perhaps others missed, he smiled and said he would like that. He then readily engaged with R as his ally in his plan to challenge of 'Fidget':

R: *When Mrs. C asks me to take a group of pupils to do Maths Y, and you are part
     of that group how will they know that you are challenging "Fidget" and winning?*

Y: *Well they will see me doing my work and not making noises.*

R: *Yes.*

Y: *And I will use my new pencil.*

R: *When I have to ask questions to others. What is it that your teacher expects pupils to do?*

Y: *We have to put up our hands so I will **beat** "Fidget" and I won't call out.*

R: *Anything else that the children in the group will see that will let them know you are challenging "Fidget" and winning?*

Y: *You know how I have new pencils. Well I could share especially if someone's pencil is broken.*

White (1989) maintained that boys often show ingenuity and doggedness in challenging problems when they are involved in externalising conversations. Adopting this form of questioning with Y allowed the direction of the conversation to shift from target setting to playful problem solving. It seemed to R that Y was genuinely surprised that the conversation had taken a more playful turn. More accustomed to being badgered into behaving in a compliant way, it seemed to R that Y's smile suggested that he was beginning to think differently.

6.3.7 Documents of support: noticing exceptions; challenging "Fidget"

Mrs. C agreed to write in the Golden Book but was worried that it might prove time consuming. However she agreed to R documenting when R worked well and concentrated during the Maths Group. For R this provided an opportunity to consolidate an alternative story of R in class and negotiate the group rules from a Solution Oriented framework. The pupils were invited to consider the following:

How do you prefer to work?
What is happening when you concentrate on your maths?
What helps?
Anything else?
How will you know that you are working well?
Who will notice that you are working well?

There agreement among the pupils that they preferred to work calmly. They liked it better when they heard people speaking respectfully to each other and sharing their pencils. They said they would enjoy hearing other pupils saying respectful words about their efforts. R explained how she preferred to work with a group and emphasised the importance of showing respect for others by not calling out which was part of Y's solution building plan. Their preferences were written on card and they agreed that each week that R could let their teacher noticed when they worked well.

Conscious that some pupils might face difficulty with regard to understanding the curricular element, R chose to focus on heightening, only their competencies in the group. Y worked calmly and others noticed his considerate and respectful behaviour towards to R and the other children. Particularly supportive of a child who was trying to improve his handwriting, Y spoke kindly to him and offered to lend him pencils. When Y was unsettled he agreed to sit away from the group for a time and return when he felt calmer. Each week, at the end of the lesson R wrote in the Golden Book about his efforts. He gave permission for the other children to hear his stories of success. Their words of encouragement were also documented thus contributing to a thick description of Y's alternative story.

6.3.8 A different story of Y in class

The teacher noticed that changes were beginning to occur wrote in his Golden Book:

> *This week Y tried hard to play with the other children. Many children told us*
> *that Y played well today. He forgot to take his homework jotter home because*
> *he left it beside the computer. The next day he thought hard about where he*
> *had left it. When he remembered he said "I'll stay in at interval and do my*
> *sums". I was pleased about this because he was taking responsibility for himself.*
>
> (Class teacher)

Before the work began Mrs. C, in response to the miracle question, had hoped that there would be fewer complaints from the other children and that Y would get on with his work. Over a period of weeks this had begun to occur. Initially sceptical about the possibility of change in Y's relationship with the other children, she seemed intrigued by what was happening in her class. Mrs. C, who had a reputation for fairness, acknowledged that her words in the Golden Book had an impact on Y and despite the demands of delivering the curriculum began to write more frequently in the Golden Book. Happy that his teacher had noticed that the pupils supported him, he asked R to re - read his teacher's words. Having listened, he became calmer and applied himself to his work in a more settled way. This small entry facilitated subsequent conversations with Y and his teacher, which focused on support and celebrated his strengths. Y began to adopt a more hopeful view of his abilities.

6.3.9 Enlisting support

The following excerpt demonstrated how the class teacher, having begun to reflect with R about those times when Y's behaviour was less problematic helped Y become "more organised". The conversation took place at the end of a morning as R and the class teacher walked along the corridor. In this instance, it enabled clarifications of curricular issues regarding the Maths Group work and at the same time updated R on Y's progress in Mrs. C's class.

R: *When are the times when you see Y more settled and on task?*

T: *Well he is trying in his writing, and he seems less argumentative in the*
playground. A few weeks ago he was constantly being kept in at interval times.

R: *What is it that you are doing Mrs. C that encourages Y?*

T: *Well I don't think I'm doing anything special. I sometimes think*
I'm getting nowhere with him.

R: *He seems really pleased about his handwriting and that is just in a few weeks*
because you have helped him get organised.

T: *Well he is P.4*

R: *I think he knows that you have high expectations of the class and he is*
delighted that you wrote about his sense of responsibility. He says your
rules are fair. I think Y is beginning to understand how respectful you
are to all the pupils.

T: *I never thought of it in that way. He is so interested in his topic work*
and I suppose I do have a sense of fair play. But do you really think we
are getting somewhere?

R: *Oh yes*

The following week there was an entry written by the teacher " This week Y tried hard to play well with the other children at intervals and many of the pupils have come to say Y played well with us today". When he was asked about what was helping him to become more organised and challenge 'Fidget' Y wrote in his book:

> Sometimes I get a green mark when the teacher sees me being organised for my work and hears me saying respectful things. I've got a lot of green marks just now. I think I' m beating being disorganised.
>
> (Y)

Subsequent conversation focused on getting richer descriptions of Y managing to challenge "Fidget" as R was conscious that the story of Y's strengths at school competed with the more dominant one of him being troublesome. Later on that month the teacher wrote:

> Y was prepared today. When I was about to start the spelling test he gave me his book for the words before I had even asked for it. I said 'Thank you'. Y said, " You're welcome". This was pleasant. He is still playing well with the other children at intervals.
>
> (Class teacher)

When a supply teacher was brought into the class because the teacher was on a course Y reverted to behaving in a disruptive way. However he admitted that although he was beating "Fidget" most of the time, he said he had, " carried on a bit last week and annoyed the teacher... it was fair that she was angry with me you know". Y apologised to his class teacher for misbehaving in her absence and managed to get back on track. For the teacher there was merit in him owning up.

6.3.10 Making plans to challenge "Fidget"

Y enjoyed responding to the scaling question in relation to his challenge of 'Fidget' He aimed for a 10 and his teacher said she would settle for a 7 or an 8.The description of an 8 was "working calmly and behaving in a respectful way remembering to keep the class rules". Y then said he would aim for a 9 and drew a cartoon of him beating "Fidget". The following week this entry appeared in his Golden Book:

> R behaved well when his class teacher was at a seminar. He managed to do accurate work. He also played the recorder well at the assembly at which our class and room 15 performed. He had some speaking to do. I was pleased for him and other teacher.
>
> (Class teacher)

There continued to be difficulties when Y was in a less structured environment. In particular he found it difficult in the playground during the lunch hour. In the absence of additional support Mrs. V agreed that Y should go home at lunchtime. Anxious about Y succeeding at school she was keen to help him with his homework, which she said usually ended up in a "shouting match". The Solution Oriented work with the parents initially focused on the problem of homework.

6.3.11 Solution Oriented conversation with Y and his parents about homework

Mr. and Mrs. V were very concerned that if he did not make progress in school Y could be returned to a Behaviour Unit. After having employed a private tutor to help Y, they were disappointed that he struggled with his homework and took a long time to complete it. R and her colleague were invited to their home to consult with Y and his parents about assisting Y to explore a solution to the ' homework

problem.' Y was pleased when he was invited to explain to his parents about the work of the maths group and the use of the Golden Book.

Y: *Mrs. M made a Golden Book with me and we write a letter in it and she asks*
        the teacher or even the janitor and the headteacher about me doing well...
        She showed me another wee boy's book and his mum made it special and
        put his special football stickers in it.

Mrs.V: *I'll get you stars. I know it's just for the children in the class who do*
        really good work. I'd like him to have a star if he manages the challenge.

Y: *It would be good if mum and dad give me stars.*

R: *So Y what will your mum and dad write in your Golden Book? What will you be*
        doing to make your mum say, "This a silver star story?"

Y: *I think dad will be writing about me doing my homework quicker*

R: *What is the story about your homework Y?*

Y: *Sometimes I don't want to do it. I want to go out to play and I keep on*
        Mum says I've to finish it before I go out to play.

R: *In the maths group at school Y, I'm impressed at how you not only finish*
        your maths work quickly but, you are helpful to others.

Y: *Yes (he smiles at his mum and dad) I help other people and I can do*
        my work quick.

Mr. V: *Well when you are given the work to do for homework you argue about*
        not being able to do it.

R: *Y, that surprises me because Mrs. C only gives homework, which has*
        been taught.

Y: *I can do it. I just want to go out to play for a while before I do it.*

R: *Oh so you can do it. That is good Y. Mr. V what's the story here?*

Mr. V explained how most nights after work, he felt hassled because of Mrs. V's distress at Y struggling with his homework.

6.3.12 Describing a preferred future: homework without a hassle

R chose to direct the miracle question to Mr. V in order to help clarify for Y and his mother how the resolution of this difficulty could impact on all their lives.

R: *Suppose a miracle happened tonight Mr. V and the homework problem was*
        hassle free. What would be different?

Mr. V: *Well I would come in from work, sit and read my paper and then look over Y's*
        homework. Then we would do what we're going to do without his mum meeting
        me at the door with ' He's not doing his homework'.

R: *What is Mrs.V saying or doing in your miracle?*

Mr. V: *Well she's smiling and just chatting about things that happened during the day It would be just a normal thing to have to do rather than a major catastrophe.*

R: *So Y just for the next few weeks is it OK that your mum and dad write in the Golden Book about you manage your homework. You might want your teacher and your friends to read about it. It is up to you. Does that sound OK to you?*

Y: *I don't mind people reading about how I can do my fast work. I think that my dad will be pleased at me doing my work. So it's OK for the teacher to write about my dad and me too.*

Mrs. V: *Well I think that waiting till your dad comes in from work to start your homework might be a good idea and I can keep little B occupied helping me with the dinner while you and dad are busy. O. K.?*

He agreed that when he was winning the challenge his parents would see him complete his homework in half an hour. Y had been accustomed to R speaking in the group about preferred ways of working and this framework was used to engage with Y about his preferences in relation to the successful completion of his homework. He agreed to work carefully at his homework each night for a half hour and his preference was to sit near the window rather than in his room. Y listened carefully to his father who pointed out that that when a person has a job to do in a work place it is 'not on' if they 'skive'.

6.3.13 Noticing exceptions: building on success

The class teacher agreed to remind Y about how she expected the homework to be done. It was an unobtrusive process and A became more conscious of what was expected of him. It appeared that he was more able to reflect with others. The resources, which are valued in school by the pupils and their parents e.g. stars stickers became a shared commodity and a focus of negotiation. His mother enjoyed using the silver stars and Y was proud to allow other children to read his stories from home. The non-completion of homework could be considered of minor importance. For Mrs. V who worried that Y might be excluded from Melfort School, it was of major importance. His parents were invited to notice when he did his homework well and comment on other instances when they were proud of his efforts. The following excerpts from the Golden Book highlight the on going communication between home and school over a period of two weeks. The family negotiated with each other about the use of the stars. One star meant that Y had tried hard, two silver stars meant Y did extra especially well, and three stars meant brilliant. The following excerpts, illustrated that Y had not only achieved success in completion of his homework, but had also challenged other problems. His parents delight in this development and their support of their son was apparent to everyone in the school. Of particular significance to Mr. V was that the changes were noticed by their extended family. The following excerpts illustrate the type of entries that were made each night. Y loved having them read and re read.

Day 1
The whole family went to the Fireworks Party and Y mixed with his friends in a way which meant that I was proud of him. (2 stars)

<u>Day 8</u>
*I was pleased because Y did his homework in a sensible way and then we went to visit his
grandparents. His behaviour was good there also. (2 stars)*

<u>Day 9</u>
*I was so proud of Y because it was his Grandpa's birthday and we went to their house.
He was really well behaved. I was delighted…He said he was happy to be in a good f
family. (2 stars)*

Two months after the initial entries in the Golden Book, Y continued to makes progress at home and
in school. He continued to challenge "Fidget" in class and used the externalising process to challenge
a problem that he faced in the playground which he named "Trouble". R continued to work with the
Maths group for the remainder of the academic year and contact with his mother was on a regular
basis by telephone or meetings as necessary. The input from Behaviour Support was gradually
withdrawn. As Y's behaviour became more settled his interest in the Golden Book waned. He said
that he preferred that conversations with R be recorded in a "Report Book" and, although happy to
see her on occasions, he was content that she was busy elsewhere. Although she was respectful of
the support that was available to Y it seemed to R that Mrs. V was aware of the wider significance of
such input. She later said "I think that a lot of people think there is a stigma attached to people who
have Behaviour Teachers in the school you know".

6.3.14 Feedback: the depute headteacher
The depute headteacher considered that Y had learned to adapt to the demands of school.

> *He is much more settled in school, he seems to be enjoying his work
> particularly when he has structured activities and he is enjoying success.
> He is keen to be part of a group but sometimes that still had problems He
> seems a happier boy. On his way down to assembly walking around the
> corridors he just looks like any other normal boy of his age, whereas, before
> he would have been the class clown jumping about on the stairs which would
> have been a danger but I don't see that now.*
>
> (Depute headteacher)

The depute headteacher had interpreted the work in terms of Behaviourist principles such as
improvement, positive behaviour measurable outcomes and achievement. She said:

> *There has been a great deal of work done with R about how to improve
> on his behaviour. He thinks more now about the outcomes of his behaviour
> about what is going to happen. He's a much happier wee boy… I think he is
> responding well to the whole school environment. I think he finds it positive and
> finds it easier to achieve within the school.*
>
> (Depute headteacher)

She believed that more time for staff reflection would have been beneficial not only for Y and his
parents but also for the class teacher and other members of staff. She considered everyone involved
could, "reflect on what is going to be done and to look at the success, or not, of the project in hand".
Concerned that Y's that parents had often been consulted when things were difficult, she observed
that she had not seen them as regularly which she thought was a good thing. She considered that
including them in conversations which celebrated their child's success was worthwhile and she noted
that as Y's behaviour changed in school and in the playground, other members of staff changed their

attitude to him and he was given more responsible positions in school playground because of his kindness to younger pupils. The depute headteacher said, " At play times he can go out for the short play time without many serious incidents whereas before Y was always getting the blame…Y is not one of the names that is mentioned so much". There was less discussion about him as being "'at fault' and more about staff 'assisting him in his challenge'.

6. 3.16 The educational psychologist

The educational psychologist considered that the Solution Oriented approach 'focused clearly on the behaviour, not the individual'. He thought that externalising the problem had the greatest strength for the child:

> It was a good way of approaching it for this particular teacher. It helped
> redefine the problem. It does change expectations. The child and staff
> can be in a rut. It takes something completely different - an attempt to
> involve staff and child in working out situation. It's a much more
> dynamic form of intervention.

<div align="right">(Educational psychologist)</div>

The educational psychologist noticed that when the teacher realised that Y was making an effort to resolve the difficulties that he faced, she became more open to the notion that change could occur. He was interested in the shift in the attitude of the class teacher who had been sceptical about the possibility of including a pupil for whom there had been a reduction in support. He knew that other members of staff valued her opinions and respected her ability. He was pleased to hear positive comments from them about Y's behaviour. He also commended the way in which the process involved overt encouragement of Y from other children. He believed that children who are assessed as AD/ HD might benefit from immediate positive feedback from their peers.

6.3.17 The class teacher

Mrs. C recognised differences between the Solution Oriented approach and the more usual behaviour modification strategies. She said, "A lot of what happened before didn't seem to be making one bit of difference". For her, noting exceptions was not always easy however her professional interest was stirred by the small changes that began to occur. She observed, "Then I thought it was interesting if it was going to work. The fact that you know that it will work makes it exciting". When she realised that an approach that focused on conversations and stories was having an impact, Mrs. C was persuaded that alternatives to punishment and reward had to be tried. She also stood firm against possible critics.

> I think that there are people who say that when children behave like that – punish
> them and that is the end of the story. You can punish children till you are blue
> in the face… and it just does not work. They keep on doing it. Now if it does not
> work you have to do something different.

<div align="right">(Class teacher)</div>

At the starting point, Mrs. C seemed dispirited by the lack of resources and unenthusiastic about trying what might have seemed to her a harebrained strategy invented by support staff unaccustomed to teaching thirty pupils. She acknowledged that it is sometimes difficult for even the most experienced teachers to "do something different" in relation to responding to pupils with SEBD:

It might be that you look as if you are soft. I think there is always that "You must be mad doing that kind of thing". That is quite hard to deal with because colleagues are people who are there to support each other. But as I said before if there is no change then we have to start thinking of another way.

<div align="right">(Class teacher)</div>

Although aware that her colleagues might be sceptical about working in this way, Mrs. C became curious about the work as she listened to the children in her class speaking to each other and R about their preferred ways of working together, and their understanding of the concept of respect. She reflected on some of the ways in which the process impacted on her work:

Looking at the problem as a whole, as all of us working together and having your view of things adapted...will make our lives workable. I see the changes in exactly how I look at children and how respectful we should be to each other. It can only be for the good, really change like that. And you change things in your whole life not just at school.

<div align="right">(Class teacher)</div>

She seemed to see the process as one through which all involved undergo change. Her confidence in Y's ability to resolve difficulties increased. She noted, "I feel Y is going to be a survivor whereas before I wondered if it was always going to be like that for him". Mrs. C was conscious that the work had been carried out against a backdrop of diminished resources and she remained critical of a system, which disregarded the need for additional supports for a pupil who clearly required them. She believed that if Y had a similar level of support in the playground of Melfort Primary as that which was available at the Behavioural Unit, and then he would have made quicker progress.

6.3.17 The parent

Y acknowledged the support of his friend whose opinions he valued. The supportive words of his friends were equal or superior to that of his teachers. Drawing attention to himself by clowning in the assembly hall had been a recurring feature of Y's behaviour. Y said that his friend's words had helped him beat "Trouble". He commented on the usefulness of the scaling questions. He said "My friend T helped me by reminding me to beat "Trouble". I remembered the scale. I didn't want to get a zero. My friend said to me, "Excellent Y". His words are important and strong". He was eager to help other children and showed kindness to younger pupils who faced difficulties. He believed that the stories n the Golden Book were the truth about him

Mrs. V said that her best friend had noticed a change in Y's behaviour and that although there continued to be difficulties he was more reflective and calm. Mrs. V was proud that as a result of the process people were more aware of her son's special qualities. Although she was pleased that his grandparents and teachers had noticed the change she remained hurt in relation to what she considered was rejection by people who did not seem to understand .Y's exclusion from his mainstream school at the age of five had far reaching consequences for his parents as they had felt others blamed them because their son did not conform to the dominant idea of normal:

From Y was a wee boy it has been hard and if they had given themselves time to know what he was really like they would realise what a different wee boy he is.

<div align="right">(Parent)</div>

She wanted people to celebrate his uniqueness instead of judging him "the way **they** think he is". As a result of his involvement in the Solution Oriented work, it seemed that Y's unique skills and qualities were made public through the use of the special books. Involving Y in the process of co - constructing solutions aimed to help him become more aware of his resourcefulness and value his unique views. There exists between teachers and pupils a power differential, which is acknowledged. Adopting a social constructionist perspective recognised that R could learn from and with Y. It seemed that Y understood that his views were valued as he suggested that a Report Book, which he helped to design should replace the Golden Book. He believed that his Golden Book had served its purpose. When he had faced a difficult week he liked to re- read the supportive words of others. Mrs. V compared the approach to working as a team and was conscious that Y's views were taken into account which resulted in "doing something different". She recalled:

> *Depending on the situation I would tell her and she would say we could try*
> *something different. Maybe he is past the Golden Book stage. We could do*
> *something different and it worked. We looked at the situation. We worked*
> *on the situation all together and the outcome is that it worked out.*

<p style="text-align:right">(Parent)</p>

Mrs. V volunteered to share how she worked with R and used the Golden Book with other parents. The parents and R valued her openness. Influenced by the ideas of Narrative therapy, R attempted to work with Mrs. V in ways, which acknowledged her resilience. It was impossible to meet Mrs. V and not be touched by her experience. The prospect of Y returning to an SEBD unit had filled Y and his parents with dread and it was against this backdrop that the work with Y was done. It often seemed to R that the sense of hopefulness, which is a characteristic of Solution Oriented practitioners, was less present in her work with Y and she had to make a conscious effort to keep hope alive. Nonetheless, adopting a Solution Oriented approach served to strengthen a resolve, which at times seemed weakened. It seemed however that Mrs. V did not detect R's qualms and understood the process as hopeful:

> *She understood more. It was different wavelength. This was all. She could*
> *see what was happening with him because of what she did, no what the*
> *psychologist or nurse would look up. All that came oot of that was what*
> *they thought. The thing was she knew what was going to be best for Y and*
> *to be best for us and we were working as a team. So it was a matter of*
> *respecting us in everything we did together. It brought it all together.*

<p style="text-align:right">(Parent)</p>

For Mrs. V the work "was on a different wavelength" which perhaps suggests that she appreciated the attempts of R to heed the advice of White (1997) who emphasised the concept of "transparency" on the part of therapists. Mrs. V considered that as a result of the Solution Oriented conversations she saw things in a "new light". Likewise R's involvement in the process deepened her awareness of how working in this way can rekindle hope for those who work in situations which seem intractable.

The staff and parents believed that involvement in the Solution Oriented interventions contributed to Y being maintained in his mainstream school. Y continued to thrive in Melfort Primary supported by those members of the school community whose words meant more to him than those of R. He involved the janitor in his scaling questions and was fulsome in his praise of his friends whose 'words were strong.' A visiting music specialist identified his unique ability to play the recorder and his

<p style="text-align:center">135</p>

parents proudly attended the school assemblies in which he was involved. Y was later assessed as having a mild form of AD/HD but because he responded effectively to the strategies which were in place in his school, he did not require medication. Y's parents did not wish their child to be on medication unnecessarily as they were familiar with the side effects of the drug, having read up on the subject. Had Y been diagnosed with Attention Hyperactivity Deficit Disorder aged five, Mr. and Mrs. V may have felt less isolated in their community. The label, which was accorded to Y, was disruptive rather than inattentive. His mother recognised the inadequacy of inter- agency cooperation.

She believed that if " Y had been done in the beginning we would have seen a difference. We would have seen a different outcome"

Postscript

Y continues to attend a mainstream school and his parents are proud of his success.

6.4 Case Study 3: H at Rowantree School

H, aged 8 years 5 months is the only child of Mr. and Mrs. E who are unemployed. H often brought a small soft toy, which he called Toby to school, unaware, that the other children had outgrown playing with such toys. His parents frequently attended their GP and had requested that H be assessed for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Syndrome (AD/HD). His mother believed his behaviour would alter radically if he were prescribed Ritalin. In the meantime, H was seldom allowed out of her sight. In class H gestured at other children often shouting "Jings! Man!" which were phrases that featured in his favourite comics. Intervals and lunchtimes were particularly difficult for H who did not like to lose at football. He sometimes accused others of being cheats and swore at them. A problem facing the school was that there was another pupil, B who was in his class and who also had been referred to the Behaviour Support Service. In recognition of the challenge facing the school, the Education Department had allocated a special needs assistant, J to the school for a limited amount of time.

6.4.1 'Problem' behaviour and its meaning: the headteacher's perspective

The headteacher of Rowantree School was the only non-class committed teacher in the school. It was common to see Mrs. M in the art room with a group of children tending the plants which were later used as a focus for their paintings. In an effort to improve the playground environment she had requested that it be re-designed and had introduced organised games for the children. Despite her efforts H was often at the headteacher's office because he had been in trouble at playtime. Although keen to play football, H became furious when his team lost. He reacted by swearing or hitting the other children, who in turn complained to the headteacher. H could regularly be found outside the headteacher's office loudly protesting his innocence about alleged offences and making faces or gesticulating at anyone with whom he had a grievance. Hopeful that the presence of a special needs assistant J, in the playground would improve the way in which all the children played, the headteacher explained that despite her efforts to assist H in the playground, he was " still giving the special needs assistant cheek". J was an experienced nursery nurse who did voluntary work with children with special educational needs and who was keen to develop her skills at responding to children with SEBD. Mrs. M believed that H would become calmer as he matured, and she encouraged his parents to notice his attempts to cooperate with the school rules. She asked Mrs. E to help reorganize the Art Room so that she could see H when he was calm in school. The headteacher believed that H would have benefited from socializing after school with children his own age and discussed with his parents about the possibility of him joining different clubs. Appreciative of the support of the school staff, Mrs. E was initially pleased to hear that H sometimes did well at school. However she persisted in the belief that H required specialised help and did not sustain her involvement in the school because of other commitments. Mrs. M worried that the dynamics between H and the other pupil B, who was also referred to Behaviour Support would result in the class teacher facing extreme difficulties. Conscious that she did not have access to back-up staff in school, and aware that the school had a higher than average percentage of pupils with special educational needs, Mrs. M hoped that the Solution Oriented work would augment the work of the class teacher and the special needs assistant.

6.4.2 The educational psychologist's perspective

Rowantree Primary School had a reputation for being effective at responding to pupils assessed as having a wide range of special educational needs and the headteacher valued the advice and input from the educational psychologist. Conscious that it was likely that the parents of H would seek a referral to the Department of Child and Family Psychiatry (DCFP) for a diagnostic assessment of AD/HD, the educational psychologist was supportive of an approach that highlighted H's strengths and which through a process of " rewriting his personal story might help him overcome his sense of helplessness". He did not see his role as directly working with H and the class teacher. However he saw his role as "highlighting achievement from an objective distance". He noted:

> Educational psychologists are able to give information about how to handle
> disruptive pupils and we give advice. An important addition is that there is an
> opportunity to examine what is going well. It is easy within a busy class to lose
> the thread of what is happening and sometimes the teacher can become
> involved in discussion about pathology.

> (Educational psychologist)

He hoped that the Solution Oriented work would shed light on those behaviours which the parents believed were caused by AD/HD. He noted that interventions based on Behaviourist principles had been tried with limited success. Although H seemed elated when he received stars on a chart for positive responses he became despondent when he did not achieve rewards. When this happened it seemed he became less motivated to do well. The educational psychologist was supportive of an approach that was " optimistic". He believed that H's mother in particular required guidance and support.

6.4.3 The class teacher's perspective

Mrs. A was the youngest member of the staff in Rowantree School. Mrs. A and the special needs assistant, J decided were worried about coping with two pupils assessed as having SEBD but decided to work together without input from Behaviour Support for a period of six weeks, after which they would meet with R. Mrs. A described how H often swung on his chair and wound up B by smirking and making silly remarks. They squabbled when they sat in a group. She tried to keep them apart in class because they tripped each other up. Playtimes were also for difficult H. The teacher described him as very aggressive and often on the verge of attacking other children. H, nonetheless loved playtimes. The teacher explained how after playtimes, " he entered class tardily, " but before going out to play he would run about excitedly trying to take someone's hand. She thought the other children singled him out as a troublemaker in the playground. Playtimes often ended with him being in trouble for fighting. She believed that he wanted to be friends with the other children and seemed frustrated when his brash attempts to be friendly were rebuffed. If a fight ensued he would say, "It wisnae me". After a difficult playtime, the teacher said H usually "switched off". When asked to do his work he would protest, "Jings I can't do this". Although she responded on a daily basis to the difficult behaviours which H displayed, the class teacher understood his behaviour in terms of 'assurance seeking'. She considered his impulsivity masked a lack of confidence and thought he wanted someone to listen to him. Her description of his behaviour as 'assurance seeking' rather than attention

seeking helped others, including R, to see H in a different light. Mrs. A adopted a 'time–out' strategy which involved H sitting at a desk away from the other children but within view of the class teacher and under the supervision of the special needs assistant. This approach was based on Behaviourist principles, which assumes that working calmly in class could eventually become intrinsically rewarding for H. When H complied with the class rules he received a happy face sticker on a chart but when he failed to get a sticker he often became enraged:

> *If he was having a temper tantrum the whole class knew about it. He'd march*
> *about. He would have huffs and puffs. He would constantly use words like*
> *'Man'! and 'Jings'! These were his common phrases. As he was in a huff, he*
> *would walk about the class or if he were put out to the head teacher's office*
> *to calm down, we would hear it all the way along the corridor.*
>
> (Class teacher)

His outbursts, although loud, were short lived. The teacher said that he could fly off the handle easily. She observed how he would always take an argument one step forward instead of remaining calm. Often H copied the work of other children, sometimes claiming that he completed it by himself. In order to get the teacher's attention she described how he would constantly click his fingers or shout across the room. She said, "I think he needs reassurance and he seems not to understand that we have rules in class". Other methods of getting attention included dropping his pencil and then complaining that he did not have one to complete his work. Conscious that H required extra support with his work, Mrs. A differentiated material and encouraged H to be more confident about making mistakes.

6.4.4 The parents perspective

Mr. and Mrs. E seldom went out socialising except to church events. Mrs. E explained, "We are quiet people who just keep ourselves to ourselves". The housing estate in which they lived had few community resources and the family travelled to the town centre to attend their church. His mother said H often acted up at the services:

> *We all went to the church for the Boys Brigade display. When we got there, H*
> *would not do as he was told for me. When I told him to sit down beside me, all*
> *he did was embarrass me in front of everyone. So I ended up taking him out*
> *of the hall until it was finished. We all went home without staying for a cup of*
> *tea and a cake.*
>
> (Parent, Mrs. E)

Cheered at the prospect of socialising over tea and cake, Mrs. E was disappointed that she had to leave. It seemed to R, attendances at the church functions were social highlights of their week. Mrs. E also felt ostracised by her immediate family because of their son's behaviour. Her elderly aunt was the main support to the family. Mrs. E spent her day cleaning her house and ironing and was pleased that her husband and son preferred her homemade pizza to those that could be bought in the supermarket. She became overwrought when H messed up the room after it had been tidied. Mrs. E believed this behaviour was proof that H had AD/HD and informed not only their GP about the developments in his behaviour but also school staff and R. She searched the popular press for articles on this subject and made them available to the staff. She also wrote about her experience with H in an effort to help the teachers understand what it was like:

> *I can tell you it is not a joke having a child with AD/HD. Experts say that*

Winston Churchill and Albert Einstein are thought to have suffered from
AD/HD.If the children are put on Ritalin then they are very normal but if they
do not get their medicine, things can get worse.

<div align="right">(Parent, Mrs. E)</div>

Despite facing struggles, H enjoyed being in school and delighted in school outings. On these occasions, his mother alerted the school to the potential difficulties which his behaviour might pose and cautioned teachers to be vigilant. She was however eager that H should do well at school and was zealous in her efforts to assist him with his homework:

I tried to be helpful and show him how I was told at school the best way to do
them (sums). He was not interested. I will keep showing him this way until he
sees this is the way of doing it.

<div align="right">(Parent, Mrs. E)</div>

Because his mother worried that he would get into trouble in the community, H was not allowed out to play after school. H did not like this restriction and sometimes got out of bed early and climbed out of the window:

We just turned our backs for a second and he was off out the kitchen window.
His dad went out and brought him back. He was very angry because he was
caught. He said a few words to us.

<div align="right">(Parent, Mrs. E)</div>

H explained that he climbed out of the window because he wanted to play with his friends. When his parents reprimanded him he swore at them. This strengthened their belief that he had AD/HD. In order to compensate for not being allowed out onto the street to play, Mr. and Mrs. E occasionally bought a special rail ticket so that the family could visit a coastal town. This was however a rare occurrence. On their return from their day trip, they enthusiastically described their experience to R and the headteacher. They dreamed of winning a lot of money so that the family could take a two-week holiday in Blackpool. Mrs. E, who had visited the seaside resort in her youth, described how they would spend their day going to fairgrounds and buying large ices. When Mr. and Mrs. E bought toys for H, they played as a family:

Today H was very high until his dad bought him a ten-pin bowling game. We all
played with it. We all had good fun and we all had a great laugh with it. I must
say that he did not attempt to climb out of the window today at all, so one good
thing came out of it.

<div align="right">(Parent, Mrs. E)</div>

Mrs. E's belief that her son suffered from an undiagnosed condition was strengthened by his early morning escapades such as attempting to climb out of the window or raiding the fridge and eating all the yogurts. The educational psychologist explained to Mr. and Mrs. E that although the diagnosis of AD/HD was the remit of the medical profession, it was important to find what would assist H work better in school. Invited to participate in the Solution Oriented work, Mr. and Mrs. E willingly agreed. Mrs. E however, believed that an approach, which did not include medication, would have a limited impact on her son. The role of the Golden Book was explained and Mrs. E who prided herself on her handwriting said she would buy new pens to document those times when she saw H behaving well. Mrs. E was not convinced that there would be lasting changes in H's behaviour as she thought "H was good at pulling the wool over peoples' eyes". However they agreed to visit the school each week to meet with R, H and the special needs assistant. Mrs. E explained that in the future she hoped to go to

college to study psychology. The educational psychologist thanked the parents for their commitment to working with the school and R. Alert to the advice of de Shazer (1988) to look for clues which may indicate an alternative story line which runs alongside the dominant story, R said she hoped to learn from and with the school staff, H and his parents. There was laughter when she admitted that her handwriting might not compare favourably with either the teacher or Mrs. E's. H's parents confirmed that they would attend school each week and seemed pleased when the special needs assistant J said she would ensure that the coffee would be ready.

6.4.5 Noticing strengths: documenting a story of competence

On entering the class Mrs. A asked R to sit near H and the special needs assistant so that she could notice how H did his best work. She explained that R could write in his Golden Book about how well he worked. H said, "This will be a good story just watch me". His teacher smiled and said, "Well just as I would expect from you H, as 'silly head' is not there today". H smiled and said, "No way Miss, he's been put out of our class". H did his best work and was eager to let his teacher know. The teacher invited R to join them so that H could speak about how he managed to do well. The conversations took place at H's "office" which was a desk where he had agreed to work when he felt excited. R asked permission from H to write in his Golden Book about what she had noticed when he worked in class. H agreed. The entry read:

> Today I watched H work carefully at his maths and language work. I noticed that
> when he needed a sharpener he put up his hand and waited until J noticed
> him and then he said " Please may I have a sharpener". His teacher was
> busy at the time but I think she will be pleased to read this story. I also noticed
> that H sat safely in his seat. This is so important because Mrs. A cares about
> H and all the other children being safe in class.

<div align="right">(R)</div>

H smiled and looked relaxed as he listened to his story. H explained that he did well because he did not fidget. Invited to think of a name for the problem, which he managed to challenge during that time, he said he would call it 'Fidget.' When asked what helped him to challenge 'Fidget' he said he remembered not to act silly and just get his work done.

6.4.6 Re- telling a different story of H: enlisting support

In order to counter the dominant story of H at school as someone who did not concentrate and who was involved in fights it was important that his story of working calmly and safely was developed. R, influenced by the work of White and Epston (1990) recruited an audience for the telling and re -telling of his story of competence in class. This provided a framework for subsequent conversations. The following questions invited H to identify people to whom he might want to reveal a new account of him at school.

> Who in school will enjoy reading your story?
> What do you think they will say?
> Who at home will be pleased?
> What do you think they will say?

The latter question, which invited H to anticipate the responses of others, not only injected fun into the conversation with its emphasis on guesswork, but it also illuminated for significant adults, those words that H would like to hear. Teachers have long understood that children learn better when their sense of fun and playfulness is respected. In a similar vein Freeman Epston and Lobovits (1997) suggest that therapists adopt playful approaches to serious problems. H believed the headteacher, his mum and dad would enjoy reading his story. R said she would enjoy showing off to the headteacher about what she had seen in Mrs. A's class. It seemed that there was a tacit understanding among the children, R, the teacher, the special needs assistant, and H that an alternative story of H was beginning to emerge. The other pupils, who were busily working and eavesdropping, seemed to enjoy the idea of a teacher being a show-off for H. It seemed that the atmosphere in the class became merrier and lighthearted. R explained to the children that that sometimes she became a '**Golden Detective**' who noticed when children were doing well and told their headteacher about them. Suggesting that people become solution - detectives who uncover what is going well in peoples lives is evident in the Solution Focused practice of Furman and Ahola (1992); Selekman (1993, 1997).

6.4.7 Negotiating a plan to challenge " Fidget"

The class teacher and the special needs assistant willingly documented those times when they witnessed H working well and behaving safely in class. It was not long before he had a thick book which was a testimony to his skills and achievements in class. The scaling question provided a framework for H and the class teacher to negotiate with each other about their preferred ways of working in class. It also assisted him to articulate what he thought was needed in order to progress. R invited H to estimate where on a scale of 0-10 the teacher would think he was in terms of his efforts to beat Fidget, given that 0 was when things were really bad and "Fidget" was winning, and 10 was when H concentrated on his work, remembered to sit safely and put up his hand to get the teacher's attention. H enjoyed estimating where his teacher would put his efforts on the scale and listened carefully when she described what a 7 or an 8 looked like. When asked, "What will help you to stay at a 7 or get to an 8?" his answer informed the planning of the teacher and special needs assistant in relation to providing additional supports for H in class. In practical terms it emerged that when pencils and sharpeners were placed near his 'office' H wandered about the room less. When asked what would help him get higher up the scale in relation to completion of his work H explained that he would like to colour pictures of cars or animals after he finished his tasks. Specially selected colouring activities about his current interest were made available to him when his work was completed.

