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Removing barriers to learning or picking up the pieces?
An Ethnography of the Learning Mentor in a
performance-based culture.

Jo Bishop

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in
partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.

September 2017

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Abstract

This doctoral study examines the everyday experiences of the Learning Mentor, a support role introduced into English state schools fifteen years ago. It was conceived as part of a broader New Labour policy agenda which sought to resolve the relationship between 'risk' and 'social exclusion' as the root cause of many social problems. According to the official narrative, Learning Mentors were part of a wider initiative to 'eliminate and never excuse' underachievement in the most deprived parts of England. Their primary task of 'removing barriers to learning' was premised on the notion of offering a different type of pupil-support from that which already existed in schools, being described in official accounts as a "professional friend" and "challenger of assumptions". The role can also be understood as part of a transformative agenda which elevated 'low level' workers to paraprofessional status across a range of public services.

The thesis is premised on two key areas: first, how this type of occupational domain has been historically constructed and continues to evolve through policy transformations which are enacted at the local level. Second, how the work activities and practices associated with these and other school support workers, expose issues around 'structure' and 'agency'.

The methodological approach was informed by Institutional Ethnography in that in order to establish how the work of Learning Mentors was practised, viewed and understood within the school, the researcher undertook to gather and document the work knowledges of several groups: firstly the mentors themselves, followed by children and young people as pupils; teaching and support staff, and middle and senior managers. In tracing the genealogy of Learning Mentor practice, attention was also paid to the legacy of an earlier educational paraprofessional emerging in the 1960s and termed the 'community agent'; along with a burgeoning youth mentoring movement from the late 1980s – developments which both took place in the United States of America.

The problematic of the study which became apparent was that although warmly received by pupils, Learning Mentor practices were marginalised, misunderstood and relatively unseen; casting doubt on the role's level of influence suggested by formal prescriptions. Furthermore, despite the support systems in which they worked being formally presented as coherent and straightforward entities, they were in fact found to be 'messy' and contested spaces which were inhabited by different groups of practitioners, whose differing identities informed and underpinned their own respective practices.

Abbreviations

BSF	Building Schools for the Future
BS	Behaviour Support
BSW	Behaviour Support Worker
CE	Compensatory Education
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CWDC	Children's Workforce Development Council
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DES	Department of Education and Science
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EAZ	Education Action Zone
ECM	Every Child Matters
EiC	Excellence in Cities
FD	Foundation Degree
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HLTA	Higher Level Teaching Assistant
HND	Higher National Diploma
HSO	Human Service Organisation
IE	Institutional Ethnography
LEA	Local Education Authority
LM	Learning Mentor
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NL	New Labour
NPM	New Public Management
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
PFI	Private Finance Initiative
PL	Progress Leader
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
TA	Teaching Assistant
UK	United Kingdom
US / USA	United States of America
YM	Year Manager

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Introduction

My interest in work-based ‘helping’ relationships is long-standing. Since the age of 17, I have observed such roles in supported living for young people in the looked-after system, elder-care and third-sector community projects focussing on the interrelation between poverty and mental health. Over the last few years my focus has shifted into state schools and specifically to occupational roles that have been described and understood as educational ‘paraprofessionals’ (Kerry, 2002) i.e. individuals who are tasked with providing ‘new’ solutions to enduring ‘problems’ of underachievement and disaffection. My interest is focussed around two main areas: first, how this type of occupational domain has been historically constructed *and* continues to evolve through policy transformations which are enacted at the local level. Second, how the work activities and practices associated with these workers expose issues around ‘structure’ and ‘agency’. Despite previous policy attempts to use schooling as a means to engineer ‘equality’ - be that of outcome or opportunity (Lowe, 2005) - critiques show how education systems and processes reproduce class inequalities in varying ways. Prominent examples include the ‘correspondence principle’ (Bowles and Gintis, 1976) which, through an economic determinist lens, demonstrates how education systems prepare pupils to be obedient and compliant workers¹; whilst others place a greater emphasis on how cultural processes maintain economic and social structures (Bourdieu and Passerson, 1977) or, in focusing on issues of pupil resistance and (relative) autonomy, argue for a greater acknowledgement of the inherent complexities in school life (Apple, 1982). Whichever angle is taken, contemporary research demonstrates how such inequalities *continue* to frame children and young people’s experiences of formal education to the present day (Ball, 2008; Dorling, 2010; Evans, 2007).

This study sets out to explore what implications the above contextual backdrop holds for one particular group of educational paraprofessionals – the Learning Mentor (LM). It is informed by Institutional Ethnography (IE) as a method of inquiry to learn not only how LMs view their work, but equally how the role (and its associated activities) is understood by those who are associated with more permanent or durable institutional structures in schools, namely teachers and senior leaders / managers. The LM role was enacted by the New Labour (NL) Government between 1999 and 2001. At the time of writing, the role continues to exist in some English secondary schools - particularly those which have remained under the governance of local education authorities. However, with an increased fragmentation in the type of school provision in recent years (Mortimore, 2013), further research is required to establish the extent to which the role exists in institutions such as academies and free schools, either by name or associated activity. The remainder of this section sets out the immediate policy origins of the LM, at some points identifying issues which are duly taken up and examined in more depth in the Literature Review.

¹ Despite the authors’ own questioning of what they later saw as an overly economic determinist conception (Bowles and Gintis, 1981), the correspondence principle has endured as a widely taught concept.

The policy agenda giving rise to Learning Mentors – ‘Education, education, education’.

To overcome *economic and social disadvantage* and to make equality of opportunity a reality, we must strive to eliminate, and never excuse, underachievement in the most deprived parts of our country. *Educational attainment encourages aspiration and self-belief in the next generation*, and it is through family learning, as well as scholarship through formal schooling, that success will come (David Blunkett, 1993, cited in Bishop, 2011:30m, my emphasis).

The first few years of the NL administration witnessed the implementation of what might be described as a ‘genre’ of policies. Some were educational in nature whilst others sought to tackle wider social issues, although as seen in Blunkett’s words above, such issues were inextricably linked in the minds of NL policy innovators. Here, I focus predominantly on policies implemented in the school arena which were aimed to simultaneously raise standards and tackle the workload of the teaching profession. The first of these, *Excellence in schools* (DfEE, 1997) was published just 67 days after Labour took office and is described as a ‘bedrock’ document (Ball, 2008) as it contained almost all of the key themes of New Labour’s education policy. In relation to this discussion, these were an attack on low standards in schools; a declaration of zero tolerance of under-performance and a stated aim that policies would be designed to benefit the many and not the few. *Excellence in schools* was designed and disseminated as an accessible policy document, presented in a highly visual, colour-coded format and made available at supermarket checkouts (Maguire, 2004 in Ball 2008). It also introduced Education Action Zones (EAZs) - a pilot project which attempted to ‘join-up’ services working with families as a way to tackle poor educational outcomes in disadvantaged areas and which bore a striking similarity to Education Priority Areas (EPAs) arising from the Plowden Report some 40 years earlier (Martin, 2016). EAZs were eventually incorporated into *Excellence in Cities* (DfES 1999) a policy initiative which carried the explicit intention to enable social engineering through schools as social organisations. Indeed Michael Barber, chief educational advisor to the government claimed that:

Ultimately the programme should result in a complete re-engineering of secondary education. Instead of fitting students into systems as we did in the 20th century, we would build the system around the needs and aspirations of students (cited in Elliot, 2001:194-95).

Excellence in Cities (EiC) focused on improving standards in secondary education by introducing several new strands of provision into schools. These encompassed extended opportunities for those pupils perceived as ‘Gifted and Talented’ (particularly if they were from lower socio-economic backgrounds), the establishment of Learning Support Units designed to work intensively with pupils in danger of temporary or permanent exclusion and, key for the focus of this thesis, the introduction of LMs, a group who were trumpeted in government and educational news media circles as the most successful strand within the initiative (Hayward, 2007; Stoney, 2005; Kirkman, 2004 and Bell 2003). Far wider in scope than the EAZ programme, EiC initially encompassed six English cities and urban conurbations, but was then extended in the form of ‘Excellence Clusters’ to other areas experiencing disadvantaged, such as ex-mining communities and coastal towns (Bishop,

2011). The number and presence of LMs was significantly strengthened through EiC and by the mid-2000s, there were estimated to be between 12 – 14, 000 working across the sector (DfES, 2005).

A further series of initiatives and legislative changes were also running in parallel to the above which had a significant impact on both the numbers and activities of support staff working in schools (Andrews, 2006). These were set out in *Schools Achieving Success* as the twin problems of teacher shortages, and overwhelming/unsustainable teacher workloads (DfES, 2001a). This publication argued that, in relation to deployment, a far greater flexibility was needed which in practical terms meant the jettisoning of some responsibilities that had previously fallen within the domain of teachers to others. If accepted, these changes promised 20,000 more support (i.e. paraprofessional) staff in schools along with 10,000 more teachers (DfES, 2001a; Ball, 2008). This proposal was then formalised through section 133 of the Education Act 2002 providing for the first time a regulatory framework for the role and deployment of support staff and leading to a national restructuring and remodelling of school staff (DfES, 2003a; Nathan, 2011). Teachers were no longer required to routinely undertake clerical and administrative tasks and also relinquished some aspects of their work defined in the Act as ‘specified’ to the Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA), a role that was created partly in response to this changing policy climate. It is not possible to ascertain how far the work of LMs was directly linked to changes brought about under Section 133 as their work activities were often seen as falling outside of this ‘specified work’. Nevertheless, the remodelling agenda was presented to support staff as a vehicle for recognising their skills and experience whilst also offering the potential to enhance their roles and provide a much needed career structure (DfES, 2003a). On this last point, it is possible to confirm that some LMs did go on to be appointed in a range of ‘new’ pastoral leader posts bearing titles such as ‘Pastoral Manager’ and ‘Inclusive Programmes Manager’ (Bishop, 2011).

Corresponding with these school-based policies were broader social policies and a stated Government desire to invest in childhood at previously unprecedented levels (Frost, 2011). This investment came about through a combination of fiscal measure and social policies like *Every Child Matters* (ECM) which led to the establishment of Sure Start centres and the Extended Schools agenda. This was part of a wholesale reform of children’s services which will be explored in more depth later on. One example in a ‘high-implementation school’, i.e. a school that had embraced the ECM policy agenda, shows how the changes enabled the Head Teacher to “redesign and re-shape the support staff” (Harris and Allen, 2009:344), a sentiment which is reinforced by a member of the support staff from the same study whose words here are highly illustrative of the educational policy initiatives set out above:

We see ourselves as part of the teaching team, offering support and ‘just in time’ interventions with certain young people. This often prevents exclusions or accelerated behaviour... (Cited in Harris and Allen, 2009: 344).

Not all writings regarding the impact of ECM on the schools workforce were as positive. For example, framed within a discussion which sets out the development of pastoral care through “seven ages”, Calvert (2009:75) notes how both the ECM agenda and changes in the wider schools workforce have led to a situation where new and existing groups of workers with different professional and quasi-professional identities to teachers, are now present in schools. His observation that such groups speak a different ‘language’ and bring with them “different notions of care and caring” is somewhat tentative, implying that there are

cultural and organisational ramifications of these changes which have not been fully considered. Placing these to one side for now, the key point here is that the policies which gave rise to the LM role as set out above, are best understood as part of a broader social policy strategy of tackling 'social exclusion' which will be explored in more depth in due course.

A closer examination of the Learning Mentor role

The original objectives assigned to the LM were that they should contribute to raising standards and play a part in reducing truancy and school exclusion (DfES, 2005). LMs were envisioned as providing a complementary service to teachers and other support staff, whilst cultivating and maintaining links with agencies outside of the school setting such as local authority youth services and other relevant statutory and third sector agencies (Marshall, 2006). Between 2001 and 2003, a Functional Map of the 'Provision of Learning Mentor Services' was drawn up and finalised in line with the National Occupational Standards for *Learning Development and Support Services*. These new occupational standards were specific to the 'new' services of Connexions advisors, learning mentors and the educational welfare service. Within the Functional Map LM practice is defined as:

[providing] support and guidance to children, young people and those engaged with them, by *removing barriers to learning* in order to promote effective participation, enhance individual learning, raise aspirations and achieve full potential (Sauve Bell, 2003 in Cruddas, 2005:74, my emphasis).

Whilst the government described the role as:

[Helping] young people to *overcome barriers to learning* through one-to-one mentoring, [having] regular contact with families/carers and encouraging positive family involvement (cited in Constable and Roberts, 2003:4, my emphasis).

Once the role had been implemented the Government commissioned and published further advisory or "Good Practice" guidelines which they saw as critical to the success of the role. These included the necessity for a whole-school understanding and appreciation of the role; a dedicated space for LMs to work in and from; and a clear system of line-management (DfES, 2001b).

As seen in the formal descriptions above, a phrase which became synonymous in describing the work of LMs was that of assisting pupils in 'overcoming' or 'removing barriers to learning'. It appeared repeatedly in government publications (such as those mentioned above), educational news media reports about the role (Morrison, 2008; Jewell, 2010; Wallace, 2001) and at some point, entered the professional lexicon of LMs and other school staff who worked closely with them (Bishop, 2011; Marshall, 2006; Davies and Thurston, 2005). From a government perspective possible barriers to learning included behavioural problems, persistent absenteeism, problems with transition from primary to secondary school, bereavement, difficulties at home and poor study or organizational skills (DfES, 2001b). According to those who conceived the role, pupils experiencing such barriers should view the LM as a new resource who would provide a more individualised approach to their learning. The "Good Practice" guidelines stated emphatically that the LM should be

understood as a “role model”, an “active listener”, a “professional friend” and a “challenger of assumptions”. Equally emphatically they were *not* to be viewed as a “counsellor”, a “classroom assistant” or a “disciplinarian” (DfES, 2001b:8). However, these very clear depictions of the LM role were not always reflected in online discussion forums as illustrated in this question posted by a teacher:

“I would like some advice regarding Learning Mentors and their role. I would like to utilise our mentor more but her role appears limited. What are they really supposed to do?” (‘Olesammie’, Times Educational Supplement, n.d.).

This post received several markedly different responses from one which described the LMs in *their* school as “just a couple of (nice enough) middle-aged relatively uneducated people” who “engaged in social chit-chat” with children and young people but had “no experience or understanding of SEN/soci-economic [sic] issues/barriers to learning” (Betamale, *ibid*), to more positive perceptions like this one:

“With the students I teach who get this support they [the mentors] seem to break down the barriers to the students learning ... taking away some of the pressures that they [pupils] may have that could hinder their school work and progress”
(Helen123abc, *op.cit*).

One striking characteristic of the LM role identified in both news media articles and academic texts was their apparent ability to build relationships *beyond* the school gate, described in one study as working at the interface between family and school (Jones et al, 2009). This can be understood as a type of ‘bridging’ social capital i.e. a form of social capital which is inclusive and outward looking, with the potential to generate reciprocity and broader identities (Putnam, 2000). News media reports in particular had a tendency to focus on how some mentors had overcome previously negative situations such as growing up in ‘tough areas’ and under-achieving at school. Such experiences were then viewed as ‘qualifications’ for the role which further cast LMs as school personnel who would appear “less daunting” to parents whose memories of *their* [own] schooldays were “less than fond” (Morrison, 2008:3). Others noted how LMs often lived in close proximity to the school in which they worked (in contrast to teachers who perhaps did not) and therefore had a more immediate and greater understanding of the locality, which apparently enabled them to “act as a go-between if problems arose with parents” (Allison, 2008:2). The starkest example of this ‘bridging’ characterisation of the role is illustrated in this comment made by a professional teaching body official who stated:

[Learning mentors] are valued members of *their* communities who can translate things to *their* communities that [the] middle-class teacher can’t” (cited in Garner, 2010:3, my emphasis).

As will be demonstrated, such depictions are not just confined to the educational news media and academic literature but are a feature of the ethnography presented in this thesis.

This then is an appropriate point at which to set out a signpost for what is to come. Chapter One - the Literature Review - starts by explicating three areas that enable a broader contextual understanding of the LM as educational paraprofessional. These are: the social policy agenda of the last Labour Government (1997 – 2010); a study of comparative

literature which explores an earlier model of educational paraprofessionalism in the 1960s; and, the wider ideological imperatives that have driven state education in more recent years. The Literature Review continues by examining the creation of the LM role specifically, first viewing it as part of a wider youth mentoring movement but then recognising that because it is a role which essentially operates in schools, it should also be understood as a more recent component of 'pastoral' provision and therefore needs to be considered within this particular field of literature. The Literature Review concludes by considering what it means to be a paraprofessional in educational and other contexts. Chapters Two and Three consider the methodological approach and design of the ethnography respectively. The findings of the study are then presented, discussed and analysed across Chapters Four, Five and Six with Chapter Seven forming the conclusion to the thesis.

The notions of 'structure' and 'agency' are referred to at varying points in the thesis as a means to frame the analysis of a number of different areas. These include policy making at government level: for example I interpret New Labour's adoption of the term Social Exclusion as a move toward a belief that human agency could and should play a greater part in addressing issues like poverty which had previously been laid at the door of structural economic causes; also when assessing the extent to which professional identities are self-constructed (agency) or imposed. In relation to one of the key focuses of the thesis I utilise the language of 'structure' and 'agency' in examining the 'choices' that underpin how pastoral work is 'done' in schools, drawing on the perspectives or 'standpoints' of those employed in such roles. The 'agency' of young people being referred for pastoral interventions or independently accessing more unofficial means of support is also considered.

However, an inherent problem with these concepts is their traditional presentation as a dichotomy, i.e. an 'either – or' where human actions are considered devoid of context and vice-versa. . An alternative view to tackling the structure and agency dichotomy is that of a "both-and approach" (Jencks cited in Deacon and Mann, 1999:432) which although slightly more developed still presents each concept in limited and binary terms. Giddens (1984) also modified earlier conceptions through what he termed "structuration" which enables an interplay between individual action and structure which then permits the agency of individuals to participate in the creation of structure. Although this might seem to resolve the issue of being forced into an 'either-or' mind set, it does preserve the original practice of viewing the social i.e. 'structure' as an entity that exists independently of human beings (Smith, 2005).

A related point is how 'agency' is interpreted and who is doing the interpreting. For example, a neo-liberal perspective posits that poor people simply make poor choices; the classic example being 'choosing' not to work and living on state welfare. However a contrasting way of viewing agency is that people have the capacity to be aware and conscious of their situation and therefore decide actively i.e. use their agency, to opt out of a system that in their view has nothing to offer them. This could be interpreted as a wholly rational choice given that the contemporary labour market demands:

[A] new class of docile workers who can cheerfully work under the more privileged elements of the population while accepting low pay for demeaning work... (Schram in Melrose, 2012:6)

Intrinsically linked to this view of work is an education system which arguably prepares the 'bottom 40%' (Garner, 2013) i.e. those not going on to university and/or pursuing professional careers for the above and here I am reminded of the pupil I observed during my fieldwork daring a member of staff to: "Go on then, exclude me! Please - *do it*. Its pointless being here. I don't *want* to be here". Was I to interpret this as an example of a rational choice being expressed by a disenchanting pupil?

Thus whilst acknowledging the value of 'structure' and 'agency' as a form of short-hand, to think critically about those issues set out above, I was also aware of the limitations associated with these concepts. To overcome this dilemma I turned towards writings which focused on the human consciousness as a more rigorous way to understand peoples' actions within the social world. Both Allman (1999) and Smith (2005) draw on a materialist concept of history to show how people not only produce their material world, but in doing so, *produce themselves*. Here Allman directly quotes Marx and Engels to illustrate the argument that people's understanding and awareness of their situations come about as a direct consequence of their economic, social and material circumstances:

This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the production of physical existence...Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life...As individuals express their life, so they are. *What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and how they produce*. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production (Marx and Engels in Allman, 1999:15) (My emphasis).

Smith similarly rejects the theorizing of structure as something which is independent to and determining of people's actions or "doings" (2005:65). She argues:

Isolating and individuating the subject objectifies the historical commitment of the ongoing process. The concept of social structure hypostatizes what is external to the individual subject active in it (Smith, 2006:67).

Rather, Smith argues for a dialogic understanding which focuses on a more inclusive conception of coordination. She conceives of the social as an ongoing historical process in which people's doings are caught up and responsive to what others are doing, both past and present.

Hence, it is these latter explanations that are intended to form a critical backdrop to my usage of the terms 'structure' and 'agency' within this thesis. When referring to each, whether singularly, or as twinned but mutually opposing concepts, I seek to do so in a way that critically draws on the viewpoints set out above. Thus the references to 'structure' and 'agency' are based around the numerous examples of mediated cultural practices which emerged within the study.

Research Questions

1. What parallels can be drawn from earlier accounts of educational paraprofessionals vis-à-vis their current experiences?
2. What does the enactment of the learning mentor and other recent paraprofessional roles tell us about how practices previously conceived as 'pastoral' are evolving?
3. How does the evidence of the ethnography suggest the influence of texts on the work activities of those situated in schools?
4. How do helping relationships develop and operate within the context of a performance based culture?

