

Discourses on Behaviour: Is There Room for Restorative Justice in a Secondary School?

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Abstract

School-based behavioural standards and the means to best improve these continue to be a topic for discussion amongst educators, politicians, the general public and the media. Discourses around behaviour management have been dominated by behaviourism and to an increasing extent, a discourse of 'zero tolerance' (Cameron, 1998; Clough, Garner, Pardeck and Yeun, 2005). Additional psychological discourses have emerged alongside these influenced by cognitive psychology and within recent education policy, the notion of the 'whole child'. However, concerns have been raised that such discourses imply a within-child focus that potentially alienates pupils. What is more, it is argued that many dominant discourses fail to acknowledge the socially constructed nature of behaviour and the political, economic and practical reasons why institutions such as schools may wish to maintain such discourses as dominant. Restorative Justice (RJ) is explored and promoted providing an alternative framework which has greater affinity with a social constructionist understanding of behaviour (e.g. Zehr, 2002). The need to understand how to effectively promote such an alternative (Hopkins, 2004; Morrison, 2007) forms the basis of this thesis, which through a case study of one Yorkshire secondary school, looks to expose dominant discourses, showing the implications of these, and how alternative discourses such as those supporting RJ might be constructed. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been utilised to analyse transcripts of three focus groups held in the secondary school, as well as the school's behaviour policy (Fairclough, 2001; van Dijk, 2001). This analysis is discussed in relation to three research questions: What are the dominant discourses on behaviour amongst school staff within a secondary school?; How are certain voices privileged over others?; What are the implications for the construction of alternative discourses and in particular one of relationships and RJ? Further discussion is given to the literature and the network of practice within which those discourses are located (Fairclough, 2001).

Chapter 1 – Introduction

The Perennial Problem of Behaviour

Behaviour and its management are a perennial preoccupation and concern for those in Britain within education and has been a favourite media topic, particularly the perceived rise in difficult behaviour in schools (McCluskey, Kane, Lloyd, Stead, Riddell and Weedon, 2011). Headlines from newspapers over recent years have exclaimed the increase in exclusions for children as young as four (The Times, 31 December 2009; 31 July 2009), the deterioration of behaviour generally (The Daily Mail, 23 April 2010), the concerns of parents (The Daily Mail, 29 October 2006) and the need for a strong response to discipline and behaviour (The Times, 28 May 2007; 6 December 2005). Whilst the recent riots by young people across the cities of England have sparked further debate about the behavioural standards across children and young people (e.g. The Daily Mail, 26 September 2011).

Behaviour in schools has historically been a priority for government (e.g. Foucault, 1977), the *Education and Inspections Act* recognising that ‘behaviour has long been a major concern for school staff and parents alike’ (England, 2006 p.2). The concept of government is, however, a broad one, with different cultures and national systems developing different policies and research bases. This is no less true for Great Britain, with the devolution of the governments of Scotland and Wales, including the devolution of Educational matters and legislation, negating a simplistic understanding of what British government has to say about behaviour. It is important to note that whilst aspects of this thesis relate to Scottish research, British government activity around education after 1999 pertains to England and Wales only.

Such a strong agenda on behaviour reflects not only concerns about behaviour and discipline in schools but also the fundamental role that behaviour has been given within

successful teaching and learning. 'Good' behaviour and effective teaching and learning are thought to go hand in hand, meaning that for standards generally to be improved behaviour has been placed at the heart of matters of education and learning. Two reports of note have been commissioned by both Conservative and Labour governments to examine behaviour and discipline in schools. *Discipline in Schools* chaired by Lord Elton (HMSO, 1989) places importance on 'good' behaviour and warns of the disruptive impact of 'bad' behaviour on the successful running of an organisation; whilst *Lessons Learned* chaired by Sir Alan Steer (DfES, 2005; DCSF, 2009c), highlights the importance of not tolerating 'poor' behaviour and makes a number of recommendations about the management of behaviour.

The priority that has been placed on behaviour in schools has been clear in the outgoing Labour government's legacy of educational legislation and papers concerned with improving standards of behaviour. For example, *Building a 21st Century schools system* (DCSF, 2009e), *The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act* (England and Wales, 2009), *The Children's Plan* (DCSF, 2007) and *The Education and Inspections Act* (England and Wales, 2006). The language and feel of many of these documents, for example *Delivering the behaviour challenge: Our commitment to good behaviour*' (DCSF, 2009b), has been unequivocal in setting an agenda geared towards higher standards for behaviour. This document in particular describes the fundamental importance of 'good' behaviour, explicitly requests schools to prioritise behaviour standards and warns that 'satisfactory' behaviour is not good enough. Clear expectations and the consequences of not meeting these are set out for both schools and Local Authorities, placing responsibility clearly with them.

Under the current British coalition government (Conservative-Liberal Democrat) the focus on behavioural standards has not been lost. The publication of the report *Behaviour and Discipline in Schools* (House of Commons Education Committee, 2011) sets out stronger and firmer approaches to behaviour, implying a presumption that standards of behaviour

are low enough to necessitate this. This continued focus on behaviour more than 20 years after the Elton report is despite clear indications from the outgoing Labour government of improvements in behaviour across schools. Reportedly fewer schools than ever have been recorded by Ofsted as having unsatisfactory behaviour and conversely more schools are recording Ofsted judgements of 'good' or better for behaviour (DCSF, 2009b). The DCSF reported in their 2009 report that the proportion of schools judged by Ofsted to have unsatisfactory behaviour was 'the lowest ever recorded – less than 2% of secondary and less than 0.5% of primary schools compared with 6% and 2% in 1997/98' (ibid, p. 1). This continued focus despite reported improvements may be due to perceptions of behaviour and discipline remaining pessimistic, *The Children's Plan* recognising 'that standards of behaviour continue to be a matter of concern for parents, teachers, and children and young people themselves' (DCSF, 2007, p.11). Likewise research by The National Foundation for Educational Research (DCSF, 2008) has found that a large number of teachers perceive pupil behaviour to have deteriorated and believe that pupil behaviour is driving teachers out of the profession, particularly in secondary schools.

Behaviour retains a high profile for many professionals in education, including Educational Psychologists (EPs). This is no exception for the author, who having worked as an EP for nearly six years has seen concerns regarding behaviour in schools remain high on the agenda. This has particularly been the case for secondary schools, where approximately 80% of the cases the author was involved in within the 2008/2009 academic year were primarily focussed on behaviour concerns. This is in contrast to primary school cases where approximately one third had behaviour as the primary concern. Anecdotally this is reflective of case work across the previous school years and across the Educational Psychology Service Team the author works for, whilst a recent Team Development Day (March 2012) within the service raised again the issue that enquiries to the service relating to difficult behaviour are increasing.

Discourses around Behaviour Management

Given the importance placed on behaviour and its management it is no surprise that there exists an extensive body of literature offering strategies and ideas for behaviour management; and within this a range of discourses have emerged. Psychology has alongside other disciplines had much to offer in this work, forming the theoretical basis of many strategies. Within psychology, behaviourism in particular has provided one of the most visible theoretical underpinnings to approaches to behaviour management. Behaviourism and its focus on observable behaviours is well embedded in the history of psychology generally, influenced by the writings of Watson (e.g. 1913), Thorndike (1932), Pavlov (1927) and Skinner (1938). Behaviourism was conceptualised at a time when psychology was pitting itself against the natural sciences for equal recognition, focussing on the observable stimulus-response connection as a means of objectifying psychology. Whilst the rise of cognitive psychology later in the twentieth century saw a challenge to the dominance of behaviourism, particularly in its more extreme forms, behaviourism has continued to influence today and is often placed alongside cognitive psychology, for example in the context of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). Evans (1991) also points to the adaptations of behaviourism which have seen its scope broaden and modernise, for example in considering a broader range of correlations between behaviour and stimuli (ibid).

The continuing presence of a behaviourist discourse within psychology and particularly with respect to approaches to difficult behaviour can be seen within the literature. For example, Cangelosi (1988) discusses the behaviourist movement and Cameron (1998) and Galvin (1999) in discussing the primary approaches to difficult behaviour, highlight the influence of behavioural thinking. The notion of rules with accompanying reinforcers and sanctions is common place in schools, where rewards can range from verbal praise to stickers to special privileges. Many schools now utilise a hierarchy of sanctions, including

removal of merits and privileges, time out, detentions and usually the ultimate sanction of exclusion.

Whilst the use of reinforcement and punishment remains a staple aspect of school behaviour management (McCluskey et al, 2011), questions are being asked as to the effectiveness and appropriateness of approaches which rely on external rewards and sanctions and which aim to modify the behaviour (and ultimately the individual) rather than the environment or actions of others. Morrison (2007) criticises such a reliance on behaviourism, claiming that these external sanctions and rewards emphasise compliance and obedience rather than consideration and self-discipline and so fail to foster self-monitoring, self-evaluation and ultimately self-regulation. Also that behaviourism supports the presumption that the cause of the difficult behaviour lies within the individual, which is consistent with a prevailing discourse of individual responsibility (Parsons, 1999). The use of exclusions in particular has given cause for concern (e.g. Morrison, 2007), not least for its potential for alienation.

Whilst exclusion may be considered a just punishment or effective deterrent for difficult behaviour and ultimately a way to keep the school safe there are concerns that it has a number of negative side effects and fundamentally undermines the focus on inclusion. For example, Stinchcomb, Bazemore and Reistenberg (2006) report problems of stigma and loss of relationship with school staff, an increase in the problem behaviour and disruption to educational progress. Of particular concern is that exclusion may do little more than move the problem into the wider community. Cameron and Thorsborne (2001) state that 'policy and practice which seeks to exclude those very students who are in greatest need of social support and an education simply relocate the problem in time and place and may exacerbate it' (p.189). Whilst it might be argued that the use of exclusion and internal exclusion offer time out and respite for both pupils and staff, the longer term benefits of these approaches for the pupil are difficult to identify, whilst the need for the school to take responsibility for contributing to change is avoided. This was illustrated to the author

first hand in relation to the use of internal exclusion with a pupil at a secondary school. On returning to lessons following a period of time in a behaviour 'unit' the pupil continued to exhibit the same behaviour for which he was initially excluded. The problem it seems was relocated but for the pupil no positive changes were forthcoming and the same patterns of behaviour and interactions continued.

Criticisms levelled at exclusion reflect wider concerns that the dominant discourse on school discipline is dominated by the philosophy of 'Zero Tolerance' (ZT) (American Psychological Association, 2008). Although there is no absolute definition of ZT the term has been increasingly used, particularly in American literature, to refer to approaches which focus on clear expectations and sanctions, deterrence and removing pupils from school. Given concerns about school behaviour and the implicit pressure on policy makers and educators to tackle the problem strong approaches, such as ZT, may be perceived to provide a 'quick fix' and to do so cheaply. This would consequently make them a popular choice for those keen to show their commitment to tackling behaviour. However, the focus on strict boundaries around behaviour, which characterises zero tolerance, risk being inflexible and promoting knee jerk reactions which isolate those who need the support most. This is particularly poignant as national data in Britain shows that those most at risk of exclusion tend to be from minority or socially disadvantaged groups (DCSF, 2009a).

Although the literature discussing ZT has tended to be largely United States based there is a growing recognition that ZT discourses are present within the United Kingdom context (Clough et al, 2005), not least because schools make use of at least some of those strategies associated with the philosophy. In considering the strategies common to popular behavioural approaches many have inherent within them the importance of clear expectations, limited tolerance for poor behaviour, choices and the use of rewards or incentives. The media also contribute to perceptions that society wants a zero tolerance approach with headlines often exclaiming the need for more discipline (e.g. Three quarters of parents think discipline in schools is plummeting – The Daily Mail, 29 October 2006);

whilst the recent *Schools White Paper* (DfE, 2011) is characterised by a firmer and less tolerant approach to difficult behaviour. That said, the picture does not appear to be that clear cut. For example exclusion figures recently published at a national and local level suggest a decrease in fixed term and permanent exclusions, albeit within relatively small margins in some cases. This has been widely reported by the media, for example BBC News reported 'Large drop in pupil expulsions from schools in England' (29 July 2010) from the year 2007/2008 to 2008/2009, whilst a DCSF Statistical First Release (DCSF, 2009a) illustrates a steady decrease from 2003/2004. However, this may be largely attributed to the use of 'managed moves' and internal exclusions, suggesting that the perceived need for schools to remove pupils remains.

Beyond behaviourism and ZT, approaches to behaviour are characterised by a range of discourses. For example, there has also been a rise in Britain in the promotion of social and particularly emotional development of children and young people. The coining of the term 'social, emotional and behavioural difficulties' has seen a broadening of approaches to include those which aim to develop the social and emotional skills of pupils in a bid to improve behaviour. The SEAL curriculum (Social and Emotional Aspects of Language) (DfES, 2005) has been a particular development in recent years and the activities it promotes are often used by schools. Likewise the recent Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS) has raised the profile of mental health and its contribution to behaviour difficulties in schools. A whole host of interventions aimed at improving skills have become available, such as circle time, circle of friends, peer buddying and social use of language programmes (e.g. Rinaldi, 2008; Smith, 2002). There is also greater awareness of how general teaching and learning strategies and good classroom practice can contribute to good behaviour, for example through differentiation, good classroom organisation and building effective relationships with clear communication (Galvin, 1999). The introduction of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice (CoP) (DfES, 2001) and along with it a graduated response and Individual Education Plans (IEPs) or Individual Behaviour Plans

(IBPs) have emphasised the need for a measured response to behaviour, which focuses on what those presenting with difficult behaviour *need*.

Many of these approaches towards managing behaviour are embodied by the Every Child Matters agenda (DfES, 2004), which provides a holistic approach to the development and well being of children and young people. However, whilst such approaches offer an alternative discourse to that of ZT, for example, there are concerns that they continue to locate the cause of difficult behaviour within the child. That is to say that such approaches and their associated discourses fail to recognise the environmental, political, economical, familial, organisational and historical influences which might better explain not just why a child behaves as they do but why their behaviour is labelled and responded to as it is; instead a within-child focus highlights only the personal attributes of the child, laying blame for certain behaviours squarely at their feet. Thomas (2005) raises particular concerns about the notion of 'need' which is embodied within these approaches, questioning just whose needs it is that are being met or not met.

The Need for an Alternative Discourse

On the one hand it would seem that schools are encouraged to meet individual needs and to be inclusive of all pupils yet on the other hand the message from the current coalition government is that discipline in schools needs to be tougher ('Tough talk on school discipline', BBC News, 10 July 2010). The resultant stance appears to be the medicalisation or pathologising of some pupil's behaviours (Parsons, 1999) and the demonising of others' behaviour (Clough et al, 2005), creating a dichotomy between pastoral and discipline systems (The Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003), neither of which fully remove causality from within the individual.

The manner in which pupils presenting with difficult behaviour can be pigeon holed in such ways is indicative of the way in which schools and society at large seek to construct

understandings of pupils' behaviour, implying the need to engage with social constructionist thinking. An example of this is the use of terms such as 'good' and 'bad' which are evident within a range of documents, including government documentation (e.g. HMSO, 1989, p.12-13). The positioning of these terms within the institution of a school and its rules constructs what we come to understand as 'good' and 'bad' and thus how we respond to and ultimately maintain *the* standards of behaviour (Foucault, 1977). This is highlighted further in the work by Swinson and Knight (2007) who in their exploration of teacher's use of praise and feedback identified that the frequency of positive or negative feedback was dependent on factors such as the type of work or behaviour, with greater positive feedback provided for instructional and work related behaviour; and the pupils to whom the feedback is directed, with greater negative feedback for pupils of lower ability and from Afro-Caribbean backgrounds. This raises concerns about how value judgements and expectations can contribute to constructions of what constitutes appropriate or inappropriate behaviour.

The engagement of social constructionism (e.g. Burr, 2003; Gergen, 2009) enables consideration of how our understanding of behaviour and approaches to its management are constructed within the political, historical, social and economical context within which it occurs. Thus it can allow for reflection on definitions and judgements of difficult behaviour as well as the development of approaches and thinking around difficult behaviour. Social constructionism encourages critical thinking around what is constructed as 'good' and 'bad' behaviour, terms which need consideration because of the way in which they position individuals (Corcoran, 2003). Social constructionism can also shed light on the contexts and agendas which might favour particular conceptualisations of difficult behaviour. In recognising the constructed nature of behaviour, social constructionism invites a range of discourses (Gergen, 2009) as well as encouraging reflection on how certain discourses dominate and in doing so allow for certain voices to be privileged over others. Morrison (2007) points out that 'When institutions are not open to hearing many voices, they will continually repress the same people again and again.

When these voices are repressed, alienation kicks in and the consequences become evident later on' (Morrison, op cit, p. 164). Engaging with social constructionism encourages the consideration of additional voices in the field, one of which is Restorative Justice (RJ).

RJ is an approach borne out of traditional cultures across the world and is focussed more on practice than theory, allowing for a degree of post-hoc theorising and the opportunity to consider more marginalised theories. RJ is concerned with repairing harm caused by wrongdoing, encouraging the 'offender' to accept responsibility and in doing so contributing to repairing the relationships which may have been affected (e.g. Zehr, 2002). Within the general philosophy of RJ, there are a number of practices or approaches which have been developed, predominantly the use of circles and conferences to address incidents of wrongdoing. These typically involve those directly involved and can involve the wider family and community.

The Challenge of Changing Discourses

Whilst the strengths of alternative discourses such as RJ can be outlined the challenge of introducing and promoting such discourses can be a considerable one. There has been activity around RJ in Britain in both the Criminal Justice System and increasingly within schools. For example, the use of restorative conferences, as well as the development of approaches such as peer mediation. Organisations such as 'Transforming Conflict' – a private company whose aim it is to promote and develop restorative practices – have raised the profile of RJ in schools, whilst government documents and initiatives, such as the *Crick Report* (QCA/DfEE, 1998) and the *Safer Schools Partnerships* (DCSF, 2009d) promote the use of more restorative approaches. However, whilst evaluations of RJ in schools (e.g. Youth Justice Board, 2004) have shown that RJ approaches can benefit schools, they have also highlighted the challenges to fully adopting an RJ ethos. In particular there have been difficulties noted around the time consuming nature of RJ

conferences, the need to provide adequate training and the need for leadership involvement. The consequences of this are that RJ can be introduced and implemented in a piecemeal fashion as individual practices rather than as a whole school philosophy or ethos, something which is evident through my own practice and which is considered problematic by Hopkins (2004).

These challenges were experienced first hand by the author in supporting a secondary school in establishing a peer mediation service. A number of sessions were provided for pupils from a range of year groups, who were trained in the basic skills of peer mediation. Various staff members were involved in the training and it was coordinated by one member of staff who was very enthusiastic about the approach. Naturally there were a number of logistical discussions and decisions required with regard to how the peer mediation service would actually run, be staffed and be supervised and it was anticipated that there may be some difficulties in getting it started. However, the author and her colleague were surprised to learn that the school had eventually decided not to establish a peer mediation service at all; the reasons for which were never fully revealed or explored.

One of the reasons why RJ is not more successfully embedded into schools to date could be that it is perceived to present a vastly different and contradictory approach to those more traditionally used in schools. This is taken up by McCluskey et al (2011) in their consideration of the embeddedness of more punitive approaches. Despite the fact that RJ can be used as a complementary approach – Wachtel and McCold (2001) highlighting the role of both care and control within RJ - Zehr (2002) warns that there are many misconceptions about RJ; not least that RJ is an alternative to punishment.

Misconceptions which see RJ as an alternative and therefore incompatible approach to punishment will undoubtedly feel uncomfortable for schools who have become reliant on exclusion for example. Indeed, Cameron and Thorsborne (2001) refer to the existence of a 'control paradigm' in schools which contributes to a 'behaviour industry' and sees approaches such as exclusion used as a tool for organisational efficiency. This again points

towards the discourse of Zero Tolerance and punishment as being most centrally embedded within schools.

What would seem to be required therefore is a change within the culture of and/or discourses available within schools in order to embed a RJ approach, particularly given the general consensus that RJ works best where it is taken up as a whole school philosophy (Hopkins, 2004). However, the difficulty of changing culture and/or the discourses available is widely recognised and as such a number of authors have suggested models for approaching cultural change in schools in order to introduce and sustain RJ (e.g. Blood and Thorsborne, 2005; 2006; Hopkins, 2004; Morrison, 2007). A key theme in many of these models is 'winning hearts and minds' and as such the first stage is often related to establishing existing views and the readiness of a school for change and/or establishing the level of resistance. Variations of the tasks suggested as useful for doing this include debunking myths, challenging current practices, collecting evidence to provide a rationale for change and providing staff the opportunity to voice their concerns.

Approaching culture change and opening the possibilities for alternative discourses in a planned and staged manner is probably of even greater relevance when considering change in a secondary school due to the large size and complexity of a secondary school as an organisation, as well as the greater prevalence of concerns around behaviour. Within the Educational Psychology Service where the author works there has been much discussion around difficulties in engaging secondary schools due generally to the large number of staff and the challenges regarding communicating to such a wide and varied audience. Additionally, influencing decisions around exclusion, which are often taken at senior management level has been difficult due to the limited access EPs in the service have had to senior management figures within the secondary schools.

It is considered that one way of establishing a school's readiness for alternatives discourses such as RJ and therefore of informing the change process might be to better understand

what discourses in school dominate and whose voices may be differentially silenced or promoted as a result of this. By understanding what staff are saying about behaviour and its management it may be possible to understand resistance and barriers to approaches such as RJ (McCluskey et al, 2011). This in turn may aid those early stages of 'reculturing' schools.

Researching Discourses

It is with this in mind that this thesis sets out to explore such discourses within a particular secondary school, adopting a case study approach (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). A number of focus groups have been conducted with a range of staff from one secondary school in West Yorkshire and the audio recordings of these transcribed. A critical discourse analysis has then been conducted of these transcripts and the school's behaviour policy, which have provided the basis for the discussion of three research questions. These are as follows:

- What are the dominant discourses on behaviour amongst school staff within a secondary school?
- How are certain voices privileged over others?
- What are the implications for the construction of alternative discourses and in particular one of relationships and RJ?

In considering these questions this thesis intends to adopt a social constructionist approach to exploring the discourses which are dominant in the literature and government policy at large and to consider the implications of this for pupils; how these discourses compare to those present within the data in this thesis; and what this means for issues of

power and voice and the possibilities and barriers to alternative discourses and particularly RJ.

When referring to behaviour within this thesis I will use the term 'difficult behaviour' to imply a focus on behaviour which is judged to be difficult to manage by those adults working with children and young people. This may be behaviour within the classroom which is considered inappropriate, such as talking, refusal to follow instructions, displaying off-task behaviour and answering back to staff, as well as that behaviour taking place in the corridors and other areas of school which might include fighting and swearing. My reason for focussing on this definition of behaviour is because it is these types of behaviour which appear most commonly (although not necessarily as explicitly as this) within reviews and discussion of behaviour; and about which the adults appear most concerned (e.g. DfES, 2005; DCSF, 2009c).

Chapter 2 will present a critical literature review comprising three parts. Firstly social constructionism will be discussed in some detail in order to lay down the epistemological basis of this research. The second part of the literature review will explore the current position within the literature on difficult behaviour. Namely the theoretical bases informing its management, including the dominance of behaviourist approaches; the rise of a discourse of zero tolerance; the more recent influences of cognitive psychology and the concept of need; the perceived increase in difficult behaviour in schools and the relevance of social constructionism to this discussion. The final part of the literature review will consider Restorative Justice (RJ), providing an overview of RJ as an approach; its relationship to social constructionism; and its use and effectiveness within schools in Britain to date; and the challenges inherent to developing it in schools.

In Chapter 3, the methodology for the research will be presented. The benefits and considerations of using a case study will be considered and in particular how traditional critique of research is not always appropriate or relevant for qualitative research (e.g.

Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall, 1994). The use of focus groups will be outlined and debated and issues of sampling and composition discussed. Finally the methods for analysing the data – that is the transcribed audio recordings of the focus groups and the school's behaviour policy – will be considered. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and particularly those frameworks illustrated by Fairclough (2001) and van Dijk (2001) is the selected method for analysis and as such is discussed.

In Chapter 4, I present the analysis of the data and a simultaneous discussion of this. Unlike the separate presentation of results and discussion within traditional quantitative methodologies, the analysis and discussion are presented together within this chapter with a particular focus on relating the analysis to the three research questions. Within this discussion the implications of the analysis are considered, particularly for those pupils who are the subject of behaviour approaches in schools. There is a particular focus on issues of within-child causality, individual responsibility and pupil-staff/staff-staff power relations; as well as consideration of how these discourses relate to wider and national discourses within both the literature and government policy. To draw this chapter to a conclusion Fairclough's (2001) framework is adopted to consider how the 'social problem' is needed and thus conclusions are made as to the barriers that this presents to introducing alternative discourses such as RJ as well as a summary of the reasons for optimism.

In the final chapter this thesis is drawn to a conclusion with a review of the discussions which have preceded, the key observations of the research and consideration as to the implications for future practice, both with regard to research in this area and also with regard to the practice of Educational Psychologists.

Chapter 2 - Critical Literature Review

This literature review comprises the three main areas of discussion which have influenced this thesis and my position within it. Firstly I shall discuss social constructionism as a means of establishing the psychological framework I am working within. Secondly, in light of this social constructionist viewpoint I shall explore the literature on behaviour and consider the discourses which are being employed. Thirdly, I shall consider the approach of Restorative Justice and the merits and difficulties of implementing such an approach.

PART A - Social Constructionism – A Psychological Framework

Social Constructionism – A Psychological Framework

I approach this thesis and the ideas within it from a largely social constructionist point of view, particularly with regard to my focus on discourse and the selection of my methodology. As such I have taken some time below to outline this perspective and to discuss the merits and challenges which it poses. It is important however to highlight that it is beyond the scope of this overview to present a complete and exhaustive review of the area (see Burr, 2003; Gergen, 2009) and that the author's personal engagement with the work is likely to have influenced what is included and what is not included on this subject.

Social constructionism might be considered something of an umbrella term for a range of perspectives and standpoints on issues of self, agency, ontology and epistemology amongst other things. Broadly speaking, social constructionism provides a critique of traditional psychological thinking and taken for granted 'truths' or 'realities' about the world generally. It suggests that our knowledge and understanding of the world and how we come to have this knowledge is not an irrefutable fact but rather something that is created within social, political, economic and historical contexts. That is to say it is generated through social practice and primarily through language and discourse. Gergen illustrates this point in his statement that '...what we take to be the world importantly

depends on how we approach it, and how we approach it depends on the social relationships of which we are part.' (Gergen, 2009, p. 2) There are a number of early writers who have influenced the development of the area with regard to issues of language, knowledge and power. For example Vygotsky (1934) considered the way in which language is social in nature, proposing that language constitutes an artefact or tool that mediates interactions and that language influences thinking and feeling but is also itself the product of mediated activity (Daniels, 2005). Wittgenstein (1953/2009) considered a range of issues pertinent to social constructionism in his *Philosophical Investigations*, including the inadequacies of relying on language as an exact representation of our mind, stating that 'the more closely we examine actual language, the greater becomes the conflict between it and our requirement' (ibid, No. 107). He also considered the issue of knowledge and concept formation, suggesting that for any given concept which is regarded correct, there are often other concepts available which are different from the 'usual'. Mead (1934) places language as a social practice which is central for the development of self and mind, arguing that mind arises during social processes and that self 'arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process.' (p.135).

Gergen (2009) presents five assumptions about social constructionism. Firstly, that the way in which we understand the world is not required by 'what there is'; secondly, that the ways in which we describe and explain the world are outcomes of relationships; thirdly, constructions gain their significance from their social utility; fourthly that as we describe and explain things we fashion our future and finally that reflection on taken for granted worlds is vital. Similarly, Burr (2003) attempts to illustrate the strands which are common through various social constructionist viewpoints. She highlights four such strands, including social constructionism as a critical stance; as acknowledging historical and cultural specificity; as recognising that knowledge is sustained by social practices; and as recognising that knowledge and social action are bound together. Burr also states how

social constructionism differs from traditional psychology in that it is anti-essentialist, questions realism, presumes that language is a pre-requisite to thought, views language as social action, focuses on interaction and social practices and has a focus on process.

A particular focus within social constructionism is on language and discourse. There is a move away from understanding language merely as a representation of, or tool with which to communicate our inner thoughts and feelings and a move towards understanding discourse as a socially constructed phenomenon. That is to say that language itself is arbitrary, a constructed entity and it is through language that we construct the world and give it meaning. Potter and Wetherell (1987) define discourse as including all forms of spoken language and all written texts stating that 'language is so central to all social activities...' (ibid, p. 9) and that a large part of human activity is performed *through* language; whilst Burr (2003) defines discourse as anything which meaning can be attached to. Given the importance of language and discourse, analysis of language is at the heart of social constructionist research methods.

Social constructionism engages post modernist and post structuralist debates and has arisen as part of a critical stance against traditional psychology and particularly social psychology, with its tendency to take social processes out of context and study them in isolation in the laboratory (Burr, 2003). Of particular concern has been the manner in which scientific 'truths' generated in this way come to take on an unquestionable reality, which is inaccessible to anyone but the 'experts' and which can take on a number of implicit values which favour certain people and things over others (Gergen, 2009). As such, issues of power are a feature of writings engaged by social constructionism (e.g. Foucault, 1977). This is one area where approaches to social constructionism can diverge, alluding to the existence of a range of positions within social constructionism.

Different Positions Within Social Constructionism

Burr (2003) offers an overview of the range of positions including critical psychology (e.g. Fox and Prilleltensky, 1997), critical social psychology, discursive psychology (e.g. Edwards and Potter, 1992), deconstructionism and Foucauldian discourse analysis and constructivisms. Particular focus in the literature at large is given to discursive psychology as well as the work of Foucault, which Burr (2003) describes as micro constructionism and macro constructionism respectively. The former has focussed more specifically on the details of how language is used as a performative function and has presented an explicit challenge to cognitive psychology; its separation from social psychology; and its presumption that every day discourse can be mapped directly onto underlying cognitive representations. 'The focus of discursive psychology is on the action orientation of talk and writing...the primary issue is the social actions, or interactional work, being done in the discourse' (Edwards and Potter, 1992, p.2). Edwards and Potter (ibid) introduce a model of discursive action which emphasises the way in which individuals 'conduct important psychological business' (ibid, p. 3) through their discourse, often presenting information as a report and as factual to infer its accountability; and in doing so how they also use rhetorical devices to undermine the viability of an alternative. They state that the identification of how individuals do this is a key task for discursive psychology. However, there have been many developments in discursive psychology since its beginnings and more recently Potter (2010) charts this development, describing discursive psychology as a complex area of study with three main strands. These include a focus on the use of Interpretative Repertoires or devices employed in social action; a focus on the psychological (e.g. memory, attribution), descriptions of psychological activity and issues of accountability related to these; and a more recent focus on epistemics as a specific topic. A key feature of discursive psychology is its focus on methodology, a position made clear both in its infancy (Edwards and Potter, 1992) and more recently (Potter, 2010). Details relating to methodology will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Foucault (e.g. 1977) in contrast focuses on wider issues of ideology and power and his understanding of discourses of knowledge as being central to power relations. Nightingale and Cromby (1999) refer to this as the 'dark' version of social constructionism in contrast to discursive psychology's 'light' version. Gergen (2009) provides an illustration of this with regard to the mental health professions. He describes how the expansion of mental health discourse and of the professions generally can be viewed as a continuous cycle which supports itself. The dominance of a discourse of knowledge around mental health promotes greater occurrence of mental health difficulties in individuals and this greater occurrence in turn promotes and reinforces the discourse of knowledge and the expert profession which is required to manage this (Gergen, 2009). Likewise, in his book *Discipline and Punishment*, Foucault (1977) discusses generally how issues of punishment and justice have been bound up in economical and historical changes. In discussing schools, Foucault describes how the use of discipline and reward have come to signify the 'good' and the 'bad' and in doing so have normalised certain behaviours over others. Similarly he describes how examinations have contributed to our knowledge and understanding of what constitutes knowledge and how the discourse of power and 'discipline' have shaped our reality of what we mean by the individual. The term deconstruction is often used in relation to Foucauldian approaches to social constructionism as a way to describe the need to deconstruct discourses in order to explore issues of power and understand those discourses which are dominant and those whose voices are unheard (e.g. Burman, 2008).

Within the range of positions taken in relation to social constructionism there are a number of issues which are widely debated, including the issue of relativism and realism and its relationship to ontology and epistemology.

Realism versus Relativism (and Ontology versus Epistemology)

Issues of realism and relativism are of central importance to any debate on social constructionism, given that the basic premise of social constructionism is to challenge our understanding of what is 'real'. Given the role of discourse in constructing such realities, the view is often espoused that there is nothing beyond discourse or 'there is nothing beyond the text' (Derrida, 1976, p. 158, cited in Burr, 2003, p. 82). As such there are no objective truths and the constructed truths which we may have previously treated as reality can actually only be compared against each other and not against an absolute truth or standard. This is a position often referred to as relativism and a position which has sparked debate amongst social constructionists regarding where one might draw the metaphorical line between what can be considered constructed and what can be considered real.