6.4.8 Document of support: noticing exceptions and identifying goals

Mr. and Mrs. E, the special needs assistant and R met each week for a period of six weeks. H was invited to join them. Mr. and Mrs. E listened attentively to the entries in the Golden Book. The special educational needs assistant, J augmented the teacher's entries in the Golden Book with accounts of H trying to play safely in the playground. H smiled when the special needs assistant read out his teachers words and was delighted when his parents commended his efforts. Although they continued to face difficulties at home Mrs. E said she tried hard to notice when H behaved in a calm way. It

seemed to R that Mrs. E got particular enjoyment writing in the Golden Book and was proud of her efforts and her handwriting.

> *H went to bed and was told that it was time for his dad and I to watch*
> *programmes. He did obey by the rules without a bit of moaning. At his gran*
> *and grandpa's he was playing with his baby cousin William and he had such*
> *fun.*
>
> (Parent, Mrs. E)

H's dad did not write in the Golden Book but seemed pleased to listen to what the teacher had written. He spoke proudly about his son's efforts. When asked what was going well, Mr. E gave a detailed account of H having fun and behaving respectfully at the Boys Brigade service in the church. H gave permission for R to write this account in the Golden Book, aware that story would be retold to his teacher, headteacher and others in his school community. By adopting a stance of curiosity about how H managed to do things differently R asked, "H, I am really curious about how you managed to make that happen at the Boys Brigade? In solution focused literature such questions are referred to as coping questions which are designed heighten awareness of personal agency. He explained that by watching some of the senior boys behave and remembering what his dad said to him before going to church, helped him manage. H gave permission for R to document his words and was happy for his parents, R and the special needs assistant to compliment him. Although his teacher and headteacher were not present in the room H agreed that they would be interested in what he had achieved.

In order to sustain a lighthearted approach and encourage dialogue between adults and children, it was customary for R to ask "I wonder what your teacher and headteacher will say when they read this story in your Golden Book". H thought they might say, "Brilliant H keep it up". He was aware that his teachers would read his Golden Book and was keen to hear his story retold. For R the notion that he was suffering from AD/ HD was being undermined. The description of H at the Boys Brigade contradicted a dominant story of H being uncontrollable. When his mother was asked about those times during the week when she had noticed H behaving in a calm way she said, "Well we can take him to the Boys Brigade now and he doesn't make such a commotion. He listens to me and the bigger boys all like him". The account of H as someone who listened counteracted the notion that he had attention difficulties. de Shazer (1997) suggested that in order to amplify the solution story it was useful to simply ask "When else?" Thus when asked about those other times when she saw H listening and behaving in a considerate way, Mrs. E said that when he was with his wee cousins, he was kind and generous. Mrs. E meticulously wrote in the Golden Book about those times when she noticed H trying to behave in a safe and respectful way and R complimented her not only on her observations but also her careful work:

> *I think he enjoys art work and getting into a mess. He knows that I will wash his*
> *clothes so he doesn't mind…He also tells me about J who helped him with his*
> *work. He was very pleased. Maybe that is a sign that he is becoming a mature*
> *boy.*
>
> (Parent, Mrs. E)

H was delighted at his mother's words and asked to show his teacher. Subsequent questions aimed at assisting H to consider possibilities of him managing to repeat his success at the Boys Brigade. It was important that the goal was achievable as de Shazer (1985) considered that lack of progress is often related to a poorly defined goal. He also recommended that goals have more chance of being achieved if they are planned from a position of competence (de Shazer 1988). Having complimented H for managing to do well R invited him to consider what future attendances at the Boys Brigade would look like. H agreed to his words being written down and said that R and the teacher could hear about his stories of success. H's mother continued to write about his specific successes at the Boys Brigade and more generally about times when H behaved in a respectful and safe way. As the story of H at home unfolded, it was interwoven with the stories of his parents. Mr. E told about how as a youth he had been a junior athlete. Mrs. E enjoyed making pizzas for her family. Normally quiet, Mr. E proudly boasted "Her pizzas are better than the ones you buy out of the chip shop".

6.4.9 Golden detectives in the playground: supportive reporters

After playtimes H had been used to children reporting his misdeeds to the teacher. He would accuse them of telling tales and would wait for a chance to pay them back. As his stories in the Golden Book grew it seemed he was less prone to fighting with other pupils in his class and seemed to want to be their friend. R explained how some children in class could become Golden Detectives and let the teacher or J know about people they have noticed who behaved in kind and respectful ways. H agreed to become a **Golden Detective** and happily recounted good stories about pupils to his teacher. When asked whose words were important to him in his challenge of Fidget, his teacher noted:

> We also encouraged some of the children to notice when they were all doing well.
> H liked to tell good stories when a particular child was doing well. I think he was
> pleased with that.
>
> (Class teacher)

The following excerpt from H's Golden Book illustrates the extent to which the words of the other children assisted H in his challenge:

> M said he thought H was really winning and beating "Fidget". He saw him in
> assembly and even when some other people were carrying on H just kept on
> beating "Fidget" M said it is just like this H, my dad said when I got my new
> computer and didn't know how to work it well just keep on trying.
>
> (R)

The special needs assistant who had a responsibility for working in the playground involved other members of the school community e.g. the secretary and the "Lollipop" lady. She wrote:

> H helped Mrs. G who was carrying her lollipop stick into school. At lunchtime he
> played football and kept the rules. He was so helpful and collected my coat and
> keys. In the afternoon he worked hard at painting his balloon. You are helpful H.
>
> (Special needs assistant, J)

J was happy to be a teller of good tales. H thrived in this class and his stories testified to this. By May the Golden Book had many stories, which described how things in school were changing.

> H helps me with the lunches and then takes the tin to Mrs. O the secretary.
> He then brings back the tin and helps the secretary by taking the tuck shop

to Mrs. A's class. During lunch, he is well mannered

<div align="right">(Special Needs Assistant, J)</div>

H's supporters shared their stories in a lighthearted way. Opportunities exist for teachers and children to converse informally at times such as lining up for break times or at home time. At these times Mrs. A took time to listen to stories of H's whilst tying a shoelace or fixing a hood. She often asked the children to remind her to write down the stories. They always did.

6.4.10 Maths Game: consulting about preferred ways of playing

The story of H at school intertwined with that of B who was also referred to the Behaviour Support Service. When both children were angry, sparks could fly and the headteacher and class teacher worried that things could spiral out of control. It was agreed that R adopt a Solution Oriented approach to working with the children in a group situation. The special needs assistant joined R during these sessions. Discussion centred on the pupils' and adults' preferred way of playing a board game. It was useful to adopt a stance of curiosity in relation to these conversations. Permission was sought to document their unique preferences and care was taken to write their exact words. When asked about their preferred ways of playing the game it emerged the children in the group agreed on the following: Everyone should play safely and always pass the dice to the other person. They preferred to hear words such as "good luck" when the dice was passed to them. When a pupil won they preferred to hear words that were congratulatory. They suggested that when someone did not win it would be preferable to hear words that did not make them feel bad. They did not like to see pejorative gestures from winners. They preferred to hear words such as, "Better luck next time". They also liked it better that the participants in the game used their first names and were helpful and supportive when someone forgot a rule. The children agreed to R or J documenting accounts of how the group played the game in fair and respectful ways. Encouraged to use words which conveyed their respect for the others, the children paid special attention to the words of their friends.

At first H tried to gain the attention of the others by making faces and going in a huff if he did not win. However when reminded about the agreed rules H soon settled to play. Often H was the recipient of the "kind words" of others. His face shone and he seemed to grow in status. When the other children spoke respectfully about each others' efforts, H listened intently. He too contributed and complimented the other pupils. The group did not only support H, he was also supportive of them. He worked in a more calm way, assured that his friends were supportive rather than censorious when he forgot a rule. Whilst working with the group on a normal curricular task there was an opportunity for the special needs assistant and R to tell and retell a different story of how H and B got on with each other in class.

6.4.11 Feedback: the headteacher

The headteacher was delighted that H tried to challenge "Fidget". She was often seen with a Golden Book in her hand reading to the administrative assistant who listened intently while H glowed with pride. He would urge her to read yet another page. She did this despite the ringing phone in the

background. As H's story of school changed, it seemed that he became more reflective. When his father collected him from school he had told the headteacher of improvement at home. The headteacher described H as calmer and needing to spend less time at her office. She was pleased that he was making progress in his work in class and that there was less discord in the playground between H and B:

> He has calmed down a lot, not quite so quick to blame others and he gets on
> a lot better with B who, as you know, when they were together, sparks could
> really fly. It was difficult for the special needs assistant at first because he could
> really take the strumps.

<div align="right">(Headteacher)</div>

The staff of Rowantree School had a reputation for being skilled at teaching pupils who required additional support. Consequently many pupils traveled to the school from outwith the catchment area. All pupils were encouraged to support each other and develop their unique skills. The headteacher was impressed at the way in which the approach had impacted on the work of the whole class. Pleased that pupils in Mrs. A's class had developed ways of working and playing respectfully, she celebrated their success at the school assembly to which parents were invited. In the past, H had been disruptive during assemblies and sometimes was removed to the office. This had caused his parents to feel embarrassed. The public acknowledgement of the communal effort of his class however meant that an individual story of H failing at assembly was replaced by one of him contributing to group success. His parents were proud to attend and the headteacher believed that the Solution Oriented work had contributed to them participating more fully in the life of the school. She wanted his parents to know about the changes in his behaviour. They were invited to Poetry Readings, School concerts, and Assemblies as the headteacher wanted H's parents to see him in a different light. When he excelled at reading his poem before the whole school or when he behaved in an exemplary way at the Christmas pantomime, his parents were told and they were very proud.

6.4.12 The educational psychologist

Conscious that his parents sought a diagnostic assessment of H in relation to AD/ HD, the educational psychologist believed that the Solution Oriented work illuminated for those involved with H, that in certain contexts he displayed behaviour which was contrary to the diagnostic criteria. He acknowledged that adopting an approach that focused on H's strengths and competencies had facilitated an alternative story of H to emerge:

> I think that it is easy for adults to give negative comments about how a child
> behaves. In a sense, the children begin to live the deviance. It seems that there
> is now a different story about the child. I think by becoming involved in the process
> the child began to see himself differently and it broke the rhythm of the problem.
> He began to go with it. It seemed that the more he heard a different version of how
> he can be then he began to behave differently.

<div align="right">(Educational psychologist)</div>

Although not directly involved in the work in class, the educational psychologist was supportive of the approach. He saw his role as one of conduit and liaised with other professionals, especially the medical professionals and social work on behalf of the parents and the school. He noted that staff

spoke differently about H whom he thought seemed much happier at school. He recalled a visit to the school when he had observed H taking a reprimand from a visiting teacher without losing his temper. He believed that the approach had resulted in the parents " probably acknowledging that H was doing better in school". He believed that it countered a dominant negative view of H and was a "simple and appealing approach to use with teachers, parents and children".

6.4.13 The class teacher

Mrs. A said that initially she was sceptical that working with R would produce any significant change in the situation and asked herself, "Is this going to happen here? … I was a bit unsure". However she said she would have tried anything for 'even the slightest change.' By the end of the year, she noted that:

> He could work with other children. At the start of the year with B, (the other referred pupil) they could not even stand beside each other without tripping each other up or having a wee go at each other. By the end of the year they could even work at a table with each other. His attitude to class work did improve as well so it was a general change.
>
> (Class teacher)

Although the Education Department had allocated a special needs assistant to the school, she had received no formal training. Adopting a Solution Oriented perspective in the teaching situation meant that the group worked in class and the special needs assistant worked alongside R. Thus, the special needs assistant was part of the individual work with the parent and child and the group work where she was privy to the conversation about the negotiated rules. She took on the role of supporter. The attitude of the class teacher was instrumental in helping the special needs assistant feel valued in her work and the teacher seemed able to coordinate the activities successfully. The class teacher believed that although there was a lack of time for reflection and discussion, the Solution Oriented work helped create a framework for joint working:

> Generally I tried to stick to the same format because I knew that it was working this writing in the Golden Book and trying to be as calm as possible and to listen to him. A lot of the times he just wanted someone to speak to him. I tried to ignore the tantrums unless someone was obviously being injured or hurt in some way.
>
> (Class teacher)

Mrs. A understood that she could approach the headteacher who would listen to her concerns and she recognised that her colleagues on the staff also supported her work. She believed that as a result of being involved in the work she had changed the way in which she thought about teaching children assessed as SEBD.

> It has changed my attitude towards the way to work with these children. I suppose I had an attitude where you had to be fairly firm, like a disciplinarian. You have got to have that, but at the same time you have got to have their respect. You have got to like them instead of stamping on their forehead "Troublemaker" I think that was because of my work with R. I changed my thinking. They are not the troublemakers they are part of the class.
>
> (Class teacher)

Mrs. A's comments suggest that she began to challenge notions about behaviour being fixed. For Mrs. A , involvement in the Solution Oriented work had resulted in a shift in her thinking about notions of control in classrooms:

> It changed my perceptions because anyone who knew me a few years
> back if I had a difficult child in class they all knew about it (laughter). Whereas
> after working with this particular child it was a case of, I did not really
> see him as being this big problem. My whole attitude towards him changed.
> There were problems but it was not the individual.
>
> (Class teacher)

She noticed that his reading had improved and that he was getting on better with the other children. Conscious of the difference between his behaviour in school and at home in terms of improvement, Mrs. A knew that she would not be directly involved in the assessment procedure of H. She noted that R had requested that the Golden Book, which included detailed accounts of H at school, be forwarded to the medical professionals:

> The mother of the child was trying to get medication, and at that particular
> point, we had been working quite successfully with him. The support teacher
> wanted my opinion if he was manageable in the class and then it was
> forwarded to the doctor.
>
> (Class teacher)

When asked what she did differently she said that she remained calm and reasoned with H. She did not judge his behaviour but relied on the special needs assistant to remain with him until he was calm. She noticed that he responded better to language such as, "**When** you are calm, just get on with your work". She was also noticed that if she highlighted his strengths he reacted positively:

> I began to notice an almost lovable side to this particular child. If you said a
> silly wee thing like…"Show the primary two children how to sit up nicely in
> assembly, he would do his **best** you know…once he was praised, it completely
> changed him.
>
> (Class teacher)

Mrs. A's pride in H's achievements also influenced how other teachers perceived him. Although less experienced than her colleagues, Mrs. A was keen to challenge the notion that teaching H was difficult. In the staff room she involved R in unobtrusive Solution Oriented conversations about how H was making progress. She later observed, "Other teachers noticed that he had not been in as much trouble". Mrs. A would have liked to meet more frequently with the parents but because of staffing constraints, this did not occur. H's parents were respectful of the work of the teacher but there were few opportunities for them to meet with her. The teacher was also aware that the educational psychologist, although not directly involved in the process noticed changes. She said:

> Psychological Services had noted that there had been some change. They had
> very little input, I mean not lack of input from their department as such.. They knew
> that they did not have to be involved as much.
>
> (Class teacher)

The teacher's words suggest that the role of the psychologist is considered powerful in matters of assessing behaviour and advising teachers. The teacher noted that as a consequence of the work, H seemed more confident about owning up to misdemeanors. She explained, "In the past everything had upset him, everything made him angry. He was not particularly truthful. But now even at this

particular point if you ask him if he did something, he will admit to it". His honesty helped his developing friendships. Although Mrs. A continued to use strategies based on Behaviourist principles she incorporated Solution Oriented thinking and practice into her work. She did not find the practice burdensome. She explained," It just became something I did. It was not a chore and I think it became part of the class work". For the class teacher who has the responsibility of delivering the curriculum, it was important that the support teacher adopted an approach which could adapt to the demands of a busy class. She recalled an occasion when she asked R to change her plans and work with a different group, as she had to complete a reading task with H. She observed that whilst working with the group R had also noticed that H enjoyed his lesson with Mrs. A and then asked his permission to write this account of him in class:

> I think she was very hopeful She had an idea that there was going to be some
> sort of changes. She did have an idea of what she was hoping to for.
>
> (Class teacher)

The class teacher believed that she was listened to, but she emphasised that there were elements of the process that escaped definition:

> Listening, always giving suggestions praising me as well as the child. Always
> willing to listen to anything that I said or suggested. These sound general words,
> which I am using but they describe the relationship, which we had. Always
> listening always willing to offer support in any way she could.
>
> (Class teacher)

There is no systematic method of apportioning support to schools in relation to discipline problems. Mrs. A noted that when things were going badly she used her intervals to meet with R or engaged in chats in the corridor. Although grateful for the support, she was dissatisfied that insufficient time was available for her to meet with R, the special needs assistant or the parents. H and B were not the only pupils in her class who required additional supports. Formal reviews occurred at the most once per term and were chaired by the educational psychologist with a view to assessing progress. Despite the lack of formal meetings Mrs. A believed that her work was valued:

> Somebody who had suggestions to make and was basically there to say "It is not
> your fault. You did not cause this child to have a temper tantrum". It was always
> a very very supportive role.
>
> (Class teacher)

She described the way in which she understood the process in terms of what it was not:

> It was not a case of step back into the classroom and try this. If the problem arose,
> I had it in the back of my mind that maybe I will try this. Maybe this will work
>
> (Class teacher)

She became more curious about working in this way and was willing to adapt it to the classroom situation. She believed however that more needed to be done so that pupils, teachers and parents could benefit from working in this way:

> There seemed to be a restraint on time. Not always, but I did not see the
> Behaviour Support teacher because of meetings. You know more time outwith
> the time allocation to the child so that we could discuss things. More time for
> her to work with the child. I was involved with review meetings with the parents
> and that that was really the only contact I had with them. I did have communication
> with the parents through the Golden Book so I think it was not as necessary for
> me However, I think the parents would have wanted more contact.
>
> (Class teacher)

6.4.14 The parents and H

Initially Mr. and Mrs. E were pleased that changes had occurred in school

> *If he works hard and then the teacher gives him something to unwind, then he*
> *seems to have a good day. He also tells me about J who helped him with his*
> *work. He was very pleased that J offered to help him. Maybe a sign, that he*
> *is becoming a mature boy...He is more polite more understanding about the rules.*
> *If you say it's our turn to watch TV, he will say that's OK mum and I am calmer.*

<div align="right">(Parent, Mrs. E)</div>

They viewed the work of R as being helpful and said that they enjoyed coming to the meetings, especially the ones to which they brought the scones which Mrs. E made. She recalled:

> *Yes, we tried the Golden Book for a good while. We tried hard to notice when*
> *H was doing well. He loves my pizzas and R knew he was proud of my baking.*
> *She got a surprise when we brought them to her one day. I laughed and*
> *laughed because my husband said she'll not think we will bring them.*

<div align="right">(Parent, Mrs. E)</div>

Mrs. E said, "I think he enjoys art work and painting and getting into a mess". She added, "He knows that I will wash his clothes so he doesn't mind getting messy". As H's behaviour became more manageable in school, it was hoped, that there would be changes in the home. Although pleased about the positive reports from school his parents, particularly his mother continued to voice her concerns about his future. They worried that he continued to disobey them by going out to play without permission after school and then swore at them when he was grounded. Despite his improvement in school, his parents were convinced that H required a more intensive medical assessment. They pursued a diagnosis of AD/HD because they believed that their son needed more support than what was currently available. H was prescribed Ritalin and his father came to school on a daily basis to administer the drug.

6. 4.15 A changed story of H

Input from the Behaviour Support Service was reviewed and it was decided that as H's behaviour in school had improved, input from R would be reduced and the special needs assistant withdrawn. In the following year, H's new teacher continued to write in the Golden Book. The headteacher was concerned that H's behaviour was gradually becoming worse. He did not seem interested in his Golden Book. Eight weeks into the new term, his teacher reported that H was behaving in a disruptive way in class and in the playground. A believed that he needed medicine to make him behave. Despite making progress during the previous year, it seemed that more would have to be done to help H in school. The staff of Rowantree School continued to support H with reduced resources and he completed his primary education in mainstream school.

6.4.16 Postscript

H no longer attends a mainstream school.

6.5 CASE STUDY 4 B at Rowantree School

After an acrimonious divorce, which split the family, B aged eight, lived with his mother. His elder brother remained with his father and B visited them at weekends. B's maternal grandfather lived abroad and ensured that his daughter and grandchildren were supported in material terms. B and his mother lived in a large house in an established district. There was no apparent organic reason for B's behaviour. He attended school regularly. B's mother was anxious about her son's behaviour school but had not expected that he would require support from psychological services.

6.5.1 'Problem' behaviour and its meaning: the headteacher's perspective

A number of parents sought placing requests for their children to attend Rowantree Primary. Although a high percentage of children received support from Psychological Services, the headteacher was the only teacher who was not class-committed. A particular problem facing the headteacher, Mrs M, of this small school was that B, was in the same class as H who had also been referred to the Behaviour Support Service. The story of B cannot be separated from that of H because the difficulties facing the school staff were compounded by their presence in the same class and playground. Conscious that the children clashed with each other both inside and outside class, the headteacher welcomed the decision by the Education Department to allocate J, a special needs assistant, to the class. Aware that J lacked training on how to respond to pupils assessed with SEBD, the headteacher hoped that input from the Behaviour Support Service would help the special needs assistant and the class teacher to respond to the demanding situation. She was also conscious that in B's class there were other pupils who required an individualised approach to their learning. The headteacher described B as having a 'short fuse' and admitted that H, sometimes "wound him up". Aware of the possibility of extreme disruption in the class, she was concerned about the safety of the other children and the well being of the staff and pupils. She wanted support for the teacher whom she noted was, " trying to cope with this pupil in class and keep him contained in groups with other children". She described his behaviour as " very disruptive". He sought attention all the time and she said he was, " aggressive and insolent even to his class teacher".

Mrs M's patience was often stretched in relation to B whom she described as a "wee angry boy". On a daily basis she responded to his angry outbursts. Despite rewarding him for positive behaviour by using star charts which encouraged him to aim for a particular goal, he often exploded angrily at children whom he thought had cheated at football. When there had been a difficult playtime the headteacher arranged with the teacher that he could spend time at her office so that he could calm down. Anxious that his continued aggression might lead to a serious incident, which in turn could result in exclusion, she was disappointed that his mother seemed disinclined to discuss the situation with her. Mrs M said he was, "Disruptive, not conforming at all, stubborn. If he did not want to do a task he did not do it, uncooperative".

In class H would make faces at B, which caused a rumpus and meant that the headteacher had to take either one of them to her office. Their classroom squabbles often spilled over to the playground, which led to fighting. B liked to be a leader at games in the playground. The headteacher observed that, "He certainly could dominate other children". The headteacher recalled an occasion when she excluded B from school because he had come to school with a sharp object:

> B was excluded for two days although on many occasions he could have been excluded for longer. But this was serious. I have been teaching for about thirty years and in that time I have only excluded about two pupils so I don't believe in exclusion. I don't believe that it is the answer.

> (Headteacher)

In an attempt to avert further exclusions, the headteacher advised the special needs assistant to notice when B entered school in a 'bad mood' so that she could divert him away from trouble at playtimes. Difficulties arose when both pupils commanded J's attention. Hopeful that the presence of a special needs assistant would help to defuse potentially volatile situations in the playground, she was disappointed that this did not happen. The headteacher noticed that when J attempted to reason with the children during their playground skirmishes, they sometimes reacted in a belligerent way. These incidents had to be officially logged by the headteacher and reported to their parents. J had noticed that both H and B responded differently to her when the headteacher or class teacher was not present and had brought this to the attention of the headteacher and teacher. Aware that special needs assistants were in short supply, Mrs. M was appreciative of the work which J carried out but also hoped that the Education Department would provide her with training.

6.5.2 The educational psychologist's perspective

B was referred to psychological services because he often displayed "difficult and disruptive behaviour in class and yard which interfered with his work". The psychologist questioned the notion that he was essentially disturbed or disruptive and believed him to be, "more mischievous with a glint in his eye". Before the staff and parents became involved in a Solution Oriented approach the educational psychologist had approved the use of strategies, which focused on extrinsic rewards, target setting and the use of 'Time Out.' Given that B was competitive it was hoped that this approach would motivate him to change. He hoped that the Solution Oriented work would enable the teachers to see B as impish and likeable instead of being a troublemaker. Although supportive of the approach and interested in the outcome, he acknowledged that there was insufficient time to become involved in the Solution Oriented work in class or with the parent.

6.5.3 Class teacher's perspective

Mrs A described B as restless, irritable, and quick to fly off the handle. When he was in a bad mood he spent time swinging on his chair rather than doing his work. When he faced a

challenge at language activities, B would give up on tasks. When he was reprimanded for not doing his work, he would put on silly voices or "argue back" with the special needs assistant and teacher. On one occasion, B told the teacher that he would not do his work because he believed the special needs assistant favoured H, as she had allowed him into the shelter at playtime. Mrs A described how B had accidentally tripped over H's leg and then accused H of deliberately tripping him up. B warned H that after school he would trip him up. Mrs A said the repetition of this sort of behaviour caused a tense and negative atmosphere in the class.

Resourcefulness and improvisation on the part of the teacher and J characterised their work. The classteacher was aware that J wanted to develop her skills and gain a permanent position. Employed on a temporary contract, J could be removed at short notice from Rowantree School and she was worried about her future employment. They hoped that by the consistent use of Behaviour Modification strategies both H and B would eventually accept that there were positive and negative consequences to their behaviour. J agreed to supervise 'Time Out.' Withdrawn from the group situation, it was expected that B or H would be motivated to behave better and recognise the intrinsic value of being included in the group. Mrs A found it difficult to implement this particular strategy. As she was legally responsible for the children in her class, she knew that the special needs assistant should be within view of the class teacher. Conscious of the potential difficulties of setting up a "Time Out" desk in the narrow corridor of the large Victorian building, she set up a desk in a corner of the class and described how she encouraged the other children to continue working in the midst of disturbances:

> They remained calm if he was asked to sit near J, for "Time Out". It was a
> sort of calming off when he was dancing or tapping the desk or anything
> to annoy everyone. They were very good at ignoring and tried really hard
> not to get involved.
>
> (Class teacher)

When B was asked to sit at this desk away from the group, H sometimes made faces at him or pointed to him, which caused a furore:

> Well we used to try to remain very calm. It was not a case of I would lose my
> temper with him. I also tried Behaviour Charts. He would get a happy face
> stamp if something had gone well for the first part of the morning.
>
> (Class teacher)

Still B's anger did not improve in the playground. After intervals, Mrs. A regularly listened to the supposed rights and wrongs of a situation instead of getting on with her planned lesson. The teacher said B was often furious if he thought someone had cheated at games in the playground:

> He wasn't very happy and could lose his temper very easily. The other
> children suffered. If he felt that things were not going his way he just could
> not control his temper...there were certain children he just couldn't relate
> to and he just had to be kept away from them because they would wind
> each other up.
>
> (Class teacher)

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Although deeply appreciative of the work of the special needs assistant, Mrs. A was also conscious that insufficient time was available for joint planning and reflection. She was aware that J, in her effort to help the children finish their work, could unwittingly contradict the work of the teacher. The special needs assistant was employed from 10 a. m. until 2.30 p.m. which covered the critical times of playtime and lunchtime. There was no time allocation for discussion with the teacher. If either, or both children needed support before 10 a.m. or after 2.30 p.m. Mrs A had to cope with diminished support. The class teacher explained to R that she worried about a worst-case scenario in which she was alone to deal with a fight and described how the special needs assistant 'kept a close eye' on the situation. Mrs A described how a teacher who had not previously worked with B, remonstrated with him which resulted in him being difficult all day. Despite facing difficulties on a daily basis, Mrs. A was open to new ideas about alternative ways of working.

6.5.4 The parent's perspective

On first meeting with B's mother Mrs. K, she seemed self-assured. Although it may have seemed that Mrs. K had a privileged life, her public persona hid her feelings of desolation. When she spoke of her sons, the break-up of her marriage and the difficulties that she had faced, she appeared forlorn. Her neighbours were mainly middle-class professionals who expected their children to behave responsibly in school. Her experience of isolation seemed more pronounced in the middle-class community where the need to 'keep up appearances' is a dominant value. Conscious that B was unhappy about living apart from his father and brother, she hoped that with time B would settle in school. She avoided seeking help. Her decision to leave her husband had not been lightly made:

> At first again as I said there was a lot of covering up. You don't want to admit
> it at the time. Now when I look back. It wasn't my fault. (pause). You feel
> (pause.) You are to blame...I had marriage problems (pause)

> (Parent)

She was surprised when B did not settle in school and avoided contact with other mothers in case they complained about B's behaviour:

> I would be sort of defensive but most teachers did not really know what
> was going on. I was under pressure. I was snapping at all the wrong
> people... The headteacher was fantastic about the whole thing but
> I was on the defensive.

> (Parent)

She bought B presents in an effort to encourage him at school. However her efforts did not seem to work. She said, "B would not do his work. He was always in a daze sometimes and quite disruptive in class with the teachers and in the playground". She haltingly described how it was for her and B at a time when things seemed bleak. Speaking in both the past and present tenses she said:

> He was not a disruptive child in that he was completely out of control. I think he

*was keeping a lot to himself at so young an age. I am covering up things. It is
not helping. He is holding back. I am holding back. You basically don't know
what is going on in his head or how he is feeling. It spun off in the school. He
was taking out this anger out on other people...(pause) He did not want to
upset me and I did not want to upset him.*

<div align="right">(Parent)</div>

Although he knew his mother was sad, B also seemed to keep up the appearance of coping.
He did not cry when he was upset. When reprimanded in school or sent to the office he
stoically took his punishment. Shaken when the school suggested that it would be wise to
involve psychological services, Mrs. K she explained that she did not believe that he needed
help and that she had "wrapped him in cotton wool". She said that when things were at their
worst in school she felt:

*Despair. I felt despair. I mean I have never.... I have never. God forgive me.
I have never had a nervous breakdown ...I was near enough on the verge
of just crossing that line... I felt totally... just despair. That is the only word
I can describe to you.*

<div align="right">(Parent)</div>

Mrs. K was less than optimistic about the opportunity to work with Behaviour Support as it
served to deepen her sense of despondency:

*I was very sceptical thinking I'm not knocking anyone's profession but my B
does not need this. He is not crazy...I know a psychologist is different
from a psychiatrist ...so I was very sceptical at the beginning, very sceptical.
But I take into account I love B.*

<div align="right">(Parent)</div>

Mrs. K doubted the value of psychiatric or psychological help in relation to her child and
approached such interventions with a sense of foreboding. She also questioned the
usefulness of excluding B from school at such a young age as she felt that it impeded any
progress that had been made:

*When they expelled him it put him from the top of the ladder. It put him
right down and his bad behaviour started kicking in again. I felt it
was a big mistake. I am not against expelling. He found a dangerous object
and brought it into school. Straightaway everyone was up in arms He was
embittered. I think that there should be discussion before a child is excluded.
To put exclusion on a child is like tarnishing the person*

<div align="right">(Parent)</div>

The word 'tarnish' conjures up notions of dishonour and falsification yet in terms of their
personal struggle, Mrs K saw her son as valiant. Admitting that B had done wrong, she
believed that excluding a child resulted in them gaining a 'bad' reputation. When B returned to
school, "It seemed to be the talk of the playground with a lot of whispering going on". She said
B probably thought, "everyone is talking about me, and everyone is looking at me". Once
again she said that she believed that the process tarnished him. Mrs. K believed there would
be value in having time for 'discussion and evaluation' before excluding a child from school.
She thought that children like B could experience a sense of isolation. At the time of the
study, it had been suggested by her GP that she attend the Department of Child and Family
Psychiatry (DCFP), in the hope that she and B could be supported. Mrs. K paid one visit with
B to the clinic but did not return as she found it unhelpful.

6.5.5 Listening for strengths: coping questions and compliments

George, Iveson and Ratner (1990) emphasise the value within this approach of listening sensitively for elements of conversations which, when retold serve to enhance a person's sense of creativity and personal worth. Careful listening to Mrs. K facilitated the use of 'coping' questions and 'compliments' which seemed to help forge a mutually respectful relationship. R explained that she sensed in Mrs. K and B qualities of strength and tenacity, which she believed, would help them in their future work. Mrs. K smiled when R described how she had heard about B's reputation for honesty and fairness and wondered how she managed to teach B the value of honesty. Proud of her son's reputation Mrs. K said B was truthful even if it meant he got into trouble. Mrs. K admired him for that. She agreed to work with R using a Solution Oriented approach, as it seemed that the use of Behaviour Charts and rewards had a limited effect on helping B to progress in school. When B did not achieve his target or goal the moods got worse and he looked sullen. Mrs. K said she could predict whether he was going to have a good day by his behaviour on getting up in the morning.

6.5.6 Noticing exceptions

When B joined in the conversation, he was invited to listen to his mother describe those times when he got up cheerfully, dressed on time. Mrs. K was proud to tell how he was usually willing to get up early when he knew that he would be going swimming after school.
B seemed to enjoy hearing about what was going well in their lives. They agreed that R could document this story. Favourite activities included football training and going to the cinema or swimming baths For R there was a possibility of telling and retelling this account of those times when Mrs. K and her son were having fun. Lethem (2000) suggested such conversations with parents help them acknowledge their own special influence on aspects of their children's development that is going well. When asked if they would share more stories of this with R in the following weeks they readily agreed and smiled at each other.

6.5.7 Challenging "Trouble": enlisting support

R explained to Mrs. K and B about how Solution Oriented work involved people noticing and writing in a special book about those times when B behaved in a calm and respectful way in school. She also explained that Mrs. K could read about how B managed to challenge any difficulties that he faced. Mrs. K was happy to hear that the class teacher and J were to write about her son's special skills and was enthusiastic about designing a special cover for B's Golden Book. She agreed to write in it each night. R explained that that the presence of the special needs assistant in the class was an added advantage, as she would also become involved in writing in the Golden Book. When asked about what he liked doing in school B readily replied football and maths. He admitted that sometimes he was in trouble.

He grinned when R said she was curious about how he would handle a challenge with "Trouble" and seemed to enjoy the notion of a contest. He said he would challenge "Trouble" by completing his work and keeping his temper in the playground. B agreed that his mother should hear about his efforts. B gave permission for R to write in the Golden Book about his plan to challenge "Trouble".

For R it was important that her conversation with B, in the presence of his mother not only imparted a sense of confidence in B's ability to challenge "Trouble" but also attempted to convey the notion the school staff would be involved in supporting B in his challenge. Future oriented questions were useful at this junction in order to help B reflect on the first steps he would take in order to challenge "Trouble". It also provided R with information about whose support B believed was significant. When he was asked what he would be doing in class that would demonstrate to others that he was challenging "Trouble" and winning in class, B said that he would not be getting out of his seat and that he would be working hard at his maths. When R asked "Just your maths B?" he grinned again and explained that he would concentrate on all his work. Subsequent questions invited B to describe in more detail what working hard meant and it revealed that he was able to concentrate and was aware of the reasons for class rules:

R: *When you want the teacher's attention what will you do?*

B: *Put up my hand and not call out*

R: *Who will be winning when you do your work and not chat to others?*

B: *Me not "Trouble"*

R checked with B about what she had written and he verified that when he was challenging " Trouble" in class and winning he would be completing his work, remembering to put his hand up and not call out. B was asked to identify members of the school community whom he believed would support him in his challenge and invite them to write about what they noticed in his Golden Book. He said he thought the class teacher and the special needs assistant would notice and write about his efforts. R said that it seemed to her that B and his mother once they had made up their minds to do something would do it and she looked forward to reading their stories. The conversations were conducted in a matter-of-fact manner because it was important that B returned to his class believing that he could succeed and his mother left the school confident that she was able to participate fully in the work in the work.

6.5.8 Exploring exceptions: building on strengths

B gave permission for R to read about his intention to challenge "Trouble" to his teacher and listened attentively when R and his teacher talked about those times when B worked well in class:

R: *When do you see B working well Mrs. A?*

T: *Oh he is super at maths and his art is so good too.*

R:	*May I write that down B?*
B:	*Yes Miss.*
R:	*What helps you when you are working like that B?*
B:	*Well I like to be quiet but sometimes H makes a face at me and I get mad.*
R:	*So you like to be quiet?*
B:	*And I like my good pencils.*
R:	*Oh so do I. I have a problem that I challenge. It is called 'messy handwriting' and I treat myself to new pencils so that my handwriting is as good as your teacher's*

B smiled and offered R one of his pencils. This was a topic of conversation which R and B often revisited and he complimented R when her handwriting improved or used encouraging words when it was not so good. His class teacher also advised B to keep an eye open when he was shopping for pencils so that R could buy some too. B decided that sometimes it would be useful to sit by himself in an office which he designed. He admired his uncle whose office he had visited and agreed that there were probably times when his uncle wanted to concentrate on his work. B agreed that other pupils might want his help to design a special calm place to do their work. During this conversation, B was consulted about his understanding of the need for rules in relation to working safely and speaking respectfully. With characteristic honesty B admitted that sometimes, although he agreed that the class rules were fair, he just did not keep them. As his awareness of his unique skills increased so too did his ability to consider challenging " Trouble" in other contexts such as the playground. The administrative assistant who worked at the office near the school entrance was a keen supporter of B and other children. When R appeared, she was told supportive stories about B which were written in his Golden Book.