Chapter 1: Literature Review

The introduction set out a brief picture of the LM role in terms of its immediate policy origins and its key purposes, as envisaged in government guidelines. Alongside these formal prescriptions of the role, other perspectives were considered from the mixed picture of understanding from teachers which emerged in online community forums, to the strong identification of the LM as someone who provided a bridging function between schools and 'their' communities featuring in both news media and academic accounts. This initial introduction of the LM as educational paraprofessional clearly raises a myriad of issues requiring further critical examination. First, I examine the wider social policy agenda brought about by New Labour in government (1997 – 2010) as the contextual backdrop to those educational initiatives identified above. Secondly, I look beyond the contemporary picture and utilise historical accounts to achieve a more rigorous understanding of the educational paraprofessional in contexts other than England. Thirdly, I return to the present day to consider how a new culture of management in the public sector emerging in the 1980s has led to a system of performativity; my key focus here however, is a critique of how *little* this literature has had to say about the *paraprofessional* experience. In contrast, the fourth section of this literature review turns away from a broader focus and deals with the 'story' of LMs specifically. Here I present a critical exploration of the perceived 'success' of the youth mentoring movements in both North American and British contexts and why that was driven into English schools from the late 1990s. This discussion also includes an examination of the scant literature regarding LMs, particularly in terms of how the role has been conceptualised and theorised. The fifth section looks at the contested arena of pastoral care in schools as a further means to understand the work of LMs. Both this and the previous section (on youth mentoring) are useful in foregrounding some of the issues of practice which emerge in the ethnographic study on which this thesis is predicated. In the fifth and final section of the Literature Review I return to a broader focus in assessing the relevance of existing conceptualisations and contemporary accounts of 'professionalism' in terms of contributing to an understanding of the paraprofessional experience. In this section I also consider the concept of liminality (van Genep, 2004; Mansaray, 2006; Downey et al, 2016) as offering an alternative means to make sense of the marginalised paraprofessional.

1.1 New Labour's Social Policy agenda:

The key focus of this section is to document the broader factors which led to the creation of the LM role. Whereas the introduction discussed the immediate educational policy origins of this paraprofessional role, this section deals with the wider agenda in examining the establishment of the Social Exclusion Unit and the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* policy agenda (DfES, 2003b).

1.1.1 The identification and elimination of risk: the Social Exclusion Unit and *Every Child Matters*

New Labour's educational initiatives were part of a broader policy strategy of tackling 'social exclusion' which was defined in UK government circles as:

... a shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999 cited in Peace, 2001:27)

These issues were to be confronted through the establishment of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), a new cross-departmental group whose primary purpose was to lead policy thinking in tackling seemingly intractable social problems previously neglected because, according to the Prime minister “no Whitehall department ‘owned’ them” (Blair, cited in Powell, 1999: 291). However, ‘Social Exclusion’ was (and remains) contested as both term and concept. Within a broader geographical context, the term was adopted by European policy makers during the 1980s as they struggled to describe innovative social policy in a way that avoided the stigma associated with concepts like ‘poverty’ and ‘deprivation’. As French and English were the mandatory official languages for all European-Union-wide policy initiatives, the term was not only mutually recognisable in both languages (“*exclusion sociale*” / “social exclusion”), but offered a fresh alternative, something which was “shiny and new” (Peace, 2001:18). However, there is no monolithic pan-European definition of social exclusion but rather a range of national discourses which used the idea in a number of different ways (Levitas, 2005). Within a UK political context, the adoption of the term was certainly more than a simple rebranding exercise in that it signalled an ideological shift away from Labour’s traditional and unconditional language of social justice which was predicated on an understanding of how structural forces (such as economic downturn) impact adversely on individuals and communities; towards an implication that human agency could and should play a greater part in addressing the issues identified in the definition above. This shift was evidenced by the constitutional revision of Clause IV which, since its inception in 1918, had committed the party to social equality but now talked of “the rights we enjoy reflect[ing] the duties we owe” (Dean, 1999:220). Similarly the party’s 1997 manifesto drew explicitly on a contractarian and thereby conditional discourse claiming a ‘bond of trust’ which it sought to forge with “the broad majority of people who work hard, play by the rules [and] pay their dues” (cited in Dean, 1999:220). These changes can also be understood as a result of competing discourses (conceptualised and named as ‘RED’, ‘MUD’ and ‘SID’ by Levitas, 2005:2) which had a profound impact on New Labour as both a party in opposition and in government. RED refers to a redistributionist discourse, situated in a critical social policy which understands social exclusion as very much intertwined with poverty. The second, MUD, is a moral discourse which looks to cultural, rather than material explanations of poverty. It originally used the term ‘underclass’, associated with thinkers on the right (Bochel et al, 2005) but those on the centre-left preferred the language of ‘social exclusion’. Finally, SID describes a social integrationist discourse which sees inclusion primarily in terms of labour market attachment, which as we shall see, became a recurring theme of New Labour in governance. Although the identification of these discourses is to act principally as an analytical device, Levitas reminds us that:

... [A] discourse also constitutes ways of acting in the world ... [which] both opens up and closes down possibilities for action for ourselves. If we can make it stick, it does this for others too (2005:3).

In examining how these permutations of social exclusion were reflected in policy, it is argued that New Labour drew heavily on both SID and MUD for a “discursive reconstruction of the

self" (Levitas, 2005:3). Thus the purpose of the SEU was concerned with particular groups whose excluded status was characterised by their behaviour, namely: school truants and concerns regarding how certain groups were over-represented in school exclusions (Ball, 2008); teenage lone-mothers; young offenders and rough sleepers (Bochel et al, 2005). Each area was tackled through a 'strategy' with examples such as the Youth Inclusion Projects which targeted young people living in high crime areas and the abundance of provisions set up through the *Teenage Pregnancy Strategy* which sought to engage young lone mothers into education or training (Tabberer, 2000). In short, a collectivist responsibility to risk was replaced with an individualist one.

1.1.2 'Every Child Matters'

An example of early intervention was *Every Child Matters* (ECM), an ambitious policy agenda which was underpinned by the twin goals of ending child poverty and enabling every child to reach their potential and premised on universal intervention rather than targeted protection alone. It brought into view those children who had previously remained hidden and marginalized such as children of prisoners, looked-after children and unaccompanied children entering the UK (Williams, 2004). But whilst it represented a previously unprecedented investment in childhood, ECM was not based on any fundamental redistribution of wealth potentially leading to a reversal of increasing social and economic inequalities. As Dorling observes "While New Labour achieved so much ... they had little notion of where they were falling down elsewhere" (2011:129) a comment related to his critique of how children became racially segregated in tower blocks under their period of governance:

The majority of children who live above the fourth floor of tower blocks, in England, are black or Asian. This concentration is only possible because prejudice, poverty and locality are so closely linked – especially in London, where the richest tenth are now 271 times better off than the poorest tenth of the population (*ibid*: 130).

As with the language of 'joined-up thinking' that framed the establishment of the SEU, ECM also represented a major structural change to the organization of those professionals involved with children's lives in that it demanded a multi-disciplinary approach and a breaking down of professional silos. For example, the Green Paper set out its intention to create 'joined-up' services for children, who were currently the responsibility of Social Services, Health, Education, the Police, Youth Services, and the Voluntary Sector (DfES, 2003). This cultural change to working practices was to be realised through the housing of a number of health and social care professionals under one roof through 'hot-desking' in community settings such as Sure Start and Children's Centres – a development that one seasoned professional declared he did not think he would have witnessed during his life-time (Frost, 2014). Also unprecedented was the claim by the implementers of ECM that it had involved children in the formation of this agenda, particularly the outcomes for children that it purported to give rise to. In sum, the ECM agenda, represented a significant shift in British policy and culture in moving away from a society which, with the exception of the "naughty/needy children or those deemed as mad, bad or deprived", had traditionally preferred to leave the responsibility of children's care outside of school to their parents (Williams, 2004:407).

Despite the apparent universalism of ECM, some of its policies also had a tougher side such as enforcing responsibilities of parents for ensuring their children's school attendance and good behaviour. For the former this led to fines and in a handful of cases, custodial sentences (Garner, 2004). With regards to the latter issue a number of parenting orders and rehabilitations programmes were offered, which if not sufficiently engaged in led to benefit sanctions and even evictions (Thomas, 2007). As illustrated in the extract given below, New Labour in government were unapologetic about their proposed 'early interventions' directed at what they perceived as 'failing families':

I am saying that where it is clear, as it very often is, at a young age, that children are at risk of being brought up in a dysfunctional home where there are multiple problems, say of drug abuse or offending, then instead of waiting until the child goes off the rails, we should act early enough, with the right help, support and disciplined framework for the family, to prevent it. This is not stigmatizing the child of the family. It may be the only way to save them and the wider community from the consequences of inaction" (Blair, 2006 cited in Ball, 2008:154).

New Labour also promoted what they termed 'protective factors' that would foster children's resilience against disadvantage. These were identified as:

- Strong relationships with parents, family and other significant adults;
- Parental interest and involvement in education with clear and high expectations;
- Positive role models;
- Individual characteristics such as an outgoing nature, self-motivation, intelligence;
- Active involvement in family, school and community life;
- Recognition, praise and feeling valued (DfES, 2003b: paragraph 1.13).

Here it is possible to see, once again, the contractual and conditional nature of policy with the increased emphasis on parental agency in taking an active 'interest and involvement' in their children's education. This can also be linked with the earlier government identification of possible barriers to learning which, as the reader will recall, were very much based on situations pertaining to the young person's family and home such as 'behavioural problems' and 'persistent absenteeism'; or deficit constructions of young person themselves, such as 'lacking focus' or having 'poor organizational skills'. This then ties in to how the notion of 'duty' is extended to children and young people in terms of how they approach the education afforded to them by right; along with advice about what characteristics they should already have or be appropriating. It is also possible to see, implicitly at least, where educational paraprofessionals like learning mentors fit into this new schema as those 'other significant adults' and/or 'positive role models', (particularly to those from disadvantaged backgrounds) who will deliver that 'recognition, praise and sense of feeling valued' that would apparently contribute to young people's resilience.

The universal and multi-disciplinary approach of ECM was underpinned by new appointments of Directors of Children's Services at a local level and a new Ministry for Children, Young People and Families located within the DfES, developments which did arguably represent a new seriousness towards children. However, concern has been expressed over the difficulty in striking a balance between strategies that on the one hand sought to enhance opportunities and minimize risk at a *general level*; and strategies that

sought to minimize the specific risks faced by *particular* children. From the early legislative stages of ECM, there was a lack of clarity in identifying how these general and specific strategies might work in tandem and more importantly, what values might drive them (Williams, 2004). For example, a strong theme running through policies examined so far is the responsabilization of parents, particularly around their children's engagement in education and ability to desist from engaging in criminal behaviour. However, such a culture has to be counter-balanced by one of entitlement to parental support "if services are to be destigmatized and if trust is to be engendered" (Williams, 2004:419). In highlighting these tensions between entitlement and responsibility, and protection and punishment, early critiques skilfully summarised the 'poly-glot' nature of the New Labour policy agenda:

So how do we understand Every Child Matters? Is it further evidence of the creeping social investment state? Is it recognition of children's rights and a more child-centered society? Is it universalism and thin egalitarianism slipping stealthily in through the back door? Does it herald a new, holistic and multidisciplinary approach to the professional care of children? Or does it carry a Foucauldian twist in its tail, inculcating parental responsibilities in collaborating with the state to construct their children as educated, disciplined and self-responsible subjects? In true New Labour style the [ECM] Green Paper is a hodge-podge mixture which appeals to all these interpretations (Williams, 2004:408).

1.1.3 The Centrality of Work

Earlier, I referred to a social integrationist discourse (SID) which envisaged that social inclusion was to be achieved primarily through participation in the labour market. In addition to the policy initiatives outlined thus far, a key facet of New Labour's approach to tackling social exclusion was reducing dependence on the welfare state in shifting people from 'welfare to work' and in doing so reducing entitlements to benefits that were formerly universal rather than means tested and selective (Bochel et al, 2005). Alongside the care of pre-school children, the role of Sure Start and Children's Centres was to support and encourage unemployed parents take tentative steps back into work. Examples provided in the literature emphasise how relationships that were enacted between Sure Start workers and such parents led to a greater take up of further education which in itself acted as a catalyst to enter the labour market. In some cases parents went full circle in eventually becoming paid Sure Start workers. This in itself gave greater credibility to such initiatives in that they recruited local people who then acted as acceptable if not aspirational role models to their peers who were being 'encouraged' in their own transitioning from 'welfare to work' (Power and Willmott, 2007).

The centrality of work as a twin economic goal of New Labour's social policy agenda (Ball, 2008) was also brought about through the establishment of a new Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC). This is a large part of the 'story' of learning mentors and other educational paraprofessionals whose numbers, as indicated in the introduction, increased significantly during this era of 'job creation'. Indeed, in a speech to the Social Market Foundation in 2001, Estelle Morris, then Secretary of State for Education envisaged that ten years on, schools would be "rich in the number of trained adults [other than

teachers] available to support learning to new high standards” (DfES, 2001a:15). In underlining the new multi-disciplinary nature of working practices, LMs were seen as members of both the Schools *and* Children’s workforce respectively (DfES, 2005). Furthermore, attempts to not only formalise but give a greater sense of permanence to these new paraprofessional roles were brought about in the form of a newly established Sector Skills Council for Children and Young People’s Services which oversaw a new and previously unprecedented qualifications framework, encompassing an initial three day mandatory course (Marshall, 2006), a nationally accredited training programme linked to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at Levels 3 and 4 and a new suite of foundation degrees written to reflect the different areas of work undertaken in both the Schools and Children’s workforce. Like those enlisted by Sure Start above, this enabled people who were employed in these roles but had limited or no qualifications, to ‘earn and learn’ i.e. gain qualifications whilst in paid work. What this meant in practice was that many working class women were able to enter employment in primary schools on the basis of their already-existing links with schools as (for example) class room volunteers. Whilst for those already employed in this sector as teaching assistants or lunchtime cover staff, new roles like that of the learning mentor, afforded genuine opportunities for career progression in terms of not only earning a higher salary but also being in a position to offer a different, more nurturing type of support to children and young people as reflected in the words of this learning mentor:

In 2001 when the first Learning Mentors were introduced to [-----] I knew that it was the role I had been waiting for. I had been in school five years as an SNA [special needs assistant] and seen so many children with social, emotional and behavioural problems and yearned to help them (cited in Bishop, 2007).

The focus of the LM’s work in the secondary school sector was more explicit in that the main motivation to ‘remove barriers to learning’ was to improve standards. One particular case study of a school (Kerry, 2002) shows how the LM role was implemented after the school was deemed as ‘failing’ by Ofsted. The Head Teacher talked about an urgent need to ‘do something about GCSE results’ expressing that over and above the teaching that took place in the classroom, pupils needed “... the additional back-up of an interested adult, a critical friend, who could guide their learning in a non-threatening way” (*ibid*: 3). This typifies an experience faced by many other schools at this time leading to the employment of adults whose own biographies of ‘coming good’, despite experiencing their own school disaffection, somehow qualified them for this work. Again, it is the policy agenda of NL that played a key part in this move to employ individuals who would have previously have been seen as members of ‘outlier’ groups in formal education settings. For example, the 1998 SEU report on the over-representation of Black boys in school exclusions and truancy (Ball, 2008) gave direct rise to a number of black men being employed as mentors as credible figures to turn the tide of such disaffection (Odihi, 2002). Paired with the heightened levels of optimism and, some might argue ‘blind faith’, that was invested in mentoring as a vehicle to engage young people at this time (Colley, 2003b), it is possible to see how the conditions arose for a significantly greater number of working class people to take up occupational roles in schools other than those they had traditionally been assigned to i.e. as cleaners, caterers and administrative assistants.

In conclusion, New Labour's policy agenda of addressing social exclusion through early intervention led to an increased presence of paraprofessionals in the schools workforce, albeit supported by framework of in-work benefits and tax credits to ensure that work did indeed pay. These new employees were often consciously and purposefully drawn from communities whose engagement and achievement within schools represented a cause for concern - not only in the immediate sense, but in terms of the risky 'conditions' (teenage pregnancy, long term unemployment and welfare dependency) that they might lead to. An important question for consideration is whether other Western industrial societies have responded to and dealt with the consequences of protracted and/or rising social inequalities in a comparable way? I was interested to establish if similar attempts had been made to draw working class people into areas of public service traditionally dominated by the middle classes and if so, on what basis and with what impact on those involved?

1.2. Examining earlier accounts of paraprofessional experiences

Existing contemporary literature pertaining to all types of educational paraprofessionals is scarce in comparison to that of the teaching profession / school leadership and it is the Teaching Assistant (TA) role which has gained the most attention in the literature (Cajkler et al, 2007; Lee, 2011; Tucker, 2009). Here there is a tendency to view the role as 'other' which immediately emphasises its supposed peripheral nature in relation to the teaching profession (Mansaray, 2006). However, a number of rich historical accounts provide a credible basis on which to build a meaningful understanding of paraprofessionals that are more akin to the LM role, as well as providing an understanding of the wider economic and social context which initiated the policies giving rise to such roles. One such example is Stewart (1971:n.p.) who sought to establish "knowledge not previously available" about the school paraprofessional in the United States of America (hereafter US / USA). From this information it is possible to establish two key points: first the date of this study confirms that educational paraprofessionals existed in other western contexts at least two decades before being present in English schools; second, the author's stated intent to gather knowledge about the role suggests that there lacked a coherent understanding about what these individuals actually did. Stewart's study identified no less than seven major categories of secondary school paraprofessional with the two most relevant to this thesis being instructional aides - a role which has endured within the US to this day, with over half a million people currently employed as such (Mansaray, 2006) and secondly, student supervision aides. It is the accounts of this latter group that bear the closest resemblance to LMs in terms of who occupied the role, what their work entailed and the relationships with students that arose as a result. Student supervision aides were found to be the fastest growing type of paraprofessional at the time of the study and were common to schools which included unstructured periods in their schedules from which "faculty members" (i.e. teachers) were eager to give up responsibility for overseeing.

The rationale for the introduction of paraprofessionals in US schools during this period reflects some of the issues that the English teaching profession were to grapple with some years later in its argument that a lack of time for professionals' work was damaging to "professional pride" (Baynham and Trump cited in Stewart, 1971:n.p). The further designation of the student supervision aides as "community agents" is of key interest to this

thesis as it is possible to draw from these, clear parallels with the modern day English Learning Mentor. So who were these so-called community agents and what did their work entail? The study gives four detailed pen pictures with the first, described as a “male Negro [sic]” aged 23, who had completed two years of college and continued to attend on a part time basis to pursue a teaching qualification. The school he was situated in had a significant percentage of Black students but no Black teachers. Based on observations of his work the researcher judged his impact on, and rapport with, students as “outstanding” describing him as a “communicator between the Black students and the faculty” who “tried not to function as a disciplinarian” but instead counselled the students and reasoned with them (Stewart, 1971:28). The second community agent, a woman, aged 59 (also described as “Negro”) was observed as a “bright, alert and dedicated person” whose work involved “patrolling all the floors, halls and girls’ rest rooms, watching for disturbances and trying to solve the problems on the scene” (*ibid*). The accounts given here suggests quite different roles with the woman’s work activities presenting a more reactive and possibly punitive approach; whilst the male is depicted as a mentor, advocate and intermediary between student and ‘school’ implying those professionals in authority. As such, the description of these two paraprofessionals as “community agents” would not appear to be based on their work activities but more their potential links with communities outside of the school. This is further reinforced by the comment that, in common with other community agents, the 23 year old male served as a liaison between the school and family and between school and community:

All community agents visited homes, day or night, to foster mutual understanding. They accompanied sick students home and saw that they were taken care of. They accompanied suspended students home and explained the school’s actions to the parents. They sat in on conferences between parents and school officials (Stewart, 1971:28).

The third paraprofessional, an “oriental [sic] woman”, aged 22 years, had been previously employed in the Portland Model Cities Program and *Head Start*. In contrast, her role was primarily *outside* the school where she was tasked with establishing a community evening school along with parent advisory groups and parent forums, information which adds a further element to our understanding of what comprised a community agent. As with LMs, the employment experiences of this particular community agent were very much bound up in significant policy initiatives originating from this era; Head Start was a programme that aimed to improve the health status, learning and social skills of poor children so that they could begin schooling on an equal footing with their more advantaged peers (Currie, 2001). Still in existence to this day, the programme was initiated as part of the then Government’s ‘*War on Poverty*’, legislated through the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (Pearl and Reissman, 1965). This connection with a policy of such magnitude seemed to generate a certain amount of status for this particular paraprofessional as it was noted that inside the school she was given “an almost free hand in determining her role as a community agent ...” (Stewart, 1971: 29). This reflects a degree of autonomy and independence that was similarly envisaged for LMs in the earliest days of their role but, as shall be seen in due course, is not characteristic of the role where it still exists today.

