

**BRIEF PSYCHOTHERAPY WITH CHILDREN IN A  
SPECIALIST SCHOOL: AN EXPLORATION OF THE  
UNDERLYING ISSUES FOR CHILDREN AND MAINSTREAM  
SCHOOLS**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores brief psychotherapy with children on placement at a specialist school setting, as part of an on-site, child psychotherapy outreach provision. The study sought to explore two research questions concerning the themes that could emerge in brief work with children and how these themes could be discussed in relation to the understanding formed by their mainstream school teachers. A qualitative research design was used to investigate these questions. The methods used to collect data were case studies, concerning the brief psychotherapy with 4 boys, aged 7 years, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers. Thematic analysis was used to explore the data. The themes that were derived from the analysis were described in detail. The research found that brief work has considerable benefit for children and mainstream schools. Through the brief work intervention, the children all made significant progress in all areas of their lives at school. Contributions that the research makes to related fields, the implications that it has for policy and practice and recommendations for future research were all discussed.

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## **Introduction**

This chapter will introduce the study of brief work in a specialist school which is the subject of this thesis. It will explore the rationale behind the topic of research underpinning this doctorate and will outline the research questions which it aimed to investigate. It will also discuss existing policy concerns and bodies of knowledge and practice into which the research fits. The context of the study and a brief overview of subsequent chapters in this thesis will be looked at too.

## **Background and Rationale**

The brief psychotherapy with children at a specialist school which is explored in this thesis, formed part of the clinical work I undertook during the course of my four-year child psychoanalytic psychotherapy training. Part of my joint clinical training post was in a child psychotherapy team, based at the specialist school - an educational provision for children deemed as having emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. The child psychotherapy team engages in a variety of work with the children, their families and the wider professional network. This includes: assessment and brief work with the pupils and their families, individual psychotherapy for pupils, parent work, drop-in consultations for pupils and staff, work discussion seminars for the different departments at the school, consultation to and liaison with professionals in the pupil's wider network. The child psychotherapy service was a CAMHS outreach service.

A few months into starting my clinical post, the school, which had up until then consisted of departments for primary and secondary school pupils, extended its provision by introducing a year group for younger children aged between 4 and 7 years. Since the inception of this new year group, there was much eagerness and support from the school for the child psychotherapy team to provide input to the year group. I was very much involved in the brainstorming and planning of what kind of work our team could undertake, which aroused my interest in exploring it further. Funding for a place for children in one of the two classes which formed the new year group is secured for a term (between 10 and 12 weeks), with the aim of re-integrating the child back into mainstream school. Due to the brevity of the child's placement, and also because the children often presented as much younger than their age, we tailored our input as a child psychotherapy team around this, and so the work undertaken with children was a brief five-session intervention, inspired by the Tavistock Clinic's Under Five's Counselling

Service's model of working with children under the age of five and their families (e.g. Daws, 1989; Miller, 2002; Barrows, 2003; Pozzi, 2003; Emanuel, 2006; Bradley, 2008; Likierman, 2008; Urwin, 2008).

### **Research Questions**

The children at the specialist school were referred by their mainstream schools because of concerns about their behaviour and sometimes also due to concerns about their emotional and psychological wellbeing. From my research, I wanted to gather a psychoanalytic understanding of some of the underlying issues faced by the children and to explore the understanding that their mainstream schools had of the children after their return to mainstream school. My two research questions were based around what themes might arise during the course of the brief work with the children, and subsequent interviews with their mainstream school's liaison professional to the specialist school, their class teacher or Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO), following the brief work. My first question was: 'what themes can emerge from brief psychotherapy with children?' My second question was: 'how can these themes be discussed in relation to the understanding constructed amongst mainstream school teachers?'

### **Policy Context**

In Britain, child psychotherapy delivered in the public sector takes place predominantly in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). CAMHS work has traditionally taken place in local mental health 'outpatient' clinics, usually in multi-disciplinary teams, in Tier 3 (Music, 2008). Over time, there have been changes in British child psychotherapy public sector service-delivery. Child psychotherapists have branched out from clinic-based services within CAMHS to include work in community settings such as GP surgeries, hospitals and schools (e.g. Folkart, 1964; Jackson, 1970; Wittenberg, 1971; Daws, 1983; Fletcher, 1983; Dyke, 1985; Woods, 1985; Vas Dias, 1990; Emanuel, 1999; Reid, 1999; Tydeman and Kiernan, 2005; Jackson, 2008; Maltby, 2008; Robertson, 2008; McLoughlin, 2009). This was partly in response to changes in government initiatives aimed at improving and changing the way that services worked with children and their families, such as Sure Start. There has been an economic push for time-limited intervention and evidence-based research, to which child psychotherapists have also responded, for instance with the IMPACT study (soon to be published).

During the last fifteen years, the government issued policies designed to establish multi-agency working. This has been partly attributed to the rise in serious mental health issues amongst children and young people and greater understanding and awareness of children's and adolescent's psychological needs (Music, 2008; Music and Hall, 2008). These changes have also come about in response to the tragic death of Victoria Climbié in February 2000 – an 8 year old girl who was tortured and murdered by her aunt (her guardian) and her aunt's boyfriend. A major public inquiry into her death resulted in the *Laming Report* (Laming, 2003) which highlighted "...the failings of the child protection system...." (Rustin, 2011: p.115) and of a number of services that had been party to the child's care.

Mainly due to this report, the government issued a Green Paper entitled *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* (Department of Education, 2003) and then a policy document: *Every Child Matters* (Department of Education, 2004). This document sets out comprehensive frameworks to ensure that all children are supported to: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic wellbeing. The policy promotes multi-agency work between children's services. Services are required to engage in the joint planning and delivery of interventions for the child, and for all parties involved to be aware of their own and other services' involvement in the child's care. Improvement of children's mental health and psychological wellbeing and ensuring equal access to services for all children are also promoted (Music, 2008; Music and Hall, 2008; McLoughlin, 2009; Ingall and Smyth, 2011).

Another key policy document is the *National Services Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services* (NSF; Department of Health, 2004). It has a section specifically concerning CAMHS and at other points in the document, the importance of other services working closely with CAMHS professionals is highlighted. Based on liaison with mental health professionals such as child psychotherapists, the document states clear cut standards to be met within the ten years following publication. The NSF emphasised the necessity for CAMHS to provide services in Tier 1 and 2 settings, in an attempt to reach out to those populations who do not usually engage with traditional clinic-based mental health services (Urwin, 2003; Music, 2008; Music and Hall, 2008). Despite needing the support, many children and young people are in family circumstances which are unable to assist them to consistently attend therapy sessions in

outpatient settings. For some young people, to make appointments relying on their own agency alone can be quite onerous, requiring more motivation and determination than they may feel capable of (Trevatt, 2009). For example adolescent boys, in particular, struggle to attend therapy appointments in CAMHS clinics (ibid). Child psychotherapists have argued for some time for the need to provide therapeutic support outside of the traditional CAMHS clinic for these populations who would otherwise be unable to receive such help (e.g. Dyke, 1985; Jackson, 2008; Trevatt, 2009). These children and young people can benefit much more from psychotherapy based in a school setting, where the child psychotherapist and school staff jointly provide a supportive structure around the therapy, and therapy is easier to access being on-site and in an environment which is familiar to them (Trevatt, 2009). There are a number of challenges in working in school settings though (discussed further in the following chapter), such as difficulties in engaging parents. CAMHS teams and professionals have indeed responded to the requirements posed by the government, and over the past decade, CAMHS work has expanded and restructured to meet these initiatives (Music and Hall, 2008).

Government strategies do not only promote collaboration between various services that have traditionally worked with mental health difficulties; joint work has also been necessary between mental health and non-mental health services such as schools (ibid). The government put forward a requirement that schools deliver a number of extended services from 8am to 6pm for children at their school and their parents, such as sports, fitness and drama clubs, parenting skills and computer training, sexual health and CAMHS provisions - thus being a centre for different community initiatives and services (Department of Education, 2004; Music and Hall, 2008; Paiva, 2011). There was emphasis that through providing such 'extended services', schools could contribute to the improvement of the lives of disadvantaged children (Department of Education, 2004). It was acknowledged by the Department of Education (2005) that schools and other agencies would be facing challenges in *"...working with new people, with a new service remit and in a new way. This means that it will not be possible or appropriate to work in the same way they did before. It will probably mean abandoning or at least reassessing old assumptions, values and theories about how things work."* (p.10). This puts additional pressures on schools to meet these demands (Music and Hall, 2008).

The government has also set out initiatives concerning pupils with special educational



needs (SEN). *The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice* (Department of Education and Department of Health, 2015) contains statutory guidance for local authorities, educational, health and social services working with children and young people from 0 to 25 years of age with SEN or disabilities in-line with the *Children and Families Act 2014*. The code states that “*A child or young person has SEN if they have a...significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age...which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of...mainstream schools...[and] which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her...*” (pp.15-16). The code places much emphasis on the requirement to consult with children and their parents about educational provisions and for them to be able to participate in decision-making and the planning of support at all stages. The code identifies four broad areas of needs, one of which concerns social, mental and emotional health. It states that there must be “*...collaboration between education, health and social care services to provide support...[and to improve] the quality of special educational provision...in relation to disabled children and young people and those with special education needs....*” (pp.19 and 24). In addition, it states that schools need to be well-equipped to provide support in these areas and advises that in order to meet these needs, “*This might include schools commissioning specialist services directly.*” (p.103) and names CAMHS as such a specialist service. The child psychotherapy service through which I did the brief psychotherapy with the children which is the subject of this thesis, was set up by the specialist school and a local CAMHS in the context of the aforementioned government initiatives.

A more detailed exploration of the expansion of child psychotherapists’ work within CAMHS clinics to community-based settings, especially schools, and a discussion of the considerations and complexities involved in this work occurs in the next chapter.

### **Setting**

The specialist school where I conducted my research is situated in the South East of England. The school consists of a large main building and connected to it, a smaller new building which houses the new year group. There is a consulting room designated for child psychotherapy in each building. The premises also includes a playing field. The school buildings and grounds are spacious and well-kempt. The classrooms are big and equipped with modern technology. The newer building is very nurturing and appropriately colourful in appearance. The therapy rooms are suitably sized and their

appearance is pleasant. They consist of a desk, some chairs and a lower table with a dolls' house on it. There are also some other shared toys in each room such as telephones, building blocks and some books.

Pupils come from the school's Local Education Authority catchment area, which comprises of varied ethnic, religious, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Most of the pupils at the school have faced challenges in their lives, such as breakdowns in family relationships, domestic violence, mental health issues amongst their parents, abuse and/or neglect. Pupils range in the difficulties with which they present with. All primary and secondary pupils have an Education Health Plan (EHP), and children in the new year group either have or are in the process of receiving one. Most pupils seem to express their complex difficulties through action rather than words, often through aggressive behaviour, particularly upon referral to the specialist school. Other difficulties include: making friends, maintaining relationships with others, modulating their feelings and mood, managing anxieties, seeking refuge in gangs rather than turning to adults for help, and separation and attachment difficulties. Many children have been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and a number are in Looked After Care. A few older adolescents have been in trouble with the law, mostly for minor crimes.

### **Brief Work Model**

The Tavistock Clinic's Under Five's model, on which my work with the new year group was based, is a time-limited, psychoanalytically-orientated intervention. It consists of up to five sessions, or the work may be extended to another set of five sessions, if need be. The sessions are followed by a review meeting. The reasons as to why a child might be referred vary widely and include issues such as “...*feeding and sleeping difficulties, crying...failure to thrive, tantrums and aggressive or disruptive behaviour, sibling relationship difficulties, and developmental delay.*” (Emanuel, 2006: p.67). Problems which are more severe and/or complex usually require longer-term work rather than brief work, such as where the child has a serious illness, disability or where babies/children have died in the family. Many of the children in the new year group displayed some of the kinds of problems that are suited to the brief work intervention, which furthermore made it an appealing model. A broader discussion of brief work by child psychotherapists is in the following chapter.

## **Thesis Overview**

In the next chapter, I review the literature in areas pertinent to my thesis. I examine the changes that public-sector child psychotherapy service-delivery has undergone due to changes in governmental policies. I discuss the range of therapeutic work that child psychotherapists have done in school settings and the variety of brief work conducted by child psychotherapists. The subsequent chapter focuses on my methodology. I discuss issues surrounding the planning and conducting of my research, the samples utilised in the thesis, the methods used for data collection and analyses, and ethical considerations regarding my study. This is followed by three chapters that arose out of my analyses of the data. The first of these three chapters concerns my analysis of the children's brief work sessions. The second and third chapters relate to my analysis of the interviews with the children's mainstream teachers<sup>1</sup> - one chapter looks at the children's progress following their placements at the specialist school and the other chapter investigates the teachers' views of the children. In my final chapter, I explore conclusions drawn from my research in terms of how the main findings relate to the research questions, limitations of my study, the contributions my research makes to related fields, implications for policy and practice and recommendations for future research.

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term "teachers" to denote class teachers and SENCOs during this thesis.

## **Literature Review**

This chapter examines the existing body of literature in areas which are particularly relevant to the subject of this thesis. The literature review is composed of three sections. The first section explores the changes undergone by child psychotherapy provision in the public sector in Britain, from being situated in the clinic to include bases in community settings, such as schools. It looks at the impact of changes in government's policies on services for children and their families. The second part of the literature review explores the work of child psychotherapists in schools. Despite the modest amount of literature which has been published in this field, a breadth of work is described, including work with children and teachers. It also investigates how child psychotherapists have applied psychoanalytic thinking to their understanding of emotional and psychological experiences in school settings. The final section looks at brief work which has been conducted and documented by child psychotherapists, and focuses on the common themes which emerge with children under the age of five. These issues will now be explored in light of their relevance to my research questions.

### **CAMHS Outreach Services**

This section discusses the changes in British child psychotherapy public-sector service-delivery. CAMHS work has evolved from being situated in clinic settings to include outreach settings, such as schools. In recent times, governmental policies and initiatives have called for greater joint work between services working with children and their families. This has also influenced the changes in CAMHS work. These issues are relevant to my research, which took place in a CAMHS outreach service.

In the literature, the history of child psychotherapy within the public sector has been traced back to its presence in "Child Guidance Clinics". McLoughlin (2009) recounts that it was following the First World War that these clinics came into existence (initially in East London and Glasgow), to help and provide services to children and families who had been severely affected by the war and suffered from loss, displacement and being split up from their families. McLoughlin states that the staff at the clinics provided a collaborative approach and that the teams consisted of a psychiatrist, social worker and educational psychologist. Shuttleworth (1999) and Music (2008) document that child psychotherapists worked in Child Guidance Clinics too. Music also explains that these clinics were outpatient services and that they were gradually set up in most parts of the

UK. Differences occurred in the size of the staff teams and accessibility of services from area to area. Funding for the clinics came from local authorities.

Shuttleworth and Music both write that Child Guidance Clinics later became known as “Child and Family Consultation Services” and that today they are known as “Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services” (CAMHS). CAMHS work takes place within a four-tier system (Music, 2008). Tier 1 consists of services provided by professionals who are often the first to identify mental health concerns within the child and/or family, for example GPs, teachers or health visitors. Tier 2 professionals are mental health specialists who work in community and primary care settings. Tier 3 consists of clinicians who work in local mental health ‘outpatient’ clinics within multi-disciplinary teams. CAMHS work has traditionally taken place in this Tier. Tier 4 is composed of services which are geared towards dealing with the most severe of mental health problems. It includes highly specialised settings, for instance, inpatient units and day units.

A notable change concerning multi-agency work has taken place over time. Music states that the work of educational psychologists at Child Guidance Clinics with schools in their locality provided an important connection between mental health and education. However, this link was severed because “*Unfortunately these original multi-agency systems were slowly dismantled.*” (Music, 2008: p.105). However during the fifteen years, government issued policies, such as the NSF and *Every Child Matters* (see previous chapter), to re-establish multi-agency work once again amongst services for children and families. This has been attributed to the rise in serious mental health issues amongst children and young people and greater understanding and awareness of children and adolescent’s psychological needs (Music, 2008; Music and Hall, 2008).

In response to government requirements, CAMHS have restructured and expanded over the past fifteen years (Music and Hall, 2010), including in terms of joined-up work with services in community settings (e.g. Urwin, 2003; Tydeman and Kiernan, 2005; Elfer, 2010; Hurley, 2010; Witkon, 2012; Argent, 2015). For example, Urwin (2003) gives a detailed account about a weekly clinic which she ran on behalf of CAMHS in a local community centre. This project was government-funded and time-limited and a joint venture between CAMHS and Sure Start. It took place in an inner London borough with an ethnically diverse and economically deprived population, working with families

where there were concerns about children under the age of four. This population was under-represented in the CAMHS clientele statistics, and the project was successful in reaching them. During the first year of the project, the proportion of Bangladeshi clients who attended the project was representative of the community's population of Bangladeshi residents. This ethnic group had been under-represented in clinic-based CAMHS work in the past. Also, families where there were ongoing issues of domestic violence, criminal activity or uncertainty concerning immigrant status managed to access the project; usually individuals in such precarious circumstances tend to avoid drawing the attention of those in authority to themselves.

Government strategies such as *Every Child Matters* do not only promote collaboration between various services who have traditionally worked with mental health difficulties. Joint work has also been necessary between mental health and non-mental health services, such as schools. For instance, Ingall and Smyth (2011) have written about such a partnership between the Tavistock and Portman Clinic, Child and Family Department and New Rush Hall School, a specialist school for children and adolescents with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. In order to meet government initiatives regarding the addressing of pupils' emotional needs, the school approached the Tavistock Clinic which led to a collaboration between the two services. This was two-fold. There was an arrangement for the first year of a postgraduate course, "*Emotional Factors in Learning and Teaching: Counselling Aspects in Education*" to be held at the school. Ingall and Smyth describe how psychoanalytic concepts enabled school staff to understand meaning behind their pupils' complex challenging and puzzling behaviours and communications, and their own feelings and reactions towards these experiences, through seminars about psychoanalytic papers and ideas and about their work with pupils. In addition, the school commissioned a child psychotherapy service from the Tavistock Clinic based at the school, thus CAMHS work then occurred on-site at the school.

The next section will focus on literature about the variety of work that child psychotherapists do in schools as well as how psychoanalytic thinking has been applied to school settings.

### **Therapeutic Work in Schools**

Dating back several decades, child psychotherapists have attained a long and established

history of working in outreach settings, including health clinics, hospitals and GP surgeries and this has been documented in the literature (e.g. Folkart, 1964; Wittenberg, 1971; Daws, 1983; Fletcher, 1983; Vas Dias, 1990; Flynn, 1998; Cant, 2002; Miller, 2004; Tydeman and Kiernan, 2005; Cregeen, 2008; Hadley, 2012). Work in school settings is another area, and this has provided a link between work in the sectors of mental health and education (e.g. Jackson, 1970; Dyke, 1985; Woods, 1985; Mawson, 1986; Emanuel, 1999; Reid, 1999; Maltby, 2008; Music and Hall, 2008; Robertson, 2008; Sayder, 2008; Jackson, 2008; McLoughlin, 2009; Evans, 2013). Within this body of literature, child psychotherapists have explored work with children and adolescents regarding considerations and complexities that arise when working in a school setting, particularly in terms of individual psychotherapy. The literature also describes the contributions that child psychotherapists have made towards improving life at school, especially through work discussion groups and consultations with school staff, for instance by helping teachers to understand pupils' challenging behaviour, complex interactions between teachers and pupils, and teachers' unprocessed feelings towards pupils' challenging behaviours, in the context of the pupils' underlying issues. This work with children and adolescents and school staff is pertinent to my thesis because my first research question looks at themes that emerge when working with children in a school setting, on an individual basis (in my research, it is through brief work), and my second question relates to the understanding that teachers form of their pupils. These areas will now be explored.

### ***Individual work***

Child psychotherapists have discussed a number of issues that emerge when working with children and adolescents in community settings, concerning individual work (e.g. Folkart, 1964; Jackson, 1970; Fletcher, 1983; Woods, 1985; Mawson, 1986; Vas Dias, 1990; Youell, 2002; Robertson, 2008; McLoughlin, 2009, Trevatt, 2009) and group work (e.g. Reid, Fry and Rhode, 1977; Reid, 1991; 1999; Canham and Emanuel, 2000; Sayder, 2008; Argent, 2015). This particularly concerns individual work and considerations and complexities regarding the setting, technical issues and gaining the support of other staff for the work.

One of the main issues that is pertinent in outreach work concerns challenges regarding the setting in which therapeutic work takes place, including using a room which is consistently available and suitable for individual work, managing disruptions during the

session from other children and staff, having separate boxes for the children and a place to store them, and sharing facilities with clients (e.g. Folkart, 1964; Vas Dias, 1990; Youell, 2002). Similar issues are faced by child psychotherapists in school settings. Using the same room, at the same time each week for a child's therapy (or the same times each week for a child having more frequent sessions) is an important part of the framework in the work of child psychotherapy. Offering a regular, consistent, predictable and stable setting enables children to gradually bring their inner, underlying preoccupations into their therapy (Joseph, 1998). However, obtaining such a room in a busy school setting, separate from the rest of school life to delineate clear boundaries between school and therapy and deter intrusion from other members of the school, can be difficult to achieve (Jackson, 1970; Woods, 1985; Trevatt, 2009).

Finding a suitable time for therapy sessions which takes into account the child's school routine is another essential consideration, in order to maintain good working relationships with class teachers, who may otherwise feel that their work with the child is not perceived as important (Daws, 1983, Robertson, 2008). Sometimes, interruptions to the rhythm of therapy may occur, for example due to class trips, and it is important for the therapist to process his or her own feelings towards this disruption (Robertson, 2008). It is also useful to think about how the child makes his or her way to and from therapy; whether the therapist or a member of the teaching-staff brings the child and returns him or her back to class, or whether to rely on the child's own agency (Daws, 1983).

It is likely that children in therapy know other children with whom their therapist works. Jackson (1970) and Dyke (1985) highlight the potential for rivalry and jealousy to emerge. Where destructive impulses take hold of children, this can lead to hostility, conflict or provocation amongst children or ganging up against the therapist (Wittenberg, 1971). For such reasons, Dyke argues, it is better that the child psychotherapist does not see several children from the same class group for therapy. It is also necessary to be mindful about one's movements in and around the building (Music and Hall, 2008), such as whether or not the therapist has lunch in the dining hall like other members of staff, and what impact this would have on the children in treatment. Some children may struggle to manage witnessing such situations, which can impact on the security and containment of the therapy framework (Jackson, 1970; Kohon, 2011), as it can "*...evoke considerable jealousy and envy and ridicule of the therapist and can be used by the*



*child to sabotage the therapeutic alliance and weaken the trust involved.”* (Jackson, 1970: p.56).

A second key issue which is prominent in outreach work concerns technical issues, such as engaging with children outside of therapy, working in the transference and confidentiality issues (e.g. Folkart, 1964; Elkan, 1984; Vas Dias, 1990; Cant, 2002). These themes and others are also pertinent to in work in schools. Jackson (1970) states that making interpretations to children outside the therapy room can be counterproductive. For example, when there is a desire in the child to draw the therapist into life outside the therapy room or attack the work, the patient may experience the interactions as colluding with this wish. Holding onto one’s role is also important as one could be pulled into roles akin to that of other professionals, such as teacher (Jackson, 2008). The therapy can be affected by external agendas too:

*...preventing school exclusion or helping a child access learning are never far from one’s mind, and can sometimes obstruct access to a more symbolic understanding and interpreting of the clinical material...the parameters of confidentiality tend to be much more complex and fluid in school-based work, and much distrust and confusion can therefore ensue around this issue in young people at times of external crisis. (McLoughlin, 2009: pp.309-310)*

McLoughlin argues that such issues which impact on the child psychotherapist’s therapeutic technique in individual work pose a question as to whether this kind of treatment can be deemed as ‘psychoanalytic psychotherapy’. She suggests defining the work instead as ‘supportive psychotherapy’, a term used by Kernberg (2004). This is because, for example, therapy in schools often focuses on ego-strength rather than challenging or exploring defensive or destructive structures with the child, and responses to material are made on the level of the external world rather than directly in the transference. Whatever the stance taken in defining the work, it seems to be an important part of the therapy to assist the child to distinguish his or her internal world from the external world. This task is ongoing and requires the therapist to continually bear in mind how the child is using the setting (Jackson, 1970).

In addition, the transference to the child psychotherapist in a school setting can be very different to that in a clinic. Unlike work in a clinic, it is quite likely that the child has seen the child psychotherapist in and around the school and therefore may well have fantasies and preoccupations concerning the therapist prior to them meeting (Dyke, 1985). Depending on the child's perception about the extent to which the child psychotherapist is part of the school, the institutional transference to the therapist may be stronger in a school environment than in a clinic (Trevatt, 2009). Dyke argues that these factors make it important to take up such issues to do with the transference more directly in one's interpretations, where they arise during the assessment, so that the child experiences that his/her communications and preoccupations are being registered and understood. This is different to the usual practice of assessments in clinic settings, where interpreting in the transference may be experienced as quite startling and too personal for the child who meets with the therapist for the first time (Dyke, 1985).

A third main issue which occurs in outreach work concerns the necessity for one's colleagues to support the work (e.g. Folkart, 1964; Daws, 1983; Fletcher, 1983). In school-based therapy, it is also essential that the work is supported by staff. This is similar to the parental corroboration which is usually required for clinic-based treatment. As part of this support, it is necessary that there is minimal obstruction on the therapy from the school to create a secure framework around the therapy (Jackson, 1970). Dyke (1985) argues that the school's ethos towards therapy plays a significant role in the level of support that is given to treatment. For example, there may be more resistance from staff in schools where it may be felt to be undesirable for the school's profile to have children in therapy. Whereas in schools where it is felt that there are many who need therapy, more referrals of children for therapy may be made than there are spaces to see them. Dyke stresses that children can struggle to engage in therapy without backing from the teacher. In schools, there is also considerable potential for splitting to take place between education and therapy, and it is important for the child psychotherapist to be aware of this (Youell, 2000; Hadley, 2012). Intensive psychotherapy can especially require a good and understanding working relationship between the child psychotherapist and the school, as the treatment may sometimes generate particularly strong feelings within the institution (Robertson, 2008), such as competition and rivalry. Collaboration between the child psychotherapist and the teachers is also vital in situations where it is necessary to end the session prematurely, such as due to physical aggression, as the therapist may require help in removing a child from the therapy room

and escorting them away (Jackson, 1970).

There has been discussion within the literature about situations where, for some children, therapy in a school setting may not be a preferable option. For instance, Dyke argues that school-based therapy may be unsuitable for children who have problems in withstanding pressures to be involved in gang activities at school or who struggle acutely with sibling rivalry. In thinking about individual work in special schools, Woods (1985) states that:

*...there will be many children for whom treatment is contraindicated. The children who come to special schools are often so damaged that they feel compelled to destroy whatever good may yet exist for them. The school's task is first and foremost to be undestroyed by such envious attack. Destructiveness in these children cannot yet be symbolised and the school is required to sustain attacks that emanate from the meaninglessness of the child's internal world. (Woods, 1985: p.64)*

Woods argues that in such circumstances, it is important for the therapist to try to help the school to process and contain these attacks and communications, which may possibly enable therapy to take place in the future. Acrimonious relations between home and school can affect treatment too (Dyke, 1985). Children who truant from school or those on the verge of exclusion may also struggle with school-based therapy. Dyke also states that it is challenging to establish therapy where the defence against difficulty and pain is to take flight.

If issues about the physical setting and technique and support from school staff are thought about in advance of the therapy and throughout, then this can help to keep education and therapy distinct from each other, for the child to get on with the task of individual work and for therapy to flourish (e.g. Jackson, 1970; Dyke, 1985; Woods, 1985; Mawson, 1986; Music and Hall, 2008; Robertson, 2008).

### ***Work with school staff***

Child psychotherapists have explored the contribution that their work with staff in

outreach settings can make to life in such institutions (e.g. Folkart, 1964; Wittenberg, 1971; Daws, 1983; Fletcher, 1983; Hopkins, 1988; Vas Dias, 1990; Flynn, 1998; Cant, 2002; Miller, 2004; Tydeman and Kiernan, 2005; Cregeen, 2008; Rustin and Bradley, 2008; Hadley, 2012). Child psychotherapists have also supported school staff in their work with pupils. This is predominantly explored in the literature in terms of work discussion groups (e.g. Jackson, 2002a; 2005; 2008, Music and Hall, 2008) and consultations with staff (e.g. Emanuel, 1999; Maltby, 2008; Evans, 2013).

Work discussion seminars form a key part of the child psychotherapy training and are also an integral component of the *Psychoanalytic Observational Studies* post-graduate course, which is a preliminary to the training (e.g. Rustin, 1999; Jackson, 2002a; 2005; Music and Hall, 2008; Rustin and Bradley, 2008). The work discussion group aims to understand the impact of emotional processes, factors and responses which are at play in the relationship between a worker and client(s), by exploring close and often detailed observations of interactions between them. At times, this may also include the effect of the wider group and institution. Work discussion has an important role in other courses which are informed by psychoanalytic thinking, such as the Tavistock Clinic's *Emotional Factors in Learning and Teaching* MA course (e.g. Hartland-Rowe, 2005; Jackson, 2005; 2008). A key text in this course is *The Learning Relationship: Psychoanalytic Thinking in Education* (Youell, 2006). In her book, Youell discusses a number of matters pertinent to learning and teaching from a psychoanalytic perspective. For instance, she explores issues that can obstruct children and adolescents progressing in their learning at school and contextualises this in terms of psychoanalytic concepts and understanding. Whilst child psychotherapists have established the work discussion group in other settings, such as residential and social services, Jackson (2002a; 2005; 2008) argues that the model is under-employed in schools, though there is much scope for it.

Within the literature about work discussion, child psychotherapists have discussed key themes which emerge in their groups with school staff, particularly in terms of understanding child and adolescent development, relationships between staff and pupils and managing challenging behaviour (e.g. Jackson, 2002a; 2005; 2008; Music and Hall, 2008).

One of the main themes which is prevalent in work discussion groups in schools

concerns understanding child development, particularly adolescence. Jackson (2002a; 2005; 2008) discovered that most teachers did not feel that they had adequate teacher training about adolescence, including secondary school teachers. Interactions with adolescents which teachers share with the groups often bring forth in them the kinds of feelings and experiences that adolescents can struggle with (Jackson, 2008; Music and Hall, 2008). Staff often find themselves compelled to react in the moment to these experiences, rather like the adolescents they work with (Rustin, 2011). Work discussion groups are spaces where teachers are been able to manage the feelings evoked in them in a different way, by noticing, articulating and reflecting on them (Jackson, 2002a; 2005; 2008). Processing and understanding their feelings and conflicts helps teachers to think about the feelings and underlying struggles that their pupils might be experiencing, which in turn often results in thinking about different ways to approach a situation (Jackson, 2002a; 2005; 2008; Music and Hall, 2008; Rustin, 2011).

Another prominent theme revolves around the attachments and relationships between pupils and staff. There is often a culture within schools for staff to overlook their feelings towards and stirred up by their pupils due to concerns about being perceived as overstepping professional boundaries (Jackson, 2002a; 2005; 2008; Music and Hall, 2008). This can make it difficult to think about the meaning, functions and impact of such relationships on both staff and pupils. Issues to do with pupils relationships with staff are particularly prevalent and intense at points of transition, when matters pertaining to the boundaries around life at school emerge, such as school holidays or when children or teachers begin or leave school (Youell, 2006; Jackson, 2008). Work discussion groups enable staff to notice these issues (Jackson, 2008; Music and Hall, 2008). This fosters the understanding that these kinds of attachments and the strong responses that pupils can sometimes incite in staff, such as fondness, anger or indifference, are normal and can also be connected with pupils' experiences, which in turn, makes it easier to explore the relationships between teachers and pupils (Jackson, 2008).

Managing challenging behaviour from pupils, which can prevent their own learning or distract others, is also a focal theme in the work discussion groups (Mawson, 1986; Jackson, 2002a; 2005; 2008; Music and Hall, 2008). For instance, behaviour which is hostile, gang-like, spoiling or seemingly aimed at provoking a response from others can leave teachers feeling anxious, weary, frustrated or resentful towards them or tired,

powerless and incompetent within themselves. Work discussion provides a forum for teachers to express and process their feelings and preoccupations. This then makes more space for further exploration. Usually there is some form of emotional experience or feeling that the pupil struggles to connect with or manage, and the anxiety that this generates is underlying their outward behaviour (Mawson, 1986; Jackson, 2002a; 2005; Youell, 2006; Jackson, 2008; Music and Hall, 2008; Rustin, 2011). Through this kind of processing and subsequent understanding in the group, teachers are able to approach their pupils with a different mindset. Work discussion groups can have a positive impact on teachers' wellbeing and teaching, and in turn also help children to cope and academically perform better at school (Jackson, 2002a; 2005; 2008).

In addition, benefits such as these which are gained through work discussion can provide teachers with a more positive association to the experience of observation (e.g. Jackson, 2002a; Hartland-Rowe, 2005; Jackson, 2005; 2008; Music and Hall, 2008). Usually for teachers, observation is part of the process by which their work and the performance of the school is assessed by their seniors, other educational professionals or Ofsted inspectors, often resulting in an anxiety-provoking and stressful atmosphere, where there is pressure connected to outcomes and to be seen to be doing well (Briggs and Ingall, 2005; Jackson, 2005; Youell, 2006). Through work discussion, observation therefore becomes promoted as a helpful tool and skill for teachers to draw on. Jackson (2005) writes:

*Over time, teachers tend to feel their capacity to tune into their observations increases dramatically and in ways they had not expected...they also speak of becoming much more aware of themselves – their own self-observations – including the way they are feeling, what they are thinking, how they are behaving, and so on. On the whole, this has had a liberating and distressing effect on teachers. Moreover, rather than getting into repetitive cycles with pupils and feeling provoked into responding in predictable ways, teachers can begin to make use of what is going on inside of them in effective and encouraging ways. (p.11)*

In evaluating work discussion groups, Jackson (2002a; 2005; 2008) reported feedback

which was “...*overwhelmingly positive.*” (2005: p.15). For instance, Jackson (2008) relayed some of the responses collated from over 95 evaluation forms, regarding secondary school-based outreach projects conducted for the Brent Centre for Young People and the Tavistock Clinic. Concerning responses attained from some of the questions, between 88% and 97% of teaching staff experienced work discussion groups as “...*supportive...*”, enabling them to “...*share their work with an outside professional*”, develop “...*a deeper understanding about the meaning of behaviour...*”, and felt “...*helped to persevere...*” and “...*develop new ways of engaging ...*” with pupils who had been very challenging (2008: p.79).

As with work discussion groups, in their consultative role, child psychotherapists can support teachers to think about and understand their feelings and reactions in response to interactions with pupils, and sometimes even with their colleagues (Wittenberg, 1971; Emanuel, 1999; Maltby, 2008; Evans, 2013). This can take the form of individual consultations with a member of staff, including ‘drop in’ consultations, or with specific groups, such as the management staff, or the whole school institution (Emanuel, 1999; Maltby, 2008). The work aims to: “...*help the participants to find what they thought they had lost, to recognise what they still have at an internal level and to access this...to galvanise their own inner resources....*” (Maltby, 2009: pp.98-99).

There is some variance concerning the perspectives which consultants draw on to understand phenomena which emerge in consultation (e.g. Menzies-Lyth, 1960; 1982; Harris, 1987; Halton, 1994; Obholzer and Roberts, 1994; Emanuel, 1999; Sprince, 2002; Cregeen, 2008; Maltby, 2008; Evans, 2013). For example, consultants may think about the issues that surface in terms of organisational dynamics, or personal issues that arise for the client, and either directly comment on these processes or keep them at the back of the mind to inform their thinking and what is being presented to them. Emanuel (1999) Maltby (2008) and Evans (2013) all made use of working psychoanalytically with the children and their families in their approach to consultancy, as well as staffs’ transferences to them and their countertransferences. In their respective consultative work, Emanuel, Maltby and Evans used understanding about the painful feelings and emotional experiences that pupils were struggling to contain to make sense of staff’s experiences. This included issues to do with damage, loss and inadequacy, which may have stemmed from pupils’ unprocessed experiences as infants of being recipients of similar projections from their parents. The children seemed often to manage these

feelings by projecting them into staff members, who, in turn, became overwhelmed and felt unable to care for the children in the way that they would otherwise have liked to.

In their experiences of consultative work, Emanuel, Maltby and Evans each note that positive outcomes were achieved. Over the course of the meetings, unprocessed underlying anxieties and preoccupations which seemed to hinder progress surfaced. These were addressed and made sense of and the capacity to think creatively was mobilised and staff felt much more contained. This enabled them to approach the problems and challenges they faced from a different perspective, often leading to changes in school life. They found that staff were able to give more space to contemplating children's experiences, preoccupations and needs, improving both learning, teaching and life at school.