The stories in the Golden Book about him enjoying school and his activities after school provided leverage for B to bring the topic of his dad into the conversation. He said he wanted his big brother and dad to read it too and enjoyed speaking about the good times, which happened when he visited his dad. After staying with his dad at weekends he would tell his teacher or J about going to the baths or having a Chinese meal. He was keen that these accounts were also written in the Golden Book. For a limited time he wanted the headteacher to read about his particular efforts. During this time the headteacher and B met on a regular basis to read the Golden Book. He was happier when he knew that she was aware of his efforts in class and his good times at home. When B was excluded from school the Golden Book was used in order to explore with him possible future solutions to challenge 'Trouble'

6.5.9 Golden Detective: B as a supporter
B and other pupils became involved in a playground initiative whereby they became Golden Detectives looking out for people who were keeping the rules, behaving respectfully, and saying kind words. B liked to use the word respectful. Often other pupils told stories of him

behaving in a way, which was fair and honest. These stories challenged the notion that he could be domineering. The special needs assistant J made regular entries:

> *At the morning playtime B played football with H, D and me. There were no problems. When a boy bumped into him accidentally he did not retaliate. He stayed calm. He is beating " Trouble" and winning. I am so pleased for him. Playtime is good fun.*
>
> (Special needs assistant, J)

As B became more reflective about his behaviour, he was able to celebrate the success of other pupils, in particular H. It seemed that peace had broken out and H and B joined in a maths games group.

6.5.10 The maths group: stories of competence and kindness

B agreed to join with R and a group of other children in playing a maths game. R chose to play the game in the class while other pupils were engaged in different work. This meant that the story of B and H not being able to play together in a group was challenged. Invited to inform the group about his preferred way of playing, B stressed that he liked it best when people played well and did not cheat. Although he was competitive and loved winning, B agreed that it was respectful not to make others feel bad if they lost. He abided by the agreed rules and readily complimented others on the way they played. When he lost a game or had to miss a turn, he did so with stoicism. B also used his skills in maths to help others. Occasionally when H went into a huff because he did not win, B did not make fun of him. Instead he encouraged him to remember the rules and keep on playing. When H did play well, B was generous in his praise and H became less guarded in his company. A particular advantage of co-working with J was that she could adopt the approach to her playground games. Invited to become a Golden Detective who noticed B and H behaving respectfully in the playground resulted in her compiling thick documents, which testified to their strengths. She shared these stories with their teachers, their parents and R.

5.5.11 Feedback: the headteacher

The headteacher said that she noticed that B was a lot happier and that he had changed from a 'sullen boy to a much happier wee boy' She observed that when she saw his mother, she seemed happier and calmer and more cooperative with the school. She noted, "Things seem to be on an even keel for her".He was also less often at the headteacher's office which helped the smooth running of the school:

> *The biggest change that I see in B is that he does not visit my room, which is a great success. In the beginning he was a regular visitor to my room. He is working far more cooperatively. He seems much happier although he has his moments. He can still be badly behaved but not to the extent as when we first started the intervention.*
>
> (Headteacher)

Her worry that he was capable of 'domineering' other pupils gave way to a view of him emerging as a leader:

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*He has not displayed aggression. He is a bit of a leader of the boys
in his class but he has never displayed any aggression towards anyone in
recent months*

<div align="right">(Headteacher)</div>

The headteacher believed that the work involved looking at things positively and writing about the 'good things' that he had done. She said, "If he had tried hard or performed well it was noted. The result was that because they had success in some things they could build upon this success". Although she acknowledged the attempt of R to work in a collaborative way, she described the work as specialised. She saw R as 'being an expert in her field". She noted:

*On lots of occasions the work helped when we were hanging on by our
fingertips. R defused the situation...I know of other colleagues who had
children with problem behaviour who have not approached the service
and the problem just never goes away.*

<div align="right">(Headteacher)</div>

The headteacher's reference to the school 'hanging on by their finger tips' and her understanding of the dilemma facing many of her colleagues suggests she knew that more needed to be done to assist those children, who for whatever reason enter the school gates in an angry state of mind.

5.5.12 The educational psychologist

The educational psychologist noted that the Solution Oriented work helped the staff see B in a different light. The notion that he was essentially a troublemaker was overturned and he was pleased that an alternative story of B in school emerged. He believed that staff began to describe B as a 'likeable rogue' rather than a boy who was out to cause trouble. Concerned the class teacher may have been overburdened by the presence of two pupils with SEBD in her class and that more needed to be done in terms of support, he explained, " I'd like more psychological and behavioural support, more auxiliaries for the class teacher. The key to preventing exclusion is skilled support and an auxiliary or nursery nurse". He believed that as a result of her involvement in the Solution Oriented work, the class teacher had increased her confidence in terms of her management of children in class. He accepted that excluding B from school could have had detrimental effects on him but that violence could not be condoned and hoped that in future, extra resources would be available so that exclusion could be averted.

5.5.13 The class teacher

Mrs. A was delighted at the progress that had been made in her class and it was evident that she recognised that the staff valued her efforts. She spoke of B's past reputation, which suggests he was considered 'trouble':

*Even if I didn't mention to other staff members or the headteacher they
were well aware of this child's history in the playground and suddenly there
were very few stories, being told that were bad. They were aware. The
changes were noticed. Even if there was nothing mentioned specifically.
They were mentioned through the Golden Book.*

<div align="right">(Class teacher)</div>

The class teacher reflected on how her attitude had undergone a change:

> *I think that my attitude has changed even since I started in this school.*
> *It is not so much, I am the teacher and you will do as you are told or*
> *I am in charge. It is not as dogmatic I suppose.*

<div align="right">(Class teacher)</div>

Encouraged by the headteacher and staff, Mrs. A had taken on board the task of working with two referred pupils and she had succeeded in helping them enjoy school more than they had. She said she had never felt hopeless about the situation, as there were no exhortations to achieve goals in this approach. She noticed that the approach emphasised conversations and storying and that the storying took twists and turns. Mrs. A noted, "We always had this view that we were changing even the slightest bit for the better so we were always very hopeful". As a result of working in a Solution Oriented way with B, the teacher said she thought differently about other pupils in her class:

> *It has changed my way of working. Not just with any particular child. It is*
> *more generalised because I had to be very calm and positive. I think that*
> *the whole class got a totally different teacher because of this particular child.*

<div align="right">(Class teacher)</div>

The class teacher described the working relationship with R as:

> *Very understanding of all the problems. Great to work with easy going*
> *sort of open. If I wanted to try something she would have been quite*
> *happy even though she thought this wouldn't work. She was willing to*
> *experiment as well.*

<div align="right">(Class teacher)</div>

Embedded in her description of collaborative work is the notion of being helped and the suggestion that the experimental work of the teacher 'may not work'. However the class teacher rightly asserted that R was open to ideas from others. As noted previously when Mrs. A described another pupil's behaviour as 'assurance seeking' rather than attention seeking it helped R understand more clearly about how to work with him. An important part of narrative practice is the engagement of audiences who will witness to the preferred stories. Using a therapeutic approach in a school differs from working in a clinical setting because there are more opportunities to access the people who really matter to the children.

The stories of B doing well in school and at home proliferated and his smiles increased. The class teacher noticed that the other children benefited. She said, "The children felt as if they were important, which was helpful". Working in class meant that the other pupils were involved in the conversations and worked with J as "Golden Detectives" in the playground. The class teacher saw this way of working as different from other strategies:

> *I think that there was a lot of discussion and talk with the child He was*
> *more involved in comparison to what had happened before. Although*
> *he had been involved in trying to get the happy faces it was not so*
> *much written down whereas this was different. Everyone was involved.*
> *He was very much the centre of it. I think he was quite happy to be*
> *involved in it. He could also have written things down if he wanted.*
> *He thought it was wonderful.*

<div align="right">(Class teacher)</div>

She acknowledged that the input from the special needs assistant helped defuse potentially volatile situations and was grateful that she had been employed. She was disappointed however that J did not receive a long-term contract in the school so that her expertise could have been developed. The class teacher expressed concerns that support to class teachers seemed arbitrary. She had friends who faced similar difficulties and who had been made to feel inadequate:

> Teachers should not be made to feel inadequate and the pupils should not be labelled troublemakers. A full time auxiliary helps and obviously a support teacher would help.
>
> (Class teacher)

Although grateful for the support provided, the class teacher described working with H and B in class was " hard work". For R there was an increased awareness that the views of teachers like Mrs. A and the headteacher and the special needs assistant J, who were so generous with their time and professional about their work, should be heard by policy makers and employers.

5.5.14 The parent

Mrs. K made three Golden Books for B and she said that they were precious to her. She documented how B behaved safely with his brother at the baths. She explained that she read selected stories to him each night and reported that they both loved them.

> We keep going back to the Golden Book. This is, if there was another way of doing it fair enough... If you've got the Golden Book in front of him and you are writing good things...any achievements big or small that helps. It helps me because it keeps me calm. It lets B see that I appreciate every little thing he does. We are writing it down. We are not just saying it. We are reading it...
>
> (Parent)

Mrs. K believed that it was more powerful to read an account of what was going well than to verbalise it:

> A child is not going to sit and listen basically if you are having a conversation with him. He's not going to sit and listen to it but if it is written down. It's giving him, "Oh yes, I've been good today. It keeps him being good. He's got something and he can think". Oh well I'll do the dishes tonight".
>
> (Parent)

B's mother was good at handwriting. B had told her about R's challenge with "Messy Handwriting". The support of the teacher and his mother for R seemed to cheer B. Proud of his mother's good handwriting he was sympathetic about R's struggle and often used encouraging words to her. Mrs. K said that her storying of the Golden Book helped them to speak about things which had hitherto, remained unsaid. She had worried that because of his volatile behaviour he might have been unable to make and keep friends. She delighted in the other children's support of B and was happy that he became more reflective with his teacher and R. B's mother said that before she had become involved in the Solution Oriented work with R and the teacher, she had been "snapping at B and not addressing any problems".

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It seemed that by writing about her son's unique strengths and competencies, Mrs. K gained insight into her unique qualities as a mother. She referred to the work as:

Tasks between the teacher and B and myself and R were like a circle.
That was what was basically important. It lets you bring all your
feelings on paper. You are not bottling them up. You are addressing them
It makes you feel better and it also makes the child feel a whole lot better.

(Parent)

She valued the conversations because it made explicit, her deep care and respect for her son. It appeared that the Golden Book helped them to speak more and heightened her understanding of how B felt. She said, " I think that although we are very close it made us closer and we began to actually communicate". B's mother reflected on how she had changed:

I have changed...from a nervous person losing a lot of weight to I'm a lot
more confident, than I've ever been. I've been confident before but really
I'm on top of everything now. I can deal with problems now without dread.

(Parent)

Mrs. K reflected on what it was like for her when she was involved in the conversations:

You did not feel like, "Oh five minutes, I better get out the door sort of
thing. You were made to feel welcome. If you wanted to discuss your
problems it was there for the taking, and if you didn't there was no pushing.
You don't feel like, you know that, you've got to sit and be quiet and watch
what you say which is a good thing.

(Parent)

For Mrs. K it was important that R did not pry into her problems. Working from a Solution Oriented perspective with Mrs. K assumed that she had many strengths, which would become more apparent as the conversations developed. In Rowantree School there were less meetings with B's mother than with H's parents yet she reported that she felt strongly supported. For her this meant that the process was seen as:

Very sympathetic. There was no taking sides. Not judgmental. You never
felt you were being judged. Even though you said you had been in the
marriage for twelve years you never got that look (That said)'Oh you should
have been out long before twelve years'

(Parent)

B's mother references to the 'look' that can be judgmental suggests that she was alert to the non-verbal messages which are given during a conversation. She spoke as if the process was light-hearted despite the seriousness of the situation:

I felt I did feel that a weight was lifted off my shoulders. After leaving
a meeting with the support teacher you felt your questions were getting
answered. You were being heard.

(Parent)

The view of the parent in relation to working with the support teacher had undergone a change. She saw the work as being rooted in the school and valued the notion of teamwork. She believed that consulting the child was important:

It does work. This was a sort of team effort... He's got to feel comfortable
in anything that we tried with him... The three way split. Everyone has got

to feel sort of equal in it

<div align="right">(Parent)</div>

The words of B's mother suggest that positive changes come about by listening to children and working together:

> *There just is not an ideal world out there…. It is just children who need help. They just need an extra shoulder and an extra voice. Kids are sitting there and they feel that nobody is listening. Nobody is bothering. If you have schools with support, it gives this child a chance to express their own emotions if they don't want to express it to their parents or if they feel a bit shy. Oh they will tell you what you want to tell you or what they think you want to hear.*

<div align="right">(Parent)</div>

Grateful for the work which was done in the school, she was aware that including 'problem kids 'in school requires more resources and experienced staff.

> *We got help in this school… There needs to be something done so that every school, even secondary schools get help. Problems can arise there too… We go back to the same old situation money. We have got to have resources so every school has a chance to experience what I have experienced Divorce does take its toll on the child no matter how much you cover up.*

<div align="right">(Parent)</div>

5.5.15 Postscript

B continues to be educated in a mainstream school. He does not receive Behaviour Support.

He excels at football and joined the junior team of a premier league football club.

6 Case Study 5: A at St. J's School

A, aged eight years eight months, was the eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. S who have three younger daughters one of whom is physically disabled. They lived in a large town in the west of Scotland where once, the steel industry had provided employment for many people. A's parents were both unemployed and although poor, the family loved animals and were proud of their pet canaries, chaffinches, white mice and dogs. A responded violently both in class and in the playground and on his way to school to anyone whom he thought "wound him up". He often accused other children of making faces at him or calling him names. After school, A mixed with older youths who harassed the children from the primary school. This resulted in parental complaints. Although concerned that he mixed with older youths, A's parents were reluctant to seek help from the Social Work Department.

6.1 'Problem' behaviour and its meaning: the headteacher's perspective

Visitors to St. J's school are impressed by the co-operative way in which the pupils and staff work in a semi-open plan environment. Ms. B had only recently been appointed to St. J's and the pupils were used to seeing her in their classes on a regular basis. She spoke animatedly about her expectations for the school which included aiming for a government award for quality in education. The headteacher was concerned that if A got into trouble on his way to school, his teacher would face difficulties in class. Therefore she invited him to visit her each morning. At the headteacher's office, A could be heard telling her his latest joke, news of his pets, or giving his recent rock-star impersonations. She in turn, answered his questions about her car and her pet cat. Although she had taught for twenty-three years and had been in management for twelve the headteacher admitted that she had not encountered a child with such difficulties:

> A's behaviour was so different from anybody else. School was so different in
> terms of what we were trying to achieve and he just could not cope with the
> social and emotional interaction. I saw it as part of my job to deal with A
> and ensure that staff was supported.
>
> (Headteacher)

Ms. B was adamant that despite facing difficulties A would not disrupt the work of the class. She made it clear to him that she expected him to behave well in class and at school assemblies where he had a reputation for singing over loudly and drawing attention to himself. His parents seemed to respect the headteacher's down-to-earth approach. It appeared that A and the headteacher had forged a relationship based on mutual trust and good humour. The headteacher recalled how one morning A appeared at her door laughing and holding something in his hand. He asked her to take a closer look. It was a dead spider. Ms. B who had previously told A that she did not like spiders shrieked which caused A to laugh uproariously. Helping others see A as a joker who was full of life rather than disruptive, helped A and Ms. B to develop a positive relationship. She believed that the system had failed not only A but also his parents:

> When A came to school and certain demands were made on him, the parents
> had to bring this child into line. It was far too late. They were a very poor family.
> When I contacted them in conjunction with Behaviour Support they were very
> receptive to what I was about and what I could offer them.
>
> (Headteacher)

As parents ensured that he wore his school uniform and he was seldom absent. Although they did nt attend parents' evenings, they were pleased to hear about his success. Ms B believed that in the pst relations between the parents and the school had been discordant and she was determined to involve the parents in her work:

> I do not think it was always good in terms of what had gone before. Because the parents opened their eyes to what A was like, we were sharing our experiences with them and involved them at every twist and turn. I was very respectful towards them. I really liked them.

(Headteacher)

Ahough Ms. B commended his parent's efforts to support A in terms of school attendance and shool uniform, she also made it clear to them that allowing him to mix with older youths after school culd undo the work of the school. Intervals and lunch times were particularly difficult for the staff and fc A. When he went out into the playground he often mimicked the behaviour of older youths by ating tough and swearing. Sometimes he accused other pupils of calling him and his family names. H said that these pupils "noised him up". The headteacher would have liked more support for A in th playground. Although there was a special needs assistant in the school, she had specific duties wh regard to pupils who had physical disabilities. The headteacher and the janitor were the only staff aailable at lunchtimes and intervals that could provide support to A. No extra resources were aailable to the school in terms of support for A at lunch times and intervals. Worried that A might hit ppils when he was out playing which could result in a formal exclusion, the headteacher negotiated wh him that when he felt agitated, he could help her at the office. Characteristically Ms. B and A dicussed the matter in a straightforward way. She explained the situation in terms of helping him to aoid getting into trouble. He agreed that he sometimes got "noised up" or "lost the plot" and said that wen that happened, he would remain in school at interval to help the administrative staff.

Te staff who worked in the school office became accustomed to hearing A's jokes and his imitations oElvis Presley and were supportive of him. In order to avert problems on the way home from school th headteacher asked his parents to collect him and suggested that they encourage him to become inolved in activities that were suitable for his age. She became increasingly concerned however, that A was entering school some mornings looking tired and pale which suggested to her that he was out lae at night. Ms. B was clearly supportive of A and strived to make him feel that school was a place were he could be safe and enjoy himself. She knew that A loved his family and was especially proud of his little sister who had been ill.

6..2 The educational psychologist's perspective

Oer the course of the study, despite changes in staffing, the educational psychologists agreed that it wuld be helpful if Mr. and Mrs. A would access support from the Social Work Department. They reised to do so. Their perception that social workers would take their children from them, informed thir decision to refuse voluntary involvement with the Social Work Department. Teachers

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were advised to help A get the most out of school by promoting positive behaviour and highlighting consequences to inappropriate behaviour. The approach which had been used was informed by Behaviourist principles and included the use of behaviour charts and setting goals with a view to rewarding school appropriate behaviours. When A aimed for a reward and did not achieve it, his anxiety increased. When A became aware that his violent reactions could result in him being sent home, he became tearful and said he was worried that his father would punish him. Consideration was given to the possibility that A attend the Behavioural Unit. This would have involved A attending the Behaviour Unit in the mornings which was a journey of a journey of seven miles by taxi, and then he would return to school in the afternoons. Concern about a 'split placement' was discussed as behaviour which may be considered manageable in a unit with six pupils, can pose problems for class teachers who works with thirty three pupils in a mainstream class. In a behavioural unit when a pupil swears, it may serve as a stimulus for work in relation to anger management. In a mainstream school swearing can lead to exclusion. There was a strong possibility that A might imitate the behaviour of the children in the unit setting which could have resulted in him being sent home. It had also been agreed that in his best interests it was important to avoid excluding A from school. His mother, in consultation with the educational psychologist and the headteacher agreed that A be given an opportunity to respond to a Solution Oriented intervention in the hope that he could remain in his local school.

6.6.3 The class teacher's perspective

Ms. P had recently qualified and her first permanent position was in St. J's. Enthusiastic and well prepared for her class, she spoke calmly about her work with A. She admitted that her lack of experience made her apprehensive about working with a pupil assessed as having SEBD. She said, "A can appear unhappy and pale. Sometimes he seems really tired. When he becomes fidgety, he bites his nails." The teacher also worried about A's relationship with the other children in the class because of his reputation in the community was that he was a fighter:

> He fights after school. Mainly it involves arguing and calling names. He said that
> after school, on the road home some boys had called him names, so he twisted
> one boy's arm. The headteacher is more aware of this behaviour and she is
> trying hard to stop the unkind words of the others and to help A. He is sometimes
> left out in P. E and Drama when the children are asked to find a partner.
>   (Class teacher)

Although some parents complained to the school about his behaviour on the way home from school, Ms. P thought the staff, "always cared about him and were sympathetic to him because of his difficulties". She was aware that parents of other pupils were worried about their children getting involved with A and the older youths. It seemed that the pupils were discouraged from playing with A. Ms. P had heard that after school A would run past some children's homes shouting up at their windows. Unlike other pupils in his class, A did not attend the cubs, the swimming club, or the junior football team. Attempts to encourage his parents to get him involved in local organisations failed. They expected A to go to school and keep out of trouble. The teacher wondered what more could be done to help him. In school when he thought the teacher was not watching she noticed that:

> He seems to find it hard to walk in corridor to cloakroom. He breaks into a run

*and if no one is looking, he sometimes takes a swipe at someone. When he is
unsupervised he jumps up and down and does 'Rock' impersonations
depending on his mood.*

<div align="right">(Class teacher)</div>

A usually described his physical swiping at a pupil as "only playing." His attention wavered when he
faced difficulties in his work and he would complain that he was bored. The teacher noted:

*When undertaking a task which he understands well, he is calm and settled.
If I have to go over a part of his work that he has not quite cottoned on
to, he becomes quite moody, lowers his head and he really cannot take in
that he has not achieved success. If that happens to be an early morning task
then it means that I can have a turbulent day ahead. If he is not being attentive
then he touches things on his desk wriggles about slouches on his desk and
starts to draw.*

<div align="right">(Class Teacher)</div>

Ms. P noticed that his sense of isolation and fear of failure affected his work and that of others:

*He often thinks he is being accused of something. He also thinks that other
children are saying negative things about him. He then accuses them of making
faces at him.*

<div align="right">(Class Teacher)</div>

Ms. P was calm and kind in her responses to A. She seldom raised her voice in class and it seemed
to R that A desperately wished to please his new teacher. The class teacher said that when the 'bell
rang,' A seemed to enter a different world. Although his sense of being victimised was strong, A's
violent behaviour cast him as the instigator of trouble. Ms. P worried that A would become more
alienated in her class

6.6.4 The parents perspective

A's mother, Mrs. S, and her brothers and sisters had received support from the Social Work
department when they were children. She associated Social Work involvement with the possible
break-up of her family. Mr. and Mrs. S were keen to emphasise that they could manage without
support from the "Welfare." Mr. S had an extensive knowledge of animals and knew about how to rear
and breed them. Visitors to A's home were introduced to the different animals which included ferrets
and chaffinches, some of which would be flying about or sitting in the cages. Mr. S seemed amused at
the consternation on the faces of visitor when the Alsatians which guarded the entry to their home,
barked fiercely. He did not attend the meetings at the school during the time that the R was involved
in the work. In the past when he had been asked to attend the school, he had denied that A was
solely to blame. Although guarded, about the involvement of psychological services and R, A's
parents recognised that their son faced possible exclusion from school. This was of particular
annoyance to Mr. S who believed A needed strong handling and was of the opinion that schools were
now " too soft." He considered the school should find a solution to the problem without involving the
family and thought that A was trying to be a "hard man." To be given the label "hard man" in this
community engendered respect from some and fear from many others. It also involved a man being
able to "handle himself" in physical fighting and be able to "hold his drink." Although Mr. S thought that
school staff should be stricter in relation to discipline and that A, "should get his act together," he took

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on board the headteacher's concerns about A mixing with older youths. He also seemed pleased to know about his son's strengths at school.

Mr. S was deeply appreciative of the work being done in a pre- five centre with their young daughter whose physical disabilities meant that she required additional support. His appreciation of the work of the pre- five centre helped foster a positive working relationship with staff involved in the education of their son. He explained that when A got into trouble at school he 'grounded' him and did not allow him out to play after school. A often climbed out of the window, sometimes not returning home until late. When it was suggested that they accompany A to and from school to avoid potential trouble, Mr. and Mrs. S agreed to the suggestion but said they found it inconvenient. Mrs. S, like her husband, recognised that A faced problems in the community and at school, but she seemed limited in what she could do to help him. During a three-year period Mrs. S gave birth to two children. Although she often appeared tired and exhausted, Mrs. S could be seen pushing a pram, days after giving birth accompanied by Mr. S and her other children. Mrs. S attended the review meetings alone and the headteacher commended the family for their cooperation with regards to school uniform, attendance and punctuality. The headteacher also let A's parents know that she had high expectations of him and that he was capable of achieving success at school. She highlighted his achievements in maths, drawing and commended his progress in reading. On hearing the headteacher's words, Mrs. A smiled and seemed pleased that their efforts to support the school had not been ignored. At the time of the Solution Oriented intervention, it was hoped that Mr. or Mrs. S would come to the school and become involved in the process on a regular basis but because of their commitments in relation to their other children, this did not occur. A's mother agreed that R could be in contact with the family in order to let them know about how A's progress and expressed a hope that things would change and that he would 'see sense'.

6.6. 5 Reflecting on practice; compliments; noticing exceptions

Ms. P's description of the problem she faced in relation to working with A made it possible for R not only to affirm her strengths and qualities as a teacher, but also to become curious and reflective about pedagogical practices. R complimented Ms. P on noticing that when A faced challenges in his work, he gave up more easily than others in her class. As teachers are recommended to be "reflective practitioners"(Schon 1983), the adoption of a Solution Oriented perspective, with its emphasis on assuming a non – expert position and maintaining a sense of curiosity, enabled R and Ms. P to consider the possibility of making adaptations to the curriculum. R described that in a unit setting, with pupils who behaved like A, teachers were encouraged to develop a "fail proof or calming curriculum."

This involved negotiating with the pupil about flexible arrangements for the completion of tasks. It also allowed the pupils an element of control over what they did when they entered the class. Usually pupils who enter school agitated, opted to do work, that calmed them down. R explained that in order to discover what these activities are it is useful for the teacher to observe closely when the pupils are most calm and then make use of this information in curricular planning. O'Connell (1998 p 37) noted,

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"The task of the therapist is to find leverage for change." The notion of leverage in relation to changed behaviour resonates with the ideas of " scaffolding" which Bruner (1975) described as a process whereby an adult supports a child in learning a new task and gradually withdraws control as the child gains mastery. Further use of exception questions conducted from a position of wondering prompted a fuller description of those times during the school day when A behaved in ways that countered the dominant story of him being troublesome. Complimented for her insights into how A worked in her class, Ms. P was keen to explore his curricular strengths with a view to planning an individualised approach to his work. O' Connell (1998 p 60) described how de Shazer believed that the task of a Solution Focused therapist "was to set out to discover and affirm the resources, strengths and qualities which the client can utlilise 'to ' solve' the problem." Impressed at the commitment of Ms. P to helping A meant that R was able not only ' to identify resources ... but understand how they were deployed and how to reactivate them' (O' Connell, 1998p 60). The teacher described how A was usually calm when he did his Math's and Drawing. She also noticed that he loved to sit near her desk when he did his handwriting. She explained that during her initial teacher training, she had specialised in Art and encouraged the children to experiment with different pencils and pens, which she made available to them. She noticed that A enjoyed experimenting with her pencils. By asking her permission to document her account of when A worked well, a narrative was beginning to emerge which countered a dominant story of A as being troublesome.

6.6.6 Documents of support: a different story of A
R asked the teacher if she could document her words so that the story of A's unique competencies could be read to him. The teacher readily agreed, apparently intrigued about the possibility that an approach which emphasised stories and language, could impact on behaviour. Asked which qualities she thought A possessed which would help him challenge the difficulties he faced, she said the children in her class admired A because he was a confident performer. Ms. P laughed when she described A's apparent lack of inhibitions when there were concerts. "You should see him when we have a concert. He is something else, what a performer!" When asked to elaborate on how A performed at concerts, Ms. P readily described how both staff and pupils were amazed at his skills as a singer. Further questioning of how others reacted to his performance and their admiration for his skills provided R with a description of A as someone who, despite getting into trouble at school could cheer others up by his lively performances. Ms. P agreed to notice those times when A was calm at his work and to make special entries about his performance in Drama.

6.6.7 Consulting with A about his preferences: building on success
As a result of her conversation with R which examined the possibility of creating further opportunities for A to work in a calm way, Ms. P made special handwriting cards, art assignment and maths reinforcement tasks for A and other pupils. She negotiated with A about when he would prefer to compete those tasks at which he excelled. She asked A's permission to write about his efforts in his special book which she covered with Golden paper. A said he liked to complete these tasks first thing in the morning. When he entered her class, looking pale and agitated, Ms. P noticed that given a choice, A preferred to sit quietly using the teacher's pens to complete a handwriting or art task. Each

day, Ms. P wrote in his Golden Book about those times when she noticed A working in a calm and respectful way. A proudly showed his stories to other members of staff, including the janitor and the dining staff who delighted in his success.

6.6.8 Telling a different story of A

As part of the Behaviour Support plan, it was agreed that R should work with a Maths Games Group of which A was a member as there were concerns about how he mixed with the other children. While the teacher was busy organizing work for other pupils, R asked A's permission to read some words that she had heard about him during the previous week. A immediately responded "I bet I'm in trouble." The following section describes how A responded to the words of his teacher. It also illustrates the value in telling a story that respects not only A's skills and qualities, but also those of his family:

R: *A, this is not a story of you being in 'in trouble'. May I read the words?*

A: *Aye well, OK.*

R: *A's teacher said she noticed that he is very good at maths and drawing. She said that the class would be doing a topic about animals. This pleased R who explained that A knew a great deal about animals. She thinks he learns a lot about animals from his dad who knows so much about how to care for birds, dogs, mice rabbits and ferrets. At school, the headteacher, Ms. B noticed that he sometimes made her smile by telling her jokes and that she was so pleased to hear from his teacher that he enjoyed reading about animals.*

A: *My dad knows everything about animals.* (Looking around at the eavesdroppers and smiling broadly) *Miss, do you want to hear me doing Elvis?*

R: *Some day soon I will enjoy hearing that, but I think that your teacher wants me to begin the Maths Games Group.*

His teacher reminded him at this point that he had to go and get the games ready for the maths work. When she asked him "Will I see you doing that quietly A?" he answered, "As quiet as a mouse or a rabbit." Before beginning the maths game, R and A discussed preferred ways of playing a game. The difference between the way people play outside school and how a game should be played in school was explored. R asked A if he would like to hear how she preferred to play a game in class. A and his teacher listened to R's preferred way of playing a maths game in class which emphasised playing safely by passing the dice; saying kind and respectful words when a person missed a turn or when a person won; using each other's first names and playing quietly because other children were likely to be working on another topic. A asked R if her children liked playing like that. He seemed interested in how board games could be played at home. After listening carefully to R's preferred way of playing the Maths Game, he repeated her account, almost verbatim, as to how he thought it should be played. Ms. P suggested that R and A have a trial game in class just to make sure they understood their agreed rules and she also suggested that R should write about the story of the Maths Game in the Golden Book. A and R played the game. A remembered to say, "Good luck, " when he passed the dice slowly to R. When he won he said, "Better luck next time." At one point R said, "Well done A", loudly, and was reminded by A about the need to speak quietly.

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The teacher said she thought R and A had come up with good rules and hoped that the pupils agreed with her. She chose a group to play the game in class with A and R. The children in the group watched and listened to A who taught them the game and explained his preferred way of playing. Subsequently the Maths Game was played each week and the Golden Book soon had many entries, which described how A and the group played in a respectful way. The teacher later explained that some pupils interested in the animals which A's family owned had spent time asking him about the care of rabbits or birds. She noticed a growing admiration for him. When A's father heard that the other children wanted to know more about the animals he said he would get information for the teacher. A asked the headteacher if he could borrow books from the school library and inquired about how to join the public library. A became more eager to let not only the children in his class know about his Golden Book, but also other members of staff.

6.6.9 Externalising the problem: enlisting support

A gave permission for R to talk to significant people in the school about his continued success and to write their words in his Golden Book. Questions of the following type were asked of his supporters:

> *What do you see A doing well?*
> *What else?*
> *Who has noticed these changes?*
> *Who else?*
> *May I write your words of support?*

The Golden Book provided evidence of a 'thickened counterplot' which provided A with an alternative view of himself at school. As the stories of support grew it seemed that A became more aware that he could talk about his unique vision of a future when problems were less dominant. For R it was useful to engage with A in a way which, 'separated the problems which he faced from his sense of personal identity' (O' Hanlon, 1995, p25). This involved A giving a name to the problem which he was trying to thwart. It was important to R that she maintained position of curiosity and lightheartedness in her conversations with A as it seemed he had become more aware of school being a place where he was listened to and where his voice was valued.

It was customary for A to tidy up after the Maths Game and for R to write up the account of how he and others played respectfully. She wondered what name he would give the problem which he was managing to put a stop to. A immediately answered "Trouble." White and Epston (1990) suggest that by exploring with a person aspects of their lives that do not fit with the "problem saturated" account of self the person may gain insight into alternative possibilities and may chose to develop a new story of self. For R it was not only important that A became more aware of his unique skills and competencies but also that the teachers had insight into what supports A needed in school. When R said, "I wonder what it is about you that makes it hard for 'Trouble' to win.", A described himself as a fighter who did not give in. He explained that "Trouble" did not win when he was doing his maths, or when he did not get noised up if he lost at the maths game. When asked what helped him not to "get noised up" when he lost at the maths game, he said the words of his class teacher, the headteacher and a friend

helped him. The following excerpt from the Golden Book summarizes a conversation between R and A about what A valued in terms of support.

> At the Maths Group A showed that he was strong enough to beat 'Trouble'.
> When he was about to shout out because P had missed a turn, people saw him
> reminding himself about being respectful and R noticed him winning. She smiled.
> He noticed that other people were smiling too because A was able to challenge
> 'Trouble'. When the game was over A heard people in his group say kind words.
> M told A that she thinks he should keep on going, because he is getting
> stronger. A heard the words of his friends who supported him because he
> played so well. He liked the words of P and D who said, "Keep on standing
> up for yourself fagainst 'Trouble,' you are winning."   (R)

The children in the Maths Group also commended each other and their delight in A's success was surpassed only by his joy at their words. Repetition and familiar themes in stories has long been associated with calming children. A responded to his Golden Stories in much the same way as a young child responds to a favourite story. He often asked R to tell members of the school community his stories. The semi-open planned structure of the school was advantageous in this respect as members of staff and pupils were privy to the re- telling of A's stories of how he managed to challenge 'Trouble' in school. R retold the stories of A within earshot of his teacher and Mrs. Q, who worked as a special needs assistant in the open area and who was a target for A's attention. Each week R read the Golden Book to A after having made her own entries. Sometimes if he was agitated, A would opt to keep tidying but liked to be assured that others heard his stories. He would call over to Ms Q. "Are you listening Mrs. Q?" to which she would calmly announce. " With pleasure A, with pleasure." She ensured that she worked at that base, knowing that he looked to her for assurance. If, for some reason she was not there, A knew that he would be given an opportunity to let her know about his recent successes. His friendship with the staff grew and their support of him was evident both within and outwith school.

His teacher was later to reflect on his relationship with other members of staff:

> He used to take the dinner board round the classes and the stories in the staff
> room showed that he was liked. He would go round to the Primary one and say
> things like, "Oh they are cute the wee primary ones aren't they ?" (laughter).
> Oh he absolutely loved it at that time. I think that whole time was a good time
> for him in school. He was a happy boy.
>
>   (Class Teacher)

There were often humorous stories told about his jokes and singing ability which made it easier for the headteacher, teacher and R to explore with A the reason for the school rules. A enjoyed the predictability of the school day and was seldom absent.

The normal rules of the school applied to A and as he became calmer, he was more accepting of the consequences of responding inappropriately. However after school A continued to mix with older youths and the gap between what was expected in school and what was expected of him after school was widening. The Solution Oriented work in the school was done against a background of increasing uncertainty about A's future in the school. A's behaviour outwith school gave cause for concern about his safety. Reports that he had run away after school became more frequent. As the term neared an

end, the headteacher contacted the Social Work Department in the hope of getting support for A over the summer holidays. A was able to join a school holiday scheme for two weeks. A's parents reported his absconding to the police and eventually they admitted that he was 'outwith parental control'. The Social Work Department were formally involved in order that A and his family would be able to access the support, as he was deemed to be at risk.

6.6.10 A Solution Oriented approach to working with A's parents

Mrs. S seemed pleased to read A's teacher's words in the Golden Book when she attended the formal review meetings. Although invited to become involved in the Solution Oriented work with the teacher and the headteacher it did not happen. The Solution Oriented work took place in school with A, his teacher, headteacher and members of the school community. A's parents did not see the point of them coming to school as they thought that the school should just deal with A. When R and her colleague visited A's home it was usually to inform the parents of a review dates or to tell them either about A's progress or about current concerns of the school. It was made clear to A's parents that whilst progress was being made in school, the staff continued to face problems. During the visits a Solution Oriented perspective was adopted and there was an attempt on the part of R to focus on the particular strengths, which A's parents possessed. On one occasion, R and her colleague asked Mr. S about the care of his animals. He talked at length about canaries and chaffinches. R explained to Mr. S that A was very proud of the way his dad looked after the animals and he was able to tell other children in the group about how to care for birds. Mr. S looked pleased but his response was gruff. When A was asked what he liked to do at home he said he liked reading about animals. He said, "I think about going to the library, sometimes I think about going to the baths." A explained that the woman in the library knew him and that she said he needed to get a form so that he could join the library. A's father took him to the library. The following week A was delighted to tell his friends at the Maths Games Group about the books he had chosen. The books were about animals. The children were engrossed by the stories of A's animals. The visits to the library however were short lived. His family could not afford to pay the mounting fines for mislaid books.