The work of the fourth paraprofessional, described as a Black male with “three years’ experience as a community agent” indicates that his work involved wide-ranging activities encompassing those which would currently be understood as pastoral *and* inclusion work in

English schools today. This is reflected in the following extract which points to tasks like the statistical monitoring of students and dealing with poor attendance and behaviour whilst ensuring the physical well-being of students from lower socio-economic groups:

He maintained files on his students during their four years; he handled the attendance of his class and took referrals from teachers on 'tardy' students; he assisted impoverished students with medical and clothing needs through a special fund; he counselled students on subjects ranging from academics to drugs; he sat in on all suspension conferences with the class dean and helped to decide the action to be taken... (Stewart, 1971:28).

Earlier it was noted how academic and news media accounts had characterised the LM as a paraprofessional who was able to draw on aspects of their own biography (for example, socio-economic background, ethnicity, personal experiences of school) to provide an effective interface between school, family and community respectively. The description of paraprofessionals as "community agents" in this study was particularly intriguing, but as the study was written on the basis of an assumed knowledge about this role i.e. no further definitions or explanations were provided, it became imperative to gain a retrospective understanding about the origins and impetus for such a role and whether they existed in human service organisations (HSOs) other than education. This led to the discovery of a literature spanning the early 1960s to the late 1980s, which enabled an understanding of the wider economic and social context that led to the creation of the US educational paraprofessional and it is to this that I now turn.

1.2.1 'New Careers for the Poor'

New Careers for the Poor: the Nonprofessional in Human Service (Pearl and Reissman, 1965) was a thesis proposing that the employment of 'non', 'sub' or 'para' professionals in HSOs should be vastly expanded in order to achieve two interrelated objectives: the first - 'to eradicate poverty by providing employment to the poor' provides the context in which the authors' work is situated and helps explain why the idea gained currency leading to implementation over a relatively short period of time. From the early 1960s, there was a growing awareness of an "other America" characterised by severe poverty, chronic unemployment and social neglect. The election of Kennedy and the burgeoning struggle of the Civil Rights movement reflected that significant parts of the American people were not indifferent to the plight of many but had to take action. The afore-mentioned policy response: 'War on Poverty' was characterised in part by a desire to implement new ideas and alternative programmes that deviated from conventional HSOs and the professionals who staffed them, both of which were criticised for their increasing disengagement from, and insensitivity to the poor (Katan and Etgar, 1998).

The second objective - 'to promote changes in the structure and activities of HSOs *and* the interrelationships within them' - reveals the rationale for Pearl and Reissman's call for 'New Careers for the Poor' in their assertion that the employment of the "indigenous nonprofessional" in economically disadvantaged communities could fill an important vacuum. Expanding on this they state:

In this sense, the term “non-professional” is limited because it does not specify the nature of the tasks to be performed; the usefulness of the term, however, lies in calling attention to certain distinctions between a professional orientation and the performance of various tasks by people whose training is less inclusive than that of professionals, *but who may have specific contributions to make* in the performance of tasks related to the helping professions (Pearl and Reissman, 1965: viii, my emphasis).

The term “indigenous nonprofessional” is used frequently and with very little clarity apart from one contributor who relates it to “workless Americans” referring specifically to:

[The] Negro, the Mexican-Americans, the Puerto Ricans, the rural whites of poor educational backgrounds [and] the Indians [sic]” (Saltzman, 1965:39).

That aside, it is clear that the “specific contribution” of the indigenous nonprofessional was their capacity to serve as a ‘bridge’ between the middle-class institution and the low-income population as exemplified by the school community agent above when being described as a “communicator between the Black students and the faculty”. The bridge concept is credited to Herbert Gans (cited in Pearl and Reissman, 1965:187) and here, its function is explained within the context of a community mental health programme:

Indigenous staff are [...] able to *interpret community life and values* to professionals...as well as serve as *interpreters* of the professionals, and role models for lower-income persons (Brager cited in Pearl and Reissman, 1965:77, my emphasis).

Saltzman, also a supporter of the New Careers thesis, gives similar designations within the field of education which shed light on the notion of the “community agent”. Coming as they do a decade earlier, these make reference to “school-community” agents or “coordinates” who:

... [S]huttle effectively between the school and the community *helping each know more about the other* (Saltzman, 1965:48, my emphasis).

Essentially, the ‘New Careers’ project argued for an original and new look at the status and functions of the nonprofessional worker. This would lead to a different perception of his/her potential contribution to the functioning of HSOs, a belief which was premised on their apparent ability to provide “qualitative and meaningful services to their clients” (Katan and Etgar, 1998:128). Varied arguments were presented to support this assertion: their “(peer) status attributes” meant that they had similar if not the same life experiences as the clients of HSOs so consequently had far less need to validate themselves to those they worked amongst, thereby allowing “considerable advantage over the professional from the outset” (Pearl and Reissman, 1965:85). Nonprofessional workers were credited with knowing how to deal with problems from the “inside” not from above and their style was also noted to be considerably less formal:

“They will hug clients, accept – and repay – their hospitality, and share first-name designations ... (ibid).

Aside from this informality, nonprofessionals were noted as more “directive, “active” and “partisan” in comparison to their professional counterparts and more likely to provide active direction to their clients. Taking all of the factors together, the nonprofessional was viewed as having the means to develop comparably more “rounded, everyday type of relationships” with their clients (Pearl and Reissman, 1965: 86).

By the early 1970s the ideas expounded by Pearl and Reissman could be seen in education, healthcare, social work and what would be understood in a UK context as ‘youth work and community development’ as references are made to projects such as Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited - a social activism organization which utilised the indigenous or paraprofessional. The extract below which is taken from a report designed to look at ‘manpower’ [sic] needs for professional and paraprofessional social work personnel, provides a further meta-commentary by which one can gauge the actual enactment of the New Careers idea:

The human sectors of health, education and welfare have recently expanded to include *new faces, old allies, and in some cases former consumers*, the working and the non-working poor. The largest number of new faces is found in the work force of *paraprofessionals*. The paraprofessionals are those persons who tend to live in the areas of our cities needing the greatest improvement in human services, whether in the hospitals, schools or social agencies. Some of the paraprofessionals have high school diplomas, some do not. Many are members of the Black Community, some are not. However, all of them have had personal experiences with poverty and the majority have come to recognize *their extensive knowledge of their neighbourhood or community* (Austin, 1972:59, my emphasis).

By this stage, it is noticeable that the term ‘nonprofessional’ is being replaced more and more by ‘paraprofessional’. Although it is not possible to establish the reason(s) for this with any certainty it could be that as the visibility and contribution of such workers increased, their designation as a ‘nonprofessional’ may have sat uncomfortably with all parties concerned i.e. amongst professional colleagues and/or in their interactions with their nonprofessional counterparts. There may have also been a need to rebrand and change the narrative in order to attract more so-called indigenous workers to such roles.

1.2.2 Applying the ‘New Careers’ thesis to education and schooling: ‘... nothing about the system belongs to the poor’

Given the many parallels that can be drawn between these 1960s paraprofessionals and the LM role I turn now to a more in-depth critique of how the ‘New Careers’ idea was applied to education. I start by examining the ideological beliefs that underpinned the desire to see nonprofessionals employed in HSOs as well as a consideration of the issues and potential pitfalls identified by those pursuing this project.

Proponents of the ‘New Careers’ project noted how educators had joined the “general orgy of consumption” that was gripping many services in post-war America which led to schools in affluent areas enjoying new buildings, new technologies and increased salaries for teachers. Saltzman cites Aphra Behn’s injunction to “Come away, poverty’s catching” in his

observation that in this expansion of the “educational plant” there was little discussion of the poor and the deprived:

The slum school and neighbourhood were lost sight of in an actual and metaphorical rush to *Suburbia* (Saltzman, 1965:40).

This view is also reinforced by others who argued a rationale for changing what was clearly a very segregated schooling system on both class and racial lines:

Schools constitute a colonial imposition because *nothing about the system belongs to the poor*. [Thus] Introducing the indigenous poor into meaningful teaching roles could be an important initial step toward producing a fundamental change in the character of the school ... (Pearl and Reissman, 1965:73, my emphasis).

However, this “initial step” should be motivated by a genuine desire for change and not mere “window dressing” meaning that the poor had to become “truly a part of the teaching organization” in terms of helping to determine educational policy and programmes and crucially being given opportunity for “meaningful advancement” (ibid). But how was this to be achieved? Arguments for utilising education as a model for bringing about ‘new’ careers were put forward on more than one front but anything that could be construed as pragmatism was quickly re-aligned with the afore-mentioned twin goals of eradicating poverty by employing indigenous workers in a way that would benefit *all* parties. For example, it was one way of solving the predicted teaching shortage but *only if* the teaching role was re-examined and effectively re-imagined, as illustrated in this extract and the discussion which follows:

Currently in the classroom there is but one designated role – teacher. Incorporated in that role are a great number of diverse functions – the teacher is an educator, but he [sic] is also a clerk, a custodian, an operator of audio-visual equipment ... *In many slum schools the impression gained is that the teacher is part lion tamer and part warehouseman*. The latter roles must be eliminated and many of the others can be assumed by less qualified personnel (Pearl and Reissman, 1965:56-57, my emphasis).

Nonprofessionals were already carrying out this work in some instances but such an approach was argued to be piecemeal and insufficient; it was only the redefinition of the teaching role that would usher in the formal structural change needed to enable the functions carried out by new personnel to be integrated into the “fabric of the system”. This redefinition involved the abstraction of no less than five different roles from the “one omnifarious duty now performed” thus ‘teacher aide’; ‘teacher assistant’; ‘teacher associate’; ‘teacher’ and ‘supervising teacher’ would exist along a continuum in which advancement from entry position (‘teacher aide’) to fully-fledged professional (‘teacher’) could be negotiable on the basis of talent and motivation “rather than economic means” (ibid). It would seem that this was realised as ‘Teacher aide’ was one of the school paraprofessionals highlighted by Stewart (1971) some years later; but what is also interesting to note is how the policy, once enacted, has continued to evolve and expand through the appearance of several different adjectives assigned to this, one, designation of ‘aide’ (for example, ‘clerical’, ‘instructional’ and ‘student supervision’).

The all-important career advancement of the teacher aide to teacher assistant (or beyond) was to be achieved through a system of credit for on-the-job activity alongside college courses. Advancement to the level of associate teacher would follow a similar course of two years' work and academic training. Once operational, the teacher would "...no longer be burdened with menial tasks" but "liberated to act as a true professional" (Pearl and Reissman, 1965:61). The authors are careful to acknowledge that there were already people working as 'non-certified' (i.e. unqualified) teachers but point out that they were not provided with special supervision nor was their role legitimated by tenure or official status; the more formalised role of 'associate teacher' would, they argue, deliver this. Persuasive cases were made for the adoption of the 'New Careers' concept which were also predicated on dominant constructions of youth as vulnerable and/or a threat:

... a poor youth who had not completed a high school education could *revitalize an entire existence* and in less than ten years emerge as a fully-certified professional [...]. *During this entire period he would be socially useful* (Pearl and Reissman, 1965:60-61, my emphasis).

The final role in the continuum - 'supervising teacher' - was seen as "cardinal in this new career sequence", envisaged as individuals who would be drawn from teachers with "outstanding histories of achievement" who were therefore equipped to provide "constant and imaginative" supervision, counselling and training (Pearl and Reissman, 1965:62). It was crucial that this position also became an affiliate of the higher education process who would in turn validate this new career structure. The role of 'supervising teacher' was also intended to provide an alternative avenue of advancement to the more usual paths of administration or management which would sustain incentives for those who wished to "devote their lives to education" (ibid). This attempt to redefine the teaching role provides some interesting parallels with the UK "remodelling" policy agenda of the early 2000s which as discussed earlier, was part of a group of policies which gave rise to the LM role and other subsequent paraprofessionals such as Behaviour Support Workers (BSWs) who were offered their own career advancement through the CWDC, reflecting the optimism felt at the time about the expansion of education as a public service. Furthermore, although the increase of paraprofessionals in English schools might initially be viewed as government-led, it was a reactive policy, given that significant numbers of TAs and other paraprofessionals were already present in schools from the mid-1990s onwards (Mansaray, 2006).

1.2.3 Critiquing 'New Careers'

One response to the optimistic accounts conveyed within the 'New Careers' thesis could easily be cynicism and an interpretation of the project as mid-20th century middle-class 'do-gooding' premised on a deficit model of the poor. But whilst 'New Careers' is undeniably written from a 'them and us' perspective and the language used often stark - "slum child", "slum community" et cetera - the analysis is one that understands poverty as a structural rather than cultural issue, in defining the experiences and 'choices' of the poor. In this regard its proponents do not follow traditional sociological traditions of placing structure and human agency as opposing explanations for human behaviour but view them rather as imbricated. Pearl and Reissman challenged the view held by some of their contemporaries that the poor were directly responsible for their own educational *underachievement*. They also questioned dominant constructions of young people which framed middle-class young people as 'reality-

oriented' and willing to make the day-to-day sacrifices demanded by schooling in the interest of some future pay-off, in contrast with the low income (working class) young people, who were supposedly governed by the 'pleasure principle' and living only for the delights of the present:

As enticing as this "ant versus grasshopper" distinction might be, it fails to recognize a signal fact. There *is* a future in schooling for middle-class youth; this just isn't true for the great majority of the poor. Schooling is, by and large, a rewarding experience for the affluent; for the poor it is largely a misery to be borne (Pearl and Reissman, 1965:71).

This was because middle class students had a virtual monopoly on the rewards of the system through getting good grades which led to positive pupil-teacher and home-school relations and represented a school experience which afforded dignity and enhanced self-esteem:

In attaining success, the affluent youngster is required to make very few sacrifices and he attains one of life's most precious gratifications – he is allowed to have a feeling of competence and is given the greatest measure of self-determination that the system allows (ibid).

In contrasting the middle-class experience with the schooling of the poor, the disadvantaged young person receives few rewards because "he has none of the attributes to attain rewards". At points, the authors come close to looking through the lens of a deficit model as they cite a home-based "language style and behaviour pattern that do not fit easily into the standard classroom situation". But crucially, these observations are presented as part of a *wider* picture which identifies an educational experience that stigmatizes the poor young person as "stupid" and affords them no sense of competence:

When seen in a larger context, the school is but another agency in the anatomy of the establishment overwhelming the poor (Pearl and Reissman, 1965:72).

Saltzman (1965) adopts a similar position in arguing how Compensatory Education (CE) could continue to play a part in the realisation of the 'New Careers' project. Noting the migration of the poor to central cities (and the middle-class response of flight to more affluent neighbourhoods noted earlier) astute mayors and school superintendents began recognizing this new bloc of voters on the scene who had the capacity "if not yet the organization, to veto their plans for urban and educational renewal" (Saltzman, 1965:40). As a result, many federal school systems initiated programmes under the banner of 'compensatory education' which were guided by a number of principles that once again, illustrate understandings of this complex interrelationship between structure and agency. The first of these was a belief in the human potential for learning but recognition that this could be sharply curtailed by poverty. Exponents of CE challenged schools to no longer passively accept that a slum environment placed limits on a child's potential but instead to show no compromise "in any effort to determine the limits of the slum child's potential..."(Saltzman, 1965:42). This could be viewed as an earlier version of New Labour's resolve to "eliminate but never excuse" underachievement in areas of social deprivation as cited earlier, but supporters of the CE movement were also insistent that whilst there were specific, identifiable factors in the social, physical and cultural environments of the poor which did "retard" intellectual development,

these factors existed because of *poverty*, (a word that was applied only to children’s situations in NL discourse, preferring to talk of ‘socially excluded’ adults). As such the response of the poor should not be “causally related to inherent inferiority, inherent anti-intellectualism, or inherent insensitivity”; rather a more pro-active political and educational response should compensate “for the deficits imposed upon by the child by the slum environment” (*ibid*). The key argument was that the American school which served a poor community had to be different from that in a more affluent area and it is here that arguments for the New Careers thesis really take centre stage:

For, while members of the slum community may lack much formal education, they may have wisdom dearly bought from the experience of surviving the rigors of their environment; while they may lack an understanding of the organization of the school, they may know intimately the organization of the community; while they may be unschooled in the nuances of middle-class mores and customs, they may know full well what will or will not “go” in the slum community; while they may lack a grasp of educational philosophy and theory, they may be fully conversant with what is or is not perceived as important, honest and useful by the school’s constituency (Saltzman, 1965:48).

In presenting this rather lengthy but nevertheless uncensored extract, I confess to feeling an initial uncomfortableness with both the language and sentiment on my own first reading. However, within the twin frameworks of ‘compensation’ and ‘New Careers’ it is important to understand how the employment of the poor was viewed and conceptualised as “appropriate, logical and important, perhaps crucial” (Saltzman, 1965:48) . What is more, the ‘New Careers’ initiative was also defended as a potential device for increasing the social diversity of schools with the recognition that low income nonprofessionals were already being employed in schools described as “integrated” thereby providing middle-class children contacts with adults of different social backgrounds in educational settings (Saltzman, 1965).

But this is not the complete story; accounts by supporters of the ‘New Careers’ project also provide real time *and* retrospective analyses of the issues and pitfalls that can arise. But before looking at the *actual* impacts it is necessary to examine the hypothetical pitfalls that its proponents wished to avoid. The most significant issue was identified as the “pitfalls of assimilation” (Goldberg, n.d. cited in Pearl and Reissman, 1965:196) meaning that it was absolutely necessary to maintain professional and nonprofessional distinctions some of which I have summarised here to enable direct comparison:

Professionals	Nonprofessionals
Distinct career line	Talent comes from nonprofessionalized status – the task of the nonprofessional <i>precludes</i> a professional relationship (However) “This view does not prevent us from teaching various professional skills to indigenous personnel; nor does it prevent us from “disciplining their practice”, codifying their skills. We may want to professionalize their tasks, but not to professionalize <i>them</i> ”.
Professionalization includes, but implies more than task rationalization. It encompasses a	Very much task centred and “now” centred

variety of norms and attitudes and a perspective that covers a broad spectrum i.e. looking at the broader implications of behaviour and practice	
Professional socialization constrains toward much more role-segmentation in relation to the client	Indigenous personnel have the capacity for a much more (w)holistic client relationship – that is their strength <i>and</i> limitation (Pearl and Reissman, 1965:196-7)

Figure 1 Distinctions between professional and nonprofessional working experiences and practises

The most illuminating phrase from the comparison set out above is the apparent danger of professionalising the nonprofessionals / paraprofessionals: “We may want to professionalize their tasks, but [we don’t want] to professionalize them”. The belief underpinning this was that workers are more effective in their jobs when strains between the two groups are present as that means paraprofessionals are challenging professional observations and actions that might not be good for their clients. Thus the typical strains between professional and paraprofessional were functional for maintaining the integrity and skill of the indigenous worker. ‘Professional contamination’ i.e. the way in which paraprofessionals may acquire professional attitudes that would interfere with their indigenous strength was to be prevented at all costs.

1.2.4 In practice – what *actually* happened to ‘New Careers’ paraprofessionals?

In reality projects such as ‘New Careers’ had a significantly negative impact on ‘non’ and paraprofessionals with outcomes like rapid turnover of personnel, ‘burning out’ and watered down training. For example, a key finding by Stewart (1971) was that the role of student supervision aide was highly stressful and considerably more complex than the title suggested. Individuals occupying this role either transferred to another position in the school or resigned within the first year, suggesting that systematic and directed training that had been seen as a crucial element of the ‘New Careers’ project did not materialise. This links to a further issue identified, that of the paraprofessional being “Locked out”, a term used to describe the “...ever-present danger that the new nonprofessional positions [would] provide jobs but not careers” (Pearl and Reissman, 1965:203). This fear was realised as early as the mid-1970s as social, political and ideological changes signalled a more limited role for the state in the welfare arena; a development which was coupled with an erosion in public awareness of the problem of poverty *and* its readiness to cope with it (Katan and Etgar, 1998).

1.2.5 “Psychic Stretch”

Further issues of a more complex nature arose out of the situations and experiences of those paraprofessionals occupying roles in a way that the ‘New Careers’ project envisioned. One impact identified for paraprofessionals within the Social Work profession specifically was termed “Psychic Stretch”. This came about where people were selected and recruited for new roles on what was viewed as questionable and spurious bases:

They [paraprofessionals] were recruited and hurriedly trained, if at all, and told to help both the agencies and their clients unscramble the web of human needs and misery. They were selected on the basis of their low income, if they had any at all, the color of their skin, their political connections, and their *presumed knowledge of the low-income community* and the related agencies serving the community ((Austin, 1972:60, my emphasis).