In contrast, those within social constructionism who have sympathy with a more realist perspective are often referred to as 'critical realists'. Burr (2003) summarises a number of such perspectives, including those of Hruby (2001, p.95) and Liebrucks (2001, p.95), both of whom are reported to maintain that there is something of a consistent reality which we are all perceiving or referencing if only from a different perspective or with different outcomes. Liebrucks (according to Burr 2003), makes a distinction between the material world (as real) and the psychological world (as constructed). Willig (1999) positions herself as a critical realist arguing that social constructionism need not engage relativism.

In what has become an influential paper in the field, Edwards, Ashmore and Potter (1995) discuss the use of 'death' and 'furniture' as arguments to challenge the viability of a 'pure' relativist position. They challenge the view of some that there is a bottom line of reality and that some things cannot and should not be denied, because this either flies in the face of what is clearly real (furniture) or undermines the moral fabric of our society (death). In addressing the former, Edwards et al (ibid) describe how the realist might bang the table in

front of them to indicate its reality. They do this without the use of words, which would then enter them into the arena of representations and discourse. In addressing such realist challenges, Edwards et al (1995) make a powerful argument for 'all truths as claims' (ibid, p. 39). They sweep away the furniture argument by describing how the very act of banging the table is a rhetorical device and that by engaging this device the realists have already entered the world of representations because the table bang *is* an argument. Perhaps most notably they surmise that the furniture argument is a shield for the more vulnerable aspects of reality that relativism may have something to say about and that by focussing on the material, which they describe as a 'soft case', realists are setting aside and possibly even conceding more contentious issues. In addressing the issue of death, Edwards et al (ibid) take a position that relativism offers greater benefits to realism on issues of morality as it embraces variability and promotes discussion. Gergen (2009) supports this in his discussion of morality, where he asserts that social constructionism avoids making value judgements or holding particular values as superior. He states that all values obliterate their alternatives and so by failing to promote a single value, all alternatives are made available.

Both Gergen (2009) and Edwards et al (1995) concede that reality can have a practical purpose, that is to say that we do not need to say that nothing is real and as Gergen (2009) points out we may all lose the will to act if absolutely everything is reduced to social constructionism. One example of this is the self referent system that is language, so that once you begin to unravel a word and use other words to do so not only can it be impossible to get beyond the language to any sense of a reality (Burr, 2003) but as even Edwards et al (1995) concede the meaning can begin to disappear altogether, leaving a sense, if only an intuitive one, that indeed there must be something beyond the text. Otherwise, as Pujol and Montenegro (1999), drawing on Wittgenstein (1953/2009), succinctly put it 'the limits of our language become the limits of our world' (p. 84). Instead it might be considered therefore that reality can provide the practical and common place ground for everyday living.

Further more, despite such challenges to the realist position, Edwards et al (1995) have been described by Burr (2003) as 'bracketing off' reality to some extent, a fact that Edwards and Potter (1992) themselves concede in their book, stating that they intend to bracket off reductionism and origins in favour of method and analysis (p.19). The extent to which authors engage in this discussion of the origins and existence of phenomenon reflects a further lens through which the discussion on realism and relativism can be viewed. This is highlighted by both Burr (2003) and Corcoran (2009) who argues for an ontological and epistemological constructionism. Whilst making slightly different distinctions, Pujol and Montenegro (1999) support this distinction between ontology and epistemology, suggesting that critical realism can be described as realist ontology and relativist epistemology, whilst social constructionism can be described as relativist ontology and epistemology.

Corcoran (2009) and Potter (2010), in his response to Corcoran, debate some of these issues of ontology and epistemology. Corcoran (2009) argues for a greater consideration of ontological issues by discursive psychologists in particular, stating that: 'To confirm, as many DPEC [Discursive Psychology Epistemological Constructionism] researchers do, that there is more to human being than discourse alone, only to then disallow ontological commitment in the psychological study of human beings, is circumscribed to say the least.' (p. 381) In much the same way as the critique of the relativist position has focussed on their failure to take moral responsibility in accepting certain realities, so too does Corcoran remind epistemological constructionists of their responsibility as psychologists to acknowledge our belonging and existence as humans in language. In considering an ontological understanding of discursive psychology, Corcoran (ibid) engages a number of positions. Drawing upon Shotter (1993), Corcoran discusses how ontology and epistemology are inherently linked, suggesting that 'knowing' is situated within 'being', that we know by being part of something, and that as such it is necessary to accommodate ontology into any discussion of knowledge. He also warns that to fail in this task may leave

social constructionism as meaningless to people because it is in how we talk about ourselves and our mental states that we commit to an understanding of ourselves.

In his response, Potter (2010) acknowledges the epistemological focus of discursive psychology and highlights that its very definition is to stand itself as opposed to the ontology of the inner world and of objects. He argues that this position allows greater simplicity and a more coherent analytic practice as it avoids the complexities of ontology. He defends the ethics of this position arguing that discursive psychology has engaged with a range of political and ethical matters and that ultimately discursive psychology is a technical and analytical enterprise which is not designed to build connections with participants or to endorse a participant's position. However, Potter (ibid) does acknowledge Corcoran's attempts to explore the 'thirdness' within interactions but argues that further work is needed to develop this position.

The battle between realism/relativism and ontology/epistemology seems something of a 'stalemate' according to Burr (2003) and an unhelpful one at that. Suggestions have been made that these various positions should be viewed as alternative positions rather than opposing ones (e.g. Corcoran, 2009). One of the strengths of relativism is purported to be its acceptance of multiple discourses, allowing it to perform an important ethical and moral function in challenging issues of power and oppression. With this in mind it would seem intuitive to consider that the varying discourses on what is real and what is not real are just that, different discourses which may have their own merits in different situations. Burr (2003) uses the ontology/epistemology distinction to provide a bridge between realism and relativism, surmising that epistemological considerations point to the fact that once we begin to talk about something we represent and thus construct it.

When used ontologically, the term social constructionism refers to the way that real phenomenon, our perceptions and experiences, are brought into existence and take the particular form that they do because of the language that we share.

This does not make these phenomenon or things unreal, fictitious or illusory; they are no less real for being the products of social construction. (Burr, 2003, p.92)

The Benefits and Pitfalls of Social Constructionism

The merits of social constructionism appear to lie predominantly in its critical stance of traditional psychology and its unwillingness to blindly accept the taken for granted truths which have emerged from the discipline; as well as its challenge to the individualistic, reductionist and within person approach that traditional psychology has adopted for much of the last century. Gergen (2009) lists the problems with such individualism, including the potential for isolation, narcissism and the positioning of relationships as artificial entities which need to be 'built', 'made' and 'repaired', rather than processes which are inextricably entwined with what it is to be a person. Individualism, Gergen (ibid) argues, promotes competition and war, exploitation of nature, power and control through organisations and the attribution of an individual's faulty functioning to their behaviour, providing little possibility for change (Burr, 2003).

In contrast social constructionism accepts the roles of society and interaction in our understanding of being and promotes the idea that the individual is constructed and reconstructed through the process of social interaction, rather than being a fixed end product on emergence into the world (Burr, 2003). This understanding, rather than pathologising and condemning individuals to a lifetime of being which is socially unacceptable, opens up far more optimistic and liberating possibilities for being. Gergen (2009) states that 'the scholar's task is not to "get it right" about the nature of the world, but to generate understandings that may open new paths to action' (p. 81). This idea is particularly pertinent for therapy, where the likes of narrative therapy can allow individuals to explore the different discourses available to develop an understanding of themselves in the context of their social environment, which may be less stigmatising and which may provide greater scope for change (Gergen, 2009).

McNamee and Gergen (1999) develop these ideas further in their book 'Relational Responsibility'. Drawing on Wittgenstein (1953/2009), they argue that a shift is needed away from attributing responsibility and causation to a single individual and towards relational responsibility.

We inherit from the past a strong tendency to locate the source of such failings within individual minds, acting either individually or collectively. Yet we find that we are without the conceptual resources to justify such a tradition but that the presumption of individual responsibility also lends support to a variety of destructive practices...much of this criticism is derived from a keen appreciation of the significance of relationships – intimacies, friendship, groups, communities, institutions, and cultures. As it is variously reasoned, it is out of relationships that we develop meaning, rationalities, the sense of value, moral interest, motivation and so on. (McNamee and Gergen, 1999, p. 10)

However, they recognise the futility in overturning an entire culture of discourse of which individualism is at the centre, and indeed the inappropriateness of doing so, and instead pragmatically consider how we can complement and add to existing discourses. 'Within the recesses of our tradition are indeed multiple modes of realizing relationship as a unit or process.' (ibid, p. 11) It is this continuing acknowledgement of the individual alongside the development of the relational which gives strength to McNamee and Gergen's ideas, Gergen (1999) pointing to the dangers that fully relinquishing personal responsibility would mean, namely the loss of the widely held reframings for considering human behaviour; and deconstructing the relational until meaning becomes lost and humans are left without any sense of self or agency.

This particular critique of social constructionism is prevalent within the literature (Burr, 2003). That is, that social constructionism leaves us without any sense of self or indeed any control in our lives, because 'social constructionism, then, replaces the self contained,

pre-social and unitary individual with a fragmented and changing, socially produced phenomenon who comes into existence and is maintained not inside the skull but in social life.' (Burr, 2003, p. 104) Whilst the variability in 'being' - which social constructionism allows for - is a welcome alternative to the fixed, individualistic person, it is the idea that we only exist in social life and that there is no sense of a personal and private 'us' with which many scholars have a problem. As Burr (2003) states, social constructionism runs the risk of denying us psychological properties and claiming that we are only present in discourse. This does not fit with the experience of most people and with the idea that 'we are all in the process of claiming and resisting the identities on offer within the various prevailing discourses.' (ibid, p. 110) Burr (ibid) argues that far from being passive agents in the process we actively construct our identity from those discourses available, albeit limited discourses which are made available from the prevailing culture and society. Burr (ibid) continues by reminding us that individuals 'position' themselves in social interaction and seek to position others. Finding a way to incorporate the self and agency into social constructionism is important if change is to be possible and alternative discourses are to be made available to individuals (Gergen, 2009).

This is particularly important as one of the strengths of social constructionism is its potential to challenge oppression and inequity. In a world where some discourses are more dominant and where some individuals and societies may be constructed as inferior, we actively construct good and bad, reward and punishment and rationalise the institutions which uphold these principles (Foucault, 1977; McNamee and Gergen, 1999). An approach which asks questions of these assumptions and challenges these institutions and understandings is surely one with considerable merit. This is one of the arguments used for rationalising the need for a social constructionist discourse. For example Pujol and Montenegro (1999) state that social constructionism, and particularly the debate surrounding realism and relativism, is a meaningful debate because whether 'real' factors are identified either legitimises existing structures of power or gives ground for radical action. Likewise, Edwards et al (1995) respond to the question of whether we actually

need to deconstruct with a resounding affirmation that we do because social forces are so powerful and must not go unchecked.

The degree to which issues of self, agency and power are acknowledged or incorporated into social constructionist thinking and the extent to which these can be critiqued is of course dependent on the 'brand' of social constructionism being employed. For example, the approaches and philosophy of Foucault (1977) lends itself more to political and economic critique of psychology and society and perhaps less so to the incorporation of personal agency. It is this disparity in position between scholars which is both social constructionism's greatest strength and paradoxically its greatest weakness. Its variety allows for a range of discourses, promotes discussion and allows for a whole new way of doing psychology. However, this disparity also runs the risk of polarising discourses and providing 'stalemates' between relativism and realism, mind and body, self and other. In doing so social constructionism can present as a competition as to who or what will replace traditional psychology and so scholars must ensure that they are not holding one form of social constructionism as superior to another, which would surely flout the very fundamentals of social constructionism. Likewise, if we turn social constructionism back on itself we realise that if social constructionism is itself socially constructed then reaching a complete understanding between authors is a fruitless exercise.

What is more, the continuing challenge for social constructionism is to find a way to function as more than a critic and to go beyond deconstructing to reconstructing (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999). As both Corcoran (2009) and Gergen (2009) acknowledge whilst many of the individual states, descriptions and explanations we employ may well be socially constructed they are the constructions we make, they are the way in which people create meaning for themselves and as such they perhaps deserve greater attention. The task is surely not to deconstruct the self out of existence but to reconstruct it in a less individualistic, less fixed and less realist manner. As Burr (2003) concludes 'A social constructionism that fails to address individual differences in and subjective experiences of

such things as desires, choices, embodiment, sense of self and personal change is, for me, inadequate as a psychology.' (p.199)

Final Thoughts - Taking a Position on Social Constructionism

I cannot help but be drawn to the statement made by Edwards et al (1995) that the only guarantee is that *everything* is socially constructed because otherwise how can we decide where to draw the line between reality and constructed reality? However I do have concerns about the applicability and practicality of a true relativist perspective. To fully let go of reality and to challenge all taken for granted truths feels like a rather exhausting, endless task, which has me constantly questioning, analysing and deconstructing every situation and every sentence that someone speaks.

For me a pragmatic approach is preferable. That is to accept that there are some realities (constructed or otherwise) which do not need to be challenged and do not need to be deconstructed; and there are some taken for granted truths about the world that can be taken for granted. As Corcoran (2009) argues there are some realities that are 'real' to people and perhaps, as psychologists, that needs to be our starting point. Whilst Gergen (2009) states that we need shared reality and meaning and that relationships require a shared ontology.

There are many aspects of our own experience and histories (as both children and adults) that in their experiential living could be neither captured nor expressed as we might have wished: for example, the birth of our children, in our intimacies with others, and being present at the death of a parent after a long and painful illness. Our inability to express these extra-discursive aspects of these experiences is not a failure of our expressive abilities, it is a failure of language. Our lives are more than we can say. (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999, p. 221-222)

It is Gergen's (2009) consistent message through his book which perhaps provides the strongest influence for me. That is to say that social constructionism is not to say nothing is real but it is to say that we have a responsibility for considering the promises and pitfalls of our traditions. McNamee and Gergen (1999) discuss a similar notion in their suggestion that we should think of the potential uses of a theory and how it is interpolated into culture and with what effect. This idea of responsibility as developed by McNamee and Gergen (ibid) is a key feature of restorative justice and therefore a direct link as to how social constructionism has informed my interest in restorative justice. Likewise, issues of responsibility relate to how we define good and bad and how we serve out punishment and reward, a key theme in the literature on behaviour generally. These issues will be discussed in the following sections.

PART B – Behaviour in Schools, its Management and Social Construction

Good order is essential in a school if children are to be able to fulfil their learning potential. (House of Commons Education Committee, 2011, p. 5)

We know that no issue is more important when it comes to attracting good people into teaching than tackling poor pupil behaviour. (Department for Education, 2010, p. 32)

Behaviour in schools is a much discussed and hotly debated topic for governments, schools, parents and the public at large (e.g. Hallam, 2009). It has been given high visibility and status and increasing standards in behaviour have preoccupied both the current and previous governments.

In particular, concerns over the perceived rise in difficult behaviour has been a topic for discussion which has led to much debate around 'perceptions versus reality', Visser (2005)

stating that there tends to be a 'crescendo' in concern about behaviour culminating every 7-10 years in 'searches' for the 'answer'. What constitutes such an 'answer' has been influenced by a number of sources, from both within and outside scientific and professional disciplines, such as psychology; but also by government agendas and public perception. Influences include the dominance of behaviourism, the growing popularity of cognitive psychology and skills training, a focus on curriculum, standards and zero tolerance towards difficult behaviour and an increasing preoccupation with supporting 'needs'.

Whilst the emergence of these varying discourses around difficult behaviour can be viewed as a historical journey (Cole, 2005) it would also appear to be the case that they have developed in a cumulative fashion (Visser, 2005) meaning that all such discourses remain present in our dialogue and interactions about behaviour today. This section looks at a selection of such discourses and their associated issues. For ease of presentation the discourses discussed are presented as three 'groups' of associated discourses: 'Behaviourism and Zero Tolerance'; 'The 'Whole' Child'; and 'The Rise of Difficult Behaviour in Schools?' This represents the usual dichotomy of discipline versus therapeutic or pastoral approaches (i.e. behaviourism versus the 'whole' child) and the more recent move to engage social constructionism. However, this presentation is not to suggest that such clear boundaries exist or that different discourses are mutually exclusive. If the author's research has confirmed anything it is that discourses on behaviour are difficult to separate and are best represented as a complex web, reflecting the diversity of influences noted by Miller and Todd (2002) and O'Brien and Miller (2005).

Behaviourism and Zero Tolerance

The Continuing Dominance of Behaviourism

The model of behaviour management which has predominated and which continues to be influential today is behaviourism and the notion of behaviour modification. Bull and Solity (1987) outline the key principles of a behavioural approach to behaviour in schools as: behaviour is learned; a focus on the observable; learning means changing behaviour; there is no teaching without learning; our behaviour is governed by the setting in which it occurs; and our behaviour is also governed by what follows our actions.

One behaviourist framework which has been utilised is the ABC (Antecedent-Behaviour-Consequence) model of behaviour management (Bull and Solity, 1987; Cameron, 1998). The basic premises are that pupils learn through direct experience; through modelling others; and through how those around them set the events, provide cues and implement consequences. So teachers have the possibility to intervene at either the Antecedent or Consequence stage. For example, teachers can adapt the environment of the classroom, promote effective leadership, develop positive relationships and provide effective teaching (Antecedents). Teachers can also respond to behaviour once it has occurred by using consequences to reinforce certain behaviours over others, either through positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, punishment or extinction (Consequences). This is regularly referred to as rewards and sanctions and the expectation is that through repeated exposure new behaviours can be learned.

Another model which is frequently used according to Cameron (1998) is the assertive discipline model (Cangelosi, 1987; Canter and Canter, 1992), which emphasises issues of consistency, clarity in expectations and boundaries and a focus on positive reinforcement. The influence of behavioural approaches such as assertive discipline and ABC models is clear in behaviour management texts, government documentation and general advice on

behaviour management (e.g. Cowley, 2003; DfE, 2010). In her book 'Getting the Buggers to Behave, 2', Cowley (2003) outlines the basics of behaviour management as being definite, aware, calm and consistent, providing structure and being positive and she reports that conversations with pupils revealed that they preferred a teacher who was 'firm but fun'. Galvin (1999) in his book on strategies for teachers highlights five key areas of: communication (what are the expectations?), motivation (how are expectations reinforced?), correction (how is misbehaviour responded to?), organisation (how well is the classroom organised in order to get the expected behaviour?) and experimentation.

Similarly in government documentation these influences are evident. Sir Alan Steer summarised what works for school in the 2005 review, commenting that:

Consistent experience of good teaching promotes good behaviour. But schools also need to have positive strategies for managing pupil behaviour that helps pupils understand their school's expectations, underpinned by a clear range of rewards and sanctions, which are applied fairly and consistently by all staff. It is also vital to teach pupils how to behave – good behaviour has to be learned – so schools must adopt procedures and practices that help pupils learn how to behave. Good behaviour has to be modelled by all staff all of the time in their interaction with pupils. (DfES, 2005, p.10)

The proliferation of behaviourist strategies is based on a belief that there is a sound evidence base for behavioural techniques. Although it is beyond the remit of this thesis to consider the evidence base for behavioural approaches or indeed any of the approaches to behaviours discussed, it is fair to conclude that such approaches are naturally not without their pitfalls. Bull and Solity (1987) acknowledge that, 'It is unlikely that any model can be used to explain satisfactorily every aspect of human behaviour and in adopting the behavioural model we must accept that there are limitations to its application.' (ibid, p. 12)

Cameron (1998) picks up this issue and highlights the problem that the traditional behavioural model can have in acknowledging the complexity of the emotional and behavioural difficulties of pupils. She argues that modern behaviourism needs to avoid the overtly adult directed approach to behaviour and to embrace the importance of relationships, embedding learning within interactions, in much the same way as Vygotsky (1987) suggested.

That behaviourism can fragment behaviour and focus too heavily on controlling students and on changing the individual is all too clear in my experience as an Educational Psychologist, where the use of rewards and sanctions and particularly the latter often form the totality of approaches to difficult behaviour. This focus on behaviour modification rather than environment modification lends itself to a more 'within-child' approach to behaviour, an approach which can blame and stigmatise the child and place the onus of responsibility for change on the child rather than on the adults who are probably best placed to invoke change, therefore falling foul of Gergen's (2009) criticisms of individual responsibility. Therefore, the simplistic appeal of behaviourism it seems can be both its strength but also its weakness, as whilst it would seem there is room for greater complexity and a fuller understanding of context within the ABC model, its interpretation and application does not necessarily support this.

The Rise of Zero Tolerance?

The American Psychological Association established a task force to review what they refer to as a discourse of zero tolerance (APA, 2008). The APA (ibid) define zero tolerance as 'a philosophy or policy that mandates the application of predetermined consequences, most often severe and punitive in nature, that are intended to be applied regardless of the gravity of behaviour, mitigating circumstances, or situational context' (p. 852) and that it is based on the presumption that the removal of students from the classroom will deter others. MacGillivray, Medal and Drakey (2008) make reference to clear consequences and

explicit behavioural expectations as characteristic of zero tolerance approaches, whilst Morrison (2007) makes reference in particular to exclusion as a feature of zero tolerance. Exclusion generally appears to characterise zero tolerance, reflecting a 'three strikes and you are out' mentality (Galvin, 1999). Generally speaking, definitions of zero tolerance draw heavily on behavioural and social learning principles of reinforcement and modelling such as those models discussed above and is consistent with the wide use of school behaviour management policies which utilise hierarchies of rewards and sanctions with the ultimate sanction of exclusion. Zero tolerance also draws on a 'whole school' discourse of behaviour and its management, requiring a consistent and agreed standard for behaviour and consistent application of pre agreed responses to the behaviour, an issue discussed by Lewis and Newcomer (2005).

The APA (2008) claim that since the 1990s the United States (US) national discourse on school discipline has been dominated by this philosophy of zero tolerance. In the US in particular there is a growing body of literature which makes reference to and discusses the issues around zero tolerance. Zero tolerance is increasingly becoming an accepted and explicit characteristic of American schooling today; it is laid down formally in school policies; and is supported and sanctioned from the highest levels of government (Schoonover, 2008). This thesis is however, concerned primarily with schools in Britain and whilst the terminology of zero tolerance is less evident in the British literature it is nevertheless present both explicitly and implicitly.

Parsons (1999) has previously noted that the value orientations of Britain are dominated by an authoritative and punitive orientation which resonates well with notions of self reliance and individual responsibility. Clough et al (2005) argue that Britain is experiencing an era characterised by zero tolerance, whilst Lloyd Bennett (2005) refers to the decreasing tolerance which we are demonstrating towards children with difficult behaviour. Galvin (1999) makes reference to the appeal of zero tolerance within and outside education. Mahaffey and Newton (2008) also discuss the dominance of traditional

approaches to discipline which largely engage punishment and McCluskey et al (2011) conclude in their consideration of RJ approaches that one of the biggest challenges is the 'default' setting of punishment which staff tend to retreat to when things get difficult. The section on behaviour within the recent *Schools White Paper* (DfE, 2011) is characterized by a firmer and less tolerant approach to difficult behaviour, focussing on giving teachers greater powers over students' behaviour:

...we need to restore the authority of teachers...with zero tolerance to bullying, clear boundaries, good pastoral care and early intervention to address problems. (p. 32)

We want all teachers to be clear about the powers they have to deal with disruption in the classroom and to have confidence in exercising their authority. (p. 33)

We will therefore issue statutory guidance to extend head teachers' powers to punish school pupils who misbehave on their way to or from school. (p.35)

The need for this strong approach is grounded firmly in ensuring the safety of pupils, in attracting teachers into the profession and ensuring the success of pupils at school (DfE, 2011; MacGillivray et al, 2008). The importance of behaviour for learning has been a feature of much government documentation, the previous government stating that 'Good behaviour is fundamental to school standards' (DCSF, 2009b, p. 5). Given the drive for high standards in education and the climate of curriculum prescription, targets, inspection and accountability (e.g. Davies, 2005), it is no wonder that finding a 'quick fix' to behaviour is at the forefront of the mind of educators and politicians. Bear (1998) suggests that the ease in use of more punitive measures as well as their short term effectiveness is most likely the reason for using them.

However, there are concerns about the dominance of these approaches. They are of course open to many of the same criticisms already discussed in relation to behaviourism. For example, the use of sanctions and exclusion are repeatedly reported to be ineffective in changing student behaviour (APA, 2008; Bear, 1998; Galvin, 1999). According to the APA's findings, school exclusion was found to predict higher future rates of misbehaviour and exclusion and to be associated with more negative school climates.

However, worrying concerns have also been raised about the impact that zero tolerance approaches have on minority groups (APA, 2008; MacGillivray, 2008; Sullivan, 2008; Vavrus and Cole, 2002); their failure to address causal factors (Stinchcomb, Bazemore and Reistenberg, 2006) and to meet underlying needs (Mahaffey and Newton, 2008); the inflexibility of such approaches and a 'one size fits all' attitude (APA, 2008; Galvin, 1999; MacGillivray, 2008); their capacity to alienate (Cameron and Thorsborne, 2001; Morrison, 2007); the negative impact on the community and on crime (Thorsborne and Vinegrad, 2008); and the inconsistency of such approaches with adolescent development (APA, 2008). For example, Morrison (2007) argues that 'the bottom line is that the exclusionary fail to address the deeper issues, build understanding and foster responsibility' (ibid, p. 58), whilst Cameron and Thorsborne (2001) state that 'policy and practice which seek to exclude those very students who are in greatest need of social support and an education simply relocate the problem in time and place and may exacerbate it' (p. 189). Parsons (1999) highlights the role that the media have played in defining the image of excluded young people by simplifying images, minimising tensions and 'shaping discourse and defining the unacceptability and underservingness of the excluded' (ibid, p. 138).

Zero tolerance approaches draw heavily on the need for a socially constructed standard against which all students can be judged and as Vavrus and Cole (2002) point out this is a standard which may not be equally accessible to all children from all ethnic backgrounds. This is particularly poignant as national data in Britain shows that those most at risk of exclusion tend to be from minority or socially disadvantaged groups. As such there is a risk

that zero tolerance and similarly inflexible approaches, which fail to recognise the larger context, the role of the environment and the needs of the individual, could contribute to the promotion and maintenance of inequalities.

The APA (2008) call for greater flexibility and 'common sense' in the application of discipline and on the need for preventative work. With this in mind I turn my attention to those discourses which are more concerned with the need to prevent difficult behaviour through understanding its causes, teaching appropriate skills and meeting pupils' needs.

The 'Whole' Child

A discourse which has been increasingly influential in recent years is that concerned with providing a supportive and preventative approach to pupils displaying difficult behaviour. This has included a focus on prevention, early intervention and meeting the needs of children displaying difficult behaviour alongside the management of difficult behaviour. Although the most recent publication by the current coalition government does focus more on reactive strategies, they do maintain the need to identify and support the needs of children displaying difficult behaviour (DfE, 2010).

As an implicit part of supporting pupils there has been an emphasis on understanding the 'whole' child, which reflects a move towards understanding the context and the wider origins of behaviour rather than presuming that the cause lies solely within the child. That is to recognise the family and school factors which contribute to a child's presenting behaviours and to promote the understanding that an individual can only be understood in their social, cultural and historical context (Lloyd Bennett, 2005; Mahaffey and Newton, 2008). For example there has been a growing body of literature which has pointed to the importance of parental behaviour on a baby's brain development and the subsequent social, emotional and behavioural development of children (Anisman, Zaharia, Meaney and Merali, 1998; Sunderland, 2008).

Alongside this has been a focus on the skills related to behaviour, for example, a focus on social and emotional skills. This is illustrated in the use of terms such as Behavioural Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) to describe those children whose behaviour is deemed particularly difficult (Clough et al 2005; DCSF, 2010). McGrath (2005) argues that social competence defines what it is to experience behaviour difficulties and as such places great importance on the need to develop these skills if children are to be supported with their behaviour. Goleman (1998) has also been particularly influential in this respect in raising the profile of emotion in relation to behaviour. Drawing on Maslow (1968) and developed in Britain by Faupel (2007), it is argued that individuals' basic emotional and social needs have to be met in order for them to 'function' at a 'higher' level.

Developments such as these have served to locate the origin of children's difficult behaviour at a variety of sources (DCSF, 2010) and in doing so have endeavoured to move thinking away from children who present with difficult behaviour as deviant, manipulative and in control of their difficult behaviour. This has clear implications for whose responsibility it is to address difficult behaviour, resulting in an upsurge in the professionals available to support such students and the responsibilities placed on schools and authorities to provide appropriate support and funding. This is particularly evident in government activity which has included the creation of specialist behaviour teams and alternative provision for those pupils who are excluded from mainstream school, namely Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). Likewise the introduction of initiatives such as Individual Behaviours Plans (IBPs) and Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships between schools (e.g. DCSF, 2009b), as part of the previous government's commitment to raising behaviour standards suggests a more preventative way of working.

Developing Social and Emotional Skills

The Every Child Matters agenda (DfES, 2004) supported by the *Children Act 2004* (England and Wales, 2004) raised the profile of looking at the 'whole child' when considering needs

and support. 'Its aim are for every child, whatever their background or circumstances, to have the support they need to: be healthy: stay safe: enjoy and achieve: make a positive contribution: achieve economic well-being' (DfE, 2011).

One outcome of this has been the development of the SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) approach introduced by the previous government (DfES, 2005). SEAL was developed as part of the Primary Behaviour and Attendance Pilot which took place between 2003 and 2005 (Hallam, 2009) and it includes a curriculum and related resources for use in primary and secondary schools. The DfE website states that 'This curriculum resource aims to develop the underpinning qualities and skills that help promote positive behaviour and effective learning. It focuses on five social and emotional aspects of learning: self-awareness, managing feelings, motivation, empathy and social skills.' (DfE, 2011)

It has been widely implemented in many authorities across England and Wales. For example, in the authority within which the author works, there is a specially defined SEAL Coordinator post, the holder of which is responsible for the dissemination, support and evaluation of SEAL across the authority.

SEAL reflects a general trend towards more supportive and skill based approaches to difficult behaviour. For example, a provisional scan of articles in the Educational Psychology in Practice (Journal produced by the Association of Educational Psychologists for Educational Psychologists in England and Wales) makes reference to peer tutoring, social stories and developing 'emotional intelligence'. Peer support interventions generally, including peer mentoring, peer tutoring and peer mediation have gained increasing popularity (e.g. Smith, 2002), whilst interventions such as *Social Use of Language Programme* (SULP) (Rinaldi, 2008; The National Autistic Society, 2010), anger management (DCSF, 2010) and *Circle of Friends* (General Teaching Council, 2007) are

common place in schools. The focus of many of these approaches is to teach the social and emotional skills necessary for maintaining good relationships with others.

Such approaches have naturally been evaluated, McGrath (2005) arguing that there is much empirical evidence to support the effectiveness of social skills programmes in particular. SEAL specifically has been subjected to evaluation, Hallam (2009) reporting on the use of questionnaires and interviews across 172 Primary schools in the SEAL pilot. She reports that the vast majority of staff found the materials to have been successful in promoting pupil emotional well being, pupils' abilities to control their emotions, staff understanding of pupils' emotions and staff responses to behavioural incidents. Of particular significance was the feeling that the SEAL project could engender environmental change, adding further weight to the argument that behaviour is not just within the child. However, the view of the pupils who had participated was more inconclusive due to differences in responses across age and gender. An evaluation of SEAL in secondary schools (Smith, O'Donnell, Easton and Rudd, 2007) focussed on the implementation of SEAL and reported a positive attitude by staff to the project but highlighted the long term nature of the project and the need for it to become embedded in school culture.

Cognitive Psychology and the Concept of 'Need'

A focus on prevention, causation, need and skill training are not without their disadvantages, Mahaffey and Newton (2008) highlighting the tendency for staff to engage the medical or deficit model and focus on what's wrong with an individual when confronted with 'difference, disability or social and emotional needs' (ibid, p. 73). The increase in skills based approaches to difficult behaviour have their roots in cognitive psychology (ibid). McGrath (2005) discusses the need for social cognitive training as well as direct skills training, whilst Cole (2005) highlights the favour that cognitive-behavioural approaches have enjoyed within approaches to difficult behaviour. The attraction of such approaches is likely to be due to their simplicity and order. However, one issue with

cognitive approaches is that they do not fully remove the problem from within the child. Whilst it offers something beyond mere reward and sanctions in terms of supporting the child, it inherently maintains that it is the child who is 'deskilled' and who is lacking in some way. Interventions of this nature, therefore, can continue to implicitly support the notion that a child's difficult behaviour is due to their own deficiencies. This is also true of the burgeoning interest around causative factors and in particular attempts to generate understanding around the child's difficulties. For example, engaging attachment theory may presume to locate the problem outside of the child and within the interactions with their parents but ultimately it still retains the assumption that as a result of such interactions the child's character and behaviour is flawed. The importance of considering the socially constructed nature of such understandings can not be underestimated

Clough et al (2005) and Thomas (2005) pick this up in their discussion of 'need'. For these authors the concept of 'need' is part of the problem because it implies the need for resources, the need to categorise individuals and it continues to reinforce concepts of deficit and disadvantage.