This section has examined the contributions that child psychotherapists have made in schools, as part of their work in outreach settings. Child psychotherapists have also had a distinguished and long history of brief psychotherapeutic work with children under the age of five and their families. This work has evolved over time too, as it is now well-established in child psychotherapy, and will be discussed in the next section.

### **Under-Fives Brief Work**

Child psychotherapists have used psychoanalytic understanding and techniques to creatively tailor to the need for brief psychotherapeutic work. Examples of such work can be seen in the brief work with adolescents pioneered by clinicians at the Brent Consultation Centre (e.g. Novick, 1977; Hurry, 1986) as well as the Tavistock-based Young People's Consultation Service, Parent's and Carer's Consultation Service and Under Five's Service. Most well-documented of these provisions in the literature seems to be the work of the Under Five's Service (e.g. Likierman, 1988; Hopkins, 1992; Miller, 1992; Daws, 1993; Barrows, 1997; Daws, 1997; Emanuel, 2003; Pozzi, 2003; Urwin, 2003; Pozzi and Tydeman, 2005; Likierman, 2008, Miller, 2008; Urwin, 2008; Emanuel, 2012). This five-session model of work (described in the *Introduction* chapter) operates as a quick response to parents and their infants and/or young children's needs. It has also "...*thrown the net wide....*" (Miller, 2004 p.185) by seeing the families in outreach services and providing consultations to professionals outside of the health services. Child psychotherapists have written about some of the themes that are prominent in under-five's work, which are pertinent to this thesis for two key reasons. First, my initial



research question investigates the themes that can emerge in brief psychotherapy with children. Second, the children in this study, like many of their peers in their year group at the specialist school, often presented as much younger than their age. These themes will now be explored.

### ***Separation***

One of the main themes that is present in the literature about under-five's work concerns separation difficulties (e.g. Daws, 1997; 1999; Pozzi, 2003; Likierman, 2008; Emanuel, 2012). The first experiences of separation occur very early in life during infancy, such as at the end of a feed or when the baby's parent hands him<sup>2</sup> to another adult (e.g. O'Shaughnessy, 1964; Daws, 1999; Likierman, 2008). It is necessary for the infant to experience both closeness and separation in order to grow, and as the infant becomes a toddler, separation and gaps in the parent attending to him increase as the parents attend to other things in life, such as other relationships (Daws, 1999; Likierman, 2008). When the child is feeling more secure, these experiences of separation are tolerable and he has a sense that he will eventually be attended to and can wait. Conversely, when he feels less secure, separation becomes harder to tolerate and the child may experience underlying anxieties such as fear of being abandoned or that he might stop existing (Daws, 1999; Likierman, 2008). Likierman (2008) argues that separation anxiety needs to be thought about in relation to the child's family context and about how hopeful the child feels *"...that his needs will be met after periods of inevitable waiting and frustration...At an optimal level, the child needs to feel that his family is sufficiently intact to contain his separation anxieties while he struggles to work through them."* (pp.216-217). Over time, the child can then tolerate longer separations.

Emanuel (2012) states that children who are seen in under-fives work often come across as not having experienced much emotional containment from very early on in their lives. They can struggle with separation and *"...have developed primitive unconscious strategies to cope with mental pain."* and fears such as *"...terror of falling apart or fragmenting when feeling un-held..."* (p.270). Thinking about the work of Bick (e.g. 1968; 1986), Emanuel states that the baby may seek means of *"...holding himself together..."* (2012: p.270) through *"...adhesive identification..."* (Bick, 1986: p.60) as the infant *"...stick[s] concretely to the object...linked to a fear of separation from the object and to the difficulty of weaning, separation and letting go, associated with*

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<sup>2</sup> For ease of reading, masculine pronouns will be used to refer to a baby or infant.

*mourning.*” (Emanuel, 2012: p.270).

Examples of the kinds of presenting problems faced by families who are seen in under-fives work, where separation issues are prominent, include difficulties with sleeping, eating, and bereavement, which can also be interrelated (e.g. Daws, 1999; Pozzi, 2003). Child psychotherapists have noted that when families with young children with sleeping problems seek help, they often feel very distressed, desperate and exhausted (e.g. Daws, 1989; 1999; Pozzi, 2003). Getting a child to go to sleep involves separation, for instance by the parent laying the baby down or leaving the child in his own bedroom. Separation can also be challenging for the parent, not just the child: “*The mother of an eight-month old said, ‘when he closes his eyes, I feel left out’.*” (Daws, 1999: p.267). When working with the families, Daws (1999) deems it important to learn in depth about the child’s daily routine and timetable, his life from mother’s pregnancy onwards and the relationship between the parents. This enables the therapist to obtain a detailed picture of the child’s life-story within the family context. Pozzi (2003) argues that the therapist sometimes needs to help the parents to generate “*...mental bolts...*” (p.98) which “*...allow internal boundaries to be set and...then create spaces between them [and their child]...a solid parental authority.*” (p.95). Pozzi states that these ‘mental bolts’ have a paternal function in that they help to separate a “*...too-close mother-child unit.*” (p.98).

The therapist tries to understand and process underlying anxieties and preoccupations that the family are communicating during the course of the work, and what the sleeping difficulties or any other problems might represent at an unconscious level. The understanding which is gained is either put to the parents or utilised by the therapist to help the family indirectly. This containment by the therapist is based on what Bion (1962b) described as the mother’s “*...reverie...*” (p.116) and is an important mechanism which is used in under-fives work (e.g. Pozzi, 2003; Emanuel, 2008; Miller, 2008; Emanuel, 2012). Bion stated that the infant projects overwhelming and unprocessed experiences, “*...beta elements...*” (p.117) which are received and contained by the mother. Using her “*...alpha function...*” (p.115) she processes and transforms them into acceptable “*...alpha elements...*” (ibid) which are returned to the infant, enabling him to feel contained. Similarly, the therapist uses containment and reverie to transform the family’s projections, make sense of them and help them to manage their experiences.

Feeding difficulties usually relate to when the child is eating too much or too little (e.g. Daws, 1993; 1999; Pozzi, 2003). Daws (1993; 1999) states that when the problem concerns the infant being fed too much, the parent and baby are struggling to part from each other. Daws (1999) deems that sometimes the mother believes that she must continually be available to feed the baby and that saying 'no' equates with 'bad' mothering. She also argues that it can be important to think with the parents about the different things that the infant's communications might mean, other than wanting to be fed, such as desiring to play. Infants who feed too little can be of greater concern due to worries that they will not thrive. This might mirror the parents' internal experiences of being deprived and neglected in life. Daws (1997; 1999) states that in such cases, it is necessary to explore their negative feelings towards their babies, themselves as well as in the transference to the therapist. Pozzi (2003) argues that children who reject food can come across as wanting to take control of their carers who are trying to feed them. The families often display "...no-entry..." defences (Williams, 1997: p.115) as they "...are very controlling of the counselling....have tightly shut lips, which do not let much therapeutic feeding enter...when improvement in the eating symptoms and family dynamic occurs...the parents [deny] that counselling had made any difference." (Pozzi, 2003: p.82).

Daws (2008) argues that through attending to the baby's physical needs, the infant gains experiences early on in life of regulation of his physical states such as hunger and sleep, which is important to healthy development. She states that "*Parents use their emotions to attune appropriately to their newborn baby and his needs to be looked after.*" (p.238) Through this "...*affect attunement*..." (Stern, 1985: p.142), the parents demonstrate to the infant that they are in touch with his feelings and emotional states. Daws states that it is necessary for the therapists to attune to the families seen in under-fives work "...*to be in touch with their state of mind before...think[ing] about how to change it.*" (2008: p.238).

Bereavement can result in separation difficulties, particularly when the loss is the death of a child or parent or due to a miscarriage (e.g. Pozzi, 2003; Bradley, 2008; Emanuel, 2012). Sometimes the loss of a baby leads to challenges in the parent bonding with their next child, as they are still preoccupied with the death (Bourne and Lewis, 1984; 1992; Bradley, 2008; Emanuel, 2012):

*The new child may have a sense that he or she can never get it quite right for their mother, as he or she cannot be, or replace, the lost child. The mother may believe that the new baby has to be neglected, because otherwise she is being disloyal or unfaithful to the dead baby. (Bradley, 2008: p.268)*

Where there has been a death of one of the parents, Pozzi (2003) states that for the child to cope with his parent's death, he has to have internalised a good object (Klein, 1952a) and a secure attachment to the parent (Bowlby, 1980), "...to be able to hold onto it in his mind and feelings...." (Pozzi, 2003: p.122) when the parent dies. His living parent is also key in helping the child to process his feelings about his loss.

### ***Challenging behaviour***

A second common theme which is prevalent in under-fives work surrounds challenging behaviour (e.g. Pozzi, 2003; Emanuel, 2008; Emanuel and Bradley, 2008; Miller, 2008; Urwin, 2008). This usually presents itself in the form of aggressive and disruptive behaviour and tantrums, which can occur at home or preschool or both (Emanuel and Bradley, 2008). Miller (2008) describes a tantrum as a "...nervous breakdown in miniature...." (p.131), where the child's capacity to think breaks down. Urwin (2008) mentions neurological changes that occur when the child is 2 or 3 years of age - when tantrums usually occur. At this stage of the child's life, neural pathways are newly forming which play a significant role in the development of his sense of self, for instance, he discovers that he has a 'will' "...that can come up against the 'will' of others." (p.152). Around this time, the child is still in the throws of issues of separation and loss, and tantrums can be the means by which young children deal with anxieties relating to these issues (Pozzi, 2003; Emanuel, 2008; Miller, 2008; Urwin, 2008).

Through tantrums, the child evacuates primitive feelings and emotions which he feels he cannot manage, tolerate or think about (Miller, 2008). The child "...uses his own body to discharge anxieties...." (Pozzi, 2003: p.152) or what Bick (1986) called "...secondary skin...." defences (p.60) to cope with these feelings (e.g. Pozzi, 2003; Emanuel, 2008; Urwin, 2008). Miller (2008) states that the baby in the midst of infantile rage expresses violent feelings, for example panic and anger, by violent actions such as kicking, thrashing about and yelling, and that the young child displays similar emotions and behaviours through tantrums. Urwin (2008) argues that young children also engage

in behaviours to defend themselves against feeling vulnerable and small; manic and omnipotent behaviours, such as refusal to rest or sleep, are used to combat feelings evoked by separation and loss. She states that such behaviours pose a challenge to parents: they do not want to collude with the child's pretence of not being vulnerable or dependent on others to meet their needs, yet they also want to nurture their child's desire to separate and be independent. When this omnipotent identification disintegrates, the child "...keeps the [subsequent] anxiety at bay..." (Urwin, 2008: p.154) through a tantrum.

Where parents are able to contain and use their reverie to manage their child's feelings and experiences, over time, the child will be able to manage his own feelings better: "...eventually the child acquires, through identification with a thinking parent...the capacity to keep a sense of proportion and reflect on consequences before acting." (Urwin, 2008: p.154). However, children seen in under-fives work who present with challenging behaviour do not appear to have experienced this kind of containment. The absence of it early on in their lives results in infantile defences later transforming into behaviours which are difficult to manage. The parents' struggles to contain their child can be a consequence of difficult experiences in their own lives, such as domestic violence, postnatal depression or experiences evoked from their own childhoods. For example, Miller (2008) writes about the impact on children of living in a home where there is violence. She states:

*Children...are asked to endure excess of terror. It is too much for them to do, to grasp the dreadful truth - that they, small and dependent, are in the hands of people who are far from being in command of themselves. Instead of feeling like witnesses, they feel like participants; they feel that they are joining in and are destructive people too. Violence can be addictive; it can come to seem a sign of life. (p.135).*

She argues that the children can become drawn to dangerous and risk-taking behaviour, which is experienced as exciting, as a form of defence.

The degree to which a mother can suffer from postnatal depression and its subsequent effects on the baby can vary widely (e.g. Murray and Cooper, 1997; Daws, 1999; Pozzi,

2003; Emanuel, 2008). Gender differences have been found as boys can come across as more withdrawn in their presenting symptoms and girls more sad or depressed (Pozzi, 2003). The mothers of children with difficulties such as hyperactivity, psychosis and autism, have often been found to have suffered with postnatal depression (Murray and Cooper, 1997; Tustin, 1990). Emanuel (2008) argues that postnatal depression can lead to problems in attunement between the mother and infant and the mother can thus struggle to pay attention to her infant's experiences. Emanuel cites research from Murray (1988) showing that by 18 months of age, children whose mothers suffered with postnatal depression were less securely attached than toddlers of the same age with mothers who were not depressed. Murray, Cooper and Hipwell (2003) state that where the mother is preoccupied with her own internal experiences and feelings, she can miss her baby's cues and can come across as "...*withdrawn*...", and where she appears intrusive, this may cause the infant to feel "...*discomfort*..." and he will find this "...*overwhelming*..." (p.72). The baby may also protest and withdraw from engaging with his mother (Murray, 1988). Misattunement can result in the infant developing "...*defensive forms of behaviour to deal with excessively long periods of inattention or inconsistent unpredictable responses*." (Emanuel, 2008: p.139). In addition, the baby may experience his communications not being received by his mother as hostile, and thus feel persecuted. When his re-attempts to project these now intensified feelings are still not received, a "...*vicious cycle [ensues]...often the source of the disruptive attention-seeking behaviour labelled Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder*..." (Emanuel, 2008: p.140). As this progresses, once at school, it can seriously hinder the child's learning as he identifies with this inattentive object.

Postnatal depression can be caused by relationship problems, for instance, the mother may have had problems with her own mother and struggled due to "...*the lack of empathic mothering*..." (Daws, 1999: p.269), there may be absence of a supportive person in her life or she may have suffered from a bereavement (e.g. Brown and Harris, 1978; Daws, 1999; Pozzi, 2003). These experiences can evoke feelings in the mother about her own needs not being met (Daws, 1997; Emanuel, 2003). If the birth of the baby brings unexpected difficulties and affects the mother getting acquainted with her baby, postnatal depression can also occur. Daws (1999) argues that postnatal depression can be cured so long as the professional listens to what the mother "...*really feels about herself, her partner and her baby*." which can be quite difficult as her thoughts might be very negative and "...*quite shocking...[such as] self-hatred, hatred of the baby or*

*partner...fear of damage that has happened, or might happen.” (p.270).*

### ***Parental couple***

A third theme which is common in under-fives work concerns the parental couple. How the parents function as a couple, their internal preoccupations concerning being part of a couple and their own experiences of being parented can influence their relationship with their child. In under-fives work, these issues are also explored in terms of how they impact the child’s development, as they can affect how he deals with separation, loss, exclusion and oedipal conflict (e.g. Barrows, 2008; Emanuel, 2008; Emanuel and Bradley, 2008; Gurion, 2008).

Child psychotherapists state that when working with under-fives families, it is important to concentrate on the relationship between the parental couple (e.g. Barrows, 2008; Emanuel, 2008; Gurion, 2008). Barrows (2008) argues that babies are born into social worlds which entail more than the mother-infant dyad, and that they are “...*having to deal with numerous relationships.*” (p.173), one of which is the parental couple. Even in the absence of a father, the fact that the mother has other significant relationships in her life means that the baby will experience oedipal situations (Barrows, 2008; Emanuel, 2008). The nature of the child’s identification with the parental couple affects the kind of parent that the child will one day become. If the child experiences a united and creative couple, he can become a good-enough parent himself later in life (e.g. Waddell, 1998; Britton, 2002; Morgan, 2005; Ruszczynski, 2005; Barrows, 2008). Being able to tolerate this link between the parental couple helps the child to cope with experiences such as oedipal conflicts, separation and loss, and to assume what Britton (1989) called a “...*third position....*” (p.87):

*...it provides him with a prototype for an object relationship of a third kind in which he is a witness and not a participant. A third position then comes into existence from which object relationships can be observed. Given this, we can also envisage being observed. This provides us with a capacity for seeing ourselves in interaction with others and for entertaining another point of view whilst retaining our own, for reflecting on ourselves whilst being ourselves. (Britton, 1989: p.87)*

However, if the child's experience is of a disunited and unstable parental couple, then this will make it difficult for him to work through oedipal conflicts by affirming his omnipotent phantasy that he can divide the parents, expel one parent from the couple and possess the other (e.g. Barrows, 2008; Emanuel, 2008).

Parents' internal perceptions of a parental couple can impact on their relationship with their child too. Emanuel (2008) connects this to the notion of container/contained purported by Bion (1962a; 1962b). She states that the parents provide the child with a "*...containing framework...*" (Emanuel, 2008: p.188) within which normal development takes place. It consists of combined maternal and paternal functions. There is a 'maternal function' of receiving the child's communications in a tender way, and a 'paternal function' of providing structure in the form of benign and firm limits and boundaries, and a penetrating role denoted by insight and novel ideas (Emanuel, 2008). However, dysfunction in the couple's relationship can affect the maternal and/or paternal function and containment that either or both of them provide their child, as they can become "*...excessively punitive and harsh, restrictive rather than limit-setting...[and/or] excessively indulgent and permissive, lacking any limit-setting capacity.*" (Emanuel, 2008: p.188). Emanuel states that in under-fives work, sometimes single-parents struggle to hold onto both maternal and paternal functions and instead oscillate between the two extreme positions. She believes that being too preoccupied with the child's absent parent can affect the single-parent's ability to receive the child's communications. Emanuel argues that if the single-parent does not mourn the relationship with the absent parent, holding onto an internal creative and benign couple will be a struggle, which subsequently affects the child working through oedipal conflicts.

Parents experiences of being parented can affect their relationship with their child too (e.g. Heimann, 1942; Fraiberg, Adelson and Shapiro, 1975; Hopkins, 1992; K. Barrows, 2000; P. Barrows, 2008). Where these "*Ghosts in the nursery.*" (Fraiberg, Adelson and Shapiro, 1975: p.387) are present, the parent's perception of the child is distorted by a figure from the parent's childhood being transferred onto the child. Barrows (2008) cites Heimann (1942) who states that some objects become part of the ego by "*...assimilation...*" (Heimann, 1942: p.42). Assimilated objects are "*...owned and acknowledged...[and can be] tested against external reality.*" (Barrows, 2008: p.181). Objects which are unassimilated exist as "*...foreign bodies...*" (ibid). Barrows argues



that these unprocessed experiences become passed onto the child, who can develop a disorganised form of attachment (Main and Hess, 1990), and in turn, are internalised by the child as unassimilated foreign bodies. Barrows states that helping the parents to develop the capacity to observe in the 'third position' is an essential step in helping them to reflect upon their relationship with their child, and in preventing further transgenerational transmission of these experiences.

In this chapter, literature which is relevant to my research questions has been reviewed. Discussion of the expansion of child psychotherapy provision, from clinic settings to include outreach work, highlights the importance of the service which I worked in as a bridge between mental health and education. Examination of the contributions that child psychotherapists have made in school settings, emphasises the impact that psychoanalytic work and thinking can have on children and adolescents, on teachers' understanding of their pupils and in terms of overall life at school. An area that has not been documented in the literature by child psychotherapists concerns brief psychotherapy with individual, young children in schools, which is the focus of my research. To establish a theoretical framework for this intervention, themes that have emerged in brief work with under-fives families, which are particularly pertinent to my study, have been explored. Having documented the body of knowledge that exists within the child psychotherapy discipline concerning my research, it is now possible to look at the methodology that I used in my study.

## **Methodology**

This chapter will focus on the methodology underpinning the study which is the subject of this paper. It will examine the rationale for employing qualitative research. It will explore issues to do with the planning and execution of this research study, concerning the samples and methods used to collect research data, namely case studies and semi-structured interviews, and the analysis of this data using thematic analysis. Ethical considerations regarding the study will also be discussed.

### **Rationale**

This study was conducted utilising qualitative research methods and analyses. It has been argued that one's choice of research methods should be based upon what one wishes to investigate in terms of questions and aims (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Silverman, 2010; Robson, 2011; Silverman, 2014). This thesis sought to study two questions: 'What themes can emerge from brief psychotherapy with children?' and 'How can these themes be discussed in relation to the understanding constructed amongst mainstream school teachers?' It has also been purported that one formulates thoughts and theories about the phenomena which are emerging from the study and reasons about why they are occurring, which will shape one's research questions (Ritchie, 2003; Robson, 2011). It is argued that one's theoretical stance also affects the way in which one posits research questions: *"How we frame a research problem will...inevitably reflect a commitment (explicit or implicit) to a particular model of how the world works."* (Silverman, 2010: p.11).

In the case of this research, psychoanalytic thinking influenced the research questions in terms of seeking to achieve an understanding of the underlying issues, unconscious processes and internal preoccupations which were present for the children and their teachers. Qualitative research methods were considered best suited to explore answers to this study's research questions.

Qualitative research aims to elucidate how we, subjectively, understand human experiences including social phenomena, relationships and processes, and the interpretations and meanings which we attach to them, using various research methods (Caronna, 2010; Silverman, 2010; Bourgeault, Dingwall and De Vries, 2013; Silverman, 2014). This thesis set out to attain understanding of this nature to answer its research

questions, which made the qualitative approach to research highly compatible with the current study. A number of definitions of the term 'qualitative research' have been put forward. Snape and Spencer (2003) have collated a list of some of its aspects where there is consensus amongst qualitative researchers. They state that researchers agree that through gaining knowledge about people's experiences and perceptions about them, qualitative research seeks to achieve an extensive and thorough comprehension of how participants construct and the meaning that they give to their social world and social phenomena. Snape and Spencer relay that the sample size in qualitative research tends to be small and that participants are often chosen in a purposive manner. They aver that between researcher and participant there is close contact when using qualitative research methods and that the data generated from such methods is rich and broad in detail. They also assert that analysis of this data allows researchers to form elaborate taxonomies and explanations of the social phenomena which come to the fore in their research. Open-ended questionnaires, case studies and unstructured interviews are examples of qualitative research methods.

By contrast, in brief, quantitative research investigates relationships between variables through examining and interpreting numerical data; it seeks to derive 'facts' concerning social phenomena through quantifiable information (Silverman, 2014). This mode of investigation did not suit this paper's research aims and thus quantitative research methods were not adopted. Robson (2011) highlights a number of the common characteristics of quantitative research. He argues that in quantitative research, researchers seek to emulate the natural sciences by being 'scientific', aiming for standardisation and by giving detailed accounts of the procedures involved in their studies so that they can be replicated. Robson also emphasises that such data is interpreted via statistical analyses. From this are drawn correlations and explanations (Silverman, 2014). Examples of forms of research which use quantitative methods are experiments, social surveys and structured observations.

Qualitative methods possess a number of strengths as research tools. These strengths allow for qualitative research to be used to explore particular phenomena which quantitative research is not suitable for. For instance, qualitative research is able to explore how participants build stable social phenomena, such as a family, and the internal experiences, evolving social processes and meanings that this involves (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Silverman (2014) states that qualitative research utilises:

*...naturally occurring data to find the sequences ('how') in which participants' meanings and practises ('what') are deployed. Having established the character of some phenomenon, it can then (but only then) move on to answer 'why' questions by examining the wider context in which the phenomenon arises.... (p.18)*

Conversely, in quantitative research, the impact of context is often negated in the explanations of social phenomena, and this loss of “*...contextual sensitivity...*” (Silverman, 2014: p.18) occurs because quantitative research utilises operational definitions of social phenomena instead. Ritchie (2003) argues that qualitative research methods, unlike quantitative methods, can investigate certain issues which may need more time to be explored more fully through the use of “*...finely tuned questions that are responsive to the particular circumstances of the individual...*” (p.33). Ritchie states that these issues include matters to do with specialist areas of knowledge, issues that require delving into the unconscious, matters which are intangible, complex or sensitive/potentially distressing in nature. As the current study asked these kinds of questions, qualitative research was a good fit for the thesis.

Ritchie asserts that qualitative methods can play certain key roles in research inquiry, and she classifies these functions into four categories: contextual, explanatory, evaluative and generative. She argues that qualitative research can have a contextual function as it can explain, in-depth, the ways in which participants experience and understand social phenomena and the meanings which they give to them. Ritchie states that qualitative research can function as explanatory research too, as it can suggest why particular phenomena happen as well as which factors contribute towards their development. She also deems that qualitative research can be evaluative as it can seek answers to questions regarding how well something works, such as an initiative or programme. Lastly, Ritchie proposes that qualitative research can be generative as it can add to existing knowledge or theory or result in the formation of new notions. As Caronna (2003) states, qualitative research can “*...play an important role in theoretical elaboration and theory development...*” (p.72). These functions fitted well with the current study's research aims, again, making qualitative research the most viable mode of investigation for this thesis.

## Samples

There were 10 participants in this study. 4 of the participants were children whom I met for brief psychotherapy work at the specialist school: “Jerome”, “Jameel”, Dantrell” and “Farrell”<sup>3</sup> (see profiles below). The other 6 participants were teaching staff who had worked with the children: 2 from the specialist school and 4 from the children’s mainstream schools (explained in more detail below). Given that the specialist school had a pupil catchment area from one Local Educational Authority in London, the population of this study came from this area. There were two research samples: one consisted of the children and the other consisted of the teachers. Both of these will be discussed in turn.

The children who were participants in the study were pupils at the specialist school whom I was seeing as part of my clinical work. I had some criteria for the cases that made up the children’s sample: they were children who were on placement at the school in the early years’ classes and currently not in any form of psychotherapy. However, I only utilised the cases which were part of my clinical case-load, following the approval of my doctorate proposal. For this reason, my clinical cases formed a ‘convenience sample’ as I used those cases which I already had access to (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam, 2003; Flick, 2009; Bryman, 2012), rather than seeking out cases which had not been referred for psychotherapy, and those cases which I was able to see during my limited time frame for data collection of six months. Within this time period, I saw 4 children for brief psychotherapy work and used all of these cases, and all five of the sessions for each case, for my study. All four children were boys and from the same class; at the time of the data collection, there were no girls in the year group and the other class group in the year group were engaged in group psychotherapy. The boys were all 7 years of age.

The staff members who were participants in the research, whom I interviewed, had all worked with the children. The sample for the interviews was purposive as I had specific criteria about who I wanted to interview (Ritchie et al., 2003; Flick, 2009; Silverman, 2010): teachers at the children’s mainstream schools who knew them well, as well as their class teacher during their placement at the specialist school. Concerning Jameel, I interviewed his current class teacher at mainstream school, who was relatively new to

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<sup>3</sup> Pseudonyms have been used throughout this thesis.

the school and had not known Jameel prior to his placement at the specialist school. I also interviewed his former class teacher at the specialist school, whom I had wanted to interview concerning each of the other three boys too, yet this had not been possible due to time and timetabling constraints. Regarding Farrell and Dantrell, I interviewed the SENCOs at their mainstream schools who had known the boys respectively for a number of years - both prior to and during their placements at the specialist school. Farrell's SENCO still had considerable contact with him. Dantrell's SENCO had invited his current class teacher at the mainstream school to the interview as she felt that he would be able to give a more detailed account of his progress and his life at school. Jerome did not return to mainstream school following his placement in the early years' class at the specialist school and carried on his education at the specialist school into the next year group, and I interviewed his current class teacher at the specialist school. I also interviewed his former class teacher at the mainstream school, who had known Jerome since he began mainstream school and who still had contact with him, but in an extra-curricular, after school group. Thus, I had to make some compromises in terms of my original hopes to meet with mainstream teachers who had both previous knowledge of the boys and were still involved in their education, and regarding my original aim to interview the children's previous class teacher at the specialist school (who taught them during their placement) concerning all of the boys.

Morse (1998) suggests a number of attributes that the interviewee should possess which are summarised by Flick (2009):

*They should have the necessary knowledge and experience of the issue or object at their disposal for answering the questions in the interview....They should also have the capability to reflect and articulate, should have time to be asked...and should be ready to participate in the study. (p.123)*

All of the participants whom I interviewed seemed to fulfil these criteria.

Before moving on from this section, it would be helpful to have brief accounts about the children whom I worked with in this study and their main presenting problems prior to their referrals to the specialist school. A profile of each child will now be given.

### *Children's profiles*

Jerome lived with his mother, and saw his father very occasionally and sporadically. Jerome's mother was Black British and his father was Middle Eastern. His teachers stated that he had found mainstream school challenging from the start. He was unable to stay with one activity for any length of time and would become rather manic. Jerome would have big tantrums, which petered out before his referral to the specialist school. Over time, he managed to make a small group of friends, yet he was unable to retain them because when he was angry, he would hit other children. Jerome was selective about which adults he would listen to and came across as very attached to his class teachers. He could be very sociable with them and often precocious in his conversations with them. Jerome was a bright and intelligent child and could sometimes concentrate on his work for long periods of time. At other times, he would become very restless, very quickly and would not like to do any work.

Jameel lived with both of his parents. They were of Black African decent and from the same country of origin. His father regularly travelled for a few weeks, and it was not clear why he went so often. Jameel was the second eldest of four children. He was shy at school and quiet. When he spoke, he did so quietly and mumbled. There were queries about him having speech and learning difficulties and also Autism. Jameel could become quite preoccupied with buses and their timetables. Prior to his referral to the specialist school, he often appeared to be in his own 'world'; he was not like this at the specialist school. Jameel did not have any friends at mainstream school. In class, he would struggle to pay attention; he would not sit on the carpet for long and would hit out at the other children, disrupting the class. During his first few weeks at the specialist school, he became very distressed, crying very loudly upon separation from his parents at the start of the day.

Dantrell lived with his mother and baby sister. He saw his father very occasionally. Both parents were of Black African decent, from different countries of origin. There was a history of domestic violence from his father to his mother, when Dantrell was an infant. Dantrell struggled at school from the beginning. Often, he would refuse to participate in class activities and would become disruptive, for example going under the table, and coming out pushing the other children. He would kick staff when in a distressed or angry state. When he was not disruptive, he was very quiet and shy. Dantrell did not appear to have any friends. His teachers said that they thought that he

was a very unhappy child. He was considerably behind his peers in terms of his education and did not seem to have any interest in learning.

Farrell lived with his mother and two older sisters. He rarely saw his father. His mother was White British and his father was of Black African origin. Farrell had difficulties at school from the start. He was not able to make any friends. He would disrupt the class and hit and kick other children and staff. He was very physically aggressive towards staff outside of class time too. Farrell was not able to concentrate in class or follow instructions and made little progress in his learning. He had considerable speech difficulties, he struggled to form words and spoke in short clauses. He also sounded baby-like when he spoke. He would become very frustrated at not being understood. Farrell would be very tired in the afternoons at school and often fell asleep in class. His teachers thought that this was because he went to sleep very late at night-time. At home, Farrell would refuse to go to sleep and stayed up watching TV.

### **Ethical Considerations**

During each step of my research, it was essential for me to consider various ethical issues (Flick, 2009; Silverman, 2014). Ethical practices are vital in order to “...*regulate the relations of researchers to the people and fields they intend to study...the research should avoid harming the participants, including not invading their privacy and not deceiving them about the research’s aims.*” (Flick, 2009: pp.36-37). Prior to the start of my research, it was important for me to reflect upon why I wanted to study the phenomena which is the subject of this paper. It is argued that for the sake of good ethical practise, one should ensure that the research to be undertaken will contribute to prevailing or new areas of knowledge (Flick, 2009; Silverman, 2014). Indeed, I felt that this was one of the main reasons that I wanted to conduct the study. Brief psychotherapy work with children in schools in early years’ classes had not been documented in the literature and there was little known research of this. I felt that this was a domain where child psychotherapy could make a substantial contribution in therapeutically helping children with emotional, psychological, social and/or behavioural difficulties in education settings. Thus, I hoped that my research might be of some benefit in this area and related fields.

It was essential to obtain ethical approval for my research to go ahead too. Silverman (2010) states that:



*...when you successfully obtain ethical approval for your research...you have benefited from the advice of at least one academic trained to detect any potential flaws in your research design that could pose a threat to the participants...when you assure your research participants that your study has been approved by a university and/or medical research ethics committee, you earn their confidence that you are a trained researcher with the backing of a legitimate academic institution.*  
(p.154)

As my study involved clinical work in a school setting as part of my clinical training, I required clearance from three separate institutions: from the senior management team and governing body of the specialist school, the local health research ethics committee board as working with pupils in a clinical capacity meant that they were patients, and the university that accredited my clinical doctorate training course. The ethical considerations which will now be described met the requirements posed by these three bodies' ethical guidelines.

Obtaining consent was a vital part of the ethical procedure for my study. Consent was attained regarding being able to use my written records with the children and transcriptions from my interviews with the teachers. This included sharing the information with my supervisors. Regarding the interviews, I attained consent from each member of staff whom I interviewed both before interviewing them and afterwards. Concerning the brief psychotherapy, as this work involved young children, consent needed to be gained from their parents. Questions also arose about whether to obtain consent from the children. Silverman (2014) states that

*Issues of consent become even more complicated when you want to study vulnerable people such as children or adults with disabilities. A set of complex issues arise: how can young children or people with limited mental capacity realistically give informed consent to your research? Is it satisfactory for parents, other family members of carers to give consent? (p.144)*

My university advised that the children who would potentially participate in the research should be required to give written consent (where they were able to judge that they were doing so) and that they should also have the right to refuse. They also requested that a simple instruction sheet and form should be provided for the children. I incorporated these requirements into my study.

I also put together two sets of information sheets (Silverman, 2010): one for the teachers (see Appendix i) and one for the parents (see Appendix ii) which were theirs to keep. It was necessary to refrain from using terms and language on the sheets that could potentially be sensitive (Silverman, 2010). It was also important to ensure that these sheets were both easy to understand and detailed about the purpose of the research:

*...potential research subjects should be given a detailed but non-technical account (in a format that they can understand) of the nature and aims of your research...people want information they can understand; they are usually not interested in the often technical and theoretical research questions you want to address.*  
(Silverman, 2014: p.149 and p.151)

On the sheets, I made clear that any identifying information would be anonymised and that they had the right to withdraw consent at any time (Flick, 2009; Silverman, 2010; 2014). I further informed parents that if they did not want their children to participate in the research or withdrew their consent, their child would still receive brief work sessions; that declining to take part in the study would not affect their child's treatment in any way. I also explained to the parents that the written records of my work with the children, and to the teachers, that transcriptions of our interviews, would be stored securely. I gave them details of how to contact me should they require more information or if they had any more questions. I explained that a consent form was attached to their letter for them to sign (see page 2 of appendices i and ii). On the consent form was a statement concerning confirmation of having read and understood the information sheet about the research, that they had been given the opportunity to ask questions and that they understood that they could withdraw consent at any point. Below this they had the option to tick one of two boxes concerning whether they were willing or unwilling for their child/to participate in the study, followed by spaces to print their name, sign and date the form.

The information sheets and consent forms enabled me to obtain informed consent from parents and teaching staff. Ryen (2004) states that informed consent is where:

*...research subjects have the right to know that they are being researched, the right to be informed about the nature of the research and the right to withdraw at any time.... In general, deception is only acceptable if discomfort is believed to vanish by itself or removed by a debriefing process after the study.*  
(p.231)

It also includes not pressurising the participants - that they should agree voluntarily (Silverman, 2014). I waited to obtain written consent from the parents until after my feedback meeting with them regarding the sessions, and at the end of the interviews from the teachers - although they gave me verbal consent before the sessions and interviews respectively. Despite having gained their consent, Silverman (2014) states: “...we should never assume that people have understood our research sufficiently in order to give truly informed consent to describing their accounts or behaviour in our reports.” (p.145). As Marvasti (2004) writes concerning interviews:

*...in qualitative research sometimes the interview questions and the focus of the project itself changes in the course of the study...[in] in-depth interviews...follow-up questions emerge spontaneously in reaction to respondent's comments. Since one cannot anticipate the exact direction the interview will take, it is impossible to fully inform the respondent about the focus of the study in advance.* (p.141)

Prior to commencing the interviews, I gave the teaching staff a copy of the questions which I was going to ask of them, which is part of the ethical practices outlined by Silverman (2014). During the course of the interviews, I was posed with some ethical considerations too. In the interviews with both of Jerome's teacher, it seemed as though they had harboured skewed views which I found somewhat concerning (see chapter on *Analysis of Teachers' Interviews: Teachers' Views*). I felt that I had an ethical responsibility to help them to gain more understanding of these unprocessed

experiences and did so by offering interpretations about these phenomena. Thus, it was ethically important for me to actively assume my role as clinician in the interviews for these instances. Similarly, in my interview with Farrell's SENCO, I deemed it necessary to remind her that consultative help was available as she portrayed that institutional tensions were potentially affecting decisions about Farrell at their school (see chapter on *Analysis of Teachers' Interviews: Teachers' Views*).

All of the data collected from my research were anonymised and pseudonyms were used. Consent forms were kept in a locked filing cabinet and information stored on the computer - including audio-recordings of my interviews, transcriptions and process notes - were only accessible via a password system. As I stated in my doctorate proposal and ethics applications, the interviews will be erased once my thesis has been examined and passed.