This representation stands in stark contrast to those earlier images of the paraprofessional moving smoothly and harmoniously between the two domains of work and community, supplying each with increased wisdom and understanding of the other. Here, it is apparent that the paraprofessional is being pulled in two directions - by the demands of the agency and the demands of the community - so that returning to their neighbourhoods as salaried members of the establishment actually “produced immense personal strain”. “Psychic Stretch” also implied how, on the one hand, paraprofessionals were being rewarded for their “deviance” – meaning that there was an expectation that they *should* question various practices and call into question the goals and objectives of the services they were being expected to deliver, described above as strains which were functional for maintaining the integrity and skill of the indigenous worker. On the other hand they had to negotiate the realities of organizational life such as project monies disappearing and the ‘last in, first out’ rule of hiring and firing, meaning that “[although] they were hired as their brother’s keeper...” they soon found that they had to look out for themselves (Austin, 1972:61).

Pearl and Reissman also acknowledged this ‘schizophrenic’ position of the paraprofessional in referring to their “militancy” as a so-called “latent attribute” of the ‘ideal type’. That said, they did believe rather uncritically, that the relevance and application of such militancy would vary depending on the context posing the question:

Is the nonprofessional to be a protest person, critical, socially aware, or is he to be more pleasant, efficient at communication across the class lines? (Pearl and Reissman, 1965:193).

Their given answer was that for those in community leader roles it was deemed as high priority to the extent that a situation of “diverted militancy” i.e. where a paraprofessional may be utilized to “forestall, reduce or deflect the militancy of the community they represent” was seen as a negative situation, with the paraprofessional representing little more than “a new kind of indigenous stool-pigeon” (Pearl and Reissman, 1965:196).

1.2.6 Emotional Labour?

When considering the shared experiences of educational paraprofessionals both past and present, the theory of ‘emotional labour’ (Hochschild, 2012) has the potential to offer something perhaps more tangible and certainly more enduring than that of ‘Psychic Stretch’. This concept is critical of how labour processes have traditionally been presented as a simple dualism of manual or mental labour, and emphasizes the relational rather than the task-based aspects of work proposing that emotional labour is a process which requires individuals in certain roles to “induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others” (Hochschild, 2012:7). This concept has given rise to a huge literature which has explored the existence and impact of

emotional labour in the service sector and helping professions (Steinberg and Figart, 1999). It is a contested concept with some authors seeking to defend the Marxist theory of alienation on which it was built (Colley 2003a; Brook, 2009) whilst others have provided an alternative and arguably depoliticised concept of 'emotional management' in organisations (Bolton, 2005). It is however the former interpretation of emotional labour which offers a more relevant application to Psychic Stretch. Here, researchers have considered issues regarding the impact of providing emotional labour on an employee's well-being, finding that there are negative consequences such as burnout, fatigue and emotional inauthenticity:

To perform emotional labor, and in contrast with mental and physical work, employees must give something of themselves to others with whom they have no ongoing personal, noninstrumental relationship. Although sometimes they may form what would be considered authentic, caring relationships with clients or coworkers, this is not necessarily a requirement of the job (Steinberg and Figart, 1999:12).

Furthermore, there is a gendered element to this discussion as emotional labour is found to be extensive within many female-dominated professions and in occupations involving considerable work in helping and caring for others. For example, Hochschild provides statistical data of "Kindred" and Service Workers from the same period – 1970 - that Pearl and Reissman were espousing their 'New Careers' thesis. This data indicates that out of just over 131,000 teacher aides, 118, 0000 were women; statistics for "Welfare Service aides" showed similar disproportionality (Hochschild, 2012:249). A further area of relevance links to what are termed 'compensation practices' (Steinberg and Figart, 1999) where special attention is paid to the invisibility of emotional labour as a job requirement and the consequent lack of remuneration for the competent performance of those skills and the exertion of considerable effort. In Chapter 7 I shall return to this concept and review whether or not it 'stands up' in relation to the findings of the thesis.

In relation to the ethnography undertaken for this thesis, these historical but comparative accounts about the work of educational paraprofessionals (Stewart, 1971; Pearl and Reissman, 1965) provided an awareness of potential issues to be alert to when entering the field of research which will be presented and discussed at varying points. More broadly, this section of the Literature Review has demonstrated that the NL Government were not the first to introduce new groups of workers into public services as a means to resolve entrenched social issues of poverty and disaffection. Furthermore, historical policy agendas (like *Head Start* and the War on Poverty) which underpinned the 'New Careers' project have clear, although not necessarily identical, parallels with those more recent initiatives discussed earlier. It is equally important to underline significant differences as well; the 1960s was a period of economic expansion, along with the start or rejuvenation of emancipatory ideas (women's liberation, Black and civil rights, the anti-war movement et cetera); thus the introduction of the American paraprofessional must be seen in this light. By the 1990s both the USA and the United Kingdom (UK) were dealing with a radically different economic landscape as discussed in the following section. Nevertheless, a previous attempt to employ poor and working class people *purely on the basis of their designation as such* provides much to reflect on. At the time of writing there is no sign of a renewal of the 'New Careers' project but the issues that have been raised in this analysis are particularly

pertinent as we move toward ever-increasing social inequalities in 21st century Britain (Dorling, 2010).

1.3. New Public Management giving rise to a system of performativity

One of the key developments which differentiates the two policy eras discussed thus far is the implementation of new approaches to managing public services termed as the 'new public management' (NPM) (Newman and Clarke, 1997). Since the 1980s, NPM has signalled a move away from traditional bureaucratic methods towards systems characterised by the following key features:

- Performance management;
- Performance measurement and monitoring;
- An emphasis on 'outputs' (which involves the close control of behaviour to maximise efficiency) and;
- A distrust of traditional professionals

(Mahoney and Hextall, 2001; Hudson and Lowe, 2004).

The backdrop to these changes arises from two further developments: an increasingly globalised economy as nation states became ever more aware that the growth of their economies depended on the notion of a 'universal consumer' of its goods and services; thus the performance of education systems needed to be shaped in a way that permitted international comparisons (Elliot, 2001). This was underpinned by the second development - the notion of a 'knowledge economy'. Here 'knowledge' and 'education' are treated as business products which can be exported for a high value return (Ball, 2008). This is then reflected in the changes to the economies of the UK and many other industrial nations in that the 19th and 20th centuries were characterised by (wealth) production through manual labouring activities typical to a manufacturing economy, whereas the 21st century would be characterised by one "where we compete on brains, not brawn" (Tony Blair, cited in Ball, 2008:17). The impact of such changes is strongly emphasised in literature through the use of emotive language inferring that the impact of these changes should not be underestimated:

The stakes are high. Throughout the world governments are attempting to reform their education systems in the face of national and global change. In many advanced industrial societies', where both economic and natural resources are in decline, investing in human capital now constitutes a central platform of economic and education reform (Gleeson and Husbands, 2001:1).

Earlier on I documented how NL invested in the lives of poor children and young people through a host of new social and educational policies such as *Every Child Matters* and *Excellence in Cities*. But these investments were not given unconditionally and it is this

which enables an understanding of what has changed when comparing and making sense of policy enactments in two eras. In return for such investments, workers had to accept a far greater degree of monitoring and micro-management of their activities, in effect, the introduction of a new culture which has been termed 'performativity' within educational contexts (Ball, 2003; Jeffrey and Troman, 2012). I will now examine this concept in more depth and consider its varying reach and impact on different groups who are present in schools.

Within an English context, the seeds of a performative culture were sown within the Conservative's Education Reform Act of 1988 (Perryman, 2012) but proceeded with a much firmer and confident resolve under New Labour (Elliott, 2001). Performativity has three distinct strands: the pervasive culture of targets and auditing; a regime of regulatory mechanisms and a general marketization of the environment (Bright, 2012). Performativity 'happens' via interventionist policies at both a macro and micro level. One example of the former is where the state, rather than 'de-regulating' and shifting towards privatisation (as it has with other areas of welfare provision), engages in processes of 're-regulating' (Ball, 2003), recasting itself as the evaluative state (Elliott, 2001). In this new guise its role is to prescribe the operating environment of schools and regulate their performance through a technology of audit: for example, inspections and the introduction of quasi-market mechanisms such as league tables - devices which serve to strengthen this "indirect regulation of performance by central government" (Elliott 2001:192). In order to understand the significance of such macro-level trends, it is also important to focus on the ways in which performativity is enacted at the micro level in that it does not simply change what educators, scholars and researchers do, it changes "who we are" (Ball, 2003:215). Illustrations of how performativity has resulted in this reconstruction of the self are numerous. Here are the words of one teacher reported in a news media article:

What happened to my creativity? What happened to my professional integrity? What happened to the fun in teaching and learning? (Guardian, 2001 cited in Ball, 2008:51).

Whilst ethnographic studies have made a particularly strong contribution to charting the impact of performativity:

... I feel [that] every time I do something intuitive I just feel guilty about it. 'Is this right ... does this cover what I am supposed to be covering ... should I be more structured?' ... of course it's multiplied by the fact that Ofsted is coming in because you get in a panic that you won't be able to justify yourself when they finally arrive (Jeffrey and Woods, 1998:118).

Critiques of performativity have certainly outlined its impact on the teaching profession in that the majority of this literature has tended to interrogate the shaping of subjectivities among 'professional' practitioners; this is despite the increased growth of paraprofessionals in the schools workforce. Bright, (2012) is one of the few exceptions to this as he examines youth workers, arguably a marginalised 'profession' (Smith, 1988) who were reconstructed as tutors as a result of profound economic and social change in an ex-mining community. Thus marginalised educational professionals *and* paraprofessionals are conspicuous by their absence in the performativity literature, as the following examples will illustrate.

Firstly, a key driver of performativity for teachers is performance management which has given rise to a discourse described as having deeply ‘totalising’ characteristics, meaning that teachers are presented as units of labour to be distributed and managed and whose structural characteristics (such as their ethnicity, gender and class) are deemed largely irrelevant provided that they comply with certain specifications and meet particular working criteria. Whilst this analysis is credible in terms of how performativity applies to teachers, it omits to consider the issue of what happens when structural characteristics *do* take centre-stage, when, as seen earlier, they are viewed as ‘qualifications’ to do a paraprofessional role. In this case the structural characteristics are not marginalised but actually *are* the totalising characteristics, whether the paraprofessional is employed to act as a ‘bridge’ between a largely white-staffed school and Black community in 1960s America or as a role model who is tasked with raising the achievement of certain groups of young people whose engagement in education is a cause for concern in late 20th Century Britain.

Another issue is in the degree of visibility given to the work activities of different groups in a school. This is because performative cultures presume that the performance of core activities within organisations - which in schools would be teaching activities leading to qualifications as measurable outcomes - can be made transparent to the public’s gaze on a continuous and sustainable basis via the afore-mentioned technologies of audit. As such, Ofsted inspections and school league tables provide fixed and immutable standards against which to judge performance and thus the quality of an organisation’s core activities is described in the audit language of indicators, a process by which schools are reduced to one or two-word judgements of ‘Outstanding’ ‘Good’ or ‘Requires Improvement’. As has already been noted, the impact of this culture or system of ‘terror’ (Ball, 2008) on teachers has been well documented, but what about the host of other activities and interventions taking place in schools which cannot be measured by the same means? For example, one study commented how LMs found it difficult to gather evidence to measure their ‘effectiveness’ when in reality this referred to the practice of “listening, supporting, [being] approachable, understanding, non-judgmental, communicative, consistent and caring” (Marshall, 2006:197). Although inspection frameworks make explicit judgements about the quality of pastoral care, it is not as clear what criteria these are based upon, nor is it directly comparable with how academic performance is measured. Pastoral activities have the potential to escape the gaze of technologies of audit but are not then seen as “the bearers of real quality” (Elliot, 2001:194). This issue is particularly pertinent to paraprofessionals such as LMs because much of their work takes place outside of the classroom so, within a performative culture is at risk of being misunderstood - or more simply, just missed. Then, in the occasional times when their role is under focus, it is all too easy to gain the impression that it lacks any real skill or value, as with those LMs described as ‘nice enough’ but ‘largely ineffective’ in the online discussion forum presented earlier.

The final area of concern in terms of how the paraprofessional experience has been neglected in the performative literature is the observation that performativity poses a paradox in terms of how it attempts to use social engineering to meet human needs. Elliot argues that the more activities are shaped by “the timeless logic of a standardised indicator” (195:2001) the less they meet the real needs they are intended to serve. Applying this to

education, one could argue that meeting school attendance requirements and attaining what is considered to be a good set of GCSE² grades is not well matched to the learning needs of adolescents at a time when they are preoccupied with 'emotional work' (but):

The more totalising the engineering of the educational system around standardised performance indicators becomes, the more difficult it is for schools and teachers to provide flexible response to their students' learning needs (ibid).

In observing that students are more willing to play the 'formal learning game' if teachers allow time and space for a degree of 'informal learning' i.e. freedom of association within the organisational boundaries of the classroom, Elliot makes the point that the more pervasive the gaze of performance audit on the activities of teachers, the less it becomes possible for them to balance these potentially contradictory elements. I agree with this premise but the key problem here is that that is where his analysis ends, which once again ignores the presence and activities of a significant part of the schools workforce. Elliot does not consider that a possible motive behind the establishment of paraprofessionals like LMs is that New Labour recognised this paradox and introduced a role which could provide the 'more flexible response' that teachers, having had their role 'remodelled', were no longer able to give. The 'flexible response' that Elliot argues young people require is now the 'business' of paraprofessionals, whose role affords young people a brief respite from the classroom and its performative demands, particularly for those who are struggling with their 'emotional work' as described above.

It is clear that there is a need to start thinking about how performativity applies to paraprofessionals such as LMs. In beginning this debate I offer the following questions: firstly, has the role been created to 'pick up the pieces', as teachers have had to shed the pastoral element of their work through the remodelling agenda - a process described as "humanistic morality [being] replaced by one centred on technology" (Jeffrey and Woods, 1998:84). Secondly, the work of LMs (and other paraprofessionals) is often viewed as largely unquantifiable and therefore immeasurable with pastoral and support staff referring to their work as 'soft outcomes' as a means to contrast it with the 'hard outcomes' i.e. *measurable* results produced by their teaching counterparts. Is it then possible that LMs are able to construct and define themselves *outside* of performativity? Are they able to resist some of its imperatives? But if so, with what consequences? Or, should we assume, on the other hand, that LMs and other paraprofessionals are affected, simply by virtue of the fact that they exist and operate within that culture? One thing is certain; there is a need to re-examine performativity in relation to its impacts on paraprofessionals, not just professionals.

1.4. The importing of mentoring as a 'successful' intervention for 'disaffected' youth

The first three sections of the Literature Review have dealt with the 'bigger picture' in terms of examining broad social, economic and political developments. In this section these

² The GCSE (General Certificate in Education) is the academic qualification used to measure pupil attainment in the final year of schooling. At the time of the study all pupils were expected to gain 5 GCSEs graded between A* and C.

themes are continued but within a narrower application as I focus on mentoring and its rise as a youth intervention. The popularity of youth mentoring was first noted in the USA and literature emanating from this context provides useful starting points for analysing how mentoring was utilised for young people perceived as troubled and troublesome. The questions that these analyses gave rise to were then taken up and critiqued within a UK context but connected much more explicitly to the social policy agenda of NL discussed earlier - namely engaging disaffected young people. Noted as “one of those bright ideas that takes a periodic grip on the imagination of the policy community” (Pawson, 2004, n.p), LMs were just one of many guises of an intervention that was utilised from the late 1990s onwards in the areas of youth justice, targeted youth work and careers advice and guidance. Interventions generally involved the pairing of disadvantaged, and in some cases ‘disaffected’ young people with an experienced adult. The type of relationship needed to carry out this work has been described as “mentoring’s most challenging task” in that this particular dyad reveals “the kinds of social forces that a relationship has to withstand if it is to succeed” (*ibid*).

1.4.1 Establishing the societal framework in which mentoring occurs

The areas (outlined above) in which mentoring interventions took place have given rise to a number of sociological and policy critiques (Philip, 2000, 2003; Colley, 2003a; Piper and Piper, 1999, 2000) which have provided important starting points for problematising the LM role in this thesis; in part because this is a significantly larger literature than that pertaining to school-based LMs. An issue which takes centre stage in these critiques is the changing nature of youth transitions in western societies during the last two decades of the 20th century, characterised as a loss of citizenship for young people of which the causes are: the increasing permanence of youth unemployment; restricted entitlement to social security and public housing and an increase in school exclusions (Philip, 2000). Also significant to this analysis are how the dualistic threat/vulnerability portrayal of young people has come to dominate western discourses of youth i.e. that young people are seen as vulnerable beings in need of protection whilst simultaneously posing a threat to the social order and by extension, their own future. This is obviously not a new observation, appearing earlier in this thesis as part of the ‘New Careers’ arguments for a need to invest in young people. Pearson (1983) also referred to a twenty year ‘cycle’ in which the behaviour and attitudes of contemporary youth are compared extremely unfavourably with their counterparts of two to three generations previously. Conversely, it is important to acknowledge that alternative views of young people and their ‘exploits’ have also existed. Within the context of an industrial society in the early 20th century, youth leaders in Chicago interpreted the actions of young people who were compelled to invent their own excitement as having ‘leadership qualities’ or an ‘adventurous spirit’. Views like these, underpinned by a “powerful Pygmalion-like optimism” (Brendtro and Ness, 1983:3) stand in sharp contrast with contemporary policy-based approaches that concentrate on abnormality or pathology framing youthful behaviour as ‘anti-social behaviour’ in contemporary terms. Muncie provides a useful summary of these inherent contradictions:

At one time feared, young people are at another time pitied for their vulnerability. They are simultaneously constituted as in need of control and protection. They are the constant object of fascination. The adult gaze is fixed on youth as something both desirable and threatening. Desirable, because youthful energy remains a part of adult

longing...but a fear of youth is never far beneath the surface. Above all, youth is treated as a key indicator of the state of the nation itself (2009:11).

Of prime significance to this thesis however, is the implication that this 'threat versus vulnerability' dichotomy has for those who may be supporting young people through their varying transitions. Examples to come in this thesis will highlight how the support which is available has the potential to be both highly significant and/or highly problematic depending on the extent of how 'honest' and transparent such interactions can be.

A further issue identified in British critiques is how the discipline of Developmental Psychology has become the dominant explanation for understanding youth transitions. The adequacy of this approach is called into question in terms of how young people are viewed as a homogenous group "undifferentiated by race, class or gender" (Philip, 2000, n.p.), which results in a highly individualised model of the 'deficit' young person whose main 'issues' are 'understood' as lacking self-esteem and appropriate role models. Alongside this, there is concern at how limited effort has been made to seek the perspectives of young people as active participants within their social contexts, thus:

The uncritical acceptance of traditional development theories about youth...the neglect of structural factors such as poverty and the reluctance to view young people as social actors have all been subject to trenchant criticism (Philip, 2000:n.p).

1.4.2 Youth mentoring in the USA: the prequel

So how is mentoring as an activity framed within the context set out thus far? How is it interpreted and practiced in relation to (arguably) limited understandings of transitional change, contradictory perceptions of young people and the theoretical imperatives which dominate this area? The North American literature provides some of the answers because mentoring as a youth intervention emerged at an earlier point in the USA. The nascent critiques which accompany these developments (Rhodes, 1994; Freedman, 1993) provide a comparative analysis with which to highlight the similarities and differences within these contrasting socio-political contexts. First then is Freedman (1993) whose book title: *The Kindness of Strangers: Adult Mentors, Urban Youth and the New Voluntarism*, succinctly and vividly illustrates the dominant discourse of how mentoring is conceived and practised in relation to its intended participants. The development of mentoring in the USA is characterised in terms of three 'waves', the first of which, 'Classic Mentoring', originated from 'Friendly Visiting' which emerged in the late 19th century as a response to what social reformers saw as a "terrible chasm" between the rich and the poor. This approach was ultimately doomed by a shortage of volunteers and a series of economic depressions in the late 19th century which simultaneously underscored the impact of poverty (as Rowntree's UK study did only a few years later) and placed the limited power of middle-class 'friendship' into perspective. The essential features of Classic Mentoring remain highly relevant to how the activity is understood and practised up to the present day in that it envisages an older, more experienced person seeking to develop a young person's character and competence. The impact of this particular conception of mentoring cannot be understated as it holds high status as "one of the most enduring and celebrated relationships in our culture" (Freedman, 1993:30). Other writers underline this point in citing famous mentoring dyads (like Ann Sullivan and Helen Keller, Freud and Jung et cetera) which serve to substantiate the

mentoring myth that certain relationships can greatly influence a person's course in life and that many of us can identify, albeit on a "less grand scale", significant adults who have may have encouraged and taken a special interest in us and in doing so "creat[ed] pivotal moments that, in hindsight, deeply impacted our lives" (Lucas, 2001:22).