Intended to be helpful, to place emphasis on the child's difficulties rather than simply naming a supposed category of problems, the notion of need has instead come to point as emphatically as before at the child. (Thomas, 2005, p. 60)

Thomas (ibid) continues that the problem with the concept of need, beyond its powerful sub-text of deficit and deviance, is the seemingly 'benign' nature of it and therefore the unquestioned acceptance with which the term and concept is employed. He engages Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1975) to illustrate how the 'kinder' or 'softer' aspect of need versus deviance still implies judgement, but more worryingly with the backing of science and particularly psychology. What is more, Thomas (2005) argues that the current leaning towards need and the role of the professional in meeting these needs actually takes more power away from the child and increases the power of adults because rights

are unclear and it is much more difficult to argue against someone who is meeting your needs. Similarly Ecclestone (2007) raises concerns about the increased interest around emotional wellbeing and therapy both generally and within education, arguing that it turns emotion into a series of rituals and formulaic expressions and risks further isolating pupils.

Rudimentary training and uncritical promotion of emotional wellbeing lead to simplistic assumptions. Labels of "vulnerable learners", "at-risk learners", children with "fragile identities" and "low self-esteem" are commonplace in staffrooms and on school reports. Sweeping assumptions are applied to whole groups, such as asylum seekers, working-class boys, "non-traditional" students in universities, or 14-year-olds deemed to be disaffected, badly behaved or alienated. (Ecclestone, 2007)

In her book with Denis Hayes *The Dangerous Rise of Therapeutic Education* they reinforce this message, warning of the 'diminished self' (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2008, p. xi) which is rife within the British education system as a result of the dominance of therapeutic and 'needs' discourse. Furedi (2003) expresses similar views in charting the social construction of the therapeutic culture. This construction of pupils with difficult behaviour as lacking skills and having 'needs' and the interventions deemed necessary to address this has particular implications when considered in light of the continuing belief that such difficult behaviour is on the increase, as I turn to next.

The Rise of Difficult Behaviour in Schools?

There has been and continues to be concern over what many fear is the rise in difficult behaviour amongst pupils in schools, with each generation appearing to believe there to be such an increase (Visser, 2005). Media interest has promoted a picture of increasing problems in relation to behaviour in schools (e.g. 'One in three schools suffering too much

bad behaviour', *The Times*, 6 April 2010) with successive governments responding with a proliferation of reviews of behaviour and initiatives to address behaviour.

Three main reviews have been conducted over the last twenty three years in response to such concerns. In 1988 the Secretary for Education and Science established a Committee of Enquiry into Discipline in Schools chaired by Lord Elton 'in response to concern about the problems facing the teaching profession' (DES, 1989). In 2005, the former Labour government commissioned another review on behaviour, chaired by Sir Alan Steer, which resulted in the report *Learning Behaviour* (DfES, 2005). An additional review was requested in 2007 leading to the publication of *Learning Behaviour: Lessons Learned* (DCSF, 2009c). Most recently, the current Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government has published the report *Behaviour and Discipline in Schools* (House of Commons Education Committee, 2011) as part of the government drive to improve standards in behaviour. All three government reviews have focussed on the concerns raised about the perceived increase in behaviour problems in schools, Lord Elton reporting that 'the two questions most frequently asked about bad behaviour in schools are how much of it is there, and is there more now than in the past?' (DES, 1989, p. 57)

In answering this question they have drawn on a variety of sources - including Ofsted data; data on exclusions, surveys of LEAs, headteacher and teacher associations, charitable organisation and specialists; as well as visits to schools - in order to establish a picture as to the nature and extent of pupil behaviour in schools. The outcomes from this evidence gathering have suggested that the situation may be more positive than media reports and perceptions suggest (Cameron, 1998). Lord Elton concluded that there was insufficient evidence to support the notion that there was an increase in behaviour problems or to support the perception that violent behaviour was the behaviour causing most concern. In reviewing Ofsted data, Sir Alan Steer concludes that there had been no increase in problem behaviour. The 2009–10 Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector found that pupils' behaviour was 'good' or 'outstanding' in 89% of primary schools and 70% of

secondary schools compared to 95% primary and 80% secondary in 2008–09 and 93% primary and 72% secondary in 2007–8.

Our experience as teachers, supported by OSFTED, is that the great majority of pupils work hard and behave well, and that most schools successfully manage behaviour to create an environment in which learners feel valued, cared for and safe. It is often the case that for pupils, school is a calm place in a disorderly world. We realise that this is not the case in every school, but in our experience, where unsatisfactory behaviour does occur, in the vast majority of cases it involves low level disruption in lessons. Incidents of serious misbehaviour, and especially acts of extreme violence remain exceptionally rare and are carried out by a very small proportion of pupils. (DfES, 2005, p. 7)

Yet despite this, concerns remain. The Education Committee stated in the most recent review (House of Commons Education Committee, 2011) that the conclusions of Lord Elton and Sir Alan Steer do not ring true for most teachers. Other surveys, such as the Teacher Voice Omnibus (DCSF, 2008) continue to indicate that teachers believe behaviour has worsened. In their June 2008 survey they found that 64% of teachers agreed that negative behaviour is driving teachers out of the profession. Yet despite this, 94% of these same teachers rated behaviour in their own school as ‘very good’, ‘good’ or ‘acceptable’.

This ongoing disparity has raised the issue of perceptions and also of the agendas of those reporting on behaviour. The Education Committee review (House of Commons Education Committee, 2011) has called into question the reliability and agenda of those claiming behaviour is good. For example, they reflect on the reliability of headteacher reports, which they argue may be influenced by motivations to portray a positive perception of how behaviour is managed in their school. Cameron (1998) picks up on this point about perceptions highlighting the need to manage ‘disruptive behaviour’ from a ‘real’ rather than a perceived baseline.

Sir Alan Steer addressed this issue of 'perception versus reality' in the 2009 review (DCSF, 2009c). He suggested that a number of factors may impact people's reporting of behaviour including: the distinction between low level disruptive and violent behaviour; and differences across different schools, with the DCSF (2008) survey indicating that perceptions of behaviour are worse in secondary schools than primary schools. Likewise Cameron (1998) points out that behaviour is influenced not necessarily by objective measures of behaviour but by media coverage, school sensitivity of their perceived image, parental expectations and government legislation (also Parsons, 1999).

Behaviour as Socially Constructed?

The apparent lack of national agreement on the level of difficult behaviour in schools raises an interesting point in itself, namely the socially constructed nature of behaviour, its definition and measurement. In asking those questions highlighted by Lord Elton and in searching for the answers through surveys, questionnaires and interviews there is a presumption that there is a 'truth' about the nature and quantity of difficult behaviour in schools.

Yet difficult behaviour and its management, as is evidenced by the discourses discussed, has been presented in a number of ways over the last few decades. Mahaffey and Newton (2008) provide an overview of the perspectives which have influenced the subject, including behavioural, cognitive, humanistic and systemic approaches to difficult behaviour in schools. Each implies a different understanding and way of talking about difficult behaviour and in turn the way to deal with such behaviour. The presence alone of so many influences indicates the role of culture and disciplines such as psychology in actively constructing our understanding of behaviour. It is this social construction, which Mahaffey and Newton (2008) conclude provides the most appropriate framework for understanding behaviour.

Much of our understanding and discourse on behaviour is maintained and recontextualised through policy and the media, Parsons (1999) pointing out that the interaction between the media, public opinion and public policy is an important focus, not least because the media is selective and can provide an outlet for political ideologies. Thus statements on behaviour do not constitute 'objective' reporting but 'the value orientations in a country at any one time' (ibid, p. 127), McCluskey et al (2011) pointing to the varying definition and meaning of terms such as 'violence'. As such an acceptance of the discourses discussed here and their presumptions are being increasingly challenged, many authors arguing that difficult behaviour is a socially constructed phenomenon. For example, that behaviour is constructed through interactions (Pomerantz, 2005) and that discourse can be used to achieve a particular view of someone's behaviour (O'Brien and Miller, 2005); that each individual can have a unique construction of an event (Lloyd Bennett, 2005); and that behaviour is context specific and is created by the expectation and need for a certain type of behaviour in the school environment (Clough et al, 2005; Foucault, 1975).

To pick up the first point, Pomerantz (2005) argues that language is central to schooling and that through language meanings are socially constructed and used to advantage and disadvantage certain groups. She states that 'challenging behaviour is perceived to be constructed through the interaction that takes place between the pupil and the teacher in the classroom setting which in turn serves to reinforce its presentation' (ibid, p. 21) and that this causative factor of language has been ignored in the consideration of the causes of difficult behaviour. The Restorative Practices Development Team (2003) talk of the way that traditional and particularly punitive discourses on behaviour use language in a totalising, deficit and internalising manner, which leaves no room for any conclusion other than that fault lies with the internally deficient individual.

Lloyd Bennett (2005) argues that behaviour is the 'total response' of a person to a situation and that too much attention is paid to specific unwanted behaviours. This is a

focus which he believes has arisen out of decreasing tolerance for difficult behaviour arising from a market economy and consumer choice, a tolerance which is depleted by the high level of demands and resources supplied to support a child with such difficulties.

School needs rather than individual needs have given rise to constructions of difficult behaviour argues Thomas (2005), who in discussing the rise in focus on emotional skills argues that wrongdoings rarely have anything to do with the emotional makeup of a child. Instead he says that wrongdoings have everything to do with a school's need to regulate time, activity, speech and body, resulting in the deluge of apparent misdemeanours in relation to punctuality, effort, off-task behaviour and uniform (see also Sutoris, 2000). Whilst Parsons (1999) asks 'Whose aims? Whose functions? Who benefits' in his discussion of educational functions (ibid, p. 12) and Hopkins (2011) suggests it should not be rules upon which we are focussed but how we wish to treat each other and to be treated. Thomas (2005) concludes by stating that schools frequently commit 'fundamental attribution error' in presuming that the causation of negative events such as difficult behaviour lies outside of them and within someone else. Lloyd Bennett (2005) takes this one step further arguing that the very presence of such rules actually 'causes' difficult behaviour because 'the organisation of schools requires rules and paradoxically obedience to rules also implies the possibility for disobedience.' (ibid, p.13) The role that schools and discipline have played in normalising certain behaviours over and above others is discussed at length by Foucault (1977).

In short, the art of punishing, in the regime of disciplinary power, is aimed neither at expiation, nor precisely at repression. It brings five quite distinct operations into play: it refers individual actions to the whole that at once is a field of comparison, a space of differentiation and the principle of a rule to be followed. It differentiates individuals from one another, in terms of the following overall rule: that the rule be made to function as a minimal threshold, as an average to be respected or as an optimum towards which one must move. It measures in quantitative terms and

hierarchizes in terms of value the abilities, the level, the 'nature' of individuals. It introduces through this 'value-giving' measure, the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved. Lastly it traces the limit that will define difference in relation to all other differences, the external frontier (the 'shameful' class of the Ecole Militaire). The perpetual penalty that traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, hierarchizes, excludes. In short, it *normalizes*. (op cit, p. 183)

This suggests a dangerously circular argument, for if a child's difficult behaviour is implied by their failure to match the expectations constructed and maintained as 'normal' through the discourse of adults then the natural conclusion is that the problem lies within the child. This can seem something of an immovable object, Hayes, Hindle and Withington (2007) pointing out the risk which there lies for teachers in accepting their role in discourse. To do this is to accept responsibility when things go wrong, a notion which from the experience of the author both as a teacher and Educational Psychologist, is easier said than done, particularly within punitive discourses which emphasise the importance of authority. This is highlighted in a study by O'Brien and Miller (2005) where they analysed the conversation between an Educational Psychologist and school staff about a pupil's behaviour. Their resultant analysis indicated a tendency for school staff to employ a range of discursive techniques to maintain a within-child explanation and undermine alternative discourses.

The very terms which are used to refer to children with difficult behaviour have the potential to define and position them (Miller and Todd, 2002) a theme taken up by the various contributors to the *Handbook of Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties* (Clough et al, 2005). Despite the fact that there is no universally agreed definition for behaviour difficulties (Lloyd Bennett, 2005) and that the use of the term Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) (and its variants e.g. Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties) is not statutory, the term carries, according to Clough et al (2005), a 'quasi scientific legitimacy'

which reinforces its usage. They argue that the term carries with it a presumption of blame and 'a scarcely disguised assumption...that these school students are manipulative, capable of controlling their actions and unwilling to comply with the work orientation of school.' (op cit, p.11)

Billington (2002) raises his concerns that the professional stories offered in relation to a child's difficulties remain organised around the discourses of psychopathology and remain reductionist in nature, whilst bearing no resemblance to the 'real' experience of the individual. This 'knowledge' about such individuals and how best to help them has spawned an industry which has the circular capability to legitimise and reinforce such knowledge (Cameron and Thorsborne, 2001; Gergen, 2009). Billington (2002) highlights how 'knowledge' is heavily dependent on language, an issue about which there is some recognition in the advice available to schools regarding behaviour (e.g. Galvin, 1999).

The presumption and dominance of certain forms of knowledge and the structures and processes which perpetuate them can lead to isolation and exclusion of certain individuals from society (ibid; Billington, 2002), a notion clear in schools where the repeated failure of a child to meet certain behavioural expectations can result in exclusion from the school. This in turn implies the pervasive issue of power and how certain discourses or knowledge are preferred and given 'expert' status over others (ibid), disqualifying and undermining the alternative discourses available. This psychopathologising in turn continues to lead to the exclusion of children from certain social activities, 'social exclusion, it is suggested here, is a pervasive 'signified' or discourse within our work that survives mere cosmetic changes to professional practice.' (ibid, p.37) Cameron and Thorsborne (2001) suggest that exclusion is indicative of a 'control paradigm' in schools, which contributes to a 'behaviour industry' and sees approaches such as exclusion used as a tool for organisational efficiency.

It is perhaps this discourse of social exclusion about which we should be most concerned as even the most caring approaches to difficult behaviour, such as those focussed on need, risk further alienating and stigmatising individuals, whilst they remain fixated on an individualistic way of speaking (Corcoran, 2003).

Back to Basics – The Importance of Relationships

As constructions of behaviour and its management change or not with the varying political, social, economical and historical context within which they lie, it is interesting to note the similarities which survive from one trend to the next. This is an issue taken up by Visser (2005) in his discussion of the 'eternal verities' of each generation's approaches. He criticises the tendency to 'wheel reinvention' and the need of each generation of professionals to lay claim to and put their authority on the accepted truths and solutions of the day. Visser (ibid) presents a range of such 'eternal verities' generated from his own experiences and study, including: intervention being second to prevention; transparency in communication; behaviour can be changed and emotional needs can be met; importance of empathy and equity; the need for boundaries and challenge; and the importance of building positive relationships. It is this latter 'verity' to which I would like to turn my attention.

Despite the concerns repeatedly raised about the continuing dominance of reductionist and deficit models related to behaviour, there is, within the literature, a commitment by most to the importance of relationships. For example, in their consideration of a behaviourist approach, Bull and Solity (1987) acknowledge that '...the model provides the basis for a positive system of classroom management which enhances, rather than detracts from, the development of positive relationships and a pleasant atmosphere in class.' (ibid, p.13) Rogers (2005) in his discussion of behaviour management strategies states that 'At the end of the day it is not the drawings, discipline, encouragement, even

'rewards' that see changes in behaviour...it is the quality of the ongoing relationship between teacher and student.' (op cit, p.258)

This represents an attempt to address the social constructionist critique of discourse on difficult behaviour because although not always explicitly stated in the way that Galvin (1999) does so, relationships imply interaction which implies language and the importance of how we make meaning and knowledge. This provides a point on which social constructionists and those espousing behaviour management strategies can agree.

It is with this in mind that I now discuss Restorative Justice, in an attempt to outline a response to the problems with current thinking and approaches towards behaviour and a way in which this common thread of relationships can form the basis of alternative discourses and approaches to behaviour and its management.

PART C – Restorative Justice

In an attempt to consider an alternative discourse on difficult behaviour in schools I turn now to Restorative Justice (hereafter RJ) and its focus on relationships. I intend to outline the rationale and principles of RJ, considering how it can offer both an alternative and a complementary approach to defining and managing difficult behaviour and in doing so how it can offer a response to some of those social constructionist critiques discussed above. I will then consider how it has been applied in schools, its success and the issues which have arisen from its application.

What is Restorative Justice?

RJ is not new, and is described by Liebmann (2007) as being ancient and having many histories. RJ is an approach to addressing wrong doing (ibid), which focuses on repairing harm and in particular repairing the relationships which may have been damaged in the

course of the wrong doing. It is characterised by the use of circles to achieve this end. Both traditionally and in its modern context this tends to involve the coming together of the 'wrong doer' and those affected by the wrong doing in a circle to discuss what has happened and to consider who needs to take accountability, what can be done to put right the wrong and how the needs of the different individuals can be met. RJ works on the principle that crime is a violation of people and relationships and that such a violation create obligations, the central obligation being to put right the wrongs. It asks the key questions: Who has been hurt? What are their needs? and whose obligations are these? (Zehr, 2002). At the heart of RJ is the interconnectedness of people and therefore the need for participation, collaboration and respect. Zehr (ibid, p.25) sums up RJ in saying that 'RJ requires, at minimum, that we address victims' harms and needs, hold offenders accountable to put right those harms, and involve victims, offenders and communities in the process'.

It has arisen from historic practice within indigenous populations such as the Aboriginal, Maori, Native American and Anglo Saxon populations (ibid). More recently RJ has emerged within the criminal justice system and represented a backlash against more punitive approaches to criminal justice arguing that crime is an interpersonal conflict and so any response crime must start with relationships (Restorative Practice Development Team, 2003). Although it is referred to as RJ within this thesis, it is elsewhere referenced as Restorative Approaches (McCluskey et al, 2011) and Restorative Practices (Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003), the term RJ used increasingly less in the school context in particular.

Within this modern context RJ is not an approach or set of practices, although both have emerged from it, but is instead a philosophy which places needs and roles at the heart of addressing wrong doing (Zehr, 2002), including victims' needs for information, empowerment and truth telling and the role of offenders in accepting accountability. Unlike the criminal justice system, which emphasises law breaking and the offender and

which detaches and alienates individuals from the process (Morris and Young, 2000), RJ focuses on the harm which has been caused to relationships and the need to repair this harm, as well as allowing the victim access to and participation in the process. It also acknowledges the harm caused to the offender and incorporates the whole community, considering both their needs as possible victims themselves but also their role in supporting both the victim and the offender as part of mutual accountability.

The definition of RJ is not necessarily universal and as its popularity has increased and approaches have broadened and developed, its name has been given to an increasingly varied number of practices, which have according to Miller and Blackler (2000) threatened to render the term meaningless. Liebmann (2006) points to a number of processes and services which are similar to RJ but not the same, such as Non-Violent Communication. It has led some authors (e.g. Hopkins, 2004; Wachtel and McCold, 2001) to suggest a continuum of practices within the umbrella of RJ.

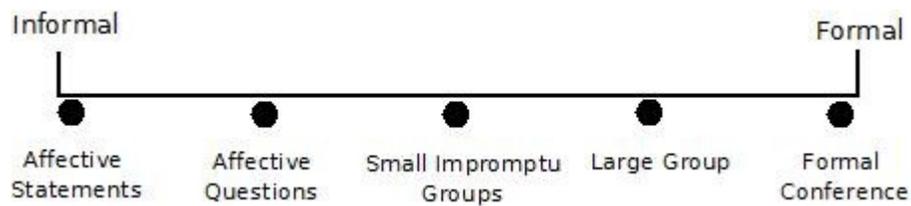


Figure 1 – Wachtel and McCold’s (2001) Restorative Practices Continuum

The emergence of such a varied field of practice has led, according to Zehr (2002), to a number of misconceptions about RJ, which he aims to rectify by stating clearly that RJ is not simply mediation; is not primarily about forgiveness and reconciliation; is not primarily designed to reduce repeat offending; is not a particular programme; is not a replacement to the legal system; and is not necessarily the opposite to retribution.

This latter point highlights that RJ and punishment/retribution are not necessarily incompatible (Daly, 2000; Walgrave, 2007; Zehr, 2002). RJ is viewed as an alternative approach in some contexts but also as a complimentary approach or optional extra (Liebmann, 2006) to more traditional approaches, often being used *within* the criminal justice system as part of sentencing procedures (Immarigeon, 2004) or as a means of supporting reintegration following school exclusion (Youth Justice Board, 2004). However, the extent to which punishment can undermine the principles of RJ is difficult to avoid. Exclusion is alienating and removes individuals from the community, whilst RJ is about maintaining relationships. That said RJ's role in restoring relationships could frame its role in addressing situations where a pupil has been alienated through exclusion.

Wachtel and McCold (2001) have produced a model which places RJ within continuums of both control and support, in order to avoid becoming trapped in what they term a punitive-permissive or harsh-liberal cycle.

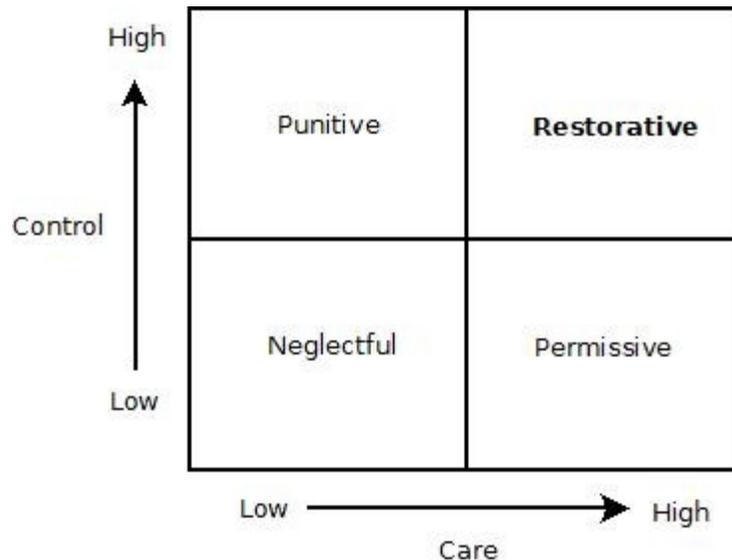


Figure 2 – Wachtel and McCold's (2001, p.117) Social Discipline Window

In the Britain a move towards RJ has become increasingly apparent within both the criminal justice system - where for example the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act (England and Wales, 1999) has made direct restorative provisions (Liebmann, 2007) – as well as in schools (e.g. Scottish Executive, 2004), the latter of which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

A Theoretical Basis for RJ – the Role of Social Constructionism

RJ can be seen as practice led rather than theory led (Morrison, 2007), with theory lagging significantly behind practice (Braithwaite, 2000). Although it is questionable whether this is because such theories have been slower in engaging with RJ or whether the ‘voices’ of such supporting theories have been traditionally silenced or sidelined by more dominant theories. As such researchers have been motivated to understand the possible value of the RJ process.

The most influential theory to date has been that of ‘reintegrative shaming’ (Braithwaite, 1989). This supposes that social disapproval is enacted via a process of shaming (e.g. being called to publicly face one’s victim) whilst a reintegrative component (e.g. the offender making reparation if required) suggests a re-engagement with the community. Braithwaite argues that shaming works because it produces a painful interrelatedness or anxiety as the result of social disapproval, providing immediate and systematic punishment, which is more powerful than punishment by the criminal justice system. By accepting responsibility and acknowledging feelings of shame which emerge from this, the individual can discharge this shame and re-join the community (Morrison, 2007). This is contrasted to stigmatising shaming (Braithwaite, 1989), which fails to separate the person from the crime and which instead assigns a deviant characteristic to the offender. Nathanson (1992) also discusses shame in his development of a theory of ‘affect’, highlighting the social or interaction dependent nature of shame.

Whilst this goes some way to engaging the social context there are a number of concerns that shame may not be a wholly adequate explanation (Corcoran, 2003; Maxwell and Morris, 2004). Shame is a complex and ill defined emotion (Harris, 2006; Maxwell and Morris, 2004), the experience of shame can lead to a range of negative outcomes (Nathanson, 1992); and a focus on the inner experience of emotions appears to steer discussion away from the community and social aspects of RJ and towards an individualised, within person paradigm (Corcoran, 2003). Corcoran (2004) warns that affect theory fails to reflect societal factors and actually advocates individualism, determinism and reductionism, reflecting the dominant discourses of modern psychology and standing in stark contrast to the relational heart of RJ.

As such other accounts have been engaged for explaining the value of RJ. In a previous paper the author considered some of the alternative theories which can be found in psychology, focussing on those which appear consistent with RJ's central tenant of relationships (Harold, 2009). I give consideration to the importance of belonging (Baumeister and Leary, 1995); social psychology and its emphasis on communication and belonging; the applicability of community psychology as a paradigm to underlie RJ, given its values of participation, empowerment and social justice; and a discussion of 'discursive justice' (Cvetkovich and Earle, 1994), including the importance of recognising the interpersonal and dialogic nature of justice and the role of social constructionism (Corcoran, 2003).

Social Constructionism as a Basis for RJ?

Both community psychology and social psychology provide additional viewpoints from which to consider the underlying value of RJ. However, social constructionism may provide a more critical position from which to engage RJ. Corcoran (ibid) engages social constructionism in his discussion and particularly Shotter's theory (1995), which describes the responses of individuals acting within the social milieu primarily as 'joint action'.

Shotter (op cit) describes how when you are 'in it' you feel ethically and morally interlinked – you have a position or a place. It is easy to see how RJ practices, such as circles, can allow people to feel 'in it' and to have a place in the dialogue on an issue.

The importance of language in RJ provides a 'good fit' with the emphasis of social constructionism on language and discourse. The Restorative Practices Development Team (2003) discuss the importance of 'ways of speaking' in their development of Restorative Practices in New Zealand schools.

People's identities are created through the ways they are spoken about to others, and in the ways that they learn to speak about themselves. (ibid, p. 13)

They highlight the importance of Restorative Practices for challenging and changing the way we speak and in particular challenging the totalising, deficit and internalising discourses dominant in discussion of difficult behaviour. They argue that unless such discourses are challenged the 'spoiled identities' which they assign will continue to silence those labelled with them (cf. Ecclestone and Hayes' 'diminished self', 2008). Cvetkovich and Earle (1994) take up this point arguing for a discursive justice, where justice is the product of social construction and language is the cultural practice within which such realities are constituted. Justice is constructed through discourse, interaction and exchanges and it is through discourse that individuals come to understand certain actions as just or unjust (ibid).

The role that RJ may have to play in promoting an alternative discourse - one of relationships - is discussed in detail by The Restorative Practices Development Team (2003). RJ's role in achieving this can also be firmly situated within McNamee and Gergen's (1999) work on 'Relational Responsibility'. Their discontent with the individualistic nature of western thinking, its negative impact on the individual and society as whole and its ineffectiveness in resolving conflict and argument, is replaced with the

notion of Relational Responsibility. Relational Responsibility is described as an understanding of an individual as participating in an open-ended process of exploration via conversation through which relationships can be altered. Burkitt (1999) describes this as a 'generative dance' – a continual and regulated improvisation where individuals are constantly repositioning themselves. McNamee and Gergen (1999) suggest the need to extend and modify existing discourses, locating traditions where relationships are already central, and energising these alternative discourses.

Links have also been made between narrative therapy and RJ (Mahaffey and Newton, 2008), RJ providing a platform from which multiple stories can be heard and understood. As McNamee and Gergen (1999) recognise, resolution of conflict is impossible whilst a traditional 'judicial' approach is taken, which sees individuals fixed firmly in their 'corners' or 'domains'. Instead exploring different voices can be less oppressive and prevent further resentment and alienation of people at the margins (The Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003), moving away from the presumption of one universal truth which is objective and measurable. Narrative therapy also lends to RJ the possibility of using externalising language which separates the person from the problem (Mahaffey and Newton, 2008; The Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003).

It is the engagement of RJ with a wider range of theory and particularly embedding it within a social constructionist stance (Mahaffey and Newton, 2008) which affords it a favourable position as well as offering the potential to challenge those critiques levelled at behavioural, cognitive and skills based discourses. That is not to suggest that there is not room for such discourses within and alongside RJ (ibid), the strength of social constructionism and by implication therefore RJ is in allowing such multiple voices. However, it is to suggest that RJ offers an alternative discourse which ultimately promotes social inclusion and offers schools and society a way to do things differently.

Restorative Justice in Schools

In considering the social constructionist basis of RJ, its focus on community and the way in which it responds to many of the critiques of more traditional discourses it is possible to see the potential that RJ has for schools, McCluskey et al (2011) arguing for the potential which RJ has to provide the 'solution' to many problems within schools. Morrison (2007), in her focus on schools, argues that RJ provides the framework for creating safer schools. She focuses on the development of self-regulation which can arise from a restorative approach and identifies five key elements, including the inclusion of all members; avoiding the denigration of the whole person; individuals taking responsibility for their behaviour; acknowledging emotional, social and physical harm; and reparation of harm as essential. She describes schools as one of the most important institutions, representing a microcosm of society, teaching through an overt and hidden curriculum and teaching about our place in the world. Schools, therefore, are ideally placed to implement RJ (Morrison, 2007).

Whilst the impact of more traditional approaches, such as punishment and sanctions are not considered effective, Thorsborne and Vinegrad (2008) query that even if they were effective, how would such programmes deliver outcomes for pupils? They ask the question, 'In what way does traditional punishment create an opportunity to have the kind of conversations needed to explore harm done, the impact on relationships and how to make things right?' (Thorsborne and Vinegrad, 2008). Punishment may be an effective organisational tool, children may even 'learn' what not to do, but how are they embracing the breadth of human attributes that we presumably want to promote in our children? Morrison (2007) points out that external rewards and sanctions emphasise compliance and obedience rather than consideration and self-discipline and fail to foster self-monitoring, self-evaluation and ultimately self-regulation. However, RJ is thought to succeed in operating at a relational level, with a greater focus on internal motivation and self-regulation.

In a move away from individual, deficit based thinking of pupils and their behaviour, RJ encourages us to consider the relational context of behaviour. By giving voice to the many stories available stigmatisation and oppression of silenced voices might be reversed. Rather than the cause and reparation for their difficult behaviour lying solely with the individual, everyone is encouraged to take responsibility. A secondary headteacher who has implemented RJ approaches across his school commented in the way in which staff are now better able to take responsibility for difficult behaviour in school (Straker, 2010, p.9).

Perhaps the greatest strength that RJ offers schools is the opportunity to develop links between disciplinary procedures and pastoral care, in line with Wachtel and McCold's (2001) disciplinary window. It offers an alternative discourse which comprises many familiar features, such as accountability, responsibility and needs but does so within the wider context of relationships. Therefore, the dichotomy that is restoration versus retribution is rendered irrelevant by RJ (The Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003), not only because the two are not mutually exclusive (Zehr, 2002) but because by redefining problems as relational rather than individual the need to punish an individual's wrongdoing or 'treat' their needs is replaced by a focus on how the relationship is restored. This in turn may naturally imply sanctions (Thorsborne and Vinegrad, 2008) but with the difference that they are more logically negotiated, akin to Galvin's (1999) 'logical consequences' rather than artificially enforced via a 'mechanical process' (Straker, 2010, p. 9). This means ensuring a careful balance between care and control, individual and community, accountability and support (Morrison, 2007). Adopting such a balance would point towards a RJ approach to wrong doing and conflict in schools.

However, to offer RJ as an alternative discourse on behaviour in schools is not to suggest that it is new to schools. There has already been a historical move towards restorative approaches within schools albeit often in a piecemeal fashion. During the 1980s and 1990s there was a rise in the use of approaches such as circle time and peer mediation, which encouraged the participation of young people in solving conflict and reflecting on

issues (Hopkins, 2004). Peer mediation in particular has ‘taken off’ in many schools with an abundance of references to and evaluations of it within the literature (e.g. Bickmore, 2002; Durbin, 2003; Mankopf, 2003; Schrumpf, 1994). The encouragement of more restorative approaches has been further formalised in documents such as the *Crick Report* (QCA/DfEE, 1998), which called for greater pupil participation and conflict mediation and the *Safer School Partnerships* (DCSF, 2009d), which focuses on building relationships and communities, as well as advocating more restorative practices within schools. Amongst other references to RJ the guidance advises that school should ‘use restorative approaches to challenge and change the behaviour of young people and to resolve conflict’ (DCSF, 2009d p. 12). The profile of RJ continues to be raised at a government level with the Restorative Justice Consortium’s recent briefing to the Secretary of State for Education (Restorative Justice Consortium, 2010) on RJ in schools.

There is also much evidence that RJ is already being implemented in schools across Britain. For example, the Restorative Approaches Partnerships in Lewisham have worked with a number of secondary and primary schools since 2002 to introduce and embed restorative approaches (Williams, 2008); and the Scottish Executive have piloted restorative practices across three local authorities (Scottish Executive, 2004). Barnet Youth Offending Service introduced RJ into three primary schools in 2004 and this has since rolled out across many more primary and secondary schools (Barnet Youth Offending Service, no date), whilst the organisation Transforming Conflict report on the introduction of RJ into two Hull schools (Transforming Conflict, no date). The author’s own observations at the 7th Annual Restorative Approaches in Education and Residential Child Care Conference (Transforming Conflict, 2011) was also testament to the national endeavour which embedding RJ in schools has become.