The Solution Oriented work with A's parents did not focus on the use of the different types of questions such as the miracle question or externalizing the problem. It was characterised by an application of the principles of being respectful of the perception of a family who lived in extremely poor circumstances. Due heed was taken of issues which were of concern to the parents in relation to school and church. They wished their children to be christened but were unsure as to how to go about it. This was relayed back to the headteacher who, with her staff, supported A and his parents in their attempts to be included in their church community. It seemed to R that A's parents knew that the headteacher recognised the difficulties that they as a family faced, in relation to involvement in school initiatives. She did not judge them. A's parents seemed to understand that the school community cared about them. When their fourth child was born, A's pride knew no bounds as he announced the news of the latest arrival in his family. Pupils and teachers shared his pleasure and some bought gifts. The headteacher helped the parents to arrange a christening. Within a few weeks of the birth, Mr. S

stood proudly beside his family during the christening service. Photographs were taken and the headteacher, specially dressed for the occasion was at the forefront of the group. Overshadowing the joyfulness of the occasion, was concern that A needed more support. Efforts to engage with the parents in a more structured approach regarding a Solution Oriented intervention were not successful as A's parents were not able to come to school to work with R and the teacher.

Adopting a Solution Oriented perspective meant that A's successes in school reflected not only the support of the school but also signaled that his parents were keen that he did well. Subsequently at meetings which were arranged by the Social Work Department, A and his parents gave R permission to read about A's successes in school. The Golden Book made clear their expectation that A attend school regularly, wear his uniform and do his best. It allowed the social workers hear about how the family, despite facing many difficulties tried to cooperate with the school staff. The views of White (1996), helped to sustain a sense of hope in this work at a time when the outlook seemed bleak for A and his family. He urged professionals to support, encourage and acknowledge the persistence of parents who, despite the difficulties, which they faced, continue to care:

> I've never met a parent, who loved their children too much, but I have witnessed
> many situations in which all the loving and caring that is to be done is left to
> just one or two people, and most often these people are women ...and this can
> lead to exhaustion.

<div align="right">(White, 1995b, p56)</div>

6.6.11 Feedback: the headteacher

The concern of the headteacher and staff in relation to A's behaviour extended beyond the classroom where it seemed that he was able to respond effectively to a calm and structured environment. However, if there was a change in the routine it could cause difficulties. On an outing to a theatre it was decided that R attend with the class teacher. Understandably given A's tendency to "do a runner," the headteacher wanted to know that A and his class teacher were supported. The reports, which were compiled for the educational reviews, reflected the concerns of the school:

> A continues to work well in class. He responds well to structure and
> consistency. In general his work is of a fairly high standard. He takes time to do
> careful writing and maths. It has been reported, however that A had a 'bad week'
> last week, and it is hoped that he can get back on course again. The incidents which
> happen usually relate to behaviour outwith school or in unstructured situations.
> It would be helpful if A could be included in an After-School club or group. Mrs. Q
> the special need assistant reported that despite the' big trouble' last week, he
> was very well-mannered when he had his lunch beside her.

<div align="right">(R)</div>

The big trouble related to the increasing violent responses from A on his way home from school or when he was going to the cloakroom. The headteacher was disappointed that things were beginning to slide. She had been hopeful of positive change and described his response to the Solution Oriented intervention as a 'good spell' when:

> Everything really did change. He showed us that he could be considerate. He could
> interact with the other children albeit in a highly structured situation. He could play
> quite affably on a one to one basis. Staff who had been here longer than I saw that
> A was no longer sitting outside the office when he should have been being educated.

He could come to school assembly and be very polite and mannerly.
<div align="right">(Headteacher)</div>

Ms. B emphasised that she became more aware of A's politeness and courtesy which are qualities valued not only in school but also in the wider community. His attendance at school assemblies had undergone a change. Before being involved in the Solution Oriented work he had made faces and sang overly loud. The headteacher noted:

> *The result was most valuable. We had someone coming in who could share our experiences, who would listen to us and who could take it perhaps a step further. The consistency of it all I liked. I did not have to go and look for someone, because someone would be there at sometime throughout the week with this in inverted commas therapeutic type of approach that helped me helped my class teacher and helped A. It definitely helped the smooth running of the school. Some days I would say, "Oh thank God R is here I have had a terrible week" or Things have been really good." The fact that it was so specialised.*
<div align="right">(Headteacher)</div>

Although the headteacher described the work as therapeutic, she was pleased that it could be used in the context of a class. She did not find it mysterious. She expected high standards from the staff and pupils in her school and appreciated the pragmatism of the approach. Ms. B believed that her work with R was a collaborative venture:

> *It was very professional. Homework done, she always came prepared, always willing to help; always willing to share. The respect was there. We respected this person and we definitely needed her.*
<div align="right">(Headteacher)</div>

She the Solution Oriented process in terms being listened to and as a process whereby her views were taken into consideration.

> *Although these were not happy situations even the fact that there was someone there to experience exactly what you were feeling, exactly what you were talking about. You did not have to fill them in it was an on going process.*
<div align="right">(Headteacher)</div>

The headteacher's references to the notion of mutual support and the need to express the feelings about the unhappy situation reflects the sadness that was felt at A's situation. Normally garrulous and joking A had become quieter as the year progressed. The headteacher and R shared their concerns with the appropriate authorities and steps were taken to ensure A's needs were met. There are no easy answers to the problem of responding to pupils with SEBD. Frustrated by the lack of resources available in terms of people to work with A, she said that she would say to others in her position:

> *Seek out the advice of someone who is able to give this expert knowledge. Take any advice you can. Look for any solutions you can and just keep going. Keep the dialogue going. Keep the dialogue going.*
<div align="right">(Headteacher)</div>

Critical of a system, which on the one hand exhorted schools to include pupils who were disruptive, and at the same time failed to resource the process, the headteacher believed that A needed:

> *A behaviour support teacher permanently. Interagency work and after school support is very very poor. Between the hours of nine and three our job is hard but is made easier by what happens with the interagency work. After three o'clock it all seems to fall apart. We need more of this kind of support in the evenings definitely.*
<div align="right">(Headteacher)</div>

She thought that the Solution Oriented work opened the eyes of the staff, to how life for A could be, but conceded that more would have to be done to ensure that he was safe. As the year progressed A's responses in unstructured settings continued to be violent. The headteacher asked advice from other agencies. When asked about the involvement of other agencies she noted:

> *Social Work had to be involved because of concerns about A. Psychological Services, in terms of paper work and reviews yes. Yes, but not a high profile not as high as myself, the staff or the Behaviour Support Services.*
>
> (Headteacher)

The inclusion of A in his local school was not just about keeping him in class. His headteacher and staff recognised that A and his family needed more support in the community if they were to feel included. Unable to return library books because of fines, not being able to join the children in the class at the cubs, the altar servers meetings or the junior football club put A on a different footing from other children. It seemed to R that the headteacher's urgent request for professionals "to keep the dialogue open, keep the dialogue open" was most relevant.

6.6.12 The educational psychologist

The educational psychologist who had been involved in the referral of A to Behaviour Support had left. The replacement educational psychologist recognised that despite changes in terms of A's attitude to school and his increased confidence in his ability to apply himself to his work, concerns remained about his safety after school. His absconding from home was a matter of serious concern. Of additional concern to the educational psychologist was that A, normally talkative and open about his activities, became reticent and at times seemed guarded. Given that A had a positive experience of school for a lengthy time and had built a trusting relationship with his headteacher and teacher, it could reasonably be expected that he would confide in one or both of them about his whereabouts during the night. This had not happened. He had recently become tired, pale and lacking in concentration on entry to school. These features of his behaviour precipitated the involvement of Social Work.

6.6.13 The class teacher

School remained a constancy in A's life and the class teacher believed that his involvement in the Solution Oriented work resulted in changes:

> *A became different boy. His work changed completely. His attitude changed and he was much happier in class although it did not change in the playground. I could trust him more, I did not have to keep an eye on him so much in class. He was quite content*
>
> (Class teacher)

Working with A had influenced all the staff whose understanding seemed to deepen in relation to his situation:

> *He loved coming to school even when he stayed out all night. When he ran away from home all night, he was always in school the next morning. He was always happy to be in school and I think he felt that everybody cared about him here. People brought him in play pieces (snacks) and things like that so he was cared for here. He tried to please me and he wanted to do his work. He did often give me a smile in the past months.*
>
> (Class teacher)

The transformation in A's attitude to school seemed to be influenced by the respectful way in which M. P worked with him. Although she was relatively inexperienced, she quietly supported A's attempts to challenge 'Trouble' and maintained high expectations of him in relation to his work. She noted that he wanted to be friends with the other pupils and noted that when they responded positively, he was much happier. Previously other children would have easily wound him up. It seemed that the pupils were aware that 'winding - up' A would meet with the censure of their class teacher. After school, however , A did not mix with the children in his class. His teacher noted:

> I think that the attitude of the other pupils did change but I think it was still
> there hidden deeply. He was not causing trouble. He was not fighting over
> things. They sort of looked after him but I don't know, it seems to be coming
> back again. He gets into a lot of trouble outside school.
>
> (Class teacher)

As A's behaviour became more at variance with the community values, the children in his class were less inclined to mix with him. The class teacher explained that as a consequence of the Solution Oriented work her attitude to teaching A had changed:

> I viewed him differently I took more time with him but also I got to know him.
> I did spend more time rather than just telling him to sit down do this. That was
> not working. Not showing him attention in an over the top way was important
> He also knew the rules.
>
> (Class teacher)

It was important to the class teacher that the Solution Oriented work could be integrated into the existing discipline policy. The class teacher found her work with R and A helpful, as her initial teacher training had not prepared her for what she had encountered:

> I saw how she captured his interest. I could see when R was working in a
> group. I was not getting it so I tried it and I found it interesting. I did write in the
> Golden Book and that was carried on. Sometimes he took it home but not always.
>
> (Class teacher)

Teachers work in relative isolation. When working in class or in the open area with the group R deferred to the class teacher about class procedures. It seemed to R that there was a sense of mutual understanding about the work in class. Ms. P incorporated future oriented language into her conversations with A and the other children. She was heard saying, "When you are finished your maths A I will enjoy hearing you reading." She used compliments and highlighted those times when she noticed exceptions to the problem situation such as; "A, I noticed that when you were in the line yesterday you behaved respectfully."

The class teacher thought that R was hopeful about change. She related this hope to 'faith in the school', which reflected the feelings of R. The possibility that things could have been different remained with R, the headteacher and the teacher. The class teacher said, "I think that from the very beginning that R was very optimistic. I think she had faith in the school and she was very positively received." She saw the Solution Oriented approach as non-judgmental noting that "R did not put him

down. I know that the parents trusted her." In terms of how the teacher understood the work with R she noted:

> *Very understanding and gave me guidance. I think she knew that I had just been out of college. She was cooperative and understanding. She knew that I had the rest of the class,so she knew that I had work to do.*

<div align="right">(Class teacher)</div>

Ms. P felt unprepared for working with a pupil who had SEBD and explained, "We got a bit at college but more would be helpful." She believed that smaller classes would have been beneficial but tentatively qualified her statement by asking, "Oh am I allowed to say that?" She was glad, however that the headteacher did not minimize the difficulties caused by A's behaviour and appreciated her acknowledgement that she had not taught a pupil like A in her teaching career. Although appreciative of the input from R in class she would have preferred more time for reflection with the support teacher. She commented, "I feel that R was given a lot of time working with the children but I do not feel we had enough time to sit down and discuss and talk about things."

Although A progressed in class under the care and supervision of his teacher, he responded differently when he was in less structured settings and there were ever-increasing reports about him fighting. The headteacher had contacted social services and support was provided for A who enjoyed the opportunities, which were afforded him by this work. He spoke respectfully about the workers. He enjoyed going swimming and doing things that previously he had not been able to do. He displayed difficult behaviour however, when invited to participate in group work organised by social workers.

6.6.14 The parents

The changes in relation to A's behaviour were confined to school. His mother considered that he "just puts on an act for R in school" and his father believed that the school was too soft with him. The headteacher noticed that A's parents had become more trusting of the school because of the Solution Oriented work. She commented that she thought the parents thought highly of the work being done. Although A's parents were respectful of the work being done, they did not get fully involved. At the time when A's mother agreed to be interviewed about how she perceived the Solution Oriented work A was in trouble in the community. She said, "He just won't listen. We tell him not to go around with the ones who get him into trouble, but he does not listen to me or his father." She was fearful that A's behaviour would lead to him being taken into care and yet seemed powerless to help him stay away from those who influenced him. The difficulties which the family faced, were extreme and it seemed that A's future in mainstream school was less than secure. At meetings, which were convened by Social Services it was obvious that A and his parents valued reports in the Golden Book. With A's permission, the Golden Book was shown to senior social workers at official meetings. A's story of success in school reflected on his parents best efforts to look after their son. However, it was recognised by other agencies that A needed more than a school-based intervention. His behaviour was putting him at risk and his parents required mores assistance.

As the concerns of the professionals increased in relation to A's safety, he became less inclined to read the Golden Book. He explained to R and her colleague that "he had lost the plot."

6.6.16 Postscript.

A was eventually excluded from primary school for a violent incident. His secondary schooling was not in mainstream. He was eventually received into local authority care.

6. 7 Case Study 6: W at Brownlee School

W, aged seven lived with his father who had been given custody of his son after his parents divorced. W attended Brownlee Primary School, which is located in a deprived area of a large town where there is a high rate of unemployment. At weekends W lived with his mother, her partner, and his stepsister. W's father who is unemployed had a military background and was a reservist in the Territorial Army. He described himself as a strict disciplinarian who ran an organised home for his child. Although he acknowledged that his son's behaviour caused difficulties for the school, Mr. T thought that W was sometimes unjustifiably labelled a bully.

6.7.1 'Problem' behaviour and its meaning: the headteacher's perspective

Mrs. F, the headteacher was worried about complaints from parents of other children about W's behaviour. She had written in support of her application for support, "I would be grateful if Behaviour Support could be provided as a matter of urgency as W's behaviour is now becoming increasingly violent and very hard to control. A variety of behaviour strategies has been tried but to no great avail." The headteacher believed more should have been done during his pre- school years:

> He obviously had massive problems. He came to me in primary one with all these
> problems with no support agency involved. I tried to get him involved with the
> Child and Family Clinic but they had such a caseload. I really don't think he had
> been served terribly well before coming to school.
>
> (Headteacher)

She had applied for assistance from the educational psychologist, the learning support teacher and a home- link worker. The headteacher thought the home link worker would help W's father with his parenting skills and believed that, had the home - link worker not left, there might have been positive change. She believed that that W might be confused:

> When he is with his mother it may be that she has a different way of handling him
> and then he returns to his dad and it may be different. Then coming to school it
> was different again.
>
> (Headteacher)

A meeting was held at the Behaviour Support unit before the summer holidays in order to plan for the next term. The headteacher, depute principal psychologist, educational psychologist, and the behaviour support team were present. W's parents were not present. The class teacher was not present. The headteacher explained that as it was near the end of term, a different teacher would be in place next term. This teacher was not present. During the meeting the possibility that W had been affected by the separation of his parents was discussed. Although she tried to engage with W's father Mr. T, the headteacher admitted that the relationship between him and the school staff was strained. She tried introducing W and his father to different types of strategies, such as charts and awards. She had involved W and another pupil in a 'Buddy System', which involved a senior pupil looking out for W. Problems arose however when W would not cooperate with the older pupil. When the long-established strategies which aim to 'promote positive behaviour' in schools do not work, head teachers look to advice from those who are considered experts in the field of behaviour. Mrs. F noted:

> The psychologist gave time to the father at home and carried out an
> academic assessment. It was difficult to know where he was academically

*because of his behaviour problems. Father made it clear he did not want
Social Work involved. There was never any formal involvement of Social
Work.*

(Headteacher)

The headteacher believed that the school staff had to deal with a problem which was not of their making. When W was upset he lashed out at others. In the dining hall W had been involved in a violent incident in which a pupil was injured with a fork. Another pupil said W had bitten him. Mrs. F had excluded W from school, although she felt that this was something which she did as a last resort. She felt exclusion was counter productive. She was concerned however, that after a 'temper tantrum' W might run out of school, which could result in him being at risk and the school staff being blamed for negligence. She was aware that her staff faced difficulties if they intervened physically in order to avert a violent incident. At the suggestion of the headteacher, W's father agreed that he should remain in school during intervals He also agreed to accompany W to school later than the other pupils and take him home five minutes earlier. The headteacher explained that although the teacher who was to teach W the following term was inexperienced, she believed that she was both enthusiastic and skillful. She hoped that with assistance, W would make progress and that there would be a reduction in parental complaints.

6.7.2 The educational psychologist's perspective

There was no apparent organic reason for W's behaviour. Although he displayed impulsive behaviours his cognitive functioning was within the normal range. The educational psychologist's report suggested that different styles of parenting could impact on his behaviour. When W lived with his father he was expected to obey him. When he was at his mother's house at weekends, a more lenient regime existed. The importance of common rules and consistent expectations had been explained to Mr. W by the educational psychologist who suggested that Mr. W access support from the Social Work Department in relation to parenting strategies. Mr. W did not wish the involvement of the Social work Department. W liked to watch cartoons, which involved action figures in violent situations. The possibility that W also mimicked his favourite cartoon characters was discussed as he often explained his fighting with others as ' only playing'. It was agreed that adopting a Solution Oriented approach which involved not only the class teacher buts also the parent might prove helpful in strengthening links between the school and the home. Since the there was to be a replacement educational psychologist it was agreed that an approach, which focused on strengths might provide the basis for further assessment.

6.7.3 The class teachers' perspective

As the class teacher had not been present at the admissions meeting, R visited the school one week before the end of term. Ms. O had recently completed her probationary period as a teacher. Keen to assure the teacher of her support, the headteacher remained for most of the meeting. When asked her views about the prospect of teaching W, the teacher explained that despite being concerned, she would wait and see what happened. She seemed eager to convey to R and the headteacher that she wanted to do her best. The worried look on the face of Ms. O and her concerns about

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possibility that she might fail to cope, prompted R to emphasise the unique difficulties which teachers face when working with pupils who have SEBD. R said:

> *Teaching pupils who have SEBD is difficult, but you deserve to go on holiday*
> *confident that any concerns which you have, will be taken very seriously. If what we*
> *do doesn't' work out then we will go back to the drawing board. I just wanted to*
> *discuss with you about a particular approach which I use in my work and to ask*
> *your cooperation.*
>
> (R)

Adopting a Solution Oriented perspective invites people to become less certain. Consequently R, who was considered an experienced teacher of pupils with SEBD was not cast in the role of expert or advice giver. The headteacher explained that she had noticed how sensitively Ms. O worked with the children. She said she hoped that with support, Ms. O would be able to assist W in class. When the headteacher complimented her, the teacher smiled and admitted that she had been worried. Although she knew she would try to do her best she worried about how she would cope if things got difficult.

Teachers are not usually consulted about which classes they take. The entitlement of teachers to support is not clear especially in relation to pupils who have SEBD. None of the pupils who were referred to the Behaviour Support Service had Record of Special Educational Needs (RON), which is a means of assessing, planning, and delivering provisision for a child with special educational needs. It is a legally binding document, which ensures that a pupil's difficulties are recognised and monitored. Consequently educational provision for pupils with SEBD in Scotland varies and teachers are often left to cope without specialised support from teachers who have experience of SEBD. Ms. O agreed that she would prefer to settle her class at the beginning of term in order to get to know W better. She thought that the long holidays and a 'fresh start' with a new teacher might be beneficial. It was agreed that R and the teacher would meet after the holidays

The support given to Ms O, from Behaviour Support was two one-hour sessions per week. There was no extra staffing in terms of a classroom assistant. The headteacher explained that she was willing to cover for her when the support teacher and the class teacher had their planning meetings. Paradoxically support for the teacher could have contributed to an already stressful situation, as she seemed anxious about the headteacher taking her class. The teacher worried about 'lost' teaching time.

> *He can be restless. If he does not have his pencil he will wander about looking for*
> *one. Sometimes he takes taking a person's pencil and says that he had just wants*
> *a loan of it. If the child says 'No' to him he is apt to fly off the handle. That's when it*
> *can get serious as he is a big boy and he gets very moody. If I say, 'that is a wrong*
> *thing to do W you must say sorry', he sometimes just denies doing anything wrong*
> *and goes in a huff. It takes quite a bit of persuasion to get him back on task. By*
> *that time, I have lost a lot of teaching time and am getting a bit exasperated.*
>
> (Class Teacher)

W was more settled when he worked near the teacher in a small group. When he was expected to work independently on a task, his behaviour was troublesome. He called out to his teacher. If he did not get immediate attention, he shouted louder. Instead of working he flicked objects at other children and then had a chat with them. Although he did not like to correct mistakes, the teacher noted that

after moaning, W usually did as he was asked. Often he asked her for help even when he was capable of doing the work. If he were unsure about his work he would say that he lost his pencil:

> *I think that W lacks confidence in social situations which result in his impulsive and blustery behaviour. He is unaware of his own strength. When the other children say "No that is not fair," he goes in a huff or else he lashes out at them. He finds it difficult to accept teacher criticism. He responds well to peer praise and teacher praise and is very proud of his achievements.*

> (Class Teacher)

Ms. O worried about W's reputation in school:

> *His relationship with the other children has not greatly improved. Some parents are continuing to voice their concerns about the behaviour of W in relation to others. The headteacher asked that W come to school about ten minutes after the bell*

> (Class Teacher)

Although he was popular with some pupils, he quarreled when he was expected to share or when he was not a leader in a game. The children thought he was bossy and he sometimes failed to own up when he had done something wrong. When she asked W to keep to a plan he seemed to forget and was not able to stick to it. Vigilant about the possibility that W might hit someone, the teacher found it difficult, "watching and thinking what is going to happen if he disappeared for a minute. I always have to keep my eye on him. He is uncontrollable really."

6.7.4 Listening for exceptions; focusing on strengths; enlisting support

R explained that the approach which was to be adopted would involve discussion with the teacher, W and his father about those times when they saw W behave in ways that differed from the "problem saturated account." It was explained to Ms. O that the Solution Oriented conversations would form the basis of the Golden Book, and would celebrate the strengths and competencies of all concerned. The possibility of Ms. O meeting with W's father was discussed and the teacher agreed to remain in school at the end of the day so that she could participate in the Solution Oriented work. Payne (2000 p129) suggested that in order to redress power imbalances in a conversation questions should be transparent in "form and intention." He also noted, "I must utilize my inevitable power position to ask questions which among other functions promote my disempowerment in relation to the person." W and his father were not present at the first meeting with the class teacher. R wished to convey to the teacher that she respected the individual and collective strengths of those involved in the situation. She explained to Ms. O that she would speak with her as if W and his father were present. This admission caught the interest of the teacher and it seemed that she appreciated that there was an attempt on the part of R to work respectfully not only with the headteacher, but also with the class teacher, the parent and W. R asked for permission to write about those times when the teacher noticed W work well and behave respectfully in class. Ms. O smiled and was enthusiastic about the idea of rescripting a different story of W. The following excerpt illustrates how R and the teacher explored exceptions to the problem:

> Ms. O: *It can be difficult to get through the work with W in class but you know he is likable. Although he fights with the other children he does not really argue*

with me. I think he trusts me and I like him very much although his impulsive behaviours are really difficult to manage.

R: *Tell me more about this trust that you sense.*

MS. O: *Well it is just that he likes to come over and show me his toys even though there is a school rule about bringing toys into the class. He just ignores rules but not in a bad way. He likes to let me know about the cartoons he enjoys. If allowed, he would chat all day to me about cartoons and Power Rangers.*

R: *I am impressed at how you have built this relationship with W in such a short Time. I really hope that we can build on your work and in a sense follow your lead so that we, his dad the headteacher and so on can work with you and learn from you.*

Permission was sought from the teacher to write her words so that they could be shared not only with W, but also with his father or other people whom W wished to be involved in the work.

6.7.5 Exploring a future when the problem is less dominant

The next part of the conversation with Ms O reflected a belief on the part of R that change is inevitable. There was an attempt to clarify in concrete terms, what it would be like in her class when W's behaviour had become less problematic and the teacher more assured about her unique qualities and skills. The teacher was invited to identify what would be the first sign that things were changing in relation to W behaving better in class. She said:

W, has been asked to come into class later than the others but just when we are about to sit on the carpet and do our news time he manages to cause a stir. `I had a wee chat with him about it and said look I will have a few minutes with you when the others are sitting down doing their work. He won't or can't seem to listen. I suppose that he would be coming in calmly, putting his bag under his desk, keeping his toy in the bag and come and join the others on the carpet.

(Class teacher)

R steered away from doling out advice to the teacher but rather reflected with her on her unique strengths as a communicator and a teacher, whilst at the same time acknowledging the difficulties that she faced. The teacher agreed that it would be useful to enlist the support of W's father in the solution building conversations with W and R. The first entry in the Golden Book read:

Dear Mr. R
This is a very important book. I hope W and you will enjoy reading it. It is about W at school. His teacher said she would like to write stories about W coming to school safely, working well and listening carefully. I heard his teacher say that W often says kind words and he enjoys telling her all about his special toys. She also said that he loves to draw. I hope that soon this book will be full of good stories about W at school. I hope that you will enjoy reading these stories.

(R)

6.7.6 Watching for strengths; documenting an alternative story of W in class

R was introduced to Primary 3 as a visiting teacher to their class who would sometimes work with different groups. Ms. O asked R to sit at the teacher's desk and watch how well the children in Primary 3 worked. W sat beside a group of pupils who were expected to finish three tasks. The teacher explained to the children that if someone they could put up their hand and ask R, as she

would be happy to assist them. Ms. O explained that she had to hear the Blue Group reading and should not be disturbed. W talked loudly. When his teacher said "Shh, Shh, W", he immediately left his seat and went to her and said "I cannae dae my work." She gently pointed out that he had done the first sum correctly and he could do the rest of his work in the same way. He then said "Oh no I just can't dae it." Ms. O then suggested that he get help from R who was helping another child E.

W came over to R, placed his work before her and said, "I can't dae this look." R explained that when she had finished with E she would be happy to help W. W smiled, sat down and grabbed a yellow crayon from another pupil B who said, "That is not fair." W replied, "It is fair I need the yellow crayon." B worked without the yellow crayon. W spoke loudly for the remainder of the time looking around him, shouting out to his teacher "Miss O, I cannae dae this work." R suggested that when W returned the yellow crayon to B she would be happy to see if she could help him. W returned the crayon to B and said, "Sorry B." B replied, "That's O. K. W." R put up her hand in order to get the teacher's attention and asked if W might sit near her to complete his work. While W moved his work near the teacher's desk, R checked with the teacher about the class rules about working safely and respectfully:

R: *Can you remind me about your class rules Ms O? I know you care about pupils doing
             their best work and sitting safely.*

Ms. O: *Oh yes I like to make sure that we sit safely, no swinging on the chairs because I really
             care about the children being safe*

R: *And the work Ms O. How is to be done?*

Ms. O: *Oh I think you will see that W does his very best work. I really care about that
             because I like to see that everyone does their best and we all help one another
             in this class.*

R explained to W that she would write the rules so as not to forget them. R then asked W's permission speak to him after he had completed his work about what he was good at doing in school and what he liked about it. W said yes. She then asked if Ms. O and W would like her to write about how well W did his work. The class teacher said, "I would like that very much". W smiled broadly at R and the teacher. He said, "I will dae it good and all my friends too can read it, and you and everybody".

Before W settled to work he smiled at his teacher and said, "This will be a great story." His teacher said "Good W, good," and continued with her work. R left her pencil case beside him and explained that if he wished to borrow a pencil, a sharpener or a coloured pen, she preferred to hear him say, "Please Mrs. M may I borrow your pencil?" If R was using the pencil she would say to W, "Well of course you may have it after I have finished using it W." R also explained to W that she liked pencils, pens, and sharpeners to be put back into the pencil case, as these were the things that she used to do her work. She said that she would be busy writing about how W worked in class and she would try to write very carefully. W then worked on his tasks. After successive borrowing and requests of the following type, "Please may I borrow your sharpener and your pencil Mrs. M?" to which R replied either "Certainly you may have it W" or 'Well of course after I have finished using it W", W finished his work to a very high standard. After completion, W wished R to correct his work. R explained that as

she was a visiting teacher and that it was important that she waited until Ms. O finished hearing the reading group. She told W that she had written a story about how he had worked so well and spoken so kindly to her. Then she asked W if he wanted her to read the story in the class or read it later with his teacher. W said he wanted to hear the story in class so that his friends could hear it too. He wanted Mrs. J, the assistant headteacher to hear it. R said that she would leave a copy of the story for the depute headteacher. The class teacher joined W and R who read:

> Today I visited Ms O's class and I was asked to help W with his work. I noticed that he tried very hard to do his best work. He remembered to say, "Please may I borrow yourpen R?" Sometimes, when he was not able to get the pen because R was using it; he remembered to wait until she had finished. When he saw that she was busy writing he still remembered to put up his hand to let her know that he wanted to speak to her. I think that Ms. O will be proud and happy to know that W worked well and behaved ina way that was kind and safe. I know that Ms. O cares about all the pupils in her class being safe and working well.
>
> (R)

As the words were being read to the teacher, it was evident to R and the class teacher that the other children who, by this time were tidying up seemed to be listening carefully. The teacher said, "I am delighted that W worked so well and behaved so kindly. I think that his dad, the headteacher, and Mrs. J the depute headteacher will be delighted to read this story.'

When asked if he would like a special book in which there were many stories about how he worked well in school and listened carefully, W beamed and said "O yes! all aboot me." He chose golden paper to cover his book instead of other colours, which were on offer. After choosing the **Golden Book** he then chose the pen, which he wished R to use for story writing. The following excerpt showed how important it was to W that thee accounts would only focus on his strengths.

W: *The teacher said I can dae well.*

R: *I know that W.*

R: *W, who else will like hearing good stories about you in school?*

W: *My dad.*

R: *May I ask your dad to come and hear these good stories?*

W: **No bad ones?**

R: *No W only good stories and Ms. O said that she would like to speak to your dad and you about the stories. Tell me what you think about your dad hearing how you manage to do well?*

W: *I think it will be good my special Golden Book.*

R: *What do you think your dad will say when he hears about your good stories?*

W: *Good keep it up W.*

R: *What about Ms. O what do you think she will say ?*

W :   *Oh W excellent.*

Conscious that W seemed to want reassurance that his father was to hear only happy stories he was invited to the meetings, which took place after school. It was assumed that Mr. T had read the first

page of the Golden Book, which created the framework for subsequent conversations, which would document an alternative story of W in school.

6.7.8 'Problem' behaviour and its meaning: the parent's perspective

W was very different both in appearance and in personality to his father. Above average height, rounded with fair curly hair, W enjoyed talking about Disney cartoons and Power Ranger action toys, which were his current preoccupations. Mr. T valued his training for the Territorial Army and encouraged his son to be punctual and organised. He appeared reticent when speaking with teachers about his son's behaviour and reported that he had no trouble with W at home. He had supported the school by advising his son to keep the school rules. He had said to W, "If they say ye have tae dae your work. Ye have tae dae your work." Although Mr. T's advice to his son in relation to school could be interpreted as adopting a position of subservience, it seemed to R that the professionals were in the presence of someone who was not submissive. Mr. T spoke at all times in the vernacular and although R respected his fidelity to a way of speaking which is valued in the world of Scottish poetry and literature, her conversations with him were conducted in 'professional mode' as was the language of all the school staff. Mr. T said he was concerned that W was beginning to gain a reputation as a bully because of his aggressive outbursts. He understood his son's behaviours as "messing aboot" a phrase, which is commonly taken to describe trivial behaviours. He said "Basically he jist couldnae sit doon fur five minutes tae dae his work... He wis jist getting up and messing aboot." Mr. T seemed to lack the supports that many parents of young children take for granted. Generally, the parents who collected the children from school were mothers, some of whom had complained to the headteacher about W. Angered by this, Mr. T considered that the complaints were not wholly justified and considered that his son was being blamed. Puzzled as to why the educational psychologist and a support worker had visited their home he said, "Well I never really had any difficulties wi' him. Aye he is OK wi' me because if he is told to dae something he jist does it." The headteacher had hoped that the intervention from a home – link support worker and advice from the educational psychologist would have helped Mr. T and W gain skills which would help W in relation to school. The intervention of the support worker did not last because of staff shortage. Mr. T had then agreed with the suggestion that W come later to school than the other children and that he remain in the school at playtimes in order to avoid getting into further trouble. He was concerned however, that W was acquiring a label.

> When he was in primary one and then primary two. It seemed tae me that
> anything that went wrang it wis him that done it. Even though he wasn't even there.
> He always goat intae trouble. He wis tarred wi' that brush, you know whit Ah mean
>
> (Parent Mr. T)

Mr. T explained that his approach at home was disciplined but acknowledged that W's experience at his mother was probably different.   .

> When he was staying at his mum's, he was getting into trouble when he was out
> playing. I couldn't really see what he was doing because I don't go doon there.
>
> (Parent Mr. T)

R complimented Mr. T for his commitment to W and asked if he would agree to visit the school so that some work could be done with R. When it was explained to Mr. T that the work would involve working

with the teacher to examine when W did well at school and build on his successes, he seemed to relax.

6.7.9 Noticing exceptions: building on strengths; exploring a hopeful future

When Mr. T first met with R and the class teacher he seemed more reserved than his son who sat happily between his teacher and his father. W asked whether his dad had bought him a Scooby Doo video to which his dad replied, "Aye but you will see it after your homework. Adopting a Solution Oriented perspective offered many opportunities for R to compliment Mr. T on what he was already doing which was useful in helping the school work towards a solution. The teacher said sometimes W did not always finish his work in class and Mr. T explained in order to get him to do his work he just said, " That's your homework W, and you have to get it done before you watch the telly." W smiled broadly and told everyone that after his homework he watched Scooby Doo. The teacher wondered what W would think about having a Scooby Doo chart on which would be a reminder of the tasks which he had to complete each day. W agreed that this would help him and he was keen to start using it the next day. The teacher assured him she would make one that night.

Social constructionists like Gergen (1991) argue that participation with others in collective conversations helps to form an individual's sense of self. Solution Oriented therapists such as Furman and Ahola (1992 p91) engaged in conversations which sought to explore preferred futures which they claimed, "invite hope… and provide the inspiration for generating solutions." The next series of questions aimed to create a space for W to tell the adults about his particular preferences with regard to his homework completion. The use of future oriented questioning helped the adults get a clearer picture of what W wished for:

R: *So I believe you are pleased with his work when he sits at the table and completes it?*
Mr. T: *Aye*
R: *W, which words will you like hearing your dad says when you finish your work well?*

W: *Well "Excellent," like Ms. O does, and "Have a packet of crisps W."*

R: *Well I don't know about the crisps W, but what about those words that W likes to hear such as "Excellent"*
Mr. T: *Aye OK and sometimes a bag of crisps after his dinner, but no always.*

R asked W for permission to write about how he intended to do his homework and his preferred way of being treated on the successful completion of this work. A useful aspect of this questioning from R's perspective is that it placed W's behaviour in an interactional context and gave him space to expand on how the adults could take small steps in order to better understand how W liked to be treated. Conscious of Mr. T's reserve, the amusing conversation about crisps and kind words helped weave the conversation towards aspects of W's behaviour that had given cause for concern. The notion of safety in school was explored and Mr. T and W agreed that the school rules, which were about keeping pupils safe, were fair. Permission was asked to write about how Mr. T showed that he cared about W being safe en route to school. Similarities between the expectations of the teacher and W's dad were highlighted. W nodded in agreement that they both wanted him to be safe and do well in school.

6.7.10 Negotiating preferred futures: documenting different stories of W

When asked to describe his life when the problem was solved Mr. T spoke in terms of not having to come up to the school to hear complaints. Conscious of the usefulness of building a collaborative approach, R asked if the teacher if she could share her vision of what the first steps of her 'miracle' would look like so that W, his dad and R could work with her to make it happen. W listened attentively and gave permission to R to document the teacher's account. The class teacher said that she would know that W was doing well at school when, each morning, he came into class in a calm way, put his bag under his desk and joined the others. She said that he would not have his toys hidden in his pockets. W smiled and took from his pocket a small power ranger and said "I will keep them in my bag Ms O." The following excerpt in the Golden Book summarises the collective responses of Mr. T, W and Ms. O:

> *Every morning W's dad takes him to school. He holds his dad's hand because his dad wants him to be safe. He knows that it is only on a Monday that the children are allowed to take a toys to school. His teacher said that instead of chatting to her when he comes into class, she likes him to smile at her. She would smile at him while he is putting his coat on the hanger. He knows he has to walk very quietly because the teacher is listening carefully to the other children who are on the carpet. She said, "I am pleased when W opens the door puts his bag under the table, smiles quietly to me, and then goes to hang his coat, and sits in his special place. I care about him doing his best work and being safe. W said "I like sitting quietly and listening to my teacher and the children speaking quietly about their stories. Ms. O will know I am listening because I am sitting quietly hearing the boys and girl's stories. My dad will like these stories.*
>
> <div align="right">(R)</div>

There is evidence of repetition in the stories in the Golden Book which assisted W in terms of creating a predictable framework for him in class. It was important that to reassure W that the teacher and headteacher would help him to carry out his plan and that he could tell them if he faced difficulties. Subsequent entries in the Golden Book testified to his success:

> *W came into class, put his bag under the table and sat on the carpet. W came into gym very quietly and had an excellent morning. He was very good at dancing.*
>
> <div align="right">Ms. O</div>

The class teacher, so pleased at his success wrote to Mr. T, "Dear Mr. T, W came into class quietly and did his work well. He is a lovely boy. Mr. T responded "W came home watched his cartoons, took off his school stuff went out to play and then came in as it was too cold and had a good day." J. T.