Following the 'Classic' conception of mentoring, a second incarnation emerged in the 1970s, which emphasised the instrumental aspects of the activity (such as academic and career achievement) over its more nurturing and generative dimensions. Thus the 'Corporate' wave of mentoring offered a strategic means for women and Black and Minority Ethnic people to break through the 'glass ceiling' in their chosen career setting. The late 1980s ushered in the third wave of mentoring which targeted "disadvantaged children and youth" (Freedman, 1993:42) and featured the instrumental characteristics of corporate mentoring but using 'older and wiser' volunteers from the classic model. In this third incarnation, the mentors were recruited from a variety of backgrounds - some from the professional class, some from within the mentee's own community and others who represented both. This latter group were exemplar roles models, akin to the 'silver bullet', in that they had realised a degree of social mobility by successfully 'escaping' their humble origins so could therefore show young people 'how it was done'. The US model of youth mentoring summarised below, illustrates how important it is to consider the cultural context in which it takes place:

Mentoring's fervor is rooted in a quintessentially American outlook: optimistic, individualistic, anti-institutional, anchored in the belief that we can reinvent ourselves – even the most disadvantaged among us – and overcome the odds, no matter how daunting (Freedman, 1993: 21).

Whilst clearly valuing the benefits of mentoring, Freedman is not wholly uncritical, in that attention is drawn to the widening inequity between income and wealth, accompanied by the inevitable social divide which has taken place in the USA. Echoing Saltzman's earlier observation of the "actual and metaphorical rush to Suburbia" taking place in the post-war years, Freedman describes how urban unrest and disorder in the 1960s gave rise to an "elaborate social reorganisation of American metropolitan life" based on the principle of "everybody getting as far away from the underclass [sic] as possible" (Freedman, 1993:126-127). A further consequence of this was the widening gulf between those who experienced the realities of living in areas of chronic underinvestment and those whose metaphorical and actual distance meant they did not:

As the middle and upper classes exit the cities they take with them social capital. They also take financial capital, in their tax dollars. The result is a country full of urban areas where social problems are spiralling out of control, fiscal resources to deal with them are dwindling, and the immediate impact on most Americans...is fairly faint (Freedman, 1993: 28).

Freedman also identifies the gap between the rhetoric and reality of mentoring, noting how in all of its varying incarnations, the practice has been renowned for "overheated marketing". His banner headline is that to be successful, mentoring must avoid being "all fervor and no infrastructure". On this point he identifies a number of micro, meso and macro issues which serve as useful warnings for countries such as the UK who sought to capitalise on the apparent benefits of mentoring at a later stage:

Fervor without infrastructure is dangerous at the program level because it leads to disappointed mentors and youth. It is dangerous at policy level because it plays into the unfortunate tendency to lunge at new and glossy strategies, glorify them over the short-term, and discard them as they tarnish. More disturbing is the way fervor without infrastructure feeds the recurring appetite for voluntarist panaceas, idealized in isolation from institutions, proposed as quick, cheap and easy. As such, mentoring serves to distract attention from deep-seated problems that cannot be simply marketed away (Freedman, 1993:93).

Ultimately though, Freedman sticks with the American dream asserting that such issues *can* be overcome by the re-engagement of the middle classes whose voluntary efforts will serve as “catalysts for more encompassing reforms” (Freedman, 1993:141). His most significant belief is that the activity of mentoring enables active participation in what he terms “the essential but unfinished drama of reinventing community” (ibid) in the sense that it brings people together across generation, class and racial communities who might not otherwise meet in their everyday lives.

Of equal significance is the contribution of another North American author, Jean Rhodes (1992 – present day). During the 1990s she both observed and participated in a growing body of literature which argued that ‘natural’ mentoring relationships, ranging from teachers to neighbours and “extended kin” appeared to contribute to resilience in “high-risk youth” (Rhodes, 1994:187). For example, natural mentoring was found to be an important resource in the social networks of young African-American mothers (Rhodes, Ebert and Fischer, 1992). Efforts were then made to replicate these natural helping relationships through volunteer mentoring programmes which targeted pregnant teenagers, disabled youth, African-American young men and, more generally, youth perceived to be at risk of disengaging from their education, commonly termed as ‘high-school drop-outs’. With the exception of disabled young people these groups bear striking parallels with those young people who were targeted for mentoring interventions in the UK a decade later but described in this particular geographical and policy context as ‘disaffected’, ‘socially excluded’ and ‘NEET’ (Not in Employment, Education and Training). The notion of ‘policy transfer’ (Hudson and Lowe, 2004, Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996) is one plausible explanation for why similar groups in the UK were targeted to participate in what was seen as a successful intervention in the USA, (albeit framed in a different language); however it is also important to note the historical, socio-cultural and political differences between these two countries.

In the USA, the mentoring movement was initiated and grown through a ‘call for action’ story promoted by a Washington Post columnist Dorothy Gillam who asked: “Who will answer the SOS?”, in order to prevent what she perceived as groups of disadvantaged children being “lost to the streets” due to drugs, gangs and violence (Freedman, 1993:1). In contrast, it has been the existence of an interventionist welfare state in the UK from which strategies for youth mentoring have predominantly originated and have therefore had a more formalised presence in the statutory sector. For example, LMs in primary and secondary schools, Connexions advisors in the careers service and an abundance of mentoring initiatives in the Youth Justice Service are all salaried positions which have been established *alongside* projects originating in the voluntary or third sector but commissioned by the state such as

New Beginnings, the pseudonym applied to a third sector project aimed at NEET young people in Colley's account (2003) of engagement mentoring.

As previously noted, the construction of artificial mentoring dyads within the North American context, involved the pairing of young people with a volunteer mentor recruited from a diverse range of adults such as community members, executives, older people, teachers and peer leaders. By the early 1990s, one of the best-known youth mentoring organisations, *Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America* were matching 70,000 young people with adult "Bigs" (but continued to have 40,000 mostly ethnic minority youths on a waiting list); owned the rights to the phrase "*One-to-One*" and enjoyed one of the highest levels of name recognition of any organisation in America (Freedman, 1993). Vignettes outlining personal accounts of such meetings between mentor and mentee are interspersed throughout Freedman's book providing illuminating tales of genuine efforts to get alongside a young person and, to utilise a stated value of British Youth Work, 'start from where the young person is at' (Batsleer and Davies, 2010) without judgement³. Other accounts however, include breath-taking examples of the *lack* of understanding that some mentors who differed in class and/or ethnic background had about the environments in which their mentees were situated along with the assumptions the mentor(s) brought to bear on those they sought to 'help'.

Like Freedman's observation of "Fervor without infrastructure", Rhodes notes a clear disconnect between the apparent 'promise' of the mentoring relationship and the validity of observational data and (small number of) empirical studies on which the promise of youth mentoring was based at that time warning:

Most of the empirical work on mentoring has been conducted in adult career and academic contexts...as interest in mentoring programs with at-risk youth continues to grow, it will be important to carefully examine mentoring in both informal and formalized contexts (Rhodes, 1994:188).

In addressing her own critique, Rhodes offers three 'starting' analyses which served as useful 'stepping stones' in initiating both discussion and critiques vis-à-vis the UK youth mentoring scene coming as it did some years later.

1.4.3 The nature of mentoring relationships

The first critique concerns the nature of mentoring relationships and specifically that which can be 'captured' and replicated in planned interventions:

A persistent assumption underlying assigned mentoring relationships is that they are analogous to natural mentoring i.e. that the availing elements of a natural mentor relationship are contained in assigned relationships (Rhodes, 1994:193).

³ For example see the story of John Hogan and Sean Varner which resulted from another organisation Mentors Inc (Freedman, 1993: 7-14).

This is of course problematic as there are several qualitative differences between the two. Natural mentor relationships typically emerge from *within* a young person's social support network whereas assigned (i.e. artificial) mentoring relationships, tend to be "grafted onto the extant network" (ibid), undeniably influencing the nature and course of mentoring relationships whatever the cultural context. Pawson (2004:6) reminds us that "Good old fatal attraction is hardly something that can be predicted and encoded into programme planning", and this issue emerged in the ethnography reported in this thesis which, given that LMs are working in formal institutions, could initially be read as an examination of artificial mentoring relationships.

1.4.4 Mentoring – compensatory or supplementary?

The second area of analysis addresses the question of whether the mentor relationship provides a compensatory or supplementary function. Here, Rhodes observes and challenges the almost taken-for-granted assumption amongst many practitioners and researchers, i.e. that it is the mentor who is supposedly compensating for the absence of strong parental bonds. In contrast, is the view that young people who have had positive and constructive inter-family relationships may well have greater confidence and trust in seeking more specialised adult role models outside of the immediate family in their transition to adulthood. Another significant contribution to the mentoring literature made a similar observation some years earlier, suggesting that mentors often synthesize the characteristics of the parent-child relationship and peer support, but in a way in which they "must be both and not purely either one" (Levinson et al, 1978:99). This point is reflected in a UK study which consulted young people on their chosen sources of support (Philip and Hendry, 1996) the findings of which gave rise to a typology of mentoring forms demonstrating that young people have a far broader conceptualisation of mentoring in terms of both context and role. Thus in addition to classic mentoring, a further type of mentoring involving the importing of 'specialist knowledge' by professional youth workers who are perceived as accepting of and empathetic to the young people's experiences, is also identified. One-to-one and peer mentoring are also present but significant to this discussion is the identification of an older family friend, known over a long period of time and seen as having previously engaged in 'risky' activities in comparison to the young person's parent/s. It is this person who is deemed by the young people as a credible and appropriate vehicle for support - in effect representing the "specialised adult" who, as identified respectively by Rhodes and Levinson above, is neither peer nor parent.

Such observations lead to an important issue concerning the direction of influence within the mentoring relationship presented here as a 'chicken and egg' question: Do mentoring relationships promote resilience? Or, are resilience and securing a mentor, proxy indicators of a third, underlying factor? To explain further, some young people may already be resilient and thus more adept at actively seeking out the support they need, therefore it is the *predisposition* and *instrumentality* of such young people which is the *essential* protective factor, rather than the compensatory element that the mentor is assumed to bring to the relationship.

1.4.5 The mentoring relationship – who is the beneficiary?

The third analytical stepping stone offered by Rhodes is the question of how personal and contextual factors may motivate mentors along with any benefits that they may derive from the relationship. This third area of enquiry is driven by Reissman's helper-therapy principle (1965) which suggests that it is the helper who may improve the most in a therapeutic situation (cited in Skovholt, 1974:58). Previously understood as an unexpected by-product of the mentoring relationship, Rhodes argues that this phenomenon has to be seen as *integral* to the relationship, particularly when mentoring programmes are premised on people giving up their time voluntarily. It could be asked if this point has less relevance within the boundaries of this thesis, which is after all, a study about mentoring as a salaried rather than voluntary occupation but, as we shall see, the UK literature *has* considered this very question in relation to LMs. Furthermore, if voluntary mentoring is understood as having a degree of *informality*, then we shall see from the ethnography to come that this issue is indeed relevant to the actualities of the LM's work.

Studies and critiques of mentoring in a US context have provided several important areas for reflection at a time when comparable research in Britain was in its infancy and certainly absent from the policy-making agenda. The respective contributions of Freedman and Rhodes offer those involved in mentoring at both policy and practice levels a useful framework with which to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of such interventions. The following quote underlines this 'distance travelled' but also alerts the reader to questions that remained unanswered at the time of analysis:

Both natural and assigned mentors have the potential to modify, or even reverse, the developmental trajectories of at-risk youth. Given these benefits, mentoring is increasingly attracting the attention of researchers and practitioners. Still, many questions remain concerning the direction and effect of mentors' influence. These questions constitute an important research agenda (Rhodes, 1994:194).

1.4.6 UK Critiques of youth mentoring: Mentoring within a discourse of disaffection

Earlier on I questioned the veracity of Developmental Psychology as the dominant explanation of youth transition and its tendency to view young people as a homogenous group "undifferentiated by race, class or gender" (Philip, 2000, n.p.). Concerns surrounding the theoretical underpinnings of how young people are viewed *and* on which mentoring programmes are predicated (for these two phenomena must be seen as connected) are also taken up within a UK context which questions both the term 'disaffection' and the youth policy agenda which accompanied it (Piper and Piper, 1999, 2000). In policy terms the two were inserted as 'bed-fellows' in the sense that they were pre-requisites of how mentoring was defined and practiced in relation to young people; but this is problematic as when mentoring is directed at an "elusive and problematic concept such as disaffection" (Piper and Piper, 1999:122), the process becomes far more complicated than the apparent simplicity

which a classic notion of mentoring suggests. This is particularly so if the mentee in question has experienced multiple disadvantages and enters the relationship with an element of stigma. In cases such as these the practice of mentoring is re-defined as “those with power pre-empting the capacity of others to interpret their own needs and problems” (Piper and Piper, 2000:85). This analysis contributes to a burgeoning critique of the LM role because it recognises the consequences of such a discourse when applied to practice. This, then, gives rise to the following questions: Is a LM’s starting position with a young person already skewed by the fact that that young person has been deemed as having ‘barriers to learning’ by a third party? And: How far does the school culture in which they operate (i.e. where ‘success’ is defined as achieving a specific number of academic qualifications) influence the scope of what a learning mentor might see as a useful intervention? Some LMs come from a youth work background which is premised on a voluntary relationship but the element of compulsion underpinning formal education is an aspect of the relationship which deserves further interrogation.

In heeding calls for a more adequate theoretical framework, Piper and Piper (1999) present a sociological analysis which seeks to enable a fuller consideration of how young people are viewed in societal terms, and crucially how these differing and contrasting ideological concerns may underpin the pitfalls or potential of mentoring. They start by questioning a discourse which not only defines a significant number of young people as ‘disaffected’ but also assumes that “such a condition can be helped through the practice of mentoring”(ibid:121). Their contention is that mentoring cannot be inserted uncritically into any social/organisational context and develop this point further in noting that those responsible for the discourse of ‘mentoring the disaffected’ have avoided an explicit prioritisation between social control and social care. They resolve this by looking at both ‘disaffection’ and ‘mentoring’ separately and in abstract terms (Figure 2) through ideal-type constructs based on contrasting theories the foundations of which are rooted in established perspectives on the nature of society (broadly Functionalist and Marxist). The extent of individual responsibility and capacity for action are then considered alongside these. The purpose of the framework is to illustrate the extensive range of perceived realities, perspectives or ideologies which participants in any mentoring based project may employ (1999:127).

MENTORING

The young person being mentored is ...

		‘Passive’, moulded by society	‘Active’, able to create meanings and values
‘DISAFFECTION’ Society is characterised by a state of	‘Consensus’, integration, common interest	Young Person: a flawed system-component, lacking the necessary values and behaviour, needs correction. Project Ethos: consensual, individualistic, missionary, corrective, training-based, focused on ‘real world’ targets. Purpose: to compensate shortcomings of young person, to put them right. Target: to change the young person to eradicate offending behaviour and permit entry to work or education. Method: direction, role-models, guidance towards modified behaviour appropriate to achievement of target.	Young Person: has made poor choices, currently underachieving, causing problems for themselves and society particularly in relation to employment. Project Ethos: accepts status quo, individualist, competitive, focused on self-interest. Purpose: to propose and support a purposive programme of change. Target: to change values and behaviours to facilitate entry to work or education. Method: focused education and counselling to support rational choice in support of their best interest in a competitive situation.
	‘Conflict’, fragmentation, competing interests	Young Person: has deficiencies caused by the workings of an unfair social and economic system which, with others, could be changed. Project Ethos: critical of society, collectivist, educational, focused on achieving a changed social and economic system. Purpose: to emancipate the young person and permit them to challenge a system which has failed them. Target: to inculcate the critical awareness and skills required to work with others to redefine the system. Method: to teach a correct critical awareness and the necessary competencies.	Young Person: has been damaged by society but has the inner potential to change themselves with assistance. Project Ethos: critical, communitarian, liberatory, transcendent. Purpose: to release the creative potential of the young person to achieve both individual and social change. Target: to facilitate personal change and development, with wider social and occupational implications. Method: non-directive, ‘client-centred’ social/political/personal education and skills development.

Figure 2 Ideal Type constructs of ‘Disaffection’ and ‘Mentoring’ (Piper and Piper, 1999:128)

Focusing first on ‘disaffection’, if society is understood to be based on a consensus of shared norms and values then the disaffected will be seen as failing to conform or perform in the expected manner. This causes a problem for society and ultimately the individual is blamed and held responsible. If we then transpose mentoring as an activity upon that explanation, the practice is concerned with the modification of individual behaviour in accordance with a “socially prescribed blueprint” (Piper and Piper, 1999:127) which is achieved by example or exhortation. By contrast, if society is understood to be characterised by conflict and exploitation, then the disaffected are recast as casualties or victims of the economic system they inhabit. The source of the problem is therefore societal rather than individual, and the so-called ‘disaffected’ have the right to expect care and even retribution. If the individual is transformed into an agent with free will they have autonomy to pick and choose between alternative values and courses of action; thus mentoring now becomes a facilitative process which leads to change based on intentional action/s. The table is a useful tool in attempting to begin a conceptualisation of the LM and other more recent paraprofessional roles as the policy framework which typified the Labour government’s approach in creating these is arguably illustrated by the top left box which sees society as “consensual” and the young person as “a flawed system-component, lacking the necessary values and behaviour and ultimately needing correction”. Thus, the project ethos accompanying this is “corrective” and focused on “real world targets” illustrated by interventions such as ‘anger management’ and helping a young person achieve ‘success’ in

academic terms which in a UK context is five A* to C grade GCSEs (Bishop, 2011). But what if the starting point of the mentor, young person or even both is a “conflict” view of society? And, furthermore would this even be tenable within a school which as we have previously noted has been recast as a performance-based institution? Writings about the learning mentor role specifically addressed this issue to some extent as we shall see later (Cruddas, 2005; Bishop, 2011) albeit with markedly different conclusions.

‘Engagement Mentoring’

The notion of ‘Engagement mentoring’ (Colley, 2003a) offers a further critique which can be applied to the LM role. This conceptualisation points to how an individualistic discourse has been utilised to explain young people’s school-to-work transitions. This then forms the basis by which the changes brought about by this transition are interpreted *for* those young people experiencing them, *by* the agencies who are tasked with guiding them. In constructing her model of engagement mentoring, Colley initially draws on the work of Skinner and Fleming (1999) who posit three broad models of youth mentoring. The first is a type of ‘industrial mentoring’ which arose from Business-Education partnerships that became visible from the early 1990s. The second type, which is termed as ‘positive action’ or ‘community mentoring’, targeted young people from groups deemed to be either poorly represented in certain areas of the curriculum (e.g. girls into science and engineering) or those whose general level of educational attainment was a cause for concern from within the relevant communities, based on either a recognition of institutional racism or other structural inequalities. Mentoring provisions in the latter arena have had varying aims, seeking to supplement or compensate for the inadequacies of formal, mainstream education. An example of such a project is *‘Black Boys Can’*; now a social action organisation, it started out as a faith-based group which utilised elders in the community to mentor young African-Caribbean males (www.fbrn.org.uk). However this type of approach is not always welcomed or entertained within formal school environments as part of its motivation is to challenge and ultimately change dominant beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards young people from oppressed groups, as well as institutional cultures (Colley, 2003). Of most significance for this discussion is the third model of mentoring which Skinner and Fleming identify as an intervention responding to disaffection and social exclusion. In this model, projects across the statutory, private and third sectors identify targeted groups of young people deemed to be ‘at risk’ of or already disengaged from, formal systems of employment, education or training:

They [the projects] then seek explicitly to re-engage young people with these systems in preparation for entry to the labour market. It is for this reason that I have dubbed this ‘engagement mentoring’ (Colley, 2003a:18).

Engagement mentoring is based around three central foci:

- The re-engagement of young people with formal learning and the labour market.
- The transformation of personal attitudes in order to ‘nurture’ a commitment to employability.

- A requirement for the mentor to act as a vehicle for the demands of policy-makers and employers in the above process.

This third observation is particularly pertinent as it requires more than a simplistic understanding of a 'mentor as powerful / young person as powerless' dichotomy identified as 'classic mentoring' uncritically by Freedman (1993) and critically by Philip and Hendry (1996). Within the framework of engagement mentoring, the mentor, although probably older and wiser is not necessarily more powerful as set out in the dominant conceptualisation above; neither do they necessarily benefit from the relationship, a point also noted earlier. As a counter to previous assumptions, Colley examines the personal impacts of the mentoring relationship on the mentor (for example, the mentor's mental health and wellbeing) whilst s/he is putting into practice the "demands of policy makers and employers", demands which have been premised on an altogether different stance than that of merely wanting to provide help and support to another human being. Using a case study approach framed within feminist readings of Marx and Bourdieu, Colley relocates mentoring within the socio-economic context from which it has been dis-embedded. Engagement mentoring can be understood as a game or 'field' which structures the ways in which players act through the relations of power which exist between them. Within this analysis the gendered nature of mentoring, incorporating Hochschild's notion of 'emotional labour' is utilised (cited in Colley, 2003a:153) to describe the demands placed on mentors to "transform the dispositions" of their mentees in attempting to re-engage them with the labour market. Such work calls for dispositions of 'devotion' and 'self-sacrifice' within the mentors themselves:

We could replace the word 'disposition' with 'habitus' here. Habitus....is both structured and structuring, because it incorporates aspects of our predispositions created by factors such as social class and gender, as well as more individual aspects of disposition (Colley, 2003b:537).