The Effectiveness of RJ in Schools?

Evaluations from these projects and others (e.g. Barnet Youth Offending Service, no date; Cameron and Thorsborne, 2001; Crow, Marsh and Holton, 2004; Kent Safe School, 2010; McCluskey et al, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2004; Transforming Conflict, no date; Williams, 2008; Youth Justice Board, 2004) have been positive, albeit with a number of challenges and issues with regard to implementation and sustainability.

The most comprehensive evaluation of RJ in schools in England and Wales is that conducted by the Youth Justice Board (2004). They collected data between 2001 and 2004, following the implementation of restorative approaches in 26 schools. Although all the schools took different approaches to introducing RJ they all included restorative conferencing, training staff and peer mediation. Baseline and follow up data was collected and was compared to non-participating schools. The findings indicated that 625 conferences had taken place across the schools. Of these, 92% resulted in agreement with 96% of the agreements being upheld, 89% of attendees were satisfied with the outcomes and 93% thought the process was fair, reporting that the opportunity to be listened to was the most important part of the process. Staff generally gave positive reports of the approach, reporting that peer mediation freed staff time from dealing with 'petty squabbles' and all but three members of staff reported that a RJ approach had benefited the school generally.

There was, however, no significant difference with regard to attitudes around issues of bullying or feelings of victimisation between the participating and non-participating schools. The report also failed to make any judgements about the impact of RJ on exclusions, arguing that it is too difficult to isolate RJ as a factor within exclusion figures, although some schools did use RJ conferences for reintegration following exclusions. There were also a number of challenges identified regarding implementation, including the need for senior management commitment and clear information and sufficient time for

training, this latter point being identified as the most significant barrier. Conferences in particular were viewed as time consuming and requiring professional support. The report also highlights the enormous variation in school structures and cultures and the fact that less than half the schools integrated RJ approaches into their behaviour policy. The Youth Justice Board (2004) make a number of recommendations, including the need for leadership and vision, integration into policy, adequate training, adequate definition of conferences and formal follow up of agreements reached in conferences. They also report difficulty in translating the language of RJ into schools. Such difficulties appear to arise from language such as 'justice', 'victim' and 'offender', which are taken from the criminal justice system. It was not always clear in school situations who the victim and offender were, and if indeed there was an 'offender', given that no crime had often been committed; and there was a sense that these terms have the capacity to label. The term 'justice' presented particular difficulties as it did not make sense in every situation, one deputy head teacher of a primary school reporting that 'we don't use the word justice in the school. But 'fairness' is an important principle to our pupils and their parents. Justice equals fairness. We try to use everyday language' (ibid, p.63). The Youth Justice Board (ibid) concluded that 'restorative justice is not a panacea for problems in schools, but if implemented correctly it can improve the school environment, enhance learning and encourage young people to become more responsible and empathetic' (ibid, p. 13).

Similar findings have been reported in other evaluations. The Scottish Executive (2004) pilot across three authorities has reported significant progress across 14 of 18 schools (Peppiatt, 2007), having implemented a range of restorative practices including restorative ethos building; focusing on relationships; circles; mediation; restorative enquiry and conversations; restorative language and scripts; and formal and informal conferences. These improvements were seen in staff morale, reduced exclusions and increased conflict resolution skills amongst the pupils. However, not all schools adopted a whole school approach to RJ, with secondary schools in particular often adopting practices within specific areas. Again factors viewed as important within this process included leadership,

staff development and commitment. It was also recognised, as in the Youth Justice Board evaluation (2004), that it takes time for RJ to become embedded within schools.

Across 40 Lewisham schools in England, successes in using restorative approaches included reductions in fixed term exclusions; improvements in student relationships; less staff time spent on investigating incidents; more effective and longer lasting conflict resolution; increased emotional literacy; and calmer, happier schools (Williams, 2008). Additional to those factors found to be important in previous studies, this pilot also found that whole school approaches, keeping good records and sharing successes, developing support networks for practitioners, establishing a key team of core practitioners, and learning about culture change are important for successful implementation (ibid).

In Barnet the introduction of RJ across a range of primary schools was evaluated in 2008 (Barnet Youth Offending Service, 2008) and findings included increased staff confidence in dealing with bullying and challenging behaviour; increased positivity and calmness of the environment; and a significant reduction in exclusions. In two Hull schools (one primary, one secondary) there was shown to be a reduction in exclusion, including a 44.5% reduction in fixed term exclusions within the secondary school. Also a decrease in a range of negative behaviours such as verbal abuse and racist incidents, as well as a decrease in staff absence (Transforming Conflict, no date).

The Challenges of Implementing RJ in Schools- Need for Cultural Change?

RJ it would seem has the potential to make a difference to the ethos of schools and their approaches to behaviour management. However, these evaluations highlight a number of challenges in relation to culture change, leadership and the logistics of implementing new and time consuming approaches. Traditional discourses around behaviour, for examples those relating to behaviourism and zero tolerance, have long been embedded (McCluskey et al, 2011) to the extent that even where teachers are supportive of RJ they presume that

others (e.g. parents) will desire more punitive measures (Morrison, 2007). Hopkins (2004) recognises the extent of the problem suggesting that we need a paradigm shift in order to challenge notions which are embedded deep within our culture. This emphasises further the need for a psychology of RJ and indeed a psychology per se that adequately accounts for the contextual nature of human existence and behaviour, particularly as academic psychology is quickly absorbed by popular psychology and lay understandings of psychology.

Success in achieving a cultural change is particularly important given the general consensus that RJ works best where it is taken up as a whole school philosophy rather than as piecemeal strategies (Hopkins, 2004; McCluskey et al, 2011; Morrison, 2007). Hopkins (2004) presents 'value base/ethos' as the base of her 'restorative pyramid' (p.31), a necessary feature before skills and processes can be developed. However, cultural change is notoriously difficult in schools (Hopkins, 2004), takes a long time (3-5 years according to Blood and Thorsborne, 2006) and resistance to change is common (ibid), McCluskey et al (2011) finding that even where RJ is successful resistance, ambiguity and ambivalence remain. A number of authors have looked at cultural change within the context of RJ and have suggested several stages or factors necessary to achieve such change. Table 1 summarises four such models.

Table 1 – Four approaches to implementing and sustaining culture change for RJ¹

Blood and Thorsborne (2005)	Blood and Thorsborne (2006)	Hopkins (2004)	Morrison (2007)
Gaining commitment	Initiation – agenda setting (perceived need for innovation)	Owning and developing the vision	Professional bridging
Developing a shared vision	Initiation – matching (aligning the problem with the innovation)	Establishing and developing a steering group	Restorative practices
Developing responsive and effective practice	Implementation – redefining/restructuring (experimentation)	Identifying and establishing the training team	Behavioural evidence
Developing a whole school approach	Implementation – clarifying (policy development)	Developing and supporting the training team	Institutional vision/policy
Professional relationships	Implementation – routinising (new norm established)	Policy and organisational review to ensure restorative practice is integrated	

¹ The overview presented here does not necessarily reflect the manner or complexity of how the authors have presented their ideas. The reader should refer to the original source for a fuller understanding of each approach.

What all have in common is the need to understand cultural change and ultimately to respect the difficulty of this. Hopkins (2004, p. 170) cites Hargreaves and Fuller (1998), who have coined the phrase 'reculturing' as distinct to 'restructuring' schools, arguing that reculturing requires emotional investment in the change. As such, Hopkins (2004) argues that the change process itself has to be underpinned by restorative values, a view shared by Blood and Thorsborne (2006) and Morrison (2007). However, the question may be asked to what extent does RJ require a 'culture change' rather than a change in 'discourse'? Given the importance of discourse within culture the two may seem somewhat inseparable. Yet, if we are to avoid setting up a dichotomy of RJ versus something else a discourse of 'discourse' may be more appropriate and may reduce issues of resistance. The idea of changing how we speak may also seem more accessible than the image of huge organisational overhaul that concepts of culture change conjure up. The focus of ideas at the 7th Annual Restorative Approaches in Education and Residential Child Care Conference (Transforming Conflict, 2011) was on the day to day and classroom practice of RJ, shifting thinking to the more subtle nuances of how a discourse of RJ can become part of the ways of speaking.

A key theme in all the approaches is 'winning hearts and minds' and perhaps the first step within this is establishing the readiness of a school for change (Morrison, 2007) or establishing the level of resistance (Blood and Thorsborne, 2006). Blood and Thorsborne (ibid) emphasise that take-up must be seen as a developmental process, with different people coming on board at different points and suggest starting with interested parties in order to reach 'critical mass' (Blood and Thorsborne, 2005, 2006) or 'restorative contagion' (Wachtel and McCold, 2001), where enough people have adopted the innovation. Blood and Thorsborne (2005) conclude that 'the implementation of restorative practices risks the fate of many other well intentioned programs unless we understand what it takes to change the hearts and minds of our school communities...' (p.18). Hopkins (2004) provides practical suggestions for preliminary work with staff which can allow them the opportunity to explore their thoughts and beliefs around behaviour management and RJ.

Additional issues include those of: early preparation and planning as important to establishing the specific needs of the school (Blood and Thorsborne, 2006); staff development around RJ but also the need to develop key skills (Hopkins, 2004) such as impartiality, active and empathic listening, patience, creative questioning and empowering pupils (ibid); time for training, time for ongoing development, time for implementation and time for reflection to ensure RJ does not contribute to the feeling of ‘death by 1000 initiatives’ (Blood and Thorsborne, 2006, p. 22); effective leadership; and the importance of ensuring RJ is adequately integrated into the behaviour policy of the school (e.g. Cameron and Thorsborne, 2001).

Both Hopkins (2004) and Morrison (2007) have developed models of what whole school RJ might look like.

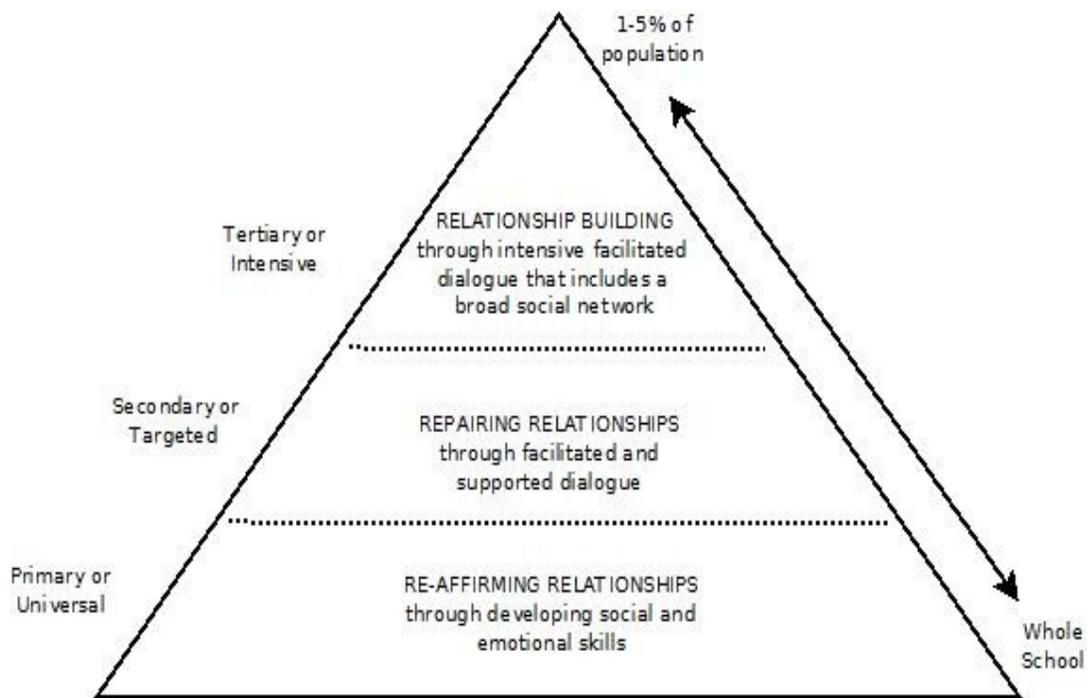


Figure 3 – Morrison’s (2007) whole school model of RJ

Morrison (2007) emphasises the need for a range of proactive and reactive strategies to be implemented within a RJ framework which operates at three levels, levels which parallel

the tiered system within public health models and thus makes links with health discourse. She gives examples of intensive interventions as large circles and formal conferences; targeted interventions as problem solving circles and peer mediation; and universal interventions as developing basic skills, particularly around social and emotional development (e.g. listening and empathy). She aligns her approach, from universal to intensive, with Wachtel and McCold's (2001) continuum of informal to formal approaches (see figure 1). Similarly, Hopkins (2004) makes reference to the increasing complexity of a continuum of restorative processes, from restorative enquiry through to family group conferences, providing schools with an increasing literature base from which to draw on when considering RJ.

However, in drawing this section on RJ to a conclusion, the optimism with which RJ has been presented here needs to be countered with a more critical perspective, one which McCluskey, Lloyd, Stead, Kane, Riddell and Weedon (2008) raise in their article *'I was dead restorative today': from restorative justice to restorative approaches in school*. Alongside the issues which have already been raised regarding the challenges of establishing a discourse of RJ; the tensions with traditional discourses; and concerns around the theoretical bases proposed, there are some more fundamental questions which need to be more fully explored and could have been given greater voice within this thesis. Most notably a fuller critique on the evaluations presented and what they say about the potential of RJ. McCluskey et al (ibid) raise concerns that not all evaluations are positive, whilst the limitation of research to tell us how RJ affects exclusions for example, or what staff assumptions are on behaviour management (Munn, Sharp, Lloyd, Macleod, McCluskey, Brown and Hamilton, 2011) must surely suggest caution in promoting RJ too enthusiastically too soon. The potential for RJ to position and alienate through the use of terms such as 'victim' and 'offender' is also a cause for concern. This might be seen to arise not just from the use of such language but the assumption that there is a tangible incident where roles are clearly defined; a focus which would not necessarily lend itself to consideration of issues of power and class, for example (McCluskey et al, 2008).

McCluskey et al (ibid) further suggest that the more formal RJ conferences do not take into account the complexities of life; whilst the authors own practice would suggest that these more formal aspects of RJ are not always relevant to schools.

Perhaps of greatest need for consideration is the potential use of RJ for the purpose of social control (ibid). Given the challenges posed by introducing RJ into schools and the tendencies of schools to default to punishment (McCluskey et al, 2011), what is the possibility of RJ becoming another mechanistic process that individuals 'have to' do? And in doing this to what extent does RJ just provide a different language and set of processes which wear the same benign mask of 'need' to achieve an end which is little different or better than those so heavily critiques in this thesis?

Exploring Discourses on Behaviour within a Secondary School

The discussion of social constructionism and particularly the socially constructed nature of difficult behaviour - as well as the power that discourse has to position and alienate individuals - places significant responsibility on researchers and those working within education to explore and understand the discourses which predominate and the impact that these potentially have. Understanding which discourses are dominant and the way in which they position and define individuals provides us with the opportunity to understand what the possibilities and barriers are to exploring or promoting additional and/or alternative discourses. In line with the models discussed above for introducing RJ into schools, this understanding provides a 'baseline' as to the possibilities for RJ in a particular school. As such this research intends to consider one school and its context and to explore the discourses within this school in relation to its existence within a network of different practices (Fairclough, 2001). Three research questions are presented in the next chapter which intend to shape this understanding of discourses on difficult behaviour in the school and the methodology for achieving this is considered and debated.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

This chapter examines the main features of the methodology employed for this thesis. Notably the use of a case study; the choice of focus groups to collect data; and the use of Critical Discourse Analysis to analyse the data. The rationale for these choices, which relies heavily on engagement with social constructionism, will be presented alongside consideration of the relative merits and pitfalls of each. The discussion has been arbitrarily separated into data gathering (elicitation) and data analysis (evaluation) - a distinction which Meyer (2001) makes in his account of social research – but as Meyer (*ibid*) warns, this does not necessarily mean that they are two separate steps.

Data Gathering

A Case Study Approach

In approaching this research I have engaged exclusively with qualitative methodology. Consistent with social constructionism and its challenge to reductionist traditions within psychology I have opted to build a rich picture of discourse within one secondary school thus necessitating a case study approach to the research (Pomerantz, 2005). Although engaging social constructionism does not necessarily preclude a positivist approach to methodology - social constructionism offering no particular blueprint of how things *should* be - a qualitative and particularly a case study approach feels well suited, providing the opportunity to explore how constructions are made and maintained.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) define case studies as a ‘specific instance’ or a ‘single instance’ (p.181) representing a bounded system such as a child, school or class. The rationale for choosing a case study approach is based on a desire to consider people in context ‘recognizing that context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects’ (*ibid*, p.181); to maintain the wholeness and integrity of the ‘human system’; and to

provide a rich and vivid or 'thick' description (Geertz, 1973) of individuals, thus generating greater understanding of them.

The value of case study research is not only its ability to provide greater detail but to allow the embeddedness of 'social truths' to be explored; to provide a 'step to action'; to be more easily accessible to a wider audience; to catch unique features and rare phenomena; and to embrace the variability and uncontrollable nature of life. What is more, they can perform a number of functions depending on their type, including exploration, description, explanation, evaluation, interpretation and education (Cohen et al, 2000).

As with any methodology, case studies are however subject to some criticism, notably the inability to generalise from case studies to other situations. Shaughnessy and Zechmeister (1997) list additional difficulties with case studies including difficulties in drawing cause-effect conclusions and bias in interpretation and in data collection.

In relation to generalisation, the strength of a case study is its ability to explore the constructed 'truths' as they are constructed and maintained within a particular context (i.e. in this case a school) and so on the one hand negating the need for generalisation. Alternatively it could be considered that generalisability is possible from case studies in certain situations (Cohen et al, 2000), for example, from single instance to the class of instance that it represents; from features of a single case to other classes with similar features; and from single features of the case to the whole of the case. It might also be argued that the detail which is inherent within a case study actually provides a more substantive base from which to make judgements about the similarities and difference between cases and therefore the situations where generalisability is a legitimate and valid act.

With regard to cause and effect, the inability to conclude on this matter is rendered irrelevant when engaging social constructionism. For example, the very move away from

understanding language as the product or 'effect' of our internal mind and towards understanding it as an entity which can both reflect and actively construct our world indicates a circularity which is valued by social constructionism. This research wishes to explore how discourses are constructed, maintained and indeed challenged and has no desire to look for or reduce this complex interaction to simple cause and effect.

Finally in addressing the issue of bias in interpretation and in data collection it is the case that I am an active participant within this process, making choices and selections regarding group compositions, how to facilitate focus groups, what aspects of the analysis to include and much more. It is because this research does not seek to highlight the truth that this fact bears no particular significance. Furthermore both Cohen et al (2000) and Banister et al (1994) highlight the important role of reflexivity in case studies and qualitative research generally. It is also fair to comment that many of the criticisms levelled at case study approaches (as with qualitative work generally) are steeped in and informed by traditional and experimental paradigms and constructs of what 'good' research should look like. As Banister et al (1994) point out, most psychologists are trained to adhere to quantitative traditions and as such it is natural to view and critique other methodologies through this lens. Banister et al (ibid) suggest instead that we need to reformulate the parameters against which we judge qualitative data and subsequently case studies.

It is the opportunity to capture such rich information which makes a case study the methodology of choice for this research. If I am to better understand the range of discourses available within schools on behaviour, given the complexity and scale of secondary school institutions in particular, it would seem pertinent to study this in some depth within one school in order that a wide range of discourses as they are available to a wide range of staff are given the space to be shared and constructed. In order to build this picture I will be conducting focus groups with a range of staff (as discussed below), which will be audio-recorded and then transcribed and analysed (also discussed below). Alongside the analysis of the focus groups I will be analysing the school policy on

behaviour. Taken together the analysis and discussion of this information will form the case study.

The choice of school was a deliberate one, informed by my experience as an Educational Psychologist across a number of secondary schools in West Yorkshire. I approached schools which I had personal experience of and contacts within and also identified those schools who I felt would want to engage with the research questions, particularly with regard to considering the appropriateness of RJ. The secondary school selected had received some previous training on RJ which had not been taken up holistically and they are also a school who have undergone much change generally and with regard to behaviour policies specifically. As such taking a 'baseline' of discourses and considering the potential barriers to adopting a more restorative approach across the school was considered to be a useful exercise for the school at that time.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were used as a means of giving 'voice' to the discourses available. Focus groups have been defined as a 'nondirective technique that results in controlled production of a discussion of a group of people' (Gillfiores and Alonso, 1995, p. 85) and are considered to have evolved from the notion of group interviews (Cohen et al, 2000; Kitzinger, 1994). Focus groups are a generic method in the sense that they can be applied to many fields of study and not exclusively psychology. Although common in market research, health, film, television (Kitzinger, 1994), political research (Cohen et al, 2000) and health research (Barbour, 2005) they have been less systematically developed within the social sciences and educational research although they are being increasingly developed in these areas (Barbour, 2005; Cohen et al, 2000).

Focus groups involve bringing together a group of people in order to discuss a particular topic or theme (Cohen et al, 2000) and they rely on and can be defined by interaction.

Despite their comparison to group interviews, focus groups are less about a question and answer format and more about facilitating discussion between participants, with the researcher having a limited role in proceedings. Gilfiores and Alonso (1995) describe the similarity between focus groups and non-directive interviewing arguing that focus groups share the same assumptions as therapy in believing that people are more likely to talk to each other than to a researcher. This is a particularly interesting point for myself as a practitioner and researcher, as my position as someone of perceived expertise, who advises the school about what they *should* be doing, may undermine attempts to engage participants directly within the context of interviews or to conduct observations of participants in situ, making focus groups a more favourable approach.

Whilst observation is cited as being the most naturalistic and common method linked to case studies, focus groups in comparison may seem contrived and to a degree unnatural (Cohen et al, 2000). Gilfiores and Alonso (1995, p. 99) counter this stating that: 'The produced data are real because the participant's reciprocally influence one another in the same way as happens in real life'. It is easy to spot the principles of social constructionism in this statement, namely the rejection of 'fact' and 'reality'; the importance of language, including the role of language in constructing our world; the importance of context, social action and relationships in shaping how we explain and describe our world; and the notion that as we describe the world we fashion our future (Gergen, 2009). Consistent with this, focus groups recognise and provide opportunity for the construction of discourse. Cohen et al (2000) comment that focus groups can reveal insights that might not otherwise be accessible, whilst Barbour (2005) echoes this and adds that focus groups are good at accessing hard to reach members of society and at diluting the power of the researcher. As such it is possible to make a strong case for the use of focus groups as consistent with both the underlying epistemology of this research and the research questions which are concerned with identifying discourses. Perhaps the only caveat to this is a question about the extent to which focus groups provide the 'space' for the construction of discourses which might otherwise not have been constructed. It is perhaps for this reason that

'triangulation' of data is recommended (Cohen et al, 2000). It is hoped that setting the discourses which arise in the focus groups alongside analysis of school policy and within the context of national policy the study will achieve such triangulation.

Focus groups can be used for a range of purposes which make them a good fit for this research and the research questions. They can help to generate hypotheses, can be used for evaluative purposes; to elaborate and interpret other data; to gather feedback; and to develop themes and topics for other methods such as interviews. Although the use of focus groups as a complementary approach to other methods is a strength in some respects it has been criticised, particularly where focus groups are defined exclusively as a means to provide hypotheses for quantitative methodologies to 'test' (Barbour, 2005; Cohen et al, 2000). Focus groups are considered particularly effective in investigating feelings, attitudes, perspectives and doubts about a concrete theme – which in turn can help organisations to plan and implement change (Gilflores and Alonso, 1995). Gilflores and Alonso (ibid) report on how focus groups have been used in education to explore perspectives of teachers and reform school systems, arguing that if teachers are responsible for putting reforms into practice then there needs to be a 'nucleus' to such attempts to reform and that sensitivity is required to teachers preoccupations, concerns, prejudices, myths, fears and attitudes. This is more than reminiscent of Blood and Thorsborne's 'critical mass' and Morrison's (2007) 'winning hearts and minds' in relation to RJ and as such lends itself to the third research question in particular.

Practicalities

In choosing a focus group approach there are a number of considerations to be made about the practicalities of running such groups, which are flexible and not rigidly defined within the literature. The main considerations to be made are around the number of focus groups, the number of participants within a focus group, homogeneity of participants, sampling and the specific format of the group, including the role of the researcher.

Gilflores and Alonso (1995) recommend a minimum of 3-4 focus groups and a maximum of 10-12 focus groups, which I took as my starting point in establishing the focus groups for this research. In the case of this study, however, the number of focus groups was ultimately limited by the number of participants who volunteered, with just 18 individuals initially volunteering, although an additional 4 individuals volunteered later on in the process whilst 1 individual dropped out, meaning that a total of 21 individuals participated in the focus groups. This allowed for 3 focus groups of 7, 6 and 8 participants respectively to be run, Gilflores and Alonso (ibid) recommending approximately 6-10 members per focus group. Participants dropping out of focus groups is a point raised by Cohen et al (2000) who highlight the importance of over-recruiting to manage this problem.

Selection of the participants was achieved by briefing the whole school staff on the research and then asking for volunteers. This was not without its pitfalls, most notably the lack of control it gave me as a researcher in ensuring some degree of representativeness of the focus groups. I was keen to ensure that individuals from across the school staff were represented in order to allow for as full a range of discourses as possible, as well as giving the opportunity for everyone to have a voice. The platform I was given to brief staff was a staff 'briefing session' which the school regularly held, however, this excluded some members of staff, including domestic and some part time staff. In order to counter some of these difficulties with representativeness I recruited the help of a senior member of staff who followed up the briefing by approaching staff directly and asking them if they would like to volunteer, this meant that she could approach a wider range of staff although not every member of staff. Whilst this was useful in generating what eventually was a broadly representative group of participants - in terms of gender, role and experience - by the admission of the senior member of staff herself she did find herself more readily approaching individuals she knew were more likely to participate, which in turn may have narrowed the discourses available. However, Barbour (2005) maintains that purposive sampling is preferable to random sampling in focus groups in order to maximise

representativeness, whilst Gilflores and Alonso (1995) refer to this as intentional or deliberate sampling.

Whilst representativeness can mean many things, I focussed on the representativeness of role in particular for two reasons. Firstly because I felt that this would give a broader spread of experience and therefore discourse, a decision I made based on my own experience of working in schools. Secondly I was mindful of recommendations within the literature to ensure that the focus groups were largely homogeneous in terms of the features affecting the discussed topic (Gilflores and Alonso, 1995). If participants were to feel comfortable talking to each other (ibid) and due attention given to the vulnerability that participants could feel in 'revealing themselves' then placing participants with those of a similar role rather than for example with someone higher up the management hierarchy was felt to be preferable. Kitzinger (1994) discusses that the strengths of focus groups include the challenges that participants often pose each other, the way in which they can facilitate discussion of taboo topics and the process which allows participants to theorise their own standpoints and often to explain their reasoning. It was felt that having groups which were more heterogeneous in terms of role could have undermined these potential benefits.

That is not to say, however, that homogeneity is without its disadvantages. Barbour (2005) warns of the tendency for focus groups to over-emphasise conformity, something which a more homogeneous group may be even more inclined to do. However, to counter this is to point out that any conformity observed in the focus groups could well be typical of conformity within the day to day jobs of the participants and as such is a valid issue for analysis in itself. Linked to this is the fact that the participants know each other and in some case have close friendships. Whilst in some focus groups this may be undesired (Barbour, 2005), Kitzinger (1994) point out that 'By using pre-existing groups we are sometimes able to tap into *fragments* of interactions which approximate to 'naturally occurring data'' (p.105).

Having established the focus group composition, the process of the groups needed clarification. Although it is generally advised that the role of the facilitator be limited, Kitzinger (1994) does present an example where the facilitator maximised interaction, urged debate, challenged assumptions, encouraged discussion and invited participation in a group exercise, specifically a card game. Barbour (2005) also suggests the possibility of using stimulus material such as vignettes. However, after considering the various options I simply provided each participant with a discussion starter sheet (See Appendix F) which oriented them to the broad topic of behaviour and behaviour management. It was assumed that the participants would have much to say on the matter and it was also felt to be in keeping with the research questions to keep the discussion open ended with low facilitator involvement. The research is concerned with discourses as they 'exist' and are constructed within the school in order to provide something of a 'baseline' for the consideration of RJ. This ensured that 'Priority is given to the respondents' hierarchy of importance, their language and concepts, their frameworks for understanding the world' (Kitzinger 1994, p.108). The exception to this was the introduction of some key restorative principles into the conversation where it was felt that these had not already been touched upon or where the group were stalling considerably in their discussion. This only happened in one focus group (focus group 1), where I posed a question to the group to facilitate discussion of the importance of relationships.

Analysing the Data

Transcription

The focus groups were audio recorded and later transcribed (see appendix I). It is acknowledged that to record and then to further transcribe is to reduce the original discussion and some consideration was given to video recording in order to retain some of the visual information (Bailey, 2008). However, given the priority afforded to ensuring

participants felt comfortable, safe and able to fully engage it was felt that this may have been too intrusive.

The issue of retaining detail was therefore picked up in the choice of transcription. I elected to use a variation of the transcription system devised by Jefferson (1984). This is a system used by some discourse analysts (e.g. Potter and Wetherell, 1987) and by Pomerantz (2005) in her work with a school pupil and is particularly associated with Conversation Analysis (Wooffitt, 2005). It focuses on transcribing not only the spoken words but also dysfluencies and non-lexical contributions and can be useful for capturing aspects of speech production and temporal positioning of utterances such as turn taking, timing, emphasis and volume (ibid). The detail it incorporates can capture detail which may be interactionally significant.

A detailed system such as this is time consuming and the need for detail had to be balanced with the practicality of time, the research questions and methodology. Therefore, I selected aspects of the system which I felt would give useful detail to the transcription and that would contribute to understanding the discourses shared (see appendix H for symbols used), in particular those features which are focussed on aspects of interaction e.g. overlapping speech, interruptions and hesitation. This highlights the subjective process involved in transcribing, with interpretation and judgements forming part of the process (Bailey, 2008).

In the case of the transcripts prepared for this research, it is important to note that in the second focus group there was an interval which was not recorded due to the malfunction of the digital recorder, meaning that the transcript is not a complete record of what was discussed. Given the nature of my research questions which ask the question of what discourses are present and dominant it is possible that the omission of data could skew how this question is answered with some discourses over or under represented as a result. I have endeavoured to guard against this by using notes and recollections which were

taken, the general gist of which can be referenced, however, it is of course not possible to analyse the more detailed use of language.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Following transcription of the focus group audio-recordings both these transcripts and the school behaviour policy (appendix J) were subjected to a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA hereafter).

A range of analytic approaches have emerged which are consistent with social constructionism's focus on language (Banister et al, 1994; Burr, 2003), including critical discourse analysis, conversation analysis (Bucholtz, 2001) and discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). A direct link between methodology and social constructionism is also made within discursive psychology where Edwards and Potter (1992) make clear their focus on methodology. The links between social constructionism and discourse analysis are made particularly clear in Bozic, Leadbetter and Stringer's (1998) description of discourse analysis. They describe how discourse analysis is 'more than a purely linguistic discipline, it explores how forms of communication actively create the way we understand the social world' (ibid, p.65), which is in keeping with social constructionism's focus on how we use language to construct our world. Bozic et al (1998) also address the issue of power relations and the positioning of individuals, stating that discourse analysis is concerned with 'the way we are positioned and in turn position others through the use of spoken and written language' (ibid, p. 65) and that it provides a way of 'understanding how power relations are perpetuated and how institutional culture is maintained' (ibid, p. 65), which is reminiscent of the macro approaches to social constructionism influenced by the likes of Foucault (e.g. 1977). Bozic et al (1998) make a final point about discourse analysis in terms of its concern with 'the subtle ways in which the deployment of particular discursive forms can create the edifice of factuality on which many important aspects of the social world depend' (ibid, p. 65). This clearly engages the realism-relativism debate

within social constructionism in terms of considering the issue of objective truths as well as generally being consistent with social constructionism's concern with how knowledge is sustained by social practice including language.

The work of Bozic et al (1998) also emphasises the developing culture within educational psychology itself with regard to engaging discourse analysis as a methodology. Billington (1995) highlighted the role that discourse analysis can play in revealing social position and power relations and the complexity of human interactions. In particular he focussed on the need for EPs to utilise this methodology within their practice. This has been followed by a number of other EPs engaging with discourse analysis, including Pomerantz (e.g. 2005) and O'Brien and Miller (2005). The relevance of discourse analysis to this research is strengthened by its position within this developing culture.

In considering the relative styles of authors such as Bozic et al (2005) and Billington (2005) it is also possible to see that in much the same way a distinction can be made between macro and micro approaches to social constructionism, so too can a differentiation be made in the field of discourse analysis between a focus on wider social and political context and alternatively a focus on the micro-dynamics of discourse (Nikander, 2008). Wetherell (1998) agrees that it has become common place in social psychology in recent years to distinguish between two or more forms of research method, notably distinguishing between the fine grained analysis of action orientation of talk and investigations concerned with power and subjectification (ibid).