Ethical issues were also important during the writing of my paper. It was necessary to be fair and just in the presentation of my analyses of the data obtained from the participants of my study (Silverman, 2014). As Dingwall (1992) states "...we should ask of any study: 'Does it convey as much understanding of its villains as its heroes? Are the privileged treated as having something serious to say or simply dismissed as evil, corrupt or greedy without further enquiry?'" (p.172).

### **Case Studies**

My initial research question asked, 'what themes can emerge from brief psychotherapy with children?'. To investigate this question, I used case studies. This chapter will now explore my rationale for using case studies.

How the term 'case study' is defined can vary quite widely (Flick, 2009; Robson, 2011; Silverman, 2013; Patton, 2015). For instance, it can concern the study of singular individuals, societies, events or instances (Midgley, 2006; Patton, 2015). Lewis (2003) states that there are some aspects which are commonly attributed to case studies, such as what is being investigated is studied in context, in depth and usually intensively. Yin (2009) states that case studies

*...are generalisable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes...[a case study] does not represent a*

*'sample' and, in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalise theories (analytic generalisation) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalisation. (p.15)*

Case studies have been fundamental in communicating clinical work in psychoanalysis since the infancy of this discipline (e.g. Freud, 1905). In child psychotherapy, case studies are used to relay clinical findings, often through journals or book chapters. They are vital throughout the child psychotherapist's career, for example, in the qualifying paper, trainees are required to express their work with one of their three intensive cases (Midgley, 2006). Case studies have led to the revision of entire concepts and paradigms (Kuhn, 1962; Popper, 1963). For instance, Klein's conjectures of oedipal states beginning earlier than Freud had supposed were generated from the observations of the play of young children that she treated on an individual basis (Klein, 1926). Case studies have also led to the creation of new concepts (Bromley, 1986). For example, Bick (1968; 1986) postulated ideas on 'adhesive identification' and the formation of 'secondary skin' from her analysis of a child who attempted to protect herself against intensely feared separation with these observed behaviours. In addition, studies which have either contradicted existing theories and/or led to the development of new ones have often had a bifurcating effect by having a much larger impact on the discipline (Rustin, 2002). Bick's notions of adhesive identification and second-skin, for instance, have influenced understanding of the way autistic children 'glue' themselves to their objects (Briggs, 2002). Thus, case studies have a central role as a method of research in child psychotherapy. The case study remains a powerful tool because it provides rich information regarding the experiences of the individual. Arguably, the 'real person' can be found in the case studies of child psychotherapy, in detailed accounts of the child's experiences and therapeutic journey with the therapist, which adds to the strength of this particular research method.

I felt that case studies were the best method for me to answer my initial research question because this method of data collection would allow me to investigate, in depth, my clinical sessions with the children and the themes that could emerge from our brief work.

The referrals of the children that I saw for brief work came from the school's usual referrers: the child's class teacher, head of year and/or head teacher. This was discussed

in the weekly child psychotherapy team meetings, in terms of how best to proceed with the referral, as per standard practice at the school. As stated in the *Introduction* chapter, the team provided brief interventions when working with the new year group, due to their placements being time-limited. I scheduled the session at times that were mutually best suited to the children's school timetable as well as mine (Daws, 1983; Robertson, 2008). Prior to commencing brief work, the teachers explained to the children that they would be meeting with me, in preparation of our sessions, as they usually did.

Sessions took place in one of the consulting rooms at the school and the same room was used throughout the work. Sessions lasted 45 minutes in-line with the established practice at the school of collaborating with the school timetable, as classes were also 45 minutes long. I met the child for 5 sessions as part of the brief work model (e.g. Likierman, 1988; Miller, 1992; Daws, 1993; Emanuel, 2003), on the same day and at the same time each week. In advance of the treatment, the block of 5 sessions were scheduled to fit within the school term, to avoid breaks in treatment due to holidays. We met for 5 consecutive weeks, unless the child was absent from school on the day of our meeting, in which case we met the following week, and continued to meet weekly for a total of 5 sessions.

I made up a box containing age-appropriate toys and creative materials for each child ahead of their treatment, consisting of, for example, families of dolls, wild animals, farm animals, fences, toy vehicles, plasticine, felt-tip pens, coloured pencils, and stationary. Within the consulting rooms, the children also had access to some shared toys (see *Introduction* for more details). I put the child's box in the room just before each session and stored it securely in the child psychotherapy team's lockable cupboard for toy boxes between sessions. Prior to each session, I collected the child from his classroom and took him back following the session.

I set aside some time immediately after each session to write up detailed and extensive accounts of the sessions in the form of process notes (Klein, 1961; Midgley, 2006). In my notes, I distinguished between my speech and the child's, demarcated between his non-verbal communication and verbatim accounts and recorded my reflections and countertransferences (Midgley, 2006).

## Interviews

Following on from my initial research question about exploration of the themes generated from the children's brief psychotherapy work, my second question asked: 'How can these themes be discussed in relation to the understanding constructed amongst mainstream school teachers?'. To investigate this question, I used semi-structured interviews. This chapter will now discuss my rationale for using semi-structured interviews, the procedure that I used and considerations that arose regarding this method.

The interview is a method of collating information in the form of a specific kind of conversation between at least two people. It can be conducted face-to-face or remotely, such as over the telephone or internet (Matthews and Ross, 2010). The interviewer controls the interview by asking questions of the interviewee. Interviews can vary in how structured they are (Legard, Keegan and Ward, 2003) and are commonly divided into three types: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Structured interviews are standardised and consistency is essential: the same questions are asked of all the interviewees, in the same order, without any improvisation or prompting from the interviewer. Responses are coded and generate quantitative data (Silverman, 2014). Semi-structured interviews consist of the same focal questions for each interview, however, the interviewer may probe the interviewee for greater detail or to clarify their responses, or ask extra questions to expand on issues which arise in the interview (Arthur and Nazroo, 2003; Bryman, 2003; Matthews and Ross, 2010; Gray, 2014; Silverman, 2014). The interviewer might not ask all of the set questions in each interview. They are not standardised. Semi-structured interviews "*...combine structure with flexibility...The researcher will ask an initial question in such a way as to encourage the interviewee to talk freely when answering the question.*" (Legard et al., 2003: p.141). Unstructured interviews are not standardised either. The direction of the interview is determined by the interviewee. Whilst holding the main aims and issues of the research in mind to ascertain meanings and values held by the interviewee, the interviewer also probes in-depth (Arthur and Nazroo, 2003; Silverman, 2014).

Whilst structured interviews are easily distinguishable from the other two types of interview due to their salient qualities, there is difference of opinion amongst researchers concerning exactly what semi-structured and unstructured interviews are (Arthur and Nazroo, 2003). Arthur and Nazroo argue that

*There are different models of semi-structured interviewing and terms are not necessarily used consistently so that what some commentators describe as 'semi-structured' interviews may be described by others as unstructured or in-depth, or at the other end of the spectrum, open-ended survey interviews. (2003: p.111)*

I felt that semi-structured interviews were the best method for me to answer my second research question because this method would allow me to explore in-depth the teachers' understanding of the children whilst also ensuring that certain key areas were addressed. I could prompt the teachers towards focal topics but the teachers would also be able to speak freely and in detail about them.

Prior to conducting the interviews, there were a number of considerations concerning the setting up of the interviews. I had planned to interview at least six months after the children's brief work to allow for any developments, changes or progress to emerge following the treatments and for the teachers to notice and process them. Initially, I had hoped to meet the teacher whose class the child was in at the mainstream school upon his admission to the special school. However, six months on from the first child's brief work, the children were now in a new academic year. Their class teachers had changed and their previous teachers had minimal contact with them now (with the exception of Jerome, who still saw his former class teacher regularly). Thus, my initial contact with the staff from the children's mainstream school concerned setting up the interviews. Staff were contacted by telephone or email. If I was unable to reach them over the telephone then I emailed them; an email was also sent to confirm appointments. I introduced myself to them (my name, where I was calling from and my professional capacity). I explained that following my brief sessions with their pupil, I was conducting research regarding this work and I gave them a brief rationale about the research and that I would like to interview them. I informed them that the interview would take about an hour and that it would be confidential (Gray, 2014; explained earlier in this chapter regarding the consent forms) We also arranged the venue; all of the staff requested that the interviews take place at their schools, and as I had flexibility to travel and they had more time constraints due to their school timetables, I agreed.



I set aside time before and after each interview. Wengraf (2001) and Gray (2014) both state that ample time should be scheduled, not only for the interview, but also for preparations just before it (arriving early to the venue, checking the recording equipment etc) and doing fieldnotes about the interviews afterwards. They advise that these processes should not be rushed. All of the interviews took place in a quiet room at the school with just me and the interviewees present - in an office or meeting room. The interview meeting began with introductions. I reminded the teachers of the purpose of the interview and about confidentiality again and sought permission to record the interview using a dictaphone (Gray, 2014). Prior to beginning the interview, I gave them a copy of the interview schedule (see Appendix iii) and the teachers affirmed that they were happy to answer the questions.

In constructing the interview schedule, it was necessary to be mindful of the language that was used. This was to ensure that the questions were “...*phrased in language which [was]...as neutral as possible...*” and that I avoided terms that could generate “...*misunderstanding.*” (Arthur and Nazroo, 2003: pp.123-124). It was also important to be thoughtful about the order in which I asked the questions. Arthur and Nazroo (2003) make suggestions concerning this. My first two questions asked about the teachers’ initial impressions of the child and concerns they had about him before his referral. This seemed to be in-line with some of the recommendations made by Arthur and Nazroo. They state that the initial questions one asks of the interviewees should be simple to answer as they should ease them into the interview. They also suggest that these questions should enable the collation of background information as this would be useful in contextualising later responses and details. Arthur and Nazroo recommend that questions should begin by being general and then move to being more specific. My questions about more specific topics, such as to do with change “What is Johnny like now?” came later in the interview schedule. My final question, “What do you think his prospects are now?” concerned the teachers’ thoughts regarding the future and the teachers also made some suggestions and recommendations, which seemed to fit in with the advice from Arthur and Nazroo about questions to ask towards the end of the interview.

My interview schedule consisted of specific questions to which the teaching staff had “...*a great deal of leeway about how to reply.*” (Bryman, 2003: p.471). In addition to having set ‘topical’ questions, I asked questions during the course of the interviews to

facilitate the process in various ways. These questions were spontaneous, and as Arthur and Nazroo state, they could not be formulated ahead of the interview “...since their wording and use depend on what the participant has just said.” (2003: p.124). Legard et al. (2003) discuss these different kinds of questions which are asked in an interview. They categorise the questions as either “...content mapping...” or “...content mining...” (p.148). They state that content mapping questions are geared towards “...[broadening out] the research territory and to identify the dimensions or issues that are relevant to the participant...” (2003: p.148). Content mapping questions can be “...ground mapping...” due to the fact that they ‘open up’ a topic, “...dimension mapping...” as they are directive and facilitate pinpointing areas of a subject, or they are “...perspective widening...” as they help the interviewee to consider matters from different perspectives (p.49) Content mining questions “...explore the detail which lies within each dimension, to access the meaning it holds for the interviewee’s point of view...[they] are used to explore [issues]...in detail...” (p.148). Content mining questions are made up of various probes. For instance, probes can be “...amplificatory...” as they help interviewees to elaborate upon their responses, “...explanatory...” as they investigate deep-seated feelings, views and meanings held by interviewees, or “...clarificatory...” as they enable the interviewer to seek clarity from the interviewee in terms of their responses (pp.150-151). I used all of these questions across the interviews.

Apart from asking questions, sometimes I used various forms of communication, both verbal and non-verbal, to facilitate the interview process. For instance, if the interviewee was “...on track, straying off the point...[or if] further elaboration of a point [was]... required....” (Gray, 2014: p.394), my feedback included communication such as “...‘hmm, mm’, reformulating a question, agreeing and remaining silent.” (Silverman, 2014: p.202).

It has been argued that the interviewer should possess certain qualities and skills (Mason, 1996; Legard et al., 2003; Matthews and Ross, 2010; Gray, 2014; Silverman, 2014). Gray (2014) and Legard et al. (2003) emphasise the importance of being able to generate a good rapport with the interviewee. The interviewer should be able to help the interviewee feel relaxed and at ease, respect the points of views of others from different backgrounds and to build trust between them. Mason (1996) and Legard et al. (2003) state that the interviewer should also have good listening and talking skills, be able to

process what is being said, filter the focal issues and possess a good memory in order to remember these key points and revisit them at appropriate times in the interview. Being interested and curious about and empathising with what others say and being able to adapt to the interviewees direction of the conversation is also important (Legard et al., 2003; Matthews and Ross, 2010). The ability to observe the interviewees behaviour and other non-verbal communications as well as reflect on their own thoughts, feelings and responses are essential too (Mason, 1996; Legard et al., 2003; Matthews and Ross, 2010). The skills and attributes which have been mentioned are necessary in clinical interviewing and are developed during the child psychotherapy training under supervision.

Regarding ending the interview, Gray (2014) advises: *“It is worthwhile asking the interviewee if they have any questions or final comments that they would like to make.”* (p.397). Following these last stages, I ensured that the consent form had been signed and I also informed the teachers that I would contact them after the research was completed to feedback about the study. After the interview, I made some fieldnotes about it, which included my countertransferences. I also used these in my data analysis. Arthur and Nazroo state that:

*...where data are captured through audio-recording, fieldnotes provide an opportunity to record what researchers hear and see outside the immediate context of the interview, their thoughts about the dynamic of the encounter, ideas for inclusion in later fieldwork and issues that may be relevant to the analytical stage.*  
(2003: pp.132-133).

### **Data Analysis**

Having conducted the brief work sessions and interviews, and subsequently recording them in the form of process notes and transcriptions respectively, the next stage of my research concerned examining and interpreting the data. I used thematic analysis to analyse my data from both the children’s brief psychotherapy sessions and the interviews with their teachers. This chapter will now discuss my reasons for using thematic analysis, the procedure which I utilised and considerations which arose regarding this form of analysis.

It is argued that qualitative analysis is either attached or detached from specific epistemological or theoretical stances (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In discussing the analytic methods which are theoretically- or epistemologically-bound, Braun and Clarke state that concerning some of these methods, there is little variance in how they can be applied. They deem conversation analysis and interpretative phenomenological analysis to be examples of such methods. Conversation analysis is a method which explores verbal and non verbal communication in order to understand everyday situations and social interactions and is linked to social theory (Silverman, 2014). Interpretative phenomenological analysis is a method of data analysis which aims to understand social phenomena by focussing in elaborate detail on the understanding ascribed to people's experiences of reality, and is associated with phenomenology (McLeod, 2001). Braun and Clarke also assert that with regards to other methods which are linked to theory and epistemology, there are a number of versions of the same method, which makes matters more complex. They state that grounded theory and discourse analysis are examples of these kinds of methods. Grounded theory looks for patterns in data in order to create theories about the phenomena being studied - thus theories are grounded in research data (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). There are various manifestations of grounded theory (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Discourse analysis is a method which encompasses a number of approaches which seek to analyse language which is written, spoken or signed and will use social and historical contexts to understand what is being communicated (Silverman, 2014).

According to Braun and Clarke, thematic analysis examines data in order to identify and report 'themes' (patterns), and these themes encapsulate something meaningful about the data to do with one's research questions (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Bryman, 2012). The researcher repeatedly goes through the data, back and forth; data extracts are coded as part of this process and themes are derived from the codes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke state that: "...[due to] its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data." (Braun and Clarke, 2006: p.78). Whilst thematic analysis is a method which is commonly used to explore qualitative research data, consensus regarding what it is and clarification of its procedures is lacking (Boyatzis, 1998; Bryman, 2012). Some efforts have been made to describe the procedures involved (Bryman, 2012). For instance, in their paper '*Using thematic analysis in psychology*', Braun and Clarke (2006) constructed a detailed guide

about implementing this technique, which consists of six phases: “familiarising yourself with your data”, “generating initial codes”, “searching for themes”, “reviewing themes”, “defining names and themes” and “producing the report”.

I felt that thematic analysis was well-suited to analyse my research data for a number of reasons. First, it is strongly compatible with the mode of interpretation and analysis of interactions that are part of child psychotherapy practices. In child psychotherapy, process notes and observations are analysed in great detail for underlying meanings and processes, internal preoccupations and dynamics between individuals or between therapist and client, in order to achieve a deeper understanding of what is going on. In clinical work, this understanding is documented in a processed and succinct form in reports, where ‘themes’ are relayed with evidence from the work to support it. Second, thematic analysis is a method which is easy to learn and implement, including by those who are inexperienced in qualitative research. Another reason that I used thematic analysis to analyse my data was because I did not need to have knowledge of other epistemologies in order to utilise it. Also, it is well-suited to analyse a large body of data in depth, such as the data collated from my research. I used thematic analysis to analyse my research data based on the procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), which is described below.

Braun and Clarke state that there are a number of issues which need to be considered and explored prior to data analysis. One such consideration concerns what a theme entails. Themes are made up of codes (Bryman, 2012). Codes are “...*the most basic....*” pieces of data “...*that can be assessed in a meaningful way....*” (Boyatzis, 1998: p.63). Thus themes are broader than codes (discussed in more detail later in this section). Braun and Clarke argue that whilst a theme should occur a number of times throughout the data, more occurrences of a particular theme does not imply that it is of higher importance than others. Also, a theme does not have to be something which is given a great deal of attention within the data each time that it occurs. Rather, a theme is determined by the researcher’s judgement.

Braun and Clarke recommend that another consideration concerns whether one investigates the data using an inductive or deductive approach. Regarding an inductive approach, themes are data-driven in that they are closely associated with the data (Boyatzis, 1998; Gray, 2014) and not determined by pre-existing theory or

preconceptions “*However, it is important to note...that researcher’s cannot free themselves of their theoretical and epistemological commitments, and data are not coded in an epistemological vacuum.*” (Braun and Clarke, 2006: p.84). Conversely, a deductive approach is theory-driven. As it is associated with preconceived theories or interests, Braun and Clarke argue that the deductive approach is less descriptive. There is a tendency, therefore, to concentrate on particular aspects of the data instead.

Whether analysis focuses on deriving themes at a semantic or latent level is a consideration which is deemed as important too (Boyatzis, 1988; Braun and Clarke, 2006). Semantic themes are generated when the researcher looks at the data at the surface level, whereas latent themes are derived by exploring deep-seated patterns, assumptions and ideas (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In my analysis, I explored the data both at semantic and latent levels. For example, in the chapter, *Analysis of the Teacher’s Interviews: Children’s Progress*, concerning the theme of ‘feelings and emotions’, material was described at a semantic level, for instance, the teachers noticing that the boys used to get into very distressed states and now this was less so, or not at all the case. Regarding this same theme, data was also analysed at a latent level, such as understanding that the boys seemed to now feel much more emotionally contained.

The first phase of analysing my data involved becoming familiar with my data. Braun and Clarke advise that one should immerse oneself in the data by repeatedly reading through it for meanings and patterns and noting initial ideas. Regarding the children’s brief work sessions, this familiarisation with the data occurred as I wrote up my process notes, during the process of supervision as part of my clinical work and also during my reading of the material again later. I began to familiarise myself with material from the interviews too as I transcribed my dictaphone recordings of the interviews. My transcripts entailed a verbatim record of verbal utterances (for an example, see Appendix iv). I also included, for instance, overlaps in speech between two speakers, indicated by square brackets which contained the second speaker’s utterance (such as [Teacher: Yeah] meaning that the teacher uttered “Yeah” as I asked a question). I added non-verbal communication too, again in square brackets but in italics (such as [*both laugh*] meaning that both I and the interviewee laughed). Braun and Clarke state that the transcripts should be “...*rigorous and thorough....*”, but that generally speaking,

*...there is no one set of guidelines to follow when producing a*

*transcript...what is important is that the transcript retains the information you need from the verbal account...and that the transcription convention is practically suited to the purpose of analysis.* (Braun and Clarke, 2006: p.88)

In the second phase of analysis, I coded my data. I went through each of the sessions and transcriptions in turn. I used my own system of labelling each session or transcript with a letter in order to find material at a later date with ease. I underlined texts and wrote notes in the margins as part of the process to distinguish codes, consisting of anything interesting or meaningful in the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Braun and Clarke, 2006). In terms of naming codes, Miles and Huberman advise that they should be kept “...*semantically close to the terms they represent...*” (1994: p.65). On a separate sheet of paper, I wrote the name and a description of the code, so that I could recall what each code meant later (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Braun and Clarke, 2006). I numbered each code and also wrote down the page number of the sessions or transcripts from where the material came too. So, for instance regarding: “12. Vulnerability: A34”, “12.” was the number of the code, “Vulnerability” was the name of the code, “A” was the ‘source’ (the session in which the code was located), and “34” was the number of the data extract in that source. Concerning this coding phase, Braun and Clarke state that

*...it is important...to ensure that all actual data extracts are coded, and then collated together within each code...a satisfactory thematic ‘map’ that you will eventually produce - an overall conceptualisation of the data patterns, and relationships between them - does not have to smooth out or ignore the tensions and inconsistencies within and across data items.* (Braun and Clarke, 2006: p.89)

Braun and Clarke also suggest that one should code as many patterns as one can as these data might be interesting at a later date, and to retain some context surrounding the data extract, as loss of context is a main criticism to do with coding. Miles and Huberman (1994) advise that “...*coding and recording are over when the analysis itself appears to have run its course - when all of the incidents can be readily classified, categories are “saturated”, and sufficient numbers of “regularities” emerge.*” (p.62).

The third phase of data analysis involved me thinking about how different codes might be combined and sorting my codes into possible themes. I wrote the codes down on separate pieces of paper and sorted the codes into potential themes. Once I had sorted the codes into potential themes, I created a thematic map (Braun and Clarke, 2006) which consisted of themes, and listed beneath each theme were the relevant codes (for examples, see appendices v and vi). Braun and Clarke state that in this phase of data analysis, the codes may become main themes, sub-themes or disbanded altogether. There may be some themes that do not appear to fit anywhere and Braun and Clarke suggest collating these codes under a miscellaneous theme.

In the fourth phase of my analysis, I reviewed my potential themes. As Braun and Clarke state, “...*some themes are not really themes...while others might collapse into each other...[and others still] might need to be broken down into separate themes.*” (p.91). They advise that there should be meaningful coherence between the data within each theme and that themes should be distinguishable from each other. Some of my potential themes seemed very closely related and it appeared to make more sense to combine them into one theme. For instance, concerning the analysis of the teachers’ interviews regarding the children’s progress, initially, I had a potential theme relating to “communication”. However, in reviewing the data within this possible theme, I felt that this theme was closely linked to the theme of “learning” and thus “communication” became a dimension of “learning”. Also, some of my themes were too broad and seemed to fare better as two separate themes. For instance, regarding the children’s sessions, I had a potential theme called “early experiences” which appeared to work better as two themes: “emotional regulation” and “separation”. Braun and Clarke state that this phase consists of two levels. In the first level, one reads over all of the extracts per theme to ascertain if they actually do fit together, and if so, one can move to the next level. Otherwise one should think about where the problem lies - whether it is the theme which is an issue or the extracts within it. Depending on what appears to be the problem, one can reconstruct the theme, formulate a new one, place the data extracts into another one of the themes or not include the data in the analysis. In the second level, one thinks about whether, overall, the “...*candidate thematic map ‘accurately’ reflects the meanings in the data...*” (Braun and Clarke, 2006: p.91). Reviewing and refining the themes and coding occurs until one is content with it.



The fifth phase of the analysis involved defining and naming the themes and writing a detailed analysis about each of them. Braun and Clarke advise that each theme should tell a ‘story’ and that one should be able to link this back to one’s research questions. Identification of sub-themes may occur too. For instance, in my analysis of the teachers’ interviews regarding the children’s progress, the theme “social relationships” consisted of two dimensions: “relationships with peers” and “relationships with adults”. Braun and Clarke state that it is also important to give the themes final names which are “...*concise, punch and immediately give...a sense of what the theme is about.*” (p.93).

In the sixth and final phase of the thematic analysis of my data, I produced my final report - my three analytic chapters. Braun and Clarke advise that one should evidence the themes with appropriate and sufficient vivid data extracts, incorporated into the analytic narrative of the theme and that the analysis should:

*...tell the complicated story of your data in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of your analysis....[It should be] a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the story...within and across themes.* (2004: p.93)

### **Validity**

Having described the methods of sampling and data collection and analysis used in my research, it is now important to address potential critiques of my research design. Within the social sciences, there is debate about whether one’s research design should be assessed in terms of its validity. Validity relates to: “...*the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers.*” (Hammersley, 1990: p.57). Examining my study in terms of the validity of its design, one could argue that there are potential difficulties in being able to generalise the results of my research. It is argued that being able to generalise one’s findings beyond one’s research to the wider population makes those findings more likely to be ‘true’. From this perspective, one may argue that my small sample size and the methods used for sampling and data collection affected the validity of my research (Flick, 2009; Bryman, 2012; Silverman, 2014). One could state that it is statistically improbable that 10 participants who were selected purposively or due to ‘convenience’ will be representative of the general population. However, had I used a large sample size, given my time constraints, I would

not have been able to do such an in-depth thematic analysis of my data from the interviews and case studies due to the sheer volume of the data, and richness of information would have been lost. Also, using a different sampling method, such as random sampling, would have raised challenges. For instance, Flick (2009) states that: *“It may be difficult to make generally valid statements based on a single case study. However, it is also difficult to give deep descriptions and explanations of a case which was found by applying the principle of random sampling.”* (p.125)

In addition, concerning the children’s brief work sessions, it would have been unethical to potentially deny those who needed treatment purely for the purposes of research. Regarding the teachers whom I interviewed, had I selected interviewees randomly, this could have resulted in me interviewing teachers who did not know the children well and thus I would not have been able to do justice to answering my research questions. As Ritchie et al. (2003) argue: *“The precision and rigour of a qualitative research sample is defined by its ability to represent salient characteristics...and it is these that need priority in sample design.”* (p.81). Had I used standardised research methods, such as structured interviews, again, this would have been problematic. In-depth analysis would not have been possible and I would not have been able to capture the complexity of the teacher’s understandings of the children that I was able to with semi-structured interviews.

There are potential concerns regarding validity when using data analysis techniques, including thematic analysis. One such problem arises when there is incongruence between the data extract which one reports and the analytical claims that one makes about it (Spencer, Ritchie and O’Connor, 2003; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Silverman, 2014). Rigorous application of the phases suggested by Braun and Clarke helped me in the prevention of this issue (Braun and Clarke, 2006). By positioning the data *“...within the local context from which they arose....”* (Silverman, 2014: p.79) I enabled readers of my thesis to form their own thoughts about the inferences that I made in writing up my findings (Bryman, 1988). Bryman cautions against *“...anecdotalism....”* (1988: p.77) which is where one reports only those examples which fit the claims that are made. To counter this, I included any contradictory cases into the analysis - those cases which did not fit the inferences being made - and postulated interpretations about them (Silverman, 2014). Meeting regularly with my supervisors to pinpoint any *“...blind spots and to discuss working hypotheses and results with them....”* (Flick, 2009: p.392) was further

beneficial. In addition, it was important to: “...[make] the research process transparent through describing...[the] research strategy and data analysis methods in a sufficiently detailed manner in the research report.” (Silverman, 2014: p.84)

In this chapter, I have described in depth the methodology used in my research regarding brief work with children and their teachers’ understanding of them following treatment. This included rigorous explanations concerning the procedures that I used to gather my data, through case studies and semi-structured interviews, and investigation of this data utilising thematic analysis. I explained my rationale for using these methods, in terms of their relevance to my research questions. I also examined, in detail, ethical considerations and issues of validity regarding my study. Having discussed my research design, findings derived from my study can now be explored.

## **Analysis of Children's Sessions**

This is the first of three chapters which investigate the findings that I obtained from my research. This initial chapter focuses on the themes derived from the children's brief psychotherapy sessions. It investigates my first research question, 'what themes can emerge from brief psychotherapy with children?'. Six themes were identified from the analysis of the children's sessions, namely: "family constellation", "emotional regulation", "separation", "damage", "struggles to relate" and "working together". Each of these themes will be explored in turn in this chapter.

### **Family Constellation**

One of the themes which emerged from the children's brief psychotherapy sessions concerned matters to do with the children's preoccupations about their family constellation, such as family members who were present and those who were absent, issues concerning gender and ethnicity, and their own identity within their family. This theme was present in the work with all four of the boys. After entering the therapy room in our initial meeting, Dantrell immediately showed interest in the dolls' house. Shortly, he seemed to be confused about a small window box which he tried to put in the window, as if he thought it was meant to be glass, and told me that "...it doesn't fit." Later he looked into his box and informed me that one of the wheels was missing on a toy fire engine which was in there. He proceeded to play with a family of dolls and I asked him about his family.

*Dantrell says that there are three girls - his Mum and his [two] sisters...but no boys. I say that (I notice that) the boys seem to be missing and that Dantrell is a boy! Dantrell exclaims, "Oh yeah!" and it is as if he forgot. I say that the boy, himself, is missing from his thoughts like the wheel that is missing from the fire engine. There is a boy on a rocking horse and Dantrell asks if it's the baby [it's actually an older boy doll].*

Dantrell seemed to demonstrate a preoccupation with something which does not 'fit' in the house, which instead resides on the fringes of it, when he spoke about the window sill. There was also an idea about something which is 'missing' when he mentions that one of the four wheels of the fire engine is not there. When he talked about his family

make up, he did not hold in mind a fourth member of his household - himself; he was missing from his own thoughts. This was followed by confusing a boy doll for a baby. This material appeared to reflect a deep-seated question for Dantrell about whether there was a place for him as a boy in this family; where he fitted into it.

Upon collecting Dantrell for his third meeting with me, I learnt that his mother had come for breakfast time, along with his baby sister. His teachers also told me that there may be a change in the class' timetable following the session. Dantrell's mother left his classroom as we left for the therapy room. He did not respond to his mother's goodbye and we entered the therapy room:

*Dantrell goes to the dolls' house. He is doing something inside the house (I can't quite see). Then he touches the window ledge and takes out the 'flowers' and brings them to me. He asks me to kiss it and gives it to me in my hand. I say that I wonder what will happen if I were to kiss it. Dantrell says that I can make a wish and it will come true. I say that I wonder what I might wish for or what he might wish for. Dantrell says that he would wish that Iron Man comes. He adds that then he would punch him. I say I wonder why he would punch him. Dantrell says "because he is bad". I ask about this but Dantrell has moved onto something else...Dantrell asks how long we have left. I say that he seems to have moved onto the time....*

The wish to punch 'Iron Man' came as a surprise to me as I was expecting something soft, warm and loving in response to the 'kiss', rather than 'iron', distance, anger, violence and toughness, perhaps rather like his mother who may have been expecting more warmth from Dantrell as she said goodbye. The separation seemed to evoke oedipal feelings (discussed later), hence the desire to punch the 'Daddy Iron Man' figure. In part, perhaps Dantrell was also putting a 'mask' on his feelings (like a superhero) aroused by the separation, by becoming so tough in his mind that he could punch a man made of iron. This reminded me of the omnipotent identification which children can assume in order to cope with feelings of vulnerability and being dependent on others (Urwin, 2008). The idea of separation in this middle session may also have stirred up feelings and phantasies regarding his father's absence, who he may have imagined to be

like an 'Iron Man', for instance, someone who can come and then fly away at will, contrary to Dantrell. It is also possible that Dantrell was expressing a desire to retaliate against the disruption to his usual routine that day: his mother had come into school during his class time - usually his mother had been called into mainstream school when he was disruptive and so he might have been anxious about how the morning would go, his baby sister had come too, and after his session, his timetable may or may not have changed. Perhaps Dantrell asking the time at the end of the extract was about finding his bearings in the midst of all of this.

In my work with Jerome, early on in our first meeting, he told me about his family's ethnic background. He told me that his mother is black and then proceeded to tell me his mother's name. Jerome looked slightly confused when he said that "*...he had a different last name and that maybe his mum had the same last name.*". It took me a while to make sense of what he might be saying: Jerome had the same last name as his mother, not his father. He then informed me that he thought that me and his father were mixed race (which neither of us actually are). He then asked me "*Do you know when you were born?*" and told me that he did not remember when he was born. There seemed to be an underlying preoccupation to do with identity and how people 'matched up' or 'fitted' together, when Jerome spoke of himself and his mother sharing the same last name and me and his father both being 'mixed race'. There was also a sense that some important information was missing, as he spoke about not recalling the year of his birth.

The idea of fitting together seemed to come up in our third meeting too. Jerome attempted to sharpen a brown felt-tip pen with a sharpener, and in my countertransference I wanted to prevent him from doing so, because he would spoil his things; these two objects did not fit together. Later in the session, Jerome seemed to imagine that another child, with whom there was rivalry, a boy of black parentage, had an advantage over Jerome, because this boy was of one ethnicity; the boy was 'the same' as both of his parents whereas Jerome was not. Jerome appeared to also wish that he had an identical twin. There seemed to be deep-seated issues about two things which come together in a destructive way, when Jerome tried to sharpen his felt-tip with a pencil sharpener which could have damaged it. There was also an idea that due to not being 'the same' as his parents he was missing out on something, perhaps a feeling of fitting in and belonging, and there was a phantasy that having a twin, someone who looked the same as him, would alleviate these feelings.

In our fourth meeting, complex issues around acceptance and identity emerged as Jerome told me about a girl in his class whom he ‘loves’ who is white:

*He says she won't marry him though...because he isn't white...Jerome tells me that he is "mixed race". I ask what that means. He replies "black and white". I say that it sounds like he feels he won't be wanted because he is not all white. Jerome agrees. I say it sounds like colour is a big thing. Jerome tells me "I only want to marry white people". I say I wonder what about black people. He replies no, he does not like black people...Jerome says that he misses his daddy. I ask Jerome where his father is. He shrugs...Jerome says that he wants to see his daddy. But that his daddy doesn't come to see him. He tells me that's bad of his daddy. There is another pause. I say that he sounds sad. Jerome nods. I say that maybe a reason why he wants to only marry white people is because he misses and wants his daddy, who is white. Jerome says that his daddy says bad words sometimes. He adds "So does my mummy. They say bad words to each other". I say that it sounds like things are difficult between mummy and daddy and that this doesn't feel good to Jerome at all.*

In this session, it seemed as though a split between ‘black’ and ‘white’ was emerging. There was a mother figure who linked up with a white father and an absent father who does not see his son. Perhaps Jerome imagined that his mother only wanted someone white and that his father did not come to see him because he was not white. The boys in Jerome’s class at the specialist school were either mixed-race or black; none of the boys were white. Perhaps he also felt rejected by mainstream school and the girl in his class because he was not white. Jerome saying that he only wanted to “...marry white people...” seemed to be a rejection of black people; ‘white’ was something desirable and maybe idealised and ‘black’ was something to be disliked and rejected. In addition, there appeared to be an idea that when his ‘black mummy’ and ‘white daddy’ came together, this led to conflict and a bad exchange.

In my sessions with Jameel, he initially seemed rather lost as an individual away from his class group and without his family. At the start of our first session together, Jameel was highly reluctant to leave his classroom and come with me, and at the point of separation, “*He drops his weight and he’s on the floor.*”. Jameel eventually managed to attend our meeting, and when I referred back to this experience in the session, Jameel had taken all of the furniture out of the dolls’ house:

*He goes to the table and he opens the box. He takes out a piece of paper and felt-tips. I say that I wonder what he might think is important for...[me] to know about him....Jameel chooses the brown felt-tip pen and moves the pen back and forth across paper. I say seems to be drawing like he might feel really fed up, like he can’t be bothered. Jameel nods. I say that I wonder what this is about. Jameel doesn’t respond. Next, Jameel takes the glue stick from his box. He glues on top of the lines he’s drawn on paper (he puts glue onto these lines). Jameel drops the glue stick down (again like he can’t be bothered)....*

In my countertransference I felt quite rejected and as though what I had to offer Jameel was not adequate - that I did not have anything of interest to him. It was as if he wanted to be with his class and not with me and that his heart and mind were somewhere else. A related thread was present in our third meeting. There was an idea of a mother at home with a baby and Jameel’s thoughts and feelings about this seemed to emerge in his play with the dolls’ house:

*I say that I wonder what life was like before the baby brother. Jameel lines up three of the dining room chairs with slight space in between. I say that there were three of them before the baby. Jameel adds another chair to the line and pushes them all together. I say now there are four chairs...that there is no space in between. That altogether they just about fit in the dining room, that there is less space for everyone when the baby arrived. Jameel nods and says “Yeah”. Then he stops and slouches and asks if can he go back to class. I say that it’s hard now to be here. I say that like the four chairs there are also four boys in his class,*



*that usually he is together with them.... I say that it might be tough to share, but then when has something just for himself, it's also hard to use this and that he doesn't know what to do with himself...is he allowed to have something just for himself?...I say that it seems like being with Mummy and being inside Mummy or inside something means he exists, and without it, he don't exist, he can't create or play. Jameel says that he doesn't want to talk and he doesn't want to play and slouches. He stays like that for a while.*

It seemed that when the new baby brother was born, there was no longer enough space for Jameel and his two siblings. It was as if feelings about losing his space were also stirred up when he had to leave his class to come to our meeting - that he would lose his place if he took up a place somewhere else. After Jameel began at mainstream school, his baby brother was born and he may have felt that going to school meant that he had lost his place at home and perhaps also in his mother's mind as the baby now occupied them.