Thus the 'field' of engagement mentoring aims to transform the habitus of those on both sides of the mentoring dyad. Its goal is to produce and reproduce habitus as an ideal of employability which is determined by the needs of employers and other dominant groupings, rather than by those participating directly in the mentor dyad itself. Colley describes this process as a "brutal commodification of the self" but one that is cloaked in the guise of human relations "commonly assumed to be based on warmth and compassion" (*ibid*) and it is this which is one of the greatest contradictions of Engagement mentoring. This analysis offers real possibilities of gaining a critical understanding of the LM role. As has been noted, from its conception, the impetus for the role was to improve standards in inner-city schools as part of a NL wish to "... eliminate and never excuse under-achievement in the most deprived parts of the country" (Blunkett in Excellence in Schools, 1993:3). More recent research (Bishop, 2011) shows that whilst the role has evolved and has in some cases undergone a re-branding, it is still used to target young people who experience 'barriers to learning', particularly those with a D/C grade profile and/or who are at risk of disengaging from their education and school life more generally. It is plausible then that in their work, and whether knowingly or unknowingly, LMs are seeking to transform the habitus of some young people within the education system. Furthermore, it is also possible to detect

warnings of a potential “exploitation of colleagues” in relation to the levels of commitment that some mentors bring to the role (Jones, Doveston and Rose, 2009).

Engagement mentoring also refines what has been a dilemma of how mentoring is understood – as an activity of *either* social control *or* social care (Hall, 2003). Colley defines engagement mentoring as a *controlling* model of *care*, arguing that not only does the activity represent a moralisation of risk with regard to young people, but that its prescription of the mentor’s role and its emphasis on feelings may also represent a ‘flip side’ of the same controlling process towards those who act as mentors, referring to this as a “parallel tendency towards the moralisation of care”:

Where the provision of welfare services used to be perceived as an expression of the collective moral good, now increasingly the responsibility for displaying moral goodness has been shifted onto individuals working within the welfare system (Colley, 2003b:539).

Such a re-working is highly significant for the UK which, as stated earlier, has a history of significant state intervention which gathered pace up until the breakdown of the post-war consensus and the “abandonment of Beveridge” (Lowe, 2005:154); thus services which existed because of a collectivist imperative are now increasingly dependent on the dispositions of those who supply them.

From the discussion thus far it is possible to extrapolate a distinct set of ‘common denominators’ in critiques of youth mentoring policies and programmes which emerged in the late 1990s/early 2000s. Collectively these enable the beginnings of a critique of the LM role as both concept and practice. These oft-recognised issues are summarised as follows:

- That there is a connection between the theoretical underpinnings of how young people are viewed and on which formal mentoring programmes are predicated.
- The origins of mentoring programmes are specific to the geo-political context in which they arise in that the US ‘story’ of a news media-driven appeal aimed explicitly at the middle classes and resulting in large-scale volunteer mentor programmes does not have any recognisable parallels in the UK where provision has been much more policy and therefore state-led.
- The individualist discourse underpinning mentoring projects became much more explicit under New Labour (1997 – 2010).
- Much of the research into the effectiveness of mentoring assumes as its starting point only the benefits of mentoring rather than a consideration of all the potential outcomes. This has led to commentators like Piper and Piper and Colley to make the case for a mentoring practice which is based on a political and economic analysis and one which has the potential to challenge dominant assumptions.

1.4.7 Learning Mentor literature

The summary points above assert the importance of viewing literature through the geo-political lens in which it arose and it is with this in mind that we turn to the most detailed examination of learning mentorship to date (Cruddas, 2005). Although acknowledging that Colley's critical analysis of mentoring "resonates in important ways" (Cruddas, 2005:23) its relevance within a school context is questioned given that its analysis is based on third sector mentoring programmes targeting post-16 young people. In contrast, LMs are presented as "a fledgling profession in a changing children's workforce" (Cruddas, 2005:83) although the professional regulation of which has since been broken up and abandoned. Also rejecting Skinner and Fleming's (1999) three models of youth mentoring, Cruddas argues that LMs fall into a fourth category which draws on the "theoretical anchors of established professional groups in other countries" (Cruddas, 2005:92) referring explicitly to 'social pedagogy' - a concept originating predominantly in Europe (Smith, 2009) and having close links with the youth work profession in the UK; and 'child and youth care work' in North America (Brendtro and Ness, 1983). In order to locate LM practice within a broader 'field', Cruddas offers a taxonomy of contrasting 'standpoints' the first of which is neo-liberalism. Her analysis here shares some common ground with those UK authors cited earlier in that she sets out how a neo-liberal discourse of 'risk' has coincided with a discourse of (formal) learning where the latter is assumed to be a way out of the former:

[Neo-liberalism's] still dominant script is one which invites us to move away from the traditional areas of pastoral and wider engagement with young people and focus more insistently on formal learning in classrooms in school. It is proclamatory, even proud, in its confidence and its insistence that we return again and again to learning (Field, cited in Cruddas 2005:2).

Consequently, those 'traditional areas of pastoral and wider engagement with young people', are co-opted into the 'well-being' agenda where activities like mentoring are legitimated as the active sites of emotional intelligence leading to a more sustained engagement in what is seen as the core work of the school i.e. raising standards (Fielding, 2007). Within a neo-liberal framework LMs become 'agents of the standards agenda' (i.e. engaging in purely instrumental practices that can be measured in quantifiable ways); 'instruments' whose purpose is to impose institutional goals on young people in ways that are perceived by them as diminishing and destructive; and, finally, 'disciplinary agents' whose purpose is to increase compliance among young people whose attitudes and behaviours are perceived as a 'threat' to school improvement (Cruddas, 2005).

The second standpoint within the taxonomy is the emancipatory position. Through this lens schools are viewed as cultural and social institutions that introduce young people to particular ways of life where "...ways of being-in-the-world are constructed and given legitimacy" or "refused and degraded" (Cruddas, 2005:4). This position is informed by Gee's socio-linguistic theory which argues that some young people experience a mismatch between their home-based or primary discourse and the school-based, secondary discourse.

In this context, 'discourse' is a type of identity-kit, a means to display membership of a group which has shared values, beliefs and actions. Pupils deemed 'successful' have a close match in that the primary discourse supports the secondary discourse so less conflict is felt. However, 'unsuccessful' pupils experience a crisis of choice between the two, which is then demonstrated by an 'acting out' which presents as challenging behaviour, 'aggressive language' or a rejection of academic, formal knowledge. Gee refers to this as the 'borderland discourse' which is a peer-based discursive space situated between the primary and secondary discourses respectively, and comprising "...a whole set of social practices [involving]...not just ways of talking, acting and valuing, but also ways of reading and writing" (Gee, cited in Cruddas, 2005:5). LMs therefore practice a 'border pedagogy' i.e. their practice is one which calls into question differing forms of subordination that lead to inequities between different groups. In deliberately identifying with, and advocating for, children and young people within the 'borderland', LMs are transformed into "radical agents of change, aiming to franchise the disenfranchised" (Cruddas, 2005:5). But in viewing them as employees in schools, who are therefore subject to the competing demands of standards, performance and policy outcomes identified earlier in the discussion, Cruddas argues that the emancipatory standpoint fails to account for the complex and often highly skilled ways in which LMs are required to negotiate such power relationships:

Learning mentors do not just have 'solidary' responsibility to the young people with whom they work... As employees they also have responsibilities to school leaders and have to meet the outcome-driven demands of policy (Cruddas, 2005:6).

Thus, in naming the "dangers and difficulties" of the neo-liberal position and the "limitations" of the emancipatory position, Cruddas reveals her chosen standpoint as the "*possibilities*" of the post-structural position which whilst drawing on emancipatory theory ultimately rejects its "totalising narratives" (2005:1-6).

Cruddas's theoretical assessment of the Learning Mentor role

Following a trend noted earlier, Cruddas looks to Developmental Psychology in developing a theoretical understanding of how LMs assist children and young people drawing on Bronfenbrenner (1979) whose work responds to the critique that psychology has traditionally downplayed the impact of the environment on a person's development. Bronfenbrenner argues that an understanding of human development demands an examination of multi-person systems of interaction not limited to a single setting and taking into account aspects of the environment beyond the immediate situation containing the subject - a perspective he names the 'ecology of human development'. His interest lies in the interconnectedness of the systems that affected children's lives arguing that children's development is best understood within the socio-cultural context of the family, educational setting, community and broader society (Brock and Rankin, 2011). Using the analogy of a set of Russian dolls, the ecological environment can be conceived as a nested arrangement of concentric structures named the micro, meso, exo and macro systems. The building blocks of the microsystem are the activities, roles and interpersonal relations as experienced by the developing person in a given setting. Key here is the word 'experienced' as Bronfenbrenner's conceptualisation of the environment is informed by phenomenology which sees reality not as it exists in the so-called objective world but as it appears in the mind of

the person. Thus the primacy of the phenomenological over the real environment in steering behaviour can be seen in Bronfenbrenner's assertion that "... one needs to discover empirically how situations are perceived by the people who participate in them" (1979:24).

The phenomenological perspective is also relevant at the next and succeeding levels of the ecological structure. First, the mesosystem which comprises two or more settings in which the developing child actively participates such as relations among home, school and their neighbourhood peer group; it is the interrelations between them which hold the most importance as such interconnections can be as decisive for development as events taking place within a given setting. For example, a child's ability to learn to read "...may depend no less on how he is taught than on the existence and nature of ties between the school and the home" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 2). The third level, the exosystem, refers to phenomena that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but will contain factors which may still have a profound effect on that person's development. Examples might include a parent's education, workplace or profession and in relation to the latter, Bronfenbrenner cites data suggesting that among the most powerful influences affecting the development of young children in modern industrialised societies are the conditions of parental employment. The final part of the ecological system, the macrosystem, refers to the wider cultural context, be that historical, social, cultural etc. Here, Bronfenbrenner suggests that within two different geographical contexts, familiar places such as a school classroom, a playground, et cetera, may look and function much like one another, but they all differ to some extent:

It is as if in each country the various settings had been constructed from the same set of blueprints ... [but] ... An analogous difference in form appears at levels beyond the microsystem...(Bronfenbrenner, 1979:26).

Furthermore there are also consistent patterns of differentiation within each of these societies as homes, communities and work settings, and the relations between them are not the same "for well-to-do families as for the poor" (ibid). Thus such intrasocietal contrasts also represent macrosystem phenomena because those "systems blueprints" referred to above differ for various socioeconomic, ethnic, religious and other subcultural groups, reflecting contrasting belief systems and lifestyles, which in turn help to perpetuate the ecological environments specific to each group.

Having introduced the structure of the ecological environment Bronfenbrenner identifies a general phenomenon of movement through ecological space. This is referred to as 'ecological transition' and occurs whenever a person's position in the ecological environment is altered as the result of a change in role, setting, or both. Ecological transitions through the life-span are readily identifiable from the birth of a first child to their first day at school; finding, changing and losing a job; marriage; divorce; retiring and "the final transition to which there are no exceptions – dying" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:27). It is clear that Cruddas views Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development as highly significant for the work of LMs as the following extracts demonstrate:

The ecological environment clearly impacts on a child's development and psychological growth, affecting cognitive, behavioural, social and emotional

functioning. Sometimes difficulties in or between these systems create barriers to learning and participation at school. Thus...it is important for learning mentors to undertake ecological assessment in order to understand each child's learning and development *in context* (Cruddas, 2005:56).

And then in a later chapter:

Difficulties in or between the ecological systems can lead to psychological, emotional, social and behavioural barriers. In establishing supportive relationships, whether one to one or in groups, the role of the learning mentor is to remove these barriers (Cruddas, 2005:75).

Cruddas sees the work of LMs as demonstrating the connection between the social and psychological by directly referencing the material circumstances in which barriers to learning and participation are constructed. She argues that this way of conceptualising these barriers enables a much more complex analysis based on exclusionary pressures and unequal structures, rather than simply focusing on the attitudes, values and beliefs of young people and their families. Thus in making this statement she is putting some distance between her views and neo-liberal deficit pathologies.

A functional definition of Learning Mentor practice

Having offered a theoretical assessment of how LMs 'remove barriers to learning' Cruddas then offers a 'functional definition of learning mentor practice'. As noted in the introduction, a functional map of learning mentor services had been drawn up by 2003, initially for the Connexions Service and then extended to include LMs and the Educational Welfare Service. In acknowledging earlier concerns that the previous plethora of volunteering mentoring programmes in different contexts had resulted in a "litany of mentoring functions that may never be exhaustive", (Colley, 2003:31 in Cruddas, 2005:74), Cruddas asserts the importance of functional mapping as a means to establish a set of descriptive boundaries which rigorously define learning mentoring, preventing it meaning "all things to all people" (2005:74). To remind the reader, the Functional Map defines learning mentoring as:

[providing] support and guidance to children, young people and those engaged with them, by removing barriers to learning in order to promote effective participation, enhance individual learning, raise aspirations and achieve full potential (Sauve Bell, cited in Cruddas, 2005:74).

Cruddas unpacks and considers this definition in some detail. First, in emphasising the supposedly new and unique contribution of LMs within the schools workforce she highlights how they differ from other support roles giving the example of the Teaching Assistant (TA) who works under the direction of the teacher to *support* teaching and learning whereas learning mentors support pupil's in *accessing* that learning:

This distinction is crucial. As the schools workforce changes under the remodelling agenda and more professionals are working in schools as part of the broader children's

workforce, school leaders will need to ensure that structures within schools provide complementary services (Cruddas, 2005:75).

This delineation is also important given that literature focusing on support staff in primary schools uses the term 'teaching assistant' far more generically encompassing 'learning support assistants', 'classroom assistants', 'specialist teaching assistants' and 'learning mentors' (Cajkler et al, 2007; Tucker, 2009).

Secondly, the functional definition states that the purpose of a LM intervention is to *remove barriers to learning*. As seen above, the theoretical assessment of LM practice is located within Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. Cruddas then extends this point further in proposing that LMs should also work with many of the people who are part of the "broader systems that define a child's world" (Cruddas, 2005: 74-5) highlighting the part of the definition which refers to "...those engaged with them". Other research on the LM role (Bishop, 2011; Jones, Doveston and Rose, 2009) also confirms that they have worked within an extended range of networks which includes other school staff, families, statutory and voluntary agencies. All of these are considered as "[working to] ...decrease exclusionary pressures in the broader systems that define the child's world" (Cruddas, 2005:76) as well as brokering support and learning opportunities to help improve the quality of services to children and families. In explaining *how* they do this, Cruddas connects Egan's notion of the 'skilled helper' alongside Bronfenbrenner:

Working within the larger ecological systems locates the work of learning mentors within the broader nature of schools as institutions. Learning mentors adopt a 'problem-management, opportunity development' approach (Egan, 2002) to helping children overcome barriers. They adopt the same approach to dismantling institutional barriers. Thus learning mentors have a bigger and highly significant role in changing institutions. An example might be establishing a breakfast club to support attendance and gives pupils a healthy start to the day. Or to change and influence playground provision so that break and lunch times are not institutional barriers to children's participation (*ibid*).

This excerpt raises many issues for further discussion and analysis, not least the transforming potential of the LM role that is presented. As will be seen in the analysis of the ethnography undertaken within this thesis, it is clear that Breakfast Clubs certainly *are* an important part of a school provision and for many more reasons than those given by Cruddas here. However, the significance which she attaches to the LM, i.e. as someone who has the capacity to question and disrupt institutional culture is, I would suggest, both exaggerated and unrealistic. It is also confusing given her earlier rejection of the construction of the emancipatory position which constructs the LM as a "radical agent of change". This then begs the question: exactly which institutional barriers are LMs dismantling? When reflecting on what might need changing in schools there are arguably much more pressing examples which come to (my) mind such as an end to a 'league table' culture which forces schools to focus disproportionately on some young people more than others. When issues such as these are considered, Cruddas's suggestions of breakfast clubs and playground provision become somewhat neutered. Mentoring may have the wisdom to spur major and long-term changes but not necessarily the resources. As Pawson (2002) argues, even close mentoring relationships cannot sweep away the institutional and structural forces that hold

sway over people's lives. Also, fulfilling such a weight of expectation must surely be a stressful factor within LM practice akin to the phenomenon of 'Psychic Stretch' presented earlier. This is particularly so when considered alongside how school leadership and management imagine and set out the everyday activities of the role - an issue which played a significant part in my own analysis.

Returning to the second part of the functional definition which refers to LM practice as one which '*promote[s] effective participation, enhance[s] individual learning, raise[s] aspirations and achieve[s] full potential*'. Cruddas argues that LMs enhance individual learning by providing the interpersonal relationship in the facilitation of learning. This plank of her proposed functional definition draws on another significant theoretical concept of person-centered practice (Rogers and Freiberg, 1994). Cruddas recognises that in a climate where class sizes sometimes exceed thirty pupils to one teacher, a more personal relationship is needed in order to access learning:

The relationships learning mentors form with the children they work with are the crucial foundation of the facilitation of significant learning. Prizing, acceptance, trust and empathetic understanding ...are the qualities learning mentors bring to their professional relationships (Cruddas, 2005:77).

The last part of the functional definition deals with the issue of young people achieving their [full] potential. Here, Cruddas challenges the idea that a pupil can ever be considered to have achieved their full potential or how it is even possible to measure asking "How can we account for the potential for development and growth beyond the present moment?" (2005:78). Thus the work of LMs in raising young people's aspirations is not purely instrumental or driven by attainment outcomes, but also person-centred and supporting children and young people to move in the direction of personal growth. Thus Cruddas proposes the following tenets as her model of LM practice:

- The working alliance is primary in the facilitation of learning and participation
- Practice is person-centred, value-driven and reflective
- Problems and problem situations are viewed as learning opportunities
- Learning is a social process
- Equality and democracy are integral to the learning mentor process
- The goal of learning mentoring is empowerment and the continued capacity for growth

Whilst Egan and Rogers form the main planks of her model, Cruddas continues to "build a rich picture of the many possible theoretical anchors for learning mentor practice" (2005:84), looking to further theories such as the psychoeducational model (Brendtro and Ness, 1983) which is located in the practices of both the European tradition of social pedagogy and the North American profession of Child and Youth Care, both of which she sees as having close occupational competence links to learning mentor practice. Cruddas claims that this eclectic range of perspectives move away from the 'either-or' position of neo-liberalism or emancipatory positions outlined earlier. In response I offer a critical exploration of the model

offered by Cruddas starting with a detailed unpacking of the first and second tenets. LM practice is presented as a person-centred model underpinned by Egan's assertion that "helpers without a sense of working values are adrift" (Egan, 2002:45 in Cruddas, 2005:94). Values then, are the drivers of behaviour in the "working alliance", proposed by Cruddas and so it is important that their practice is underpinned by a set of clearly articulated values (2005:94). A *Value Base* was written by a variety of organisations to support the *National Occupational Standards for Learning Development and Support Services* (hereafter LDSS), the content of which was informed by seminal documents such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and 'welfare principle' enshrined in the Children Act 1989 (Roche, 2005). Cruddas presents an extract from the *Value Base* of the LDSS as both a basis for her critical analysis and a demonstration of how this particular tenet has been problematized and further developed:

Practitioners must recognise that the welfare of the children and young people with whom they work is paramount. They must recognise the individuality of each child / young person and promote their learning, development and welfare. This must be reflected in all work with children and young people and their families/carers. The appropriate legislation framework must be implemented at all times.

Practitioners must adopt a client-centred approach based on enhanced inclusion and access, *honesty, trust and respect*. They will promote equality, respect, diversity and challenge stereotypes, helping to improve the life chances of their clients and the overall effectiveness of service provision. (ENTO, PAULO and TOPSS, 2003:1 in Cruddas, 2005:95, my emphasis).

She then notes that the *Value Base* does not explicitly articulate the actual values, only hinting at them in the words 'honesty, trust and respect' and so offers Egan's four key 'values in action' as a linear overview of the potential stages in the helping relationship. These are: 'Respect as a foundation value'; 'Empathy as a primary orientation value'; 'Genuineness as a professional value'; and 'Client empowerment as an outcome value'. Values generate norms therefore respect (as a foundation value) becomes much more than an attitude or way of viewing others – it becomes a set of norms. The norms that flow from the foundation value of respect include being competent and committed; assuming the client's good will; not rushing to judgement; and so on. Cruddas argues that by adopting these norms into their practice, LMs are able to apply the welfare principle as set out in the *Value Base* to their work. She states:

This form of respect will help to build trust between learning mentors, the child or young person with whom they are working, and the parents or carers (Cruddas, 2005:96).