The style of analysis developed by Potter and Wetherell (1987) is characteristic of the more fine grained approaches that Wetherell (1998) refers to. Key components of this style of analysis are function, construction and variation. Their analysis is concerned with how discourse is manufactured, how accounts are constructed, on what occasions certain discourses may be constructed and what function or purpose such discourses achieve. Potter and Wetherell's approach is characterised by their consideration of interpretative

repertoires, defined as 'a culturally familiar and habitual line of argument comprised of recognizable themes, common places and tropes' (Wetherell, 1998, p.400).

In contrast it is an interest with the macro issues of ideology and power which differentiates CDA from many other forms of analysis. Meyer (2001) explains that CDA determines its interests from the outset and in doing so often crosses the line between social scientific research and political argumentation as it 'endeavours to make explicit power relationships which are frequently hidden' (ibid, p. 15). Inherent in this view is the belief that 'language is not powerful on its own – it gains power by the use powerful people make of it' (Rogers, Malacharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui and O'Garro Joseph, 2005, p.383). As such CDA aims to examine how personal, social and political projects are achieved through discourse; to shed light on the negotiation and maintenance of social and political interaction and norms (Starks and Trinidad, 2007); and to consider how issues of dominance, power and control are not just manifested but also maintained through language (Wodak, 2001). Furthermore, CDA aims not only to reveal this power and oppression but to contribute to intervention against it. Meyer (2001) distinguishes CDA from other forms of discourse analysis on the basis that it plays an advocacy role for groups who suffer from social discrimination. CDA has been influenced by Foucauldian traditions and more recently by the work of Fairclough (e.g. 2001) who has established an analytical framework for CDA.

Slembrouck (2001) explains the consideration of three levels of analysis in CDA (micro, meso and macro) allowing relationships to be explored between the text, institutions and the wider socio-cultural perspectives. It is this concern with the link between multiple levels of analysis that have led me to select CDA for this research. CDA is also consistent with this research as it is particularly concerned with the way discourse on behaviour constructs individuals and implies 'norms' (Foucault, 1975); for the inclusion and exclusion of pupils; and for how children are defined and positioned (Miller and Todd, 2002). That I

am setting out with firm interests and as something of an advocate for such pupils is consistent with CDA.

However, the breadth of CDA is, according to Bucholtz (2001), difficult to achieve, with Rogers et al (2005) reporting that many researchers claim to have carried out CDA but indeed failed to adequately explore and link the different levels of analysis. Likewise Wooffitt (2005) alludes to the difficulties in exploring the micro (interactional tasks e.g. turn taking) and the wider political and social concerns, viewing them as conflicting and suggesting that the goals of CDA to explore and link several levels of analysis may be too problematic and risk masking or hiding issues of interest (Wooffitt, 2005). The issue of power is also one which can be turned back on CDA.

Moreover, the intellectual capital associated with natural histories of discourse as an approach – its alluring theoretical density, its impressive arsenal of polysyllabic concepts – may attract practitioners who are more interested in the trappings than in what the framework can do for critical analysis of discourse. (Bucholtz, 2001, p.170).

In conducting any research, researchers are themselves in a position of power, both in terms of how they are often viewed by others - Bucholtz (ibid) suggesting that CDA is engaged in politics which privileges the analysts viewpoint - as well as how they make choices throughout the research process. CDA may be explicit about its political intentions and commitments but this alone is not sufficient without more critical consideration about how such research favours one ideology over another and how in doing so it maintains ones set of 'norms' or 'truths' over another. Furthermore, in committing so strongly to an ideology which places certain people as the 'losers' and others as the source of power, CDA risks portraying a reductive theory of power (Blommaert, 2001). That is to say that CDA reduces power itself to a simplistic understanding of 'them and us' where 'them' is invariably defined as the larger institutions and 'us' as the smaller individual, therefore

simplifying a potentially intricate and complex network of power relations and negating the different ways in which people may hold power. Bucholtz (2001) recognises that not all institutions are 'faceless, hegemonic forces' (p.172) and insists that some institutions can be flexible and malleable. In short, she recommends that a more 'nuanced' analysis is needed, which recognises the subtleties, complexities and contradictions of politics and power.

However, in response to such concerns CDA places reflexivity at the heart of its approach (Gee and Green, 1998) and it is this reflexivity by researchers about their own role in their work, which is purported to characterise CDA (e.g. Fairclough, 2001; Starks and Trinidad, 2007). However, Rogers et al (2005) have called into question the level of reflexivity which actually takes place in practice, whilst Bucholtz (2001) warns that too much critique can miss the point that opportunities for researchers to self-affirm their work actually contributes to and sustains 'scholarly enterprise'. Hammersley (2003) raises a second issue with reflexivity, which is that reflexivity can be problematic due to its potentially endless nature. He argues that 'this endless reflexivity undermines any claim for research as an activity distinct from fictional writing' (p.765). Bucholtz (2001) agrees that there can be no end to reflexivity because there is no end to recontextualisation/entextualisation, although does not view this as problematic necessarily. A balance, it seems, is needed which ensures adequate reflexivity, without this becoming an endless and thus impractical task. As such, the 'problems' with reflexivity can most likely be addressed by taking a pragmatic and flexible approach to CDA.

A Framework for Analysis

As pointed out by Bozic et al (1998), discourse analysis generally, including CDA, is characterised by variability and to some extent a vagueness around the specifics of how to conduct such an analysis. This reflects a reluctance to treat CDA as a mechanistic process (Antaki, Billig, Edwards and Potter, 2002; Bozic et al, 1998) but instead to embrace

eclecticism (Gee and Green, 1998; Nikander, 2008). For example Rogers et al (2005) warns specifically against the over use of Fairclough's (2001) framework in educational research, arguing that there should be greater use of multi-modal analysis, in order to meet the needs of a methodology which is multi-disciplinary in nature. Whilst Wetherell (1998) argues for greater synthesis of different styles and the weaving together of different influences in the field. This is necessary, according to Bucholtz (2001), in order that such analysis does not become just another doctrine to which researchers 'slavishly adhere' (ibid, p.175).

There are consequently a number of frameworks available within the literature which I have considered (e.g. Meyer, 2001). Fairclough's (2001) framework has provided the primary structure for the analysis given its familiarity and use within the educational research generally (Rogers et al, 2005) (see table 2) as well as its attention to how discourse relates to the wider network of practices within which it is located.

Table 2 – Fairclough’s (2001) analytic framework for Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

1. A focus on a social problem with a semiotic aspect.
2. Identification of obstacles to this problem being tackled through analysis of:
 - a. Network of practices as it is located within
 - b. Relationship of semiosis to other elements within a particular practice
 - c. Discourse (semiosis itself)
 - c.i. Structural analysis (order of discourse)
 - c.ii. Interactional analysis
 - c.iii. Interdiscursive analysis
 - c.iv. Linguistic and semiotic analysis
3. Consider whether social order (network of practices) ‘needs’ the problem.
4. Identify ways past the obstacles.
5. Reflect critically on the analysis.

Fairclough’s (2001) analysis is based on an analytical progression from description, through interpretation, through explanation (Slembrouck, 2001). It provides an emphasis on a ‘problem’ which needs illuminating; on the placement of a given example of discourse within a wider network of practice; on implied ideological functions of discourse; on emancipatory goals; and on the critical aspects of research. Fairclough’s (2001) focus on linking macro and micro level issues is pertinent to this thesis in understanding how

discourses within the focus groups reflect a wider, more national discourse on behaviour. In particular, Fairclough's (op cit) description of the oscillation between action and social structures highlights the importance of considering how the action of individuals in school may continue to maintain social structures and organisation as well as vice versa.

However, in taking on board the need for greater eclecticism and the over-reliance on Fairclough (Rogers et al, 2005) I have also considered the approach of van Dijk (2001). The discourse structures suggested by van Dijk (ibid) include 'topics: semantic microstructures' (the global gist and overall coherence), 'local meanings' (the meaning of words) and 'subtle formal structures' (the pragmatic and interactional features). Whilst Van Dijk (ibid) also references this distinction between 'local' and 'global' structures, additionally he provides what I would consider a more 'user friendly' and fine grained framework for considering the linguistic features, including consideration of the overall 'gist' and the properties of talk (e.g. turn taking, pauses, hesitations).

In summary the approaches suggested by these authors would appear a good fit with the research questions, an issue noted as important by van Dijk (2001). They are also approaches which this researcher finds accessible and which I hope would be as accessible to the reader, a point made clearly by van Dijk (2001) when stating that 'CDA must be teachable and hence comprehensible...Complex theorising and analysis do not require abstruse jargon...' (ibid, p. 97).

Taking the influences of both van Dijk (2001) and Fairclough (2001) I have approached the analysis using a number of steps, which are set out in table 3 below.

Table 3 – An outline of the analysis process used within this research

1. A focus on a social problem with a semiotic aspect
2. Identification of obstacles to this problem through analysis of the network of practices within which it is located
3. Analysis of discourse
 - a) Consider the global topics (see tables 4 and 5)
[van Dijk's 'topics-semantic microstructures' and Fairclough's 'structural analysis']
 - b) Linguistic features (including nominalisation, active-passive voice and modal verbs)
[van Dijk's 'local meanings' and Fairclough's 'linguistic and semiotic analysis']
 - c) Interactional features (including intonation, repetition, hesitations and pauses, turn taking, rhetorical questions and paratactics)
[Van Dijk's 'subtle formal structures' and Fairclough's 'interactional analysis']
4. Consider how the social problem is needed
5. Identify ways past the obstacle
6. Reflect critically on the analysis

With respect to the latter two stages of the analysis itself there was considerable overlap within these stages. With regard to the issue of interaction, thought was also given to who said and did what in order that the immediate social context (for example, job roles) could be considered. It must also be acknowledged that the choices which I have made are indeed choices. It is never possible to do a complete analysis (van Dijk, 2011) and so it is recognised that the following analysis represents only one possible analysis of the data

and that the choices made regarding data and linguistic categories are but a selection of those possible. This is influenced by the research questions, but also my own personal and professional interests and the social network of practices that I inhabit as an Educational Psychologist.

Ethical Considerations

Researchers have an obligation to follow ethical guidelines in order to protect their participants. An application was made to the University Ethics board and was accepted, therefore granting ethical approval for the research. A copy of the confirmation letter can be found in appendix A. In this research, the school and the participants were required to give full informed consent. The school were provided with an information sheet (see appendix B) and subsequently a consent form (see appendix C). Likewise on provisionally volunteering participants were each provided with information about the research (see appendix D) followed by a consent form (see appendix E). Participants were reminded of their right to withdraw at any time.

In order to protect participants further during the sessions, they were grouped with participants of a similar role in order that they felt as comfortable as possible. They were also given a number of ground rules (see appendix G) which were explained in order to ensure they understood aspects of confidentiality and the need to balance disagreements and challenges with respect for each other. As facilitator I also paid careful attention during the groups to ensure that all voices were heard.

At the end of the session a general debrief was conducted and participants were reminded of their right to ask questions or speak with me about issues raised. This proved particularly important during the third focus group as two members of the group had become upset during the discussion. Extra time was taken to ensure their immediate well-being before leaving the room and an additional debriefing session was planned and

conducted in order to plan for how the issues could be addressed further. The outcome of this was that the Principal from the Educational Psychology Service and the author met with the headteacher of the school to communicate some of the concerns on behalf of those individuals. This perhaps illustrates the possibilities for intervention which can arise through listening to and exploring discourses.

Participants were assured of their anonymity and advised that no one would be identifiable in the focus group transcriptions and that once the discussion had been transcribed and the thesis completed, the digital recording would be destroyed. Participants were also sent a transcription of the discussion for their own records and will be given the opportunity to read any research reports produced.

There is also the issue of my position within the school. Having been one of the Educational Psychologists (EPs) working within this school it is possible that my familiarity with the staff and the position I hold may have had ethical implications. For example, the school may have felt more obliged to participate and likewise the individual staff members may have found it more difficult to refuse someone with whom they had an ongoing relationship. There is also the issue of how my position as an EP and within this my positionality within the research topic affected their openness and comfort within the focus group sessions. For example, staff may have felt under pressure to present a positive image of themselves and how they conduct themselves with regard to behaviour. Likewise staff may have felt obliged to promote a certain position on behaviour or felt that I had passed judgement on that position.

However, these issues were felt to be minimised as a result of my limited role as facilitator; as a result of the fact that many staff were not known to me personally and those who were appeared comfortable; also the fact that during the sessions I felt relatively 'invisible' as participants rarely looked towards me or tried to include me in the discussion, suggesting that they were sufficiently engaged in their own discussion and that the

discourses generated were of their construction and not co-constructed with me. The general outcome of the analysis also suggests discourses which are not necessarily consistent with my own and so it feels fair to conclude that my position as school EP and my position with regard to behaviour was not a significant factor in the construction of staff discourses on behaviour.

In conclusion, this research has sought to use a case study methodology, employing the use of focus groups and of critical discourse analysis to explore the following research questions:

- What are the dominant discourses on behaviour amongst school staff within a secondary school?
- How are certain voices privileged over others?
- What are the implications for the construction of alternative discourses and in particular one of relationships and RJ?

The choice of methodology reflects the social constructionist epistemology at the heart of this research. I wish to understand not only what discourses are present within the school but how these are presented, maintained and challenged within the context of this school, the implications for power relationships within the school, the possibilities for challenge and change and how this reflects and is reflected by national discourses. The methods used are considered a good fit for this purpose in providing detailed contextual information, providing access to a wide range of school staff and placing language as a central component in understanding how individuals construct the world around them.

The following chapter will consider the outcome of the analysis of this data and will discuss this alongside the general literature and policy documentation available, including the pros and cons of employing certain discourses over others. This discussion will also endeavour to start answering those research questions posed above and ultimately to make some conclusions with regard to the viability of a RJ approach within this school.

Chapter 4 - Analysis & Discussion

This chapter presents the analysis of the transcripts and the policy document and discusses these in relation to the research questions as well as the literature generally. Having reviewed the discourses available within the literature, I am primarily concerned with establishing which discourses appear to be most dominant within this research and the issues relevant to this. I then turn my attention to the additional research questions which concern themselves with the implications of these discourses, as well as the linguistic tools employed throughout the data; namely how these position some voices as more or less privileged; and how they can present barriers and also possibilities for engaging with an additional and/or alternative discourse such as Restorative Justice.

In contrast to quantitative and experimental traditions where the results and discussion sections are often separate, it is more difficult within qualitative research to make a clear distinction between the analysis and discussion. As such the analysis and discussion have been presented together in this thesis. In line with Fairclough's (2001) framework, the analysis and discussion will begin with a consideration of the social problem, its context and the network of practices within which it is located. I will then go on to address each research question in turn, discussing the aspects of the analysis which can be engaged in responding to those questions and how this relates to the literature.

A Social Problem and its Context

Fairclough (2001) begins his analytic framework by asking what the social problem is that necessitates analysis. Behaviour as a social problem is a clear topic of discussion within the literature including its nature, severity and how best to address this (e.g. Visser, 2005). Whether pupils behave in a manner which is consistent with the expectations of school and the wider society poses a social problem which is widely debated and about which a

wide range of people are concerned: parents; school staff; media; and politicians alike (e.g. Hallam, 2009; Parsons, 1999). However there is an additional angle from which to consider the way in which difficult behaviour in schools presents a social problem. Having considered the socially constructed nature of behaviour (e.g. Pomerantz, 2005) it is also the case that these constructions may marginalise and alienate pupils by supporting a within-child view of difficult behaviour (e.g. Clough et al, 2005). It is these constructions and the discourses which support them which are the social problem under consideration within this thesis.

As Fairclough (2001) highlights, any such problem occurs within a network of social structures and practices, many of which have already been discussed in some detail. Within the school under study in this research there are many practices which relate to the issue of difficult behaviour. The school has 464 pupils and 85 members of staff, of which 35 members are teaching staff and 50 members are non-teaching staff. The school operates a behaviour policy and a number of associated policies, including an exclusions policy. Arising from this staff are expected to utilise a number of rewards and sanctions and are expected to follow a 'Consequence' system, which details a hierarchy of responses from C1 to C5, increasing in severity with each stage (i.e. ranging from 'polite warning' to 'on-call + 45 minute detention'). There are systems for internal and fixed term exclusion, including the use of 're-admit' meetings for pupils returning to school following a fixed term exclusion.

There are specific rooms in the school linked to managing difficult behaviour. There is an 'On-Call' room staffed by two members of staff, where pupils can be sent as a result of serious or repeat behaviour; staff in this room can also provide support to teaching staff for removing pupils from lessons. There is a Learning Support Unit (LSU), where some pupils with difficult behaviour are educated separately to the rest of the pupils in school.

As well as teaching staff there are a number of roles within school for staff who specialise in difficult behaviour. There are non-teaching Heads of Year for each school year who are responsible for identifying patterns of problems across individuals, groups, classes and the year and for supporting staff where such difficulties arise. The Heads of Year also liaise with parents and make extensive use of the 'SIMs' computer system. The SIMs system is a database where details can be recorded about any difficulties or incidents related to difficult behaviour and it is based upon this information that Heads of Year are able to identify what they term 'hotspots' in order to support teaching staff. A number of individuals are also employed as Learning Support Assistants and they work both within and outside of the LSU supporting children with a variety of needs including those who are considered to present with difficult behaviour. Administrative staff are also employed in relation to SEN (Special Educational Needs - including difficult behaviour).

Within the school there are a range of management positions including a manager responsible for the LSU, as well as the middle management and senior management teams for the whole school. This includes an Assistant Head role who is responsible for Pastoral care (including difficult behaviour). The school make use of Team Around the Child Meetings (TAC) for pupils with difficult behaviour and involve outside agencies, where deemed necessary, such as Behaviour and Attendance Service, Educational Psychology Service, Speech and Language Therapy Service and the Child and Family Mental Health Team.

As for any school, how difficult behaviour is defined, judged and responded to is also inextricably linked to a number of wider practices, including council and national approaches (e.g. SEAL – DfES, 2005), policies, reviews (e.g. HMSO, 1989) and legislation (e.g. The Education and Inspections Act, England and Wales, 2006); local practice; professional development targets and opportunities; peer supervision, monitoring and feedback; research literature; the media (Parsons, 1999); and personal experience. For those members of staff sharing their personal experiences within the focus groups there

are also a host of implicit practices within which their experience is located. For example: resources; accountability and the role of Ofsted; school and council priorities; the curriculum and expectations regarding results; the nature and definition of their role within school and how this links to others' roles; their place within the school hierarchy; daily teaching demands, such as the particular cohorts of pupils they are teaching and their general workload; administrative processes and systems within the school; and the demands placed upon them by others, such as parents and governors.

The network of practices within which difficult behaviour is located also includes discourse itself, Fairclough (2001, p130) highlighting the need to analyse the 'relationship of semiosis to other elements within a particular practice'. Semiosis is used by Fairclough (2001; 2005a) to refer to the broad sense of carrying meaning, be it through language or visual semiosis and body language; and in this instance he uses the term semiosis as an alternative to discourse, preferring the term semiosis for its depiction of discourse as referring to the semiotic elements of social life. Fairclough distinguishes discourse in this sense from discourse as a noun or 'as a category for designating particular ways of representing particular aspects of social life' (ibid, p. 2), although he does also retain this latter definition, presenting the notion that 'Semiosis in the representation and self-representation of social practices constitutes 'discourses'' (ibid, p.4; see also Fairclough 2005b). Fairclough (2001) illustrates an understanding of the relationship of semiosis (or discourse) to other elements within social practice in the context of government as a discourse of power which serves to impose, extend and legitimise (ibid).

Discourse related to difficult behaviour in schools has already been discussed in some detail, albeit arguably with a greater focus on the categorisation of discourses (Fairclough 2005a, 2005b), for example, the discourses of behaviourism, zero tolerance and management (e.g. Cameron, 1998) and those around social and emotional skills, cognitive psychology and the concept of 'need' and intervention (e.g. Clough et al, 2005). Even the most basic terms such as 'behaviour management' and 'intervention' can locate power

and have the potential to position how difficult behaviour is viewed and responded to, shaping people's understanding of the legitimate ways of approaching difficult behaviour.

What is clear is that the list of practices within which difficult behaviour is located are sizeable. The nature of schools, including their size, their links to local and national government and the wide range of agendas, programmes and objectives which staff are expected to juggle, make them complex entities and make it easy to empathise with the perceived need for regulation (Thomas, 2005) and towards the language of management, need and intervention. Presuming therefore that there is a social problem which needs addressing this in turn illustrates the magnitude of the obstacle which is presented by this network of practices in terms of any intentions to change or challenge dominant discourses. With this in mind I will turn attention to the first of the three research questions which asks what those dominant discourses might be.

Research Question 1 - What discourses are present with regard to behaviour and its management amongst school staff and which of these predominate?

In order to address the three research questions within this thesis, three transcripts arising out of three focus groups and one behaviour policy document were analysed. For clarity throughout this chapter these will be referred to as: transcript 1, relating to focus group 1 which involved management staff; transcript 2, relating to focus group 2 which involved subject teachers; transcript 3, relating to focus group 3 which involved support staff; and the policy document.

In order to address the first research question regarding which discourses are dominant I first considered the general content of the focus group transcripts and of the policy document, identifying a number of different topics. The table below (table 4) reflects an overview of the main topics of conversation and some of their sub-themes across the focus groups. This does not represent an exhaustive or definitive list but an illustrative list

of the range of topics available. Following on from this table 5 shows the headings and subheadings of the policy document again illustrating the range of the topic areas covered.

Table 4 – Global and sub-topics discussed across the three focus groups	
Topic	Sub-topic
Judgement on behaviour	Changing behaviour in school, Ofsted
General behaviour strategies	Classroom management, corridor management
Factors affecting behaviour	Head of year role, arrival of new students, gender differences
Who is misbehaving	Pockets of students, named students
Consistency	Staff and parents, impact of inconsistency, pupil perceptions
Parents	Participation, conflict, lack of consistency
Systems and data gathering	Evidence, reviews
Role boundaries	Own role, challenges, parameters, confusion, management structure, pay
Mediation	
Nature of behaviour	Low-level disruption, corridor behaviour
Independence	Participation
Staff training	
Consequences and sanctions	Exclusion
Positive behaviour and rewards	
Intervention, needs and differences	Child Protection, LSU, SEN, transition

Staff relations	Teachers-non-teacher, conflict, bullying, complaints, staff behaviour generally
Communication and information	
Culture	Favouritism, old and new traditions
Learning	Standards, behaviour for learning, dominance of academic
The past and the future	Historical comparisons, next steps, challenges
Staff dissatisfaction	Voice, value
Preventative measures	Quality of teaching, clubs and activities, teaching style

<p>Table 5 – Areas covered by the school behaviour policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims and objectives • How the policy is implemented <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ school ethos ◦ expectations of the school community (staff/governors, students and parents/carers) ◦ curriculum ◦ school systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ rewards
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- sanctions
- consequences
- undesired behaviour out of class
- internal truancy/refusal to attend lessons
- detentions
- on-call
- internal exclusion
- support systems for individual student needs
- support systems for staff
- support systems for parents/carers
- travel

From considering these topics as well as the use of language within the transcripts and the policy document it is possible to identify a number of different discourses. These different discourses occur to differing extents both within and across the four data sources. In the following discussion the presentation of these discourses is separated into those which could be considered the dominant discourses and those other discourses which are present to a lesser extent and less consistently across the different data sets. I acknowledge that the identification of discourses is a subjective process and that those discourses below do not constitute an exhaustive list. It is also the case that within each discourse which is discussed, the material used to illustrate this and the aspects of the discourse discussed represent again only a fraction of that which could have been included

(table 6, below, indicates the transcription conventions used within the transcript extracts presented). As was the case within the critical literature review, it is also the case here that the subheadings under which these discourses are discussed represent an arbitrary and artificial division and that different links and associations may and perhaps should be made by the reader.

Table 6 – Transcription Conventions	
<u> </u>	Stress/emphasis
(.)	A very brief pause (approximately less than one second)
(1)	A short pause (approximately one second)
(2)	A longer pause (approximately 2 seconds)
(2+)	A pause longer than 2 seconds
I'm doing= =yeah but	Interruption
[it's good] [yeah]	Overlapping speech
((laughs))	Nonlinguistic/paralinguistic aspects
?	Rising intonation

XX	Unknown speaker
T1/S1/M1	Teacher/Support Staff/Manager speaking

Dominant Discourses

The discourses identified are summarised in table 7 below. Two main ‘groups’ of dominant discourses were identified, namely ‘behaviourism, zero tolerance and systems’ and ‘staff roles and conflict’. Those discourses identified as dominant were considered such as they appeared most frequently and consistently across all of the data sets. Whilst this is not an objective measurement of frequency these two groups of discourse clearly set themselves apart for the author in terms of their frequency and also in terms of the passion with which they appeared, suggesting an emotional investment in their maintenance and by implication that they are more difficult to challenge and so dominant in this respect also. The two ‘groups’ are further subdivided by subheadings to give a flavour of the aspects of sub-discourse which make up these wider discourses.

Table 7 – List of the dominant and additional discourses identified	
Dominant Discourses	Additional Discourses
Behaviourism, Zero Tolerance and Systems	Needs and Differences
Staff Roles and Conflict	Teaching and Learning
	Defining and Judging Behaviour

Behaviourism , Zero Tolerance and Systems

The first of the two dominant discourses identified is that of 'behaviourism, zero tolerance and systems'. Analysis and discussion of this focuses particularly on issues of consistency, rewards, sanctions, consequences and the importance of systems for data collection.

Behaviourism and Consistency

The discourse of behaviourism is pervasive within the transcripts and the policy document, for example the very term 'behaviour management' (transcript 2, line 6) suggests an approach where observable behaviours are in need of modification. However, it is the assertive discipline model of behaviourism in particular which is evident in the proliferation of discussion and vocabulary around consistency, clarity and expectations (Cameron, 1998; Cangelosi, 1987; Canter and Canter, 1992). For example, the issue of clarity or rather lack of it was discussed in the 'missing section' of transcript 2 (i.e. that part of the focus group which was not audio-recorded or transcribed). The issue of consistency specifically is very prevalent and explicit across two of the three transcripts (transcripts 1 and 3) as well as the policy document, relating specifically to the consistency of staff in terms of how they respond to difficult behaviour. Discussion on the issue covers a range of aspects including: promoting the importance of consistency; reporting improving consistency; berating the lack of consistency; and discussing the impact of consistency in both school and at home. The explicit discussion of consistency can be seen in extracts 1-3.

Extract 1 (transcript 1, lines 28-33)

M2: [I still] think we could have (.) better consistency (1)

XX: yeah

M2: but (.) the staff are becoming more consistent (.) heads of year are working together and being consistent in things that they're saying to students and (1) sanctions that they're putting in place and things (.) erm (1) but we need everybody in school to be singing from same hymn sheet (.) and I think we've still got a bit of work to do on that

Extract 2 (transcript 3, lines 1-11)

S1: well about er the behaviour management in school I have actually been to XX you know cause he's our new line manager (1) and I've (1) well a lot of things have been put (.) towards him (.) that I'd like changing i.e. basically its the consistency of things (1) where its consistent (1) and where it goes through the right (.) channels (2)

S2: it works

S1: you know if it (.) it definitely works

S2: mm

S1: but then for me (1) erm (.) and X as well (1) erm (1) me me being the behaviour management having to man- you know (1) sort of manage it and everything so all

this (1) I actually find it (.) very (.) difficult (1) and it is because people (1) members of staff (1) are not being consistent through things

Extract 3 (policy document, p.1, taken from aims and objectives)

- Achieve through appropriate expectations of work and behaviour with praise, reward and celebration and explicit and consistent consequences
- To ensure the policy is fully understood and is consistently implemented through the school

In extracts 1-3 the discourse of consistency is clear in the use of vocabulary such as 'consistency', 'consistent' and 'singing from the same hymn sheet'. It is also the case that consistency is more explicitly referenced in the missing section of transcript 2. The need for such consistency is further illustrated by one Head of Year's engagement with the modal verb in insisting that staff 'have to be consistent' (transcript 1, line 42, not underlined in original transcript). The need for consistency is also emphasised in extract 2, where one member of staff highlights just how effective consistency is, arguing that it 'definitely works', whilst her conclusion that it 'basically' comes down to consistency appears to mute any alternative voice on the matter.

This tendency to treat consistency as the only discourse is also apparent in the nominalisation of the term 'consistency' as it is used in transcript 3 in particular, for example, 'it all falls down to consistency' (transcript 3, line 107). As well as placing consistency again as the bottom line or the lynch pin, this member of staff treats what should be a verb in the context of the discussion (i.e. an act that staff carry out in treating pupils consistently) as a noun. In doing this she fails to show the act of behaving consistently as an ongoing process allowing for variability and complexity but instead suggests that the notion of consistency is a fixed, invariable object to be achieved. Bloome

and Carter (2001) discuss the issue of nominalisation and argue that it strips an action of its emotional qualities, style, situated context, personal consequence and the ways in which the act takes up time and space. In doing so it makes ownership, measurement and comparison easier and suggests legitimacy and common sense. Billig (2008) also discusses the use of nominalisation highlighting the way in which nominalisation can lead to the loss of information, clarity and precision. In this context presenting consistency as a fixed achievable 'ideal' minimises the possible difficulties in achieving this. However, it does need to be clarified that whilst consistency is nominalised at times throughout the data it does also retain its verb status on many other occasions, for example, where staff are described as 'being consistent' (extract 1). Also in the missing section of transcript 2 staff discussed the 'human' quality to their behaviour management, one member of staff stating that 'we're not robots', whilst another member of staff speculated on the impact of staff mood on behaviour management and particularly consistency.

However, even where the act of 'being consistent' and its implied variability is acknowledged consistency still tends to be presented as something of a fixed utopia to be achieved, which is illustrated in extract 1 where staff are described as 'becoming more' consistent and where it is added that they have 'still got a bit of work to do'. There is also much preoccupation with how consistency needs to be increased, highlighting further the dominance of the presumption that consistency is important.

Rewards, Sanctions and Zero Tolerance

The presence of a behaviourist discourse is further evidenced by the reference to rewards, albeit namely in transcript 1, where a range of positive approaches to monitoring behaviour and rewarding appropriate behaviour are discussed, for example extract 4:

Extract 4 (transcript 1, lines 1164-1170)

M2: one thing that we were talking about as head of year (.) I'm sure we were or I might have dreamt it (1) erm is (.) like for the reward trips say if we just had one (1) a big end of year reward trip say in summer to a theme park whatever (1) and yeah we've to invite everybody but then really really narrow it down to those students or (.) throughout the year (1) say (.) I don't know at Christmas time or Easter time or something half way through year is for those students that have done extremely well and have really participated well in school (1) you know say in Grease production that we [had]

Additionally, within the policy document, rewards are explicitly acknowledged with one of the objectives of the document being 'to ensure that positive behaviour is recognised and rewarded' (p.1), whilst another says 'to work within a positive proactive approach to behaviour management' (p.1). A list of possible rewards is provided (p. 3) which are noticeable for their focus on tangible and material rewards, rewards which Morrison (2007) is critical of, arguing that they emphasise compliance and obedience.

Yet despite references to rewards, there is more considerable coverage of sanctions and consequences. This is particularly true of the policy document, where there are seven sections of the document given over to discussing sanctions and negative consequences. Sanctions are a feature of all three transcripts, including discussion of the lack of consistency of sanctions and particularly exclusion (transcript 2) and the difficulty with having limited sanctions (transcript 1).

Whilst the presence of both rewards and sanctions is in keeping with a discourse of behaviourism generally, the almost exclusive focus of the policy on sanctions is also reminiscent more specifically of a zero tolerance approach to difficult behaviour. It is consistent with the APA (2008) definition of zero tolerance as involving 'predetermined

consequences' (p. 852) and with the definition of zero tolerance as involving hierarchical consequences. This hierarchical approach to consequences is clear within the policy document as can be seen in extract 7. An inflexible approach to applying this is also a feature of zero tolerance and is further demonstrated in the policy document, as illustrated by the consistent use of modal verbs (underlined in extract but not in original) in extract 5:

Extract 5 (Policy Document, p. 4, not underlined in original)

iii. Consequences

When addressing undesired behaviour, staff should apply the following consequences:

- C1: Polite warning
- C2: Second warning
- C3: 10-20 minutes detention
- C4: Removal to other classroom and/or 30 minute detention
- C5: 'On-Call' + 45 minute detention

v. Internal truancy/refusal to attend lessons

Class teachers must report any missing student immediately to 'On-Call'. 'On-Call' staff will investigate why a student is missing from a lesson and where necessary

make a phone call home. Students refusing to attend lessons should also be reported to 'On-Call'.

The issue of hierarchy is also referred to in the transcripts. For example, in transcript 1 where one member of staff berates the fact that there 'isn't a hierarchy' (transcript 1, line 352). Inflexibility is implicit within all transcripts as a product of the discourse on consistency and in transcript 2, during the missing section one teacher was absolute in her insistence that the 'C system' should be followed 'straight down the line'. It is also evident by the use of language associated with enforcement and the notion of there being a correct way to proceed. For example in transcript 1 where staff discuss the merits of a teacher doing 'everything by the book' (transcript 1, line 689) and in transcript 2 where a teacher references how they 'go through the sanctions' (transcript 2, line 499).