In my sessions with Jameel, he would usually mumble. It was also often difficult to engage him in dialogue. Towards the end of our third meeting, I asked Jameel about his routine:

*...I ask Jameel who brings him to school. He replies that his Dad brings him everyday. I become animated at the idea of a Dad....Jameel seems to also become a bit more animated. His voice is a bit clearer. He says that his Dad drops him to school everyday (something about feeling dropped everyday sticks out). Then...[we talk about] about him and his siblings and it transpires that he is the second eldest; there seems to be some confusion between us, that he doesn't get what I am saying.*

It seemed as though thinking about his father helps Jameel and brings more liveliness into the session - both for Jameel and me in my countertransference. I had previously thought that Jameel was the second youngest of his siblings, but I learnt in the extract above that this was not the case. My confusion regarding his location in the family

seemed to mirror a confusion that his teachers had, and possibly Jameel too, regarding where his father was currently located - whether he was in the country or abroad. I felt that I had to work very hard to 'find' Jameel in the sessions - it took a lot of effort on my part for him to make contact with me. The times where I felt that Jameel was more engaged were rather like this 'finding Dad' moment of much more liveliness.

The theme of family constellation came up in my sessions with Farrell too. In our second meeting, Farrell played with toy wild animal families. He stuck baby and adult hippos and tigers together with Sellotape and appeared interested in which of these animals held together and which ones came apart as they fell from his hands. It was the male animals which fell apart from each other, and his interest in this appeared to be connected to a deep-seated concern about whether there was space for male figures in this family. Farrell seemed unable to think about the parts which fell out of sight. There appeared to be an underlying idea of fragility and lack of robustness surrounding being male and this seemed to be difficult to think about.

Early on in my second meeting with Farrell, through play, he seemed to tell a story about a family of animals, where on the surface, things were great at the beginning, but beneath this, there were difficulties and they were being smoothed over. Eventually the 'Daddy Lion' left the family and disappeared. Leading on from this story, Farrell played 'hide and seek' and pretended to spring out like a lion when he was 'found'. After a while, the play changed:

*I'm to find him again. He hides under the table again. When I look underneath the table, Farrell is still. He tells me that he is not Farrell, he's a statue. He is quiet and still again. I comment that the statue doesn't seem to be moving and that it wasn't talking. I say that I wonder where Farrell is then. He points to the door. I say that Farrell has left; I wonder where Farrell has gone. Farrell laughs but doesn't say anything. I say that I wonder why he left. Farrell smiles but doesn't say anything. He tells me to ask him again where he has gone. I ask this and Farrell points to [a picture on the wall]...Farrell tells me that he has gone inside the picture. I pretend to ask Farrell in the picture what he is doing in there. He tells me that he is coming*

*out in a minute. Farrell sounds impatient. I say that he sounds a bit cross. He says that there is a crocodile in the picture and that it is coming to eat him. I say that there are no adults in the picture, who will protect Farrell?*

Through symbolic play, Farrell seemed to be telling a story to do with experiences about life at home. It appeared as though things were not going well and that father left. His going seemed to be experienced like a disappearance to Farrell and his reappearance seemed to be experienced as rather suddenly 'springing out'/'popping up', as conveyed through the game of 'hide and seek'. These ideas develop when the play changes. Perhaps in part, Farrell felt as though everything 'froze' when his father left; that Farrell's development froze. The 'statue' which did not speak reminded me of Farrell's difficulties with language and his baby-like way of speaking. There was quite a contrast between the springing, roaring 'lion', the silent, frozen 'statue' and the cross, dangerous 'crocodile'. In my countertransference, I felt as if I did not know who I was going to 'meet' next. My narrative about where Farrell is and where he has gone seemed reminiscent of the kinds of questions that Farrell might have had about his father not being around. 'Farrell' ends up in the 'picture' with a 'crocodile' who is going to 'eat' him - in a risky land and there is no one to protect him. I remembered how Farrell stayed up late at night, watching television when his mother and sisters had gone to sleep - that he goes into a 'world' of programmes which are highly inappropriate for him. Perhaps Farrell pretending to be in the picture was also, in part, a desire to take flight to manage the feelings that were aroused and difficult to contain, and his impatience was to do with being asked questions which he had asked of himself and did not have answers to; there seemed to be an object which cannot face this kind of questioning and instead 'disappears'.

In summary, the first theme which emerged from the children's brief work surrounded their preoccupations regarding their family constellations. Issues to do with fitting in, belonging and their fathers' absences from their lives were prevalent for all of the boys. In addition, for Dantrell and Farrell, there were questions about whether there was a place for the boys in their families. For Jerome, complex issues around his mixed race heritage were also present in his sessions. In Jameel's work, feelings about difficulties regarding separation and concerns about his place in his family evoked by the birth of his baby brother were prominent too.

## **Emotional Regulation**

The second theme to emerge from the children's brief psychotherapy sessions surrounded issues which affected the children's ability to regulate their feelings and emotions. This theme consisted of three dimensions: "struggle to calm down", "lack of containment" and "infantile needs", each of which will now be explored in turn.

The first dimension associated with issues stemming from the children's early life experiences concerned the children's struggles to calm down when they were in a state of high emotional arousal. Towards the end of my initial session with Jerome, he played with several traffic signs, which he pretended were 'calm down' and 'stop' signs.

*Jerome goes back to his box and he takes out the little road signs....and puts them on the floor and then he tries to take [the name of] the sign out. He can't do it at first, but then he is able to. He asks me what these signs are. I say that they can be whatever he wants them to be. He takes out the first sign and he stands it onto the desk where the dolls' house is and he said that this is a 'calm down' sign and he's been looking for the 'stop' sign and then he finds one and he says that this is the stop sign...I say that I wondered whether Jerome was able to calm down and stop sometimes. He tells me that 'calm down' is one of his targets. I say so perhaps this is something that he finds hard to do and one of the reasons why he's come to see [me]...That I can begin to think with his teachers about how to help Jerome calm down and stop...Jerome lines them up and then he takes a digger truck and...drives it very fast....The truck is bashed into the signs. I say that it's not listening to the calm down and stop signs....There is a bit of bashing and crashing with the driving of the toys. He drives the fire engine quite fast...it slips out of his hand. I say that it was moving very fast and then it was out of control and sometimes maybe when things move too fast they find it hard to slow down and stop and they bash and crash into things. He says "Crash?" and I said yes.*

The toy road signs seemed to resonate with Jerome as something important. He appeared to be ambivalent about them. There seemed to be a part of him that wanted and felt that he needed these internal signs, although he could not 'read' them. Part of his struggle appeared to be about not feeling that he had any internal 'breaks' or grips. Once he was in a distressed or destructive state, he could not pause to reflect or think and in this state of mind, he was difficult to access. There also seemed to be a side of him that wanted to remove the signs and would even 'bulldoze' them down - a side that did not want to calm down and stop or to have limits and boundaries, and had no regard for them either. He seemed to feel that these feelings were out of control and led to complete disaster - even the 'rescue vehicle'/authority figures were unable to control these raging and fiery feelings and he had no sense of any internal authority over them either.

These issues resonated in the work with all four of the children; there were times when they all seemed unable to stop. All of them went through a period of banging and throwing the toys. For instance, in Jameel's first session:

*...Jameel opens up the Russian dolls....He seems to begin putting them down on the table very firmly with the sort of stomping sound again, and I say that it seems really important for something to be heard. Jameel does this for a while with the Russian dolls and he's a bit rough with them and he throws them against the wall....Then he's taking things out of the dolls house as well and he continues like that for a while...there seems to be a lot of banging and everything is getting pulled out of the house. Eventually there is nothing left inside the house. I say, "Now there's an empty house". He puts the toilet back inside the house and I say "Oh, there's only the toilet inside". Eventually, the toilet comes out and then it's the TV [he puts the TV into the house]. When he's banging he begins to throw them [the toys] on the table. I say that these things belong to the room and it's important that we take care of them. He slows down, but then he continues again. I say the same thing again. Then I say that it seems really hard to stop and perhaps sometimes that happens to him, that he finds himself in a situation or something is going*

*on and he finds it hard to stop or to come out of it.*

Jameel appeared to be helped by this interpretation as he stopped throwing the toys. It seemed as though a part of him felt that his only resources were to project and ‘dump’ his feelings into others, as symbolised by the toilet, or to ‘zone out’, represented by the television. At other times, it seemed as though the boys required more direct instructions or my physical proximity to them to help them to stop: *“I say that it seemed like Jerome might need [my] help to slow down. I come over to Jerome and sit next to him. He stops banging.”* (Session 2 with Jerome).

It appeared as though the boys were curious and anxious about how much I would allow them to ‘get away with’ in this unstructured space with me, outside their normal experience of school and also needed to locate the boundaries and limits. It also seemed as though they needed to know that if they went too far, I could help them to stop.

The second dimension associated with the children’s difficulties in being able to regulate their feelings and emotions related to the children’s deep-seated sense of a lack of containment. For instance, when I went to collect Farrell for his second session with me, his class teacher, Mrs. Swan said to me:

*“Miss, look what Farrell’s done”. Farrell had drawn a picture...it was about a house being blown down; there were three pictures...Mrs. Swan said that they had been...reading “The Three Little Pigs” today....Farrell got up and I say that Farrell seems to be ready to go now. Farrell goes ahead to the door and we leave the room together. Farrell goes down the corridor and he tells me that he’s going to play with the animals. I say that he seems to have remembered what he was doing in the last session. He now pretends to fly like an aeroplane and I say that perhaps he remembers what he did at the end of the last session; on the way back to class last week, he pretended to be an aeroplane.*

The house in the story reminded me of Farrell’s home situation, that he and his family living in council housing and house-moving appeared to be a point of destabilisation,

which came up in the interview with his SENCO (explored in the next chapter). A powerful 'wolf' figure destroys the 'weak' home and this seemed to be symbolic of Farrell's impression of himself at home, challenging the boundaries such as at bedtime and being able to stay up as late as he liked, and at mainstream school, having had to come to a specialist school due to his behaviour. The 'house' also seemed to represent a state of mind which is not solid enough and comes apart; an internal state which falls apart. It is also unable to withstand aggression. The frame of the therapy becomes challenged too. Farrell's teacher brings something from his class time into our therapy time (Farrell's picture). I follow up Farrell's recollections of last week's session with my own memory of an event from the session, whilst we are still in the corridor on the way to the therapy room, and thus bringing something out of the therapy space. The 'aeroplane' seemed to be a way to take flight from these worries about containment. These anxieties and preoccupations were common to all of the boys.

In our third meeting, following the material about 'Iron Man', Dantrell enacts a story about a boy who is in trouble for being naughty for breaking toys, and the boy's mother is informed that the police are going to take him away. Dantrell becomes paranoid about a light fixture on the ceiling of the therapy room and thinks that it is a camera:

*Dantrell opens the [therapy room] door. Dantrell then goes to window and he says that there is a fly. Dantrell comes over to me and asks me if I kill flies. He takes the Post-it pad and puts one note under the area where the 'fly' is and one note next to fly so that there is a rectangular bit of the window created by the two note papers. Dantrell says that it's trapped. I say that it's in a small space and it's trapped. Dantrell then sticks one piece of post-it note onto the fly and crushes it. Dantrell says that it is dead. He goes to the lower (coffee table) and is doing something there. I say that I wonder why Dantrell has killed the fly.*

It seemed as though the story about the naughty boy became very real for Dantrell and resonated with his experiences, which left him feeling quite paranoid. This appeared to feel too much for him and he opened the therapy door as if to get away from them. The fly entering the room and 'intruding' on his space may have been like the feelings and thoughts which intrude in his heart and mind, which he struggles to manage, Dantrell

asking me if I kill flies might have been asking me how I deal with intrusions. Do they have to be 'killed off', or can they 'live', be tolerated, thought about and managed? When Dantrell surrounded the fly, he trapped it rather than contained it, thus he seemed to be projecting his own experiences of feeling trapped. Hence the camera was viewed as an object to be suspicious of, rather than a positive, observing or watchful object. Dantrell is cruel to the fly. His un-contained feelings escalate to the point of abuse and annihilation as he suddenly crushes the fly. He projects his vulnerability and feelings of being surrounded into the fly. In my countertransference, I am left feeling surprise and disbelief at what I witnessed. In the following session there was another fly in the room. Towards the end of the session, Dantrell went to hit the fly but missed and the fly began to buzz. He sat next to me, watching the fly and appeared startled and scared. I said to Dantrell:

*...he cannot think of me properly or just be with me because his mind is so full of the angry fly that he feels scared about. That I am meant to know what it feels like to have someone next to you but it feels like they are not thinking about you because they are too scared about someone else's anger.*

I felt that this seemed to echo an early experience in Dantrell's life of a dire absence of containment linked to the domestic violence from his father to his mother; my countertransferences described in the extract may well have been like an infant Dantrell's experience with his mother.

The third dimension of the theme of emotional regulation concerned the children's internal preoccupations connected to their infantile needs. The children seemed to enact a number of these kinds of preoccupations in their sessions with me through symbolic play, such as Jameel in his third meeting with me when he played with Russian dolls (nesting dolls):

*...the littlest doll is positioned in front of the biggest doll and he bangs it up and down on the table. It looks to me like a little one looking at a big one and trying to get its attention....Then he knocks the big one down with the little one and I say that this little one seemed to make a lot of noise to get noticed by the big*



*one, but then it didn't seem to be noticed and so the little one had to really hit out at the big one, so that the big one knew that the little one was there and it knocked the big one down. And I say that I noticed this week, as I had the other weeks, that when Jameel left his class, he stomped a little bit as if he was protesting and it seemed like it was really important to be heard, and perhaps he did not feel that he was heard and he feels that he needs to make a lot of noise to be heard. He nods slightly. Then there's a bit of banging that happens, and the middle doll knocks down the little doll, and I say...the middle one hits out at the little one [now]...how it doesn't seem that one can get cross without another one getting cross, it's as if there isn't enough space to be cross, as if it isn't allowed to be cross...Jameel seems really withdrawn after a while his body sort of slumps on the dolls house table...*

It seemed as though through the play, Jameel was expressing that there is a part of himself which needs attending to, and it feels it needs to hit out in order to get the attention of its object. The other children appeared to express this in their sessions too. This side which wants attention appears to be small and vulnerable - it seems to come up against another side which is cut off and so it is a big task to make contact with the other but also the task of making contact with oneself, self-awareness, seems to be a big one. Jameel's play also seemed to portray infantile attacks against a mother object - an object which is unable to withstand 'knocks' and unable to meet the needs of a demanding little one. Containing aggression appeared to be hard for Jameel and his object to do and is met with by retaliation, which seemed to leave him feeling quite hopeless. Perhaps Jameel's ambivalence about coming to his sessions and connecting with me was due to feeling that the other is not able to cope with these aspects of him. Concerns about retaliation in response to their aggression appeared to be common to all of the children.

All four of the boys seemed to have underlying preoccupations about not feeling held in mind and heard as well as feeling neglected. In my third meeting with Jerome, he played with a toy dumper truck which hit a small toy motorbike off the table. There was a sense that the truck-object which was meant to contain and carry feelings actually

dumped its own unwanted feelings into the little motorbike-part instead. In Dantrell's first session with me, he played with the dolls' house:

*Dantrell puts the children on the chairs. He then puts the cooker into the attic. Dantrell says that he's going to cook some food. He says that the people are hungry. Dantrell asks me where the cooking things are. I say that there is a cooker and that he imagines that there are also cooking things and so that he asks me where they are. But that there aren't cooking things. Dantrell opens the fridge. He says that there isn't any food in the fridge either, it's empty.*

Through play, Dantrell seemed to be communicating about a neglectful maternal figure, who had not provided the 'food' required to meet his needs nor had this figure thought about his needs. Dantrell appeared to feel that he did not have the right 'equipment' to manage these needs either as a result of this neglect. Subsequently, this appeared to affect his relationships with adults - he seemed to question what they had to offer him and whether they would and could take care of him properly.

In summary, the second theme which came to the fore in the children's sessions concerned issues which seemed to affect their ability to regulate their feelings and emotions. At the start of their work with me, all of the children presented as struggling to calm down when they were in a state of high emotional arousal, such as distress or anger. This made me wonder if there had been a lack of affective attunement early on in their lives (Stern, 1985; Daws, 2008). Part of the children's struggles seemed to be connected to a deep-seated sense of a lack of containment (Bion, 1962b) and feeling neglected in terms of their infantile needs. Towards the end of our work, the children showed that they were able to calm down from the heightened emotional states, and they were able to stay with their feelings and emotions better, and could, for example, show feelings of vulnerability and hurt. This reminded me of how development of a sense of containment through reverie can help to process overwhelming feelings (ibid).

### **Separation**

The third theme to emerge from the children's brief psychotherapy sessions concerned issues to do with separation. This theme was present in the work with all four of the

children. In my meetings with Jameel, issues around separation seemed to be prominent. Unlike the other boys, he showed a lot of overt resistance throughout our work together. As stated earlier, at the point of separation from his class and coming to therapy in our first meeting, he protested against leaving the classroom. In the session, Jameel's play with two toy cars which fought together and then which he attempted to stick together made me think of an enmeshed couple which could not be together in a harmonious way but also which could not be apart - then they came together there was a lot of conflict but when they are apart one fell off the table as if unable to survive the separation. Towards the end of the session, Jameel put his things hurriedly and "...a little bit haphazardly..." back into his box, as if in haste to leave. I felt that there was a haphazard gathering of himself at the time of separation. I helped Jameel to tidy up and he slowed down and put things away with more care. It seemed as though having a sense that someone was alongside him in the process of separation helped him to become more connected, as he was not alone in dealing with the 'mess'. At the start of my third meeting with Jameel, his class were coming to the end of story-time together:

*...[Jameel's teacher] is reading "The Three Little Pigs"; they are near the end of the book...[His teacher] tells Jameel that it's time for his session. Jameel protests. His protest is in a low voice, mumbling, groaning a little, turning his body from me and sort of curling into himself a little bit....[His teacher] tells me that there is one page left...It's the wolf coming down the chimney and falling into the pot.*

In this extract, I became like a 'big bad wolf' as I came to take Jameel from his 'house' before story-time had ended, even though it was time for his session, as if I was playing a harsh 'paternal function' (Emanuel, 2008). Being at 'home' appeared to be a shelter and a place to take refuge from a wolf-object. Although there is an attempt to separate and go their own ways, the pig-brothers have to come back together as alone, they are prey for the wolf. These ideas seemed to be elaborated upon later in the session. Through play with two Russian dolls representing a mother and an infant, Jameel appeared to convey an idea of a womb-like place and state of mind. This place seemed to be like a 'bubble' from where he got comfort. It appeared to be the case that when Jameel goes into this state, he gets very comfortable in there; separation becomes hard and is not desirable and there is little room to grow. There was a sense that this bubble

got recreated when Jameel settled into new situations. I remembered his mainstream teachers queries about whether Jameel had Autism, as this reminded me of an Autistic defence (Tustin, 1981; Alvarez, 1992).

The theme of separation was present in my work with Farrell too. In our second meeting, he appeared to convey an idea that there should not be a separation as he revisited toy animals which he had stuck together in our previous meeting. There was a concern that coming apart meant falling apart. This reminded me of ‘adhesive identification’ (e.g. Bick, 1968; 1986) as a means of holding oneself together as a way of managing fears concerning separation, such as terror of falling apart (Emanuel, 2012). Two animals which Farrell thought that he had joined together in the previous session were not: “...*he says that the lion’s not stuck, the Sellotape isn’t there. I say I wonder what has happened to the Sellotape. Farrell tells me that he is going to put more Sellotape on and then he takes this out from his box and tries to open it and he can’t.*”. There is a question about whether adults take care of things during separation. The box was in my care between the previous session and this session and I was ultimately responsible for it - did I take care of it and what happened to the Sellotape? There is an idea that something happens to his things during the separation. I tried to explore this further and he seemed to not want to do so. It appeared that it was not easy to ‘open up’ (like the Sellotape) due to his concerns about separation, which in turn made separation more challenging, as represented by his struggle to find the Sellotape’s end-beginning point. Through symbolic play, Farrell seemed to raise his dilemmas through ‘hide and seek’ in our meeting. As Farrell ‘hid’ me under the table, in my countertransference, I experienced feeling somewhat claustrophobia being in such a small and enclosed space. This was like a part that wants to separate. With me completely hidden, Farrell appeared to enact what it felt like to be a child alone without an adult present. There seemed to be questions about whether there was more room for Farrell to grow.

Separation was a key theme in my work with Jerome too. This can be seen, for example, in our initial meeting:

*Jerome takes the motorbike and he sits one of the male dolls on it. He drives it a little bit on the floor and then he picks up the other male doll and he talks in its voice and he says that they are twins. One doll asks the other “Can I come with you? I want to*

*come with you” and the first one says that he doesn't want him to do this (to join him) but they drive around together and then one falls off (the one who had wanted to join in) and the first one tells him that he should get his own car.*

I felt that Jerome was conveying feelings of ambivalence about separation: on the one hand, he was wanting to separate and be independent and on the other hand, he wanted to be joined up, twinned, with someone. There is one figure who feels it needs someone to make the transition with, like a much younger child. There is another side which does not want this, and appeared to resent the part which is in need; it does not want to ‘chauffeur’ the younger, needy part and wants to disown it. The two parts are like two halves, ‘twins’, but they are not able to balance well and Jerome is not able to be in touch with both of these parts of himself at the same time - an issue which also emerged in the interview with his class teacher at the specialist school (discussed in a following chapter).

In the session, Jerome came across as if he was ‘in the know’ about a number of things, such as where the therapy room was, who else used it and he selected toys to play with which were the same as the ones he had in class. It seemed as though this was a defence against not knowing and various worries connected to it. After later speaking about things which he did not know about, such as when he was born, Jerome told me that one of the boys in his class laughs at him when he loses things, as he played with the dolls’ house:

*In the dolls’ house the dolls are getting hurt; they fall through the gap [the space between two floors where there are normally some stairs] and the truck falls through the gap. He tells me that it gets hurt. I say that he seems to be telling me today about people getting hurt and feeling really hurt...Jerome turns the ground floor’s stairs around so that the smooth side faces us [the back of the stairs]. He tells me that this can be a slide. He slides one of the dolls and the dumper truck down it...he says that they’re hurt.*

The truck seemed to represent an object, a 'vehicle' which is meant to transport and carry - to contain - experiences and feelings, but it falls through a gap. There was perhaps a mind which is not able to hold onto things and loses them, and this seemed to occur at the point of separation. The play with the slide appeared to symbolise some of Jerome's preoccupations regarding transition - that it occurred very fast and that there was no sense of a 'grip' to help slow things down or to stop - no transitional period, no preparation and no time to process the experience. Perhaps there was a phantasy that these challenges were present from the earliest transition at the start of life. These issues seemed to echo the concerns of Jerome's mainstream class teacher about transition, explored in a following chapter. There did not seem to be a sense of an adult or parental figure to give support during these difficult times. Jerome appeared to feel that this made him vulnerable and prone to being targeted and hurt by his peers.

In summary, the third theme to emerge from the brief work surrounded issues to do with separation. At the start of their work, all of the children struggled with separation. All of the boys seemed to have considerable underlying anxiety that one could not 'survive' separation (e.g. Daws, 1999; Likierman, 2008). They seemed to feel small and vulnerable and that they would be left to fend for themselves when they did not feel that they had the resources to cope. There was a sense that these anxieties were related to early life experiences (e.g. Daws, 1999, Likierman, 2008; Emanuel, 2012). The children appeared to cope with these feelings, for example, by being inside or stuck to an object (e.g. Bick, 1968; 1986), or through destructive behaviour (e.g. Pozzi, 2003; Emanuel, 2008; Miller, 2008; Urwin, 2008). As these complex issues were processed during our work, separation seemed easier. For instance, the children seemed settled much more quickly in the sessions, engaged much more readily and seemed to convey more latency development in their play.

### **Damage**

The fourth theme which came to the fore in the brief psychotherapy work with the children concerned matters associated with damage. This theme was prevalent in all four children's sessions. At the start of their work with me, the boys' struggles to face their capacity to damage seemed to emerge. In my first two meetings with Dantrell, he spoke about his phantasies about 'Jerome' breaking the toys in his sessions. For instance, in the first session, following the material about an empty fridge and a missing boy, Dantrell stated that 'Jerome' had told him to break the toys. In part, it seemed as though

Dantrell was communicating about a side of himself, a destructive part, which ‘tells’ him to destroy and spoil things for himself; it was as if he was not allowed to have anything good. He appeared to be disconnected from his delinquent part which was projected into his peer. The ‘empty fridge’ in part seemed to be symbolic of this emptying of himself of his destructive side. But with it, he seemed emptied out of his good and ‘nourishing’ things too.

Both Jerome and Jameel threw and hit the toys very hard in their first sessions, with Jerome jumping on and breaking his ‘calm down’ and ‘stop’ signs. Jerome did not attend school the following week on the day of his session and so we next met the week after. At the start of the second session, he played with the toy phones in the room and pretended to ring me and hang up on me several times as two different characters: a child and a “...crazy man....” who seemed to be a scary, manic and excitable character. Jerome became very aggressive banging the phone as he slammed the receiver down and pretended to hang up on me, and I sat beside him to help him to stop. Following this, Jerome went to play with the dolls’ house and informed me that a hinge was broken on the door. He thought that another child had broken it during the time that he should have been in his session with me the previous week.

*Jerome tries to put the door back but it doesn't go. He asks me what he should do. I say that he seems concerned about this – what to do with this broken thing. Jerome nods...Jerome goes to his box. He takes out the road signs that he had been playing with in the first session. Jerome asks me what happened to them. I ask Jerome what he thinks. He shrugs and says he doesn't know. I say that it seems as though there are some things from our last meeting together, two weeks ago, that Jerome doesn't remember. I say that he doesn't seem to remember bashing the road signs, jumping on them and breaking them. Jerome says that he remembers now.*

It appeared as though after the damage which he had done to his toys in his first meeting, Jerome was rather anxious about returning to his space. He appeared to be very worried about how I might react and handle his destructive side and he also seemed to be very concerned about whether he had damaged his space. Jerome seemed to have disowned

his destruction, projecting it into another child and not initially remembering what he had done the previous session. However, he appeared to want direction from me about how to manage the ‘unhinged’ part of himself which had attacked the rules and boundaries and his own helpful and good things. In part, Jerome being careful with the door seemed to suggest that he cared about what happened to this object and felt he should do something about it.

The boys’ destructive behaviours seemed to reach a pinnacle in their third sessions. Farrell pretended to shoot me dead and wanted me to shoot him back. In the countertransference I felt very uncomfortable in this position. In Jameel and Jerome’s third meetings with me there were figures who hurt each other. Jameel’s session involved the aggressive play with the Russian dolls mentioned earlier, and in Jerome’s session, a small and weaker figure (motorbike) was bashed and broken by a bad and powerful figure (truck) whilst it was down on the ground. This appeared to be a more abusive theme to this play. Finally, in Dantrell’s third session, he killed the fly. Perhaps we reached the ‘heart’ of the work in the middle sessions and thus the peak of their preoccupations surrounding damage and destruction emerged.

The children’s destructive feelings seemed to mask their difficulties in coping with deep-seated feelings and experiences which were painful, which they had not been able to make sense of and were challenging for them to contain (e.g. Pozzi, 2003; Miller, 2008; Urwin, 2008), like a ‘second-skin’ defence (Bick, 1968; 1986). This issue has been prevalent throughout the different themes in this chapter so far. For example, underlying Dantrell’s desire to punch ‘Iron Man’ seemed to convey feelings which he was struggling with, such as those surrounding his father’s absence, vulnerability and rejection. Also his killing of the fly seemed to conceal complex feelings and thoughts regarding his experience of domestic violence from his father to his mother - an experience of damage from very early on in his life (Miller, 2008). Furthermore, there was an idea of the children being able to both protect themselves from others and attack others; they all played with a toy or talked about a figure that did this. For example, in Farrell’s meetings with me he made toy guns using Mega Blocs. His ‘fire-ice gun’ protected him against the ‘elements’, against fiery or icy feelings from others, but it was a means through which he could attack others too.

It seemed to be that it was difficult to get out of a pattern of destructive behaviour from



the children's sessions. An example of this can be seen in Farrell's fourth meeting with me:

*Farrell says to me: "Hands up!". I put my hands up. Farrell pretends to shoot me. I say to Farrell that he tells me to put my hands up, and I do, but he still shoots me. He laughs. He does this again. Farrell tells me to play like we had last week, where he pretends to be sleeping (and I have the gun and I'm meant to shoot him)...Farrell makes the gun for me and he gives it to me. Farrell says, "Hands up" to me and pretends to shoot me. He then tells me to "do hands up" to him and to pretend to shoot him. I say to Farrell that as he may remember from last week, [I don't] shoot, but that [I am] happy to say "hands up". Farrell tells me just to shoot. I say that [I don't] play the same as Farrell, and Farrell wants [me] to play the same as him, but that it might feel not so good if [I] did that. Farrell says "OK" and tells me to say hands up. I say "hands up" and Farrell says that he has been shot too.*

In Farrell's play, the two figures were meant to keep shooting each other. There seemed to be a vicious cycle of emotions and experiences including violence, retaliation, betrayal, deception and being hurt. The aggressor became the victim and the victim became the aggressor. These two figures appeared to be caught up in a destructive dynamic.

In summary, the fourth theme which emerged in the children's sessions related to damage. At the start of our work, the boys seemed to struggle to face their capacity to damage and their behaviours seemed to conceal their struggles in coping with deep-seated painful feelings and experiences which they had been unable to make sense of or contain (e.g. Pozzi, 2003; Emanuel, 2008; Miller, 2008; Urwin, 2008). These issues appeared to be related to experiences of damage from early on in life and there was an idea that being able to attack others was a way to protect themselves from attacks or unwanted experiences from others. The children appeared to find it difficult to get out of patterns of destructive behaviours, such as vicious dynamics of being aggressive towards others and being the victim themselves. (Miller, 2008). Towards the

end of the work the children's destructive behaviours diminished, and they were able to look at and resist acting destructively.

### **Struggles to Relate**

The fifth theme which emerged from the children's sessions concerned the children's struggles in relating. This theme consisted of two dimensions, which were present in the work with all four of the children, namely: "resistance" and "caution of adults". Both of these dimensions will be explored in turn.

The first dimension of the theme of struggles to relate concerned the children's resistance. One way in which resistance was demonstrated was through rejecting behaviour. For example, at the start of his sessions, Jameel would refuse and protest about coming to our meeting and on a number of occasions during the sessions, he would ask me how long there was left of the session, conveying a sense that he did not wish to be there. Also, Jerome's splitting between black people and white people involved a rejection of black people. Both boys projected feelings of being unwanted, disliked and not being accepted through the rejection.

A second way in which resistance was portrayed was through not wanting to know. Towards the end of his first session with me, Jameel told me that "...his older sister fights with him..." and that when he tried to talk to his parents, "...they don't listen...". In our third meeting, during play with the Russian dolls,

*He puts the heads of the dolls on the sofas of the dolls' house and they're all watching TV. I find in my countertransference not being present with Jameel, that my mind drifts and I wonder about this in terms of an object which isn't entirely present. He plays with these dolls for quite a while.*

Following material about how an infant figure had to bang to be heard by a maternal figure, and there not being enough room for feelings of anger, Jameel withdrew. I noticed that in the countertransference "...my mind wondered.". Jameel began to bang the toys which regained my focus. It seemed as though in this material, Jameel was telling me about objects which did not listen to him and that they did not want to know about conflict and conflicting feelings. He appeared to be communicating that there are

minds which were cut off from thinking.

An important reason for not wanting to know seemed to be illustrated in Dantrell's first session in his initial contact with the dolls' house:

*Dantrell takes the fridge out of the dolls' house. He opens and then closes its door...Dantrell puts the fridge back. He takes out one of the dolls and then removes the cover on the lower bunk bed. He adjusts the covers. He goes to put the doll inside the bed and lie it down, but then removes it and readjusts the bed, adding the pillow (which he had taken out of the house) and then goes to lie the doll down...he adjusts the bed clothes once more before laying the doll down. As he puts the doll onto the bed each time, he negotiates around the rocking horse which is in front of it – it's as if he does not want to disturb the things. I say how carefully Dantrell seems to be trying to put this doll to bed – that there is a rocking horse in the way and someone on it and Dantrell moves around them in the small space that is there. Dantrell adjusts the computer in the attic. He then opens the toilet. He picks up a doll and sits it on the toilet. Dantrell seems to be wriggling a bit and I wonder if he needs to go to the toilet...Dantrell continues a little bit and then says that he needs the toilet.*

Dantrell seemed to be communicating that he did not want to 'open up' due to concern about a disturbance being caused - in his thoughts, his mind, possibly even things outside of the therapy. His remark later in the session about there not being food in the fridge reminded me of his experience of social services coming to see him and his family at home and I wondered if Dantrell worried about what I might do with the things we learnt about him. Keeping the dolls' house neat and ordered seemed important in this respect, so as to not result in a disturbance.

Being stuck seemed to be a third form of resistance. In Jameel's fourth meeting with me, he played with two bear cubs and made them come together so that "...their front paws/limbs interlock..." which seemed to depict an impasse position (Rosenfeld, 1987).

In Dantrell's fourth session, he did not acknowledge me when I came to collect him, for his session and instead went into the classroom's Wendy house. He pretended that he had gone to "...outer space...." and that he could not find his "...way out [or]...see...." where he was going. This, in part, seemed to be a communication about not being able to find a way to come out from a position of withdrawing and distancing himself both from others and from the side of him that 'sees' and thinks, rather like a "...psychic retreat...." (Steiner, 1993), a place of psychological withdrawal and refuge from psychic pain.

Ambivalence also seemed to contribute towards the children's struggles to relate. For instance, in my second meeting with Jerome, when he pretended to phone me as the 'crazy man' and child figure, he repeatedly 'phoned' and 'hung up' on me. These figures seemed to want to make contact with the other by saying 'hello' but then did not appear to be serious about sustaining communication and were wasting time. Jerome seemed to be conveying the struggle between the side of himself which wished to engage with others and a delinquent side which held him back from engaging. This ambivalence was also in context of the concerns about returning to meet with me following the destruction of his toys in the previous session. Farrell's "...fire and ice gun...." which he made in our final meeting, in part seemed to reflect his ambivalence about how to manage the end of our work together: to be 'hot' and intense or 'cold' and distant.

The second dimension which emerged from the theme of struggles to relate concerned the children's caution of adults. The children seemed to have internalised various figures which made them wary of adults. The boys appeared to be concerned about how much their objects could 'take'. For instance, in some of Jerome's sessions, there was a 'crazy man' figure who came across as unstable. In our second meeting, when Jerome noticed that a hinge from the door of the dolls' house was missing and asked me what he should do about it, it appeared as though he was partially communicating about an object which was 'unhinged' and delicate and needed to be handled with care. This, along with the 'crazy man' reminded me of 'unassimilated' objects (Heimann, 1942; Barrows, 2008). Jerome moved the door slowly as if not wanting to contribute to the damage further, carrying the weight of the door to remove the pressure on it. Jerome seemed to convey that the onus of taking care of this object was upon him - that it was his role.

The children appeared to feel that there was an internal figure who was unable to attend to their needs. For example, in Jameel's meetings with me, there seemed to be a recurrent figure whose mind was 'cut off' and not available for contact, and that one had to work quite hard to try to gain its attention. In my first session with Jameel, he attempted to open a plastic tub of toys: "*He tries to open the lid...putting his finger nails underneath the rim of the lid...[he's] trying to get inside by breaking in...*". This container seemed to represent an object which was difficult to penetrate and access. Jameel felt the need to 'claw' his way in which suggested that this figure was from an early, 'primitive' time in Jameel's life.

The boys seemed to be concerned about the adult world's capability to protect them. In my fourth meeting with Farrell, following the game where he wanted the two of us to shoot each other repeatedly, he wanted to play another game where we took it in turns to take toy guns from each other whilst the other of us slept.