Ms. O also used the Golden Book to confirm arrangements and invited other members of staff to notice W's efforts. The depute headteacher wrote in the Golden Book about his good work. When a supply teacher mistakenly used the Golden Book as a Behaviour Book and wrote a negative comment about W, Ms. O sought advice and removed the negative entry from the book. She explained to the supply teacher how to use the book effectively. Mr. T attended the school each week for six weeks and seemed to relax as the stories of W in school became more positive and his unique contribution to the success of the Golden Book acknowledged. The classteacher and Mr. T developed a working relationship, which focused on a sharing of information about how W learned. Mr. T also shared his knowledge of army training with R and the teacher. W seemed very proud of his father's special skills. Mr. T did not make many entries in the Golden Book but he read it regularly and

listened very carefully to the words of the teacher. The teacher made W a special Scooby Doo Task Sheet on which he placed a counter when he had finished his tasks. W gave permission for R to write the story of his success at completing his work in the Golden Book.

> *W likes the Scooby Doo chart that his teacher made for him. He said when he is finished his work the teacher will see him putting up his hand. If she is busy with another child. W said 'I will just wait'*

(R)

Within a period of three months the teacher had written, "W sat quietly and completed all his work. He did not get out of his seat. He wrote beautifully."

6.7.11 Maths Group: noticing exceptions, enlisting support

R agreed to work with a Maths Group of which W was a member. This aspect of the work was influenced by the ideas of White and Epston (1990) who emphasised the importance of 'audience' for the retelling of 'revised' stories of those people who came to therapy. They believed that it was through their relationships with significant people in their real life that self-discoveries made in therapy would continue. The group work was also influenced by the ideas of Vygotsky who proposed that effective learning occurs when children are involved in 'mediated activities' shared with an adult or more competent peers. The concept of 'scaffolding' (Bruner, 1975) is based on the work of Vygotsky, who proposed that with an adult's assistance, children could accomplish tasks that they ordinarily could not perform independently. Scaffolding is a process in which students are given support until they can apply new skills and strategies independently (Rosenshine and Meister, 1992). When pupils learn new or difficult tasks, they are given more assistance. As they begin to demonstrate task mastery, the assistance or support is decreased. Thus, as the students assume more responsibility for their learning, the teacher provides less support

In conversation with each other, Ms. O and R made it explicit to the pupils about their preferred way of working with groups of pupils. This also involved exploring with the children about how to work in ways that were respectful and safe. R discussed with the class teacher that in the eventuality of pupils 'forgetting' a rule, the class teacher might request that the person sit away from the group and return when they remembered to work well and sit safely. The use of a future oriented language (when) rather than the conditional (if) conveyed positive teacher expectation. Forgetting instead of disobeying rules opened up possibilities for discussion about how people learn differently. After the completion of the work, W and the others were encouraged to speak respectfully about how others worked in the group. W delighted in hearing the words of the children and asked if their words could be written in his Golden Book. The teacher enthusiastically publicised the efforts of the pupils to their headteacher and others. The children freely shared their stories with Ms. O who documented them in the Golden Book. Accounts such as "N shared with W and said she thinks his drawing will win the competition" were written in the Golden Book.

Although W's behaviour changed in class, in the corridor, the dining hall and the gym hall he did not go out at playtimes and spent his time drawing at the head teacher's office. He seemed content with the situation for most of the time. When Ms. O asked if he could be allowed out to play, headteacher

agreed but suggested that given the lack of staff in the playground, he might face difficulties. His father agreed that it would be better that he avoided trouble by remaining in school at playtimes. Ms O encouraged the other children to continue their support of W in class and reminded them that when they were out playing she wished to hear stories that were about them being kind. Eventually when it was decided that W should go into the playground he was surrounded by supporters

An entry in the Golden Book read:

> S said she was happy when W asked her to play with him. She said. "He stands
> in the line and smiles and even when others are pushing to be first he stays safe
> and is my friend too…W said I like my stories about me playing good. R wants to
> know if she may read his lovely story to the headteacher. W said YES and his
> friends clapped hands.

(R)

As W's behaviour became less challenging in class there became less need for the support service to be involved. Input was reduced to one session per fortnight. At the end of the academic year it was explained that the work which had been done with Ms O, could be continued with W's next teacher and there was an opportunity for the class teacher and R to meet with W's mother so that she too could become involved in the process. W's new teacher continued to use the Golden Book and meet with Mr. T who said that he would prefer to have a meeting once per term with R in case of any recurrence of the problem.

6.7.12 Feedback: the headteacher

The headteacher believed that the Solution Oriented work helped W become more reflective:

> After a very short interval doing this work he was less aggressive.
> If I spoke to him and said," Now that was naughty why did you do that?"
> Before, he would just shrug his shoulders he really just did it. But now he
> answered to it. So following on from that he was less prone to doing the
> initial act.

(Headteacher)

To the headteacher shrugging shoulders was considered an inappropriate way for a child to respond to an adult. It seemed to her that involving W, his father and the class teacher in conversations about respectful ways of speaking and behaving seemed to work. After being involved in the work, W was seldom sent to her and that impacted on the smooth running of the school. The headteacher believed that other members of staff, including those who worked in the dining hall, began to see W in a new light:

> He is much more respectful. If he did anything wrong and got a telling
> off he just nodded and did not blame other people for a start. At the dining
> hall, for instance he waits for me. Before this he would disappear. Now he
> comes out of his own bat and says, "I am here. Shall I wait on you?"

(Headteacher)

Conscious that in the past he had acquired a 'bad name' she was delighted that this was changing and admitted that in the past he had been the focus of blame:

> He was no longer labelled. If anyone fell, they did not automatically turn and
> point to W. His peer group changed. Yes it was amazing. Before that, I would
> have had parents up but the label was taken from him.

(Headteacher)

The headteacher recognised that W's progress in school related directly to his ability to mix with the other children. She considered that as a result of her involvement in the work, the class teacher influenced the way in which others in the school responded to W. She believed that not only had the class teacher "gained immeasurably" from the cooperative work but the depute headteacher who was an experienced teacher had been," amazed at the work…A joy to watch. She thought of it as teaching time for her. As the story of W changed she commented that he became kinder towards the other children and he was much more respectful. She said, "He is happier now because he is getting that respect back." The headteacher also noticed that there were changes in relation to Mr. T. She noted that he seemed more relaxed coming to school.

> *There has been great improvement in relation to the father. We had great*
> *difficulty in getting dad to know that we are here to help your child. He*
> *was very much on the defensive and would not come in. He was often*
> *quite upset himself and eventually we got R in. That has been wonderful.*
> *He comes in smiles to us and talks to us. That has improved.*

(Headteacher)

Relationships between professionals and parents are often fraught with difficulty because of a lack of shared understanding about each other's intentions. It seemed that the relationship between the headteacher and Mr. T was now mutually respectful. She firmly believed that had there been sufficient attention paid to her concerns at an earlier stage things would not have reached the stage where she was obliged to exclude W from school. She did not approve of exclusion and tried every avenue open to her to maintain him in school:

> *To put the child out is a failure on my part. From a child's point of view*
> *no- one needs to be put out. Sometimes it brings it home to the parents who*
> *sometimes go around with their eyes shut.*

(Headteacher)

6.7.13 The educational psychologist

Due to staff changeover the Psychological Services, though supportive of the approach and available for advice were not directly involved with the Solution Oriented work. The reports however indicated that W's behaviour was more settled in class and that input from Behaviour Support could be decreased.

6.7.14 The class teacher

Ms. O noticed that W was calmer in class and that he played better with the other children. She was confident that he would listen to her. Previously his responses seemed unpredictable and volatile. He continued to have what she termed 'silly days' but they were managed differently. Aware that he had been sometimes unjustifiably blamed, she commended his efforts and became W's ally:

> *Well now I never have to worry that he is hitting another child. I can see that he*
> *has been labelled in the past. Often if there was an incident and he hasn't meant*
> *to do it because he is a big boy. He hasn't meant to push, just been in a rush to do*
> *something. That has changed and also his work is better. He still shouts out that is*
> *still a problem that has to be worked on and his aggression has disappeared too.*
> *He is not destructive any more.*

(Class Teacher)

Ms O was pleased to hear that his reputation in the community had also changed and that parents who had previously been cautious about their children playing with W, were more accepting of him. She considered that the Solution Oriented approach was effective, but that it was difficult to sustain. When asked about what she was doing differently now the teacher said:

> *Watching what I said was quite important. It was difficult not to point him out and not to even when he was being good so it was more watching my words and making sure that the story was good because you do tend to change after you have been away from the Behaviour Support for a while you need to be brought back into the way of thinking because you get used to saying, "Stop that" and "Do that." I had to watch that I did not do that.*
>
> (Class Teacher)

When she began to see W as high-spirited, the teacher behaved differently towards him and wanted to support this 'good story' of him. She would have liked to see more resources available to help W in the playground but accepted that remaining at the office kept him out of trouble. Keen, however to challenge a view of W as troublesome, the teacher had stood up for him in the staff room:

> *There is still an attitude in the school because they have seen him outside the office and because he maybe shouts out at people, you hear " Oh I would worry about having him in my class but I have tried to change that in the staff room and said 'Oh he's been really good.'*
>
> (Class Teacher)

Pleased that the children had changed their opinion of W she noted, "if there was something to be blamed on it would be on W but now they like him and there is a real change." The teacher said as a result of the work, she had begun to change her way of working with the other children:

> *I think with every child you thought more of working round and saying the good story. Looking at when they were doing right things because there were other children who were quite chatty ...I think it is completely connected. It changed thinking in me. Otherwise you would just carry on with the old teacher thing like saying, "Sit down carry on with your work"*
>
> (Class Teacher)

Initially, the teacher believed that R would, "come in and give me wee tips, provide charts and a specialised programme, organise things and have solutions." Her view of being involved in the Solution Oriented work differed from her original expectations:

> *She kept saying, "No it is you that is the responsible one. It is you that is the significant person". It was quite nice she was giving responsibility over to me rather than some people come in and say. 'Right Oh I'll do it and take over so it was quite nice that I was given the power to do that. Just respectful all the time, respectful of my position with the children.*
>
> (Class Teacher)

Working from a Solution Oriented perspective meant R attempted to distance herself from the role of expert and although aware that initially the teacher expected to be given a ' list of strategies' was keen to learn from and with the teacher about working effectively with W: The teacher described the work as:

> *Fully collaborative... It was totally all working together. After the conversations...I often experimented, trying different things timing him running across the playground, playing different games. Introducing the work board where he would put counters on to show that he had completed a task, I kept experimenting, trying different things.*
>
> (Class Teacher)

W was not excluded from school while he was in Ms O's class. As W's behaviour improved, his class teacher became more eager for him to be included in the playground activities and was pleased when he was allowed out to play at the morning interval. She encouraged the children to tell her stories of people who played safely and well. The pupils subsequently became involved in recounting each other's stories of playing well. W's good stories were written in his Golden Book. Ms. O considered that the process as valuable. She recognised that her words in the Golden Book were had a positive effect on W.

6.7.14 W and his parent

Before being involved in the Solution Oriented work Mr. T admitted that he had found it difficult to discuss his son's behaviour with school staff. From his point of view they over- reacted to W whom he said was just 'messing aboot' He described his impressions on first meeting the Behaviour Support teacher as being curious rather than apprehensive.

> *When I first came along, I was curious to see what it was all aboot. I just settled into it. It was just basically how we can improve his attitude towards things and how we get him tae stop messing aboot.*

>
> (Parent Mr. T)

Although claiming to be curious about the process Mr. T seldom questioned R and the class teacher. He listened carefully to them, and any suggestions, which were made by the teacher, were carried out. He had a strong belief that he was on the right track. From his perspective, W should obey those who are in a position of authority. He often referred to the school staff as *they* and was of the opinion that W should be trained to do as he was told.

> *And if they say to do your work, you have to do your work. that's what I had been telling him before R came in. He was getting better and better because he was understanding me.*
>
> (Parent Mr. T)

Given an opportunity to talk with the class teacher Mr. T began to appreciate the considerable skills, required of someone who managed a class of seven year olds. His respect for the class teacher was evident and it seemed he became less wary of professionals. Mr. T said not much had changed in terms of what he was doing but he thought that W was responding differently:

> *Well I am no daeing that much different. Just that I am telling him tae do normal things. He is doing them in a completely different way from whit he usually did. Ah don't need tae shout at him. He is calmer ootside. His attitude tae reading is changed.*
>
> (Parent Mr. T)

Mr. T became more involved in helping W with his homework was consistently punctual for meetings with R and the class teacher. He became more relaxed coming to the school and sought advice from the headteacher about other issues. It appeared that in responding to the changes in W resulted in him doing things a little differently. Although he was aware that W liked being praised, Mr. T claimed that he did this only on an occasional basis:

> *Aye he is mair respectful tae me. Ah noticed that he has changed that he likes listening now…and he likes being praised. But he never used tae. I think he wis pleased I think he likes all the attention…*

Ms O's voice was calm and quiet and W responded well to her. There was no request to Mr. T that he change his way of speaking to W but he admitted that he did do that:

> I used tae ask him ask him aboot twenty times tae dae something and now well I think I am different towards him. Things like patience and how to understand him, and to steer him in right directions, Well the way I actually talked to him, without shouting at him so that you would get," Ah well alright I'll go and do it."

Mr. T felt relieved that people knew that W had a problem and were not bullying him.

> Aye I felt alright because I knew that everybody knows that he had a problem and now no one would be picking on him now because they knew he had a problem.

Mr. T did not say what he believed the problem to be but he thought that specialised help had been required. He noticed that W was "developing his manners and he does sit mair quietly now. Aye because I praise him noo and again wi' his homework." It appeared that the **Golden Book** provided Mr. T with a structure for communicating his pride in W. He said:

> The Golden Book used to let me know, aye I read it every day, and aye I'm still doing it. I think I done quite good at that, well more or less aye me telling you what he was up to. I steered him in the right direction...In his mind he did know that there is a major change from what he wis.

Mr. T explained that his understanding of how W learned had undergone a change. The class teacher had explained about an appropriate use of calculators which influenced how Mr. T worked with W at home:

> Last night when he wis daein his ten times table An it wis like " Can I use a calculator?"Ah started showing him like two tens are twenty and he wis like, "Oh it is easy "Before Ah wid have said when he asked tae use the calculator. "Naw Jist go to your room and use yer pens."

Mr. T understood that his contacting R at the Behaviour Unit was not problematic. He said that if something transpired he could phone R. Neither Mr. T, nor the class teacher telephoned the base. He said, "R did a really good job working with him; it's no that I'm left in the dark." There was a deliberate effort to involve Mr. T in ways of working with the teacher and R where his expertise as a parent was highlighted and valued:

> She tells us what's been happening and we would try we would try and get a solution depending on what he is doing and what he is not doing. She would say something to me and then we would be like well that's a good idea try that or whatever.

It seemed that although Mr. T perceived the process as directional, he was aware of working as a team with R and the class teacher. When asked about his son's role in process he said "He sat and listened and talked, telling if it wis right or wrang. He wis always in the meetings." Mr. T explained his preferred approach to working with teachers in relation to behavioural or learning problems:

> Ye've goat tae listen tae two sides of the story and try tae get a solution tae the problem. Ah found they were OK. Ah found at least Ah wis getting there.

In the local context the phrase 'getting there' usually alludes to facing a struggle and winning. Mr. T's words suggested that involvement in the process, particularly his work with the class teacher had been something of which he was proud and he appreciated her efforts to help W be included in the playground. He did not approve of children being asked to 'stand in a corner' which possibly referred the fact that W waited at the Head teacher's office for his father who came to collect him earlier than the other pupils:

> *Well they kept him in at playtimes and things like that…. Oh you stand in that corner. He wisnae really part of a group, jist at the end of the day when Ah would go tae collect him, he would be at the headteacher's office and it wis " you did this you did that." Efter a while Ah got used tae it.*
>
> (Parent Mr. T)

He recalled his anger when W had been excluded from school and had complied with the request to take him home earlier in order to avoid further exclusions:

> *Well I wis angry… Because I've a tendency tae believe him before I believe anybody else. How did the other one not get expelled. ? The two o' them were messing aboot wi' forks (in the dinner hall) …They believed the other boy. My attitude tae exclusion is it depends oan the crime that wis done. It depends on how serious it wis. But no for weeks or anything.*

Mr. T who was usually reticent about his views was keen to explore his views on exclusion. He was convinced that the best solutions lie within the school and his advice to those in authority was:

> *They should all get the gither and hae a **wee** meeting and discuss aboot whit ye can dae tae try and solve it. Without getting ootside agencies in. Basically the only way tae solve the problem is tae get everyone tae gether.*
>
> (Parent Mr. T)

In conversation with W about his story of the Golden Book and what had changed it seemed that he did not want to look back on the past, with all its problems. His description of the present was cheerful. The following excerpt indicated that W's special qualities were more noticeable to his friends:

R: *What do you like doing best outside class?*
W: *Playing with my friends.*
R: *What do you play at with your friends?*
W: *We play at Tig and Hide and seek and football.*
R: *What do you like doing best when you are in class?*
W: *Daeing ma work and colouring in and daeing my maths. I am good at daeing maths and drawing*
R: *What makes you laugh W?*
W: *Watching Disney cartoons.*
R: *What else?*
W: *Yes when my pal says funny things.*

When he was asked to think back to when he was younger and things were different W's face looked glum and his story faltered which suggested that it had been a difficult time for him. In an effort to change the subject he suggested he should have gone for his lunch:

> *Before R came to visit me at school and people got annoyed because I was saying to J "Go back home or you are not getting a shot of my games. I should have perhaps had lunch before talking about my Golden Book.*

When working with children from a Solution Oriented perspective the present and the future are of greater significance than the past. It seemed to R that it would have been unproductive to pursue an examination of when W was 'in trouble' However before leaving he described the faces of the people when they were talking to him had looked cross. He said he did not like it when the people looked cross and that he felt a bit terrible.

R asked what he wanted to talk about before he went for lunch. He said he wanted to show R recent entries in his **Golden Book** and he beamed with pride when R's colleague complimented him on his Golden Book. He then spoke about working on his maths and cutting out at home the previous night:

> *My dad helped me with my maths and my cut Well I let him cut a wee bit of*
> *my picture and he helped me at drawing heads because I am not good at drawing*
> *heads but I am good at drawing.*

<div align="right">(W)</div>

6. 7.15 Postscript

W does not require Behaviour Support. His father continued to work with the teacher who used the Golden Book. He wanted support to be available if he faced problems again. Although Ms. O achieved success with W and the other pupils in her class and was commended by the headteacher and colleagues, she decided to leave the teaching profession.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION and ANALYSIS

7.1 Introduction

This study sought to explore the impact of adopting a Solution Oriented approach to six pupils who had been referred to a Primary Behaviour Support Service. By presenting the case study narratives individually, the nature of support to pupils with SEBD is shown to be more complex than many educational policies would imply. Through the lens of social constructionist inquiry, this study illuminated some of the tensions which exist for those educators who wish to work in socially just ways. Through the insights provided by this inquiry the notion that pupils are 'essentially' disruptive and that their parents are 'essentially' ineffective is contested. The data was analysed with reference to what Yin (1994) refers to as a theoretical proposition. Specifically, it was examined in the light of the postmodern social constructionist underpinnings of the approach with particular reference to assumptions about the social construction of identity, professional knowledge, power and social justice.

Pupils who do not conform to the demands of school are often assessed as SEBD and construed as in need of support. The powerful professions of psychiatry and psychology legitimate this assessment. White (1995a p 45) believed that professionals, such as teachers and therapists face a conflict in their challenge of dominant discourses of psychopathology and suggested that their work should "assist persons to challenge certain practices of power". In order to "undermine the privileged position of the therapist", White proposed that therapists should be encouraged to discover how the therapy process was experienced by their clients. The views of White (1995a) in the context of therapy resonate with those of Tomlinson (1982) with regard to the education of children who are assessed as having special educational needs. She argued that uncritical acceptance of professional expertise has resulted in the discourse of "benevolent humanitarianism". This study aims to discover whether adopting an approach which is informed by affirmative postmodern social constructionist ideas encouraged people to question the 'assumed expert knowledge ' to which White refers.

Social constructionism eschews notions of objective truths and challenges the legitimacy of the categorisation of people through a process of psychological assessment. Adopting a social constructionist approach also involves accepting that certain discourses are privileged and others are subjugated. Social constructionists, therefore persist in interrogation of that which is taken for granted in a social context, in the hope of illuminating those discourses which have previously been subjugated or marginalised. This study sought to explore the extent to which adopting a social constructionist approach to working with pupils assessed as having SEBD, affords professionals an opportunity to learn from, and with, those pupils and their parents.

Clendenin and Connelly (1994) argued that because of the relative isolation of teachers, time should be made available for the to converse and reflect with others. Ball (1994) maintained

that when teachers are discouraged from critically reflecting on their practice, they internalised a "common sense" view of the educational process, which, he believed served to marginalize those teachers who do question. Apple (1993) suggested that when teachers became more aware of their complicity in protecting the status quo they questioned official policy. He believed that by questioning official policies, teachers could contribute to the reconstruction of a more just educational system. Humes (2000 p 38) noted however that in the present educational climate teachers are not encouraged to ask 'why' questions or to criticise the education system. He believed that senior managers had a moral obligation to challenge policy makers to "live up to the ideals contained in policy documents".

This study sought to foreground the voices of those who are most involved with primary aged pupils who are at risk of exclusion from their primary schools. Although the official view about parental involvement in education is one which is given a high priority, it is generally accepted that there are certain groups of parents who are 'hard to reach'. Tomlinson (1981) contended that the phrase 'hard to reach' was a euphemism which described those working class parents whose cultural values differed from the dominant values of the school and for whom dialogue with school officials is often difficult. This study sought to illuminate the extent to which parental involvement in the Solution Oriented process challenged the 'taken for granted' assumption that parents of pupils who have SEBD are usually so caught up in their own problems that they do not have time to respond to the emotional needs of their children (Cooper et al 1994; Winkly 1996). Specifically there is an attempt to explore how the parents and children responded to an approach which was informed by affirmative postmodern ideas in relation to expert knowledge and socially just ways of working.

7.2 Role of the researcher

Lather (1996, p 540) suggests that adopting a postmodern perspective to the research process involves a continual questioning of "our taken- for- granted structures of intelligibility". This position resonates with that of the author whose understanding of education continues to be transformed by insights provided by postmodern and poststructuralist thinking. In order to validate the work, ideas from post-positive qualitative research in which the concept of validity is associated with trustworthiness and credibility was useful. It was essential that the research was content rich and that each area of the study was comprehensively covered. It was also important that the voices of the participants were heard. As noted in chapter one, Gitlin (1992) understood the notion of voice as being able to "go far beyond the exploration of issues and the opportunity to speak; it can be about protest". Through the research process, there was an attempt to create spaces for those voices which are usually silent to be heard. However, the researcher's relationship to the research and to the work could be considered a limiting factor. Given her involvement in both the work and the research required that the researcher face up to the uncertainty of her interpretations. Lenzo (1995) discussed the challenges which researchers face when they introduce their doubts into the research study and was of the

view that such doubts could be a source of strength. The role of a behaviour support teacher is not clear-cut and there is an implicit understanding that they act as advisors to parents, and consultants to teachers. Hence, their contribution to the lives of pupils, parents, and teachers could arguably be that of preserving the status quo in education. This study seeks to explore the extent to which adopting an approach, informed by affirmative postmodern ideas about power, language and social justice, may counter dominant notions about pupils with SEBD.

7.3 Aims of the research and research questions

Adopting a Solution Oriented approach to working with pupils with SEBD challenges the notion that language can ever be neutral and objective or that through language an underlying reality will be uncovered. Instead the position taken is that the language used will be constitutive of realities. The idea that a 'problem identity' is a social construction is an influential one in this study. The first section of the analysis examines the different perspectives of those involved in order to illuminate how the 'problem' behaviour on the part of the children affected the lives of those most closely involved with each child. The set of questions that guided the first part of the research study aimed to discover:

- what were the different perspectives on the problem?
- what was the effect of the problem on the lives of those most involved in the situation?
- what options were available to those who were involved in finding a resolution to the problem?

The second section of the analysis examines the extent to which involvement in the Solution Oriented process impacted on the participants. The extent to which the participants viewed the process as collaborative is critically examined in relation to the social constructionist assumptions that underpin the approach. The research questions, which guided this part of the study aimed to discover:

- what changed?
- to what extent was the process perceived as collaborative?
- which aspects of the intervention were valued and why?

The third section of the analysis explores the extent to which the educational response to pupils assessed as SEBD is linked to issues of social justice and social exclusion. Consideration is given to the extent to which involvement in the Solution Oriented process may offer a possibility of developing a more inclusive and socially just response to those pupils who are assessed as SEBD. Giroux (1997 p141) argued that schooling acts to produce and reproduce pupils according to a dominant value system which favours individualism and competition. He proposed that educators position themselves as "transformative intellectuals" which would involve them in dialogue with pupils instead of attempting to control them. As noted previously, pupils assessed with SEBD are often excluded from school. This can be understood as part of a process of civic exclusion. This section of the analysis explores the

extent to which adopting a Solution Oriented approach fostered dialogue between teachers and pupils who were at risk of being excluded from school.

The research questions which guided this part of study were:

- what are the differing perspectives on exclusion from school?
- to what extent did involvement in the process avert exclusion.
- what more should be done to support primary aged pupils who are at risk of exclusion?

The relationship between the micro and macro level of understanding was addressed in the study as it is widely accepted that the concept of SEBD is a socially constructed one. As indicated in chapter five Gale (1992) advised that a diagrammatic representation, in particular a Venn diagram is used so that there is a visual representation of relationships among different concepts. **Fig 7.1** represents the interconnectedness of themes which emerged during the research study.

Fig 7.1 Interrelated Themes

**Assessment of
pupils with
SEBD**
'Problem' behaviour and it's meaning
Power   Language
Expert Knowledge
Social Construction of
Identities
Language
Solution Oriented Approach
Social Justice Social Exclusion
Change Collaboration Co – working
Time for reflection
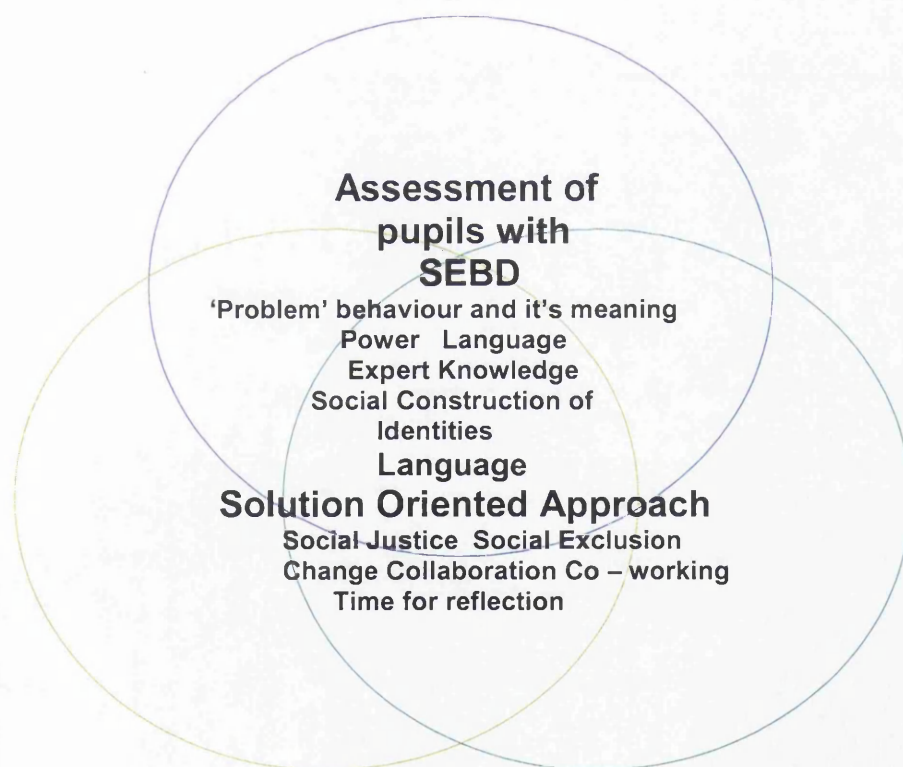
The interconnectedness of the various themes considered in this chapter is shown graphically in **fig 7.1**. These themes are briefly explained below and then addressed in greater detail in each section of the analysis.

The first section of the analysis deals with different perceptions about 'problem behaviour'. Describing the different perceptions led to an exploration of the relationship between professional discourse, power, educational responses and the social construction of identities.

The second section of the analysis explores how participants understood their involvement in the Solution Oriented process. Describing how participants understood their involvement in the process and how it impacted on their lives led to an exploration of the relationship between language, power, possibility and collaboration.

The third section of the analysis describes how participants understood the process of school exclusion. Consideration is given to the extent to which involvement in the Solution Oriented process fostered a dialogical approach to working in schools. This led to an exploration of the relationship between schooling, the preservation of the status quo and social justice.

7.4 'Problem' behaviour: differing perspectives

As noted in chapter one the alliance between the discourse of medicine, psychology and education was forged in the early twentieth century in order to detect and deal with children who were construed as 'sick' and or ' mentally defective. Through the process of psychological assessment the label SEBD is accorded to children. This has negative connotations for the children, their families and their communities. Ball (1990) noted how Foucault (1974, p171) argued that it was important for our societies:

> to criticise the working of institutions, which appear to be both neutral
> and independent; to criticise them in such a way that the political violence
> which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked.
>> (Foucault 1974, p171)

The notion of "unmasking" is germane to this study as the notion that there are neutral objective measures of assessing children as SEBD is contested. It is suggested that there is a relationship between the social construction of pupils as deficient and the social construction of the identities of 'effective' teachers, 'expert' psychologist and 'needy' parents. **Table 7.1** outlines how those most involved in the ' problem ' situation understood the behaviour .Their understanding of the problem is examined in relation to their positioning within the education system.

Table 7.1 Problem behaviour: different perspectives

L, Greenbank Nursery	L seemed to want to play uninterrupted.
Nursery Nurse	Nursery nurses believed L was outwith their control and described her behaviour as defiant. They thought she was bad mannered.
Nursery Teacher	L was described as wanting to 'set her own agenda' in the nursery. The teacher worried about the effect of the behaviour on the other pupils, the smooth running of the nursery and the stress caused to staff. Her efforts to involve L's parent had backfired.
Parent	L's mother felt that L's behaviour was uncontrollable. She relied on her parents to help take L to nursery and to go shopping. She felt powerless and anxious and at a loss about what to do. She avoided speaking to the staff.
Y Melfort School	Y said he tried hard to behave well but he could not help it when he fidgeted. Sometimes he could not remember instructions or where he left things. He wanted to do well at his new school and make friends.
Teacher	The class teacher described Y's behaviour as attention seeking and understood it in terms of 'robbing others' of her time' No other supports were available in school to help Y manage in class. The class teacher felt that having Y in class was 'hard work' and that there needed to be more support in class.
Depute headteacher	The deputy headteacher was concerned about the effect of Y's behaviour on other pupils. There was concern that without the support to which he had been accustomed in a unit setting, Y would find it difficult to manage at intervals and lunchtimes. No other options were offered to the school.

Parent	Y's mother described her son's behaviour as fidgety. She believed that Y had been 'tarnished' as a result of being sent to an SEBD unit when he was five. She felt blamed and ostracised. No other options were available to the parents. They visited the library to get information about Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/ HD)
H, Rowantree School	H loved being at school. He wanted friends. He often brought a soft toy to school and was eager to play in class and outside class. He sometimes thought it wasn't fair when he did not win and lost his temper. He often spoke in the language of cartoon characters.
Class Teacher	The class teacher described H's behaviour as 'assurance seeking.' She said it was hard work keeping him on task'. She was vigilant about his interactions with B who had also been assessed as having SEBD. No other option was suggested to the class teacher. Although a special needs assistant had been allocated to the class, there was insufficient time for joint planning.
Headteacher	The headteacher described H's behaviour as immature and attention seeking. She was concerned that he 'gave cheek' to the special needs assistant. She involved his mother in the school in the hope that she would get some insight into H's particular qualities. She recognised that he liked being at school. She was concerned that the teacher would find it stressful having to teach two pupils with SEBD in a class that also contained pupils who required additional support. No other option was suggested to the school.
Parents	H's parents believed that he had an undiagnosed medical condition. Which required a prescribe medication. H's parents were in contact with the medical profession and hoped that when H received the drug his behaviour would radically alter.
B Rowantree School	B liked being at school He did not like it if people cheated at football. He was good at playing football and adhered to the rules. He did not like being 'wound up' by H and would justify hitting H or anyone else on the grounds that they were deliberately winding him up. When faced with work that was challenging, he would say he was bored and not do it.
Class Teacher	The class teacher understood that B had a short temper She thought he had a good sense of fair play. She worried about the possibility of violence erupting between H and B, as the headteacher was the only non-class committed teacher in the school. She felt she had to be extra vigilant especially when the special needs assistant was not present. No other options were available.
Headteacher	The Headteacher was concerned about the welfare of the class teacher because of the presence of two children with SEBD in her class. She also worried about the possible escalation of their antagonistic behaviour. Grateful for the allocation of a special needs assistant she was concerned about how they spoke to the special needs assistant when the teacher was not present.
Parent	B's mother understood that her son felt anxious and upset after family upheaval. Although she worried about the level of disruptive behaviour, she did not feel that he merited referral to an educational psychologist. She felt despair when she heard that Behaviour Support would be involved as she associated their involvement with feelings of failure. She also connected the psychological assessment as labelling B as "crazy".
A, St. J's School	A said he lost his temper when other people 'noised him up'. This happened frequently, particularly when he felt that others ridiculed his family He did not like it when people called him names and he lost his temper and lashed out at the other children. In the playground he sometimes justified his fighting by saying he was 'only playing'.
Class teacher	The teacher said A's behaviour was unpredictable and violent. She was concerned that he looked pale and tired. He was often inattentive Although she encouraged him she was concerned that his reactions were so forceful that he could cause harm to others. Because he was constantly out of his seat the teacher had to be extra watchful as sometimes he hit other children. No other options were available to the class teacher.
Headteacher	The headteacher worried about A' safety after school. Concerned about his apparent inability to control his temper she supported him at intervals and lunchtimes. Initially no other service was involved with A and his family and there was a lack of community resources available.
Parents	A's parent's thought he behaved normally at home and in the community. They believed he was 'trying to act hard'. They also believed that the problem lay with A and the school and that the school should deal with him. They were opposed to becoming voluntarily involved with the Social Work Department as they considered that the involvement of this service would lead to the break- up of their family.
W, Brownlee School	W liked to play. He wanted friends and said that sometimes he was 'a little bit bad'. He liked to bring toys to school and played with toy figures instead of doing his work. When he fought he described it as "kid- on fighting" (pretend fighting).
Class teacher	The class teacher thought W was confused about what was expected of him in school. She did not construe his behaviour as deliberately bad. She was extra vigilant about the safety of other children and described the problem as 'hard work'. No other options were available to the class.
Headteacher	The headteacher had been concerned about W's behaviour for two years. She believed that living with his father from Monday to Friday and his mother at weekends resulted in inconsistent expectations. She had approached other agencies for help to 'to no avail'. She was concerned that W's behaviour could become uncontrollable. There had been one violent incident about which there had been parental complaints.
Parent	W's father described his behaviour as 'messing aboot' or 'carrying on'. He did not think that it was seriously disturbed. He said he did not experience difficulties at home. Although other agencies had been contacted there had not been a sustained involvement with W and his parent.

7.4.1 Psychological assessment of pupils as SEBD: "It's not my fault".

None of the children in the study described themselves as disturbed or behaviourally disordered. The data suggest that the meaning, which the professionals ascribed to pupil behaviour, related to the context in which the behaviour occurred. Therefore the non-compliance of L, the excessive fidgeting and calling out which Y displayed and H getting out of his seat and making faces at other pupils are problematic in the context of school. In other contexts such behaviours would not be problematic. Compliant behaviours are often accorded a value of being 'developmentally appropriate'. Dahlberg et al., (1999, p35) proposed that the discourse of developmental psychology played a significant role in the social construction of the "scientific child". They argued that pedagogical practices have become preoccupied with the classification and categorisation of children's experiences. Dahlberg et al (1999, p 46) considered observation and assessment of children against predetermined categories produced by developmental psychology could be understood in terms of what Foucault (1977) described as "dividing practices". When L behaved in a way, which was in opposition to the demands of the staff, she was described as "bad mannered and uncooperative". The nursery staff considered L's behaviour as outwith the norm. Yet it appeared that she just wanted to concentrate on activities that interested her.