For the second key value, 'Empathy' is understood as an interpersonal communication skill rather than a personality trait. It represents a commitment to understanding the young person from their point of view; in the context of their lives; and the dissonance between their point of view and reality. As such "empathic helpers respectfully communicate these three types of understandings to their clients..." which is argued as inherently applicable to learning mentors. Also included within the above conceptualisation of 'Empathy' is a need to

understand both our common humanity and our diversity. Cruddas suggests that the *Value Base* does go some way towards recognising individuality whilst also respecting diversity and challenging stereotypes but argues that in the many facets of their practice and role, learning mentors “may well have to challenge institutional blind spots” (2002:97) such as whether stereo-typing is informing referrals into the learning mentor programme leading to an over-representation of certain groups. The capacity they have to challenge is an issue left unaddressed.

The fourth key value: ‘Client empowerment as an outcome value’ affords the most significant critique of Cruddas’s model of learning mentoring, because ‘empowerment’ and ‘outcomes’ are subject to other factors which may have cause to undermine the helping relationship, not least the professional value of ‘genuineness’ given as the third key value. For example, at a basic level who decides what a positive outcome is? Just getting to school in acutely challenging circumstances or actually achieving academically once a young person is there? Furthermore, what might it take materially to achieve a feeling of empowerment and is it possible for a learning mentor to obtain these on behalf of a young person? In other words, if a young person has some insight into, and feels disempowered by, their socio-economic position – can a learning mentor actually do anything regarding this aspect of the young person’s life which will bring about change in the here and now? Taking a cue from Egan, Cruddas asserts that the outcome of helping relationships must be empowerment and as if to reinforce this point, uses Colley’s “sobering list of potential outcomes in mentoring programmes which cater to institutional instead of person-centred goals.” (Colley cited in Cruddas, 2005:98). She acknowledges that although LMs have to negotiate institutional norms, values and goals:

...the locus of decisions about goals and targets must remain within the working alliance. And the learning mentors’ attitudes and behaviours – their ‘values in action’ – should always enable empowerment outcomes for the pupils and their families (*ibid*).

Cruddas omits to explain how it is possible to keep goals and targets within the working alliance when they can also potentially be seen as ‘agents of the standards agenda’, engaging in purely instrumental practices that can be measured in quantifiable ways. Practice case studies are presented to show how LMs employ the norms that “generate empowerment and self-responsibility” including a demonstration of how pupils are engaged in “value-clarification exercises”; but it is not made clear whether this means a young person focusing on and developing their *own* values or, the values of the dominant discourses in educational achievement which they must learn and adhere to. She then considers the norms that are needed in generating empowerment and self-responsibility in order to improve the life chances of young people. Again, the influence of Egan is clear in terms of instructing LMs to start with the premise that clients can change if they choose; consciously avoid seeing clients as victims or as overly fragile; help clients see one-to-one sessions as a forum for learning rather than helping; become a consultant to clients; (Cruddas, 2005). As if in response to the criticism made above regarding how learning mentoring is positioned within an institution (i.e. how much autonomy/self-definition does the school ‘allow’ the LM to practice the values adhered to by the author thus far) Cruddas asserts that empowerment values inhere not just in learning mentoring relationships but also in institutions, suggesting

that LMs and their line managers will need to consider the underlying institutional purposes for which learning mentoring is being used. She states:

If learning mentoring is a resource that promotes learning and participation and enables a sense of belonging, independence and mastery in young people, the chances are that the institutional 'values in action' are sound (Cruddas, 2005:99).

But what if they are not? Cruddas goes on to say:

I cannot hope to address the complex issues of values, diversity, professional boundaries and the functioning of power in a few pages. I seek only to begin a dialogue about the importance of values, in the hope that it will engender productive debate and critical engagement. There is still much work to be done in this area (ibid).

This feels like an evasion of the issue, as the interplay of values, diversity, professional boundaries and power is a nexus that *absolutely* requires critical analysis if the positive contributions of learning mentors that Cruddas proposes are to be realised.

A final issue which is considered by Cruddas in relation to this tenet is that if values are the fundamental drivers of professional behaviour, what are the dangers of practitioners losing sight of such values; a phenomenon referred to as the 'atomising' effects of individual practice (Colley, 2003). Cruddas asserts that an essential part of person-centred practice is to engage critically in reflective practice in order to keep one's values in focus and avoid formulaic ways of working and argues for opportunities for critical reflective practice.

When looking at other tenets in the proposed functional model of LM practice, questions of how much autonomy and capacity a young person or indeed a LM has, are also raised. For example in the third tenet: 'Problems and problem-situations are viewed as opportunities', Cruddas actively takes on board Egan's assertion that problem management should be balanced with opportunity development so that a crisis or problem situation has the potential to create two kinds of opportunities: learning how to manage problems better and the opportunity to explore unused potential and personal resources. In applying this to the LM role, Cruddas forewarns that in *only* focusing on difficulties, problems and problem management practitioners may soon experience a sense of "hopelessness and defeat" which can only serve to reinforce those same emotions that children and young people experience. Thus "brokering opportunities" provides a more constructive and therefore positive path:

The journey from problem management to opportunity development is one of personal growth, in which the young person's potential is developed. This journey moves away from the language of difficulties, needs and risks towards strengths, resources and resilience. It assumes the agency or active involvement of young people in their own personal growth and the self-recognition of potential (Cruddas, 2005:100).

If this was in relation to everyday minor stressors that young people experience such as learning how to handle problematic peer relationships then perhaps so. But what if the young person's situation is so dire that they have neither the energy nor the capacity to engage in this process; or their own perception of their resources and resilience might be one which

goes against the institutional way of doing things? Further, how does this model 'fit' with the wider emphasis on inter-agency working, for example, would healthcare or social work professionals be as open to this way of working with a young person? This part of Cruddas's discussion raises more questions than gives coherent answers and such concerns are worth flagging up at this early stage of the thesis.

A wider sociological and political context is also absent from the proposed tenets. For the fourth, 'Learning is a social process'; Cruddas asserts that for LMs, a model of learning is not seen as a narrowly prescribed set of outcomes. Instead she turns to what has been termed by others as 'the Vygotskian tutorial' - an umbrella term for learning situations where a senior partner 'scaffolds' a young person's learning (Gillen, 2000). For Cruddas, pupil-mentor intervention represents the space between potential and actual development:

Through their working alliances with children and young people, learning mentors make the most of this space. They broker learning and participation opportunities for them, so influencing their cognitive development and strengthening their sense of themselves as learners (Cruddas, 2005: 101).

What is immediately striking about this statement for observers who have followed the development of the role since its inception is that she fails to acknowledge the government's original and narrowly prescribed purpose of their role, which was to focus on pupils at the D/C borderline. In a similar vein, for the sixth tenet which states that the goal of learning mentoring is 'empowerment and the continued capacity for growth', Cruddas depicts schools as 'reclaiming environments' which will facilitate such personal growth which again neglects the wider pressures that schools face, as identified in the earlier discussion regarding performativity.

For the fifth tenet: 'Equality and democracy are integral to the learning mentoring process', Cruddas redefines the notion of 'school improvement' as one that addresses the inequality related to the gaps between achievement and engagement of children from families in different socio-economic groups and positions learning mentors has having an essential role within that process. Using Dewey's notion of the democratic ideal in education, she links the work of LMs to issues of social justice, namely equality and diversity, seeing it as "part of a democratic tradition in education, which links it with public life" (Cruddas, 2005:103). She argues that LMs change the social environment of schools "in small but significant ways" linking this to Dewey's proposition that schools as institutions can and will adjust to constructive new practices and situations, hopefully becoming more equitable environments (Cruddas, 2005:104). But again here, the socio-political context is absent; there is little consideration of *how* schools will become equitable environments when they are operating within a marketised environment. Cruddas is writing at the time of converging policy agendas noted in the introduction. One way in which initiatives like *Excellence in Cities* were enacted was through schools working collaboratively through the deliberate setting up of clusters, often initiated via Local Authority governance. Such structures enabled schools to follow broader policy agendas like *Every Child Matters*, which, as already noted, demanded a greater degree of inter-agency and inter-professional working. However, it cannot be forgotten that the NL government also gave momentum to the academies agenda which,

along with the more recent enactment of free schools has led to an increasingly fragmented education system (Mortimore, 2013) thereby undermining the capacity of neighbouring schools to work in synergy. Schools operate in competitive environments where much of their energies are spent in resisting 'ordinariness' in order to demonstrate how they are 'better' or different to one another (Maguire et al, 2011). This is another issue which is entirely absent from Cruddas's purview of schooling when she discusses the potential for schools as institutions which have a part to play in matters of social engineering.

As will be discussed further in the methodology chapter, it is crucial within the project of Institutional Ethnography that any concepts which have been utilised to explain working practices are 'held up' and compared to the actualities with which the researcher is engaging once in the field. This position offers a counter to the view which sees conventional scholarship as an activity which is conducted to generate objective knowledge in a way that renders the researcher almost positionless (Campbell and Gregor, 2004). Thus a not insignificant part of this chapter has been given over to reviewing already existing literatures like Cruddas. Designating herself as a post-structuralist, Cruddas presents the argument that LMs understand that power relationships inhere in practice and therefore look to set up conditions for respectful dialogue with children and young people. But crucially, we are not told *how* she knows this as she does not offer empirical accounts of discussions with these practitioners which actually drill down in to the challenges they face in carrying out their everyday work. Cruddas does offer a model of learning mentoring which is based on person-centered respectful practice. She also emphasises how this role has the potential to offer something qualitatively different to other adults present in schools which assists its status within the schools workforce. She acknowledges that LM practice in schools will vary considerably and depend largely on both the leadership and culture of a school, as well as the values and convictions of the individual LM. Her overriding belief however, is that the contribution of LMs *can* make schools better places for young people by helping them to achieve *and* engage rather than merely comply with narrowly defined goals of attainment. Furthermore, in attempts to pre-empt a possible accusation that this could be interpreted as a "crass neo-liberal support for the standards agenda" she draws on analyses of the 'moral imperative' of school leadership which call for forms of schooling that are responsive to a "class-based analysis of the achievement and engagement gaps" (Cruddas, 2005:7) – one of the rare mentions that gives to 'class' as a determinant of social analysis receives.

1.4.8 Further accounts and understandings of the Learning Mentor role

Given that Cruddas is the dominant contributor in a sparse field, it is useful to note the extent to which her ideas and/or theoretical anchors are reflected in other literature which has focused on the LM role. Some studies have examined the role from the perspective of LMs themselves (Rhodes, 2006; Jones et al, 2009; Bishop, 2011) whilst others have explored young people's views of the role (Doveston and Rose, 2008). As with wider mentoring literatures, one starting point is a consideration of how the activity should be defined given the confusion in terminology which can often surround professional supportive roles such as 'coaching', 'mentoring', 'tutoring' and 'counselling'. Although Jones et al (2009) recognise that there may be an inevitable overlapping between the activities of coaching, mentoring and so on, they, like Cruddas argue that the role of the mentor is person-centred and

“...focused upon developing a relationship with an individual founded upon mutual trust and respect” (2009:43). Earlier critiques which questioned the characterisation of mentors as individuals whose responsibility is to ‘fix’ and change deficit individuals (Philip, 2000; Colley, 2003), are acknowledged but do not form a major part of these analyses with the exception of Bishop (2011).

The issue of how some LMs have become embroiled in the dual challenges of creating their own professional identity whilst securing recognition from the teaching profession is also taken up (Rhodes, 2006; Jones et al, 2009) with accounts observing how a lack of clarity in the role has characterised the development of learning mentoring in schools. The rationale for research conducted by Jones et al (2009) was specifically to provide a more detailed analysis of the role based on a consideration of the motivations that drove mentors in their work. They found that although the LMs recognised that their role was invariably shaped by school policies with a focus on learning outcomes they also shared Cruddas’s view that it afforded them a unique position to meet an individual child’s emotional and social needs. The LMs participating in this study contrasted their work with that of teachers whose respective changes to *their* professional roles and responsibilities via the remodelling agenda had meant that they could no longer offer the levels of support to pupils that mentors could. The mentors also reported experiencing a tension between meeting the expectations of fellow professionals (teachers, year managers et cetera) to operate *within* school policy, practice and culture, *whilst* supporting a child who might challenge some or all of these. When reflecting on this issue the mentors saw their primary motivator as building relationships with young people as seen in this particular respondent’s comment:

...we are not the authority figure. We are the one in the school who won’t have a go at them (Jones et al, 2009:48).

However, building and maintaining a professional network was a corresponding issue of concern also reflected in the work of Rhodes (2006). A further finding which adds to the layer of complexity around issues of professional identity was the researchers’ claim that neither money nor job security appeared to motivate learning mentors; rather it was concern for the well-being of young people which (apparently) took precedence over concern for an uncertain future in terms of the permanence of the mentor role. This point was not interrogated further but could be interpreted as a ‘choice of the necessary’ (Bourdieu, 1984) as experienced by those paraprofessionals highlighted in the ‘New Careers’ thesis earlier. Instead, the authors choose to frame the mentors’ motivations within more predictable discourses arguing:

There was a clear sense of a shared vocation [in their responses] engendered by working with challenging young people in challenging circumstances [And] This was not a nine to four job but one charged with a real sense of vocation and energy (*ibid*).

In a somewhat contradictory fashion they also warn that:

This may prove to be a double-edged sword that on the one hand leads to the development of an effective service founded upon the commitment of the individuals

involved, but that could also lead to the exploitation of these colleagues and a limiting of their impact as a result of low status (Jones et al, 2009:50).

This observation of ‘exploitation’ clearly echoes and reinforces Colley’s notion of the “brutal commodification of the self” and recognises that the work of LMs may not be seen as critical in the overall school hierarchy – two points which were neglected by Cruddas in her proposed model of the practice.

Another key finding which was first noted in the introduction was the extent to which LMs were building relationships *beyond* the school gate and working at the interface between family and school, in essence, underlining once again, that bridging function identified in earlier social media accounts and the ‘New Careers’ project. As members of the local community and often parents themselves, some LMs were recognised as being in a unique position to bridge the gap between school and home. Thus, drawing on their observations and findings, Jones et al (2009) propose a “threefold categorisation model” as a means to offer an understanding of what effective mentoring within a school context looks like.

The 3 realms of Learning Mentoring

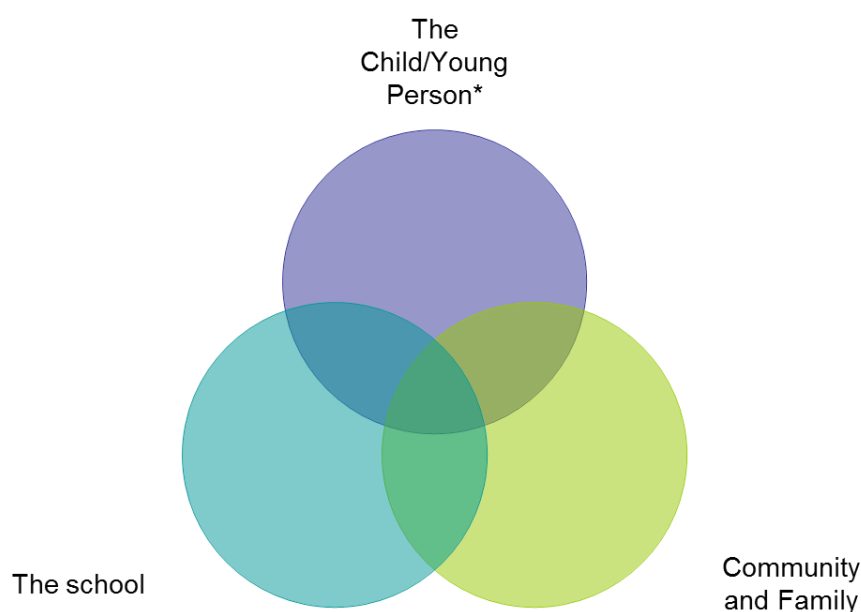


Figure 3 The three realms of Learning Mentoring (Jones et al, 2009:4)*

**NB Original representation states ‘Child’ only, ‘Young Person’ has been added*

The first realm relates specifically to the child or young person and is described as a “highly personalised component of the model”, which considers the “temperament, motivators, perspectives and challenges that characterise the young person’s needs and aspirations”. The second realm is the child/young person’s wider context, taking into account the family and community within which they are located. The authors suggest that “...these external factors will have a strong influence upon the mentee and will be shaped by a number of key individuals or settings” (ibid). However they do not identify whether these key individuals are those to be found in already existing and ‘naturally’ occurring mentoring relationships – a point of contention raised earlier. The school environment constitutes the third realm and as

the most formal this is understood as the place where the mentee has been identified by other professionals with whom s/he comes into contact as representing a cause for concern. This clearly shifts the direction of impetus for the relationship - a point which is explored from the mentee's point of view in corresponding research to be considered shortly. Jones et al (2009) maintain that a key strength of the LM's function is their ability to interface with each of these realms in order to optimise opportunities for the development of effective, highly personalised relationships. They suggest that:

...a mentor maybe more embedded within the local community realm than other school staff will be able or willing to be. This ability to be close to the mentee's preferred or family context can, on occasions, open more opportunities for meaningful interaction away from the perceived 'baggage' or bias of more formal or statutory environments (Jones et al, 2009:46).

Although not directly cited, Gee's notion of "borderland discourse" could also be applied to their findings here.

Turning now to the LM role from the viewpoint of pupils, the study under discussion is premised on a commitment to research as an emancipatory process "whereby those involved come to feel valued and respected and recognise their opinions may influence change" (Rose and Doveston, 2008:148). In doing so the authors offer an illuminative process whereby the views expressed by young people could be used to verify data obtained through other means. Like Cruddas (2005) and Bishop (2011), they recognise that 'barriers to learning' is an oft-quoted phrase in relation to learning mentors and offer a further definition of barriers as:

...wide-ranging and often personal to the individual student. They [barriers] include the need to develop better learning and study skills, personal organisation and coping strategies to deal with difficulties at home, behaviour, bullying or just general disaffection and disengagement from learning (Rose and Doveston, 2008:145).

What is striking about this definition is the *individualised* nature of how 'barriers' are defined in that the source of the issues that pupils experience appear to come exclusively from the first two realms (Young person / Family and community) given in the model above. Thus barriers to learning are described as: "pupil shouting at teacher"; "pupil being generally disruptive" and "problematic relationships at home which impact on behaviour and performance at school".

Cruddas's influence is easily observed within this study as the authors turn to the same theoretical anchors at a number of points. For example, when viewing the mentor/mentee relationship as being premised on 'learning' in which the learning mentor is "guide not master" the Vygotskian influence is again detected. Their assertion that mentoring only works when pupils feel like genuine partners within the learning process i.e. being seen as 'volunteers' rather than 'conscripts' further underlines the social (rather than didactic) nature

of learning. They also found that although initially referred on to the LM by teachers, young people took back ownership due to a “personal empowerment to manage the problem more effectively” (Rose and Doveston, 2008:149) likening this to Egan’s notion of turning ‘problem management’ into opportunity development’. However their findings also reflected issues identified in earlier analyses of youth mentoring interventions based around disaffection. For example the desire of some pupils to access a ‘safe haven’ (such as the mentor’s office) within the “social complexity of the school environment” (*ibid*) bears striking resemblance to an observation that mentoring projects may well be oriented towards targets relevant to education and work, but a young person experiencing multiple disadvantage may have other priorities such as “personal or emotional support, sympathetic adult attention or simply somewhere warm to sit” (Piper and Piper, 1999:128).

Like Cruddas, Rose and Doveston (2008) also recognised that LMs had a conflicting ‘allegiance’ to school authority as well as being a critical friend to their mentee. This required a ‘tough love’ stance, an observation I also make in my earlier study (Bishop, 2011). They develop this idea further in seeing one function of mentoring as helping the pupil interpret and understand school rules, thus developing a *modus operandi* around school codes of conduct. In giving more strength to the three realms support model (presented above), they identified instances where mentoring improved a young person’s relationship with their parent/s which in turn led to young people themselves expressing an increased sense of self-worth.

The authors conclude that mentoring places learning within a social context and recognise the necessity to ensure that pupils feel both comfortable with and in control of the learning process. Although they acknowledge Colley’s view that the role is embedded in a broader social agenda and cannot of itself solve problems rooted in the school culture and system, they suggest that “what a learning mentor may be able to do is to help students to explore, understand and deal with the issues that arise from day-to-day living” (2008:145). Thus, although they consider Colley’s observations regarding the ‘darker’ side of mentoring, they do not refer to or conceptualise the LM role as a form of ‘engagement mentoring’ at any point. As stated before, their theoretical anchors reflect those of Cruddas focusing exclusively on humanistic and individualistic approaches and thereby neglecting how the issues of gender, ethnicity and social class have impacted on or even contributed to those oft cited ‘barriers to learning’ let alone the mentoring relationship itself. This lack of a socio-political analysis is arguably a serious omission.