*Farrell tells me to pretend to sleep now. I say that I will pretend to be asleep and I keep my eyes half closed....Farrell goes past me and tells me that he goes behind me when I am sleeping. Farrell takes the gun. He goes back to his place/behind the chair. He says "Wake up now". I pretend to wake up and I notice in pretend astonishment that my gun has gone.*

It appeared as though:

*...there is an adult in this story, played by me, who does not notice what goes on when she is sleeping and a child that stays awake and takes things that are not safe for children, like guns...this child seems to enjoy the fact that he can slip past the adult!...Farrell seems to be showing me what it's like when adults are not protecting children; what happens when the adult's mind is asleep and away from the child. (Session 5 with Farrell)*

I was meant to be a figure who, following a cycle of aggression, seemed to 'close her eyes' to what was going on around her. As a result, the figure was 'robbed' of her

capacity to protect and defend herself and others from further harm. Through symbolic play, Farrell also seemed to be conveying his experience of night times, where he was able to 'slip past' the rules, boundaries and parental authority and watch television late at night, without protection from inappropriate programmes - where there was a lack of safety and containment.

The children seemed to be concerned about harsh authority figures. An example of this was in my third meeting with Dantrell:

*...[Dantrell] says he's calling my Mum. Dantrell pretends that I'm 'Jerome'. He calls and asks is that Jerome, and "Did you break the toys, tell the truth". I ask what the boy says. Dantrell says yes. I say that in each of our meetings so far, we've had a character who breaks the toys and his mother gets called; there is a telling off voice. Dantrell gives me a white pencil colour and a green post-it paper and tells me to write something to my mother to say sorry...He says that he is going to call the police. I say that there is a boy who is in trouble, a voice that tells him he has to say sorry, who is threatening to call his mum and the police. This boy seems to always be in so much trouble for breaking toys. Dantrell comes over to dolls house and takes out another block of 'flowers', telling me as he does that he is going to call my mother and narrates that he is taking the phone from the charger...He goes over to the window and pretends to be talking to Jerome's mother on the phone. Dantrell tells her that the police are going to be taking Jerome away, that he's been very naughty.*

In this play, there is a boy who destroys and damages things but is also vulnerable. There is an adult figure who threatens to call a mother and there is also a threat to call the police to deal with 'naughty' behaviour. There is a punitive enforcement to say sorry. These authority figures do not seem to unite in a thoughtful way - their method is harsh and threatening and there is anxiety from the boy's perspective about them coming together. They seemed to represent harsh 'paternal' functions (Bion, 1962b; Emanuel, 2008). The boy is pressurised into a written 'confession' about his 'crimes' and made to

feel very guilty about them. These authority figures seemed to represent a harsh superego. This play was also reminiscent of a mother being called into school when the child has been 'naughty'. In the child's mind, it does not seem to be a joining up for building relationships or other good and beneficial reasons. This concern was common to all the boys. The session from which the extract above comes occurred just after Dantrell's mother had come to join his class for breakfast, along with Dantrell's baby sister. Perhaps one of the 'crimes' that were being alluded to in the play were 'oedipal crimes' - for instance to do with his feelings of rivalry evoked by sharing his mother with his class, his baby sister in his school space, mother and teachers coming together, and the threats made by the 'Daddy-police' to deal with his 'naughty' behaviour. Oedipal and sibling rivalries and fear about retaliation were prevalent in the work with all of the boys.

In summary, the fifth theme to emerge from the brief work concerned the boys' struggles in relating. At the start of our work together, the children could present as quite ambivalent and resistant to relate and this was demonstrated through rejecting behaviour, cutting off from thinking and being in an impasse position which was difficult to come out of. The boys appeared to have internalised various figures which made them cautious of adults. For instance, there was concern about objects that could not attend to the children's needs, or hold them in mind and objects that were harsh - connected to harsh superegos. Related to this were struggles in resolving oedipal conflicts and feelings.

### **Working Together**

The sixth and final theme which emerged from the children's brief psychotherapy sessions related to the children being able to work together with me during the course of our meetings. My fourth meeting with Jerome seemed to illustrate a number of instances of working together. In this session, Jerome asked me if his broken toys had been fixed and there seemed to be a notion about repairing things which had been damaged (Klein, 1946). However, the idea of damage appeared to then return as Jerome played the 'crazy man' again, shouted 'down the phone' at me and became rather manic. I told Jerome that I had decided not to pick up the phone to this character now and that "*...perhaps Jerome hopes that [I am] someone who can say no to shouty, scary people....*". Jerome seemed to stop and think for a bit.

*Jerome makes ringing sounds again. This time the ringing sounds start off a little calmer and quickly escalate. I say that it might still be the crazy man on the phone again. Jerome puts the receiver down. He makes ringing sounds again, this time much calmer. I get up from my chair to 'answer' the phone. Jerome puts on a softer voice, but which is still high pitched. He says that he is a shopkeeper and asks if I would like to come to his shop. I say that I'm being invited to come to his shop. Jerome asks again if I would like to come to his shop. He tells me he has lots of fruit and vegetables, like blueberries. I say that...[perhaps] he wonders if I will accept his things and he is telling me that he has nice things like blueberries. Jerome tells me that he needs the toilet and asks if he can go to the toilet. We leave the room and I let Jerome know where I will wait for him. He hands me the rest of his blueberries to hold whilst he is in the toilet. Jerome returns a few minutes later and we go back to the therapy room. Jerome goes to the phone and rings again. I answer the phone. Jerome asks again if I will come to his shop. We put the receivers down and I come to Jerome . He says "Welcome to my shop" and grins at me.*

It seemed as though Jerome was interested in the idea that one does not need to engage with destructiveness, that one could say 'no' to it, which appeared to lead to him playing in a different kind of way. This notion came up in my work with the other three boys too. Jerome invited me to engage with him as the 'shopkeeper', rather than imposing himself upon me as the 'crazy man'. The shopkeeper seemed to represent a figure who had many good and nourishing things to offer (Klein, 1952a). This offering also appeared to be an attempt at reparation. There seemed to be anxiety about whether this gesture would be accepted from him or not, and whether his good things could be accepted; in the process, Jerome made himself vulnerable. Perhaps his desire to go to the toilet coincided with a wish to evacuate these feelings and to escape the possibility of rejection. But there also appeared to be an idea that his good things could be held onto as he gave me the blueberries. On our return to the therapy room, Jerome 'welcomed' the opportunity to engage positively with me. Later in the session, Jerome spoke openly about missing his father and how his parents used bad words when speaking to each



other. Complex issues about his mixed race identity came to the fore relating to underlying concerns about two objects coming together in a destructive way and that good things get destroyed during conflict. Jerome seemed to find this difficult to stay with and asked to use the toilet again.

*...as I wait in the corridor for Jerome, I hear him repeatedly banging the door inside the toilet. I ask him if he is ok and he replies that he is. Soon I say that I think he did not really need to go to the toilet and that he is messing about now and ask him to come out. Jerome soon comes out and heads straight for class. He stands in the doorway of his classroom and the class look at him. Mrs. Swan [one of his class teacher's] looks a bit puzzled and asks if we have finished. I say that we've still got a little while left. Mrs. Ruby [the class' other teacher] says that Jerome seemed to be messing around in the toilets, she could hear him from here. She says that they will make sure that he goes to the toilet before his meeting next time. I gesture to Jerome and he steps out of the doorway and we return to the therapy room.*

Jerome seemed to allow his delinquent and spoiling part to take over by messing about in the toilets. His destructive side seemed to emerge in an attempt to block out his painful thoughts and feelings. Jerome's teachers directed him back to his therapy. This gesture of alliance with and support for our work seemed to help Jerome to return to the therapy room. Jerome then appeared to use the rest of the session to express his feelings around parental conflict and his identity through symbolic play. In my work with the other three boys, there were also times when they challenged the boundaries of the therapy and their teachers show of support for the work, like a united parental couple with me, seemed to help the boys to feel more contained (e.g. Waddell, 1998; Britton, 2002, Barrows, 2008) and to engage in working.

In my work with Jameel, in our fourth meeting issues to do with not being able to relate with others due to separation struggles came to the fore. Jameel then became quite stuck and withdrawn in the session. I pushed some paper towards him and Jameel now showed interest in working again by playing with plasticine.

*Jameel hands me the packet [of plasticine] from across the table...I open the top and then Jameel reaches out to take it back...Jameel tries to take out the black plasticine strip. He tries for a bit. I say after a bit "How do you get in and how do you get something you want out?" I say that he doesn't seem to want to open it further and he's got a bit of a job on his hands! Eventually, Jameel gets the black plasticine out of the packet. I comment that it's finally come out.*

It seemed as though working hard and perseverance to engage with Jameel helped to access Jameel's working part, which is symbolised in his play. In our final meeting, I summarised our work together to Jameel - interpretations about the main themes from our work. Following this,

*Jameel pulls his box towards himself and opens it. He takes out the toy bears and pretends that one of the cubs springboards off the rim onto the table, at the other cub...I say that noticing important things seems to be helpful to Jameel. Shortly, Jameel begins narrating his play, things like "The little bear jumps on the big bear" and "The little bear bites the big bear". Jameel's voice is louder and clearer and I am taken aback and find myself pleased to hear it...I'm more struck by hearing his voice...I say that Jameel has also been quiet at times in our meetings together and so [I] did not know that Jameel could speak so clearly and loudly! The corners of Jameel's mouth turn upwards slightly, as he gives a small smile.*

In our previous sessions, Jameel had been very resistant about engaging and it had taken him a while to play in the meeting. However, in this final session, following my summary of our work, Jameel engaged and played spontaneously without resisting and 'opened up'. Our meetings had been a place where I had tried to think about and understand some of Jameel's preoccupations - perhaps the work was like a 'springboard' as I would now be using my understanding of him from our work to aid his teachers to think about how best to help him. Like the little bear who jumps off the springboard in his play, Jameel makes a big 'jump' by speaking loudly and clearly for the first time in

his sessions. This felt like a pivotal moment to me. I learnt from Jameel's teachers that immediately following the session, he had continued to speak louder and clearer, something they too witnessed for the first time. This was also the first time that he had smiled in our meetings and showed a more friendly side of himself to me and one that wanted to engage.

The theme of working together also emerged in my work with Dantrell. When I went to collect Dantrell from his classroom at the start of our fourth meeting, he did not respond when I greeted him and he did not move from his chair to come with me. It was just me, Dantrell, his class teacher, Mrs. Swan in the classroom. She tried to encourage him to go to his meeting with me.

*[Mrs. Swan] tells me that I might not know, but that the children have Sports' Day in two weeks and they had wondered if Dantrell might not go as he has his session with me. I say that Dantrell and I actually have two meetings left, one today now and one next week. Mrs. Swan exclaims "Oh!" and that this should be fine. Dantrell has gone into the Wendy-house [a teacher comes in to the class to speak to Mrs. Swan]...I go over to the Wendy-house and open the curtain and say that it's time for us to go and meet together now, to Dantrell. Dantrell tells me that Dantrell isn't here...that he's gone to outer space. I say that's very far away. Dantrell puts on a pair of swimming goggles....He tells me that he can't find his way out – he can't see where he is going. I say that perhaps he might like to take my hand and allow me to help him out and to come with me. I hold out my hand and he takes it. We walk to Mrs. Swan's desk and I say that perhaps Dantrell can leave the glasses here safely with Mrs. Swan so that she can look after them for Dantrell for when he comes back to class. Dantrell says he's going to take them with him. Mrs. Swan says that she'd quite like the glasses, in a playful way. Dantrell says that she already has a pair on her head. Mrs. Swan says that she'd like another pair, that sometimes she likes to wear other glasses. She laughs and Dantrell also laughs and hands her the glasses...and we leave.*

It appeared as though Mrs. Swan gave me some information about why she thought Dantrell had resisted to go with me for our meeting - that they had thought that one of the meetings clashed with Sports' Day. Upon the mention that there were two sessions left, Dantrell seemed to retreat further, into the Wendy-house - 'outer space'. The goggles appeared to represent an object which might help him to come out of this state. Perhaps the resistance was about our work together coming to an end, and the goggles were symbolic of a valued element of our work: trying to look at and understand Dantrell's 'inner space' - his thoughts, feelings and experiences. I felt that he liked the brief work space and perhaps he did not like that he would be outside of the space when our work ended the following week. So perhaps this resulted in Dantrell feeling reluctant about letting go of the goggles. Dantrell allowed me to help him out by taking my hand. Mrs. Swan and I demonstrated that his important things could be contained as represented by the suggestion of handing the goggles over to her - we were working together to look after his important things outside of the brief work too. There was a negotiation about letting the goggles go and Dantrell seemed helped by allowing him some space to do so before we left, by us gently but assertively maintaining the boundaries about what came in and stayed out of therapy and by Mrs. Swan's playful demeanour towards the situation. It was later in this sessions that a fly appeared for the second time and Dantrell was able to resist killing it, and was able to manage his feelings of anxiety and show vulnerability; he was able to contain his feelings following this containment at the start of the session.

In my fifth and final session with Dantrell, when I went to collect him, the classroom was busy. The children and their teachers, Mrs. Swan and Mrs. Ruby, were joined by a teacher from another part of the school, Mrs. Carter:

*Mrs. Carter is in the doorway and both she and Mrs. Swan are surprised to see me. The children and Mrs. Swan are sitting at a table. Mrs. Carter says "What a shame!" and Mrs. Swan says that she thought Dantrell's sessions with me had finished. She and Mrs. Carter explain that the children are getting their certificates today in the big playground. I ask what time this is and what time it finishes. There doesn't seem to be any other time that I might see Dantrell. Mrs. Ruby (who is hidden from*

*my view) says that she can take Dantrell to get his certificate, suggesting he could get his last – at the end which would be when his session ends. Dantrell looks hesitant. Jerome calls out, “Oh no, you wont be getting your certificate”....Mrs. Swan says to Mrs. Ruby that it’s a good idea. Mrs. Ruby comes round now to where I can see her and repeats the idea to Dantrell and he nods. His face relaxes and he comes to me. We leave the classroom together and I say thank you to his teachers for their careful thinking. Mrs. Ruby says that’s fine, that it is important that he has his meeting time with me too. Dantrell and I go on to the therapy room.*

There seemed to be two sets of conflicting ‘voices’/sides about Dantrell attending our meeting. There was one side which was unable to retain that Dantrell had his final meeting with me that morning and told him that it was a ‘shame’ that he had to go and would be missing out on the special event of receiving a certificate. There was another side which stood up for his individual space and work. There was an attempt to reconcile this split and how Dantrell could both have his final session and his certificate when the other children received theirs. Dantrell appeared to be torn between the two sides, and despite another comment which could have polarised the split further by one of the other children, his class teachers and I united about maintaining his session time and demonstrated that the struggle could be worked through. Dantrell seemed to be relieved and contained by this alliance (e.g. Barrows, 2008; Emanuel, 2008) and he was able to come with me.

In my meetings with Farrell, the theme of working together was prevalent in the final two sessions. In these two sessions, in the transition from his classroom to the therapy room, Farrell walked alongside me, rather than going on ahead without me, as he had the previous two sessions. At the start of the fourth session, for example, “*Farrell looks serious as he goes with me down the corridor.*” and I felt that he was ‘serious’ about his work this session as we worked on issues to do with our meetings coming to an end. During the session, he also spoke about his father: “*...[Farrell] tells me that he doesn’t see him much and he tells me that’s not good.*” This was the first time that he had spoken about how he felt about not seeing his father and about serious and difficult issues.

At the beginning of the following and final session, I went to collect Farrell from his classroom, but he was not there. The children were still in the playground: “...Mrs. Swan goes to call him for me...and asks what is wrong. Mrs. Ruby tells us that Farrell fell and bumped his head, he is a bit hurt, but he will be ok. This seems to be a comment to help usher him into the building to support him to go for his meeting with me. Farrell comes inside and looks upset. We walk down the corridor together...” I felt that the hurt and upset resonated with inner feelings of hurt and upset about our work coming to an end. Through play, in the session, issues to do with being held in mind and remembered came to the fore. I spoke to Farrell about how I would continue to think with his class teachers, both at the specialist and mainstream schools, about how we could best continue to help him. As I spoke to him, “...[Farrell] gets up from his chair and sits down by the blocks. He takes out some blocks and puts some pieces together...”. I felt that he was taking on board what I was saying and that there was an idea that his teachers and I would be putting ‘some pieces together’ about Farrell in a helpful way, building upon the work we had done together. Farrell then said to me, “Rememba tha game, wheh I say ‘Hands-up!’ an’ you pu’ yaw hands up! [Remember that game, where I say ‘Hands up!’ and you put your hands up!]”. In this last session, Farrell used a long sentence for the first time; this was his first whole/proper sentence, rather than, for example, “Do ‘Hands Up’!”.

After the game, Farrell made some more toy guns. The first lot of guns that he made were small and did not stand up alone easily. “Farrell makes another gun. This one has two blocks attached to the bottom of it, so when he puts it on the ground with the other guns, it stands much easier/sturdier. Farrell looks at me with delight. I say that this gun stands by itself much better than the other two.” He appeared to introduce the idea of a more sturdy object in our last meeting. It was an object which was able to stand easily by itself and it had support at its base; it had a stronger foundation and was more secure and robust. I felt that he was communicating that he had developed something positive and helpful through our work.

Towards the end of the session, we played ‘hide and seek’, which had been a recurrent game in our meetings. When we had played in earlier sessions, although Farrell had wanted me to play the ‘seeker’, he appeared to struggle with me doing so. Yet in the last sessions, he seemed much more at ease with ‘turn taking’. I felt that this was a positive

development in his capacity to play with others. I also thought that through the game, he was working on processing our final separation - the ending of our work.

In summary, the final theme to emerge from the children sessions concerned being able to work through some of their struggles in relating and being able to work with me during the course of our meetings. The children seemed to work on issues to do with reparation concerning damage and destructive behaviour, which reminded me of Klein's notion of the 'depressive position' (Klein, 1946). There was an idea that there are positive ways of relating with others and that they would be accepted for who they are. This seemed to help the children to face their difficulties, to talk about them or convey them through symbolic play. There were times when the boys challenged the boundaries of the sessions, such as delaying coming to the room, and their teachers show of alliance with me and regarding our work appeared to help the boys to feel contained and to engage in working.

This chapter investigated my initial research question regarding the themes that can emerge in brief psychotherapy with children. Six themes were derived from the brief work and explored in depth in this chapter: "family constellation", "emotional regulation", "separation", "damage", "struggles to relate" and "working together". My main findings will be discussed further in the *Conclusion* chapter. Having looked at my work with the children, I will now investigate the analysis of my interviews with their teachers, which took place following the brief intervention.

## **Analysis of Teachers' Interviews: Children's Progress**

This is the second of three chapters which explore the findings that were obtained from my research. In this chapter and the one following it, I look at the themes that were derived from my interviews with the children's teachers<sup>4</sup>. The interviews took place at least six months after the brief work. They are necessary for the investigation of my second research question, which asks, in light of the themes emerging from the brief interventions, 'how can these themes be discussed in relation to the understanding constructed amongst mainstream school teachers?'. Themes derived from the analysis of the teachers' interviews belonged to one of two categories. One set of themes concerned the children's progress following their placements at the specialist school. The second set of themes surrounded the teachers' views of the children - underlying issues which seemed to affect this and the impact of their views on the management of the children. This chapter will focus on the themes relating to the children's progress as perceived by the teachers.

Four themes were identified regarding the children's progress from the analysis of the teachers' interviews, namely: "behaviour", "feelings and emotions", "learning" and "social relationships". Each of these themes will now be explored.

### **Behaviour**

One of the themes which emerged from the teachers' interviews about the children's progress concerned the children's behaviour. This theme consisted of four dimensions which will be looked at in turn: "behaviour modified", "motivation", "learning is now the key target" and "boundaries and structure".

The first dimension associated with the children's behaviour surrounded modification in their behaviour which the teachers observed during and following the children's placements at the specialist school. Jerome's teachers did not remark on changes in his behaviour, and thus regarding this dimension, I focus on the interviews from Jameel, Dantrell and Farrell's interviews. Both Jameel and Dantrell's class teachers were newer members of the teaching staff and had begun teaching at their schools after the boys had

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<sup>4</sup>As explained in the *Methodology* chapter, I interviewed the teachers at the children's mainstream schools who knew them well. I also wanted to interview the class teacher who had taught them during their placement at the specialist school. However, it had not been possible to interview her concerning all three of the boys due to time and timetabling constraints; I only managed to interview her concerning Jameel. As Jerome was staying on at the specialist school, I also interviewed his current class teacher at the specialist school.



begun their placements at the specialist school. In the interviews, they stated that they had not known of any significantly challenging behaviour from their respective pupils during their time as class teachers to the boys - either observed directly by themselves or reported to them by anyone else. They felt that the boys did not stand out in this respect from the other children in their classes:

*...I don't think he's very different to the other children. He...has those behaviours which are good and those behaviours which are silly...as a teacher, to see him with those characteristics is a good thing...it's nice to see that...he's a rounded individual....*  
(Interview 2, Jameel's class teacher)

*...I don't see him having any behaviour issues, anything above anyone else...in my class. And less than some of the others, quite possibly...don't get me wrong, at times, he has to have reminders about his behaviour, but that's a child - that's any child. I've never had any child in my class where I've never had anything to say to....* (Interview 3, Dantrell's class teacher)

Farrell's SENCO expressed that his behaviour had improved considerably following his return to mainstream school full-time. She talked about how there had been a period of about half a term prior to the interview, though, where staff had seen a regression in his behaviour. They had eventually linked this to issues in Farrell's home life, at a recent review meeting, attended by school staff and his mother, about a fortnight before the interview:

*...I think the learning's picked up and everything's improving, but there was a downturn in behaviour....And that happened just recently. And then we had a review with Mum two weeks ago, and she tells us they've been rehoused. And all this new behaviour, I'm sure, is tied in with that, because she's not very happy with this move.* (Interview 5, Farrell's SENCO)

Following the review, the SENCO had observed that Farrell was “...*much better now...*

*He's been absolutely good as gold. We're really pleased.*”; his behaviour had calmed down, and he had resumed in making progress at school.

Jameel and Dantrell's behaviours no longer seemed to escalate to extremes and neither did Farrell's behaviour, apart from during the period when Farrell's teachers were unaware of his family's housing concern. Dantrell's teachers, for example, felt that he now demonstrated “self-control”:

*...he used to say 'no' and once he said 'no' that was it...there was no turning back, there was no reasoning, there was no nothing. So I think he's learnt...how to calm himself down....[before, there was] no way of going back. (Interview 3, Dantrell's SENCO)*

*...I very rarely have to speak to him [about his behaviour]. I haven't seen any violence from him...he has had a couple of arguments...very rarely...at lunchtime with our children, but to be honest, it's usually a day when I'm not in class...But...he calms himself down. You see at times he's obviously a bit worked up. And he sort of takes that time to calm down. So from an eruption point of view...I've never seen that...there are times I have seen him when he's got frustrated, maybe a bit angry, not to the point where he's released his anger...but at times, sometimes when I've had to speak to him and say, 'No, you're doing the wrong thing', you can see he's...not happy that he's been told off, so to speak, or that he's been spoken to, but then brings it back together and then tries to show you what he can do...so he's realised, 'Ok, I've done something wrong, now if I model good behaviour now...then that won't be an issue.'*  
(Interview 3, Dantrell's class teacher)

As demonstrated in these vignettes, being able to regulate their emotions seemed to help the boys to not escalate to extremes in their behaviour.

There were no reports of Jameel, Farrell or Dantrell having been excluded since they

had returned full-time to mainstream school. Their mainstream school teachers all reported that they felt that the interventions by the specialist school had worked. Farrell's SENCO said, "...I don't know what has happened for Farrell, but he's making progress now..." (Interview 5, Farrell's SENCO). Dantrell's class teacher expressed, "...I'd say it's worked...whatever's happened beforehand with him has obviously worked to bring him to the point he is now." (Interview 3, Dantrell's class teacher).

The second dimension of the theme of behaviour relates to the children's motivation to behave in acceptable ways at school. In the past, none of the children seemed to respond well to rewards, yet now all of the children responded positively to them and seemed to be motivated to behave well. For example, regarding the time prior to his placement at the specialist school, Jerome's former class teacher said, "...I don't think any kind of reward charts...you know, all of the behaviour stuff you try, for us worked...we tried all sorts...." (Interview 4, Jerome's former class teacher). Now, however, it seemed possible for Jerome to be motivated by rewards. Jerome's current class teacher at the specialist school spoke about a trip which was due to take place a few days after the interview. Jerome was one of the children who was chosen to go on the trip due to good behaviour. The children were allowed to go if they continued to behave well for the rest of the week. His teacher relayed,

*I said to him Monday, 'You are going on this trip.' I said, 'You are not going to allow this person [another child] to spoil it for you. And they know that the only reason you'd get to go on this trip is if you can manage yourself and be safe'...I could see him losing it on Monday and Tuesday because [the other child]...was targeting him.... (Interview 1, Jerome's class teacher)*

But Jerome was able to resist reacting to the provocation and was still able to go on the class trip. In the past, the children did not seem to show positive responses to praise either, however, all of the boys appeared to very much like praise from their teachers now. Dantrell's teacher said,

*...[Dantrell] likes to be seen to be doing the right thing...so if you praise him for something, he loves it...he thinks he's brilliant...saying [to him] 'You've done that really well', 'You've*

*behaved really well today'...he likes to be seen as a model to the other pupils as to how to behave. So if I...had a child talking over there and I was to say, 'Oh Dantrell, you're sitting very quietly, maybe if everyone else sat as quietly as you, we might be able to get on with our work better.' He'll then have a big smile on his face....* (Interview 3, Dantrell's class teacher)

Thus praise now motivated the boys to work and behave well at school.

The third dimension associated with the children's behaviour surrounded the fact that their key educational targets were now about improving their learning, rather than their behaviour. In the past, the children's behaviour had been of great concern to their teachers. Now, Jameel and Dantrell's teachers were not worried about their behaviour.

*...he now is a totally different child....It's a massive change...now, looking at him and having reviews with his parents and with our SENCO, I think more now the concern with Jameel is no longer his social skills but more about his learning difficulties....* (Interview 2, Jameel's class teacher)

*...before, we didn't even feel we could even consider addressing his learning needs because we were so busy trying to understand his behaviour and to find...a way to make things better for him. Now, however, we haven't had any difficulties with his behaviour and we are focussing his...[on] his learning needs.* (Interview 3, Dantrell's SENCO)

Apart from the during the time that Farrell's school had not been aware of his family's anxieties about housing, Farrell's behaviour had not been very concerning: "...[Farrell's] previous targets...were targeting behaviour and we're now focussing on learning." (Interview 5, Farrell's SENCO). Learning now took precedence for all three of the boys and it was felt that they were all now in a position to learn. This reminded me of the impact that feeling contained can have on educational attainment, and how in its absence, children can struggle to learn (e.g. Emanuel, 2008).

The fourth dimension of the theme of behaviour related to how the children responded to boundaries and structure. According to the teacher's accounts, none of the children had been able to adhere to boundaries and limits in the past. Jerome tended to particularly struggle when the limits were not clear: *"...as soon as there's a slight inconsistency with the rules or expectations of behaviour and that kind of thing that flares him."* (Interview 4, Jerome's former class teacher).

Even when there was clarity, the children still struggled with the boundaries. However, all of the teachers felt that their respective pupils were now able to manage the limits better. Jerome's class teacher at the specialist school conveyed that he was better able to keep within the boundaries and limits set by staff, although he still struggled at times. Jameel, Farrell and Dantrell's mainstream school teachers reported that the children now responded well to boundaries: *"...as long as he's got boundaries and guidelines and knows...from day one 'this is what I'm expecting from you and this is what you can expect from me' he seems to be quite ok with that."* (Interview 3, Dantrell's class teacher).

Both Farrell and Jerome's mainstream school teachers spoke of how the boys used to struggle with unstructured times and now managed much better, particularly Farrell.

*...he was so difficult to manage at lunchtime in the playground that...the lunchtime staff said that they... [were] not going to have him at school...he was kicking the [staff]...really being totally out of control....I'm pleased that he's contained in the playground [now]....I haven't got any problems from the dinner staff.* (Interview 5, Farrell's SENCO)

Prior to their placements at the specialist school, the children did not seem to be settled at school. The teachers noticed that the children now appeared to be settled into their routines. For instance, Jameel's mainstream school class teacher said,

*...He's very much aware on Tuesdays we do PE and when we don't have PE, he'll be like 'Why we not doing PE?' then I'll be like, 'Sorry, weather!' or 'Can't get into the hall'....at home time, he's fine...he packs his things away, he gets his stuff, gets his*

*coat and he's ready to go...he's very organised and knows the routine of a school day and what he needs to do at the beginning and what he needs to do at the end. (Interview 2, Jameel's class teacher)*

Predictability and consistency and clear expectations now seemed to be important to the children. All the children appeared to manage the various transitional periods throughout their school day very well.

Overall, in terms of their behaviour, the teachers felt that the boys had improved in many respects. Their behaviour presented as more modified. Jameel and Dantrell's teachers did not appear to find them challenging and despite a recent period during which Farrell had been unsettled at school, his behaviour had considerably improved. All of the boys seemed to be more motivated to do well and learning now became the key educational target for Jameel, Dantrell and Farrell; in the past, their behaviour had been more of a cause for concern. All of the children also responded better to clear and consistent boundaries and a predictable structure at school. From the teachers accounts, Jameel, Dantrell and Farrell seemed to have made the most progress. Jameel's teacher said that he was "*...a totally different child.*" (Interview 2, Jameel's class teacher), Dantrell's SENCO said that he had "*...completely changed.*" (Interview 3, Dantrell's SENCO) and Farrell's SENCO said that he was "*...a different boy...*" (Interview 5, Farrell's SENCO).

### **Feelings and Emotions**

A second theme which emerged from the interviews with the teachers regarding the children's progress surrounded the children's feelings and emotions. This theme was composed of two dimensions: "managing feelings and emotions" and "fitting in". Both of these dimensions will now be considered in turn.

The first dimension of the theme of feelings and emotions relates to how the children managed their feelings and emotions. The teachers remembered incidents where the children used to get into very distressed states which staff had also found very distressing. Farrell and Dantrell's SENCOs recalled the cycles of emotions that the boys would go through. Dantrell's SENCO said,

*...it was very very distressing for him and for everybody involved...you could almost see it at nine o'clock in the morning that it was going to be a really bad day and things would start going wrong....It started with something small that we tried to ignore but...it would become bigger and bigger and bigger and by the end of the day, he was sent to another class or to the Head Teacher's office or sometimes excluded as well....There was a massive explosion, lots of tears, lots of anger, lots of kicking and then eventually...crying that seemed to come more from the heart as opposed to angry crying and eventually calmed down...I thought it must be exhausting to be Dantrell...*  
(Interview 3, Dantrell's SENCO)

In the early period of his placement at the specialist school, Farrell found the transition between the two schools at lunchtime very difficult:

*...there were times when Mum would just throw him through the door and Farrell would be screaming and kicking on the floor in the entrance...It was hard for her. Oh, the whole thing was difficult because our lunchtimes...were out of sync. So she would finish there before our lunchtime had even started here...it was really quite distressing to see when he came back into school from being at the [specialist school]...how upset he was...he would say he was tired and didn't want to go to school...The whole thing was quite traumatic for the adults and him....*  
(Interview 5, Farrell's SENCO)

Jameel also seemed to find transition very difficult. Jameel's former class teacher at the specialist school remembered how the separation every morning from his parents was challenging:

*...it was almost like he didn't want to be here and he used to flop down the corridor and drag his feet and he was like lumbering down and it was all a big effort.. And he used to cry a lot as well for those first few weeks. I can remember him like a baby really*

*sort of howling, he didn't want to come in....* (Interview 6, Jameel's former class teacher)

All of the teachers spoke of how the children used to be very sensitive. Jerome, who was described by his former class teacher at mainstream school as “...*very emotionally sensitive...*” (Interview 4, Jerome's former class teacher) seemed to still be very sensitive:

*...there's certain children that...just trigger something in him and he just cannot control himself. It's really, really quite...sad. Because there'll always be the likes of the children who provoke him....And he hasn't got the skills, as yet, to just ignore them....*  
(Interview 1, Jerome's class teacher)

At certain times, such as when the children were worried, they could present as more sensitive. For example, Dantrell's class teacher felt that he seemed very sensitive when he had thought that another boy had not wanted to be his friend:

*...at times he will work himself up if he's not happy...for instance a couple of weeks ago...another child said he wasn't his friend any more. So immediately...he was visibly upset, so I took him outside and we had a chat...[I] brought the other child out, which all turned out to be a misunderstanding anyway, they had had an argument over lunch....* (Interview 3, Dantrell's class teacher)

Jameel, Farrell and Dantrell's teachers felt that they now seemed much better able to manage their feelings and emotions (e.g. Stern, 1985; Daws, 2008; Miller, 2008; Urwin, 2008). All of the boys were able to manage transitional periods and separation very well. Jameel, Farrell and Dantrell no longer actually seemed to experience very distressed or sensitive states. Dantrell and Jameel's teachers felt that they now showed their feelings in acceptable ways, rather than through challenging behaviour and that they were able to show that they were upset rather than just angry or via aggressive behaviour (e.g. Miller, 2008; Urwin, 2008). When prompted, both boys were also able to say what was on their minds. For instance, in the vignette above concerning Dantrell's feelings about another



child not wanting to be his friend, his teachers felt that in the past, he probably would have become angry and disruptive and been inaccessible rather than upset and being able to say what was on his mind. Also, Jameel's class teacher said,

*...I know that currently, his father is away...he wrote that: 'The boy was sad (or upset) because his dad wasn't here' and then we picked up on that, his LSA [said]... 'Is that how you're feeling?' and he was like, 'Yeah'. So...he couldn't share it, but it was on his mind and he could write it down, which is a really good thing, so he is aware....* (Interview 2, Jameel's class teacher)

Farrell's SENCO reported that following news that his family were going to be evicted from their home, Farrell had expressed his upset through disruptive behaviour, however, his teachers were able to make connections between his behaviour and home situation and thereafter, he became much more manageable. So it seemed as though having a sense that his distress was understood helped Farrell to settle at school again. Jerome's class teacher at the specialist school felt that he was still not expressing his upset feelings properly. She spoke of how he was holding back: *"...he's built this shield around him...."* (Interview 1, Jerome's class teacher).

Jameel, Farrell and Dantrell's teachers considered that the boys were now much more contained (e.g. Bion, 1962b). They felt that the children had improved in their ability to regulate and control their emotions. It seemed as though they had developed emotional capacity to cope with their experiences better. Dantrell's SENCO said, *"...he seems to be able to perfectly...control his emotions...that doesn't mean that he doesn't get angry because he does but he's able to...self-regulate...and that's very important because he didn't use to be able to do that...."* (Interview 3, Dantrell's SENCO).

Better communication between the school and Jameel's parents and Farrell's mother seemed to aid the children to contain and express their thoughts and feelings. In the examples above, Jameel's teacher had learnt that his father was abroad following conversation with his parents, and Farrell's teachers were able to contextualise his recently puzzling behaviour following their meeting with his mother where they discovered that the family had been evicted from their home.

The second dimension associated with the children's feelings and emotions concerned their experiences of and feelings about fitting in. Complex feelings about fitting in and exclusion seemed to come to the surface during the boys' placements at the specialist school. Soon after they began attending the school, Jerome, Dantrell and Jameel all wanted to go straight back to mainstream school. Jerome and Dantrell's mainstream school teachers felt that the children had missed out on important things at mainstream school during their placement at the specialist school, such as bonding with peers or attending special activities at mainstream school. Dantrell's class teacher said that in terms of making friends: *"...by the time he gets into school, half the day's gone and people have already bonded really for the day."* (Interview 3, Dantrell's class teacher).