This focus on sanctions is not necessarily surprising (McCluskey et al, 2011) and is a concern to many. For example Morrison (2007) criticises external sanctions in the same way she criticises external rewards arguing that they focus too much on individual rather than communal responsibility. Galvin (1999) argues that 'punishment' does not tell pupils what to do, it does not motivate them to improve and does not modify behaviour; furthermore that punishment transforms the offender into the victim. He does not call for an end to sanctions but calls for logical consequences which 'fit' the crime, whilst McCluskey et al (2011) speak of the need for punishment to be negotiated where it does occur.

Further to the presence of consequences and sanctions, so too is the issue of exclusion present within the transcripts and policy document. In transcript 2 'removal' is seen as a useful and necessary management tool, for example, where one member of staff reports that a difficult group of children is 'something which is probably quite easily addressed by (.) you know (.) removing [them (1)]' (transcript 2, lines 280). Whilst another member of

staff seems disappointed that they 'can't keep them out of circulation (1) forever' (transcript 2, line 722).

The vocabulary of 'removing', 'isolated' (transcript 2, line 698), 'out of circulation' and 'exclude' (transcript 2, line 695) are all consistent with a zero tolerance discourse, the APA (2008) and Morrison (2007) both placing exclusion and removal as key characteristics of a zero tolerance discourse. The rationale for such approaches, which MacGillivray et al (2008) cite as being the need to reduce violence and keep students safe (also McCluskey et al's, 2011 'risk society'), is also clearly reflected in the school policy which establishes a 'secure environment' (p. 1) and the need to 'work/play/socialise safely' (p. 1) as part of the rationale for the existence of the policy. It seems that evoking images of safety are seen as a way of legitimising the focus on consequences.

As with sanctions, there are considerable concerns about the way in which exclusion alienates individuals (e.g. APA, 2008; Morrison, 2007); its use as an organisational tool; and its political role in providing the tough approach which is popular in the context of media coverage that difficult behaviour is increasing (McCluskey et al, 2011). Parsons (1999) views exclusion from school as a paradox, asking is it a 'lost right' or a 'punishment'? Parsons (ibid) argues that if education were a public right rather than a private right we would accept collective responsibility for children who are experiencing difficulty; and that the civilising function of schools has diminished as the drive to improve standards has increased. McCluskey et al (2011) raise a related issue, which is that alternative discourses, such as RJ, present conflict as necessary and inevitable, in effect embracing them as everyday experiences, whilst punitive measures, by implication, would rather 'get rid' of the 'problem'. The multiplicity of school agendas and perceptions of what school is actually for are subsequently highlighted (Billington, 1995).

As seems to be consistent with behaviourism generally, exclusion places individual responsibility before collective responsibility. Hayden and Dunne (2001) published a

document on behalf of The Children's Society exploring the experiences of children and their families as the result of exclusion. By interviewing 80 families they gathered information about the experience of those being excluded and found that one of the main issues for children and their families was a sense of unfairness and injustice. They highlight that in the bid to achieve procedural fairness, akin to the fixed procedures of a zero tolerance approach, the exclusion system fails to pay enough attention to the welfare of its students; that following a 'route' can have adverse effects on some pupils; and that 'the biggest losers in all of this are likely to be children in need of sympathy and support' (op cit, p. 82).

Systems

This latter point is particularly pertinent in discussing the presence of a discourse of systems. Implicitly the issues of consistency, inflexibility and hierarchy already imply a discourse which values systems. However, there is also much explicit discussion of the relative merits, compliance with and understanding of the school systems around difficult behaviour, particularly with regard to the SIMs system and the 'On-Call' intervention. This is particularly the case in transcript 1, where there were three heads of year present. They discuss in some detail their role in logging and analysing behavioural incidents via the SIMs system, for example, see extract 6.

Extract 6 (transcript 1, lines 135-140)

M2: well with this member of staff that (.) it wasn't f (.) for year nine it was another year group but I just said if you're wanting that support (.) you need to be able to evidence (.) that there is an issue in that lesson so you have to make sure that you're recording everything on SIMs and then your head of year will know (1) that yeah there is an issue and should then timetable themselves in that following week (1) to come in and support they can observe the behaviour in that class

The reliance on these systems, particularly for support staff and management is clear, with Heads of Year being dependent on this information. There is great status attributed to these systems with vocabulary such as ‘evidence’ providing the data produced from these systems with a quasi-scientific status which affords it greater integrity and legitimacy. The use of modal verbs such as ‘have to make sure you’re recording everything’ emphasise the compulsory nature of these systems and would also seem to attribute the data its own agency and responsibility, the data becoming the central platform from which to discuss incidents and to base responses.

This systems discourse could also be subsumed within a zero tolerance discourse as collectively it represents a ‘whole school’ discourse, a common standard to which adherence is expected and required. The evident frustration of staff across the transcripts about the clarity and consistency of how these systems are operated further affords great status to these very systems, strengthening both a discourse of systems and one of zero tolerance. Like zero tolerance discourses more generally, a systems discourse reduces behaviour to procedure and data and to the individual level with little consideration of context. An exception to this occurs during the missing section of transcript 2, where staff berate the multitude of systems and their potential for causing confusion, although their critique does tend to focus on the number and ever changing nature of such systems rather than on their existence in the first instance. That said, the difference between support staff and management compared to teaching staff highlights the important issues of role in discourse and how some discourses may be valued over others.

In concluding on this first dominant discourse it is important to note its pertinence given current government discourse around behaviour. The slant of the recent government report ‘Behaviour and Discipline in Schools’ (DfE, 2011) towards reduced tolerance and stronger sanctions indicates an acute need to re-consider how links can be made between discourses and between those people espousing different discourses. In considering this it is interesting to note how behaviourism and Restorative Justice (RJ) discourses might be

both similar and different. Like behaviourism, RJ has something of a focus on consequences, that is, how the actions of an individual has consequences for both themselves and others. Like behaviourism, RJ also has something of a 'systems discourse' inherent within it, with its focus on whole school ethos, involving the community and demanding certain common expectations of respect and accountability. However, where RJ sets itself apart is that rather than focussing on the individual and on consequences for the 'offender', it focuses on the collective responsibility and on how the behaviour impacts others; and rather than applying specific rules inflexibly it applies general principles in context. This further highlights the 'fine line' that exists when analysing and labelling discourses as well as the potential to take a dominant discourse such as behaviourism and 're-work' it into something alternative yet familiar.

Staff Roles and Conflict

The second of the two dominant discourses identified and discussed is that of 'staff roles and conflict', which is a novel discourse in the context of those discussed in the literature review. It is particularly present within the transcripts and especially so in transcript 3. Features of this discourse include establishing and setting parameters around different job roles; the hierarchical nature of such roles; the inadequacy of other staff members in fulfilling their job roles; making claims about one's own achievements and adequacy within their role; and within transcript 3 in particular a general disaffection amongst staff about their position within school.

All transcripts make reference to the existence and/or requirement of role boundaries. For example, extracts 7 and 8:

Extract 7 (transcript 1, line 61)

M5: And as a head of year you'd be going in and supporting which is what we're (.)
what we're doing

Extract 8 (transcript 3, lines 37-40)

S1: you know and it actually says in my job description that for me my position that
I've got to (.) er step over on the inclusion and make sure that is actually done right
and if not then I need to say something (1) but how can I say something when (1) I
don't feel as if I've got the support there

As well as taking the time to discuss role boundaries, several members of staff also identify themselves clearly by their role title when speaking, for example, starting an utterance with 'as a classroom teacher' (transcript 2, line 598-599) or 'as a head of year' (transcript 1, line 76) as well as defining themselves by their role, for example '...that's me I'm behaviour...' (transcript 3, line 416-417). This suggests that staff strongly identify with their position within the school, albeit one that seems relatively fixed and clearly defined.

Issues of hierarchy, power relations and conflict amongst the staff arising out of such hierarchy is implicit within the transcripts. For example, when one teacher repeatedly calls for the need for support staff to be 'justifying what they're actually doing' (transcript 2, line 555). Hierarchy and power are explicitly referenced in transcript 3 where support staff talk of their feeling of being looked down on and undervalued by other members of staff. One member of staff reports being 'treated like crap' (line 49) whilst another reports 'I don't feel (1) as if I'm taken [seriously]' (lines 31). Within this transcript there is also reference on at least two occasions to staff members' 'level' within the system.

Additionally within transcript 1, reference is made to 'a sort of divide between (1) teaching staff and non-teaching staff' (transcript 1, lines 105-106).

The extent of the conflict arising out of this tension between different levels of the hierarchy are made very explicit in transcript 3 where strong language is frequent; assertions that 'it's not right' (e.g. line 52) are used repeatedly; and two members of staff cried during the discussion. Within transcript 3 there is a particularly evident 'them and us' discourse which is illustrated by the use of pronouns. 'We' is more evident than in other transcripts as is 'he' in reference to the head teacher (e.g. transcript 3, line 811), with the occasional use of 'the head' (transcript 3, line 258), both of which are depersonalising. However, the strength of feeling within this group needs to be considered in relation to the wider context of the school environment. Recent job re-evaluation of administrative staff and the involvement of Trade Unions in relation to ongoing disputes between support staff and management was outlined by the headteacher in a post-research feedback meeting. Whilst not negating the experiences of any of the participants, it would seem fair to suggest that the climate in school could have contributed to the availability and selection of some discourses over others, highlighting further the situated nature of discourse.

Further indications of a discourse of staff roles and conflict is the tendency to note the inadequacy or failings of other members of staff. For example, in transcript 3 where one class teacher is described as 'kicking off' (not a direct quote, line 88) when something is not to her liking. Likewise the view of staff in transcripts 1 and 3 that staff training (the implication being class teacher training) is necessary to increase skills. This tendency to put others down is balanced by a complementary tendency towards 'self-preservation', where staff tend to promote their own adequacy and competence.

Extract 9 (transcript 3, lines 1042-1045)

S7: nobody else [will want that job]

S1: [thing is S7 nobody (1) could do (1)]

S7: nobody will want it

S1: your job (1) like you do (1) cause you do [your job] and more

Extract 10 (Transcript 1, lines 736-742)

M2: well its like with a student today we we wanted him to do his his level 2 allan testing (.) said to a member of staff (.) no effing way (1) not doing it (1) and I went up and said I'll go and have a word with him just explain not been in school long he'd come in a bit late (.) he's not going til dinner time got an hour left (1) he's not going on games he's not doing stuff he shouldn't be doing just give it a go and see how you get on and just that kind of kneeling down next to him and talking to him on his level and he did it (1) and it took what 2 or 3 minutes

The identification of others failings coupled with the recognition of one's own successes and achievements contributes to a sense of competition and conflict and not to a notion of a collective or shared responsibility towards a common goal.

This preoccupation with establishing role parameters highlights the blurring of lines between the dominant discourses. A focus on staff roles also lends itself to discourses of behaviourism and of zero tolerance, where everything must have its place and be procedurally correct. It also focuses on individual responsibility. This may well have its

origins in the culture of accountability and legal culpability which pervades schools (and society at large) today, increased target setting requiring narrowing of jobs (Parsons, 1999). In an education system characterised by testing, Ofsted judgements and prescribed curricula and approaches it may be fair to assume that rigid role boundaries provide protection from calls for accountability. It is arguably much easier to demonstrate that you have met your job description when this is clearly and unequivocally stated in the first instance. Likewise it is also easier to side step blame when the task or responsibility is not 'officially' yours to begin with, which is not to suggest a cynical avoidance of responsibility but a desire to protect oneself. The status of workers in this research as public sector employees will only heighten this sense of accountability, accountability which stretches to the highest levels of government. The pressure from government is acute and is evidenced in the history of reviews (e.g. DES, 1989; DfE, 2011; DfES, 2005) examining behaviour and the unequivocal language of documents such as the DCSF's (2009) *Delivering the behaviour challenge: Our commitment to good behaviour*. Clear parameters are set out in this document regarding the expectations of behaviour in schools, the responsibility of schools for this and the consequences of failing to meet these standards.

This in turn links back to the complex network of practices within which school staff and their discourse are located, as illustrated during the missing section of transcript 2, where staff discuss the challenges of target setting for pupils and the difficulties of the systems for assigning effort and attendance grades. Practice is shaped and influenced by school discourse, procedure and policy but also by that of local government and finally by the media who as the 'voice of the people' are well positioned to hold staff and schools very publicly accountable.

Additional Discourses

The following discourses present a range of additional but less dominant discourses. As might be expected from the review of the literature, they present a relatively wide range

of discourse concerned with issues of need, teaching and learning, definitions and judgements of behaviour and relationships.

Needs and Differences

As might be expected from the growing literature on ‘social, emotional and behavioural difficulties’ (DfES, 2005; Miller and Todd, 2002), one additional discourse which was implied across the transcripts and policy document was that of difference, that is, of certain children being different to others and having certain ‘needs’. Within the policy document there are clear references to ‘support systems’ (p.2) and to ‘educational, social and behavioural needs’ (p. 2). Whilst within transcript 3 there are references to ‘CP kids’ (i.e. ‘Child Protection Kids’ – line 105), ‘LSU kids’ (i.e. the Learning Support Unit – line 423), SEN (Special Educational Needs – line 321) and ‘mainstream’ (line 406), which is reminiscent of Ecclestone’s (2007) reflections on current trends towards focusing on emotional wellbeing. Likewise in transcript 1 there are some similar references as well as a reference to ‘behaviour and emotional needs’ (line 458) and the fact that ‘their needs are different’ (e.g. line 455).

Extract 11 (transcript 1, lines 454-456)

M1: but the LSU kids are in LSU because (1) their behaviour is different therefore I mean I’m a great believer in they their their needs are different and therefore (.) they can’t have the same sanctions as everybody else in the school [because (.) you know (.) then (1)]

M5: [they’re not the same as everybody else]

M1: their behaviour and emotional needs are different therefore they need to be treated differently but when that's running alongside mainstream and other kids see that it it's very difficult to sort of explain and justify

Extract 12 (transcript 3, lines 425-426)

T2: [they've been institutionalised] within the LSU (1)

XX: yeah

T2: do you know what I mean? so therefore (.) they wouldn't (.) survive two minutes out in (.) normal mainstream because they would just be fighting (1) and do you know what I mean?

The implication across the transcripts is that there are certain pupils who require a different approach to behaviour and/or who will experience different challenges within the school. One member of staff in transcript 1 expresses the view that some children 'can't have the same sanctions', whilst in transcript 3, staff express concerns about the 'institutionalisation' and the challenges of 'reintegration' (transcript 3, line 413) and 'dependence' (transcript 3, line 435). Whilst this discourse moves us away from that of behaviourism and zero tolerance it also serves to highlight the potential alienation of some pupils, highlighting the Restorative Practices Development Team's (2003) concerns about the way in which pastoral and discipline systems are separated. This in turn raises questions about whether providing for pupils 'needs' in this way actually improves their experience of school or further marginalises and alienates them as several authors are concerned it may do (e.g. Ecclestone and Hayes, 2008; Thomas, 2005). This is an interesting question given the policy document's assertion that 'thorough planning for the needs of individual students, active learning and student voice, progression and structured feedback all help to avoid the alienation and disaffection that lie at the root of undesired

behaviour' (p. 3). This self-assured assertion about the 'root of undesired behaviour' places alienation as a cause, yet the discourse of need carries with it the risk that alienation can be the outcome. If such pupils are already alienated then it is naturally important that our responses to them do not further alienate them, particularly if the need actually lies with the school and not the pupil (Thomas, 2005).

Teaching and Learning

As is true of government documentation which inextricably links behaviour and learning (e.g. DCSF, 2009c) so too is there a discourse of learning and behaviour across the transcripts and the policy document. Within the latter, there is reference within the aims to 'enjoy and achieve in their learning' (p.1) and although this appears to be taken directly from the *Every Child Matters* framework (DfES, 2004) there are further references within the stated expectations of staff, students and parents (p. 2) which relate to curriculum and learning.

Within the transcripts there is an apparent separation of learning from behaviour and a focus on how the academic can get in the way of behaviour, for example in transcript 2 where one teacher describes how the previous behaviour at her school was poor because they were 'so focussed on results' (line 413-414). Likewise in transcript 3, one member of staff makes a sarcastic reference to the irrelevance of good grades in stating '...we got so many A-Cs woohoo aren't we great' (line 322).

However, the converse is also apparent in that behaviour is seen as something getting in the way of learning as extracts 13 and 14 illustrate:

Extract 13 (transcript 2, lines 424-426)

T2: but I think (1) it does need to move forward now and it is good that (1) you can kind of (.) before you were just trying to get them in the classroom now you can pull them up on [inaudible] you know smaller [things]

Extract 14 (transcript 1, lines 178-179)

M1: [but we've now] reached a point where there is an expectation that a fight isn't going to break out in your classroom

XX: mmm

M1: that you can actually teach a good quality lesson we need to now step up that gear and I think some staff still have (1) they're still in that old fashioned mindset aren't they

In viewing learning and behaviour as two linked but separate entities there is a positive hope that promoting appropriate behaviour can be seen as a natural and integral part of classroom proceedings in terms of how staff relate to and respond to their students, promoting thinking outside of a within-child perspective and taking on board environmental factors. This is evident in one teacher's tentative suggestion that poor planning and lessons may contribute to difficult behaviour.

Extract 15 (transcript 2, lines 188-191)

T2: I think that's quite significant that is where (1) the (.) it's not kind of like that positive behaviour thing I just think (1) I know from you know sometimes when (1) you're one of your lessons you haven't you know you haven't planned for it and stuff like that? And you just kind of [get them]

XX: (((laughs)))

T2: you just kind of get [them (1) ((laughs))]

XX: (((laughs)))

T2: well they (.) they're not doing as much I think that's when you can see behaviour rise (.) and (.) I think its same with anything ((laughs)) you know (2) like er it's not just (1) erm (1)

T1: how confidential is this?

Multiple: ((laughs))

T2: yeah but I just think it's it's it's really important that a lot of bad behaviour often (.) in lessons comes from (.) not=

T4: =planning

T1: [yeah I agree with that]

T2: [you know the lesson's poor]

T4: mmm

T2: and I think it's same on lunch times and there weren't as many clubs and [things]

However despite the positive angle which this offers it also highlights some further warnings. The hesitant nature in which the teacher raises the issue, the way in which it is joked about and ultimately her attempt to change the topic in the last line of the extract, suggest that this is not something which is readily and openly available for discussion within the group. Ultimately the separation of behaviour and learning also poses some concerns for how integral to everyday situations behaviour is considered in people's minds and therefore to what extent it remains a within-child issue. This engages the concerns of Hayes et al (2007) with regard to the risk that accepting a role in discourse poses a problem for teachers, for whom maintaining a within-child view means the avoidance of responsibility and ultimately blame.

Defining and Judging Behaviour

As has been the case for government reviews (e.g. DES, 1989), considering the nature of difficult behaviour and how serious it is features within the three transcripts; and to a lesser extent within the policy document, where the expectations of appropriate behaviour for students and staff are outlined on page 2.

Consistent with the literature, one of the main 'types' of difficult behaviour outlined was that of 'low level disruption' reported by staff in transcripts 1 and 2 and corridor behaviour or 'community behaviour' (transcript 1, line 169) which is referenced in all three

transcripts. This represents relatively clear distinctions between behaviour inside and outside of the classroom and between minor and more serious behaviour.

Despite some references to poor behaviour, staff generally report good behaviour and in particular improved behaviour.

Extract 16 (transcript 2, line 3)

T1: Right can I basically say then that I think behaviour in classes (.) in my classes is good

Extract 17 (transcript 2, lines 407-408)

T4: said he's been worked in a lot of schools and yet these were their behaviour was exemplary (.) as good if not better than any other school he's ever been in=

Extract 18 (transcript 1, lines 10-15)

M1: see I think behaviour is (.) definitely improving

XX: mmm

M1: I mean that's (.) more difficult (.) for those of you that haven't been in the school as long (.) as other people but I think there's definitely (1) huge (.) steps have been made towards improving behaviour and that's obviously been shown by the Ofsted so what what is it that's (2) what we've put into place then that's made it since it is improving

The focus on improved behaviour appears to reflect a historical or time related discourse which is very prevalent within the three transcripts. As previously referenced, this school has experienced much change over the last few years, including a relatively recent change of head teacher. As a result of these changes, much of the discourse on behaviour references the past and future in terms of where things were, where they are now and where staff feel they should be heading. Transcript 2 in particular utilises language such as 'massively improved' (lines 422), 'changed dramatically' (line 421), 'next stage' (line 420), 'moving forward' (line 423) and 'last year' (line 135), whilst the language of 'old' (transcript 3, line 60) and 'new' (transcript 3, line 61) is engaged.

This implies that approaches to behaviour move along a linear and staged line and that there is an ideal destination to which staff are or should be headed when thinking about difficult behaviour. This is similar to the 'ideal' or 'utopia' of consistency already discussed and is reminiscent of Visser's (2005) assertion that there is a tendency to want to find the 'answer' to problems with behaviour, implying a positivist view of truth. That the discourse reflects this thinking has implications for how staff, pupils and parents alike can embrace the notion of multiple and alternative discourses where such a truth cannot be guaranteed.

The distinctions which are drawn with regard to present and past behaviour, classroom and corridor behaviour and good and difficult behaviour highlight the far from simple task of defining behaviour in schools, an issue which was raised by the Teacher Omnibus Voice (DCSF, 2008). As such it provides a further cause for warning against the over reduction and simplification of views on difficult behaviour and the need to engage with social constructionism and as such with multiple discourses in thinking about difficult behaviour (e.g. Pomerantz, 2005).

Relationships and Restorative Justice

As Visser's (2005) 'verities' would predict there is also some indication of a discourse on relationships. This is implied through the difficulties with such relationships between staff but also by some explicit references to relationships between staff and students and their importance. For example, there is reference to 'mediation' and its effectiveness in both transcripts 1, 2 and 3. This in turn highlights discourse which overlaps with those implicit to Restorative Justice (RJ) within which mediation is a commonly used approach. Although interestingly within the discussion of mediation in transcript 1, it is again the relationship between staff which is the focus (e.g. lines 933-938), where one staff member explores the difficulty which might be experienced by someone of greater authority (in this case an Assistant Head) attending mediation initiated and facilitated by someone lower down the hierarchy. Generally speaking the discourse on relationships between pupils and staff is somewhat more implicit and hidden within the transcripts and the policy document, except where discussion on relationships was prompted by the researcher in transcript 1.

Within the policy document there is reference to notions of being 'treated fairly' (p. 1), 'rights' (p. 1), 'school community' (p.1) and 'shared responsibility' (p.1) all of which imply relationships and would be considered core characteristics of RJ. Likewise the effort of the document to spell out the 'expectations of the school community' (p. 2) including those of staff/governors, students and parents/carers is indicative of a discourse consistent with relationships and RJ and particularly with collective responsibility. This perhaps represents the clearest stand within the data against the dominance of individual responsibility and within-child thinking.

Transcript 1 in particular offers vocabulary consistent with a discourse of relationships and RJ, particularly in reference to 'should be participating' (line 217-218), 'getting involved' (line 221), 'taking ownership' (line 507-508) and 'setting up agreements' (line 510), phrases associated with discussion around the need for students to be more actively

involved in their learning and, in the case of pupils in the LSU, with the way that their behaviour is managed within that context. There are also a number of anecdotes about how staff have related to certain students successfully, particularly in transcripts 1 and 3 (see extract 19).

Extract 19 (transcript 1, lines 1051-1060)

M2: well with me especially (.) with one year 9 girl whose (.) asked to be on report cause she feels she does better when she's on report is say to her brilliant you've got ticks all day then I'll give you a merit and then if she's got crosses we'll chat about why and what happened (1) and I'll just say (.) can't give you a merit for today (.) but you know at the end of the day I'll kind of explain that to her rather than when say if she's got the crosses first thing (1) I'll say but if you do well tomorrow I'll give you another merit (1) erm (1) and kind of do it that way she'll go yeah I know and (.) a lot of the time she'll put crosses on the report card (1) before the staff even do it because she knows she's not (.) achieved those set targets (1) and she'll sit with xxxx and have a chat why (.) it didn't work (1) erm but we're getting there with her

However, some of the discourse around relationships and RJ is more ambiguous. For example, in transcript 3 support staff discuss the reason why they do the difficult job they do, one member of staff claiming that its 'cause of the kids' (transcript 3, line 675-676). Whilst this implies empathy and a relationship with the pupils it could also imply a sense of martyrdom more akin with the discourse of need. Likewise in transcript 1 where staff discuss the merits of having a 'staff supporter', this introduces a discourse of relationship and communication but yet still manages to maintain a discourse of need, presuming that the pupil needs support.

In transcript 2 there is consideration of how the difficult behaviour of some pupils impacts on others, for example when one member of staff reports how a pupil is being moved from one group to another because their behaviour is 'compromising the rest of the group' (line 39). Whilst this includes a consideration of how behaviour impacts the community it also has some allegiance with a discourse on behaviourism which sympathises with removal and exclusion.

This ambiguity and the way in which language can imply and engage multiple discourses simultaneously makes for an interesting conclusion to the discussion of this first research question, not least because it lends support to the dominant nature of certain discourses, that is to say that even where alternative discourses are apparently being engaged behaviourism and zero tolerance still seem to feature strongly. This is further strengthened through the common threads of individualism and within-child thinking which seem to permeate almost all of those discourses discussed, bringing something of a consensus and uniformity to them.

Yet in considering how multiple discourses can be simultaneously engaged, this also highlights the potential for engaging a discourse of RJ and relationships further and for this alternative discourse to encompass many of those traditional discourses discussed, as well as offering additional considerations. It is with this in mind that I shall turn attention to the remaining research questions and to consider what the data has to say about the implications of these discourses for privileging some voices over others and what can be said for the possibilities of engaging RJ further.

Research Question 2 - How are certain voices privileged over others?

Whilst the previous discussion has considered which discourses are dominant across the data, this discussion turns attention to how power is differentially implied amongst staff

and pupils and how this in turn may favour some voices over others. The issue of voice is an important one in relation to how discourse constructs and maintains power and inequality (Morrison, 2007).

The privilege of certain voices over others is implied inherently through many of those discourses discussed in the previous section. Behaviourism is associated with adults administering consequences; favouring the authority of adults and separating behaviour from responsibility; cushioning pupils from the impact of their behaviour; and depriving them of the opportunity to develop empathy and compassion (Hopkins, 2008).

Punishment in particular might be seen as a way of exerting and demonstrating power and control, McCluskey et al's (2011) paper *Teachers are afraid we are stealing their strength* alluding to the fear and challenge that an RJ approach presents to the sense of control that teachers associate with being able to punish. A focus on behaviourism also focuses on behaviour modification rather than on environmental modification and in doing so lends itself to a focus on individual responsibility and a more within-child perspective. This in turn has implications for the voices which are privileged. Likewise a discourse of staff roles and conflict focuses on issues of accountability and individual responsibility and similarly supports the maintenance of a within-child perspective.

This tendency to locate causality within the child is discussed below with consideration as to how this understanding is implied directly as well as in reference to issues of agency, nominalisation and authority and power and the implications of this for the relative voice of pupils and staff. Furthermore, the variability between staff in their discourse is considered in relation to its implications for how staff voices are differentially promoted and heard.

Within-Child Explanations

Throughout the transcripts, labels which imply a within-child problem are regularly used, such as 'type of kids', 'those kids' and 'behaviour kids' (all found in transcript 3, lines 1003, 681 and 1100 respectively). As Miller and Todd (2002) point out the very terms which are used to refer to children have the potential to define and position them and to place blame very much with the child (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2008). Similarly the tendency across all three transcripts to suggest a deliberate nature to the difficult behaviour in school places causality comprehensively within the child (see extract 20).

Extract 20 (transcript 3, lines 1140-1148)

S7: kids know who they can [play off and] who they can't

XX: [yeah yeah]

Multiple: mmm

S4: yeah

S7: and kids know who who will (1) who will (1) kick off and cause a huge fuss at the slightest thing=

S1: =well there's=

S7: = and they have a bad day and I think oh I don't want to be here I'll go to so and so I'll (1) swear at her I'll get excluded they know (1) they [know exactly who they can do it with]

This is reminiscent of the view of Clough et al (2005) who claim that underlying talk of behaviour there is 'a scarcely disguised assumption...that these school students are manipulative, capable of controlling their actions and unwilling to comply with the work orientation of school.' (ibid, p.11)

Elsewhere the reference to 'immaturity' and 'childish' (transcript 2, lines 222 and 225 respectively) evoke a developmental discourse which presumes that certain behaviours are appropriate at a certain age. I have elsewhere discussed the limitations of a developmental discourse (Harold, 2009), namely that valuing certain traits and images of the child over others and defining what is 'normal' (Bandlamundi, 1999; Bruner, 2008) can serve to promote and aid in the social control and regulation of children (Burman, 2008; Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn and Walkerdine, 2002) given that the development of norms encourages adherence (Kessen, 1979). Kessen (ibid) highlights the problems of such a within-child model.

The child is invariably seen as a free-standing isolable being who moves through development as a complete individual. Other similarly self-contained people – parents, teachers – may influence the development of children, to be sure, but the proper unit of analysis and the proper unit of developmental study is the child alone. (p. 819)

This is not dissimilar to the arguments espoused by Foucault (1975) in his discussion of how the development of discipline in schools has served to normalise certain behaviours over others.

Parsons (1999) speaks of the focus on individual pathology of children with difficult behaviour, arguing that individual pathologising allows for resources to be 'righteously withheld' (p. 161), only the medicalising of a child's difficulties giving rise to the necessary funding and support. This places the issue of difficult behaviour within the context of

economics and also the wider network of practices associated with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and mental health. Labelling children's difficulties as a within-child 'condition' can enable schools to access certain funds or support services, as is the case within this local authority, further promoting the separation of pastoral and discipline systems (The Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003). This also asks questions of the wider economic influences. It is interesting to note that the current government who have taken office during a period of recession and made a number of significant reductions in public spending have also re-constructed behaviour as something different to SEN, as evidenced in the recent green paper on SEN (DfE, 2011), narrowing the definition of which difficulties are deserving of additional public spending.

Understanding difficult behaviour as being within a child makes presumptions about the causality of the difficult behaviour, about agency and about the correct procedures for managing this 'problem', as Billington (2002) suggests in his discussion of knowledge. This in turn places power more firmly with the adults who possess the 'knowledge' about these correct procedures. This can be seen in assertions about the 'right way' (transcript 1, line 38) and the 'wrong way' (transcript 1, line 904) which in turn favours adult voices as the rational and 'expert'. Yet whilst providing adults with voice it paradoxically excuses them from relational responsibility for the child's difficult behaviour, favouring the fixing of blame, solving of problems and correcting of errors over the continuous process of 'comprehending, adjudicating and adjusting within relationships' (McNamee and Gergen, 1999, p. 47). The existence of a superior 'knowledge' is implicit in the networks within which these transcripts lie, including the policies and procedures which establish the correct way to carry out day to day duties. These duties are established and maintained by adults who in carrying them out and engaging in a discourse to support them continue to promote their voice as the one which should be heard and listened to.

This relates not only to the voice of staff in schools but also to that of politicians and the media alike as well as the wider context. The provision of specialist services, Pupil Referral

Units (PRUs), government reviews and research generally all suggest a 'knowledge' and 'expertise' on behaviour which places power very much with those adults wielding that knowledge. It is rarely the voice of the child which predominates on the issues of behaviour be it via local and national government documents, in school policy or in the media, but the views of the adults expressing the need for standards, demanding action and suggesting 'interventions'.

Agency

This issue of causation and the dominance of a within-child explanation is further evident when examining the issue of establishing versus concealing agency, a strategy highlighted by O'Brien and Miller (2005) in their study of a discussion between an Educational Psychologist and school staff about pupil's behaviour. They describe how a person can construct themselves as an agent in order to be allocated responsibility and can also construct themselves as a 'patient' (ibid, p. 70) in order to avert responsibility or blame. Examples of establishing and concealing agency are evident throughout the transcripts. For example within transcript 2 the subject teachers demonstrate a tendency to promote the existence of good behaviour in their own classrooms as being directly attributable to their efforts. This can be seen in the use of the language of possession, such as 'mine' (line 37), 'my group' (line 43) and 'my classroom' (line 126), indicating their agency in the good behaviour that they report. Likewise, staff tended to establish agency when wanting to demonstrate the work which they do. For example, where staff describe a particular job role and its expectations there is a tendency (extracts 21 and 22) for staff to follow this with a statement about how they personally have achieved this expectation.

Extract 21 (transcript 1, lines 141-142)

M2: students that's causing problem (1) and then work with the students and with the staff (1) you know as a group together which I've done before

Extract 22 (transcript 1, lines 75-81)

M5: and we analyse the data

M3: mmm

M5: from the Thursday to Thursday and in our Friday morning meeting so you're picking it up (.) you're picking up (1) [erm]

M3: [yeah]

M5: (1) and then (1) I identified one particular subject area and have been to those (.) erm (1) staff and said do you want me to come in (.) and support you

Describing the role a head of year does is insufficient here and instead staff have ensured that they take personal individual responsibility for fulfilling that role, emphasising themselves as active agents. Likewise in extracts 29 and 30 teaching staff ensure through their use of the first person 'I' and 'I've' (an example of which is emphasised in extract 23) that we are in no doubt it is they personally who have achieved the task.