The approach adopted in the nursery embodied what Bernstein (1980 p129) described as "visible pedagogy", which is accomplished through "strong classification" and "strong frames". This approach contrasts with "invisible pedagogy", which is characterised by "weak classification and weak frames". Invisible pedagogy involves the teacher constructing a context which a child is expected to arrange and re- arrange. The child has extensive power over what is selected and over the time allocated. Less emphasis is paid to the acquisition of specific skills and the criteria for evaluating the pedagogy are "multiple diffuse and not so easily measured" Bernstein (1980). The data strongly support the view that the nursery staff was influenced by an approach to education, which runs contrary to the "invisible pedagogy" advocated by Bernstein. Their practice reflects the official policies which seek to measure pupil attainment and behaviour against pre-ordained targets. The data strongly suggest that technical approaches to curriculum and Behaviourist perspectives in relation to behaviour, prevail in government policies. Thus teachers were expected to view pupil behaviour in a detached way and routinely reward "positive" or "appropriate" behaviour. For staff, behaviours, which were not considered 'developmentally appropriate', suggested malfunctioning on the part of the child.

The pupils often complained about things not being fair or not being their fault. It is not the fault of children and their families, if through lack of sufficient income children are excluded from activities that other children enjoy. Although he was keen to read A could not afford to pay library fines. He reacted angrily when people wound him up and called him names. H and his parents dreamed of going on holiday to the seaside but it was outwith their means.

The data suggest that the effects of poverty, though understood to have a deleterious effect on children, are not sufficient reasons for supplying schools and communities with extra resources. The resource implications of combating child poverty do not figure largely in the political rhetoric. Instead, there is an implicit criticism that those who work with children are not doing enough to help them. Situating 'problem behaviour' within the framework of individual psychopathology avoids having to address issues of socially just approaches to education. Brookes – Gunn and Duncan, (1997) showed that children who lived in poverty fared less well in terms of educational achievements. Almost three quarters of children placed on the child protection register during the year 2000 were identified as being at risk of physical injury or physical neglect (Scottish Executive 2000). Although there is official recognition of the adverse effects of social inequality on the lives of children (DfEE 1999; Scottish Office 1999), the tendency to blame individual children and families for not fitting the educational mould remains strong.

7.4.2 The 'problem' and its meaning: the social construction of 'effective' teachers and headteachers.

Class discipline and the delivery of the curriculum are considered a primary responsibility of the class teacher, whilst headteachers are accountable for the management and support of staff, the welfare of pupils and parental liaison. The teachers took it for granted that normal behaviour in schools is associated with obedience and compliance. The data suggest that the identity of the teacher, as effective is also directly related to ability to control the pupil behaviour. A lack of compliance on the part of the child is often associated in the minds of the teachers in the study with not being able to cope. Concern and apprehension featured in the conversations with the nursery staff when they spoke about L whose responses were at first construed as abnormal. Their anxieties about "not being able to handle" behaviour strongly suggest that their perception of an effective nursery nurse was associated with keeping order. The data strongly support the notion that teachers were self-regulatory as evidenced by the teachers of B, H and W who were alert to the possible difficulties that might ensue if the pupil behaviour escalated. The class teachers often referred to managing the pupils as "hard work" and showed an increased sense of vigilance when they believed that the pupil behaviour was volatile. References to Y 'robbing' others of time and L causing 'chaos' suggest that teachers associated the behaviour of pupils with SEBD with lawlessness. The data support the views of Jones (1990) who, drawing on a Foucauldian analysis of self-regulatory practices of power and teaching, considered that the identity of the "good teacher" was associated with the notion of ability to control and to "transform wild beings into ethical subjects". The data also support the position of Foucault who proposed that institutions such as schools generate discourses which seek to normalise behaviour (Jones, 1990). The language used by the teachers associated compliance with normality.

Every teacher referred to the impact of having a pupil with SEBD in class in relation to the amount of time taken out of their day to deaing l with the consequences of the inappropriate behaviour. The data suggest that the curricular demands prevent teachers from reflecting with individuals or groups of children. Although parents and children trusted the class teachers, they were seldom afforded opportunities to meet with parents on a regular basis. Review meetings with educational psychologists, parents, support teachers and headteachers were arranged in advance and usually occurred once per term. The data strongly suggest that teachers and headteachers were concerned about responding effectively to pupils with SEBD. However the data also strongly suggest that the schools were insufficiently resourced. The views of Y's class teacher mirrors those of the other teachers:

> You have to put something in that you know is going to work, but you
> need time to work it out. Sometimes the class teacher feels like the
> bottom of the pile about what other people think.
>
> (Class teacher)

The class teacher of Y described the curriculum as "tight". The experience of Y, who eventually was diagnosed as having AD/ HD, a neurobiological disorder that can have multiple causes illustrated how a child whose behaviour may indicate a different way of functioning can, in the classroom be perceived as disruptive and irresponsible. It also illustrated the apparent ambiguity in terms of criteria which is applied in relation to the allocation of resources to schools. The experience of the pupils and teachers reflect the findings of research conducted by the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS, 2003 p21), which discovered that insufficient resources meant that some schools were struggling. The report noted that the, "resources available to some special schools on teacher- pupil ratio, in particular are not available in mainstream schools". In the Behavioural Unit the maximum number of pupils in each class was six. There were two trained members of staff, one of whom was a teacher who worked with the pupils in the playground. When Y was being integrated into mainstream, there was no extra support for the school at lunchtimes and intervals. Given that the pupils in the study faced difficulties during lunch hours and intervals, the evidence strongly suggest that the problems which they faced were intensified by the social context of the playground and an insufficiency of resources. Although the teachers recognised that social issues affected the lives of the children in school they could not condone violence on the part of the pupil and responded creatively to the challenges which they faced on a daily basis.

The data suggest that teachers expected to give of their time uncomplainingly. When time was not available for R to meet with W's class teacher she remained in school at the end of the day. Although W's class teacher had special insights into how to respond positively to him, she was initially apprehensive about airing her views to the headteacher. A's teacher admitted that she had felt unprepared for working with a pupil who had SEBD. When she was asked about the type of supports she thought that a teacher might need she said, "smaller classes". She then said, "Am I allowed to say that?" Those teachers who had recently

qualified appeared to feel less confident about offering their opinions. This would suggest that scope exists for the encouragement of undergraduate teachers to reflect on the relationship between teaching and discourses of power. The data strongly suggest however that time for teacher reflection is not high on the policy agenda and support the views of Humes (1994a, p182) who believed that teachers are encouraged to deliver the curriculum efficiently and "to refrain from thinking too deeply about the constraints within which they work, far less about the social function of institutionalised schooling". The data strongly suggest that teachers are not encouraged to question their employers. As noted by Humes (1994), compliant teachers are considered cooperative. Those who question are marginalised. All the teachers in the study described how the demands of delivering the curriculum conflicted with their attempts to respond effectively to individual children. Yet they did not complain to the parents, their professional association or their advisors.

Those who were in a position of management voiced their concerns about the impact of the problem behaviour on the staff. The nursery teacher described how L "set her own agenda" and was anxious that other children would not emulate the non-cooperative behaviour. The depute headteacher who was involved in the support plan for Y emphasised the organisational implications of responding to the management of a pupil with SEBD. She, like the other managers in the study, emphasised the potential of pupils with SEBD to influence other pupils. She noted, "we were aware of two other potential behaviour problems in class" which resulted in the management team having "to look very carefully at where we could place him". The depute headteacher emphasised the notion of corporate planning in relation to Y and spoke in the first person plural which suggests that the response to Y's behaviour by senior management was the result of consultation and which followed institutional guidelines. Her allusion to "other potential behavioural problems" served to depersonalise the situation, perhaps in the hope that the lawlessness would not escalate.

In Rowantree School, the headteacher worried about the impact on the class teacher having to respond to two pupils who had been referred to psychological services. Paradoxically the difficulties which she faced were compounded by the official response of allocating a special needs assistant to the school. Often the special needs assistants have no previous experience or training and headteachers are expected to guide and assist them. It is widely recognised that the possibility of violent reactions increases when children who have SEBD work with inexperienced staff. The experience of the special needs assistant in Rowantree School illuminated some of the difficulties which can arise when support staff are untrained and when insufficient time is allocated for planning. The data show that when H and B "gave cheek" to the teaching assistant, it resulted in a form of internal exclusion. It also suggests the pupils were aware of the power structure which is inherent in schools, and that the teaching assistant's role is considered relatively powerless. Paradoxically, the official response to the 'problem' of H and B's behavioural difficulties in the playground, had contributed to their

internal exclusion. The evidence suggests that although input from special needs assistants is helpful to teachers and pupils, care must be taken in relation to planning when working with pupils who have SEBD. The evidence supports the views of Hayden (1997) who acknowledged the need for experienced and well-trained staff to work with pupils who have SEBD. The concerns of W's headteacher mirrored those of the other headteachers in the study. She was concerned about the safety of the other pupils the pressure on staff and about parental complaints. In contrast, the class teacher told a different story of W whom she described as, "likable and not deliberately aggressive". In similar vein the classteacher of H described his behaviour as, "assurance seeking" as opposed to "attention seeking". The data suggest that those voices which are least powerful in educational discourse often have unique insights into how to assist pupils with SEBD.

The data strongly show however, that teachers did not expect to be given time for reflection. The idea of the reflective practitioner is often discussed in educational circles. The practice envisaged by (Schon 1983, p 68) is less in evidence. He suggested that reflection, "allows the practioners to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique". According to Schon puzzlement on the part of teachers generates different ideas about previous understandings and opens the possibility for a different course of action. When given time to reflect with R and the parents' teachers generally expressed a balanced view of the problem behaviour and were open to reconsidering their initial judgments. The evidence also strongly suggests that when the teachers became involved in a process of reflecting with the pupil and their parents, their sense of advocacy was heightened. This is illustrated in the actions of W's teacher who, although newly qualified, appealed to the headteacher that she should reconsider his exclusion from the playground. Construing professionals solely as part of an oppressive power structure fails to acknowledge that many teachers understand and empathise with those parents who feel alienated. The data show that teachers and parents can influence each other. Eager to involve L's s mother in the work of the nursery, the nursery teacher acknowledged that she did not fully appreciate the complexity of involving parents when their child has been assessed as SEBD. On reflection, she admitted that her request that L's mother remain with her child in nursery served to exacerbate the problem and that her actions served to alienate L's mother. The sincerity of purpose exhibited by the nursery teacher coupled with her frank reflection on her practice counters a view of education as merely preserving the status quo and suggests that schools can rekindle hope though reflection and dialogue.

The care which the teachers and headteachers expressed for the pupils was evident and yet their voices as 'experts' in their own situation did not seem to be sufficiently valued by those in positions of authority. Indeed the juxtaposition of the teacher behaviour with that expected of their pupils was startling. Gitlin (1992) and Humes (1994) suggested that the voice of teachers remains largely unheard because of the prescriptive nature of educational practice

and the taken for granted assumption that they should be obedient to their employers. Humes (1994) however warned against complacency on the part of policy makers and suggested that a lack of adequate resources might be the catalyst for conflict between teachers and policy makers. However the data strongly suggest that postmodernism with its spirit of scepticism and questioning of 'accepted ' truths has not arrived in Scottish schools.

The data strongly suggest that headteachers are aware that more needs to be done to address the impact of poverty on the lives of the children in their care. Their concerns about the relationship between low academic attainment and poverty is supported by the findings of Gregg et al (1999) which suggests that family income is significantly correlated with educational attainment. The headteacher of A worked hard to avoid excluding him from school as she was aware that his family were already facing difficulties. Her requests for additional support for A in school and her efforts to find support for him outwith school met with limited success. The data highlights the complex relationship between the effective inclusion of pupils with SEBD and resources available in schools and communities. The data also suggest that despite the rhetoric about the need for 'joined – up' working across services, links between different services remains disjointed. Therefore after school there were no services for A or H that could have had a positive impact on their lives. A continued to abscond from home and the parents of H continued to worry about allowing him out to play after school.

7.4.3 Pupils with SEBD: psychological assessment and expert knowledge

Educational psychologists are accorded a powerful position in education and the data support the view that the discipline of psychology continues to exert a powerful influence on the decision makers in education. It is widely accepted that teachers should not question the assessment or advice of educational psychologists as they are considered experts in child development. All the teachers in the study were females. The male professionals were all educational psychologists. Although they were deeply interested in the progress of the pupils who were referred to the service, the educational psychologists, who participated in the study, were not involved in day-to-day dealings with the children and teachers. They saw their role as assessing children and passing on information to other agencies. They associated their role as being able to give a 'neutral' or 'objective' perspective on matters of behaviour. The referring psychologist for three pupils (H, B and L), noted that his role was best characterised as one of 'conduit and advisor'. Such a position contrasts sharply with the social constructionist perspective which informs a Solution Oriented approach. The evidence suggests that the psychologists considered that a Solution Oriented approach was yet another skill, among a battery of strategies which are used to respond to children with behavioural difficulties and as such did not seriously challenge mainstream thinking about psychology per se. Contact with educational psychologists was mainly confined to the formal review process which focused on progress and discussion about resources.

Most staff however wished to work more closely with the educational psychologists. This contrasts sharply with the views of the parents when it was recommended that their child be referred to an educational psychologist. The data strongly suggest that teachers view psychologist as experts in relation to the area of problem behaviour. Sutherland (1988) considered that in the past there was a clear definition of what was expected from educational psychologists:

> ...to be the handmaiden of education, providing the necessary insights into human nature. The task was to offer a clear and accurate knowledge of the characteristics, traits and tendencies of child nature.
>
> (Sutherland, 1988, p, 14)

Such a position is consistent with a postmodern critique of psychology which contests the view that the knowledge base of psychology is 'expert'. The data also supported the views of Tomlinson (1996, p182) who argued that in England, following the 1981 Education Act, "LEA's attempted to use educational psychologists as gatekeepers to resources". Headteachers were unable to access support from the Behaviour Support Service unless a referral came through the educational psychologist. The decision to withdraw or increase support was made at review meetings which were chaired by the educational psychologist. Embedded in the data are explanations of the pupil behaviour which preserve the status quo of the professionals and which construct individual children and their families as needy.

Primary teachers have been socialised into a set of ideological assumptions, which stress the need for them to be able to respond effectively to young children in their care and to be a 'good role model' for parents. This was part of the socialisation of the researcher who was educated in an all female college of education where there existed a dominant ideology that teachers should behave in ways that were considered ethical and moral. It was considered more important that the teacher deferred to the opinions of headteachers (usually male) rather than question them. Jones (1990, p73) noted how at the beginning of the twentieth century teacher training institutions became focused on the psychology of child development and the teacher " acted alongside the medical officer in detecting and dealing with physically and mentally defective children". Although women constituted 73% of the elementary school teaching force by 1895, it was accepted that their expertise was considered subordinate to that of the medical officer and the child psychologist (Jones 1990). Caring for pupils is also a dominant discourse in education. However teachers have not been encouraged to advocate on behalf of children. This was illustrated by the relative powerlessness of the headteacher to access adequate help for A who absconded from home, yet who regularly attended school.

The data suggest show that although the headteachers were aware that the presenting problems of the pupils were associated with external factors such as poverty, unemployment, and family upheaval, considered themselves limited in what they could do to facilitate change.

7.4.4 The 'problem' and its meaning: the social construction of 'parents in need'.

The data suggest that that the parents, with the exception of H and A's parents, perceived the problem behaviour on the part of their children, less seriously than the teachers did. Their language reflected an attempted to normalise the situation. Y's mother described him as a "nice wee boy who just fidgeted a lot". W's father described the violent incident, which happened in school as "messing aboot". A's father believed that A had "to stand up for himself", while B's mother attributed his behaviour to his feelings of isolation and confusion because of the family upheaval. Her sense of puzzlement was similar to the reaction of L's mother who was perplexed and worried. They did not however, pathologise the behaviour of their children which contrasted with the parents of H, and A, who understood their children's behaviour in terms of their apparent deficits. A's absconding from home was construed as being outwith control. H's parents described his behaviour in terms of a medical deficiency. The data show that the behaviour of A and H generated different responses. H's mother spoke about her fear that without appropriate medication, her son's behaviour might become uncontrollable, while the teachers and R perceived H as someone who needed to play with other children and who was by his class teacher as 'assurance seeking.' H's mother hoped that accurate diagnosis and effective medication would help them resolve their problems. A's parents believed the problems which A presented in school were a matter for the school. They were reluctant to access support from the Social Work Department as they believed that their involvement in their lives would have been intrusive. The most compelling evidence that A and H valued being at school was that they regularly attended. A turned up at school despite having remained out all night. Their teachers spoke about them enjoying different activities. The data suggest that adult understanding of behaviour as an underlying malfunction on the part of a child or the school links was associated with a resistance to acknowledge changes in behaviour. When H had many positive stories in the Golden Book his mother said " he was good at pulling the wool over peoples eyes". A's father believed that the teachers were too soft. The data show that professionals, although initially attributing the behavioural problem to within - child factors were open to the possibility of change. When given an opportunity to reflect on their taken for granted assumptions about behaviour, they became enthusiastic about further assisting the children.

The suggestion that a behaviour specialist should become involved in the lives of children at school is central to this section of the analysis. The language used by the mothers in the study is often openly emotional which contrasted with that of the professional language of the teachers. The mothers of four pupils spoke about their feelings. W's father did not speak about his worries and concerns but he did display annoyance at the school, as had A's father in the past. Their reactions perhaps masked their disquiet about the difficulties which their children faced. W's father consistently spoke in a Scottish dialect. Speakers of Scottish dialects are discouraged from using the language which is familiar to them. In school their language is disparaged and they are encouraged to internalise the 'legitimate' or 'proper'

standard English. The data suggest that W's father, through his use of language challenged the notion that the official language of school is automatically legitimate. His steadfastness to his language caused the researcher to reflect on the extent to which she had been socialised by the dominant discourses of schooling, as her use of a Scottish dialect is less in evidence than once it was.

Y's mother thought that the response of the school staff to his misbehaviour seemed to be disproportionate to the incidents. Nonetheless, she was quick to defend the action of the school:

> The fact of having to go up to the school, the phone calls for the silly wee
> things or silly wee things to us but still big things in school, which I can
> understand because it (his behaviour) was so irritating and so annoying.
> (Parent - Y)

It is possible that her defence of the schools position was rooted in her great fear that any criticism could result in Y being sent back to the Behaviour Unit to which he had been sent when he was aged five. When things were at their worst she describe feelings as suicidal. Her experience was similar to that of L's mother who described how she felt like "tearing her hair out" and that she also felt like a "nervous wreck" because L did not settle in nursery. The accounts of these two mothers are similar to that of B's mother who described her feelings when she heard that the school wished to access support from psychological services:

> Despair. I felt despair.. I never took a nervous breakdown...I was on the
> verge of just crossing that line. I felt totally.. just despair. Basically
> that is the only word I can describe to you.
> (Parent - B)

The data profoundly challenges a dominant notion that the parents of pupils with SEBD are unconcerned about the behaviour of their children. Listening retrospectively to how the parents had felt when things were at their worse in relation to the problem suggests that the professionals, including R, had failed to access the views of the parents at a critical time in their lives. The intensity with which the parents spoke about their reaction to the assessment of their children as having SEBD, offers an insight into how an apparently benign intervention such as Behaviour Support can impact on the lives of others. The voices of the parents would probably have remained unheard, had R not embarked on a research project.

The data strongly suggest that the assessment of pupils with SEBD contributes to the marginalisation of pupils and their parents. The parents were eager to speak about their experiences, which suggest that there is value in researchers, teachers and parents collaborating so that the voices of those traditionally silent can be heard. The data support the view of Giroux (1997 p12) who believed that when "communities are ignored by the schools, students find themselves situated in institutions that deny them a voice". The data suggest the importance of professionals entering into dialogue with parents in order to increase their understanding of the pupils.

Most profoundly the data suggest that mothers are more likely to blame themselves for their child's behaviour. Four mothers in the study spoke about their feelings of disappointment in themselves and their feelings of shame that their children were not behaving well at school. Mother blame is not a new phenomenon. In the 1950's mothering was implicated in the rise in autism. After the Second World War a dominant discourse was that dysfunctional adults would emerge if mothers did not stay at home and look after their children. The data support the views of Sax (1997) who noted:

> As a cultural assumption, " mother blame" can haunt mothers with a constant, insidious barrage of guilt and self blame. Unfortunately the culture of psychotherapy has done much to contribute to the omnipresence of mother blame

(Sax, 1997, p115)

The mothers in the study were guilt ridden that their children behaved in a way that was considered unacceptable in school. They avoided meeting teachers, who according to Jones (1990, p75) have been socially constructed as role models for parents. He stated:

> The teacher through a process of self-examination is transformed into a moral exemplar to project an ethical verity into the unknown of the Victorian city. This transformative morality pictures the teacher as an ideal father, a good and rational parent, and eventually in an interesting reversal of gender, a good and nurturing mother.

(Jones, 1990, p75)

According to Jones (1990, p75) teachers became part of a "tutelary complex that exercises a bio – power". Thus children are expected to behave in school in ways that are assumed to be 'normal'. The 'normal' behaviour in school is related to compliance, industriousness and unquestioning obedience. The data illuminated some of the difficulties which fathers face in relation to co- working in a primary school where the majority of teachers are female. The headteacher had described W's father as confrontational. A's father had also been described as uncooperative. Unlike the mothers in the study, fathers were quicker to question the apparent unfairness of a decision. Although W's father agreed that it was fair to exclude W for a violent incident, he believed that the other pupil who was involved should have been excluded. He also questioned the value of internal exclusion measures. However, like the other parents in the study he complied with the request that W should remain in school during intervals.

None of the parents in the study contacted the Education Authority for extra resources so that their children could be better supported at intervals and lunch hours. None of the professionals in the study, including R encouraged them to do so. This suggests not only that professionals and parents expect the education system to be under funded and badly resourced but also that the passivity on the part of professionals could be construed as collusion with a system that is inequitable and unjust. The data strongly suggest the assessment of pupils as having SEBD effectively disqualifies their voices and those of their parents. Consequently choices are limited. The evidence suggests that entering school was difficult for the parents in the study. Mothers admitted they often avoided meeting teachers

and other parents. The parents, bereft of choices seemed powerless in the face of the official view that their children had SEBD. The data strongly suggest the referral of a primary aged pupil to the Behaviour Support service intensified feelings of inadequacy on the part of the parents. The absence of the parents and their children at the initial referral meeting supports the view that the children had acquired what White (1995a) referred to as a 'spoiled identity'. White (1995a) proposed that when people internalise a dominant story of failure, they then begin to live according to this account of themselves. The data suggest that the parents and their children identified themselves as failing. The evidence supports the view of Giroux (1985, p23) who believed " knowledge, discourse, and power intersect so as to produce historically specific practices of moral and social regulation".

7.5 Behaviour Support: a preferred option?

If the rhetoric of socially inclusive policies were to be accepted then it would be reasonable to assume that parents and professionals would know about a range of options so that children could be better supported in school. The data do not support this position. The data suggest that there are constraints on headteachers in relation to accessing specialist support when they consider it is required. The words of W's headteacher show the range of agencies which a headteacher might contact when a pupil presents challenging behaviour:

> I had contacted the Social worker but father did not want involvement with
> Social Work. I contacted the educational psychologist, my learning support
> teacher, and the link worker and the Behaviour Support service for advice.
> (Headteacher)

The data suggest that the headteachers, although aware of different support agencies were also perplexed by the lack of effective and coordinated action. Thus W's headteacher after having enlisted support from all the agencies concluded that 'it was to no avail'. Unlike the parents in the study the headteachers sought outside help in as many forms as possible. Importantly, the views of the parents and teachers differed in relation to the involvement of Behaviour Support. Headteachers and teachers welcomed the input and expected support and help from an expert or specialist in the field. Headteachers warmly welcomed R into the school. Initially class teachers were cautious about working with a behaviour support teacher whom they believed would have highly specialised knowledge informed by psychology. They were however eager to voice their concerns about the demanding nature of teaching pupils assessed as SEBD.

This attitude to support differs from the parents of L, Y, and B who recalled that they felt disempowered and afraid because of the support teacher's involvement. In contrast to those parents who felt shamed by the intervention of Behaviour Support, H and A's parents saw the role of Behaviour Support as assisting in the identification of a problem, which they considered was located within the child. The data suggest that when the parents believe the behaviour is a result of an organic disorder there exist alternative avenues for parents and children. The experience of A illustrated the extent to which support from the Social Work

Department is activated when the behaviour of the pupil outwith school gives cause for concern. Although they were reluctant to become involved with the Social Work Department A's parents formed a respectful relationship with the headteacher. This would suggest that they associated the involvement of education professionals differently from that of the Social Work Department. Their reluctance to become involved with the Social Work Department reflects a commonly held view that Social Work involvement in a family is associated with the pathologising of parents. The threat of children being taken from families is one that dissuades the parents from seeking help from Social Work on a voluntary basis. In contrast to their reluctance to become voluntarily involved with Social Services, both A and H's parents who were affiliated to religious denominations were more comfortable with accessing support from within their local communities. A's parents welcomed the support of the headteacher in facilitating the baptism of their children and were happy for members of staff to attend. H's attendance at activities organised by church members provided him and his parents with support. The data suggest that churches and voluntary sector organisations provided an additional option for the two families. The positive attitude of these two families to voluntary sector organisations differed from the views of parents in the study, to involvement with the Behaviour Support service.

L's mother views illuminated how a referral to a "behaviour expert" induced feelings of shame and uncertainty as opposed to hope. She said she had been "embarrassed" and did not know what to expect. She explained, "I didn't want any behaviour support". W's father by contrast said he felt 'curious' which suggests that he did not feel as intimidated as the mothers in the study. The mothers in the study associated the behaviour support specialist with the idea of pathology and madness. The anxiety described by B's mother when it was suggested that Behaviour Support should become involved with her son resonated with the experience of other mothers in the study.

> I was sceptical and I kept thinking and this is true... my kid is not going
> crazy know a psychologist is different from a psychiatrist You think Oh
> no! He doesn't need that.

(Parent - B)

Y's mother described how her first meeting with a psychologist when Y was at nursery made her feel intimidated. She thought that her knowledge of her son was less valued than the theoretical perspective which the psychologist brought to the problem. She described how the psychologist, "just wrote down in a book what he thought as a good psychologist". Y's mother associated the input from psychological services with psychiatry and surveillance. Aware that the decision to send her son to a Behavioural Unit had been informed by a psychological assessment, she worried that further assessments could result in him being excluded from his school and returned to the behavioural unit.

The data strongly suggest that those who work in "support services" have a responsibility to explain their work and encourage dialogue. It supports the view of Gergen (1992 p28) who

advocated that psychologists should embrace a "postmodern consciousness" which would involve them working more closely with communities. Approaches to psychology, which are informed by a postmodern social constructionist perspective, emphasises the ways in which the discipline of psychology constructs its objects of study and focuses on how power structures operate. Adopting a postmodernist position requires that psychologists attempt to redress the power imbalance inherent in their practice. The data suggest that parents and teachers associated input from psychologists with being advised on how to parent or how to teach. Referral to a behavioural specialist resulted in parents feeling helpless, despairing and unhappy. Paradoxically the parents expected to be judged as incompetent by "helping professionals". The range of options available to the parent's, teachers and children was limited and it was assumed that the Behaviour Support teacher would know what she was doing. The data suggest that it was assumed that the behaviour support teacher would be a 'specialist' because the support was accessed through the educational psychologist.

Discussion and reflection with parents and teachers about different approaches to responding to behavioural problems was not available. It was taken for granted that referral to psychological services would be sufficient to redress the difficulties which were faced. The data strongly suggest that the most common approach that was in use in the schools was based on Behaviourist principles. These techniques had been used with limited success. Despite the recognition that the behaviour of the children in question was influenced by external factors such as family upheaval, poverty and unemployment, there was a lack of resources available to the parents and teachers on how these particular issues might impact on the behaviour of children. There was no access to Family Mediation Services for children like W and B whose parent had separated. None of the parents in the study contacted an advisory service, unlike those parents whose children are assessed as having Dyslexia or Dyspraxia. The absence of support networks for pupils who have SEBD would suggest that the dominant discourse which seeks to blame or pathologise parents, still prevails.

The accounts of how professionals, particularly those who are involved in diagnostic assessment, were perceived by the parents suggest that the process of assessment per se is harrowing for them. They did not feel comfortable asking questions and admitted that they felt they were under scrutiny. The description that the parents provided, supports a postmodernist critique of psychology and therapy which Payne (2000, p39) described as, "practices of power involving 'expert knowledge, apparent benevolence, surveillance, and the subtle promotion of interiorised subordination". The data strongly suggest that all the parents in the study with the exception of H's parents would have preferred not to be involved with the Behaviour Support service. H was eventually diagnosed as having AD/HD as his behaviour at home had not improved. There were no extensive observations of H in school by the medical professionals. The data suggest that there exists a lack of consensus among professionals in relation to the

assessment of behavioural disorders. The power of the medical professionals however with regard to the diagnosis of AD/HD remains unchallenged.

7.6 Solution Oriented Process: change, illumination and evaluation

The previous section of the analysis aimed to highlight the relationship between psychological assessment of SEBD and the social construction of identity. The data suggest there is uncertainty surrounding the notion that pupils are essentially disruptive and challenges the accepted view that psychological assessment is necessarily valuable. Payne (2000 p 41) noted that a Foucauldian analysis of power focuses on the way in which professionals, "use the language of benevolence but actually urges the maintenance of power". Ball (1990) also noted how Foucault saw his role as showing people that they were much freer than they thought. The next section explores the extent to which involvement in the Solution Oriented process contributed to changes in the thinking and behaviour of those most involved in the process. Their views were also sought on the extent to which they considered the approach was collaborative and respectful. The approach to data analysis was influenced by the notion of illumination. Specifically, the ideas of Parlett and Hamilton (1977) were influential. They proposed that researchers acknowledge the complexity of the research process and focus on evaluation as illumination. The views of R resonate with those of Canella (1999, p 42) who considered the process of evaluation problematic. She noted that evaluation could , "reinforce the powers of expert domination, the right to judge other human beings in space".

There is an attempt on the part of R, influenced by the practice of narrative therapist Michael White (1995p23) "to undermine her privileged position by asking questions of how the process was experienced" The relationship between changes in behaviour, thinking and language is examined below as the behaviour of the children often changed in response to significant people doing "something different" (de Shazer 1990) **Table 7.2** outlines the extent to which the participants became involved in a process which contributed to them doing something different with respect to their thinking , language and behaviour.

Table 7.2 Change: language, thinking and behaviour

L, Greenbank Nursery	L listened to the nursery nurses. Her mother took her to nursery without a fuss. She attended nursery more regularly.
Nursery Nurse	The nursery nurse said that when she began to think about L as 'strong minded' and reflected on her use of language, she noticed a change in the way in which L responded to her. She involves other staff in the stories of the Golden Book and notices how L enjoyed them.
Nursery Teacher	The nursery teacher noticed that the nursery staff worked cooperatively with L. She was pleased that L's mother visited the nursery regularly. She thought that L was happier at nursery.
Parent	L's mother enjoyed using the Golden Book in which she documented how their stories of competence. When she thought of L as needing to know things in advance she changed her way of responding to her She said she was happier and more confident.
Y Melfort School	Y did his homework without a fuss. He remembered to behave calm in assembly. He concentrated on his work more and he was able to stay in school during lunchtimes He liked to hear his friends say kind words about him and he acknowledged their support when he challenged 'trouble'.
Teacher	The class teacher noticed that Y's relationship with other pupils changed. She recognised that the approach differed from a 'quick fix'. She reflected on how the language, which was used during the conversations, was respectful to everyone. She described the approach as subtle and had reconsidered her views about the relative value of more prescriptive approaches.

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Depute headteacher	The depute headteacher noticed that there had been a change in R's attitude to other pupils and that he no longer seemed to need to attract attention. She did not need to see his parents so often.
Parent	Y's mother noticed that Y was more co-operative and that she was listening to him more and not shouting so much. She was more relaxed. She did not have to go to school every day.
H, Rowantree School	H became more focused on his work. He played better in the playground. He spoke more respectfully to the special needs assistant. He co-operated with B and could sit beside him in a group. He behaved well at assemblies and on school outings. He loved hearing his Golden Stories read to the headteacher, the administrative assistant and his parents.
Class Teacher	The class teacher noticed that H was more able to cope with mistakes in his work. His confidence increased as he sought her support in his challenge .She used the approach with other pupils. She reflected more on how the language used by the teacher affected the responses of the pupils.
Headteacher	The headteacher noticed that H was less frequently sent to her office. She noted that he seemed happier and more content in school. She was pleased that he was speaking more respectfully to the special needs assistant and 'not giving her cheek'.
Parents	H's parents were pleased that there were better reports from school but they did not see a significant change at home. They believed that he required further input from the medical professionals.
B Rowantree School	B played better in the playground. He could take an appropriate reprimand without losing his temper. He completed tasks, which were difficult whereas before he would have given up. He was willing to correct his work. He joined a football club. He was proud of his mother writing in the Golden Book. He was able to co operate with H.
Class Teacher	The class teacher noticed that B was less anxious about his language work and could accept that he made mistakes. He smiled more and she noticed that her stories in the Golden Book were valued. She focused on using supportive words to B. She respected his sense of fair play and told him so
Headteacher	The headteacher noticed that B was not sent to her office as often. His mother was more involved in the intervention and the headteacher noticed that B and H were not quarrelling as much.
Parent	B's mother wrote in the Golden Book most nights. She regularly read them to her son. She noticed that this helped their relationship with each other .She said that the Golden Book helped them to communicate better. She could let B know how proud she was that he was challenging 'temper'.
A, St. J's School	A worked calmly in class. He smiled more. The other children related better to A when he was in class. He enjoyed hearing R read Golden Book to him that contained the supportive words of his teacher, headteacher staff and pupils. His behaviour in the playground and on the way home from school continued to pose a problem.
Class teacher	The class teacher noticed that as a result of using a Solution Oriented approach she became more confident when she worked with A in class. His behaviour became more predictable. She enjoyed highlighting his unique skills and talents. When his teacher was not present A continued to respond to others in a volatile way.
Headteacher	The headteacher noticed that as the work progressed A became calmer. He responded well when the adults in the school highlighted those times when he did well. He enjoyed others reading his Golden Book.
Parents	A's parents co-operated with the school staff. They write in the Golden Book and noticing exceptions. They believed that A had to change his behaviour or the school should do more to discipline him.
W, Brownlee School	W came into class calmly He worked better in class. He shared with other pupils. He put up his hand and tried to complete his work. He delighted in his teachers' stories in the Golden Book.
Classteacher	The teacher said she had changed her way of approaching pupils with behavioural problems. She focused on altering her language. She did not 'want to go back to the old teacher thing' which focused on control. She became less vigilant and more confident about her work with W. She challenged the headteacher's decision to keep him out of the playground.
Headteacher	The headteacher said the change in W's behaviour was dramatic. She noticed that he spoke more respectfully to her. And she commended him publicly for this. She noticed that his father was more involved in the intervention and that there had been a change in attitude on the part of all involved in the process.
Parent	W's father had found the work with the class teacher valuable. He was more amenable to contacting the school He noticed that he spoke differently to W (calmer). He praised him more. He co-operated with the class teacher about homework.

7.6.1 Change: language, thinking and behaviour

The data suggest that behavioural changes on the part of the pupils related to how significant others changed their language and thinking in relation to the problem situation. The evidence supports a social constructionist perspective which challenges essentialist notions

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of behaviour and emphasises the influence of social interaction and language in facilitating change

The nursery staff acknowledged that L's behaviour changed in response to their changed way of thinking and speaking. E reflected that her whole approach to working with children in the nursery changed as a result of the work and that she became more aware of the influence of language. Although one of the least powerful professionals involved in the study, she deliberated at length about the experiential aspects of the intervention and how her attitude to consulting with children had changed. She said that she would be less likely to advise colleagues about what to do when they faced difficulties in the nursery. She would listen more. The data show that she became more confident about being curious and uncertain in relation to problem situations. Her view contrasted with that of the nursery teacher who, although supportive of the approach was not fully involved in the process and interpreted the work as highly specialised and informed by psychological theories. The data suggest that those teachers who were not involved in the Solution Oriented work became more convinced that it involved expert specialised knowledge. Conversely, the class teachers, parents and pupils emphasised the way in which their thinking and behaviour changed in terms of their increased belief in their own particular abilities. The data profoundly suggest that once the nursery nurses understood the Solution Oriented work in terms of experimenting with language and stories, they were proactive in bringing their unique skills to bear on the work. Opportunities exist for the early years educators to work cooperatively, whereas the class teachers worked in relative isolation. The data suggest that when professionals and parents work together there exists the potential for reciprocal learning to occur.