Jerome being at the two schools seemed to be a major issue which was raised repeatedly by his former class teacher throughout the interview with her:

*...the transition between here and there I don't think was great for him...he found that difficult...if tonight I say to my children... 'everyone needs to bring a teddy for the morning 'cos we're having a picnic'...he'd be like, 'I'm not here, am I' so then we'd wait...we'd always try and fit...the special treats in in the afternoons so that he was part of that...even things like our end of year assembly, he had to be here for the full day, like you have to arrange it...actually, you know, that's his class, he's been with us for a year and he should be there!* (Interview 4, Jerome's former class teacher)

At times, the teachers seemed to have lost sight of the fact that the child had struggled with such social experiences prior to their referral and had not been able to participate in these activities. There was perhaps an underlying feeling that the specialist school was depriving the child of these kinds of experiences at mainstream school. Sometimes, the timing of things, like the lunchtime transition between schools for Farrell, was perceived as almost hurting the child, causing them pain and suffering. In part, these feelings may have been associated with projections from the children about feelings to do with separation, exclusion and loss. Reflecting on her observations of Jameel at mainstream school, early on in his placement, Jameel's former class teacher at the specialist school said:

*...it felt a little bit like he was sort of bothering the other children and not doing what he was meant to be doing and causing them problems...Maybe he was just a bit of a problem and they didn't...quite know what to do with him, or he didn't quite fit in somehow. (Interview 6, Jameel's former class teacher)*

Similarly, as illustrated earlier, when Dantrell became very distressed prior to his referral to the specialist school, he would struggle to find a way out of this state, as if he was lost (Miller, 2008; Urwin, 2008). Likewise, his teachers were then at a loss as to how to deal with him. The boys also seemed to convey a desperate feeling to belong. For example, Jerome's former class teacher said,

*...he was always really interested in families...he said 'What colour is your Mummy?' and I said 'White' and he said 'What colour's your Daddy?', 'White' and then he was very confused then: 'What about your sister?' and I was like, 'Well, she's white'... 'What colour's your dog?' and I was like 'Brown' and he was like 'That's ok' like as if he couldn't understand the make-up of my family being so different to his, and it's almost like the unit isn't it and the cultural side of it, all that kind of stuff. He was going through a very confusing time. (Interview 4, Jerome's former class teacher)*

It seemed as though Jerome was looking for someone 'brown' in the family of his teacher, whom he appeared to be very attached to, and perhaps related to complex issues about Jerome's multi-cultural identity and whether and where he felt he belonged within his family.

Unlike the other children, Farrell did not initially seem to want to return to mainstream school:

*...he was playing in isolation, he wasn't really mixing with the other children, and when he came back to [mainstream school]*

*in the afternoon, he wanted [the specialist school]. Because there he was in a very small group of children and here he was coming into a much larger group...he responded well to his class teacher, but as soon as she left the classroom, Farrell could not manage with the change in personnel.... (Interview 5, with Farrell's SENCO)*

Farrell appeared to feel lost in larger groups; he seemed to lose his sense of self amongst all the children and was still very dependent on his class teacher, his primary adult at school, like a much younger child. Interestingly, Jameel's former class teacher at the specialist school and Farrell's SENCO both lost track of their thoughts/what they wanted to say at times during their interviews. This was reminiscent of the boys' experiences of dislocation. This was further accentuated by a sense in the interviews that part of the 'story' concerning each of the boys was missing. Dantrell and Jameel's class teachers who were interviewed were new to the school and also Dantrell and Farrell's SENCOs did not have complete narratives about the boys - there were gaps.

Following their admission to the specialist school, Jameel, Farrell and Dantrell all improved straight away at mainstream school.

*...I think that the minute that he [Dantrell] started going to the [specialist school], he wanted to come back full time...so then we became the place where he had to be really really good...and he was...we did have a few incidents in Year 1 but it just got better and better quite quickly...then eventually it got better for everybody which is when we started easing him back into mainstream.... (Interview 3, Dantrell's SENCO)*

This phenomena could be understood through the following recollection by Jameel's former teacher at the specialist school regarding his first day:

*...we had like a mock Ofsted...[someone] came in and observed and I remember...we did a session with telling the time and clocks and 'What's the time Mr. Wolf?' and I'd got a wolf mask and hat for them to wear and I'd written all across the lesson*

*plan... 'This is Jameel's first day', 'cos I didn't know what he was going to do...whether he'd join in...He just sat on the chair really quietly, he...joined in...and at the end, I remember the woman [mock inspector] saying to me... 'it took me a while to work out which was the new boy in the group.'* (Interview 6, Jameel's former class teacher)

The underlying preoccupations in this vignette appeared to symbolise some of the children's experiences. There were feelings about wanting to fit in and being in a place where the boys did fit in with the 'pack' as there were other boys who struggled just like them; a place which could understand, contain and accept the 'wolf' aspect of their personalities and the boy who was underneath this 'mask'. Perhaps the children could put on another 'face', behaving better at mainstream school, when they had a place, the specialist school, to express, contain and explore the feelings and experiences which they found more challenging to manage. In some ways, 'Mr. Wolf' also seemed to represent mainstream school, where the boys no longer attended full time, rather from half a day, from 'dinnertime' onwards, and complex feelings about why this was the case including being a 'naughty boy'. This could be linked to deep-seated issues to do with damage and repair; in the past, the children appeared to often be in situations where they would get angry or frustrated, become destructive and then need to make amends once they had calmed down.

Apart from perhaps Jerome, prior to their placements at the specialist school, the boys did not have an emotional affiliation to their mainstream schools. However, all of the boys now seemed to feel that they belonged at mainstream school and in their class.

*...today I had his Literacy book because I just wanted to show you some of his work, and he was like, '[Miss], where's my Literacy book? I need it for my work.'* Whereas before he would just not even realise and would just sit there.... (Interview 2, Jameel's class teacher)

Jameel's claim for *his* book appeared to symbolise his sense of being a part of his class group where he now seemed to feel he fitted in. Both Jameel and Dantrell's teachers spoke of how the boys did not like to come out of class during lesson times for extra

educational support activities. Jameel's teacher said, "...*he doesn't want to be different. He wants to work with the children in the classroom...*" (Interview 2, Jameel's class teacher) and Dantrell's teacher stated, "...*he doesn't like to be seen to be doing different things to other children...*" (Interview 3, Dantrell's class teacher). This suggests the boys now cared about standing out and being different, whereas in the past, it did not seem to matter to them. It was not apparent that they noticed this.

Overall, the teachers felt that the boys had improved in terms of managing their feelings and emotions. In the early days, all of the children were very sensitive and would get very distressed at times and it was difficult to help them to come out of these states. Transitions were very difficult for the children. Also, complex feelings and issues concerning fitting in and belonging arose following their admission to the specialist school. Whilst the children made progress quickly at mainstream school, this took a while to consolidate. The children appeared to project feelings of exclusion and loss into staff and Jerome particularly conveyed his desperation to belong (e.g. Jackson, 2005; Rustin, 2011). During the course of their placements at the specialist school, the boys made significant progress. They were now much better able to manage and regulate their feelings and emotions and Jameel, Farrell and Dantrell were much more contained. Jameel and Dantrell did not like to be seen as different or to stand out. The boys now felt an affiliation towards their respective schools and class groups, something which appeared to be absent in the past.

### **Learning**

The third theme which emerged from the teachers' interviews about the children's progress concerned learning. This theme consisted of two dimensions which will be considered in turn: "development" and "feelings and attitudes towards learning".

The first dimension associated with the children's learning related to their learning development. In the past, the boys' emotional issues which often manifested in challenging behaviour preoccupied the boys so much that they were mentally unavailable for learning (Emanuel, 2008). Their struggles were further compounded by learning difficulties. Jameel and Farrell both had difficulties with speech. Jameel used to mumble a great deal. He would speak minimally and when he did speak, it could be difficult to understand what he was saying. Farrell used to sound rather baby-like and had other considerable speech problems. His SENCO said concerning his difficulties

with speech:

*...[he was] not acquiring his initial sounds...in Reception, they all start at the same level and...the teacher can see which of those children are progressing and which aren't and it wasn't making any sense to Farrell at all...at the time we queried hearing...he was difficult to understand. (Interview 5, Farrell's SENCO)*

Jameel had problems with his language too. His teachers were concerned that he might have a disorder on the Autistic Spectrum.

*There were lots of concerns before he came to us that he was on the Autistic spectrum because he wasn't using language... he did seem almost sometimes that he was in a little bit of a world of his own but what struck me...I never really thought he was because he was so aware of everybody else...When he first came...he was really, really into buses and bus numbers - so those sorts of traits were Autistic-y traits, where he could remember the bus numbers. And he knew the routes.... (Interview 6, Jameel's former class teacher)*

All of the boys seemed to have difficulties with communication: *"...if you [asked] him a question, he would answer, but he wouldn't start the conversation..."* (Interview 2, Jameel's class teacher). Sometimes it would appear to reflect in their behaviour. For instance, in speaking about Farrell's relationship with other children, his SENCO said, *"...he plays...but...because of his inability to communicate, he would punch his peers."* (Interview 5, Farrell's SENCO).

Jerome's communication difficulties were of a different nature to the other boys. His class teacher at the specialist school said he moaned and groaned a lot and that he was too talkative: *"...He doesn't pause. It's almost like it comes out of his mouth and I almost want to press the button to stop. 'Cos it just falls out of his mouth and...so loud!"* (Interview 1, Jerome's class teacher). He came across as quite precocious in his communication skills too: *"...I think because he can communicate on quite a high level,*

*adults are drawn to him because they feel that...he's more willing and he's understanding what you're saying....*" (Interview 1, Jerome's class teacher).

As stated earlier, in the past, all of the boys would find it difficult to communicate their feelings and thoughts; their emotional struggles were often manifested through challenging behaviour. In addition, Jerome's teacher seemed to feel that he could use language to communicate in destructive ways towards other children through *"...little put downs...."* (Interview 1, Jerome's class teacher), but that he did not seem to be aware of the impact that this was having on the other children.

Jameel, Farrell and Dantrell had improved considerably in terms of their speech, language and communication by the time that they returned to mainstream school, even though they still had some difficulties: *"...He's certainly audible....And I can understand what he's trying to say...the speech's definitely developed."* (Interview 5, Farrell's SENCO). The teachers felt that when the boys were *"...upset about something...then he finds it harder to express himself or talk."* (Interview 3, Dantrell's class teacher). Jameel, Farrell and Dantrell now had Speech and Language Therapy to further help them with these issues.

Prior to their placement at the specialist school, Jameel, Farrell and Dantrell were all developmentally behind their peers in terms of their learning. In the past, the boys were on 'P-scales' - they had not reached Level 1 of the National Curriculum. Their teachers reported that they were now on the learning scale. Jameel was *"...still very much below...the National Curriculum average...however [he had] made lots of progress...."* (Interview 2, Jameel's class teacher), Farrell had *"...actually made progress against the National Curriculum levels...."* (Interview 5, Farrell's SENCO) and Dantrell had *"...worked his way off P-scales and he [was] in the 1's [Level 1]...[thus he was on] the main scale."* (Interview 3, Dantrell's class teacher).

Thus, whilst Jameel, Farrell and Dantrell were still behind their peers, they were making progress. The boys were all achieving tangible results and meeting their learning goals. Their teachers spoke of how the boys seemed to do much better in small groups than in larger ones and how they were active participants. For example, Farrell's SENCO said, *"...he's participating or putting up his hand...I've observed him in his small group and he is making contributions...Farrell works and concentrates a lot better during the small*



*group sessions....*” (Interview 5, Farrell’s SENCO). Dantrell’s teachers felt that he was very creative at times and the SENCO at Farrell’s mainstream school recalled a lesson where Farrell had been creative in narrating a story about Greek mythology.

The second dimension regarding the children’s learning related to their attitudes and feelings towards learning. Their teachers reported that the boys seemed to put considerable effort into their work and enjoyed learning now. Jameel’s teacher said, “*...He really does enjoy...school...we’re writing reports... ‘Rate every lesson’...how much do you enjoy it, and he was very much putting in 1’s and 2’s...1 is the very good and 2 is good...he really seems to enjoy learning....*” (Interview 2, Jameel’s class teacher). Farrell’s SENCO stated, “*[Farrell is] always happy and enthusiastic. Farrell is very polite and his attendance has improved...[he] has learnt to celebrate his achievements....*” (Interview 5, Farrell’s SENCO). Dantrell’s teacher said, “*...he loves being able to be able to put his ideas forward...he tries his hardest in class...he is making improvements academically, he’s made leaps and bounds judging by what has happened before...to what I see on a daily basis now....*” (Interview 3, Dantrell’s class teacher).

However, concerning Jerome, his class teacher did not think that he was consistently attaining as well as he could, or putting in as much effort as he could: “*...academically, he floats between doing a lot better than anticipated, then I almost feel like he doesn’t want to do as well as he can.*” (Interview 1, Jerome’s class teacher). Jerome’s teacher felt that this was the case because if he were to do well, he would have to leave the group that his friend was in and join another group which included a boy who provoked him considerably.

In the past, the boys did not seem motivated to learn. However, they now appeared to be ready for goals. Concerning Farrell, his SENCO said: “*...the Speech and Language Therapist had suggested...working for something...so he knows what his reward is going to be....*” (Interview 5, Farrell’s SENCO).

Previously, the children did not seem to have the willingness or desire to work for goals, but now they did. The teachers also spoke about how the boys were aware of differences between themselves and the other children in their class in terms of their work: “*...he’s aware that he does different things and he wants to do the same as other children but*

*he's not aware of what does that actually mean....*" (Interview 2, Jameel's class teacher). Farrell's SENCO felt that Farrell knew that the differences between himself and other children in his class were to do with learning: *"...Farrell seems to realise that his progress is limited. So he's beginning to know that he's behind the other children now."* (Interview 5, Farrell's SENCO). Both Jameel and Dantrell appeared to dislike doing different work to the other children. Dantrell's class teacher said,

*...he doesn't like to be seen to be doing different things to other children. He doesn't mind so much if he's going to be taken out of class 'cos the other children can't see what he's doing...However if I differentiate a task and sometimes if I differentiate down to his level, he doesn't particularly like that. He doesn't get upset or...anything like that, but you can tell he wants to be doing what the other children are doing.*  
(Interview 5, Dantrell's class teacher)

Jameel, however, disliked leaving the classroom for periods of additional help. For him, this seemed to highlight the difference between himself and children in his class:

*...he doesn't want to be different. He wants to work with the children in the classroom. So now we try to teach him that sometimes you are going to have to go out and do something different, but you're not the only child, there are other children that do that. But...he resists a little bit....* (Interview 2, Jameel's class teacher)

In the past, Jameel, Farrell and Dantrell did not communicate that they cared about or that they were even aware of the differences between themselves and the other children in their class. Following their return to mainstream school the children did seem somewhat bothered by the differentiation and Farrell and Dantrell's teachers felt that they boys knew that there were differences between themselves and these children. Now that they seemed aware of these differences, they did not want to stand out any more or be the 'odd one out'.

Overall, the teachers felt that the boys had improved in their learning development and

attitudes and feelings towards learning. In the early days, the boys had been emotionally and psychologically unavailable for learning, due to their behavioural and emotional struggles, but also because of their learning difficulties. Jameel, Farrell and Dantrell had been on P-scales but now they were progressing at National Curriculum levels, despite still being behind their peers. The three boys improved in terms of their speech, language and communication as well. They also now enjoyed learning and worked hard at school, working particularly well and actively participating in small groups. Farrell and Dantrell seemed to now care about standing out from their peers. Jerome was much more sophisticated in his language and speech than the other boys, however he could sometimes use his communication skills in unhelpful ways, by putting others down. His teacher felt that whilst Jerome had the capability to exceed her expectations, at times he would not do as well which seem to relate to ambivalence about succeeding. The boys were now ready for goals, and as stated earlier, learning, rather than behaviour was now the key attainment target for all of the boys.

### **Social Relationships**

The fourth theme which emerged from the interviews concerning the children was about their social relationships. This theme was formed of two dimensions: “relationships with peers” and “relationships with adults”, which will be discussed in turn.

The first dimension which emerged regarding the children’s social relationship was about their connections with other children at school. In the past, none of the children seemed to have any friendships and would struggle to get along with other children. Now, they all appeared to have friends, “...*normal relationships...*” (Interview 2, Jameel’s teacher) and to feel more positively about their peers. Dantrell and Jerome appeared to care about being liked by their friends, as can be seen from the example conveyed earlier where Dantrell had been upset thinking that another boy did not want to be his friend any more. Jameel, Farrell and Dantrell seemed to be accepted by their peers. Jameel’s class teacher said:

*...he’s been in the same class for a numerous amount of years now, I think the children are aware that he’s probably a bit different, but support him when they need to and he has conflict with his friends but he also works well with his friends....*  
(Interview 2, Jameel’s class teacher)

She spoke about a particular friend that he had made: “...*he sits next to this girl who really supports him and they help each other out sometimes, and actually sometimes it’s quite nice when they conflict because...it’s showing a normal friendship....*” (Interview 2, Jameel’s class teacher).

As well as having a peer who was a friend, this also demonstrates that Jameel too could be a friend to the girl; it was a mutual relationship; his friendly side had emerged and flourished. Jameel, Farrell and Dantrell’s teachers spoke about how they all had a regular and “...*small circle of friends....*” (Interview 5, Farrell’s SENCO). For instance, Jameel’s teacher said, “...*he’s got a group of friends that he always wants to play with and he’s quite friendly with them and there’s common ground in that they all like football, or wrestling...when he has Reward Time, he always wants to work with them....*” (Interview 2, Jameel’s class teacher).

Jameel seemed to now enjoy playing games which were appropriate to his age group. This suggests developmental progress as he now pursued latency interests (e.g. Waddell, 1998). Dantrell also developed commonalities with his friends:

*...he seems to have a nice little group of friends...he gets picked up [after school] a bit later...his little group of friends [are] a couple of those [who] usually get picked up later as well so conveniently enough...they can sit on a table and he can talk to them or they play a little game....* (Interview 3, Dantrell’s class teacher)

Being collected late after school seemed to be something that Dantrell and his friends had in common. They appeared to be like a ‘support group’ who managed this period of waiting together.

Dantrell and Jameel also engaged in mild delinquency with their friends. Jameel’s teacher said:

*...it’s nice to see that he’s...a rounded individual...him and his friends, they get very excited about just football, getting changed*

*really quickly, or outside in the playground...he's not very different to some of his friends...his behaviour is not malicious, it's just that he gets over excited, and then becomes silly. But he gets sanctions and he's very much aware....* (Interview 2, Jameel's class teacher)

Jameel's teacher saw this rebellion as an important developmental step. Dantrell's teacher said,

*It feels as though sometimes...he copes with giggling and laughing...if someone else is doing the wrong thing, his way to react to that is through laughter...And you say to Dantrell, 'No, it's not funny...you're only encouraging them. If you're laughing they're just gonna carry on doing it' but then once he starts laughing, he just can't stop...then he'll have his hands over his mouth and then he's trying to hide behind his book or something because he's trying not to laugh...I think...that's his protection barrier... 'If I laugh about it, it will detract from it.'* (Interview 3, Dantrell's class teacher)

Dantrell might have in part been drawn to this rebellion to protect himself from discomfort and concerns about what his peers behaviour could potentially lead to - confrontation with their class teacher, who seemed to be a well-liked figure, and that order and stability in the classroom would be affected. So perhaps for Dantrell and Jameel there was mutual protection between themselves and their friends.

In the past, the boys had behaved very aggressively towards other children. This seemed to affect their relationship with their peers who would “...become very wary of...children that are very boisterous....” (Interview 5, Farrell's SENCO). Jameel, Farrell and Dantrell's feelings of rivalry towards other children, as manifested through their behaviour, appeared to be more modified. Jameel's teacher said that in the playground, often he could play in quite a rough manner:

*...he's not aware of what his strength is...he's really, really rough, he has to win or he has to score, he's very competitive, but he's*

*not aware that...he can't barge and push people around just in order to score the goal, there's some rules that he needs to adhere to, to play the game...he's very focused on himself and the people that he's playing with [and their game], but not anyone else who might be in the playground....* (Interview 2, Jameel's class teacher)

The impression from his teacher's account is that Jameel's underlying feelings of aggression and rivalry towards other children were now expressed through play rather than through outright hitting them.

Dantrell's appeared to be able to express his deep-seated feelings of rivalry through words rather than challenging behaviour. His teacher said: *"...he loves to inform on people...If someone's doing the wrong thing he'll be the first person to come up and tell me exactly what everyone's done...."* (Interview 3, Dantrell's class teacher). Dantrell's SENCO said that this was different to her recollection of him prior to his referral to the specialist school as he used to be *"...in his own world...."* (Interview 3, Dantrell's SENCO).

Jerome's interview raised more complex issues, first, about his peer relationships and second, discerning this from institutional issues. The latter will be explored in the following chapter under the theme of "struggles and tensions". Jerome's class teacher spoke at length about his relationship with another boy, "Jeremiah". She saw it as an unhelpful relationship, where Jerome bullied, dominated and exploited Jeremiah; that they were both overly attached to each other:

*...when Jeremiah is not in...he finds that really hard to cope with...he's taking away any confidence or any positive thing that [Jeremiah] has...: 'You can't do that. You're not good at that', so he's very damaging...[Jeremiah will] shut down completely...in the playground, the pair of them are running over to the swings the pair of them are on the swings together...it's almost like a secret acceptance...[Jerome is] the dominant one, and [Jeremiah is] more submissive...[if Jeremiah] was to start developing other friendships, I think...[Jerome] will really, really,*

*really struggle with that...[if Jeremiah] gets any positive feedback...[then Jerome says]: 'I want the same praise'...I think the other kids see them like a couple...they do get called by each other's names as well, that does happen. (Interview 1, Jerome's class teacher)*

This was reported as Jerome's only friendship; he did not have any fixed friendships at mainstream school. The fact that Jerome had made a friend, albeit intense and a place where both boys' internal preoccupations were being played out, it seemed to be progress. It was also reported that Jerome was scapegoated by his peers and targeted for provocation:

*...If there's anybody in that class you know you're going to get a reaction from, you know it's [Jerome]...and certain children in that class know that if 'I want to provoke anybody in the class, I know exactly who to target, and I know exactly the reaction I'm going to get.' And a lot of the children in the class feed off of that, they love that. They love the reaction they're getting from him.... (Interview 1, Jerome's class teacher)*

Thus like Jeremiah, Jerome was also possibly vulnerable to being bullied and being a receptacle for his peers' projections.

The second dimension concerning the children's social relationships was about their relationships with adults. As stated earlier, Jameel and Farrell were now audible and their speech was understandable; previously, it could be difficult to make sense of what they might be trying to say. In part, it could be argued that they now had a perception that adults would listen to them and try to understand them. Also, in the past, Jameel, Farrell and Dantrell did not have any significant emotional connection with the adults at their mainstream schools. All of the children now seemed to have made good and positive connections with adults and had at least one significant relationship with either their class teacher or a teaching assistant. For example, Dantrell seemed very attached to his class teacher. Jameel's class teacher spoke about his relationship with the class's Learning Support Assistant:

*I think having a good support like an LSA has helped him...he's quite aware when she's not around like, 'Where is she' or sometimes now, she's working with other children a little bit, and he will [say]... 'Why are you working with him? You're supposed to be with me.' ....* (Interview 2, Jameel's class teacher)

Jameel, Farrell and Dantrell also now wanted to “...to please and...get it right...” (Interview 5, Farrell's SENCO) with the adults, which did not seem to be the case prior to their placements at the specialist school.

Jerome's former mainstream school teacher and Jameel's former teacher at the specialist school spoke about how the boys related better to those adults who gave them time. Both Jameel's class teacher at mainstream school and his former teacher at the specialist school described him as being close to certain adults and distant to others. In particular, he got along better with 'current' teachers, even if he had been close to his previous class teachers in the past.

*...he was very tuned into who responded back to him so it was almost...quite an intense relationship sometimes with him...it's sort of like he had one person and as soon as that relationship finished, he moved on [to] somebody else...he was very in to...[his] Year 2 [teacher]....* (Interview 6, Jameel's former class teacher)

But then with regards to moving into Year 3, he seemed to have 'moved on' from that relationship: “...he can get quite shy and doesn't know how to react. I know even his Year 2 teacher, when he comes and says 'Hello', Jameel's quite shy and he doesn't know how to behave...like he's forgotten how he used to behave with this teacher...” (Interview 2, Jameel's current class teacher). Jameel's teacher spoke about how he would also forget the 'word of the week' which the class would focus on throughout the week. In part, this struggling to hold relationships and words in mind may have been related to deep-seated feelings about not quite believing that he was held in the mind of adults.

Jameel and Dantrel's teachers did not really have a sense of the boys' home lives.



Jameel's class teacher said that he was "...quite reluctant to share..." (Interview 2, Jameel's class teacher) or to speak about life at home. It did not seem as though Dantrell's teachers asked him about his life at home. Both of the teachers at the specialist school (Jameel's former class teacher and Jerome's current class teacher) had more of a sense of the boys' home lives. There seemed to be a difference between what the different teachers felt comfortable in asking concerning the children's home lives, how much they seemed to want to know and perhaps different schools had different policies about this.

Overall, all of the children improved in terms of their social relationships. They now all seemed to have normal friendships and Jameel, Farrell and Dantrell had a consistent small group of friends whom they spent time with at school. Jameel and Dantrell shared commonalities with their friends. Jameel, Farrell and Dantrell now appeared to be accepted by their peers too. Jerome had a close friendship with another child, however, his class teacher was concerned about how he bullied this other child at times and also how he himself was vulnerable to being bullied. All of the children now also seemed to have positive feelings and good relationships with the adults at school (Bowlby, 1980); there seemed to be the idea of a good object (Klein, 1952a). They had a sense that the adults were willing to listen to them and try to understand them. Each of the boys had a significant relationship with at least one adult - their class teacher or LSA. In addition, Jameel and Jerome seemed to get along better with those adults whom they felt gave them time.

This chapter was the first of two that explore the themes that were derived from my interviews with the children's teachers. These chapters are necessary for the investigation my second research question. Regarding the themes emerging from the brief interventions, my second question asked, 'how can these themes be discussed in relation to the understanding constructed amongst mainstream school teachers?'. In this chapter, I analysed themes that arose in the interviews concerning the teachers' accounts of the children's progress, following their placements at the specialist school. Four themes were identified and explored in depth in this chapter: "behaviour", "feelings and emotions", "learning" and "social relationships". My main findings from my analysis of the teachers' interviews (concerning this chapter and the next) will be discussed further in the *Conclusion* chapter. This thesis will now explore the second set of themes that were prevalent in the teachers' interviews surrounding the teachers' views of the

children - underlying issues which seemed to affect this and the impact of their views on the management of the children.

## **Analysis of Teachers' Interviews: Teachers' Views**

This is the final of three chapters that explore the findings that emerged in my interviews with the teachers. It concerns the second category of themes: views of the children. These themes consisted of underlying issues which seemed to affect their views and impacted on their management of the children. This chapter will focus on these themes.

Two themes were identified regarding the teachers' views namely: "perceptions and understanding" and "struggles and tensions". Both of these themes will now be explored.

### **Perceptions and Understanding**

One of the themes which emerged from the interviews concerned their perceptions and understanding of the children. This theme consisted of five dimensions which will be looked at in turn: "initial impressions", "current perceptions and understanding", "feelings about the child", "impact on management of child" and "future prospects".

The first dimension associated with the teachers' perceptions and understanding of the children surrounded their first impressions of the children upon encountering them. The accounts given by Jameel, Farrell and Dantrell's teachers and Jerome's former class teacher all focussed on the boys' challenging behaviour to differing degrees. Farrell and Dantrell's SENCOs had come to know of the children following their teachers coming to them with concerns about the boys. Farrell and Dantrell's SENCOs spoke predominantly about the boys' feelings of anger and disruptive and violent behaviours.

*[He was] very angry. I think that's probably the summary...he was really disruptive...he had good days then on a bad day he would kick all the children, he would hide under the table, he would refuse to participate...to begin with we would just ignore him and let him go under the table but then he started not having enough with that and he would come out and start pushing children. So we would have to physically move him to another room and he would kick and then we would have to take the shoes off. So it was very very distressing for him and for*

*everybody involved.* (Interview 3, Dantrell's SENCO)

Jameel and Dantrell's current class teachers had started teaching at their respective schools after the boys had begun their placements at the specialist school, and neither teacher had met the boys until they had become their class teachers. Both teachers had heard about the boys through their colleagues but had themselves found the boys to be very different to what they had expected from these accounts: *"To be honest with you, if someone hadn't told me what he was like before, I wouldn't have thought anything like that because within the classroom...I very rarely have to speak to him."* (Interview 3, Dantrell's class teacher). Both teachers had been somewhat wary of the boys before meeting them, due to the accounts that they had heard about them from other teachers. Their anxieties were soon allayed after meeting the boys and they did not actually find the boys to be challenging. In thinking about their first encounters with Jameel, both his former class teacher at the specialist school and his current class teacher at mainstream school recalled their initial observations of him in some detail.

*We went to see him at his school and I can remember going into the playground and watching him playing in a very small area that was fenced off...we sort of stood round the edge of the fence and he kept looking over at us. Trying to work out who we were and what we were doing. But he knew we were watching him...you get a name and you don't know who you're going to see and he was in Reception at the time but he was quite big, quite tall...Those great big eyes sort of looking at us...and he was watching us....* (Interview 6, Jameel's former class teacher)

Both of Jameel's teachers' initial recollections of him were centred around Jameel's interactions and how he related to them, rather than aggression; challenging behaviour did not dominate their picture of him. Jameel's mainstream class teacher was fairly new to the school and met him after he had returned to mainstream following his placement at the specialist school, and his previous teacher at the specialist school was not part of his mainstream school. Perhaps being outside the institution/at the time of his troubles at mainstream school allowed them to have a more objective view of Jameel.

Jerome's current class teacher recalled that he came across as *"...very grown up..."*

(Interview 1, Jerome's class teacher). Jerome's former class teacher at mainstream school spoke a little about his behaviour in terms of how he was "...*a lovely little boy...[who] just hasn't got control over his actions...he is extremely remorseful when...[he] doesn't choose to make the right choices...[none] of the behaviour stuff...for us worked...he just needed secure boundaries.*" (Interview 4, Jerome's former class teacher).

In the interviews with Jerome's former class teacher and Farrell's SENCO, I felt that I had to work hard to gain a sense of them, to 'find' Jerome and Farrell. Jerome's mainstream school teacher did not tell me much about him for quite a while in the interview, even though she seemed to know him very well - she had both taught him as class teacher and later as his martial arts teacher. Farrell's SENCO spoke about how staff found him "...*difficult to manage...*" (Interview 5, Farrell's SENCO), yet this was quite vague and it took a while for her to speak about what this entailed. In both of these interviews, complicated institutional dynamics was a key underlying theme, particularly in terms of clashes and tensions around whether or not the boys could and should be managed within the school. There were also issues about the teacher's feeling undermined as to whether or not they had a say in the boys' educational future at the school. Perhaps these dynamics (which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter) initially overshadowed the boys being 'seen' in the interviews.

The second dimension of the teachers' perceptions and understanding of the children relates to their current perceptions and understanding. In the past, it had been difficult for the teachers to make any sense of the boys' behaviours or to see them as having any meaning. There had not been much acknowledgement of the children's internal difficulties. Perhaps the teachers could not 'see' the boys' emotional struggles as their challenging behaviours 'masked' them. However now, the teachers were all able to come up with thoughts about what might be going on for the child. All of the teachers seemed to have awareness that the children had internal struggles and they now appeared to think about the children's behaviours as a manifestation of their internal preoccupations. For instance, Farrell's SENCO was able to link Farrell's recent disruptive behaviour to concerns to do with his home life:

*...if everything's ok, nobody's coming to me then suddenly, it all starts again and everybody's coming to me about his behaviour.*

*And that happened just recently. And then we had a review with Mum two weeks ago, and she tells us they've been rehoused. And all this new behaviour, I'm sure is tied in with that, because she's not very happy with this move...So he's got a lot...[going on] in his little life. (Interview 5, Farrell's SENCO)*

She felt as though they had now “...seen the big picture...” (Interview 5, Farrell's SENCO), which seemed to be the case with all of the teachers at times. Some of the teachers seemed to understand that the children's behaviours were sometimes defences, such as Dantrell's class teacher:

*It feels as though sometimes...he copes with giggling and laughing. He'll sit there and also if someone else is doing the wrong thing, his way to react to that is through laughter...I think...that's his protection barrier... '...if I laugh about it it will detract from it.' (Interview 3, Dantrell's class teacher)*

Most of the teachers also showed an understanding of the child's behaviour in terms of group dynamics, such as in the last example where Dantrell was “...encouraging...” (Interview 3, Dantrell's class teacher) his peers by laughing when they misbehaved. Jerome's class teachers both showed awareness of how other children could ‘set him up’, for instance, Jerome's former mainstream school teacher said, “...he then did become a bit of a scapegoat for some children. And it would be like, ‘How's this happened?’ ‘Oh Jerome did it.’” (Interview 4, Jerome's former class teacher). Jerome's current class teacher at the specialist school spoke about how his peers would deliberately provoke him:

*If there's anybody in that class you know you're going to get a reaction from, you know it's [Jerome]...and certain children in that class know that if ‘I want to provoke anybody in the class, I know exactly who to target, and I know exactly the reaction I'm going to get.’ And a lot of the children in the class feed off of that, they love that. They love the reaction they're getting from him. And I try to say to him, ‘Look, you need to stay away from him. Do not react to him. Don't look at him.’ But he doesn't*

*[listen]....* (Interview 1, Jerome's class teacher)

Subsequently, this would often result in conflict between the children or other kinds of disruptive behaviour from Jerome, and his teacher appeared to understand that this was due to him being drawn into the provocation by his peers.

The third dimension associated with the teachers' perceptions and understanding of the children surrounded their feelings about the boys. Most of the teachers expressed feeling fond of the boys and were proud of them: "*...he a lovely boy. I'm really going to miss...working with him next year...he's worked really and I'm really proud of his achievements.*" (Interview 2, Jameel's class teacher).

The exception to this was Jerome's current class teacher at the specialist school. For most of the interview, she seemed to convey very negative views about Jerome. This was in conjunction to his relationship with another boy in his class. She felt that Jerome was "*...very damaging....*" (Interview 1, Jerome's class teacher) towards the other child - that he dominated the other child and often denigrated him. During the course of the interview, she eventually acknowledged that he too, like the other child, was vulnerable, but that this side of Jerome seemed to be obscured from view as it was displaced into the other child through Jerome bullying him. Towards the end of the interview, she communicated her compassion towards him. For instance, she spoke about wanting Jerome to go on a class trip and not wanting other children to succeed in ruining this opportunity for him, by provoking him to react with some kind of behaviour that would result in him not being allowed to go. His teacher spoke about how he would become very wound up:

*...he just doesn't know how to get out [of this state]...he'll sit there all red-faced and big tears and then he'll have a cuddle and. Sometimes I think with him, he just needs a good cry...sometimes you think: 'If I give him a hug, he will let it all go and he'll let it all come out.'* (Interview 1, Jerome's class teacher)

Perhaps when she recalled a more vulnerable side of Jerome, his teacher was in touch with softer feelings towards him.

The teachers were keen for the children to feel special and seemed to want to convey this to them in some form. For example, Jameel's former class teacher at the specialist school arranged a special bus trip for the class: *"We took him to the London Transport Museum – we arranged that trip really specially for him so he could go and sit on the buses and drive and I've got some amazing pictures of him driving [another teacher] on a bus [she laughs]...."* (Interview 6, Jameel's former class teacher).

Jameel and Dantrell's current mainstream class teachers, who were fairly new to their respective schools, both spoke about keeping a close eye on the boys at certain times - at points of separation. This seemed to be due to what they had heard about the boys' past concerning behaviour. For example, Jameel had once absconded from mainstream school, following his father going abroad to his home country. Jameel was missing for a number of hours and had gone from one bus to another. His current mainstream school class teacher said that because of this story, at home time: *"...I don't want him to be at the back of the line, just in case I don't see him and I don't know where he's gone so I always have him at the front of the line and...I make sure that I physically see him go to his Mum...."* (Interview 2, Jameel's class teacher).

Despite past incidents, Jameel and Dantrell seemed to have a new start with their current class teachers at mainstream school and they both had very positive outlooks concerning the boys. This seemed to have a positive impact on the boys too: *"...last year...[Dantrell was] very...behind what's expected for his age...[this year] we suddenly see some improvement."* (Interview 3, Dantrell's SENCO). In the example above, Dantrell's academic progress corresponded with going into his new class with this new teacher who had a very positive view of him.

As stated earlier, under the theme of behaviour, Jameel, Farrell and Dantrell's teachers felt that their pupil was a totally different boy now following his placement and treatment. All of the teachers now felt that the boys were manageable at mainstream school. With Farrell, the recent concerns about whether he could be managed at mainstream school arose at the time when Farrell's family discovered that they were going to be evicted from their home. When his teachers were able to link his behaviours with this issue, they seemed to be able to manage him again and his behaviour was more tolerable. Whilst Jerome was not able to return to mainstream school full-time, there



was a feeling at the time of the interview that he was ready to try mainstream school again and there was a plan for him to attend one day a week.

The fourth dimension of the theme of the teachers' perceptions and understanding of the children related to their views about the boys' future prospects. The teachers felt that the boys all had the potential to do well and most of the teachers felt that this potential could be achieved with appropriate support. Dantrell's teachers were very positive about his future: "...he's got the tools to be able to emotionally be able to actually access learning more...I think now...his prospects have greatly increased...he's given himself the opportunity as much as anything else to be able to access that learning...." (Interview 3, Dantrell's class teacher).

The other teachers felt that the children's progress needed more consolidation and that it was important to see how things developed as the children grew older - that 'time will tell'. The teachers seemed to feel that emotional factors would play an important role in the boys' futures. They felt that with support and understanding, the children could do well.