Extract 23 (transcript 2, lines 5-8)

T1: comes in with (.) different behaviour issues that's actually moved into our school (1) and then I realise that I've then got to start all over with behaviour management and that's when I struggle with behaviour management when I have to start it all over again for every new kid that comes in

Extract 24 (transcript 2, lines 23-24)

T4: but I do think that when (1) somebody moves in from another group it changes the dynamics completely of the group you might have spent a long time [establishing]

Within the behaviour policy the active voice is also utilised alongside the use of collective pronouns and referencing such as 'our behaviour policy' (p. 1), 'we believe' (p. 3), 'we praise and reward students for good behaviour..' (p. 3) to emphasise the positive acts which the school carry out and therefore wish to be attributed with.

In contrast, where the focus of the policy is on difficult behaviour, the agency seems to disappear through use of the passive voice e.g. 'Persistent truancy and/or refusal to attend lessons will be referred to the Head of Year..' (p. 4). This would appear to present as an attempt on the part of the authors to distance themselves from any responsibility for the behaviour and could imply that causation lies with the pupil instead. Likewise there are other examples within both the transcripts and the policy document where the passive rather than the active voice is engaged, for example 'to be challenged (.) to be targeted..' (transcript 1, line 200-201) and 'they're having to be removed from the classroom..' (transcript 2, line 553-554). By using the passive voice to describe these actions the focus is placed more heavily on what is being done rather than who is doing it. The passive voice is commonly used within medical discourse (Rundblad, 2008) and its impersonalising role is well documented, serving as a means of signalling credibility, reliability, objectivity and authority (ibid). It can be used for the purpose of *generalisation* (ibid), to emphasise that the agent of the action could be anyone. Within research this fulfils the function of emphasising objectivity and replicability (e.g. Bandlamundi, 1999).

Within the context of these transcripts and particularly focusing on the latter example ('they're having to be removed from the classroom..', transcript 2, line 553-554), it can be

seen how engaging the passive voice and suggesting that the action could have been completed by anyone in turn legitimises it. In doing so it implies that there is a natural and fixed response to certain situations that any member of staff would *have to* take. This is illustrated further in the policy document where passive constructions are used more so when describing procedure, e.g. 'Internal exclusion will be supervised by members of the Senior Leadership Team...' (p. 5) and 'To allow for meaningful intervention to take place and structured programmes to be adhered to...' (p. 5). The purpose of the passive voice here would seem to be to emphasise the objective nature of the procedure and in turn the inevitability of it. The position of the transcripts and the policy within a network of practices will only add further weight to the legitimacy of these acts. Indeed it is such intertextuality which creates a powerful network of discourse (Bloome and Carter, 2001; Fairclough 1992), Bloome and Carter (2001) warning against the presentation of ideas as if they were logical and common sense, suggesting that it is this attitude which promotes power relations. In this case it is easy to see how legitimising procedures and responses in this way legitimises the authority and voice of those operationalising and maintaining such systems and leaves the lone voice of a pupil or of an individual who does not agree at a significant disadvantage.

Furthermore, with regard to agency, in all of the transcripts and particularly 2 and 3, there is a tendency to name individual pupils, which serves to place blame for their behaviour directly with them, something which could not be achieved if the child remained anonymous. For example, see extract 25.

Extract 25 (transcript 2, lines 229-236)

T5: it there there's a group of year 8s

T6: xxxx

T5: yeah and that=

T6: =xxxx

T5: and

T6: xxxx

T5: yeah and then xxxx

T6: yeah

This tendency to attribute responsibility to oneself in positive situations and yet to revoke responsibility elsewhere is consistent with Thomas' (2005) assertion that schools regularly commit fundamental attribution error in attributing causality with regard to difficult behaviour. This in turn has significant implications for the silencing and alienation of those voices which do not 'tow the party line' within the powerful organisation that is a secondary school.

Nominalisation

A feature of significance to this discussion is that of nominalisation. The nominalisation of the term 'behaviour', as well as the use of the pronoun 'it' to refer to behaviour appears to

give behaviour an agency of its own. As I myself reference 'difficult behaviour' throughout this thesis, so too is the term 'behaviour' used as a noun within the transcripts (e.g. transcript 1, see extract 26) and particularly within the policy document where terms such as 'good behaviour' (p.3), 'anti-social behaviour' (p.3), 'social and learning behaviour' (p. 2) and 'persistent undesired behaviour' (p.4) are utilised.

Extract 26 (transcript 1, lines 10-16)

M1: see I think behaviour is (.) definitely improving

XX: mmm

M1: I mean that's (.) more difficult (.) for those of you that haven't been in the school as long (.) as other people but I think there's definitely (1) huge (.) steps have been made towards improving behaviour and that's obviously been shown by the Ofsted so what what is it that's (2) what we've put into place then that's made it since it is improving (.) what is it that's working then at the moment (.) for us to get that good grade?

In this context nominalisation serves to present behaviour as a fixed trait and again locates it outside of the staff and in doing so conveys a sense of it as something unchangeable. It is interesting to consider this use of nominalisation in the context of Billig's (2008) paper, where he highlights the importance of identifying nominalisation not just where individuals are explicitly engaged in abuses of power but also in relation to those who 'exercise micro-power at a humdrum level' (ibid, p. 831). Whilst staff may not utilise this as an overt strategy for avoiding responsibility and stripping action of its complexities (Bloome and Carter, 2001) the very use of it presents behaviour as something objective and measurable and in doing so places power and voice with adults and those who are 'qualified' to make these measurements and form appropriate judgements.

The suggestion that even in such ‘humdrum’ cases nominalisation can serve as a useful tool for achieving a particular purpose also has implications for this research as it means that even the way in which I employ nominalisation within this thesis should be available for examination. This is a particularly important point if the outcomes of a research paper such as this are to be considered beyond an academic level and by those individuals who have participated. This is because accusations of explicit, intentional and cynical power wielding are unlikely to sit comfortably with staff, whereas an exploration of how they ‘automatically’ engage certain common linguistic devices may create more space for critical discussion.

Authority and Power

Whilst issues of authority and power are implicitly engaged in the preceding discussion, the issue of staff authority is evidenced more explicitly within the transcripts by a range of vocabulary and phrases. These include: the authoritative manner in which ideas are presented as matter of fact; language of evidence and of a quasi-scientific nature; as well as vivid descriptions and multi-clause phrases. The previous extract (extract 26) and Extracts 27 to 29 below give a flavour of these strategies as they are employed across the transcripts.

Extract 27 (transcript 1, lines 396-402)

M1: erm (2+) and then we’re looking at analysing whether that’s actually had an (.) an impact has it actually stopping persistent offenders (1) when you actually look at the data of the school though in terms of exclusions we-we have (1) it-it’s-it’s taken a little dip now there was a big increase in the number of fixed term exclusions it has now fallen (1) slightly it is still high for the you know in proportion to the whole school (2) but it’s actually (1) quite a small number of students now so we may

have (.) erm I mean I've not got the figures but we may have a high number of fixed term exclusions but the actual number of students

Extract 28 (transcript 2, lines 120-121)

T1: the truth is there's some well (.) you know (.) behaviour in school for me I don't find an issue at all if I'm absolutely

Extract 29 (transcript 3, lines 91-93)

S3: =has got like three days in isolation like you say there could be people roaming round telling people to F off setting off (.) fire alarms (.) doing whatever and they might just get wind one person one day [and]

In extract 26 the assistant head who is speaking uses terms such as 'obviously' and 'definitely improving' to convey the logical and absolute nature of what she is saying, thus giving limited opportunity to challenge or question the legitimacy of it. Other examples of this type of language can be found elsewhere in the transcripts, for example the use of 'basically' (transcript 2, line 3), 'genuinely do' (transcript 2, line 91), 'actually' (extract 26, transcript 1, line 374) and 'absolutely' (extract 28, transcript 2, line 121). Again these words function in emphasising the truthfulness of what is being said and therefore give authority to this.

Authority is also given to what staff are saying through the use of quasi-scientific language. Clough et al (2005) discuss the use of such language as a way of providing legitimacy. Although not extensively utilised, references are made in the transcripts to 'analysing' and 'data', as illustrated above in extract 27. General conversation around data gathering, consistent with the discourse of systems, also serves to lend a scientific legitimacy to what staff are saying and perhaps more importantly to what they are doing in school.

Interestingly in extract 27 the assistant head teacher's comment that 'I've not got the figures' illustrates conversely how assertions can lack authority and indeed that the individual making the assertion can lack confidence in their assertion when it is not evidenced by data.

Another strategy which is discussed by O'Brien and Miller (2005) is that of the extreme case formulation, which is a way of describing an object or event so that it conjures up its greatest or smallest attributes (ibid, p. 67). One of the ways of achieving this, according to O'Brien and Miller (ibid), is to present information in a three part list. Edwards and Potter (1992) also discuss the use of three part lists as a construction which is rhetorically important in a variety of different discourses, being effective in creating descriptions which appear extensive or representative, and therefore making it difficult for others to present an alternative version of the situation. Extract 29 includes an example of such a three part list and is just one example of several throughout the transcripts. This particular extract is taken from discussion between staff about the inconsistency over how sanctions are applied, with minor behaviour being sanctioned more strongly than more serious behaviour. Extract 29 is the attempt of the member of staff to emphasis the seriousness of the other 'crimes' which are going unpunished and to emphasis her incredulity with this. A three part list meets this need as it creates an extreme image of a school full of children swearing, roaming around and setting off fire alarms and thus invites the others to join with her frustrations. Additionally, in transcript 1 (lines 57-58) one member of staff who is describing the benefits of the data gathering system uses a list of three items to illustrate the extensiveness of its benefits ('the spreadsheet you can look at every week (1) and pinpoint hotspots and (.) what lessons are having issues that week...').

There is also the use of a further linguistic device which lends authority to what is being spoken. This is the use of modal verbs, which can be found throughout the transcripts and to a more limited extent within the policy document. Extract 5 earlier within the discussion illustrates the use of modal verbs within the policy document. Within the

transcripts the use of 'have to' (transcript 1, line 137), 'should' (transcript 3, line 1196), 'need to' (transcript 2, line 420) and 'got to have' (transcript 1, line 441) all feature and serve to emphasise the authority of what is being said. They imply that the act is essential and suggest that the speaker retains the power to determine whether the 'criteria' have been met.

It is of particular interest that modal verbs are of greater presence within the transcripts compared to the policy document, where you might otherwise expect a long list of 'must dos' and 'have tos'. Whilst they are present, the policy document tends to make greater use of bullet points and the infinitive form of the verb (see extract 3, 5 and 30), forming a declarative statement which is void of tense or voice.

Extract 30 (policy document, p. 1)

2. Objectives

- To raise students self esteem
- To promote/develop empathy and respect for self and others
- To develop in students a sense of self discipline and an acceptance of responsibility for their own action

In removing tense and voice this serves to provide objectivity and applicability which is timeless and without the need for context, thus providing the document and its claims with a kind of universal truth.

In considering the interactive aspects of the transcripts it is noticeable that questions are used comprehensively to gain approval and to generate acknowledgement of assertions, including both questions of a rhetorical nature as well as leading questions. See extracts 31 and 32:

Extract 31 (transcript 1, lines 88-89)

M4: they seem happy though as well don't [they?]

M5: [yes]

Extract 32 (transcript 3, lines 250-251)

S3: and its almost like we're saying that and then its like what you want me to go and pick people up (.) from a classroom ((laughs)) do you know what I mean?

In extract 32, the member of staff asks a rhetorical question in the form of '...do you know what I mean?' whilst in extract 31 the member of staff asks a question to which the only valid response is agreement. This tendency is clear from other examples across the transcripts, for example in the addition of 'did he?' (transcript 3, line 715) and 'you know..?' (transcript 2, line 426). Questions of this nature imply an authority of the person using them suggesting they already know the answer and are merely seeking acknowledgement. They also serve to increase the legitimacy of what is being said by gaining confirmation and approval from others.

The preceding discussion lends itself towards an understanding that it is the voice of the staff which is generally privileged over that of the pupils, which in turn has implications for how pupils are responded to and also highlights the failure of pupils to have a voice with regard to their own behaviour, the context and understanding of which they may be best

placed to communicate. The potential for alienation and isolation is therefore a significant concern (e.g. Billington, 2002).

Staff Voices and Power Relations

In reviewing the data as a whole it is immediately clear that there is variability between and to a lesser extent within each data set with regard to the dominant discourses as well as in the interactional quality of the different focus groups.

As described within the methodology, the three focus groups were intended to be relatively homogeneous in composition, focus group 1 composed of management (which included three assistant heads and three heads of year), focus group 2 of teaching staff and focus group 3 of support staff (which included two Learning Support Assistants, two Behaviour and Attendance personnel, two 'On-Call' staff and one administrator). In terms of the discourses engaged there are differences between these three groups. Within transcript 1 there was a relatively even spread of discussion across topics and most of the discourses identified were represented, including consideration of both sanctions and rewards within their discourse on behaviourism. In transcript 2 this variation was less pronounced with more of a focus on behaviourism and zero tolerance discourses and less of a focus on discourses of need and difference or on relationships and RJ. In transcript 3 the dominant discourse was clearly one of staff role, conflict and disaffection.

The availability of different discourses within different groups may have something to say about the relative voice of these groups. This is particularly the case in relation to support staff, who in focussing on conflict may well be reflecting the view of one member of this group that they have 'not got a voice' (transcript 3, line 48) and do not feel valued (see extract 33).

Extract 33 (transcript 3, line 1032)

S6: he won't he won't find (1) [a] bloody daft monkey like me to [inaudible] pay peanuts

It may also say something about the complexity of power relations, for example, that pupils have more or less of a voice depending on the particular adult and context; the focus of subject teachers on behaviour management suggesting that pupil voice may be more diminished within the context of lessons, where a within child discourse is more heavily drawn upon.

The greater power of subject teachers, comparative to other staff in this research, is further evidenced in how they talk about themselves and their lesson in relation to difficult behaviour. Some teachers appear to suggest that the presentation of difficult behaviour and the appropriate response to it is dependent on their specific lesson and needs (see extracts 34 and 35) and that exceptions in general approaches and judgements should be made for them. For example in extract 34 the teacher is discussing how the 'On-Call' system needs to be applied differently to her lesson because the needs of that lesson are different, whilst in extract 35 another teacher is presenting a caveat to her previous assertions about behaviour being unproblematic by highlighting the composition of the class she teaches, i.e. that they are all girls.

Extract 34 (transcript 2, lines 517)

T5: right (.) now its different for me

Extract 35 (transcript 2, lines 109)

XX: remember I teach girls xxxx which may be significantly (.) different to boys

This contextualisation of their comments serves to set parameters around what is and is not possible or appropriate for them, as if to excuse or exempt them from certain expectations. This expectation that systems should fit around the teacher and not vice versa could give the impression that the teachers are the most important consideration within the school and that they hold or should hold the power.

The greater relative power of teachers, particularly over support staff, is also apparent in the differing interactional qualities of the relative transcripts. Whilst there is general consensus in both the management and support staff groups (transcripts 1 and 3 respectively), there is a marked increase in challenge and disagreement, albeit of a friendly nature, in the teachers group. Within this group there is less use of what Pomerantz (2005) refers to as acknowledging or accepting speech acts in the teachers group, such as 'mmm' and 'yeah'; there is greater use of humour to wind each other up and pick up on each other's supposed failings; and there is greater direct challenge.

Extract 36 (transcript 2, lines 90-91)

T2: I a (.) disagree with all that I don't think there is a significant difference when erm kids move into my class I think they just seem to ta (.) tow the party line I (1) genuinely do

T6: that's because you're such a wonderful teacher ((laughing whilst speaking))

Multiple: ((laughs))

T2: well (.) I do run a dictatorship ((sarcasm))

T3: Its the machine gun you point at them ((laughing whilst speaking))

T2: it is the dictatorship but but (.) I don't (.) I I think (1) er no I don't I don't think there's a particular problem when new kids come in like I've had a few recently (.) one I didn't even notice

Multiple: ((laughs))

T6: yeah but its very different to a class based [subject isn't it

In comparison in the support staff group there is far greater use of acknowledging and accepting speech acts; significant use of repetition both of oneself and of others to convey consensus and corroboration (O'Brien and Miller, 2005); phrases of admiration for each other; and virtually no explicit challenge or disagreement.

Extract 37 (transcript 3, lines 51-59)

S1: It's not right

S6: it's not right

S1: it isn't right

S5: and I feel the same way (1) [I've had instances today]

S3: [as much as I think as well] as much as there is a favouritism culture for the students there definitely is for the staff

S6: totally

S6: [yeah]

S5: [yeah]

The difference in consensus may imply the greater sense of flexibility and freedom that the teaching staff have in expressing themselves but also the reduced need to form an allegiance to protect themselves. In contrast, the support staff present with a stereotypical 'them and us' thinking, as previously discussed, and the way in which they construct themselves within the transcript enables them to seek solace and support from each other and legitimise their thoughts and feelings in a way they possibly do not experience in every day school life.

However, the interactional quality within the focus groups again cautions against a simplistic understanding of power and voice. Within focus group 1 in particular there was greater heterogeneity in terms of management level and experience and this was evident through the interaction style of the assistant head. She took a very clear leading role which might be understood in the context of her having previously been responsible for pastoral care (including behaviour) and therefore being considered the 'expert' within the group. She structured the entire session by asking pertinent questions at regular intervals and so inviting others to share their 'expertise'. On the one hand this might maintain her position of authority as inquisitor but it might also be that she was aware of her own position of authority and so took action to create a new position for herself and subsequently for others. McNamee and Gergen (1999) discuss how positions can be maintained through language and how new discourses can invite new actions, for example

'To become the questioner invites the other's authority...' (op cit, p.27). Also of note in this focus group was the much lower frequency of interruptions and overlapping speech, suggesting a formality and possibly a respect for authority, which led people to wait their turn to a greater extent. Likewise in other groups there was some indication that seniority (often but not always related to age and/or level of experience) could be identified by the degree of contribution from individuals, with less experienced staff contributing less. This was least noticeable in focus group 2.

That power and voice is not an equal consideration across all staff would seem to be implied from the preceding discussion and this raises concerns for the way in which some members of staff may be marginalised and alienated within the school. This in turn has implications not only for the well being of those members of staff but also for the potential alienation of those students they support. Support staff are often those individuals spending the most time with pupils who are already marginalised and alienated and may be their only chance of having a voice. However, if the voice of support staff is also silenced then the potential for those pupils to be heard is limited yet further.

With this in mind I shall turn to the remaining research question regarding the implications for constructing alternative discourses.

Research Question 3 - What are the implications for the construction of alternative discourses and in particular one of relationships and RJ?

A key focus of this research is to consider how fixed the identified dominant discourses are and potential for alternative discourses to prevail, an issue which has been discussed by McCluskey et al (2011).

The presence of variation amongst the staff in terms of their use of discourse is potentially a cause for optimism. As Blood and Thorsborne (2005, 2006) discuss, a viable approach to

introducing an RJ discourse and/or approach is to start by working with interested parties in order to reach 'critical mass' or 'restorative contagion' (Wachtel and McCold, 2001), where a sufficient number of individuals have adopted the innovation. That some staff are not as fixed and do not engage with arguably more fixed discourses such as behaviourism to the same extent could suggest that there are a number of interested parties, however, there remain a number of significant barriers to this.

The dominant discourses identified raise concerns as to the scope that these allow for engaging an alternative. The centrality of a within-child understanding to behaviourism in particular would seem to present a particular barrier to engaging alternative discourses which view difficult behaviour as a collective responsibility (Zehr, 2002). A within-child perspective automatically engages a fixed notion of a pupils 'nature'.

Extract 38 (transcript 3, lines 1103-1110)

S7: kids know who they can [play off and] who they can't

XX: [yeah yeah]

Multiple: mmm

S4: yeah

S7: and kids know who who will (1) who will (1) kick off and cause a huge fuss at the slightest thing=

S1: =well there's=

S7: = and they have a bad day and I think oh I don't want to be here I'll go to so and so I'll (1) swear at her I'll get excluded they know (1) they [know exactly who they can do it with]

Here the focus on the need for consistency because children 'know', implies the manipulative nature of the pupils. This not only engages a natural, biological and developmental discourse which implies a fixed and inevitable 'nature' to children but also suggests the necessity of their control. This is reminiscent of McCluskey et al's (2011) discussion of punishment as the 'default' setting for staff as a means of regaining control.

Likewise the dominance of a discourse around staff roles presents responsibility as being divided up, compartmentalised and fixed by job description. For example, in extract 39 a member of the support staff expresses the opinion that subject teachers are generally unwilling to do anything outside of their specific job description.

Extract 39 (transcript 3, lines 230-231)

S6: well its like that thing as well that if (.) if you do ask them to do something extra like that like collect a student its like you're asking them to climb Mount Everest or [something]=

Difficulties in staff relationships, the prevailing view that each should have their own jobs and the tendency to 'pass the buck' in times of difficulty all present a significant barrier to a discourse such as RJ which is centred around collective responsibility, accountability and respect.

However, despite the dominance of these two discourses, multiple discourses are evident within the data giving cause for some optimism about the possibility for alternative discourses. Additionally there are a number of features within the transcripts in particular

which highlight the socially constructed nature of what is being said and therefore the potential malleability of individual's assertions and the potential for alternative constructions to be made.

Fluidity in Assertions

In turning attention back to the recent discussion of the use of questions, there is an alternative way of viewing this tendency. Particularly in transcript 3 this extensive use of questions appears to function as a means of seeking approval and in turn could suggest the need to form a group consensus and gain approval. Therefore rather than viewing this tendency as a means of strengthening the 'truth' of the assertion in all cases, it could also be seen as an indication of uncertainty about whether the assertion is acceptable and offer the possibility that an alternative discourse might instead be accepted.

Similarly other linguistic features within the transcripts and to a lesser extent within the policy document do suggest some fluidity in the assertions made, for example there are many times across all the transcripts where assertions are prefaced with 'I think' (e.g. transcript 3, line 242). Similarly, 'maybe' (transcript 2, line 294), 'probably' (transcript 1, line 116), 'I wonder' (transcript 2, line 109), 'if' (transcript 1, line 159) and 'at the moment' (transcript 1, line 16) also feature within the transcripts, apparently allowing room for negotiation.

A further consideration on this issue of fluidity is how some assertions are prefaced with a specific context, for example the use of phrases such as 'certain staff' (transcript 1, line 716), 'some members of staff' (transcript 1, line 768-769) and 'certain people' (transcript 3, line 242) in transcripts 1 and 3, and as already touched upon the use of phrases such as 'my classes' (transcript 2, line 3) by teachers in transcript 2. This would again seem to suggest some room for negotiation on the issue by establishing context and therefore affording the speaker an exit strategy if others disagree.

Oscillations

Further indications of the potential for movement in discourse can be seen in the oscillation between different points of view. Transcript 2 is a particularly useful example of the oscillation on behaviour standards. Having discussed and asserted for the majority of the session that behaviour within the school was not a particular concern, the conversation changes around line 632 when the teachers begin to talk about uniform. For much of the rest of the session staff are relatively unanimous in their frustrations about what they see as blatant disregard by the pupils for uniform; how other staff are responding; and the sanctions available to them to respond.

Extract 40 (transcript 2, lines 729-754)

T3: one (.) one student's got a note in her planner that she can wear what she er (.) non-uniform (1) is it xxxx? (1) xxxx? (2) ach she's got it in her planner that the heads wrote she can wear what she wants

XX: why

T3: cause the sweatshirt makes her look fat

T4: what?

T3: yeah

T4: has the head written it?

T3: yeah

T1: [inaudible]

T3: [yeah] yeah well I [inaudible] xxxx said [inaudible]

XX: oh

T5: the must be a reason other than that (1) there must be

T2: it's it's little things like that (1) that set alarm [bells] for me

T4: [yeah] yeah it is

T2: [cause I've noticed]

T1: [the new kid in] year 10 wears jeans [inaudible]

T2: yeah well there's a couple of kids I've seen in black jeans now (1) a couple of kids with pumps on

T5: oh

T2: and it's just not (.) [the little things creeping in (2) yeah]

T5: [and skirts up there with a] zip up the back

T7: and (.) and leggings

Multiple: yeah

Multiple: [inaudible]

T1: [I can handle leggings] I just can't handle tights without a [skirt]

In this extract, the starting anecdote about the pupil who can wear what she likes leads to a number of staff expressing their disapproval. They then introduce another example of a pupil who does not wear the correct uniform (the pupil who does not wear jeans). This in turn leads to mention of several pupils wearing jeans and then further problems are introduced in the form of pumps and skirts. There appears to be a cumulative effect with staff constructing vivid descriptions through anecdotes (O'Brien and Miller, 2005) - such as the detail of the zips on the skirt - something of a pandemic problem with uniform. Having discussed these problems, the staff return, in line 826, to a more measured discussion of behaviour commenting that behaviour has improved but still needs work. This 'see-saw' of describing the good and the bad of behaviour is characteristic of this transcript in particular. For example in earlier sections of the transcript staff assertions that behaviour has improved or is good are sometimes followed by another individual's view or anecdote to suggest that this is not necessarily the case. There are also apparent 'inconsistencies' in expectations of behaviour, for example, in extract 41 when discussing behaviour in the student common room one member of staff consistently defends the pupils' behaviour and explains anomalies away, which contrasts starkly to extract 42.

Extract 41 (transcript 2, line 308-310)

T3: There's always going to be stuff like that (1) to be fair they've [done well]

XX: [done well]

T4: yeah considering they've never had anything (.) like that [before]

Extract 42 (transcript 2, line 823-824)

T2: [I just think it it needs dealing with (1)] I think we've got set rules and I think we (.) like I was saying before [about raising standards we]

This oscillation within descriptions and expectations of behaviour is reminiscent of findings in research regarding teacher's perceptions of behaviour in schools. For example, the Teacher Voice Omnibus (DCSF, 2008) found that whilst 64% of teachers agreed negative behaviour was driving teachers out of the profession, 94% of teachers rated behaviour as 'very good', 'good' or 'acceptable' in their own school. The implications of such findings are that far from there being an accepted truth about standards of behaviour, perceptions of behaviour standards are in fact a constructed truth, which can and will be constructed differently within any given conversation and situation.

These oscillations between various positions might be best understood by considering Fairclough's (2001) own description of the oscillation which occurs between social structure and social action. The participants within these focus groups have a relatively fixed position as teachers or support assistants etc within a relatively fixed institution and network of practices and as such their discourses are likely to be influenced by this. However, social action whilst reproducing such structures also has the potential to transform them, the oscillation between the two representing an ongoing 'working relationship'. It is likely this relationship or interdiscursivity (ibid) which can be seen at work within these focus groups, social action through discussion allowing the potential for more 'permanent' structures of discourse to be challenged.

At a wider level this oscillation runs not only through the school but via local, national and governmental discourse and action. The varied discourse of government in particular around, for example: behaviourism (DfE, 2011); social and emotional skills (DfES, 2005), prevention and early intervention; supporting the whole child (DfES, 2004); and raising

standards (DCSF, 2009b), illustrates the constant oscillations between discourse and social action as different governments and groups of people construct varying understandings of how we should be talking about and addressing behaviour. To consider government discourse in its entirety over recent decades is to view what appears to be a rather confused and at times contradictory picture where pupils should be supported and cared for yet controlled and managed, illustrating at a governmental level the same 'dance' of constructing and reconstructing discourse - whilst weaving in and around the issues of accountability and agenda - which can be seen at the local level of this school. Parsons (1999) also draws attention to the media and the way in which they can reflect not only a range of ideological positions but views from a range of individuals as well as public opinion, representing the values of society at any given time. Conversely he also highlights the way in which government policy can be influenced by the media. This implies the issue of recontextualisation but also the socially constructed nature of such opinions and the potential for oscillation.

The use of anecdotes appears to be a particularly central technique within the transcripts in achieving this oscillation and encouraging an alternative construction. Gergen (2009) references the Public Conversations Project where a family therapy model was used to facilitate a public debate on abortion. Rather than asking individuals to present a position, they were asked to talk about their own experiences, to present their own stories. Gergen (ibid) explains how this allowed individuals to move away from blame and instead facilitated communication; and that much of the power of this came from the easily comprehensible nature of the stories which led to fuller audience engagement and greater acceptance. However, the nature in which staff quickly take on the new position as they do so above in extract 41 demonstrates that whilst such oscillations may provide the possibility for new realities to emerge, the tendency to create a common reality with those around can actually present a narrow discourse which closes down alternatives. For example the almost 'tabloid' nature in which the problems are sensationalised and the speed and totality with which all staff contribute to build this construction does not allow

much space for an alternative discourse. It would seem therefore that for every meander in the conversation there is both the possibility of new discourses emerging but simultaneously the possibility for existing discourses to be further reinforced. McNamee and Gergen (1999) in their exploration of relational responsibility characterise this meandering nature of conversation and the 'alternative dances' of relationship which can be invited through such conversation (ibid, p. 27).

Building Constructions

The previous two sections highlight not just the fluidity with which discourses are presented but also the social interaction which is inherent to the transcripts and thus the way in which realities are collectively constructed by the groups. Cohesiveness is a characteristic of all three groups and even where there is some challenge, for example in transcript 2, there are still efforts made to establish collective agreement. In extract 43 one teacher reaffirms and summarises the suggestions of the previous teacher.

Extract 43 (transcript 2, lines 212-213)

T4: and I think and I think there's enough stuff to do at lunch time then (.) rather than running around the building

Although this is subsequently followed by an explicit assertion of disagreement, staff then immediately come to a collective understanding which explains away the cause of this exception and thus retain the collective agreement. This can be seen in extract 44.

Extract 44 (transcript 2 audio recording, lines 222-226)

T5: so I think that's immaturity

XX: I do

T5: it is

T1: That's childish

T4: It is childishness

One of the features of this extract which is also common through all of the transcripts is the use of repetition. This is also evident in extracts 45 and 46 below:

Extract 45 (transcript 2, lines 519-521)

T5: and I would say right erm (1) you go to xxxx's (1) no I'm not I'm not going (1) so the kids refusing to go so I'll get on-call [(.)]

XX: [mmm]

T5: to take them because it (.) if they are refusing same with mobile phones if they've got a mobile phone out and they refuse to give it me (2) where else do you go? (2) they've point blank refused your [instruction]

Extract 46 (transcript 1, lines 580-590)

M1: [it'll be really interesting to see xxxx's perception]

M4: they do (.) they do a lot what they want sometimes and [the younger ones don't]

M2: [I bet she gets a shock]

M1: by Christmas

M2: Yeah

M1: mmm

M2: about how little she's having to chase them up for uniform

M4: yeah

M2: or having the planners and stuff with them

In extract 45 the direct repetition of the refusal of a student to follow an instruction aids the staff in building a construction of the situation which is both legitimised and adequately vivid. Likewise in extract 46 the repetition of how shocked the individual will be is achieved not through repeating the same words but by giving further examples of why she might be shocked. The attempt to construct a more detailed and vivid picture of the issue is again evident and is comparable to extract 40 in the previous discussion. The

way in which individuals consolidate and build on each other's ideas is discussed by O'Brien and Miller (2005) in their explanation of how consensus and corroboration achieve the purpose of joint construction. Gergen (2009) describes how all understanding is a relational achievement and that how we come to understand each other is derived from coordinated action.

The acknowledgement that all the data sets in this research are the result of joint construction and particularly the ongoing construction which is evident within the transcripts, provides further optimism about the fixedness of those discourses present. Where group consensus is the desired end there remains the possibility that in a different group or setting alternative realities might surface. The context specific nature of the focus groups in particular and the varying roles and agendas of the participants will all influence the way in which the conversation twists and turns, in much the same way as Gergen (2009) describes how our many different realities mean that when we come together we must negotiate a common reality because we cannot be all things at once.

Why is the Problem Needed?

In considering the fixedness of dominant discourses it is appropriate to engage one of the later stages of Fairclough's (2001) framework of analysis, that is, the consideration of why the problem is needed. Motivation or an investment to retain particular discourses is likely to present barriers to challenging such discourse and promoting alternatives. Further thought must therefore be given as to why this construction of difficult behaviour - that it originates within the child, that children are individually responsible for their behaviour - is needed.

One possibility is in the emerging central theme which seems implicit to all of the preceding discussion; that is, boundaries of responsibility. Dominant discourses of behaviourism, systems and staff hierarchy, as well as aspects of other less dominant

discourses, such as needs and difference, all reflect a concern with maintaining boundaries of responsibility and clear systems and consistent practice. This engages the idea that responsibility is an important feature of school life for which retention of within-child causality is necessary. Some discussion of this has already taken place, with a particular focus on the issue of accountability. By placing causality within the child, accountability of staff is lessened; responsibility need not be taken (Hayes et al, 2007); and the engagement of others, notably 'specialists' to address the problem, is legitimised. Likewise the engagement of staff role hierarchies and the deployment of predetermined systems, both data systems and behaviour management or consequence systems, retain a strong link to accountability, exempting staff from those duties not specified within their remit, as well as providing protection from the consequences of their actions.