The class teacher of B and H noticed that working in a way, which focused on encouraging the pupils to attend to their preferred way of conversing, changed not only her practice but also that of the special needs assistant. A particular problem, which had faced the staff in Rowantree Primary, was that H and B sometimes spoke disrespectfully to the special needs assistant. The data suggest that when adults and children reflect from a position of mutual respect then the possibilities for creative solutions can emerge. Conversing about the unique preferences of teachers and pupils promoted a more dialogical approach to the learning situation. When the children listened to how others, including the adults preferred to learn or teach, it seemed that the situation became more relaxed. B's class teacher also noted that consulting with him about his unique approach to challenging difficulties and documenting his efforts in his Golden Book seemed to increase his confidence in relation to his work. He tackled work that was challenging and also became more understanding of H. This resulted in him being able to sit near H without disrupting the class. There was evidence that teachers and pupils appreciated the small group learning experience. The data suggest that by using a Solution Oriented approach with groups of pupils in which the pupil with SEBD is a member, may be useful in challenging dominant notions that individual children are essentially

deficient. The support from other pupils was shown to be of more significance to Y than help from a supposed 'expert' in behaviour. Having been involved with specialist services for a long time, Y was delighted when they were no longer necessary. Once he felt confident in communicating to his teacher about his preferences, he made it clear that he liked support from his 'local' community of pupils and teachers. His commendation of his friend was a powerful signal to R that Solution Oriented conversations should be conducted among those most involved in the situation. He explained how his friends helped him to beat 'trouble'. He remembered the scaling line and he did not want a zero. He described his friend's words as 'strong'. The data strongly support the view that new behaviour and knowledge is constructed in relationship with others. The depute headteacher noted that Y's behaviour became calmer and more reflective and 'although he still had his moments' he seemed happier and keen to be a member of the group. The class teacher of W explained that she began to think differently about other children and about how she spoke to them. She commented that when she was stressed or tired she sometimes reverted to, "that old teacher way of doing things". This would suggest that that the teacher had reflected on how the role of the teacher can be open to reconstruction through adopting a position which does not emphasise control.

As a result of the Solution Oriented work the teachers and nursery nurses became involved in affirming the pupils through their involvement in the documents of support. The data strongly suggest that when the teachers discerned that the **Golden Books** differed from 'positive behaviour books' they were keen to continue writing in them and use them in different ways. It appeared the teachers were aware that these documents were not intended as a "jollying – along encouragement or top down reassurance" (Payne, 2000, p130). Conversations about preferred ways of completing tasks or entering school provided leverage for teachers and pupils to dialogue about everyday matters that made a difference to their lives. Their practicality in terms of planning was also considered useful. The Solution Oriented conversations with teachers and pupils about a future when the problem was less dominant, facilitated changes to curricular and classroom activities. This was exemplified in relation to A who often seemed agitated on entry into school. His teacher identified his strengths in the curriculum and devised activities which provided him with success. It was the class teacher's first teaching post and she had been apprehensive about coping with A and working alongside a behaviour 'specialist'. She was aware of the gap between the theoretical knowledge that she had acquired in college, and the reality of working every day in class. The Solution Oriented work involved R working with A in curricular group work which focused on his strengths and competencies within the group. The teacher said, "It captured his interest". She explained how by watching R work in her class with the Maths Group she began to use similar language. She admitted, "I was not getting it at first so I tried it and I found it interesting". The data suggest that adopting a non- expert position contributed to the establishment of a relationship between R and the class teacher in which respect for the

others experience was reciprocated. The evidence suggests that the teachers began to use the language which reflected that they valued a position of uncertainty and experimentation. Their adoption of this way of speaking contrasts with the notion that in matters of official policy they are expected to they are expected to 'unreflectively acquiesce' Humes (2000 p48). The data suggest that adopting a Solution Oriented approach may be useful in assisting teachers to counter a view of them as 'unreflecting and acquiescent'.

7.6.2 Stories of change

The evidence suggests that involvement in the approach served to change the views of professionals about the involvement of parents in facilitating creative solutions to problem behaviour. The headteacher of W considered that his father had changed his attitude towards the school and that he had become less defensive as a result of being involved in the Solution Oriented process. She valued his contribution and made this clear to him. This suggests that involvement in a process, which celebrates different voices, may counter expectations that parents from lower socio- economic groups are inarticulate. Their voices need to be heard and valued in schools. The data strongly supports the notion that when teachers and parents are given time to reflect on their work and experience, radical change is possible. The class teacher of W appreciated the insights which W's father contributed to the discussions. This seemed to encourage him in his efforts to support W at school and at home. He modified his view that violent behaviour was more than "just messin aboot". He listened to the perspective of the class teacher who explained that she had a duty to keep all the children safe. The Solution Oriented conversations, which W's father called "wee meetings" were characterised by an attitude of openness and willingness to learn from each other. The data suggest that adopting a Solution Oriented perspective helped to foster a relationship which was mutually supportive. The class teacher and the parent had formed relationship based on trust and cooperation rather than control. The teacher gave her time freely. It was not part of her working day. The impact of her contribution to the changed behaviour of W and his father was undeniable, yet it was almost expected of her that she give of her time voluntarily.
The data suggest that when parents are involved in a co- constructing a different story with the teacher and the pupil, then change is not only possible but also it can also be sustained.

There were limited opportunities for the class teachers to meet with the parents of Y, B and H. This was due to a lack of resources in terms of being able to release the teacher from class duties. For Y there was a reduction in terms of support for the class teacher.
The data support the view of White (1995b) who acknowledged that many teachers have the qualities and skills to transform lives but that these qualities are not sufficiently valued. Although W's teacher was committed to her work with W and his father, she left the teaching profession. This suggests that retaining people who wish to work effectively with pupils with SEBD is a complex issue. The data suggest that despite their initial distrust of school and teachers, A's parents recognised that the headteacher and the school staff were sincerely

supportive of them. However, this was not sufficient to assist them in their parental responsibilities. The class teacher noted that A's acceptance by the others was contingent on him behaving in an appropriate way. Although she recognised that the attitude of the other children had undergone a change and that they longer seemed afraid of him it seemed that their growing admiration for him was tinged with sympathy. The data showed that as A became more involved in trouble in the community the other pupils reverted to their former stance which was guarded. This suggests that community values take precedence over those of the school.

7.6.3 Different stories; school and home

The experience of A and H provide a counterpoint to the experience of the other pupils in terms of the impact of the Solution Oriented work. The data profoundly suggest that more efforts should be put into ways of accessing the voice of the child in matters which affect them. The parents of H believed that his behaviour was indicative of an underlying medical condition which medicine would fix. A's parents believed that the school should discipline him as he was outwith control and needed "fixed". Despite the views of A and H's parents that their children were out of control, the children's experience of school provided them with different stories of themselves. The evidence suggests that when members of a school community value the unique qualities and strengths of pupils, then schools can become "sites of possibility" (Giroux, 1997). The data suggest that H's behaviour in class gradually changed in response to his teacher working with him in a calm way. The teacher and the special needs assistant conscientiously wrote in his Golden Book and his stories of success were then told to other members of staff who encouraged him in his efforts. His friends played with him. Although his mother wrote in the Golden Book about those times when she noticed H challenging difficulties, she also persisted in her belief that he required medication. H was delighted when the Golden Book was read to his parents. However, as there was no improvement at home, a diagnostic label was sought. The data strongly suggest that H and his family would have benefited from support in their local community.

In contrast to H whose parents feared for him so much that they preferred that he remained within their sight after school, the experience of A illustrated the limitations of individualised approaches to behavioural problems. A responded well to the Solution Oriented intervention in school and thrived on the encouragement of his class teacher, headteacher, and school staff. The data show that when staff documented an alternative story of A and shared it in the school community he responded positively. His teacher noticed that A loved coming to school and believed he felt that everyone about him. She stated that his attitude to other children had undergone a change. Like Y, A yearned for the friendship of the other children:

> *He always wanted to be friends with them and when he did begin to become friendlier with them, he was much happier. He would always ask if he could have the games for playtimes and he was always happy.*

(Class teacher re A)

The evidence strongly supports the notion that attending to relational aspects of schooling could encourage in children, respectful ways of communicating with each other. The children in A's class were keen to compliment him on his unique abilities either in relation to his singing or his knowledge of animals. He no longer threatened them or "acted hard" in class.

However the data also show the limitations of dealing with issues of social inequality only at a school or individual level. The change of attitude on the part of the pupils in the school was confined to those in his class. As soon as he was out of school, he became involved in fights on his way home. He sometimes reported to his teacher that people called him names and he had to fight them, or that he was having a "kid on fight with someone after school". The reality was that he sometimes became involved in serious fighting after school, which had repercussions for the next day. In school playgrounds where there is a lack of trained supervisors, some children are less likely to withstand what is often described as 'normal playground banter'. A became violent when he was annoyed. The data strongly suggest that although A responded well in school to the Solution Oriented work, it was not sufficient in assisting him outwith school.

The data suggest that being involved in the Solution Oriented process illuminated for the headteacher and staff the extent to which more resources were needed to assist a child whom they respected. The headteacher was proactive in seeking support for him from other agencies. Despite the efforts made by the school staff, the effects of long-term unemployment had impacted on the life of A, his parents and their extended family. Sports days, school parties, school concerts, require a response from parents. When parents are lacking in material resources and are physically exhausted then it is likely that their children will be affected. Concern for the safety of A was heightened as he frequently absconded from the family home after school. Normally garrulous, A became silent about his whereabouts. He seemed to move between two worlds. In school, he had made progress and responded to the notion that teachers and adults who worked in school cared about him being safe. However despite all their efforts, A was eventually excluded from his mainstream school because of violence. The decision to exclude A from school was informed by government policies which locate the problem which he faced firmly within him. Such policies failed to adequately take account of A's everyday lived experience. It seemed to R that A was punished for being angry and poor. The data support the view that parental involvement in school is affected by poverty. It also suggests that parental avoidance of professionals is often associated with fear and anxiety on the part of those parents who feel that they will be blamed. The data suggest that engaging with parents, pupils and teachers from a Solution Oriented position served to illuminate the limitations of focusing on individual families and children.

The data strongly support the views of those narrative therapists who adopt an overtly political stance in their work. They contend that a failure on the part of therapists to address the political issues which impinge on their clients serves to "adjust people to problems caused by broader injustices" Waldegrave (1990). The data suggest, however that adopting an approach, which is informed by affirmative postmodern and poststructuralist thinking holds promise for educators who wish to work in socially just ways. The data also show that concepts such as social inclusion and community involvement are easier to speak about than to implement.

7.7 A Solution Oriented approach: a challenge to expert knowledge?

The next section of the analysis focuses on the extent to which involvement in the Solution Oriented process was considered collaborative. According to Wexler (1995, p95) special educators are part of, " the apparatus of classification, labelling, sorting and management". He suggested that in order to counter the negative effects of the 'special education industry' students, teachers and parents need to find ways of communicating which are transformative and which challenge those practices which Chomsky (1995) claimed, fostered docility on the part of students and teachers. Critical to this section of the discussion is the question: To what extent does adopting an approach which is informed by affirmative postmodern and poststructuralist thinking assist parents and teachers to communicate in ways that challenge the status quo? Anderson and Goolishan (1992) believed therapists should use language to, "create a space for, and facilitate a dialogical conversation" White (1995a) however proposed that issues of power impede the facilitation of a dialogical conversation. He proposed that therapists should be explicit about the extent to which involvement in therapy reproduces the dominant culture. Issues of power in relation to education, also obstruct the development of a real partnership between parents and educators. The data support the view of Crozier (1998) who found that:

> Although teachers talked about partnership as working together with
> parents, it was in fact based on the teachers' concerns and definition
> of the situation, a commitment to bringing about parents' agreement
> with their view or indeed ensuring consonance
>
> (Crozier, 1998, p132)

Crozier proposed that when parents agreed with teachers, they were considered cooperative and 'good' parents. The data suggest that the parents in the study wished their children to comply with the demands of school. They wanted to be considered ' good ' parents. From a postmodern social constructionist perspective, the notion of collaboration with teachers and parents cannot be separated from cultural, socio economic or gender knowledge (Waldegrave, 1990). Stephenson Johal - Smith (2001) believed that adopting a Solution Oriented perspective is best understood as a journey.

For R, the development of ideas about equity and social justice in Solution Oriented practice, were influenced as much by the process of research as the development of therapeutic practice. Involvement in the research study, allowed R an opportunity to hear the voices of those who are least powerful in the education system, which in turn continues to

influence her practice. With the exception of L, with whom R did not directly work, the pupils were keen to speak about their unique solutions to problems. The data suggest that the children understood that the Solution Oriented work was about negotiating with others on their behalf so that their unique solutions could become a reality. They also appreciated that their involvement in the group and class work would be documented or storied and that R would tell many people about their special skills and qualities. The data also showed that the pupils were aware that they needed assistance and understood their relative powerlessness to challenge what they considered as unfairness in the school system.

As noted previously Michael White acknowledged his indebtedness to the children with whom he worked in relation to the development of his practice. Likewise, R learned from, and with the children with whom she worked. B spoke about "being listened to". Y liked speaking to R because he thought she listened to the "truth". A explained that speaking about challenging "trouble' made him feel like a winner, and he liked to read the stories of his headteacher and class teacher". W, who although keen to go for his lunch instead of reflecting on his involvement in the work said, "I am not doing anything bad now because I know about being safe at my work". The data show that when a space is created for children to reflect in ways that are non-blaming and which adopt a position of respect and value, their creativity, honesty and integrity shines through. The pupils perceived the process as something which was associated with their work and which applied to other pupils as much as it did to them. Dahlberg et al (1999, p13) who adopt a social constructionist perspective to their work in early education noted that because teachers are involved in self-regulatory behaviour they often find it difficult to change their pedagogical practice. They suggest that in order to counter these disciplinary practices pedagogues should be encouraged to, "listen, see and let oneself be inspired by what the children say and do". The data suggest that adopting a Solution Oriented perspective facilitated a collaborative approach to the learning situation where the distinction between learner and teacher is blurred. Pedagogical practice informed by postmodern social constructionist ideas requires that educators question the tenets of a scientific approach to child development. The data suggest that adopting a Solution Oriented perspective opened up the possibility for teachers, parents and others, to work in ways that reflect "democratic practice rather than a means of social control or technological transfer" (Dahlberg et al p77).

The next section examines the conflicting themes in the data with regard to the development of collaborative work and the fostering of compliance. There is an attempt to shed light on the extent to which adopting a Solution Oriented approach offers a possibility to converse with others in ways that challenge the status quo. As noted previously, the notion of unmasking is germane to this study. Thus there is also an attempts to unmask the extent to which involvement in the Solution Oriented approach preserved or even consolidated the notion that there are ' experts ' in behaviour who can respond effectively to children with SEBD. The

importance of this type of analysis is that it hopefully will provide insights into future

possibilities of how to respond in more socially just ways.

Table 7.3 summarises the extent to which the process was viewed as collaborative.

Table 7.3 Collaboration or expert knowledge

L, Greenbank Nursery	When the nursery nurses and L's mother conversed with L about her preferred way of sitting at story time, and their care of her in relation to being safe out walking, she cooperated with them.
Nursery Nurse	Although the nursery nurse described the work as collaborative she described R as the 'real expert'. She had thought that an 'expert' would show the staff what to do. She had valued this approach, as she was able to reflect on her own way of doing things. She spoke of the work with the parent and R as teamwork. She was more able to reflect with colleagues about her work.
Nursery Teacher	The nursery teacher believed that the work was specialised and understood it as a learning experience for the staff and the parent. She noted that the parent fed back to them about her ways of working with L.
Parent	L's mother spoke of the Solution Oriented work as 'working together'. She reflected on the value in the stories and the simplicity of the approach. She was grateful that things had changed. However her gratitude her non critical stance and the fact that she speaks of taking advice suggests that R was considered as having ' expert knowledge'
Y, Melfort School	Y liked to be consulted about his preferred solutions. He valued the words of his friends. He preferred it when he was consulted about how to do his homework.
Class teacher	Although she described the work as collaborative the class teacher acknowledged that that the lack of time for reflection with Y and the parents resulted in the work being less than fully collaborative. However she describes the process as exciting and appreciated a practical class based approach which emphasised respectful ways of being. She describes it as a subtle approach which affected her "whole way of dealing with other people".
Depute Headteacher	The depute headteacher considered the work specialised and as promoting positive behaviour. She noted that more time for reflection would have been valuable.
Parent	Y's mother considered that the work was on a 'different wavelength' from what had gone before. She referred to how it seemed that R did not 'just look up a book' to find out how to work out a solution but that there was teamwork. However she alludes to the fact that she thought R did what she thought was best for Y and the family, which would suggest that the parent saw Y role as directive.
H Rowantree School. Class teacher	H consulted with R, his teacher and the special needs assistant about how he preferred to play. He agreed that others in the school could notice when he played well. His parents believed he should not be allowed out to play unsupervised after school. H's class teacher valued the teamwork. She believed her ideas were valued and that the process was two - way. She felt that her views were taken into account.
Headteacher	H's Headteacher described the work as specialised and emphasised how the intervention supported the teacher and the parent.
Parents	H's parents describe the work as respectful and worthwhile. However they believed that H needed the expert advice of the medical profession and sought further advice.
B Rowantree School Class teacher	B said he would prefer that his father read about his successes in school. He explained that he would like his father to read the Golden Book. The class teacher would have liked more time for reflection. She noted that this approach differed because she felt she was not just being given advice and expected to act upon it. She did not feel blamed.
Headteacher	The Headteacher considered the work with B's and his mother as specialised.
Parent	After she had overcome her initial anxiety about the intervention of Behaviour Support B's mother became enthusiastic about the storying. She noted that while she was working with R she did not feel under pressure to speak. She enjoyed making the book and continues to value the stories. She believed that children needed support from experienced workers in the field. She was grateful that things had changed.
A, St. J's School	A said he preferred it when other children did not mock him. He consulted with his teacher about how to do his work. He explained that he wished to join the library. He gave permission for the words of others to write in the Golden Book. He did not discuss what happened after school. A's teacher described the process as respectful. She said she accepted the advice of R, as she was a
Class teacher	relatively inexperienced teacher.

Headteacher	The headteacher described R as 'having her homework' done. She was kept informed. She valued the consistency of the support and that it was a, " specialised therapeutic approach" which was helpful to the class teacher and the headteacher.
Parents	A's parents were respectful to R and grateful that the Golden Book celebrated their strengths as well as that of the school. They were not able to get involved in the work in school.
W, Brownlee School	W wanted assurance that only 'good 'stories would be included in the Golden Book. He consulted with his teacher about his entry into class. He invited other children and adults to comment on his efforts. He preferred not to reflect on those times when things were difficult in school. The class teacher spoke in terms of the process as empowering and that it was respectful. She noted that it was respectful of her position and that R did, "not take over and show her what to do". She described it as totally collaborative and that there was consultation with the father and the teacher. She said she felt empowered and often experimented trying different things.
Headteacher	The headteacher described the co-operative teaching element of the work as amazing- a joy to watch. She believed that the work was highly specialised.
Parent	W's father said he had, "not been left in the dark "about what was happening. He understood the process as being listened to and felt that he and the others involved were 'getting there'.

7.7.1 Collaboration with parents: grateful voices

The parents in the study perceived the process as respectful. The data suggest that although they experienced the process as 'being listened to' their language suggests an absence of feelings of power or entitlement. Thus B's mother said she "did not feel obligated to speak". L's mother spoke of her relief "that she was not blamed". Y's mother described the process in contrast to what had happened before when she had felt intimidated in the presence of an educational psychologist who had assessed Y before he went to school. W's father said he had been curious about the process but the evidence shows that he had seldom questioned the professionals. Only when it seemed he had developed a trusting relationship with the teacher and R, did he share with them his feelings of anger about his son being excluded from school. He never talked about feeling a failure or feeling blamed which contrasts with the women in the study who spoke about their confidence growing as they began to realise that they were not judged as deficient. Their gratitude to the school for helping them resolve the problem which they faced was tempered by an acknowledgement that educational policy makers fail to recognise that resources are needed to support schools when pupils face difficulties. The parents of L, Y, W and B believed that authorities should do more to listen to the children, their teachers and parents Their expression of gratitude and support for the work which was done with them would suggest that they viewed R more as an expert, albeit a friendly and respectful one, rather than a co-worker. However the data also show that through their involvement in the process the parents of L, Y, B and W became more confident about the unique value of their involvement in the process.

The parents of H and A believed their children were essentially disturbed or deficient. They spoke of the work as having limited value. Their perception that the problem was located within the child seemed to diminish feelings of blame. Both H and A were eventually educated outwith their local community. McLean and Brown (1992) considered that educating pupils outwith their local community can result in social marginalisation as it is harder for children to

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maintain friendships away from their community. The experience of both H and A who seemed to enjoy consulting with their teachers and others about their unique preferences, suggest that an approach which foregrounds the voice of children could be usefully employed in order to access their views on matters pertaining to them.

The claim that involvement in Solution Oriented conversations fundamentally challenges unjust political structures requires careful consideration. The data suggest that focusing on individual children or families, without addressing the underlying political agenda could result in Solution Oriented approaches being understood as a re working of the modernist humanist paradigm. Waldegrave (1990) warned that failure on the part of therapy to address issues such as people's ability to access resources like housing, employment and education will ultimately be ineffective. Paradoxically the success of the approach strengthened the idea that R is an 'expert' in behavioural problems. The results suggest that the intervention could be criticised on the grounds that by focusing on the micro level of the individual child, their family and school masks the impact of the macro structure on the lives of those most involved in the situation. It could be argued that the intervention succeeded in helping the parents, the teacher and children be satisfied with their lot. Given, however, that the conversations were conducted in a classroom or a corridor among ordinary teachers, nursery nurses and parents may offer hope for future reflections on issues of advocacy and social justice. Although the study was undertaken at the individual level of the school, the results indicated that many of the participants began to question their previous assumptions. The data suggest that when parents and teachers began to question those assumptions about behaviour that had been taken for granted and reflect on possible alternatives, they became more confident about questioning the status quo. The evidence showed that those parents who vividly described their feelings of powerlessness and despair volunteered to speak to other parents about their experience. This would suggest that their involvement in the process had freed them from feelings of shame and had contributed to a strengthening of their voices.

7.6:2 Collaboration with teachers: co- worker or expert consultant?

The perspectives of teachers and parents differed in terms of the severity of response and expectation of support. Teachers did not speak about being completely overwhelmed. They did feel that they were less supported than they should have been. They recognised that including pupils with SEBD in class was particularly stressful. Like the parents in the study, the class teachers spoke about not feeling judged or blamed. The data suggest that the teachers initially sceptical about the input became more interested when they realised that the process aimed at cooperative working. They, like the mothers in the study, expressed their concern that they would not cope. Committed to working with the pupils and preventing exclusion, they voiced concerns about the sense of isolation, which was faced in relation to their work. The issue of power and control are central to any discussion about teacher voice.

At a time when New Labour policies are actively promoting inclusion, it appears that ordinary class teachers are less likely to be consulted. Gitlin (1992) spoke of the need to listen to the voice of the teacher in school research. The findings suggest that the teachers had expected that the specialist armed with the 'expert knowledge' of psychological theorising would come into their classes and advise them about what to do. The study suggested that their surprise at this not happening, gave way to a realisation that the process was more radical than they had first thought. Their references to changes in attitude and ways of thinking and speaking to children indicated that the teachers realised that there was more to the process than technique. Y's teacher explained that she valued working in this way because it was respectful. She considered that it could permeate other aspects of her life. This would suggest that she had understood it more in terms of a philosophical position rather than just another strategy, " or managing bad behaviour". Words which teachers commonly used in relation to being involved in the work focused on it being respectful supportive and non judgemental. The data suggest that they recognised it was not a prescriptive approach and that their unique contribution was valued. The evidence shows that whilst they found the process respectful and collaborative, it did not dramatically change the way in which they perceived authority structures. Although R adopted a non – expert position, the data suggest that overall the teachers and parents saw R as an expert. Notwithstanding this there was evidence of subtle changes. The teachers involved in the study commented that their practice changed in terms of how they attended to the power of language. Professionals requested that literature be made available to them as they wished to develop their skills in the work. Parents did not request literature. This shows that there is an imbalance of power between parents and professionals. As the study progressed there was deepening awareness on the part of R of how the role of Behaviour Support teacher limited the opportunity for collaborative work with parents. The evidence suggests that class teachers were in a better position to engage with parents at a more local level. The data strongly support a view that those who work in support services require to reflect on how their work could unwittingly contribute to socially unjust ways of working.

The findings suggest that whilst the work was effective in terms of helping individual pupils negotiate particular solutions to difficulties, there is evidence that for some teachers there was insufficient time for reflection and planning which in turn contributed to feelings of stress. Although it was widely recognised that time between class teacher and support staff should be made available, the reality was that teachers gave of their time during their lunch breaks or remained in school at the end of the school day. In one particular class of twenty-four pupils there were two pupils with SEBD and other pupils with special educational needs. The difficulties which the teacher faced were considerable. The data show that when the class teacher, parent child and R could meet there was a difference in terms of relationship building. When it proved difficult for teachers to be released from class the data show that the

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parents and teachers used the Golden Book to communicate. The evidence suggest that the teachers valued working in a cooperative way and that adopting a Solution Oriented approach opened up space for alternative possibilities to emerge. The teachers appreciated that involvement in a Solution Oriented approach valued ways of speaking which celebrated different voices. They recognised that there was value in adopting a non-judgmental stance and being committed to respecting each person's rights regardless of their position in the hierarchical structure. However the data suggest that although a support teacher may be instrumental in introducing teachers parents and pupils to Solution Oriented practices, space and time is required so that all involved in the process can reflect on the philosophical underpinnings of the approach.

7.8 Socially just schooling: school exclusion, social exclusion
Throughout the study, the data was examined in the light of the postmodern social constructionist underpinnings of the approach with particular reference to assumptions about the social construction of identity, professional knowledge, power and social justice. Adopting a social constructionist approach involves accepting that certain discourses are privileged and others are subjugated. Social constructionists, therefore persist in interrogation of that which is taken for granted in a social context, in the hope of illuminating those discourses which have previously been subjugated. It is taken for granted that when pupils are non-compliant in schools, they can be excluded from school. The third part of the analysis deals with the experience of children and the views of parents and professionals about this process. The data support the view White (1995a p44) who argued that exclusion is linked to the assignment of an identity:

> *This modern exclusion was a different sort of exclusion not based on the absence of identity, not an exclusion based on absence of membership, but a grand exclusion based on the assignment of an identity. A marginalisation of person through identity.*
>
> (White (1995a p44)

This section of the analysis aimed to illuminate for R and other professionals how exclusionary practices were perceived by the parents of the children who had been accorded a label of SEBD. The data suggest that assessing pupils as SEBD is the first step towards the grand exclusion to which Michael White (1995) refers. The overt exclusion from their local community school frequently follows the assessment of a pupil as SEBD.

The data suggest that excluding a primary aged pupil from school or transferring them to a Behavioural Unit is done with minimum consultation with the child or parents. The data also strongly support the views of (Freire 1985, p.102) who contended that, "it would be naive to expect the dominant classes to develop a type of education which would enable subordinate classes to perceive social injustices critically". The response to pupils who do not respond to the demands of school in a way that is considered 'normal' is first to classify them as disruptive and then exclude them from mixing with their community. The data suggest that

although professionals regarded exclusion as a negative response, they accepted that it was sometimes justified. **Table 7. 4** show the extent to which the children experienced forms of exclusion.

Table 7.4 School Exclusion: social exclusion

L, Greenbank Nursery	L was educated in a separate room, away from the other pupils for a limited amount of time.
Y, Melfort School	Y's parents agreed that he should not remain in school during lunch hours, as they were concerned that he would 'get into trouble'.
H Rowantree School.	H was sometimes excluded from the playground because he became involved in fights. He was sent to the Headteacher's office.
B Rowantree School	B had been excluded from school because of a violent incident. B was sometimes excluded from the playground because he became involved in fights. He remained at the Headteacher's office.
A, St. J's School	A was supported by the Headteacher during lunch times and lunch hours in order to avert his possible exclusion from school.
W, Brownlee School	W had been excluded from school because of a violent incident. W entered school ten minutes after the other pupils. He was excluded from the playground during intervals and lunch hours because of concern for the safety of other pupils.

Y had been excluded from mainstream school when he was five years old and was educated in a segregated unit with limited access to all the resources that are available to other children. The data suggest that his parents believed that this experience had a profound effect on his subsequent re - entry into his local school. His mother considered that his exclusion had resulted in him being, 'tarnished'. This view reflects the dishonour, which accompanies the exclusion of a child from school. Y's mother explained how she felt blamed and excluded by Y's grandparents. She felt that they were judging both her and her child. L's mother believed that if the school excluded her child she would feel, "let down" as if she did not belong. The headteacher of H resisted formal exclusion and tried hard to counter his mother's view of him as seriously disturbed. H's mother believed that exclusion proved that the school could not "cope" with H, which in turn verified her own opinion of him as being in need of medication because he was sick. B had been excluded for a violent incident. Although she recognised that his parent was concerned about the possible negative effects of the exclusion the headteacher was also aware that she could appeal to B's sense of fair play W's father expressed anger and questioned the fairness of the decision to exclude and spoke of his son being ' tarred wi a brush' which resonates with being singled out.

From the perspective of the parents the decision to exclude could seem arbitrary. B's mother echoed the concerns of W's father and commented on the injustice and ineffectiveness of school exclusion. The data suggest that professionals and parents were aware of the negative effects of excluding a primary aged pupil from school. In an effort to avert

excluding the pupil from school headteachers sometimes removed pupils from their class or from the playground. The data show however that although headteachers and parents were aware of the negative effects on the children of denying them access to school, they accepted that due to a lack of alternative resources, it was the only option open to them.

The data strongly suggest that there is a relationship between the categorisation of a pupil as having SEBD and the experience of social exclusion on the part of their parents. The mothers of B and L recounted how they avoided meeting the teachers because they were fearful of hearing complaints about their children. This behaviour extended to their interactions with other parents. W's father experienced a particular form of isolation as a lone father at the school gate. The evidence suggests that the other parents who brought their children to school complained about W to the headteacher. Surprisingly the censure of grandparents figured in the study. Y's mother spoke about deterioration in her relationship with Y's grandparent. L's mother, on the other hand, became more dependent on her parents so that she could take her child shopping.

The experience of those parents whose sense of isolation had been most intense highlighted the positive effects of feeling socially included as a result of their involvement in the Solution Oriented work. B's mother was happy to attend meetings and remain in the corridor chatting to the other parents. Y's mother volunteered to help the staff when there were school trips. H's mother helped in the art room and the headteacher explained that W's father seemed more at ease approaching the school staff for help. Although A's parents continued to face problems with regard to his behaviour, the headteacher commented that their involvement in the process resulted in them feeling that they could approach the school for help. Their relationship became more trusting and they sought out the headteacher's advice in matters. The data strongly suggest that involvement in a Solution Oriented process, whilst facilitating more collaborative work between teachers, parents and pupils, also served to illuminate inequalities in a system that fails to address issues of social justice. Y's involvement in the process meant that he could be included in the playground and the depute headteacher said she had less occasion to contact his mother This resulted in his mother being less stressed, as she no longer had to attend school to collect him at lunchtime. The headteacher of Rowantree Primary school said that the Solution Oriented work, " undoubtedly helped the children to stay on course but it also was helpful for the staff to think about ways of preventing things from escalating".

Concerned that school exclusion would exacerbate the problems which A encountered outwith school the headteacher worked hard at preventing him from being excluded. The data suggest that she was aware that as the time passed, a lack of adequate assistance to A and his family impacted adversely on how he behaved in school. She valued the work because it provided evidence that A possessed valuable qualities and skills. A's position in the community was already marginalised. The headteacher noted that the Solution Oriented work

contributed to W's 'dramatic change in behaviour' and that it lessened the risk of him being excluded from school. She commented that he was so much more a part of the school community. W's teacher did not think it fair that W was not allowed out to play at intervals and asked the headteacher to reconsider her decision. The headteacher appreciated the young teacher's commitment to W, but conscious of parental complaints about his behaviour she came to an agreement with his father that he remain in school during intervals in order to avoid him getting into further trouble. The Golden Book was used to highlight those times when other children noticed W playing kindly. He delighted in their support of him and eventually he joined them in their playtimes. The data suggest that adopting an approach, which is informed by a social constructionist epistemology, opens up possibilities for teachers, parents and pupils to learn from and with each other. The data suggest that when teachers are afforded an opportunity to work closely with parents and pupils, their sense of advocacy is heightened. The findings suggest that although the participants valued working in a way which fostered cooperation and collaboration, the experience of A shows that that individual approaches to pupils with SEBD have limited impact on social structures.

Table 7.5 outlines the position of the children within the education system after Behaviour Support was withdrawn. The experience of H and A provide a useful counterpoint to the experience of the other children. A and H valued conversing with their teachers about their preferred way of learning in school. The data suggest that they knew that the teachers and other staff were supportive of them. However the data also strongly suggest that in relation to major decisions affecting the lives of children such as being excluded from school or being referred to a special school, their preferred alternative may not have been fully considered. The concept of social justice which informed this study was that proposed by Young (1990) who understood social justice in terms of freedom from five major faces of oppression which were: exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence.

> *Oppression consists in systematic institutional processes, which prevent*
> *some people from learning and using satisfying and expansive skills in*
> *socially recognized settings, or institutionalized social processes*
> *which inhibit people's ability to play and communicate with others*
> *or to express their feelings and perspective on social life in contexts*
> *where others can listen.*
>
> (Young 1990, p38)

Schools are organised in ways that do not allow children a say in major decisions affecting them. Often, "they must take orders and rarely have the right to give them,"(Young, 1990, p56). Both H and A were relatively powerless in relation to the decisions that were made about them. The experiences of A and H and their involvement in the Solution Oriented process deepened the conviction of the researcher for professionals and parents to listen more attentively to the voices of children. Tisdall (1996) points out that the right of children to have their views heard is found in at least eight sections of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. Marshall (1997, p35) proposed "while questions have been raised about the enforceability of such provisions, they are regarded as valuable statements of principle which could have

some legal implications in individual cases". The practice of consulting children about their unique preferences is not widespread in relation to educational decisions. However the data suggest that adopting a dialogical approach may be valuable to professionals and parents who endorse the principles of the *United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child*. (1989).

Table 7.5 Where are they now?

L, Greenbank Nursery	L attends Greenbank Primary School. She is progressing well without external support. Her mother continues to support the school. The headteacher is delighted at her academic progress and commends her behaviour.
Y, Melfort School	Y continues to attend Melfort School. He no longer requires support. He no longer needs Behaviour Support. His parents are proud that he does his best in school and keep contact with the school staff.
H Rowantree School.	Although H's behaviour improved in school, his parents continued to worry about his behaviour at home. He was eventually diagnosed with AD/ HD and attends a special school outwith his local community.
B Rowantree School	B became more settled in school External support was withdrawn. His mother felt more confident about responding to B. She said she treasures his Golden Book and was happy to report that he was signed for the junior section of a famous football team.
A, St. J's School	A continued to abscond from home. He was eventually received into the care of the local authority. He was educated at a special school away from his local community.
W, Brownlee School	W continues to attend Brownlee School. He is happy with his friends. His father was more confident about approaching the school if there were difficulties. He was content that the Support Teacher attended school twice per term to meet with him and the classteacher. Eventually external support was withdrawn.

7.9 What more could have been done?

The parents involved in the study believed that more should be done to assist pupils with behavioural difficulties. They believe that there should be more consultation with parents and children before involving psychological services. Parents accepted that teachers needed more resources. Teachers were fully stretched by the demands of the curriculum. The data strongly suggest that teachers and parents are sceptical about the rhetoric of policy makers surrounding inclusive policies. The failure to acknowledge that teachers and nursery nurses contribute to the building of communities is reflected in this particular study by the lack of time which they were accorded in terms of consulting with parents. The teachers believed that if things were to improve there would be more inter agency work; better training; smaller classes and more time to meet with the parents. The psychologists and headteachers endorsed the views of the teachers and parents and acknowledged that the process of including more primary aged pupils with behavioural problems could be made possible by employing more staff in order to facilitate teacher parent and psychologist consultation, effective support in the playground and classroom and better after school activities. All those involved in the study agreed that ideally more time would be given to addressing behavioural problems by involving parents, teachers and pupils in on going discussion. Solution Oriented ways of conversing with all involved appeared to facilitate dialogue not only about how to resolve particular difficulties, but it also provided a framework for consideration of issues which related to social justice.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION

8.1 SEBD: Social construction or dysfunction?

The inclusion of pupils with SEBD in mainstream schools is currently on the political and educational agenda as the Minister for Education and Young People (2001) noted in his foreword to *The Report on the Discipline Task Force* (SEED, 2001 p1). The report recommends that schools "should ensure that there are formal mechanisms in place so that pupils can share their views and participate in decision making on matters that affect them directly". This statement would appear to resonate with the ideas of radical educators such as Freire (1972, 1974) and Giroux (1997) who believed that education should be a dialogical process. They argued that modern systems of education discourage critical dialogue and serve to silence oppressed groups. According to Freire (1985, p 73) silence is a prime indicator of oppression. The body of literature on how to respond to pupils with behavioural problems however does not reflect the ideas of radical pedagogues such as Freire and Giroux. Instead it is principally concerned with methods of managing behaviour in classrooms, as opposed to reflecting with pupils and their parents about their preferred solutions. Thus teachers are exhorted to apply a variety of 'strategies' to the 'problem' of individuals who display challenging behaviours in order that they become more compliant. Despite the rhetoric on the need for consultation with pupils, parents and teachers with regard to behavioural problems, the status quo remains unchallenged and attention is diverted from consideration of the socially constructed nature of the 'problem'. This study sought to investigate the impact of adopting an approach to behavioural problems that is informed by a social constructionist epistemology. Two elements of this study relate to concepts of illumination and evaluation. Through the lens of social constructionism it was hoped that insight would be gained into those taken for granted practices in education which exclude not only the voices of pupils and parents but also of teachers. The study also sought to investigate the extent to which those whose views are often unheard in official policies valued involvement in the Solution Oriented process.