Jameel's class teacher at mainstream school felt that he was working "...really hard and... showing good progress...." (Interview 2, Jameel's class teacher) and that this could continue if he sustained his efforts. She had a concern that as the level of work at school became more demanding over the next few years, the gap in attainment between himself and his peers may increase which could affect his motivation and thus his behaviour and progress. If his attainment was very much below the average, he may need to attend a specialist educational provision. On the other hand, she thought that it was quite possible that he would continue to progress well and go to mainstream secondary school. He worked well with his LSA and she would continue to support him throughout his primary school education.

Whilst Farrell's SENCO felt that he had made considerable progress since his return to mainstream school, she was concerned about whether or not he would sustain this and stay in mainstream: "*Let's try and keep him in school.*" (Interview 5, Farrell's SENCO). She appeared to be worried about how continued struggles at home would impact upon his behaviour at school and thus on his learning. Farrell's recent challenges with moving house had affected his behaviour at school and re-awoken his teachers' previous

concerns about how his routine at home and being allowed to stay up very late at night time, watching late night television was affecting him during the school day. Farrell's SENCO was concerned about whether he would remain at mainstream school.

*...I think that it is really vital that we can manage and provide for Farrell now...his older sister...just transferred to secondary school...and she's causing them a lot of trouble and yet here, she wasn't too bad...she's truanting... rude to teachers....I'd like to see a success story here from somebody so young who's at risk of being excluded at [a young age] and to just actually for us to meet his needs and...for him to thrive and develop and learn and comply, all the things that...you would expect. (Interview 5, Farrell's SENCO)*

Jerome's teachers felt confident that he could do well academically. However, they had concerns about his social relationships and the impact of this on his emotional wellbeing. They were looking further into his future than the other teachers, as far as "...when he starts work..." (Interview 4, Jerome's former class teacher). Both of the teachers were concerned that his struggles could result in him being quite isolated, that he would "...push people away..." (Interview 4, Jerome's former class teacher). His teacher at the specialist school felt that Jerome needed and would benefit from having support to develop self-awareness

*...I think if his emotions are addressed and...he has the skills to manage his feelings and to even let go of his feelings and talk about [them]...because he doesn't talk about his feelings...this is what he needs...otherwise we're just going to continue to have that very angry boy, depressed boy.... (Interview 1, Jerome's class teacher)*

Jerome's former class teacher at mainstream school felt that as Jerome grows older, it would be necessary for him to be "...aware of his triggers and...of things that make him react in a different way. And I'd hope that as he got older that would change, because...he's just such a lovely boy, that it would be a shame if all of his needs overtook that." (Interview 4, Jerome's former class teacher).

The fifth dimension associated with the teachers' perceptions and understanding of the children surrounded the impact of their perceptions and understanding of their management of the children. In terms of social relationships, Farrell's SENCO and Jameel's class teacher at mainstream school spoke of the importance of maintaining a good relationship and good communication between school and home, and that this was essential in aiding their understanding at times about the boys' internal preoccupations and how it might affect how they were feeling and their behaviour. For instance, Farrell's SENCO said that in future, if they had concerns about Farrell's behaviour, they would "*Contact Mum.*" (Interview 5, Farrell's SENCO) to find out if there was anything worrying him at home. In addition, both Farrell's SENCO and Jameel's class teacher talked about the importance of the children's relationships with their LSAs, a key relationship which seemed to help them to do well at school: "*...having a good support like an LSA has helped him...without [her] support...I think he would probably struggle to be adjusted back into mainstream...especially during those core subjects like Literacy and Maths.*" (Interview 2, Jameel's class teacher).

As stated earlier, Jameel's LSA would continue to support him throughout his time at the school, which was an acknowledgement of the importance of this relationship. Giving the child some space and 'letting them be' seemed to be an important development too. Jameel and Dantrell's class teachers at mainstream school spoke about instances where the boys had more independence:

*...[Dantrell] goes off to do his little small group work...which is only...probably twenty steps, or something out of the classroom...and then goes into the next classroom which is across the way and I can see him...but he is responsible enough that I feel that he can walk those twenty steps...on his own...even though I'm watching out the window...and afterwards they'll send him back to class and he'll walk those twenty steps back, if that, and I can see door-to-door...and he likes to be able to do that...he'll let me know that he's back and then we'll carry on with whatever we were doing...it's another way he can show that he can be responsible...he can show good behaviour to others: 'Look what I can do, I can go there and come back' Even though*

*in essence, he's not, because the whole time I'm watching if he was to do anything wrong, I'd be out there in 2 seconds.*  
(Interview 3, Dantrell's class teacher)

The teachers gave the boys more autonomy whilst also being ready to intervene if needed. Jerome's current class teacher did not always intervene when he was having troubles with his peers, perhaps to allow them the independence to try to sort their conflicts out themselves. It appeared as though at times Farrell benefited from greater flexibility in his teachers' approaches to him:

*...I popped in on him today in his little group and they were doing something about Athena and Medusa...they couldn't remember the names of the people in the story and exactly what happened, so we just spoke it through and...I gave them an 'A' and an 'M' for Athena and Medusa, so they just had to point 'cos they couldn't say the names and think of the story at the same time...the support assistant said, 'Well I think they need to practice the names'. But I knew that it was actually too much to retell the story and remember the names...and he knew exactly what was going on.* (Interview 4, Farrell's SENCO)

Revising the task in this way seemed to help Farrell to succeed in it. Farrell's SENCO also felt that Farrell's behaviour seemed to improve considerably because *"...people's expectations are less rigid."* (Interview 4, Farrell's SENCO). It seemed as though following Farrell's treatment at the specialist school, staff now had more understanding that emotional struggles often underpinned his challenging behaviour and affected his learning. This appeared to result in the adults having more tolerance of and less anxiety about Farrell, and so they no longer *"...pounced on him for the slightest little thing."* (Interview 4, Farrell's SENCO).

Overall, it seemed as though the teachers had more understanding of the children and some of the boys' preoccupations following their placements at the specialist school. In the past, the teachers struggled to understand the boys' behaviours and possible meanings behind them. Some of the teachers' initial perceptions of the boys had been dominated by their disruptive and aggressive behaviours. Following the boys'

placements at the specialist school, the teachers now seemed to have more awareness that the children had internal struggles and that these difficulties could be manifested in their behaviours. The teachers were able to make sense of the children's struggles, behaviours and/or relationships in terms of, for instance, defences, group dynamics and issues in their home lives. This reminded me of the contribution that child psychotherapists have made in schools, where psychoanalytic understanding and techniques used, for example in work discussion groups and consultation, have helped teachers to perceive the children differently (e.g Wittenberg, 1971; Mawson, 1986; Emanuel, 1999; Jackson, 2002a; 2005; Youell, 2006; Jackson, 2008; Maltby, 2008; Music and Hall, 2008; Rustin, 2011; Evans, 2013). Most of the teachers conveyed positive feelings towards the children during the interviews; they seemed fond and proud of the children and wanted to make them feel special. Once Jerome's current class teacher was in touch with Jerome's vulnerable side, feelings of empathy appeared to be evoked in her. All of the teachers felt that the boys had the potential to do well and particularly with appropriate support. Jameel's current class teacher felt that his progress would be determined by how he was able to manage the transition to more challenging work as he grew older. Farrell's SENCO was concerned that he may follow the course of his older sisters and become unsettled in secondary school, but if he was supported at school and by home then he could progress at school. Jerome's teachers were not worried about his academic attainment, rather they were concerned that he could struggle with social relationships without assistance to understand himself better. The teachers perceptions and understanding of the children also affected their management of boys, for example, sustaining good home-school communication seemed important in understanding the boys better; giving them more autonomy, being flexible and having less rigid expectations of the children appeared to help the boys to feel more confident and to flourish.

### **Struggles and Tensions**

The second theme which emerged from the interviews about the teachers' views concerned struggles and tensions in their relationships with the children, with home and/or other colleagues working with the child and how these factors affected their work with the children. This theme appeared to be present in some of the interviews, namely the interviews with both of Jerome's teachers and Farrell's SENCO. Some of the dimensions within the theme were present in the interview with Jameel's former class teacher at the specialist school too. This theme was composed of four dimensions:

“projective/over-identification”, “conflict”, “home-school issues” and “processing some struggles and tensions”.

The first dimension associated with struggles and tensions within the interviews surrounded issues to do with the teachers being closely involved with the child and/or the family which seemed to prevent them from thinking about the child objectively. In the interviews with Jerome’s current class teacher at the specialist school and Farrell’s SENCO, there were some rather negative perceptions of the boys. As stated earlier, for most of the interview, Jerome’s current teacher seemed quite negative in her views about Jerome - that he was dominating and denigrating his peer frequently. She spoke at length about her concerns about the other boy which at times dominated the interview. In the interview with Farrell’s SENCO, one of her main concerns seemed to be regarding whether or not Farrell would remain at the school, following a recent relapse in disruptive behaviour, which as stated earlier seemed to stem from worries about being evicted from the family home and unhappiness about potentially moving out of the area. Whilst a number of staff members seemed to feel that this recent behaviour was tolerable, particularly once they learnt of the potential trigger for it, which subsequently led to Farrell settling again, Farrell’s SENCO thought that this was the ‘last straw’ for the head teacher. Conversely, Jerome’s former teacher at mainstream school and Jameel’s former teacher at the specialist school seemed to share a special, close and exclusive relationship with the boys.

*...it was...quite an intense relationship sometimes with him...he was quite affectionate towards me and he wanted lots of cuddles...and we were doing ‘light and dark’ and I remember taking him in the cupboard, we took the whole class into the cupboard and we and...we turned all the lights off and we had some torches and things like that...there were four kids...[another teacher] turned the lights on and it’s almost like I was being groped by Jameel! And I thought it was almost like I’d been caught out!...he was very tactile with people and...I really liked him and I think he responded to people who he knew liked him...he makes quite intense relationships with people.*  
(Interview 6, Jameel’s former class teacher)

It appeared as though sometimes the exclusive relationships were very much on the professional-personal boundary (e.g. Jackson, 2005). Upon hearing about such interactions and those where teachers had more negative perceptions of the boys and/or their circumstances, I felt uncomfortable. I did not know how to react and what to say in response and I also felt uneasy about letting the matter pass without saying anything. I was in a position where two of my roles were conflicting, that of interviewer and clinician. I further felt as though if I did say anything, this would be intrusive and seen as 'not my place' to do so.

I felt that both the exclusive and negative relationships with the children, at times, prevented the teachers from thinking about the child and/or his situation more objectively. It appeared difficult for Jameel's former teacher at the specialist school and Jerome's former teacher at mainstream school to see the boys more aggressive and destructive sides. Both teachers were new to their respective schools when the boys had begun there. Perhaps there was a mutual wish for a special relationship rather like an ideal new mother and baby one. Jerome's current teacher and Farrell's head teacher appeared to struggle to see the boys' vulnerable sides or the progress which they had made. Hearing their interactions and views on the boys, I found them to be too harsh. The teachers seemed to want to deal with matters through hard-lined separations: in Jerome's case, to split him up from his peer by putting them in different classes and in Farrell's case, to send him away, back to a specialist school; it was like a strict paternal role. Perhaps, like Jerome and Jameel's former teachers, their experiences with the boys tapped into something more personal which led to these strong reactions being evoked in them.

The second dimension of the theme of struggles and tensions in the interviews concerned conflict. This dimension was prevalent in the interviews with both of Jerome's teachers and Farrell's SENCO. Various splits seemed to have arisen between the professionals around the children. Jerome's former class teacher at mainstream school had been rather preoccupied throughout the interview about Jerome's placement at the specialist school. She spoke a number of times about feeling that it was not the right place for him - that being at two schools was not right for him. There seemed to be an explicit division between the teacher and the specialist school. In my countertransference, I felt that there was a divergence between the teacher and me as I felt that the placement had been beneficial for Jerome. However, there also appeared to

be an underlying split between the teacher and the mainstream school as she did not agree with management's decision about this kind of placement being in Jerome's best interests.

In the interview with Jerome's current class teacher at the specialist school, the teacher was very preoccupied with Jerome's relationship with his peer and she often returned to this subject in the interview. A split seemed to be prominent here as she empathised a great deal with the peer and conveyed Jerome to be an antagonist in the relationship. It took a considerable amount of work for her to be in touch with feelings of empathy towards Jerome. I felt that there was a division between us too because I felt that she was biased against Jerome for most of the interview. There seemed to be an underlying split between the teacher and Jerome's former teachers at the specialist school as the teacher seemed to convey that they had not addressed the relationship between the two boys when the boys had been in their class.

Farrell's SENCO spoke about divisions between staff at the mainstream school regarding whether Farrell should stay at their school or be re-referred to a specialist school following his recent struggles and subsequent challenging behaviour. It seemed as though this split was mostly reconciled following their understanding of the external factors which appeared to be affecting Farrell. However, the head teacher still seemed to feel that they might not be able to keep Farrell at the school. This could be related to an underlying divergence between home and school concerning the management of Farrell; he was still staying up late during the night which was affecting him during the school day as he would become sleepy in the afternoons.

Loyalty conflicts seemed to be an issue in each of these interviews too. There appeared to be an underlying conflict between Jerome's former class teacher at mainstream school and the other mainstream staff who had authorised his referral. However, she did not locate the conflict as being between herself and some of her colleagues, rather, it seemed to be projected into the relationship with the specialist school. Perhaps in part this was due to her not wanting to be disloyal to her own school. In my countertransference I noticed a feeling of defensiveness within me when the teacher was quite critical of the specialist school; I felt that this was linked to feelings of loyalty to the specialist school being evoked in me. I also felt that there was a sort of 'tug of war' from the teacher about where and to whom Jerome 'belonged'.



*...we'd always try and fit...the special treats in in the afternoons so that he was part of that...even things like our end of year assembly, he had to be here for the full day, like you have to arrange it, it's like actually, you know, that's his class, he's been with us for a year and he should be there!* (Interview 4, Jerome's former class teacher)

From Jerome's current class teacher's account, such loyalty conflicts were present within Jerome himself and between Jerome and his 'best friend'. For example, the teacher spoke about how she felt that Jerome "...doesn't want to do as well as he can...." (Interview 1, Jerome's class teacher) academically as she felt that this meant he would have to leave his best friend behind and move into a higher achieving group with a boy who often provoked him. Perhaps this was symbolic of Jerome's ambivalence about moving forwards - leaving behind a familiar experience which he felt comfortable with and challenging himself more by moving out of his comfort zone and becoming more independent. Perhaps progression felt like disloyalty to what he was accustomed to and familiar with although it was not allowing him to move forwards academically or otherwise. Farrell's SENCO seemed, at times, to be torn between, on the one hand, advocating her view that Farrell could be adequately supported at school, that he could do well and that he should remain with them, and, on the other hand, standing by the head teacher's view to refer Farrell to a special school and being loyal to her. I felt that being caught up in these issues of loyalty and conflict, it was hard for the teachers to see the children properly. For instance, when Farrell's SENCO aligned with the school, she seemed to lose track of the fact that Farrell had managed to settle again at school once they had understood what was troubling him.

Overall the analysis revealed a considerable amount of negativity in the interviews with Jerome's teachers. His former class teacher at mainstream school appeared to be very blaming and at times judgemental towards the specialist school and I also felt quite critical of her in my countertransference. She came across to me as overly involved with Jerome and harsh in her views of the school. As stated earlier, Jerome's current class teacher seemed rather negative about Jerome for much of the interview. In my countertransference, I felt uncomfortable about what felt to me to be her bias in favour of his peer over him. Perhaps in part, these strong feelings were projections from

Jerome; they seemed to mirror Jerome's harsh perception of himself. Furthermore, there seemed to be underlying feelings of rivalry in the interviews. This was a professional rivalry from Jerome's mainstream teacher towards the specialist school regarding puzzlement about how the specialist school felt able to manage Jerome in their setting and had been able to settle him there. There was also a sense of competing for him. These rivalry issues were also present in the interviews with Jerome's current class teacher at the specialist school and Farrell's SENCO. A way in which this presented itself was in concern for resources for other children - that there were also "*...a lot of [other] children...that need a lot of support.*" (Interview 5, Farrell's SENCO). Interestingly, this was often an area of conflict concerning therapy at the specialist school in terms of competing for resources.

The third dimension connected to the theme of struggles and tensions in the interviews concerned issues to do with power and authority. This dimension appeared to be present in two of the interviews: the interviews with Jerome's former class teacher at the mainstream school and Farrell's SENCO. As stated earlier, a split between these two teachers and the lead authority figures at their respective schools seemed present. Regarding Jerome's former class teacher at mainstream school, this appeared to be the management staff who referred Jerome to the specialist school and concerning Farrell's SENCO, there seemed to be a split between herself and the head teacher who appeared to be seriously considering sending Farrell away from their mainstream school. Both Jerome's former class teacher and Farrell's SENCO appeared to feel that they had little authority in these decisions being made. In fact, they felt that they had been undermined which was an underlying issue throughout both interviews.

There were also tensions around having to endorse these decisions which the teachers fundamentally did not agree with, and it seemed to be difficult for them to reconcile this issue. Both teachers expressed feelings that they did not have a say in the decision making process concerning the boys' futures with their schools. Moreover, they had not been consulted about the boys' needs even though they had played prominent roles in the boys' schooling which led to feelings of being undermined. Loss of authority appeared to be connected with the teachers feeling that they were "*...losing respect....*" (Interview 4, Jerome's former class teacher). Perhaps they felt they were not consulted about the boys' futures because they were not respected in their professional capacity by the lead authority figures at their schools.

The fourth dimension of the theme of struggles and tensions in the interviews were those between home and school. This dimension was present in three of the interviews: the interviews with Jerome's teachers and Farrell's SENCO. Prior to their referrals to the specialist school, there was an impression that the schools and the boys were not in sync with one another. In addition, there was a lack of cohesion between various parts of their lives such as their parents and teachers, and mainstream and specialist school. Issues to do with struggles to be a couple and be 'partners' seemed to be present for all of the children's parents; perhaps they were also not able to be on the 'same page' regarding their child. The lack of partnership seemed to coincide with the splits amongst the staff. Perhaps at times, the children were able to pick up on this lack of collaboration. For instance, Jerome was perceived by his teachers to be sensitive to the adults around him and their states of mind. He may well have sensed the ambivalence about him going to the specialist school and particularly that his former class teacher at mainstream school did not wholly support his placement. The tension and ambivalence may well have made it a challenge for him to settle there. Similarly, Farrell may have been aware on some level of the tensions between his head teacher and mother around managing him which may have had an impact on him, particularly during the time that he and his family had been evicted from their home and placed in an area that mother was unhappy with.

Just as it was a struggle for the teachers to hold different aspects of the boys in mind, it seemed to be a challenge for Farrell's SENCO and other staff, particularly the head teacher, by her account, to hold different sides of Farrell's mother in mind. By her account, there was an implied struggle by the mother to manage her son and to maintain boundaries and limits for him such as around bedtime and watching television; it seemed as though the head teacher lost sight of this side of Farrell's mother. However, there was also a very competent side of her and one who could stand firm, for instance, in terms of her determination to obtain housing in the locality that she wanted herself and her children to live in: "...one of the criteria was that she didn't have to change the children's school...she could have had a house in [another area] but she chose not to." (Interview 5, Farrell's SENCO). Similarly, the school, at times, struggled to hold onto the competent side of Farrell, the boy who could ride a bike, and regarding the head teacher, the Farrell who was doing well.

In the past, absent fathers seemed to be a theme for all of the children. In addition, the 'paternal function' (Bion, 1962b) seemed to be absent in various ways in their lives. This seemed to be an issue that was still present for both Jerome and Farrell. In Jerome's interviews, his teachers seemed to be bound up in their thinking with one side of Jerome at times - his former mainstream teacher seemed to lose sight of the fact that he needed to be in a specialist educational setting, whilst his current class teacher was unable to remember his vulnerable side for much of the interview. They seemed to be unable to 'separate' from these views and required considerable assistance from me in the interviews to do so, rather like a paternal figure assisting separation between a mother and child.

The fifth dimension of the theme of struggles and tensions concerned processing some of these struggles and tensions and so helping the teachers to think more objectively about the children and their situations. This dimension was present in both interviews with Jerome's teachers and in the interview with Farrell's SENCO. At times, it seemed difficult for Jerome and Farrell's teachers to take in a different perspective about the boys and/or their circumstances. I felt as though Jerome's teachers were so caught up with their strong views or feelings about Jerome (and also for his former teacher, his placement at the specialist school) that it was a struggle for them to take a more objective stance and it took a considerable amount of work and effort on my part for them to think about him and his circumstances differently. There appeared to be a feeling of being stuck which was difficult to tolerate. For instance, there was also a kind of stalemate between Farrell's head teacher and his mother concerning issues surrounding boundaries and disciplining him. I felt that things were stuck at times in the interviews with Jerome's teachers concerning their seemingly fixed views about Jerome and his situation and in my countertransference, I briefly experienced feeling stuck concerning how to proceed in the face of this. I wondered if there was a struggle at times about letting me in. For instance, when I asked Jerome's former mainstream teacher about her initial impressions of Jerome, she spoke at length but did not tell me much about him. Perhaps this was linked to her being a newly qualified teacher at the time - she may have felt an internal pressure to do well and to 'know' what to do in her first job as a teacher, even with a child who presented as challenging as Jerome.

Issues to do with containment were pertinent at times in the interviews. When Jerome and Farrell's teachers were in the grip of their preoccupations, they projected strong

feelings and seemed to be feeling overwhelmed. There appeared to be a need for much processing and digesting of these experiences. Containing these difficult projections, transferences and countertransferences and processing them seemed to help. A second factor which seemed to facilitate overcoming stuckness in the interviews was riding out such difficult moments. Being able to withstand and tolerate these kinds of experiences and the belief that they could be worked through appeared to help shift things. Using all of these experiences to make sense of what was going on in the interviews and to bring in another way of thinking about them seemed very beneficial too. Holding onto the possibility that things could shift seemed to be important as well. With Farrell's SENCO, thinking together about the side of Farrell's mother that wanted to work with the school seemed to help the SENCO to hold in mind a more holistic picture of the mother - that she could be compliant as well as delinquent. I felt that it was furthermore important for me to hold onto the more reasonable side of the teachers - that they could be reasoned with during stuck times. This was reminiscent of a struggle/tension with therapy at the specialist school at times where sometimes, as a therapist, I had to fight to get the teachers to see the part of the child that was working and progressing despite them also behaving delinquently.

I felt that at times, it was important to articulate my thoughts about possible underlying factors. This seemed to help the teachers to think more objectively about the boys and their experiences. Addressing the undercurrents directly seemed to eventually help the situation. Making sense of the teachers' preoccupations and the institutional dynamics partly in terms of the children's emotional experiences - that the children's internal experiences were sometimes mirrored in their external world seemed to facilitate the teachers' thinking. Once a situation was understood and a different way of thinking about it was brought in, something more positive seemed able to emerge. For instance, helping Jerome's current class teacher at the specialist school to understand aspects of Jerome's relationship with his peer in terms of projective identifications of parts of himself appeared to enable her to recall a more vulnerable side of Jerome and put her in touch with her feelings of empathy towards Jerome.

Overall, the struggles and tensions which emerged in the interviews seemed to prevent some of the teachers from thinking more objectively about the children and/or their circumstances. This theme reminded me of the impact that splits can have on being able to think objectively and entertain alternative ways of looking at experiences, and not

being able to assume a ‘third position’ (Britton, 1989). The theme also made me think of the struggle to understand children’s complex feelings when there are overwhelming and intense feelings that have not been processed (e.g. Jackson, 2005; Emanuel, 2008; Rustin, 2011). Some teachers had very close and exclusive relationships with the boys and appeared unable to see the boys more aggressive and destructive aspects. This seemed to be underpinned by a mutual wish for an ideal early mother-baby relationship. In some interviews, rather negative views concerning the child, his family and/or circumstances were conveyed, and at such times, more vulnerable and competent sides of the boys seemed to be negated. This appeared to be reminiscent of a harsh, paternal figure. Divisions amongst the teachers and their schools concerning the management of the children, characterised by loyalty conflicts, blame, judgemental views and rivalry, at times, also made it difficult for the teachers to see the boys more objectively. In part, this mirrored the children’s internal conflicts. Endorsing managements’ decisions in the face of strong differences of opinion seemed to be challenging, particularly as the teachers appeared to experience underlying feelings of having lost respect and authority. There were tensions between home and school too, which seemed to surround deep-seated issues to do with lack of cohesion, the absence of paternal functions and struggles to be part of a partnership. In the midst of such tension, the teachers appeared to struggle to hold more positive and cooperative aspects of the child and/or his parent in mind. Processing some of these struggles and tensions in the interviews included containing difficult projections and making sense of countertransferences (e.g. Emanuel, 1999; Jackson, 2008; Maltby, 2008; Music and Hall, 2008; Rustin, 2011; Evans, 2013). These were used to facilitate feedback to the teachers about what might be happening in the interviews and appeared to help them shift away from more stuck positions and to be more objective about the child.

This chapter was the second of two that explored the themes that were derived from my interviews with the children’s teachers. These chapters are necessary for the investigation my second research question. In light of the themes emerging from the brief interventions, it asked, ‘how can these themes be discussed in relation to the understanding constructed amongst mainstream school teachers?’. In this chapter, I analysed themes that arose in the interviews concerning the teachers’ views of the children. These themes consisted of underlying issues which seemed to affect their views and impacted on their management of the children. Two themes were identified and explored in depth in this chapter: “perceptions and understanding” and “struggles

and tensions”. My main findings from my analysis of the teachers’ interviews (concerning this chapter and the previous one) will be discussed further in the following chapter. Having analysed my research data, I will now conclude this doctorate.

## **Conclusion**

In this final chapter, I conclude my thesis and evaluate my research. I explore how the main findings from my research relate to the research questions. I also discuss the contributions that my research makes to related fields, the implications that it has for policy and practice and I make recommendations for future research.

### **Main Findings**

From my research, I was able to draw some key findings about my brief psychotherapy work with four children at a specialist school, in terms of underlying issues for both them and their mainstream schools. The study was composed of two methods of data collection, namely case studies and semi-structured interviews, and analysed using thematic analysis, through which I was able to derive a number of themes. Regarding my brief work with the children, six themes were ascertained: “family constellation”, “emotional regulation”, “separation”, “damage”, “struggles to relate” and “working together”. Through my analysis of the teachers’ interviews, there were two categories of themes. The first category concerned four themes which were related to the progress which the children had made in a number of areas, following their placements at the specialist school: “behaviour”, “feelings and emotions”, “learning” and “social relationships”. The second category consisted of two themes about underlying issues which seemed to affect the teachers’ views of the children and the impact that this had on their management of the children: “perceptions and understanding” and “struggles and tensions”.

#### ***Findings from the analysis of the children’s sessions***

My research findings enabled me to address my research questions in a number of ways. My first question was: “what themes can emerge from brief psychotherapy with children?”. This question was answered through my brief work with the children.

The first theme which emerged from the children’s brief work surrounded their preoccupations regarding their family constellations. For all of the boys, issues to do with fitting in, belonging and their fathers’ absences from their lives were prevalent. For Dantrell and Farrell, there were also questions about whether there was a place for the boys in their families. With Jerome, complex issues around his mixed race heritage were present in his sessions too. Additionally, in Jameel’s work, feelings about difficulties



regarding separation and concerns about his place in his family evoked by the birth of his baby brother were prominent.

The second theme concerned issues which seemed to affect the children's ability to regulate their feelings and emotions. Initially, all of the children presented as struggling to calm down when they were in a state of high emotional arousal, such as distress or anger. Part of the children's struggles seemed to be connected to a deep-seated sense of a lack of containment and feeling neglected in terms of their infantile needs.

A third theme to emerge from the brief work surrounded issues to do with separation. At the start of their work, all of the children struggled with separation. They seemed to have considerable underlying anxiety that one could not 'survive' separation. The boys appeared to feel small and vulnerable and that they would be left to fend for themselves when they did not feel that they had the resources to cope. There was a sense that these anxieties were related to early life experiences. The boys appeared to cope with these feelings, for example, by being inside or stuck to an object, or through destructive behaviour.

The fourth theme was related to damage. Initially, the boys seemed to struggle to face their capacity to damage and their behaviours seemed to conceal their struggles in coping with deep-seated painful feelings and experiences which they had been unable to make sense of or contain. These issues also appeared to be related to experiences of damage from early on in life and that being able to attack others could be a way to protect themselves from attacks or unwanted experiences from others. The children appeared to find it difficult to get out of patterns of destructive behaviours, such as vicious dynamics of being aggressive towards others and being the victim themselves.

A fifth theme to emerge from the brief work concerned the boys' struggles in relating. At the start of our work, the children could present as quite ambivalent and resistant to relating and this was demonstrated through rejecting behaviour, cutting off from thinking and being in an impasse position which was difficult to come out of. The boys appeared to have internalised various figures which made them cautious of adults. For instance, there was concern about objects that could not attend to the children's needs, or hold them in mind and objects that were harsh. Related to this were struggles in resolving oedipal conflicts and feelings.

The sixth and final theme to emerge from the children sessions concerned being able to work through some of their struggles in relating and being able to work with me during the course of our meetings. The children seemed to work on issues to do with reparation concerning damage and destructive behaviour. There was an idea that there are positive ways of relating with others and that they would be accepted for who they are. This appeared to help the children to face their difficulties, to talk about them or convey them through symbolic play. There were times when the boys challenged the boundaries of the sessions, such as delaying coming to the room, and their teachers' show of alliance with me regarding our work appeared to help the boys to feel contained and to engage in working. The boys witnessing a cooperative relationship contrasted with their external family experiences of a limited or absent parental couple.

Towards the end of our work, the children showed that they were able to calm down from heightened emotional states. They felt that their issues could be attended to and they were able to stay with their feelings and emotions better. They could then, for example, show feelings of vulnerability and hurt. As their complex issues were processed during our work, separation seemed easier. For instance, the children seemed settled much more quickly in the sessions, engaged much more readily and conveyed more latency development in their play. By the end of the work, the children's destructive behaviours diminished too and they were able to look at and resist behaving in this way.

Overall, the brief work enabled me to obtain a comprehensive answer to my initial question, "what themes can emerge from brief psychotherapy with children?" regarding the work with four boys who attended a placement at the specialist school.

### ***Findings from the analysis of the teachers' interviews***

My second research question was, "how can these themes be discussed in relation to the understanding constructed amongst mainstream school teachers?". In order to set about answering this question, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the teachers from the children's mainstream schools, who knew the boys well, after the six months that followed the brief work. As partly demonstrated earlier, there were developments that took place during the course of the children's brief work with me which reveal that changes had occurred as a result of our work and that the brief work had an impact.

These developments link with the changes that their mainstream teachers noticed following the children's return to their school (and concerning Jerome, in the following year group at the specialist school) which they spoke about in their interviews with me. However, it is difficult to argue that the brief work alone had a direct impact on the teachers' thinking. I had originally hoped to interview those teachers whose class the child had been in at mainstream school upon his admission to the specialist school. Yet six months on from the first child's brief psychotherapy, the boys were now in a new academic year and so their class teachers had changed and their previous teachers had minimal contact with them now (apart from Jerome who still regularly met with his former class teacher). My initial contact with most of the teachers was when I was setting up the interviews and some of them did not know about the brief work.

There were a number of other interventions surrounding the children's placement at the specialist school which impacted the children's development and thus it would not have been brief work alone which led to changes for the children. The children were receiving therapeutic teaching at the specialist school. Later in their placements, they engaged in group psychotherapy and some of their parents met the psychotherapy team for parent work. The teachers at the specialist school met regularly with the psychotherapy team to think about the children, for example in work discussion groups and consultations about the children. The child psychotherapy team also met with the school's management team to think about the children and attended their placement reviews and thus shared their thinking about the boys in these forums, which could have been influential. In these forums, I directly brought in my understanding of the children through the brief work or other members of the team shared a summary of my thoughts on my behalf in my absence.

Therefore, a better argument is that the brief work, as part of a number of interventions, contributed to an evolution in the thinking about the children and a change in the teachers' perceptions of and relationships with the boys. A component of this argument is that certain changes that the teachers observed following the children's return to mainstream school tied up with developments which I observed taking place during the brief work as a result of our work together. These observations which were made by the teachers and emerged as themes in the interviews and the connections that can be made to changes that occurred during the course of the brief work will now be discussed.

The first theme which was prevalent in the teachers' interviews, regarding the children's progress following their placements at the specialist school, concerned the children's behavioural changes. The teachers felt that the boys had made improvements in their behaviour. Jameel and Dantrell's teachers did not experience the boys' behaviours as challenging. For instance, Dantrell's SENCO spoke about how he was able to calm down rather than escalate to the point of erupting in aggressive behaviour. I saw an example of this in my work with Dantrell, where he was able to resist killing a fly the second time round and was able to stay with feelings which had been previously difficult for him to manage, such as feeling trapped and vulnerable. Farrell's SENCO felt that he had made much improvement too, despite a recent setback surrounding issues to do with moving to a new home and area. She demonstrated being able to make a connection between his underlying worries and overt challenging behaviour. In my work with Farrell, the importance of 'home' emerged concerning the story of *The Three Little Pigs*. Deep-seated anxieties about his aggression and challenging of boundaries seemed to make him feel very concerned about an internal state that was not solid and robust, leaving him feeling emotionally destabilised and un-contained. Towards the end of our work, it seemed that these feelings could be managed and contained when understood. Farrell's SENCO noticed that once staff had been able to make sense of his worries, his behaviour improved once again.

All of the boys appeared to be more motivated to do well and due to this, learning became their key educational target, rather than behaviour. The motivation to behave in acceptable ways was, for instance, observed by Jerome's current class teacher. She spoke about how he succeeded in not responding to provocations by a peer due to wanting to go on a class trip, despite in the past being goaded into conflict. Early on in my work with Jerome, there was a 'crazy man' character who kept 'provoking' my character by phoning and shouting then hanging up. In the following sessions, I did not respond to this character and demonstrated that he did not have to engage with such unhelpful characters and could say 'no' to them. Following this, Jerome engaged with me in a much more positive way - playing a welcoming shopkeeper, inviting me to engage with him rather than imposing himself upon me. The teachers noticed that the boys responded better to clear and consistent boundaries and predictable structures. In our brief work, all of the boys destructive behaviours diminished in the final two sessions and they all seemed able to manage the boundaries and limits better. None of the boys required physical containment. They were able to manage the unstructured

space well, including Jameel as his work progressed. Jerome stopped breaking the toys and was able to respond to authority. The children were all able to settle into the rhythm of therapy; where there were class activities that clashed with the therapy, the boys were able to manage this well. Predictability, consistency and clear expectations became important to all the children. They also managed the transitions from class to therapy and then back to the classroom. Despite ongoing resistance from Jameel to come to his sessions, over time, once in the sessions, he was able to settle faster and spent increasingly prolonged periods playing symbolically. Jameel, Dantrell and Farrell's teachers all felt that they respective pupil had changed considerably and had made great progress.

A second theme to emerge from the interviews regarding the children's progress surrounded their emotions and feelings. Prior to their placements, the teacher felt that all of the boys were very sensitive and would get considerably distressed at times and that it was difficult for them to come out of these states. Whilst very challenging experiences and situations could still leave the boys feeling very upset, they seemed able to show emotions other than anger now. For instance, Dantrell's teachers spoke about him being able to show that he was upset about another boy rather than lashing out and in my work with him, he was able to show his fears that came to the fore when he saw a fly the second time in the room rather than killing it as he had previously. The teachers also felt that the boys had all improved in their abilities to manage their feelings and emotions. As stated earlier, the children presented as more contained as our work progressed and seemed better able to regulate and control their emotions. Challenging behaviour stopped all together. The children appeared to cope better with their feelings and emotions. These developments seemed to be sustained in their return to mainstream school as they progressed to the next year group. The teachers felt that better communication with their parents helped the children to contain and express their thoughts and feeling. In the brief work, it appeared as though the alliance between myself and the boys' teachers helped them to feel more contained and settled in the sessions. For instance, when Jerome left the therapy room in his fourth session for the second time, his teachers show of support for the therapy helped him to return to the therapy room, and thereafter, to work on the feelings and experiences which he had initially tried to flee from by leaving. This could have been a helpful demonstration of a sort of cooperative parental couple, in contrast to the actual experience in their own families.