Issues of accountability extend from individual staff and necessarily 'top-down' accountability to the wider institution of the school, where policy and school agendas shape systems and thus further shape discourses on behaviour. In discussing surveillance, Foucault highlights the way in which surveillance, which might be akin to the idea of accountability discussed here, can permeate within an institution in a less than simplistic manner. Understanding accountability and the power relations it maintains in this way not only serves to emphasise the embedded nature of it and the discourses it supports, but also avoids a reductionist account of accountability and power. Additional to this understanding of accountability as a complex entity within the school, there is also the accountability to local and national government and the media, as well as within and between all of these levels (Parsons, 1999).

Thomas (2005) provides a way to understand this complexity more simply in his application of 'fundamental attribution error' to the issue of difficult behaviour and responsibility. This risks charting the waters of traditional psychology and therefore the wrath of a social constructionist critique of 'attribution theory'. For example, the critique of Edwards and Potter (1992), who view attribution theory as a form of 'perceptualism',

that is the notion that individuals use certain cognitive schemas and mental representations to 'more or less correctly' (op cit, p. 20) perceive the external world, thus implying a 'ontologically given' (ibid, p. 20) or 'real' external world. However Edwards and Potter (1992) are most concerned with the decompartmentalisation within cognitive psychology of such areas of study and concede to the merits of meeting cognitivist perspectives 'half way' (p. 25). So if we are to put aside the notion of schemas and mental representations which 'fundamental attribution theory' evokes and instead consider 'why' individuals may choose to make certain attributions, that is the context within which such attributions occur, then Thomas' (2005) 'metaphor' does well to provide an understanding that sees us all as equal individuals going about our business in a way that attracts minimal criticism and consequence. Sutoris' (2000) examination of secondary schools highlights the necessity of this as he points out that the nature and size of such schools fails to provide staff and pupils with a sense of cohesiveness and relatedness and that 'As a result pupils and staff evolve patterns of behaviour which serve to protect them from the chaos and uncertainty threatened by the fragmented nature of school life' (ibid, p. 52)

A preference for power and control may provide an additional motivation for retaining discourses associated with within-child causality and responsibility (McCluskey et al, 2011). Retaining a behaviourist discourse and particularly one of punishment may give staff a sense of greater control as well as reflecting a deeply embedded 'will' to punish (McCluskey et al, 2011). Punishment is an essential symbol of power and strength (ibid), whilst viewing behaviour as being within the child gives power and control to the adults as those who are responsible enough and have the adequate knowledge to address the 'problem'. Likewise school wide systems, consistency and staff hierarchy maintain a predictable arrangement for controlling pupils and staff and maintains certain power relations over others, not least that staff hold the power over the pupils. As Thomas (2005) points out it is the schools' need to regulate time, activity, speech and body from which rules and systems arise, whilst Morrison (2007) makes reference to exclusion as an organisational tool and Sutoris (2000) emphasises the linkage of pastoral and discipline

systems which sees that pastoral processes facilitate the smooth running of the school. Yet there is also a note of caution implicit within this as it might legitimately be argued that some level of organisation and rule application is necessary for schools to serve the 'greater good', maintaining a fair system and ensuring that all pupils have equal access to learning. Schools can also represent a microcosm of society and hence have a responsibility to prepare pupils for the outside world. The challenge therefore is to find ways to control and organise such institutions but in a way that does not alienate.

Perhaps one other factor which is relevant to this discussion is that of economics. In a climate of limited resources and competing demands on resources it would seem foolish to presume that such issues are not likely to play their role. The need for organisation of a school environment is likely to stem at least partly from such financial constraints. Schools will prioritise support for those pupils deemed to have the greatest need and perhaps even the greatest worthiness, thinking back to Parson's notion that resources can be 'righteously withheld' (p. 161). Maintaining a within-child and individualistic approach allows certain pupils to be held accountable for their behaviour and by placing responsibility with them removes responsibility from others to support them further. As discussed in a previous paper (Harold, 2009), when considering the pro forma for application for a Statutory Assessment, it was observed that there was greater emphasis and credence given to those children with learning difficulties than with behavioural difficulties, the former dominating the content of the pro forma, which may imply something of a hierarchy when considering need.

It is this social, economic, historical and political climate within which this data must be considered and which presents the greatest challenge and problem for those individuals who are subject to the school behaviour systems. It is this context which sets the 'reality' of the situation and which can place considerable constraints on individuals and systems to change. To see a child's behaviour as originating within them therefore provides something of a respite from this greater complexity. Yet perceiving pupils' behaviour and

the approaches to addressing this as an unquestionable reality presents a barrier to change and a risk of alienation.

The Possibilities for Restorative Justice - A Dissatisfaction with Behaviourism?

So in considering the preceding discussion and the possibilities and barriers to RJ what is the possibility that staff in this school might engage in such a conversation in the first instance? And that they might do so adequately enough to transform the discourses within the school? Whilst optimism can be found in the fluidity of the assertions made; the potential for viewpoints to shift within a conversation; and the way in which constructions are evidently built to create a collective understanding; there remains a question as to how this will translate into staff actually engaging with RJ as the dominant discourse or at least as a discourse which represents a valid and equal alternative.

The single greatest indication within the data that RJ is a viable possibility for this school is the mere existence of so many discourses to begin with as reflected in the wider national discourse, suggesting that engaging with multiple discourses is a legitimate activity within the school. The strengths of this are the many links which can be made between different discourses. For example, a discourse of need and difference has some overlap with RJ and its concern for supporting the needs of all of the community, whilst a discourse of RJ also overlaps with a discourse of behaviourism and zero tolerance to some extent and the need for accountability and consequences following behaviour which has negatively impacted on someone. Therefore, as McNamee and Gergen (1999) suggest it may be that by making links and highlighting commonalities between discourses, a discourse of RJ can begin to emerge more strongly.

The second indication is what could be described as an undercurrent of dissatisfaction with behaviourist approaches and in particular the fixed nature of such approaches. The

following extract illustrate some concerns that staff voice about applying fixed and immovable strategies and approaches.

Extract 47 (transcript 1, lines 698-712)

M1: and yet us as leaders we sort of sending mixed messages aren't we because we're saying to our staff right we want this high [expectation]

Multiple: [mmm yeah]

M1: We want this [consequence]

M5: [yeah]

M1: this consequence this consequence and yet you've got a member of staff who follows everything by the [book]

M2: [mmm]

M1: and we get a little bit [frustrated]

M4: [yeah]

M1: [by saying to her like oh]

M4: [careful of exclusions]

M1: If you just could let that one go you [know]

M2:

[yeah]

M1: and its (1) it's a sort of a double standards isn't it?

In extract 47 staff explicitly address the problem with trying to be consistent and the apparent conflict it produces when exceptions need to be made. Later in this same transcript one member of staff asks 'how consistent can we get?' (transcript 1, line 774), apparently recognising the problem highlighted by Galvin (1999) that the search for absolute consistency is futile. Likewise in the missing section of transcript 2, some staff raise concerns and doubts as to the issue of consistency pointing out that staff are not 'robots' and that inflexibility can actually escalate difficult behaviour. Galvin (1999) instead actively promotes the need for flexibility within behaviour management, arguing that there is no certainty in anything and that fairness does not mean doing everything the same but getting everyone to the same place, that is, facilitating equal outcomes. Therefore, the frustration which is evident amongst staff on the topic of consistency may be a 'handle' on which to hang RJ, as by giving staff permission to be flexible they may feel less shackled to the principles of behaviourism and freer to embrace alternative discourses.

However, McCluskey et al (2011) warn that RJ presents both a threat or a 'dangerous discourse', which challenges existing discourse and which must be avoided and rejected; whilst simultaneously presenting schools with a solution to their problems. As such it seems the fate of RJ in schools generally hangs in the balance, which may well be true for this school also.

Reflections

I have endeavoured to reflect on my analysis as I have proceeded, particularly in relation to the choices which I have made. I have made choices regarding analytic approach, the steps to analysis, the features which were analysed, the extracts used, the discourses identified, the nature of the discussion of these discourses and the conclusions drawn. I have also endeavoured to consider my own position throughout this thesis, both in terms of my positionality with regard to epistemology, my role as an Educational Psychologist working within the school and my use of language throughout the thesis. However, there are a few additional points to make.

Firstly, in further considering methodological issues it should be noted that during the analysis and discussion limited time is spent on considering the individual characteristics of the focus groups and there is no attempt at a formal comparison of the groups. Whilst due in part to restrictions of space, this is primarily due to focusing on the research questions, which did not automatically demand this. Where such issues are pertinent to the research questions I have endeavoured to discuss them. Additionally, with regard to transcription, I feel on reflection that the transcription protocols used were of limited relevance to the research, the detail depicted by them featuring very little in the analysis and discussion. Whilst this may be an oversight on my part, it might also be considered that an alternative protocol would have been more beneficial.

Secondly, to expand the issue of language use: Whilst I have critiqued the transcripts and policy document for their use of a number of linguistic and stylistic features, I am aware that I may too be guilty of using such features. I have almost certainly used the passive voice throughout and have also used the metonym (Rundblad, 2007) 'policy document' throughout the document as well as the nominalisation of 'difficult behaviour'. In doing so I have fallen foul of the same issue highlighted by Billig (2008) in his discussion of

nominalisation, and may have failed on occasion to reveal the agents behind these data sources. Whilst my choice of the term 'difficult behaviour' was intended to be a less contentious one, compared to 'poor' or 'bad' behaviour, and to make some links with the socially constructed nature of behaviour (i.e. it is the adult's judgement that it is difficult) it's inherent judgement and it's static nature are retained.

It is also important to recognise that I have contributed - and perhaps intentionally so - to a continued understanding of some behaviours as being inappropriate. On the one hand this might reflect my position within the network of practices within which this thesis is also positioned and thus my tendency to maintain certain presumptions. On the other hand it is also indicative of my position with regard to social constructionism. That is to say that whilst I accept and embrace the opportunity to challenge presumptions and particularly those which have a negative impact, I do accept some notion of 'reality' in the world and in this case within the school environment. As a former teacher I recognise the perceived need for order and control in the classroom and the presumption that certain behaviours are more acceptable than others. In much the same way as a RJ approach would suggest I view myself, and therefore other teachers, as active agents in the social environment with a responsibility to change and to be flexible and creative in their thinking, but also as responsible adults with a duty to manage relationships and interactions. I believe that this is necessary in order that pupils and staff understand better the impact of their behaviour and so might behave in a manner conducive to developing and retaining positive working relationships.

Further more as an Educational Psychologist and particularly one working within the school under study it is also the case that I bring to this thesis a number of agendas. At least two about which I am explicitly aware. Firstly the fact that the school will be reading this thesis has made me conscious of what I am writing and this in turn has made me conscious of what I am not writing. This internal struggle to be 'honest' yet 'tactful' may have impacted on the quality and style of my analysis and discussion in particular.

Secondly, I admit to approaching this thesis with something of a 'bone to pick' with regard to my experiences discussing behaviour with secondary school staff. I have historically experienced some frustrations over the take-up of advice pertaining to difficult behaviour within secondary schools as well as some dissatisfactions generally with the descriptions often used of pupils with difficult behaviour. As such it has been easy to identify the 'evidence' to support these preconceived ideas and whilst again a 'battle' has ensued to ensure that representations are as depersonalised as possible, it is important to position myself within and not outside of this research.

Secondly, I have in a previous essay (Harold, 2008) critiqued CDA for its use of over-technical and impenetrable language, an argument which has been shared by others (e.g. Luke, 1995). For example, Billig (2008) in his discussion of nominalisation discusses the need to demystify CDA, with its many technical terms. I am aware that I have used a number of technical terms within this essay and its accessibility by others is as yet unknown. Whilst I have made a number of presumptions with regard to much of the terminology being understood, perhaps beyond this thesis, publication to wider or different audiences may require further reflection with regard to how these terms are used and defined.

Thirdly, I am aware of critiques by others of CDA studies. For example, Rogers et al (2005) discusses the need for researchers to make their analytical framework explicit, whilst Antaki et al (2002) list a number of common shortcomings in discourse analysis such as, under analysis through summary or through taking sides and through over quotation or feature 'spotting'. Whilst every effort has been made to avoid such shortcomings, it is acknowledged that this may not have been a success in every quarter.

Possible shortcomings need to be considered in light of the role I fulfil as researcher and Educational Psychologist. I am not an objective researcher searching for truth or solution but am working within the system which I describe and attempt to analyse. I daily partake

in the same developmental discourses and power relations about which I report and so this analysis is as much about a process of reflection for myself as it is for anyone else reading it. It is an opportunity to raise questions, challenge assumptions and to identify barriers and possibilities for alternative ways of talking and being and to this end it is hoped there has been some success.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

This thesis has considered the issue of difficult behaviour in schools and the discourses that are present around it. In doing so it has engaged a social constructionist epistemology in order to understand how our understanding of difficult behaviour and our responses to it, are constructed socially by the discourses and actions around us.

Concerns have been raised with a number of the dominant discourses available around difficult behaviour regarding their potential for alienation of young people. Namely behaviourism, associated zero tolerance approaches and the concept of need, whilst RJ has been raised as an example of a discourse which may better frame our understanding and construction of difficult behaviour. It reflects principles which directly support a social constructionist understanding of behaviour in terms of how it addresses difficult behaviour collaboratively and within the context in which it occurs, whilst maintaining the need for respect for all of those concerned. However, introducing an alternative discourse is by no means a simple task as highlighted by a number of authors (e.g. Blood and Thorsborne, 2005), both logistically and in terms of the challenge that new or alternative discourses present to those existing discourses which may be deeply embedded and fiercely guarded (McCluskey et al, 2011).

In order to better understand how these issues are relevant within a school this thesis has considered a case study of one secondary school in a Local Authority in Yorkshire. It has employed CDA (Fairclough, 2001; van Dijk, 2001) in order to explore three research questions:

- What are the dominant discourses on behaviour amongst school staff within a secondary school?

- How are certain voices privileged over others?
- What are the implications for the construction of alternative discourses and in particular one of relationships and RJ?

In considering the first of these questions, two dominant 'groups' of discourse emerged. Firstly, a discourse pertaining to behaviourism, zero tolerance and systems, including 'sub-discourses' of consistency, reward, sanction and the use of 'data' systems to manage difficult behaviour within school. Secondly, a discourse around staff roles and conflict, focusing on how staff take care to parameter their roles and responsibilities; the hierarchical nature of staff roles; a tendency to promote one's own competency and to highlight the inadequacy of others; as well as a general dissatisfaction with some members of staff about their experience within the school. Additional discourses identified and discussed were those of needs and difference, teaching and learning, defining and judging behaviour and relationships and restorative justice.

A number of concerns have been raised in relation to these discourses. For example, the implications which a need for consistency suggests, namely that pupils are somehow naturally unruly and in need of assertive discipline; the focus on external rewards and consequences at the expense of internal or relational rewards and consequences (Morrison, 2007); the potential alienation of pupils by exclusion (APA, 2008); the inflexibility of consequences systems and their 'one size fits all' assumptions; the implications of staff roles for responsibility and accountability; the discourse of need and how it positions pupils as different (Thomas, 2005); the separation of learning and behaviour; and the eternal search for the utopia or 'gold standard' of behaviour in schools (Visser, 2005). Furthermore, overlap between the two groups of dominant discourses also implies a 'meta' discourse of individual responsibility and within-child thinking.

In addressing the second research question, discussion turned to the way in which a within-child explanation for behaviour is often implied within discourses; and also to the way in which descriptions of pupils are presented in an objective, fixed and authoritative fashion, both of which position pupils as having limited voice within schools. This is achieved in a number of ways, for example through engaging a developmental discourse; through the exposure or concealing of agency via the use of passive and active constructions; through the use of nominalisation; and through the use of a range of devices to imply authority including the language of evidence, quasi scientific language, vivid descriptions and anecdotes, multi-clause phrases, modal verbs and rhetorical questions. Speaking of children in this way, that is to say, presuming that difficult behaviour unquestionably lies within them, has the power to position them. To locate blame within them is to silence their voice whilst promoting the voice of the 'experts' who have the 'knowledge' to speak about them (Billington, 2002). A within-child understanding also locates responsibility outside of the adults and so undermines an attempt at relational (McNamee and Gergen, 1999) or collective responsibility. However, the issue of voice extends also to the relative voice of different staff members. In examining differences in discourse and interaction across and to a lesser extent within data sets it would seem that support staff in particular feel and maybe have a less powerful voice compared to subject teachers and managers, which has implications not only for the staff themselves but for the children they are supporting.

Finally in relation to the third and final research question, consideration was given to the level of flexibility within the discourses and their openness to challenge and adaptation. Whilst the dominant discourses and the authority with which they can be presented poses considerable challenge, particularly when considered in the context of the network of practices within which they reside, there is room for optimism. Fluidity and oscillations within how staff speak about behaviour suggest a lack of fixedness in their discourse; whilst the evidence of constructions in action – through for example, repetition and vivid description (O'Brien and Miller, 2005) – further point to an opportunity to engage with

alternative discourses. Alongside such fluctuations in discourse, the appearance of so many discourses in the first instant might also give us some hope that alternative discourses and namely a discourse on RJ might be feasible. Additionally the emerging dissatisfaction with issues of behaviourism and particularly consistency might suggest some 'in-way' into introducing alternative discourses. Morrison's (2007) description of the need for 'professional bridging' in the initial stages of introducing RJ is reminiscent of the advice of Gergen (2009) and McNamee and Gergen (1999) in their respective descriptions of how common realities or 'orientating practices' (ibid, p. 19) can form the basis of constructing alternative or adapted discourses around which some agreement can be formed. Operationalisation of this idea is evident in the work of the Restorative Justice Consortium (2010) who in their briefing to Michael Gove, the Secretary for State for Education focussed on 'talking the language' of government in presenting RJ as 'effective discipline'. McNamee and Gergen (1999) describe this as 'conversational moves [which] may broaden and deepen our forms of discourse and enrich the range of reasonable actions in such a way that cultural participants are more fully (or less lethally) coordinated' (ibid, p. 19).

However, optimism must be tempered with the experiences of authors such as McCluskey et al (2011) who warn of the tendency towards a 'default' punishment discourse when the 'going gets tough' in schools; as well as with the wide network of practices within which the discourse under study is located.

Implications of this Research

Indeed it is difficult to consider the implications for the particular school in this study without considering the wider system within which the school resides. That a discourse of behaviourism dominates is consistent with the general literature and government policies, particularly those of the current government. As such, it is difficult to challenge the assumptions underlying this discourse within school without challenging it more widely, as

the influences of this network of practices invariably impacts upon school staff and policy. With this in mind, it is of particular concern that the current government appear to have taken a stronger step towards more punitive and less tolerant approaches to difficult behaviour and in particular towards strengthening the powers of teachers (DfE, 2010), when it might be argued that the power balance already resides with teachers and school staff. That continuing difficult behaviour is seen as an indication that powers are not strong enough presumes a very simplistic understanding of both behaviour and power and fails to recognise the way in which pupils may react more negatively when power imbalances are strengthened; and how alienation can only breed further alienation. Conversely this understanding also fails to recognise some of the basic principles of RJ, that by increasing respect and value, giving voice and increasing participation pupils can feel a greater sense of empowerment and belonging and that this in turn can promote the kind of positive behaviours which schools and governments expect to see. The testimonies of the schools who have embraced RJ speak loudly of this with one teacher exclaiming that '[you're] mad if you don't do this!' (Burgess, 2011)

How the government and media can be engaged in the debate around RJ and discourse generally is of significance and as mentioned above (Restorative Justice Consortium, 2010) there have been attempts to engage at this level. Perhaps one of the barriers which remains with regard to this task is the issue of how behaviour is judged. Perceptions that difficult behaviour is increasing can present governments and the media with sensational stories - akin to the 'vivid descriptions' staff used within this research - and in turn can lead to knee jerk reactions. The potential pressure that the media places upon government is a particular factor in relation to this, particularly where headlines read 'Sometimes you have to be scary' (Sunday Times, 9 October 2011), describing the merits of the new head of Ofsted who has a military background. Whilst this tight network of practices perpetually influence each other to send out a message of the need to continually increase 'standards', the grip on the safety of behaviourism and zero tolerance as the strongest and simplest tools to achieve this is likely to be very difficult to loosen.

However, to 'loosen' rather than eradicate this grip is all that may be required, as McNamee and Gergen (1999) point out in their discussion of the need to find common threads between different discourses. Also many schools have adopted an RJ approach despite existing within the context of these wider behaviourism-inspired discursive influences. Within the school under study there is also cause for some optimism with regard to RJ. Views are not necessarily fixed, dissatisfaction with consistency has been voiced and there are staff who could be identified from this research in terms of building a working party or a group of interested parties (Blood and Thorsborne, 2005) in order to begin those processes described by a number of RJ authors (e.g. Hopkins, 2004; Morrison, 2007). In terms of finding common ground (McNamee and Gergen, 1999) to explore new discourses it is also the case that the minimum requirement of RJ, as stated by Zehr (2002) is likely to engage most available discourses. That is that 'RJ requires, at minimum, that we address victim's harms and needs, hold offenders accountable to put right those harms, and involve victims, offenders and communities in the process.' (ibid, p. 25) This could be compatible with those whose discourse is dominated by behaviourism or by staff conflict, as well as those engaging in discourses centred around need, learning and making judgements of behaviour.

Where greater difficulties may ensue with this school is with the additional dominant discourse of staff role and conflict which was identified. RJ also requires mutual accountability, that is, that in addressing an incident of wrong doing, the needs *and* responsibilities of *all* participants are considered. To this end discourses which focus on role boundaries and on fixed processes, such as the school's 'C' system of consequences are likely to present a formidable barrier to an RJ approach.

However, this does provide the school with one tangible area which they may wish to consider and develop further; notably how staff can break down some of these barriers and work together around young people presenting with difficult behaviour. This is likely to require some change filtered down from a management level which gives staff the

security and permission to move outside that model of individual accountability. Given the breakdown in at least some relationships across the school, it is perhaps an appropriate first step within this particular school to consider how RJ can be applied with staff in order to create a 'restorative staffroom' (Hopkins, 2004). Straker (2010) highlights how introducing restorative practices challenges schools to look closely at the relationships in their institution and describes how within his school restorative circles are used for meetings between staff.

It would seem pertinent that the staff are engaging with RJ principles in terms of their interactions with each other before they can be expected to work restoratively with their pupils. Mutual respect and value are important central themes to RJ (Zehr, 2002) and with this comes the opportunity for everyone to have a voice (Transforming Conflict, no date), Hopkins (2011) emphasising 'unique perspectives' as a core theme or idea underpinning restorative approaches. Providing a voice can go a long way to allowing people to feel respected and valued and is important if staff are to maintain healthy relationships. Morrison (2007) talks in detail about the importance of bridging between different members of the school community, recognising that within a school there are multiple communities and reminding us that if 'the voice of a particular constituency is missing the process as a whole will be affected' (ibid, p. 164).

An additional area which school may want to consider is the 'C' system of consequences. Whilst behaviourism and RJ need not be mutually exclusive, the application of fixed consequences without consideration of context is largely untenable within an RJ discourse. Concerns have been raised generally across the Local Authority within which this school is located with regard to the use of such systems as it seems to place some pupils disproportionately at risk of exclusion. Often the only alternative is to dis-apply a student from that system which incurs its own risk of isolation by engaging the concept of need. This either/or option for pupils – exclusion or 'treatment' – leaves them with limited opportunity for recognition as a valued member of the school community.

This is reminiscent of the concerns raised by The Restorative Practices Development Team (2003), who have highlighted the tendency for schools to separate pastoral and discipline systems, a notion reflected in the data, where exceptions are made for those children considered to have 'needs'; also in the Local Authority where recent changes to the organisation of management have seen the Behavioural Support Service separated from the Educational Psychology Service and other services related to Special Educational Needs (SEN) in terms of who they are managed by. Discussion with the headteacher (of the participating secondary school) during a feedback meeting also centred around Wachtel and McCold's (2001) social discipline window which sees both permissive (cf. overly therapeutic) and punitive approaches as lacking. The headteacher could identify how these two approaches had formed the main focus of previous attempts at reform within the school and that the current approach which he was advocating was to combine these two positions to a greater extent. This is promising in relation to engendering a climate conducive to RJ. Therefore, considering how consequences can be applied in a more restorative manner, which listens to the stories that pupils have to tell about their behaviour, within or instead of this system, might provide a discrete piece of work which could develop a move away from either/or needs and punitive methods and towards the restorative mindset required for adopting the approaches more fully.

The notion of developing a discrete project (focussed on pupil conflict) was particularly appealing to the headteacher of the participating school, who felt that this would actually be more appropriate than a focus on staff relationships at this time, due to ongoing disputes involving Trade Unions. Whilst piecemeal approaches are not always as successful (McCluskey et al, 2011) there is the need to balance negotiation with a school alongside the evidence about RJ, not least because the school needs to retain ownership. However, school preference can not override fundamental RJ principles and at the core is the need for open communication channels (Morrison, 2007) and mutual respect. Therefore, perhaps the overriding issue which I will take back to the school from this

research is that addressing this as a start or even as an end in itself is a useful and indeed necessary task irrespective of the school's explicit interest in developing RJ.

Implications for Educational Psychologists (EPs)

Whilst there is a role for me in feeding back the outcome of this research to the school and indeed to other interested parties, there is of course the wider question of what further implications this research has for myself as an Educational Psychologist and the profession more generally.

On a practical level questions are raised as to how EPs can support schools in the process of listening to discourses on behaviour and promoting alternative discourses such as RJ. How an Educational Psychologist might be involved in this whole school process is dependent on a number of factors, including the needs of the individual school, service and authority priorities, capacity, individual EP knowledge of RJ and the availability of training, as well as the extent to which the EP is part of or outside the community in question. However, possible roles may include: training in relation to basic skills (e.g. listening skills), RJ processes (e.g. theory and practice) and the change process (e.g. how to manage change, awareness raising around the difficulties of change); research and evaluation; and supporting the change process. Although there are suggestions that facilitation of restorative conferences should be done by outside professionals it is unlikely that a local authority EPS would have the capacity to support this.

In completing this research and feeding back to school I believe that the process of listening to staff voices and considering discourse has been a useful one for the school and as such this may well form a viable option for how EPs contribute to the process. It is also the case that RJ does not belong to psychology alone and so other agencies and professionals may be implicated in the process, such as Behaviour Support Services and Youth Offending Teams. EPs may have a further role in coordinating with these other

services regarding how schools are supported in the implementation of RJ, an idea which the author is currently exploring with the Local Authority RJ Coordinator who is located within the Youth Offending Team.

Aside from the practicalities of implementing RJ, this research and the issues around discourse it has raised has implications for EPs as much as for schools, government or media. As practitioners working with and for children with difficult behaviour and working in and amongst discourse on a daily basis (Bozic et al, 1998), how we engage discourses has the potential to position these young people. That many EPs have sympathy with the concerns raised in this thesis is I am sure a given, however, that we all continue to engage a behaviourist discourse, for example, is also likely to be true (myself included). This is not of course to suggest that this should not happen or that such discourses have no place, but that our profession's history of discourse is littered with such references, about which we would be advisable to be aware and questioning. We have the power to retain dominant discourses and in doing so to continue, for example, to locate young people with difficult behaviour as having a within-child difficulty; or we have the power to position them as individuals with voices who are active participants in how we construct knowledge.

There are already aspects of the EP role which have the potential to promote alternative discourses as they lend themselves to the notion of listening to pupils' voices and to ensuring that context is adequately considered. For example, working directly with children to hear their story and engaging in consultation to explore the entirety of the situation. Although the latter does retain the possibility that adults' voices may dominate as they are usually the active participants in consultation (O'Brien and Miller, 2005), Billington (1995) highlights that it is being aware of the presence of discourse in these situations which is powerful. Additionally there is the area of narrative therapy; this lends itself to the very task of listening to children's stories and challenging those 'thin descriptions' which they may have internalised about themselves as a result of others' constructions of them (Fox, 2008). However, as an EP who has received some training in

narrative therapy I am aware of the constraints of applying this work routinely - not least that of capacity - as well as the ongoing debate within the profession about the place of therapy (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2008).

However, there is perhaps more we can consider. For example, whilst there is an awareness within the profession around the limitations of within-child descriptions, we must be careful of seemingly more benign alternatives such 'the needs of the child' and 'response to trauma' (to think of some which I myself have uttered). These potentially position the child as having a deficit, albeit in some cases as the result of environmental factors rather than the result of some internal deficiency. The concept of 'need', whilst not alien to RJ, replaces the concept of blame but maintains that the problem is located within the child and conversely not in the school (Thomas, 2005). Likewise how we advise schools is paramount to this discussion; advice related to behaviourist interventions and/or interventions that are aimed to develop skill can continue to place the need for change with the child; whilst advice which implicates that it is the school that needs to change is, I suspect, more unusual and I know can be difficult to do sometimes.

Whilst addressing some of these issues and challenging discourse can be difficult, particularly in the context of maintaining good working relationships with schools, professionals and parents, there may also be additional ways in which we can continue (or start) this work. As I set out earlier in this thesis, if we are to view social constructionism from the point of view of a critical realist and if we are to consider what Gergen (2009) places as central to operationalising a social constructionist epistemology, then our task is perhaps one of awareness raising, that is of both self-awareness and the awareness of others. As Gergen (2009) maintains it is not to say that we should not use the discourses familiar to us but that we should consider the pitfalls of doing so. It is about questioning ourselves and ensuring that reflexivity goes beyond the obvious and requires us to question the things which we may have taken for granted until now. Likewise it may be less about the bigger gestures and more about the small questions we ask others, the

simple request for clarification when a particular discourse or term is used, asking others to reflect on the pitfalls of 'universal truths' and even sharing more explicitly the social constructionist philosophy. Our role may also be about exploring alternative discourses such as RJ and critiquing their relevance for our schools and the pupils with whom we work. Billington (1995) summarises much of this when he reflects that EPs should change from being expert 'knowers' to 'interpreters' or 'experts not necessarily in answers but in the range of questions we can formulate and interpretations we can access.' (ibid, p. 37)

Final Reflections and Future Developments

With regard to the wider EP profession, including the academic context, this thesis also has the potential to add to a growing body of research and to further promote both RJ and the issues of discourse as an area of research relevant to practitioner-psychologists. At the University of Sheffield in particular, from which this thesis originates, there is a wealth of research interest and practice around issues of discourse and critical approaches to psychology (e.g. Billington, 2002; Corcoran, 2003). There are also possible opportunities to join research support groups and collaborative working around these areas and in relation to aspects of this thesis which could form a major implication of this thesis for the author.

With regard to how this particular research might be taken forward there are a number of areas which might be further explored. For example, following a school's development of RJ would be particularly interesting in terms of exploring how discourses may be further constructed and reconstructed, thinking of the findings of McCluskey et al (2011). Likewise it would be of considerable interest to do similar work in exploring discourses around behaviour in different schools. Whilst the issue of generalisation is not a particularly straightforward one in the context of qualitative research (Cohen et al, 2000), an understanding of RJ would suggest that considering each school in the context of its

own discursive practices would provide a preferable foundation from which to support that school in further work.

There are of course many voices absent from the discourses within this research, namely those of the pupils and so considering which discourses predominate amongst the students; how these have the potential to position and alienate; and how open the students are to alternative discourses, would make an interesting development. Equally the voices of parents would be of considerable interest. Something I considered but did not choose to do was to use heterogeneous focus groups, so for example composing groups so that the roles were more mixed. Within the confines of careful ethical consideration this might also be an area of further study as it would be interesting to consider how discourses might potentially be challenged between participants within such groups; and how this might better provide the opportunity to allow different voices to be directly heard by one another. Following on from the post-research feedback meeting with the head teacher of the participating school, I also felt that interviewing him as part of the research process would have made a valuable contribution and so this might be considered in future research.

It has come as something of a shock to me that RJ has been around for so long and yet the educational psychology literature and EP practice does not appear to reflect this. Whilst it is the case that its origins are of a more criminological basis and that many other professionals are actively involved in RJ, assigning discourse, knowledge and understanding a 'place' within a certain discipline implies a similar 'compartmentalising' of knowledge and skill that the staff in this thesis are critiqued for in their defence of role boundaries. This issue is certainly pertinent to EPs who have long been expected to account for their 'unique contribution', an issue which is only sharpened with the current economic and political environment and the uncertainty of the future of the profession. In times such as these it is safer and easier to hold onto the discourses which are 'ours', which define us and provide a long history and foundation, and therefore legitimacy, to do

what we do. Yet as local authorities become smaller and pressures become greater now might actually be the time for breaking down role boundaries and sharing responsibilities; this may provide the opportunity for educational psychology to let go a little of their traditional discourses and to embrace alternatives more fully.

It is perhaps fitting to end by stating that engagement with social constructionism and RJ has had a powerful impact on my thinking and understanding during the course of reading and writing about them, as well as on my practice, highlighting not just the value of these critical perspectives but also the importance of ongoing professional development and practitioner research within educational psychology.

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