The value of adopting a social constructionist perspective to the education of pupils assessed with SEBD is supported in this study. The data provided rich descriptions of the harmful effects of assessing children as young as four with SEBD. None of the pupils described themselves as disturbed or disruptive. They described themselves as feeling sad, being in trouble, or being bad. Their parents told of their feelings of helplessness, despair, and unhappiness at the referral of their children to the Behaviour Support service. The view that consultation with parents of pupils with SEBD is often tokenistic is also supported in this study. The data strongly supports the view of Tomlinson (1982, p75) who suggests that defining children as having special educational needs is based on an acceptance that, "there are foolproof assessment processes which will correctly diagnose and define the needs of children". The data challenges the 'truth' that pupils who are assessed as having SEBD are in some way 'damaged' and that their future within the school system is bleak. Indeed the study supports the notion that there is value in listening to the voices of those who are accorded least power in the education system. Giroux (1992, p98) points out that critical pedagogy "rejects the reduction of teaching to a narrowly defined concern with instrumental techniques, skills and objectives". This study supports a view of teaching which values a dialogical position from which teachers can reflect with

pupils and collaborate with their parents. The study also illuminates however, that current policies often preclude opportunities for teachers and parents to engage in dialogue. The experience of the teachers, parents and pupils in the study strongly support the view of Humes (2000, p 48) who proposed that in education systems the "dominant voices remain those who exercise authority and have access to privileged knowledge".

8.2 Referral to Behaviour Support: power and possibilities

The evidence showed that parents associated referral to psychological services and the involvement of R as debasing. The parents and pupils had accepted the 'truth' presented to them by those in authority that they were deficient and in need of correction. The data support the view that therapists and other professionals whose practice is informed by psychological discourse, "must always assume that they are participating in domains of power and knowledge and are often involved in questions of social control, " Besley (2002, p134). The data support the notion that adopting a social constructionist perspective in relation to pupils with SEBD allows the possibility of considering different interpretations of behaviour. It also provides a framework, which encourages the questioning of expert knowledge. The notion that language can never be neutral or objective has influenced most profoundly the way in which the writer communicates with others about her work. The study supported the view that those whose voices are less prominent in educational discourse valued being listened in a way that was understood as "listening to bear witness" (White 1995a, 1997).

The data suggest that parents and in particular, mothers are made to feel responsible when their children do not conform to the demands of school. Parents admitted that they often avoided going to school. The women in the study spoke about their feelings of guilt, nervousness, and powerlessness. In this study there is an attempt to gain insight into the way in which an apparently benevolent 'therapeutic intervention' was understood by those most involved in a problem situation. In the course of the study it emerged that parents preferred to converse in schools about the problems which they faced rather than visit a clinical setting. The words of Mr. T illustrated the desire for parents to work things out at a more local level. He described the process as 'a wee meeting', which in the Scottish context denotes notions of informality and acceptance. Mr. T's description of the Solution Oriented conversations with R and the class teacher supports the view that working from this perspective is viewed differently from traditional psychological interventions.

The data strongly suggest that participants welcomed an opportunity to reflect about how they understood their involvement in the process. They were keen to speak not only about the difficulties which they had faced, but also to reflect on the process. The data suggest that involvement in the Solution Oriented process assisted those who are less powerful in the school system to voice their concerns. Teachers and parents became more confident about experimenting with language. When parents became aware that their unique qualities were valued and that an apparently simple approach, which focused on language and conversation, had a positive effect, they were keen to speak about their experiences with other parents. Children enjoyed being consulted about their

unique solutions and they valued the support from other children. They also enjoyed knowing that significant members of the school community heard about their efforts. This would suggest that there is value in working with groups and classes rather than focusing on individuals.

Importantly the notion that teachers or parents may be as effective as experts in relation to responding effectively to pupils whose behaviour is considered disruptive, could have far reaching implications for those involved in those professions, which have accepted the tenets of modern psychological discourse. The possibility of teachers and parents learning together about Solution Oriented practice could, in future counteract the power imbalance associated with referral to psychological services and the involvement of Behaviour Support.

8.3 Parents and teachers: co-workers for change?

Adopting an approach to pupils with SEBD which does not privilege one particular voice over others may provide a framework for educators who wish to work in more socially just ways. The data suggest that working from a position of mutual respect can assist in the fostering of more collaborative practices. The evidence showed that despite teachers and headteachers putting a great deal of energy into working with the pupils in order to enable them to progress at school, their requests for much needed resources were often unproductive. The evidence strongly suggests that there is a need for those in government to heed the voices of pupils, teachers, headteachers and parents. The pupils referred to the Behaviour Support service are recognised as having 'significant difficulties' in relation to behaviour yet only one special needs assistant was involved in the study. The experience of Y illustrates the arbitrariness of resource allocation in relation to including pupils who face difficulties in school. When he was educated in a unit the staff ration was 2 adults to 6 pupils. When his parents requested that he attend a local primary school, support was reduced and Y faced difficulties in the playground. Parent support groups for pupils assessed with SEBD do not exist. The experience of the parents in the study supports the views of Tomlinson (1982 p75) who believed that, "the rhetoric of special needs may be humanitarian; the practice is control and vested interests"

Teachers' views are seldom accessed in relation to resource issues, however their professional associations represent their concerns. The EIS (2000 p.4) considered that:

> It is a source of annoyance that teachers who often work in isolation with
> challenging behaviour for long periods of time and that primacy in case
> reviews or assessment teams is provided by professionals who have limited
> experience of working with the child.
>
> (EIS, 2000 p 4)

The views of the EIS is supported in the study as the teachers who were involved indicated that they would have preferred more time for consultation with the educational psychologists and the support teacher. The notion that class teachers contribute to the emotional well being of primary aged pupils was recognized in The Warnock Report (1978) and more recently by Richards (1997), yet this recognition is not reflected in the allocation of time to teachers for consultation with other professionals. The data support the views of Humes (1994b p182) who noted that policy makers

discourage teacher involvement in strategic decision-making about resources. He believed that decision makers regard "professional autonomy as dangerous and a potential source of challenge". The teachers in this small study often empathised with the parents and pupils. They recognised that their voices, like those of the parents and children were excluded from the decision-making arena. The data suggest that adopting an approach which is informed by affirmative postmodern ideas about social justice has the potential to heighten the notion of teacher advocacy.

The data, however strongly support the views of Giroux (1997, p201) who believed in the possibility of schools becoming " public spaces where people could engage in dialogue, to share their stories and to struggle together within social relations that strengthen rather than weaken possibilities for active citizenship". The people involved in this study shared their experiences with each other. Adopting a Solution Oriented perspective meant that there was an invitation to cooperate and consult in ways, which revealed the creativity and strengths of those most involved the 'problem' situation. It would be inaccurate to claim that as a result of their involvement in this process that they became more assured about openly challenging those in authority. The teachers in the study did not contact their professional association about their need for further support. The parents did not write to officials about the lack of resources. Headteachers requested more resources but aware of the financial constraints facing the education department resigned themselves to doing without. Nonetheless there were indications that involvement in the process offered opportunities for teachers, pupils and parents to reflect with, and learn from each other.

8.4 What was of value?

The data strongly suggest that adopting a Solution Oriented approach enabled those in authority to listen to the unique preferences of the pupils. Consequently the experience of the pupils and teachers changed. Parents and teachers valued the approach because it was celebratory of their unique qualities and skills and was non judgmental. Teachers appreciated that the approach was incorporated into their pedagogical practice. Parents enjoyed being involved with members of the school community in the process of co- writing stories of their children's unique competencies. The teachers, children and the parents valued the **Golden Book.** The development of the Golden Book was influenced by the practice of White (2000 p6) who uses therapeutic documents in order to provide a testimony of, "events that contradict the problem saturated stories of people's lives and the deficit accounts of their identities". The accounts in the Golden Book not only counteracted a view of a child as essentially disruptive but also celebrated the creativity and qualities of their parents and teachers. Teachers and parents reported that the stories and copies of their unique conversations testified to the way in which apparently simple things helped the child overcome difficulties. The emphasis on the local, rather than the universal answer to the problem meant that different people did different things with the **Golden Books.** There was recognition that the language used reflected a position of hope. It was fun and the effect was often dramatic.

The evidence suggests that the children valued their **Golden Books** as they provided written evidence of their particular competencies and strengths. They enjoyed the fact that the stories in the Golden Book were handwritten rather than typed. They appreciated that R challenged 'messy handwriting' and supported her in her efforts. Pupils gave permission for their stories to be read at psychiatric clinics, social work reviews, and educational reviews which would suggest that they valued the words that were written. Newman (2004) found that among the key factors which promote resilience, were support from family, and or peers and a good educational experience. In 2004, the number of children on the Child Protection Register was 2,245 (Scottish Executive, 2004). Time for teachers, parents and children to reflect with each other from a Solution Oriented perspective would be time well spent, as it may contribute to the fostering of resilience to which Newman alludes. As noted previously, White (1995b) considered that teachers are significant in helping pupils document a preferred alternative. He considered the possibility of schools being 'communities of acknowledgment' where dominant stories of failure can be challenged. The **Golden Book** offered those who have a duty of care to children an opportunity to listen to their views.

The pupils and their teachers considered that the group work which combined a curricular element (maths games, reading etc.) with a Solution Oriented framework (problem solving, negotiated rules supportive language) was useful for the following reasons:

- there was an explicit recognition of the value of learning from and with each other.
- exceptions to problem behaviour were noted.
- R and the children were engaged in a curricular activity thus an opportunity existed within the group for children to notice each other playing / working in ways that challenged a dominant story of them as failures.
- rules which emphasised respect, care, and safety were negotiated.
- being uncertain and curious was encouraged.
- pupils were consulted about their preferred ways of playing or working.
- each person's words were valued which engendered mutual respect.
- the use of the scaling question was valued by some children, most notably Y who subsequently received a diagnosis of AD/ HD.

Adopting a Solution Oriented perspective emphasised respect for all those involved in the learning situation. The concept of education for citizenship is currently being developed in a Scottish context. Munn (2001 p1) suggests that pupils should be encouraged to become more consciousness of their interdependence. She believed "the ethos of the school and pre- school settings should model practices inherent in democratic participative communities". Teachers commented that they valued the ease with which Solution Oriented language could be incorporated into their every day work. They noted that the approach was more like a way of thinking. Parents, whose knowledge is so often disqualified by professionals became more confident approaching the school and gladly shared their stories of their children's unique skills and competencies. Lack of time for reflection about the process served in some ways to preserve the idea of the support teacher as 'expert'. Although the process was understood in terms of about celebrating the unique contribution of the children, their parents and

teachers, it could be argued that in some ways another 'expert' had emerged. Future developments in this work should involve teachers and parents meeting so that they could reflect with each other on the philosophical underpinnings of the approach. Although it is uncommon, it would be useful for parents and teachers to attend training together.

8.5 Future Possibilities

Parents of pupils with serious emotional and behavioural difficulties felt isolated and anxious. Teachers in the study reported feeling stressed and headteachers voiced serious concerns about the impact of the problem on the health of staff. If teachers and parents are to work creatively together, they should be encouraged to speak without fear of being blamed or judged. If pupils need support so too do their parents and teachers. This would require professionals and parents becoming pro- active in acting jointly so that resources can be acquired. The data strongly suggest that assessment of a pupil as SEBD is interwoven with issues of social justice. Investment in after school clubs for pupils like A or H might have prevented the escalation of difficulties and helped those families who felt isolated.

8.5.1 Time for reflection

The study showed that the time made available for teachers to reflect with the support teacher impacted on how they subsequently understood and applied the approach. When the teacher and parent and R could meet, there was a significant difference in terms of relationship building. Headteachers recognised that time between class teacher and support staff should be made available. The reality was that teachers gave of their time during their lunch breaks or after school. When the teachers were not directly involved in the work with the parents they were more hesitant about approaching the school when they were worried.

8.5.2 Involving other members of the school community

The children in the study enjoyed it when other members of staff such as administrative staff, dining attendants; janitors, and special needs assistants read their Golden Books. Future work could involve recruiting those whose words are important to the children to assist them in their challenge.

8.5.3. Consulting children: preferred futures:

The possibility that this approach could be used in order to access the voice of children on matters, which deeply affect them, should not be ignored. The experience of watching A converse with his classteacher about how he preferred to learn illuminated for R the potential of this approach for responding in a more socially just way to those children whose voices are excluded from official policies .

8.6 School exclusion : social exclusion

The intervention did not prevent the pupils from being excluded but the headteachers indicated that as the pupil behaviour changed the likelihood of exclusion diminished. The study raised several issues in relation to the exclusion of primary aged pupils who are recognised to be a vulnerable group. Parents, teachers and headteachers agreed that there should be alternatives to exclusion. The data support the view that more resources are needed to help pupils in playgrounds. Primary aged

pupils who enter school worried or angry find it difficult to cope with playgrounds and dining halls. There were insufficient resources available to assist staff at those times and behavioural responses which could merit an exclusion usually occurred at lunch times and intervals. Where a special needs assistant was employed there was a diminution in, 'internal exclusion'. The special needs assistant organised games and adapted the Solution Oriented language in relation to the playground. The involvement of the special needs assistant in the Solution Oriented work with B and H showed that there are particular advantages in employing a special needs assistant to support the work of the teacher. Of particular value was her contribution to noticing exceptions in contexts where there is not a teacher. There were numerous entries in the Golden Books which testified to the abilities of the pupils at challenging difficulties in the playground or being respectful in the dinning room. It would be useful to consider the possibility of joint training of parents, special needs assistants and teachers in the approach as the data strongly support the view that training for special needs assistants is required in order that pupils with SEBD are better supported in their local schools.

The study also illustrates the particular difficulties in reintegrating pupils who have been educated in a Behavioural Unit. The views of parents and teachers differed in their attitudes to exclusion and its effect on primary aged pupils. Parents tended to describe the negative effect on the child whereas the teachers viewed the process as being necessary to maintain order. Of interest to the teachers was that the Solution Oriented process could continue even if a child were excluded. The use of future oriented language provided staff with opportunities to shift the conversation from one, which was problem dominated, to one which was future oriented and hopeful. Parents were also more aware of the negative effects of 'internal exclusion' and that decisions to prevent pupils from going out to play seemed arbitrary. Teachers took it for granted that this was a part of school life as it was widely accepted that pupils with SEBD could be 'wound up' easier in the playground. The study illuminates how parents of pupils with SEBD can become the focus of censure from other parents in the community. When the pupils made progress, their parents became more relaxed and were more comfortable attending school functions. It would appear that adopting a Solution Oriented perspective in relation to pupils assessed as SEBD was associated with learning from and with others. O'Connell (1998) described the value of adopting a position which challenges notions of expertism:

> *She disowns the role of the expert, the keeper of truth' in the clients life.*
> *The purpose of the therapeutic dialogue is to negotiate jointly a meaning to*
> *the client's situation, which will create the possibility of change for him.*
>   (O'Connell, 1998, p15)

Adopting a Solution Oriented perspective created the possibility of change for all involved in the process and highlighted the relationship between language power and possibility.

Glossary of terms

assisted learning: Provision of guidance and supports to facilitate learning.

classification: Categorizing according to a common dimension or attribute.

disequilibrium: The "out-of-balance" state that occurs when a person realises that his or her current ways of thinking are not working to solve a problem or understand a situation .

equilibration: The tendency to strive for equilibrium (balance) among cognitive elements within the organism and between it and the outside world

scaffolding: Scaffolding is a temporary helpful structure that enables a person to successfully complete a task she/he could not complete without the aid of the scaffold.

zone of proximal development (ZPD) The level at which children can almost perform a task on their own and, with appropriate teaching, can perform it.

The following terms provided by Tom Heaney relate to the pedagogical theories of Paulo Freire.

http://www.paulofreireinstitute.org/Documents/freiren_pedagogy_by_Tom_Heaney.htm

Banking Education: The learner's mind is seen as an empty vault into which the riches of approved knowledge are placed.

Culture of Silence: The "culture of silence" is a characteristic which Freire attributes to oppressed people in colonized countries with significant parallels in highly developed countries. Alienated and oppressed people are not heard by the dominant members of their society. The dominant members prescribe the words to be spoken by the oppressed through control of the schools and other institutions, thereby effectively silencing the people. This imposed silence does not signify an absence of response, but rather a response which lacks a critical quality. Oppressed people internalise negative images of themselves (images created and imposed by the oppressor) and feel incapable of self-governance. Dialogue and self-government are impossible under such conditions.

Dialectic: Dialectic is a term referring to a dynamic tension within any given system and the process by which change occurs on the basis of that tension and resulting conflict. Based on the writings of Hegel, every concept implies its negation; that is, in conceiving anything (thesis), we must be able to imagine its opposite (antithesis).

Dialogical Method: The dialogical approach to learning is characterized by co-operation and acceptance of interchangeability and mutuality in the roles of teacher and learner, demanding an atmosphere of mutual acceptance and trust. In this method, all teach and all learn.

Empowerment: Empowerment is a consequence of liberatory learning. Power is not given, but created within the emerging praxis in which co-learners are engaged.

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Appendix A   Behaviour Support Referral System.

BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT SERVICE

BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT SERVICE,

INTRODUCTION

The Behaviour Support Service responds to the significant emotional, educational and social needs of primary aged children within ⁊. ⁊ ⁊ ⁊ . These children often confront their class teachers and schools with seriously challenging behaviour.

At present this support is accessed through the Psychological Service and is a flexible resource. This is a response to Revised Standard Circular 8, and to the Strathclyde Region report 'Young People in Trouble' which recommends the provision of a network of resources to help these children.

REFERRAL PROCEDURE

The process leading to referral and acceptance of a particular pupil for the Behaviour Support Service involves the following stages.

STAGE 1
The school attempts to deal with the pupil's challenging behaviour using its own resources in the spirit of 'Young People in Trouble'.

STAGE 2
If the child's problem continues to be seriously challenging after relevant within-school efforts to manage this, the school should involve the parent, psychologist and social worker (if appropriate) in discussion, assessment and advice. 'Young People in Trouble' recommends that this school-based assessment be seen as the basic 'building block' in the overall process of assessment of the seriously troubled child.

STAGE 3(a)
If the problem is not influenced positively at Stage 2, the psychologist should discuss the problem with the local Case Support Team (EBD) for pooled advice on options and materials relevant to the school, parents and child.

STAGE 3(b)
If a range of options has been attempted and has failed clearly, the psychologist should present the child's case at Area Consultation, where the recommendation may be to refer to the Behaviour Support Service.

STAGE 4(a)
The presenting psychologist, head teacher and class teacher attend a referral meeting at the Support Service base. Referrals are processed on a regular basis.

STAGE 4(b)
If the case is accepted for Behaviour Support, the psychologist will convene a case conference at the school, after a period of observation by the behaviour support teacher.

SUPPORT OPTIONS

The following three options for support in cases of significantly disruptive behaviours offer optimum flexibility to meet the child's needs, using a problem-solving approach. The intention is to form a continuum of support.

- Consultation

- Peripatetic Support

- Support Base (maximum number of children in class - six)

The Support Base provides part-time education for seriously challenging pupils. This allows the link with the mainstream school to be maintained and the child's needs to be appropriately assessed and managed.

RANGE OF SUPPORT

Support will depend upon individual circumstances but could consist of any of the following

- pupil counselling and individual work programme

- support for class teacher

- small group work

- parenting groups

- links with parent(s) eg home visits

- whole class approach

- whole school approach.

ASSESSMENT PHASE

It is important that a full picture is created of the interactions of all important variables concerning the challenging behaviour, so that the child is offered appropriate help for his or her difficulties.

A case conference will be held in the school. The purposes of this meeting are

- to get a clearer picture of the child's problem

- to find out when the child's behaviour is less problematic

- to be clear about the expectation for change and to ensure that these expectations are realistic

- to co-ordinate continuing efforts to achieve improvements in the child's behaviour

- to develop a support plan

- to involve parents in the overall plan.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The referral process is co-ordinated by the school's named psychologist.

It is the psychologist's responsibility to arrange the initial case conference and subsequent reviews of support.

Transport arrangements for the child, if necessary, will be arranged also by the named psychologist.

BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM - PRIMARY SECTOR

STAGE 1
Typical Primary School

Within school efforts to manage problem(s) in the spirit of 'Young People in Trouble'.

No improvement ↓ | Improvement ↑

STAGE 2
Multi-Agency Case Conference

Support plans based on problem definition and resources available.

No improvement ↓ | Improvement ↑

STAGE 3(a)
Psychological Service Discussion

(Case Support Team level) for pooled advice on options and resources / materials appropriate to needs.

No improvement ↓ | Improvement ↑

STAGE 3(b)
Psychologist presents case at Area Consultation level

Recommendations made to EO for appropriate action. If appropriate psychologist applies for alternative support.

→

STAGE 4
Case presented at monthly Admissions Meetings

(North and South Areas) Appropriate support provided.

SUPPORT OPTIONS

1. CONSULTATION LEVEL - observation and advice only
2. PERIPATETIC SUPPORT
3. SUPPORT BASE (North only from April 1996)
   - Links maintained with mainstream school.
   - Placement time-span from 6 weeks to 1 school session, depending on nature of placement (assessment and / or / specific tasks(s) / functions).

Appendix B   Consent Forms

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

═══ CONSENT FORM ═══

FOR PERMISSION FOR A SCHOOL AGE CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH

To be completed by the child's parent or guardian

Please read the following notes carefully before completing the form

This form must be attached to covering letter (which you may detach and keep), and should only be completed and returned IF YOU ARE UNWILLING to have your child participate in the research described in the research study described in the attached letter.

If you do not complete and return the form this will be taken as implying that you wish your child to participate in the study.

ONLY COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS FORM IF YOU DO NOT WISH YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH STUDY

PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS

I, (insert your name) _____

BEING THE (insert your relationship
to the child, e.g. mother/father/guardian) _____

OF (insert class or form) _____

OF (insert name of school) _____

DO NOT GIVE PERMISSION FOR MY CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH STUDY DESCRIBED IN THE LETTER ATTACHED.

SIGNATURE: _____   DATE: _____

Strathclyde Regional Council
Department of Education

Strathclyde House, 20 India Street, Glasgow G2 4PF

Director: Frank Pignatelli

Assistant Director: Linda R Marsh

Tel: Direct Line 041-249 4273
Telex: 77428   Fax: 041-249 4220
Our ref: LRM/JMcM   Your ref:
Date: 20 July 1995
If phoning or calling please ask for John McMahon
Location: Dalian House, 350 St. Vincent Street, Glasgow

Strathclyde
S C O T L A N D

A nuclear-
free zone
authority

An equal
opportunities
authority

Ms. Catherine McGlone
Behaviour Support Base

Dear Ms. McGlone

Thank you for returning the completed application and standard form contract. I am now pleased to inform you that approval has been granted at both regional and divisional levels for you to approach the headteachers of the schools in   division to ask if they are willing to take part in your project.

When you contact the headteachers of the schools involved you should enclose a copy of this letter as proof of regional and divisional authorisation but I would remind you that it is the head of the establishment who has the final veto over whether or not his or her school shall participate.

I wish you every success with your project and if I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

John McMahon
Research Management Unit

LEDLRM437

Consent Form.

My name is Catherine Mc Glone. I am doing research on the Effectiveness of Solution Focused counselling approaches to working with pupils parents and teachers . University of Glasgow   PhD   Education Department

I can be contacted at :

Behaviour Support Team

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the project. Before we start I would emphasise that :

-your participation is entirely voluntary.

-you are free to refuse to answer any questions.

- you are free to withdraw at any time .

The interviews and descriptions will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to those involved in doing the research and to those who are involved in supervision. Excerpts from the interviews may be made part of the final research report but under no circumstances will your name be included in the report.

Please sign this form to show that I have read the contents to you .

—   ____   signed

____   ·   _____   PRINTED

Name : Catherine McGlone

Behaviour Support Base

Programme of Study: Phd University of Glasgow

Faculty of Arts (Education Department)

Background

 A Solution Oriented approach is an ecosystemic approach to problem behaviour which focuses on the strengths and competencies of the people involved in a problem situation. It has evolved from the field of Family Therapy and as a theoretical model it questions many strongly held assumptions in relation to pathology and expert knowledge.

Scope of study: 6-8 referred pupils , class teachers , headteachers and parents and the referring agency over a period of 1-1.5 years.

A case study approach is used.

Features of the study

- The pupils have all been referred to the Primary Behaviour Support Service, which responds to pupils because their behaviours are considered to be impacting on their progress at school.

- The perception of the problem is explored from the perspective of the referring agency, headteacher, class teacher parent and pupil. There is a focus on the people most involved with each child.

- A Solution Oriented approach highlights the notion that change in the behaviour of one person may affect others.

- The focus is on collaboration

- Solution oriented language reflects the position of client strengths rather than deficit. Consequently the competencies of the parent, pupil and teacher are highlighted.

- The problem description is documented by the researcher, from the perspective of the headteacher/ class teacher/ pupil/ parent/ and the referring agency. This takes place during the normal course of the Behaviour Support intervention.

- During the solution oriented intervention the class teacher, pupil, parents and other significant members of the school community are requested to notice and document those times when the pupil behaves in ways that are different from the problem description. This can be done in writing or on an audio tape.

- At the evaluation stage there will be interviews conducted by a teacher other than the researcher. It is likely to be the coordinator of Behaviour Support.

- This will involve the main participants in assessing the relative value of the approach and commenting on how other issues impacted on the success or otherwise of the intervention. The questionnaire is a detailed one and examines :

- The original perception of the problem

- The Solution Oriented process

- Changes in behaviour and thinking.

- Attitude to pupil support and inclusive education.

- The final evaluative component will last approximately one hour for the teacher and parents and 15 minutes for the pupils.

- Ideas of empowerment and inclusion are examined in order that there is a deeper understanding of the collaborative nature of supporting pupils.

Appendix C   Behaviour Checklist (NFER NELSON)

Interview Schedule: Solution Oriented Interview

Referred Pupil - name :...

Class teacher's name:

Date of Interview:

Name of Interviewer:

Length of Interview

The interview will be kept strictly confidential. You will not will be identified. Excerpts from the interview / may be made part of the final research report but under no circumstances will your name be included in the report. Thank you for your cooperation.

1	When is .... calm in (class / at home?)
2	What is .... doing
3	What are you doing at these times/
3	When else?
4	What does .... enjoy doing at school (hobbies at home)?
5	What special qualities does ...... possess that will help....... challenge difficulties in school
6	Imagine what it would be like if the problem which you face was solved. Tell me about your miracle description.
7	What will .... be doing in class that will tell you that the problem has been resolved?
8	What else?

The teacher and parent are asked if their words can be communicated to the child.

Appendix E   Teacher Assessment Diary

Date: appendix E
Teacher Assessment Diary

In order that the pupil makes satisfactory progress it is important that information is available to the behaviour support teacher about the class teacher manages to deal with differing situations. It is also important to know how the pupil responds different aspects of school life.

Please write about any incident which you felt was significant. It would be helpful if this was done on a regular basis.

Thank you for your support and cooperation.

Nature of the incident

Pupil reaction: What did he/ she say or do.

Teacher's understanding of the situation.
e.g. Why do you think it happened? Responses

Appendix F   Interview Schedule (Class teacher)

Interview Schedule: Class teacher

Referred Pupil - name :..

Class teacher's name:

Date of Interview:

Name of Interviewer:

Length of Interview

The interview will be kept strictly confidential. You will not will be identified. Excerpts from the interview / may be made part of the final research report but under no circumstances will your name be included in the report. Thank you for your cooperation.

A Perception of the original problem. TEACHER

1 Before Behaviour Support was involved in your **class** it was suggested that ---- was having a number of problems at school. To what extent do you agree with this suggestion?
2 What were the main difficulties in :

class ?
playground ?
elsewhere?
3 Why do you think this was happening ?
4 Why do you think ---------------- was behaving in such a way?
5 Who else was affected by the problem ?
6 What had you done in the past to try to solve it
7 What do you remember as being the most difficult aspect in relation to
a) class ?
b) play ground
8 Elsewhere?

B The Process (
9 Tell me what you expected in your work with --------
10 What if anything was different to what had been tried before
11 Comment on the attitude of ---------- during the work?
a) to you
b) to the pupil:
c) to the parent :
12 To what extent did you feel that your description were taken into consideration.?
13 Did you become actively involved in the Solution Focused work eg... writing in the Golden Book ? making stories ? noticing tasks ? attending meetings ? Relating information to the pupil
14 Comment further on what you actually did?
15 Tell me more about how you felt about the tasks .

C The Process
16 How hopeful or otherwise was .... of things changing ?
17 Which words would you use to describe how you and ---------- worked
18 Were you able to let-------- if things were going badly? If so how did you do it?
19 When you were discussing the problem with-------- you what do you remember as being most important to you?
20 After your meetings with ---------- how did you feel?
21 What did you think?
22 What did you usually do?
23 If a colleague was experiencing similar difficulties with a primary aged pupil and you were asked to talk to them about the work which you did with ------- what would you say
24 What could have been done , in your opinion to make things better? Why ?
25 Can you say which aspects of the work with---- were most valuable?

26 In what ways did the -------- consult with you during the time that you and she worked together
27 How would you would you describe these meetings?
28 When you worked with ----------- did you feel that she was listening to your version of events
29 How would you describe these conversations
30 Did she ask for your help and advice?
31 Can you remember a time when your advice was sought and then used to advantage ?
32 Did she ask you to experiment or try something different after talking to you? If so what was it
33 How would you describe your work with ------ in relation to the problem?
34 What is your attitude to working with --------
35 Comment on the changes in ------ behaviour since the beginning of the Solution Oriented work
36 What if anything did you begin to do differently in relation to the problem ?
37 What are you doing more of ?

38	What else has changed?
39	Who else has noticed ?
40	How do you view the changes ?
41	What if anything has changed in the way you think about .....behaviour?
42	How has this affected your responses?
43	Can you comment more on this?
44	Are there other areas of your work in class which are affected by your changed thinking ?
45	Can you remember one thing in relation to the problem situation about which you think differently?
46	How has this affected your practice in relation to other behavioural problems
47	Can you comment further (example)
48	What if anything, do you think has changed in the pupils attitude to school
49	What evidence can you give to support your claims ?
50	As a professional working within the system, what more could be done when there are pupils in class who are assessed as having SEBD.

Exclusion from School Inter- agency Cooperation

51	Was there another service involved with you over the problem?
52	Was the pupil ever excluded from school? if so for how long? Why ? What effect did it have ? Can you comment on your attitude to exclusion in general ?
53	What other options should , in your opinion be available to help the pupil and their parents in a situation similar to this ?
54	What advice would you give to a teacher in a similar situation.
55	In an ideal world, which changes would you make to ensure that pupil's who display challenging behaviours would be better supported

Appendix G   Interview Schedule (Parent)

Interview Schedule: Parent

Referred Pupil - name :..

Parent's name:

Date of Interview:

Name of Interviewer:

Length of Interview

The interview will be kept strictly confidential. You will not will be identified. Excerpts from the interview / may be made part of the final research report but under no circumstances will your name be included in the report. Thank you for your cooperation.

A Perception of the original problem.(Parent)

1   Before Behaviour Support was involved with your child it was suggested that ----- was having a number of problems at school. To what extent do you agree with this suggestion?
2   What were the main difficulties
3   Why do you think this was happening ?
4   Why do you think ------------------ was behaving in such a way?
5   Who else was affected by the problem ?
6   What had you done in the past to try to solve it
7   What do you remember as being the most difficult aspect in relation to the problem?

B The Process

8   Tell me what you expected in your work with ---------
9   What if anything was different to what had been tried before
           Comment on the attitude of ----------- during the work?
           a) to you
           b) to your child
10   To what extent did you feel that your description were taken into consideration.?
11   Did you become actively involved in the Solution Focused work eg... writing in the Golden Book ? attending meetings ?
12   Comment further on what you actually did?
13   Tell me more about how you felt about the tasks .
14   How hopeful or otherwise was .... of things changing ?
15   Which words would you use to describe how you and ----------- worked
16   Were you able to let-------- if things were going badly? If so how did you do it?
17   When you were discussing the problem with--------- you what do you remember as being most important to you?
18   After your meetings with ----------- how did you feel?
19   What did you think?
20   What did you usually do?
21   If another parent was experiencing similar difficulties with a primary aged pupil and you were asked to talk to them about the work which you did with ------- what would you say
22   What could have been done , in your opinion to make things better? Why ?
23   Can you say which aspects of the work with---- were most valuable?
24   n what ways did the --------- consult with you during the time that you and she worked together ?
25   How would you would you describe these meetings?
26   In working with ------------- did you feel that she was listening to your version of events
27   How would you describe these conversations
28   Did she ask for your help and advice?
29   Can you remember a time when your advice was sought and then used to advantage ?
30   Did she ask you to experiment or try something different after talking to you? If so what was it
31   How would you describe your work with ------ in relation to the problem?
32   What is your attitude to working with --------
33   Comment on the changes in ------ behaviour since the beginning of Solution Oriented Work.
34   What if anything did you begin to do differently in relation to the problem ?
35   What are you doing more of ?
36   What else has changed?
37   Who else has noticed ?
38   How do you view the changes ?
39   What if anything has changed in the way you think about .....behaviour?
40   How has this affected your responses?
41   Can you comment more on this?
42   Are there other areas of your work in class which are affected by your changed thinking ?
43   Can you remember one thing in relation to the problem situation about which you think differently?
44   How has this affected your practice in relation to other behavioural problems?
45   Can you comment further (example)
46   What if anything, do you think has changed in...........attitude to schoo?l
47   What evidence can you give to support your claims ?

48   What more could be done when children display behavioural difficulties in school?

Exclusion from School Inter- agency Cooperation
49   Was there another service involved with you over the problem?
50   Was …….. ever excluded from school? if so for how long?
51   Why ? What effect did it have ?
52   Can you comment on your attitude to exclusion in general ?
53   What other options should , in your opinion be available to help the pupil and their parents in
        a situation similar to this ?
54   What advice would you give to a teacher in a similar situation.
55   In an ideal world, which changes would you make to ensure that pupil's who display
        challenging behaviours would be better supported

Appendix H   Interview Schedule (Headteacher)

Interview Schedule: Headteacher

Referred Pupil - name :..

Class teacher's name:

Date of Interview:

Name of Interviewer:

Length of Interview

The interview will be kept strictly confidential. You will not will be identified. Excerpts from the interview / may be made part of the final research report but under no circumstances will your name be included in the report. Thank you for your cooperation.

Interview schedule Head teacher

Perception of the Problem.

1 What did you consider were the main problems facing you as the head teacher with regard to this pupils behaviour ?
2 What were the most difficult aspects in relation to the pupil behaviour ?Within the class itself
3 What if any were the main problems at interval ?
4 What if any were the main problems in relation to parental involvement ?
5 Before the parents and teachers and child became involved in the intervention can you comment on some of the things which were being done to address the problem ?

Change

6 What changes if any did you notice in the pupil behaviour?
7 Are you more involved in the day to day disciplining of him or has that lessened?
8 Why do you think that is?
9 What changes if any did you notice if any in the pupil's attitude to the class teacher the pupils yourself or other members of staff.
10 What changes if any did you notice in other peoples responses?
    What changes , if any did you notice in the attitude of the pupil to other children ?
11 What changes if any did you notice in the parental behaviour ?

Process

12 Which aspect of the Solution Focused Intervention was most valuable ?
13 To what extent do you think that the changes were attributed to the intervention?
14 Could you say which aspects could have been better When working with R to what extent did you think that she appreciated the perspective of the headteacher
15 Can you comment on how the support teacher worked with the member of staff
16 Can you comment on her work with the parents

17 Exclusion / Inter- Agency Support

17 It has been suggested that good interagency working is important in dealing with behaviourally disruptive pupils . Which other agencies wee involved in this case
18 What is your experience c of dealing with professionals from other agencies in relation to behaviourally disruptive pupils ?
19 What other supports in your opinion should have been in place ?
20 What advice would you give to a colleague who was experiencing a similar problem ?
21 Was the pupil ever excluded from school ?
22 Why ?
23 Comment on the advantages / disadvantages of exclusion.
24 What is your attitude to exclusion of pupils?
25 In an ideal world what changes would you like to see made in relation to the education of pupils with challenging behaviour?.

Appendix I   Interview Schedule (Educational Psychologist)

Interview Schedule: Educational Psychologist

Referred Pupil - name :..

Class teacher's name:

Date of Interview:

Name of Interviewer:

Length of Interview

The interview will be kept strictly confidential. You will not will be identified. Excerpts from the interview / may be made part of the final research report but under no circumstances will your name be included in the report. Thank you for your cooperation.

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Interview schedule Educational Psychologist
Perception of the Problem.

1   What were the main reasons for the referral of .... to Psychological Services?

2   Which behavioural changes would have to have occurred before you would consider that Behaviour Support was no longer required?

3   What were the main difficulties facing the pupil in relation to school?

4   What needed to change?

5   Can you comment on the relative value of this approach to the school staff/

6   Can you comment on the relative value of this approach to working with parents of pupils who are assessed as having SEBD?

7   What more would you like to see being done for parents whose child exhibits behavioural difficulties ?

8   What do you think is the value of this approach to the support of a pupil in mainstream school?

9   When a pupil is referred to Psychological Services because it is considered he has SEBD what do you see as the role of the educational psychologist?

10   What does that involve?

11   What do you think about the process of excluding a pupil from mainstream primary school?

12   What else could be done, in your opinion to help those pupils who are at risk of being excluded from primary school?

13   What needs to change

Why?
What more should be done to support pupils assessed with SEBD?