The third theme to come to the fore in the interviews concerning the children's progress related to developments in their learning. The teachers felt that the children had progressed in their learning and had developed positive feelings and attitudes towards learning. They expressed that prior to the boys' placements at the specialist school, due to their behavioural and emotional difficulties, the boys had been unavailable for learning, and despite being behind their peers still, they were now attaining at National Curriculum levels. As stated earlier, the children's destructive behaviours seemed to diminish during the brief work and they were better able to regulate their feelings and emotions and appeared to be more emotionally contained. The teachers observed that the boys had improved with regards to their speech, language and communication too. At the start of my work with Jameel, he would mumble and speak quietly and not very clearly. He spoke very little without me asking him a question. In our final meeting, he spoke loudly, clearly and spontaneously. I learned from his teachers that following the session, he began to talk loudly and clearly in front of them too for the first time. Also, at the start of my work with Farrell, he spoke in a baby-like manner and his utterances consisted of only a few words. During the course of our work together, he spoke in longer sentences. Jameel and Dantrell's teachers noticed that the boys seemed to now care about standing out from their peers and disliked being seen to be doing different work to them. They had only developed this self-awareness during the course of their placements. Over the duration of their work with me, they became more aware of themselves and engaged with me, rather than using defences such as cutting off.

The final theme to emerge from the interviews regarding the children's progress concerned improvements in their relationships with peers and staff at mainstream school. Jameel, Dantrell and Farrell's teachers reported that they boys each had a small, consistent group of friends whom they spent time with at school, that they seemed to have developed normal friendships and had things in common with their friends. During the course of our work, they all seemed to know that they cared about being liked and accepted. They also showed an increasing interest to engage with me as they become more in touch and less rejecting. Dantrell, Farrell and Jerome all wanted to play with me and Jameel developed an interest to play with the toys overtime. Towards the end of our work, 'friendly' aspects of the boys came more to the fore and all of the boys played games which connected to latency interests. Farrell initially struggled with me being the 'seeker' in 'hide and seek' initially and over the course of the sessions, he appeared

much more at ease with 'turn taking'. Jameel, Farrell and Dantrell's teachers also observed that they expressed their feelings of rivalry in more acceptable ways. For instance, Jameel showed his feelings through play rather than hitting his peers outright. In our work, Jameel initially treated the toys very aggressively when feelings of rivalry emerged in the sessions, and in our final sessions, he expressed rivalry through symbolic play with the toys instead. The interviews with Jerome's teachers seemed to reveal more complex issues to do with friendships. His current class teacher spoke about how he had managed to develop a close friendship with another child, however, she was concerned about him bullying this other child at times and how Jerome too was vulnerable to being bullied. These mirrored dynamics present in Jerome's play in our work, for instance, one figure that 'dumped' its unwanted feelings in another or a stronger figure crushing a weaker, vulnerable figure. The teachers all conveyed that the boys seemed to have positive feelings and good relationships with adults at school too. They had a sense that the adults were willing to listen to them and would try to understand them. In our work, initially, there were figures whose minds were not present and the children seemed to have deep-seated feelings concerning being neglected, not heard or listened to. Towards the end of our work, they had a sense of a figure who was able to be attentive to them, listened to them, was interested in them and tried to think about what their communications might mean. Jameel and Farrell's speech improvement towards the end of our work suggested that they felt that they would be heard. The teachers also revealed that the boys had a significant relationship with at least one other adult, namely their class teacher or LSA. The theme of "working together" in the children's brief work showed that they were able to engage positively over the course of our meetings following initial "struggles to relate".

From my interviews with the teachers, a second category of two themes emerged concerning underlying issues which seemed to affect the teachers' views of the children and the impact that this had on their management of the boys. The first theme concerned the teachers' perceptions and understanding of the children. The teachers seemed to have more understanding of the boys and some of their preoccupations following their placements at the specialist school. Previously, the teachers had struggled to make sense of their behaviours and underlying issues. In the brief work, there was a notion that the children's destructive behaviours masked painful feelings and experiences and a key part of our work involved understanding these deep-seated feelings and the functions of destructive behaviours, such as expressions of or defences against inner anxiety or pain.

Following the children's return to mainstream school, their teachers were also able to try to think about the behaviours as manifestations of internal struggles and preoccupations, and they were able to recognise some of these behaviours as defences. Initially, Jerome's current class teacher was preoccupied by what she perceived as destructive dynamics between Jerome and a peer, and did not come across as fond of him as the other teachers had been of their pupils. In my work with Jerome, as destructive feelings diminished, he was able to show more vulnerability. In my meeting with Jerome's current teacher, once she was in touch with his vulnerable side, feelings of empathy towards him were aroused in her. The teachers felt that the boys had the potential to do well, particularly with appropriate support. The brief work demonstrated that having someone alongside them, thinking about their communications and needs, the boys were all able to progress and flourish in their development.

The other theme which came to the fore in the interviews regarding underlying issues that affected the teachers' views and management of the children surrounded struggles and tensions in their relationships with the children, their home and/or other colleagues working with the boys. These issues seemed to prevent some of the teachers from thinking more objectively about the children and/or their circumstances. A number of splits which generated conflict seemed to emerge. Divisions amongst the teachers and their schools concerning their capacity to see destructive aspects or positive qualities of the boys and management of the children, including endorsement of decisions which they opposed, and tensions between home and school seemed to surround deep-seated issues to do with loyalty conflicts, rivalry, lack of cohesion, absence of parental functions and struggles in being part of a partnership. In my work with the children, these underlying issues were present too. In the interviews, processing some of the teachers' struggles and tensions in light of the children's internal issues, as well as containing difficult projections, making sense of countertransferences and using all of these understanding to feedback to the teachers concerning what seemed to be occurring in the interviews, helped to shift from a stuck position to an objective thinking one.

### **Evaluation**

Evaluating my research overall, I feel that the decisions I made concerning its design were best suited to my research aims. I wanted to explore data derived during my child psychotherapy training from my clinical work, in a field where there was little known documented research - brief work in a specialist school setting. I felt that this was an



area where child psychotherapy could make a substantial contribution in therapeutically helping children with emotional, social and/or behavioural difficulties in education settings. I hoped that the study might be of benefit in this area and related fields. My research involved two methods of data collection and sampling. I used a convenience sample in my case studies of brief work. To explore how the children's mainstream schools understood the children following the brief work, I used semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample. These methods allowed me to explore my data in-depth. To analyse my process notes of the sessions and transcripts of the interviews I used thematic analysis. In using thematic analysis, I bore in mind the critiques of the method and implemented the recommendations to maximise validity, such as rigorous application of the phases suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006).

The experience of undertaking this study helped me to develop a 'research mindedness' approach to my clinical practice. The research process encouraged me to review literature in related fields and the gaps in clinical work which has been documented in these areas. It also emphasised some key themes surrounding working with children with special educational needs and some of the common preoccupations held by children and their teachers. These ideas could be helpful in my own clinical practice with children and their families as well as consultations and other work with their teachers. I also considered more broad issues concerning research in child psychotherapy. I thought about material which could be used for research, such as 'termly summaries' - reports which are written quarterly/biannually regarding the progress and care plans of work with a child and his/her family/carers. These summaries involve processed accounts of 'themes' that emerge during the course of treatment and would fit well with thematic analysis. Cases which are closely supervised, such as intensive cases (patients seen thrice weekly or more), would allow for triangulation, thus arguably strengthening the validity of the findings, as the case involves at least two clinicians who have a good understanding of the case - the therapist seeing the child and the clinician who supervises, together analysing process notes of a session each week.

### **Contributions, Implications and Recommendations**

It is arguable that my research contributes to various related fields in child psychotherapy and that it has implications concerning policy and practice. For example, the research supports the notion that thematic analysis is strongly suited to qualitatively exploring data derived from psychoanalytic and psychoanalytically-informed work. It

corroborates the idea that psychoanalytical work can be conducted in community settings and can work well alongside other interventions. The study supports the idea that significant contributions can be made by child psychotherapists in educational settings. It backs up the notion that brief interventions can result in some key changes in some children's emotional and psychological development which can contribute to social and behavioural progress. It also demonstrates that psychoanalytically-informed ideas and concepts can be applied to learning and teaching relationships. The study responds to the need for evidence-based practice research and also the economic push for time-limited work too.

This study supports the importance of working closely with teachers to help them understand better underlying issues to do with their pupils and their circumstances and their relationships with staff, and so can benefit relationships and life at school for the child. The government's statutory guidance, *The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice* (Department of Education and Department of Health, 2015) references a departmental advice document, *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools* (Department of Education, 2015) for schools where it makes recommendations concerning how schools can support children who have/are at risk of developing mental health problems, to promote positive mental health. One such recommendation is school-based counselling and it identifies the 'child psychologist' as a professional who can help via accessing CAMHS or commissioned by the school. I would recommend that child psychotherapists too be named in the document, as well as a concise description of the way in which they can help. It would also require child psychotherapists to more actively raise the profile of our profession. Perhaps this could be explored further at an annual Association of Child Psychotherapists Conference.

The research shows that the specialist school provision was successful. Traditionally, such services have not been available for such young children and it would be important to commission more of these services in schools. It would also be important to focus more on parent work and engagement, as it can be quite challenging to engage parents for psychotherapeutic work in school settings. More qualitative studies such as this one could be used to devise outcome measures for quantitative research thus contributing to the development of the evidence base. Studies like the one that I undertook, with different variables such as in terms of gender and cultural differences, are important.

In this doctorate, I explored underlying issues which emerged in the brief psychotherapy with four children at a specialist school, and how their mainstream schools subsequently understood the children. It is evident from this research that such work has considerable benefit for children and mainstream schools. As can be seen from the brief work with the four boys from this study, significant progress, development and vast improvement to all areas of their lives at school occurred through this intervention. Thus, this research can make an important contribution to this kind of brief work in schools and the future of child psychotherapy.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix i: Information Sheet for Teachers**

#### Participant Information Sheet for Teachers for a Study about Brief Psychotherapy with Children in a Specialist School

I would like to invite you to participate in a research project that I am doing at ... School. Please take the time to read this information sheet before making your mind up about whether or not you would like to help me with my research.

As you may remember, I saw one of your pupils for five sessions to help him/her to think about some of his/her difficulties.

Alongside my work at the school, I am working on a research project to help understand some of the issues faced by children who come to the school. My hope is that my research will be helpful to professionals in improving services for children both in mainstream schools and special education provisions.

I am writing to ask for your consent to conduct an interview with you and to use the transcription of my interview with you, about the brief work with your pupil, for the purposes of my research.

Any personal details would be kept securely and identifying information would be changed. The transcriptions of my interview with you will only be seen by my clinical and academic supervisors, for supervision purposes.

Your participation in the research is voluntary. You may also withdraw your consent at any point. I will give you a consent form on which you can let me know about whether or not you are happy to participate in the research, by ticking the appropriate box. This information sheet is yours to keep.

If you have any questions or would like any more information, please feel free to contact me at: ... or by phone on: ....

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Ms. ...

Child & Adolescent Psychotherapist

Consent Form for Teachers for a Study about Brief Psychotherapy with Children in a  
Specialist School

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions. I understand that I can withdraw consent at any time.

I am willing

I am not willing

to participate in the study as outlined to me.

Print name: .....

Signature: ..... Date: .....

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Ms. ...

Child & Adolescent Psychotherapist



## **Appendix ii: Information Sheet for Parents**

### Participant Information Sheet for Parents for a Study about Brief Psychotherapy with Children in a Specialist School

I would like to invite you to participate in a research project that I am doing at ... School. Please take the time to read this information sheet before making your mind up about whether or not you would like to help me with my research.

As you know, I am planning to see your child for 5 sessions to help him/her to think about some of his/her current difficulties.

Alongside my work at the school, I am working on a research project to help understand some of the issues faced by children who come to the school. My hope is that my research will be helpful to professionals in improving services for children both in mainstream schools and special education provisions.

I am writing to parents to ask for their consent to use written records of the brief work with their child for the purposes of my research.

All personal details about your child would be kept securely and would only be seen by my clinical and academic supervisors. Your child's name and identifying information would be changed.

If you would prefer that your child's records are not used for the purposes of my study, then your child's therapeutic sessions would not be effected in any way. You may also withdraw your consent at any point.

I will give you a consent form on which you can let me know about whether or not you are happy to participate in the research, by ticking the appropriate box. This information sheet is yours to keep.

If you have any questions or would like any more information, please feel free to contact me at: ... or by phone on: .....

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Ms. ...

Child Psychotherapist in Doctoral Training

Consent Form for Parents for a Study about Brief Psychotherapy with Children in a  
Specialist School

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions. I understand that I can withdraw consent at any time without it affecting my child's treatment.

I am willing

I am not willing

to participate in the study as outlined to me.

Print name: .....

Signature: ..... Date: .....

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Ms. ...

Child Psychotherapist in Doctoral Training

### **Appendix iii: Interview Schedule for Teachers**

#### Interview Questions

- Could you say something about what “Johnny” was like when you first encountered him?
- What kinds of concerns did you have about Johnny before his referral to ... School?
- How did other children and teachers seem to find Johnny at that time?
- What was Johnny like in class?
- What was Johnny like at the start of his school day and at home time?
- How did Johnny seem to get on with other children and adults?
- How was Johnny doing with class work and how was he doing in his learning?
- What is Johnny like now?
- Have you noticed any changes in Johnny’s capacity to use language?
- How well has Johnny adjusted back into mainstream school?
- What do you think his prospects are now?

## Appendix iv: Sample from an Interview Transcript

### Dantrell Mainstream Interview

Me: So my first question is, “Could you say something about what Dantrell was like when you first encountered him?”

Helen: very angry

Me: very angry

Helen: I think that’s probably the summary. He was very angry; he was really disruptive. Erm he had good days [*rising intonation*] then on a bad day he would kick all the children, he would hide under the table, he would refuse to participate. He – to begin with we would just ignore him and let him go under the table [Me: Yeah] but then he started not having enough with that and he would come out and start pushing children. So we would have to physically move him to another room and he would kick and then we would have to take the shoes off. So it was very very distressing for him [Me: Yeah] and for everybody involved. So that’s the way he was in Reception and in Year 1. Yeah.

Me: And Toby when you first met Dantrell, what was he like?

Toby: To be honest with you, if someone hadn’t told me what he was like before, I wouldn’t have thought anything like that because [Me: Really?] within the classroom, umm, I very rarely have to speak to him. I haven’t seen any violence from him, in the classroom there’s been no violence to any other children. Erm, he has had a couple of arguments at lunchtimes, erm, with our children, but to be honest it’s usually a day when I’m not in class [*rising intonation*] so if I’m not actually in class that morning or afternoon, usually in the morning, then if he goes off to lunchtime – not every time but and I will say very rarely, but a couple of times - he has had an argument at lunchtime. But I think at times he calms himself down [Me: hmm – *affirmation* Yeah]. You see at times he’s obviously a bit worked up. And he sort of takes that time to calm down. So from an eruption point of view, what you’re talking about there, I’ve never seen that; I’ve never seen him strike another child, he’s never tried to go underneath the table with me, he’s never - do you know what I mean - [Me: Yeah] he’s never tried to hide away from me or the other children, so I haven’t seen that.

Me: it’s a big change!

Helen: and the sort of self-control is very interesting, because he used to say no and

once he said no that was it. There was no – he would just say no no-no; there was no turning back, there was no reasoning, there was no nothing. So I think he's kind of probably learnt to see when he's feeling a little bit hmph how to calm himself down. So *[voice trails off]*

Me: That's quite amazing in a way because before, he had this kind of point of no return [Helen: Yeah!] and now there's more scope for something different. [Helen: Yeah]. That's quite something.

Toby: Because at times he will work himself up if he's not happy with something. So for instance a couple of weeks ago, or last week, another child said he was in his friend anymore. [Me: Yeah]. So immediately – he didn't get aggressive or anything like that, he just got quite withdrawn. And we would see in the class that he was quite upset - he was visibly upset, [Me: Yeah] so I sort of took him outside and we had a chat. And yes, it turned out in the end, that someone had said that he didn't want to be his friend any more. [Me: Awww] So we talked through it, brought the other child out, which all turned out to be a misunderstanding anyway, they had had an argument over lunch or something [Me: Yeah] whereas probably, judging by what you said *[turns to Helen; gestures to her]* he would have gone a bit more violent towards that before, and expressed himself in that way, with me in my class he seems to withdraw more [Me: hmmm] if he gets upset or something he sought of sits there quietly and withdraws himself from it.

Me: He takes himself away from it, which is a different [Toby: hmm] way of coping, isn't it. [Toby: hmm]

Helen: Yeah

## **Appendix v: Thematic Map of Teachers' Interviews**

### Children's Themes

#### Theme 1: Behaviour

##### Sub-Theme 1.1: Behaviour Modified

- 32. Challenging behaviour has become modified: B40, C61
- 9. Able to return from the point of no return: C7, C8
- 36. Stopping and reflecting - *more about thinking than feeling*: C59, C60
- 6. Responds well to boundaries/33. own boundaries improved
- 30. Not different to other children in class: B39
- 7. Incentives: C26
- 28. Feeling interventions have worked: C54
- 29. No exclusions: C55

##### Sub-Theme 1.2: Learning is Now the Key Target

- 8. Now available for learning/behaviour isn't a key target/concern: B10, C14, E39

##### Sub-Theme 1.3: Routine

- 48. Settled into routine: B29
- 49. Importance of routine: B29, E13
- 45. Behaviour with new people/strangers/in new situations: B22, B28

##### Sub-Theme 1.4: Masking

- 140. Capable side masked by less capable side: F32

#### Theme 2: Feelings and Emotions

##### Sub-Theme 2.1: Managing Feelings and Emotions

- Previous problems:
  - 139. Child's distress
  - 2. Very distressing: C3, E23, F24 - F27, F80
  - 10. Dramatic cycles of emotion: C15 - C17, D8
  - 68. Very sensitive: A36, D14, D15, F33
- Managing Better:
  - 4. Able to show upset: C9, C10

- 34. Children are more contained
- 125. Gets worked up: D26
- 35. Development of emotional tools: C62
- 55. Better communication of feelings and emotions

### Sub-Theme 2.2: Internal Preoccupations

- Early experiences:
  - 96. Infantile difficulties: D87
  - 138. Primitive aspects of child: C56, C57, C58, D75, D76, F9, F11, F16 - F21
- 127. Frightened of his own aggressive potential: D30, D31
- Separation:
  - 18. Some separateness and independence: B11, B25, B26, C34, C49, F72 - F76
  - 37. Challenges in transition: B2, D74, E25, E33
  - 38. Separation issues: B57, D12, D13, D66 (claustrophobia), E35
- Fitting in:
  - 103. Oedipal issues: D69 - D72
 Having a place:
  - 43. Claim things/belongings: B15, B16, B20, B21
  - 44. Have a place/sense of having a place
  - 128. Wanting to belong/'where do I belong?'/Desperate to belong: D60, D65
  - 13. Wanting to go back to mainstream: C23, C33
 Standing out:
  - 14. Didn't stand out at The School: C24, F36
  - 19. Sensitive to standing out/being singled out/doesn't want to stand out/?
  - 65. Being seen, not wanting to be seen: A9, B17, B18, C22, C27-C30, C37, C38
 Missing things:
  - 15. Missing part of the story/missing parts: C25
  - 17. Missing out on something: C32, D23
  - 143. Location/dislocation: F40, "Where's the boy?": E6 - E9, F28 - F30
  - 150. "I'm a naughty boy"
  - 151. Feeling unwanted
- Damage-repair cycle:
  - 134. Damage-repair cycle: D83
- Loss:
  - 11. Loss/lost: C20, C21, E29, F69, F70

### Theme 3: Communication

112. Desire to communicate and engage: B13, B12, E57

### Theme 4: Learning

#### Sub-Theme 4.1: Progress

23. Developmentally behind but making progress; now on the scale: B35, B36, C47, C48, C50, C52, E44, E52

42. Active participants: B14

#### Sub-Theme 4.2: Feelings and Attitudes towards Learning

52. Enjoy school: B37

113. Ready for goals, working for something: E58

12. Awareness of difference: B19 (and D21)

### Theme 5: Personality Development

51. Latency interests: B31

### Theme 6: Social Relationships

#### Sub-Theme 6.1: Relationships with Peers

- Current problems:
  - 88. Dominant-submissive relationship: A5, A6, A10, A12, A15
- Progress:
  - (used to be) 148. Incongruous: on periphery and in the centre: F65
  - 16. Small group of friends - bond: B5, C31, C36, E48
  - 47. Ganging/delinquent behaviour with friends: B27, C40
  - 46. Normal friendships: B23, C13
  - 61. Accepted by peers: B24, C11 (cares about it)
- 103. Oedipal issues:
  - 56. Rivalry: B46 - B53, C45, D82

#### Sub-Theme 6.2: Relationships with Adults

- Positive:
  - 3. Made connection w/ adults: B58, C5, C6, C18; (previous struggles: E31, E32)
  - 121. Relationships with certain adults: A3, D16, D44, D45, F41, F68



- 110. Wanting to please the adults: E55
- 111. Sense that there are people who will listen and can understand: E56
- Projecting into others [communication]:
  - 152. Projecting own experience into others: F78
- Struggles [transference?]:
  - 119. Very concerned about adults state of mind: D7, D33, D34 (?)
  - 20. Carrying things which may belong to parents: C35, C39, D5, D86
  - 153. Importance of predictability: F84
- Continual Needs:
  - 39. Needed drawing out: B3
  - 40. Very shy in comparison to other children interest in others: B4
  - 54. Doesn't share things about home life: B41
  - 57. Needing reassurance about interest: B54, B55, B56, C42, C43, C58, D78
  - 58. Manages with support: B59, C58
  - 22. Need to be held in mind positively: B55, B56

## Teachers' Themes

### Theme 7: Perceptions and Understanding of the Child

#### Sub -Theme 7.1: Initial Impressions

- 1. Initial memory: A1, B1, C2, C3, C4, E5, F4 - F8, F12 (physical presentation), F34 / 74. Initial encounter: hearing about the child: E1, E1
- 26. Different to what they expected: C53, F13 - F15, F31
- 84. Difficult to get hold of
- 142. Adults weary of child: F37

#### Sub-Theme 7.2: Current Perception and Understanding

- 5. Able to make sense of behaviour: B43, B44, E36, E50, E59, F63
- 21. Protection barrier/defence: B42, C41, E30
- 63. Dichotomy of older and younger sides: A2
- 71. Group dynamics

#### Sub-Theme 7.3: Feelings About the Child

- Feelings:
  - 53. Fondness: B23, F66, F67

147. Keen for the child to feel special: F62

60. Proud of them: B64

72. Compassion for the child: A32

- Outlook:

24. New start, new teacher, positive outlook: C51

25. Totally different boy: B6, B7

50. Behaviour is manageable within the school context: B33

#### Sub-Theme 7.4: Future Prospects

59. Future prospects: A28, A38 - A40, B63, C62 (and before?): D89, D90, E60

#### Theme 8: Impact on Management of Child

73. Letting the child 'be'

86. When peoples expectations become less rigid: E54

26. Some stories stick: B30

#### Theme 9: Struggles and Tensions

##### Sub-Theme 9.1: Projective-/Over-Identification

- Enmeshed:

144. Intense relationship: F42

117. Problems separating

/118. Merger and confusion: A11, D4, D35 - D43, D61, F34 - F36,

120. Tight/exclusive relationship: D9, D10; 145.

- Unable to See Destructive Side of the Child:

126. Unable to see/connect... D17, D29, D73, D77, D84, F64, F81, F83

##### Sub-Theme 9.2: Conflict

64. Gripe/preoccupation: A5 - A7, D19, D25, D46 - D49,

?? 141. How does the school 'look' by having such a child: F35

- Splits:

75. Splits: E3, E10, E11, E38

- Loyalty:

90. Loyalty: E37

92. Loyalty conflicts

89. Friction/lack of harmony/jarring: E14

93. Pushed and pulled in different directions: E39

104. Can't see child - aligning w/ school/be alongside him in loy. conflict issues

- Ownership:

91. Who the child belongs to/ 124. Ownership: D24

- Negativity:

122. Negative and critical/judgemental/blaming: D18, D27

129. Professional rivalry: D52

108. Other children also need support: D53, D54, E47

109. Competing for resources

### Sub-Theme 9.3: Power and Authority

77. Who has the ultimate authority;

78. Authority (who has it)/power

76. Undermining

79. Forced to endorse: E4

80. Living with others decisions

81. Own professional/individual identity

83. Not consulted: E6

130. Loss of respect: D55

- Paranoia:

94. Big Brother - paranoia after speaking out: E15

95. Paranoia and persecution: E16

### Sub-Theme 9.4: Home-School Issues

- Not joined up:

98. Not fitting together

/ 97. Out of sync: E22, E23

102. Struggle to partner up, be a couple: E67

131. Not joined up: D56

- Splits:

99. Split within parent/child/holding different parts in mind

- Absent fathers:

100. Absent fathers: B43, E61, F55, F56, F79

101. Paternal function - absence

### Sub-Theme 9.5: Processing Some Struggles and Tensions in the Interview

- No Entry:
  - 62. Struggle to take in: A19 (?)
  - 107. Impasse/stuckness/being stuck: E43, E46
  - 116. Defence against not knowing: D1, D62
- Containing:
  - 69. Strong projections from teachers/overwhelming: A13, A16, A23, C1
  - 114. Riding out difficult moments: E62 - E64
  - 115. Holding on to the part that wants to work: E66
- Intervening:
  - 123. Addressing the issue directly: D20, D50
  - 132. Making sense of gripe in terms of child's emotional preoccupations: D63, D64
  - 133. Internal mirrored in external: F57, F82 (transference)
  - 70. Bringing in another perspective/impact of my thinking: A14, A17, A18, A20 (try understand teachers dilemmas), A21, A22, A27, D57, D58
  - 106. Reviewing together: E40
  - 149. Processing: F77
  - 67. Coming out of the cycle/negativity: D67
  - 135. Global Things: F2 ("What process/stages do the interviews go through?")

## **Appendix vi: Thematic Map of Children's Sessions**

### Theme 1: Identity

- 3. Identity: A20 - A22, D33, E37, G49 (G50 &) G51, K8, K20 - K24, R27, R29 & R30
- 40. Ethnicity: C7, C31, E38, C26, T31
- 72. Identity - 2D v 3D: (E39), E40 & E41

### Theme 2: Father's Absence

- 3. Identity: A20 - A22, D33, E37, G49 (G50 &) G51, K8, K20 - K24, R27, R29 & R30
- 4. Father's absence: A23, D32, D33 (D34 - D37 paternal conflict), (G62; G63 - G65?), R18, R47, R51?
  - 97. Lost boy: G53 & G54
  - 103. Location/orientation - dislocation/disorientation: K11, K15, K20, (L6), (L13 &) L14, L16, L41, M38, R17, R36, G64
- 5. Missing part: A24
- 6. Missing paternal bit: A25
- 7. Questions - unknown: A17 - A19
- 8. Impact of father's absence: A26 & A27, (G62), G63 - G65
- 89. Absent detached object: G19, G27, H22?, K35?

### Theme 3: Early Experiences

- 112. Early experiences (triggered/remember): M58 - M60, R19, R48
- 111. Struggles to stay in the 'here and now': M50
- 110. Schizoid/fragmented: L44, R3 (not held comes apart)

### Sub-Theme 3.1: Struggle to calm down

- 19. Struggling to calm down and stop in a state: A45 - A50, E35 & E36 (L31 - L34)
- 25. Self-regulation - needing physical containment: B12 & B13, C25 - C30, (C29 communication breakdown), E10? (E32 - E36)
  - 24. Manic side: B12 - B14
  - 82. Banging the toys: E14, G40
  - 71. /Importance of physical proximity: E20, E24, G39
- 117. Lack of holding: R1 - R3, R5 (R12), R18 & R19, R28
- 14. Broken: A33, L27 & L28

- 13. Lack of containment: A35 (L35), L36 - L40 (L41 & L42), (R1 - R4)
- 107. Feeling trapped: L41, M40
- 109. Struggle to manage difficult feelings: L42, M39, M42 - M46, (R18 & R20), R49
- 93. Infantile needs: G31 - G34, R63 - R65
- 92. Infantile aggression: (G28), G29 & G30, G35 - G37, R16, R18, R20, R61 & R62
  - 90. Needing attending to: G20 - G34, H30?
  - 38. Feeling/being dumped: C6
  - 61. Not feeling heard: D46 - D48, E22
  - 67. Not feeling held in mind: E9 - E11 (G15), G46, M17 - M19, R2 & R3, R68
  - 79. Feeling neglected: E67, E78, K27 & K28

### Sub-Theme 3.2: Separation and transition issues

- 15. Transition: A36 - A39, A40
- 16. Transition and separation: A40, E61 - E63, R1 - R10, R12 - R15, R33 & R34
  - 13. Lack of containment: A35 (L35), L36 - L40 (L41 & L42), (R1 - R4)
  - 115. Second session issues: (R1 - R15)
- 17. Separation: A41, D22, D24 & D25, E50 & E51, K2 (& K3) R37-R39, R43-R46, R51
- 18. Transition - reflecting: A42
- 35. Twinning/pairing/sameness: A40, C5, C9 (C31)
- 66. Separation - struggles: E1-E5, E7, E54b, G3&G4 (G5-G7), G47-G50, H9&H10, H20
  - 95. Middle session issues: G43 - G45 (G50)
  - 96./ Having something for self: G49 & G50, G53 & G54, H23, M56
  - 85. Importance of being part of a group: G5
- 68. Separation - preoccupation with home/parents: E12 & E13

### Theme 4: Damage and destruction

#### Sub-Theme 4.1: Damage

- 44. Not repairing: C14
- 27. Damage - wanting direction: B17
- 28. Damage and destruction - facing it: B16, B18
- 20. Destructive side: A45, B19, (E64 &) E65, K18, K29 & K30, L24
- 31. Damage: C2, C16 & C17(abusive behaviour too), E30, M52 - M55, M62
- 26. Damage - unable to look at it: B15, C4, C15 (C22), D8

- 2. Intrusive side: A3, A6 & A7, C18 - C22, E29 & E30, R53 - R56
- 43. Total destruction: B19
- 57. Destructive side: delinquency: (D32-D37 context) D38-D40 (F1-F5) F6 (& F7) K18?
- 69. Dumping/ 'toileting: (E15 - E17) E18, E30 - E32 (E64 - E68)
- 34. Destructive side protects self: B29 (C23&)C24 (E64-E68) L6-L9 (L10-L12) S5, T20?

#### Sub-Theme 4.2: Play

- 41. Fighting in play: C10 & C11, H32, (L31 &) L32 - L34
  - 30. Symbolic play-complex issues symbolised in play: B26-B30, H32, J34, R10, R34
  - 102. Reality versus pretend: K34, L40, R40, R70
    - 106. Paranoia: L39, M62, M57
    - 110. Schizoid/fragmented: L44, R3 (not held comes apart)
- 51. Misusing good things (abuse?): D19, E32, K31?
- 42. Abusive fighting/behaviour: B19, C12 & C13, E30
- 108. Cruelty: L41 (& L42)

#### Sub-Theme 4.3: Vulnerability

- 34. Destructive side protects self: B29 (C23&)C24 (E64-E68) L6-L9 (L10-L12) S5, T20?
- 12. Vulnerability: A34, E44, G21, L6 - L9 (L10 - L12), L41, R5, (R63), R64, T14
- 9. Vulnerability moves to delinquency: A28 & A29
- 11. Retaliation: A32, L32?, R67

#### Sub-Theme 4.4: Reparation

- 47. Damage-refusing to allow: D5-D7, D9, E32 (E33-E35)E45? (M10&M11) M12&M13
  - 86. Negotiations: G8 - G11, M10
  - 77. Valuing what I have to offer: E69-E71, (G55) G56 & G57 (G58), H26, M11-M13
- 48. Reparation - attempt: (D9 context) D10 - D12
  - 52. Acceptance - feeling of being accepted: D20 - D23
  - 49. Acceptance - wanting to be accepted/anticipation about it: D12 & D13, E48

## Theme 5: Relating

### Sub-Theme 5.1: Relating

23. Relating - internal figures: B7 - B11, E26 & E27, E32, G15, G19, G24, G27 - G37, K26 - K29, R71 & R72, (anxieties about relating:) T2 - T4, (internalising good figure:) D16, G30, S27
21. Relating - wanting to communicate: B3-B5, D14, E20&E21, E25(E39-E41) G24-G27
22. Relating - ambivalence: B6, A40, C29 (communication breakdown), D15, D42, E20? E47, E55? G12 & G13, K1 (& K2), K7, K35, R15, R57 - R59, T16
63. Relating - working together: (D45 & D46), D49 - D52, E63, E70 - E73, (G55 - G57) G58, (G59 - G61) H27 - H29, H33 - H36, J15 - J30, J33 - J36, M7 - M9, N1 - N3, R31 & R32, S1 - S4, T6 - T9, T21, T28 & T29

### Sub-Theme 5.2: Resistance

37. Resistance: C1 (middle session), H16b - H19
76. Resistance - not wanting to see/be seen/to know: E57 - E60, E68, E75, G14 (G25?), G40, K10 - K14, K16, R15, R49 (aggressive part) & R50, S19 & S20, S30
73. Stuck/being stuck: E42, E55, G38, H24 & H25, H30 & H31, M5
53. Splitting: D25 & D26, E76 & E77
- 54./ Splitting - rejecting: D27 - D30
88. Resistance - cut off/absent mental state: G17&G18 (L6-L11 c) L12, M25&M26 (S19)
80. Negative projections: E6, E32, E66, G2, H21, L18?
98. Rejecting/rejection: (H13 - H16a) H16b - H19
87. Won't fight for things/go for what he wants: G16, H18
99. Not wanting to stand out: J1 - J5, J9
84. Lack of motivation: F7, G59 (G60 - G65), H21, J32 (an explanation)
83. Carrying a weight: F7 (F1 - F6)

Frame challenged etc:

46. Frame c: D1-D4, D18, D20, F1-F5 (F6&F7) G1, G6, L1-L5 (R1 & R2) R3 - R5
74. Challenging the boundaries: E32 - E34, E43, R69, S15 - S17
78. Undermining of authority: E74, R69?
70. What kind of a place is this? E15 - E17, E19, K6 (& K7), R3



91. Robustness: G29, R3 (R2 & R4)

94. Impact on thinking: G40 - G43, K15?, L42, R29

### Sub-Theme 5.3: Internal Figures

23. Relating - internal figures: B7 - B11, E26 & E27, E32, G15, G19, G24, G27 - G37, K26 - K29, R71 & R72, (anxieties about relating:) T2 - T4, (internalising good figure:) D16, G30, S27

101. Concerns about adult world: K17-K19 (K25&) K26-K28, K33, R52 (& R53) T17

104. Harsh parental figures: L17, L20, L23, L31, S8

105. Harsh superego: L21 & L22, L26

45. Destructive union: C31, (D33 c), D34 - D37, E54 & E54b, E56?, L20, M41, S18

59. Parental conflict: (D32 & D33 context) D34 - D37, (E46 - E56)

Internal conflict issues:

59. Parental conflict: (D32 & D33 context) D34 - D37, (E46 - E56)

75. Conflicting sides: E46 - E52, G22 & G23, (K8 &) K9, L29

32. Oedipal rivalry: B25, D25, E46b, G35, G42 - G45, L25, M22, M45, R9, R18

33. Toughness/being tough: B26

29. Sib rivalry: B20-B25, C5&C6, E14, E28, H3-H8, H11&H12, K32, M18-M23, R8

36. Presence of other children: C3

39. Territorial: A8, C6, E14, M51

### Sub-Theme 5.4: Working Together

63. Relating - working together: (D45 & D46), D49 - D52, E63, E70 - E73, (G55 - G57) G58, (G59 - G61) H27 - H29, H33 - H36, J15 - J30, J33 - J36, M7 - M9, N1 - N3, R31 & R32, S1 - S4, T6 - T9, T21, T28 & T29

50. Good things: D16 & D17 (J8), (R31), (T28 &) T29

118. Lack of stability: R21

56./ Good things don't last/get destroyed: D36, M47-M49 (will they last), R21& R22

55. Holding onto things: (D17) D31

62. Contained by memory of working together: D49, R4, ?S6 & S7

58. Containment - alliance with teachers helps: D43, E8, J11, K4, L10(-L12), M15&M16

60. Looking for containment: D41

81. Containing comments/interpretations: E11, M38, R35

64. Feelings about ending: D53 - D57 (throughout session), H33, J6, J8 (J10), J14, S9 - S13, S21 - S26, T1 - T4, T11 - T13, T19, T21 - T25, T30 & T31

65. Penultimate session: H1 - H3, M1 - M7, S28

114. Claiming his space/resilience: N1 (- N3), R6 & R7

100. Verbal communication: (J26) J27 & J28, S14, T10

113. Big boy v. little boy/older and younger parts: P1 - P4, K21, R41 - R43, R73, S14

1. First encounter: A1-A13, A15 & A16, P1 - P10

116. Wild side: P9, R23 & R24 , R74

119. Protection layer (see “wild animals”), R23 & R24

120. Space/lack of space for different parts of the self: R74 - R76, R78 - R80, S28, T14, T16, T26 & T27