1.4.9 Summary of UK literature

The respective analyses of Cruddas (2005), Rose and Doveston, (2008) and Jones et al (2009) move away from a consideration of structural factors and re-frame learning mentoring as ‘good works’ on the part of the mentor in terms of engaging with young people, their families and communities. They explore micro, relational aspects of the LM role, but stop short of fully acknowledging wider critiques offered by Piper and Piper (1999, 2000) and Colley (2003) who, in focusing on wider questions of ‘structure’ appear to remain committed to seeking to break the powerful and resistant bond between social class and educational achievement (Harris and Ranson, 2005). Thus, these studies and their findings, opt for a ‘safe’ uncritical acceptance of the economic and political context in which mentors carry out their work, with their findings ultimately presenting a view of mentoring as warm and

comforting, rather than acknowledging opposing critiques which argue that attention has shifted away from social inequalities and towards the alleged inadequacies of individuals (Hall, 2003).

In terms of the theoretical frameworks being utilised, social, developmental and humanistic psychological paradigms have once again come to the fore. For example, 'transition' is considered at a much more micro level referring to "[children's] own personal changes in terms of [their] transfer to secondary school and the changes imminent in their burgeoning adolescence" (Cruddas, 2005:157). The emphasis is on young people themselves to build purposeful and fulfilling lives which can be contrasted with the impact of more structural factors such as the significance of securing work as a key plank in achieving the transition to adulthood (McDonald, 2011).

From a policy sense, there is little or no acknowledgement of the transient nature of educational policy and provision within the analyses presented thus far. Cruddas in particular, writes within the framework of the changes that were taking place at the time without actually naming the (New Labour) government and its communitarianist impulses which whilst giving rise to an unprecedented investment in childhood (Frost, 2009) was underpinned by the conditional or even disciplinary project of espousing middle-class parenting culture as a blueprint for all (Gewirtz, 2001). In contrast, those earlier analyses which explored youth mentoring interventions (Piper and Piper, 1999, 2000; Colley, 2003) more generally were overtly political in making constant reference to government policy at that time. There is one exception as a more recent study has attempted to re-introduce some of the issues identified by those UK authors from the early 2000s cited above. An earlier study undertook a reconnaissance of the field to examine how the role had developed since its inception (Bishop, 2011) and establish what activities LMs were involved in almost a decade later; whether their brief to remove barriers to learning had endured; and to what extent the term 'learning mentor' had been rebranded post *Excellence in Cities*. It suggested that Piper and Piper's analysis of mentoring vis-à-vis characteristics of society as ideal types (as presented on page 47), was a useful way of interpreting the role within the context of formal, state-run education. Although not seeking to link learning mentoring to an explicit theoretical framework, it made a tentative proposition of a dual worker thesis questioning whether it was indeed possible for the LM to be friend *and* foe, nurturer *and* disciplinarian, counsellor *and* authority figure, within a relationship that was not always of the young person's volition.

The primary focus of the LM literature has tended to be the relationship that is established with young people who may experience varying difficulties whilst in formal education. It is seen as a role which has the potential to deliver better school experiences, transformatory even, if Cruddas's view is taken uncritically. With the exception of Rhodes (2006), less attention is given to whether LM's view themselves (or are indeed perceived by others) as a distinct professional group or at least a group seeking to construct a professional identity and the socio-economic and political context in which that takes place is key to this discussion. Thus the final section of the literature review will consider differing conceptualisations of professionalism and paraprofessionalism in terms of both definition and activity. First, I turn to the arena of school-based pastoral care.

1.5. The arena of school-based pastoral care as a further means to situate the work of learning mentors.

Whilst the title 'learning' mentor might suggest that the role is very much bound up in curricular aspect of a school's activities, it is within a school's pastoral systems and structures that LMs are more likely to be situated. As such, the rationale for this section is to examine the provision of school-based pastoral care in an attempt to establish where learning mentors fit into this evolving picture. I argue that the arena of pastoral care is a contested one - not only amongst those paraprofessionals who are in vogue and those who are on the wane (behaviour support workers and learning mentors respectively) - but also *between* paraprofessionals (termed collectively as 'support staff') and teachers as the more established professional group. In a similar way to how antecedents of the LM role were examined by looking at how and where youth mentoring has been utilised, I will draw on both historical and contemporary writings of pastoral care in this discussion. This will enable a foregrounding of some of the issues which could feasibly arise when coming to look at the day to day activities of the LMs in the ethnography, whilst also laying the foundations for a broader discussion regarding how the systems and language associated with this type of work continue to change and/or be recycled from past eras.

Nowadays there are a number of groups and individuals who are deemed as having pastoral functions. Some, like Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) have had a longer history and presence within the schools workforce and, like LMs, have a role which straddles the curriculum and pastoral divide (Power, 1996) as although mainly classroom based, they have the capacity to form meaningful one-to-one relationships with pupils (Lee, 2011). Others, such as behaviour workers, parent support advisors, year managers, pastoral managers and child protection coordinators (Nathan, 2011) are a more recent addition arguably coming about as a response to the transformation of schools as performance-based cultures. Such a diverse range of titles suggests that the discourse of pastoral care varies in response to changing contexts and policy-drivers (Edmond and Price, 2009) so any attempt to establish a precise and bounded understanding of what 'pastoral care' is could prove fruitless. Recent accounts describe it as a "diffuse concept" which has "managed to accommodate a range of attitudes and practices that have changed significantly over time" (Calvert, 2009:268). However, for reasons which will be revealed in due course, earlier accounts of pastoral care such as this one given below, adopt a noticeably less neutral outlook in their descriptions:

In particular, it tends to refer to routine administration and dealing with pupils' problems as they occur – often within a disciplinary (i.e. institution-centred) rather than 'welfare' (i.e. student-centred) framework. Certainly some 'welfare' work is done, but simply in terms of the amount of time it consumes, it is clearly a *marginal activity within schools* (Watts and Fawcett, 1980:107, my emphasis).

This then views pastoral care as a "residual category" of school provision which is essentially in service to the school's teaching structure. To reinforce this point, the authors cite a study undertaken at this time which found that within a secondary school teacher's day an average

of 8.4 minutes was spent on 'pupil welfare' (Hilsum and Strong, cited in Watts and Fawcett, 1980:106).

Some contextual background explains why pastoral care was viewed as a "marginal activity within schools" at this time, constructed as more of a disciplinary than welfare-based intervention. Until the late 1970s an accepted 'conventional wisdom' had grown up around the provision of pastoral care in schools which depicted it as a device to meet the functional imperatives of a society in transition (Craft, 1980). Pastoral care structures were assumed to have emerged in order to simultaneously, manage the tensions and alleviate the anomic effects of rapid industrialization and urbanisation reflecting a Durkheimian grand theory of social order, exemplified in turn by the modern systems approach of Talcott Parsons (Best et al, 1980). This conventional wisdom was eventually confronted by a number of authors (Best et al, 1980; Dooley, 1980; Hamblin, 1980, Williamson, 1980) who called for a theoretical and empirical (re)appraisal of pastoral care as concept, structure *and* process, arguing that a gulf existed between what theorists assumed about pastoral care and what it actually meant to those for whom "it is part of the taken-for-granted routine of daily life". In doing so they called into doubt the conventional assumption that "pastoral care structures behave in the way their designers expect them to" arguing that:

...'pastoral care' has been reified in the process of designing formalized institutional machinery with the result that the nature of pastoral care as a *human action* has been lost (Best et al, 1980:11).

Conventional wisdom accounts were also criticised for 'lagging behind' more contemporary understandings which recognised that institutional structures had the capacity to confirm deviants and deviant identities (Goffman, 1968; Becker, 1963). Thus a consequence (unintended or otherwise) of both pastoral care structures and the playing out of pastoral care roles was that they served only to reinforce the construction of the 'good' and 'bad' pupil. As such, a 'new' appraisal of pastoral care was undertaken from the critical perspective of social phenomenology, seen by its proponents to offer a partial alternative to the conventional 'normative' sociologies of education:

Indeed, the phenomenological dictum: 'render problematic the taken-for-granted assumptions of actors in their social contexts', informs our position ... for we want to suggest that, in terms of everyday practices of actors in education, 'pastoral care' is not (or at least not *necessarily*) what it seems (Best et al, 1980:5-6).

Rather than viewing pastoral care structures (and education structures more generally) as the positive, functional and convivial institutions that they had been assumed to be, Best et al (1980) argued for an entirely different perspective:

We want to suggest that perhaps they are structures facilitating social *control*, rather than 'order', in which *alienation* rather than 'anomie' is the operative concept, and where 'deviance' may be seen not as the result of 'inadequate socialisation' but as an understandable response for the individual in terms of the way he [sic] defines his situation (Best et al, 1980:11).

This literature, now almost 40 years old, continues to be highly significant for researchers like myself who are navigating their way through contemporary constructions, understandings and practices of 'pastoral care'. Utilising the framework set out by Best et al

(1980) I proceed with a critical examination of the breaks and continuities of pastoral care as structure, concept and process.

1.5.1 Structure: Who 'does' pastoral care?

When undertaking a time-based comparison of pastoral care provision in schools the most immediate difference to emerge is the staff that are tasked with dispensing it. In the 1980s, the issue was seen as the almost exclusive concern of the teaching profession who might call in more specialist knowledge and skills when required. For example, the title of 'teacher care' is proposed as a means to distinguish between "the exercise of pastoral care by the teachers in a day-to-day routine" from those seen as specialist in the field such as counsellors and careers advisors (Best et al, 1980:8).

The eventual proliferation of pastoral posts in schools came about during the 1970s as a result of three related events which can be summarised as: the comprehensive reorganisation (Pring and Walford, 1997); the raising of the school-leaving age (ROSLA) to sixteen years of age (Lowe, 2005); and the development of a stratified career structure of 'scaled posts' in response to the reorganisation of state secondary education (Best et al, 1980). Taken both singularly and collectively these not only explain why pastoral care was seen very much as part of a teacher's domain, but also why it has continued to have less status in comparison to other aspects of schooling. Whilst the first two events of comprehensive reorganisation and ROSLA were perceived as presenting "unprecedented problems of discipline and control" (Best et al, 1980:12) to grammar school teachers and head teachers, the third had more to do with the challenge facing Local Education Authorities (LEAs) whose task was to relocate largely non-graduate teachers who had previously held academic posts in secondary modern schools. Agreements between teaching unions, the Department of Education and Science (DES) and LEAs were meant to ensure that teachers would be offered 'comparable posts' in new comprehensive institutions but in reality there were not enough posts to go around. This led to a number of surplus teachers from the secondary modern system being allocated pastoral responsibilities which, given the concerns of those members of the teaching profession originating from grammar schools regarding discipline and control, were conveniently framed as integral given the context of these new larger, mixed-ability schools. In essence, the creation of pastoral care systems and structures which would stand alongside the traditional school model of subject departments, was a convenient solution in that they provided an alternative career structure for non-graduate teachers, simultaneously satisfying the unions and providing a "whole new structure of 'pigeon holes' to receive secondary-modern Heads of Department" who had been displaced through the comprehensive reorganization (Best et al, 1980: 13).

However, whether from the grammar or secondary modern system, pastoral care structures were wholly the preserve of the teaching profession at this time, albeit an extremely hierarchical one. The ramifications of these structural changes also cemented the view that the academic and the pastoral were, and would continue to be seen, as two separate entities. Power (1996) critiques this artificial binary asserting that any adequate analysis of pastoral care *must* take on board its relationship with the academic. Nevertheless, the development of these two entities has continued along a 'siloed' path which has only been further strengthened by the more recent remodelling of the schools workforce which, as explored earlier, has altered the nature of school life by 'freeing up teachers' and developing

the roles (and numbers) of support staff (Cajkler et al, 2007; Tucker, 2009). Thus when comparing the delineations of pastoral care in earlier literature with contemporary texts, the shifts and changes in school personnel are clear to see; what has not changed is how the 'territory' of pastoral care remains highly contested as borne out by the following two examples. First, Nathan (2011) offers a handbook written for pastoral leaders, in which the first chapter is headlined as: '*New Times, new titles...*' signalling that a new era is indeed upon us. Although there is a recognition that *some* teachers continue to follow a traditional route into pastoral work, the text welcomes many more actors to the field whilst acknowledging their varied pathways into this aspect of school work:

You may have been a learning mentor, often you have a background of youth work; you may have a long association with the school as one of its welfare assistants or teaching assistant; or you may come in directly from business or industry. Currently, some pastoral leaders have backgrounds in professions such as recruitment, banking or the police (Nathan, 2011:5).

Here, the 'doing' of pastoral care is centred around themes such as 'leading a team'; 'managing pupil behaviour'; 'liaising with external agencies'; 'using data to raise achievement'; and dealing with pupil welfare and parents. This content reflects the lasting influences of the *Every Child Matters* policy agenda in its focus on multi and inter-agency working and keeping potentially problematic young people in school. At the same time the performative imperatives are clearly in view; for example, the chapter dealing with raising achievement is premised on a range of "outcome targets" from 'Elite' which refers to the targeting of certain groups such as those on the D/C grade borderline (as seen in EiC); 'Average' where the aim is to raise attainment across a cohort; and 'Reliability' where the purpose is to reduce the number of students failing. All of the above is very much framed as the 'business' of the pastoral leader (Nathan, 2011).

Another contemporary text takes a very different stance (Purdy, 2013) in that rather than starting with the *activities* assigned to pastoral leaders and support staff it is pastoral *issues* which structure each chapter. As such the subject content encompasses child protection, bullying, domestic violence and abuse, parental separation and divorce, bereavement and self-harm / suicide – areas which collectively are seen as coming under the umbrella of 'pastoral care' in the modern day context and reflect in part the 'risk' factors in NL's model of social exclusion. The tone is also noticeably different from the outset in the acknowledgement that 'yes, the work is challenging and unattractive' particularly when compared to academic and sporting achievements *and* the range of issues which schools have to deal with is growing in number, intensity and complexity; but this appeal to 'stick with' pastoral work is made directly to teachers and makes no reference to the presence of other occupational groups in to schools. Thus on the question of whose work domain pastoral care is, the stance of the author is unambiguous:

[S]ome might argue that teachers should simply throw in the towel and leave pastoral care to 'the professionals', allowing teachers to get on with their 'real job' of delivering their subject ... So is it time to abandon ship? Should we acknowledge the overwhelming challenges of pastoral care work for an already busy classroom teacher, and bow out graciously? Should we just get on with delivering the curriculum and raising attainment to meet the latest government targets ... Emphatically, no! (Purdy, 2013:1).

This 'call to arms' implores members of the teaching profession to reject the performative agenda which has arguably narrowed their role and continue to see the pastoral dimension as an essential part of their work, reflecting a more traditional identification of teachers as the facilitators of pastoral care as opposed to the newer roles identified by Nathan (2011) above.

In terms of continuities, this stance has clear echoes of a critical examination of the tutor role as distinct from the teacher role written some decades earlier. Here Blackburn (1980) questioned the belief that the larger purpose-built comprehensive schools would require 'new' ways of working which had been modelled on boarding school systems of Houses and their constituent House Tutor groups. The tutor role which developed from this was envisaged as someone who would know their individual pupils beyond the relationship of formal, subject learning and be responsible for all aspects of their school experience. However, Blackburn warned against this fragmentation, calling for a pedagogy that went beyond that of subject content and encompassed learning about the individual and their relationship with others. Ultimately he considered the above model of 'tutor' as an *addition to 'teacher'* as highly problematic arguing:

[Each] member of staff [already] brings the demanding and caring aspects of [their] role, the teaching *and* tutoring aspects of [their] role, into every situation. *Indeed on the shop floor person meets person* (Blackburn, 1980:59, my emphasis).

As such this artificial distinction between 'teacher' and 'tutor' led to a false cognitive split in which the member of staff would be constantly thinking '*In this context I am teaching. In this context I am tutoring*':

Writ large this leads to an academic structure and a pastoral structure in the school which are seen as opposed to one another (Blackburn, 1980:58).

Similarly, Hamblin (1980), whose focus is how teachers deal with disruption and difficult behaviour, a dimension that was added to broad understandings of what constituted pastoral care provisions during the comprehensive reorganisation, warns against the separation of the pastoral and curricular and once again underlines the key role of the teacher:

Indeed, I see discussion of the pastoral *versus* the curricular as a pseudo-question, diverting attention away from the fact that attention to emotions, perceptions and motivation is *part of the professional task of the teacher* (Hamblin, 1980:81, my emphasis).

Analyses like these fore-warn what was to become a key issue, as seen in the later identification of 'conflict and contradiction' inherent in a curriculum premised on this pastoral and academic binary (Power, 1996).

1.5.2 Pastoral Care as Concept

As a concept, pastoral care has traditionally been organised around themes of religion, community and language. The term evokes images of the pastor as shepherd guiding his flock within a context of rural tranquillity "but also ... an idealized community in which can be

found security, refuge and belonging” (Power, 1996:31-32). Its etymology is rooted in the Latin word *‘pascere’* – meaning ‘to feed’, thus within the term ‘pastoral care’, ‘food’ is conceived of allegorically in a spiritual sense (Purdy, 2013). The potentially problematic relationship between ‘pastoral care’ and ‘authority’ is a further illustration of the critical thinking that has emerged in that pastoral care represents a consideration of a person’s needs on the basis of compassion, but schools are also traditionally associated with a structure of authority (Dooley, 1980). Thus insofar as the primary aim of a school is to engender learning, all else will be subordinated to this structure and aim. Here, it is possible to see the uneasy co-existence of two cultures, which were also identified in empirical accounts of learning mentor practice (Bishop, 2011; Doveston et al, 2009) noted in the previous section.

Another strategy in assessing how a concept takes hold is to look at when and how it starts to make an appearance in official arenas. No official educational reference was made to the term ‘pastoral care’ prior to 1970 after which it ‘suddenly’ appeared in a government publication: *The Educational System of England and Wales (1974-75)* under an entry entitled *‘Pastoral care, careers education and vocational guidance’*. Of equal interest to the evolution of the term ‘pastoral care’ however, is an understanding of the “wider historical context to which its emergent visibility seems most clearly related” (Hughes, 1980:25). Like those authors cited above, Hughes notes that the meanings attributed to pastoral care are “inescapably religious in connotation and tone” and in referring to pastoral care approaches as “museum pieces” (and let us not forget that these observations are being made almost forty years ago) he argues that:

[This] conception is strikingly out of phase with current approaches and practices in counselling and a number of areas of activity included under the heading of pastoral care in schools today” (Hughes, 1980:26).

The key question was why terms like ‘pastoral care’ were coming to the fore at a time when knowledge and awareness of radically different approaches were increasing amongst teachers in general, such as models of person – centred practice espoused by Rogers (1961) which Cruddas was greatly influenced by in her proposed functional model of learning mentoring. Thus, the concept of pastoral care was predicated on an out-dated conception of caring which could be traced back to the late 19th/ early 20th century during which time voluntary and statutory provisions became wedded in the process of establishing new state secondary schools. To illustrate this observation, Hughes notes the “moral earnestness” of this tradition combined with the “smug, condescending attitudes towards the lower orders” (Hughes, 1980:27) as represented in the activities of people such as Hannah Moore, founder of the Sunday School Movement (Hendrick, 2003) and described by her contemporaries as “compassionate, courageous and unselfseeking”, to which Hughes adds “self-righteous” and “patronizing” arguing that:

Subordinates ... were presumably expected to respond with appropriate appreciation of what was being done for them and with due reference towards their benefactor. The ‘counselling’ techniques to which such attitudes led seem to have been much the same as those so devastatingly questioned by Carl Rogers working in a different country – threatening, remonstrating, exhorting, moralizing (Hughes, *ibid*).

The philosophies and activities of a number of then contemporary movements sought to undermine stances typified by Hannah Moore. One example, Child-Centred Education, typified an important shift in conceptions of children and young people in schools, no longer framed as passive recipients of facts, precepts and correct thinking but as “persons potentially capable of thinking for themselves and of making judgements and decisions in their own right” (Hughes, 1980:27).

Thus when critically surveying pastoral care as concept, Hughes maintains that we are left with a historical and social mystery as to why terms with such outmoded overtones have been selected to refer both to the process of helping pupils deal with non-academic aspects of their lives and to the provision of organizational arrangements in schools for providing such help. Terms which are chosen to identify any particular area of intervention will surely influence the nature and quality of what actually takes place, which reinforces again that the terms ‘pastoral’ and ‘care’ only serve to convey a confused and sentimental image of helping which did not fit well with either the contemporary knowledge of human relations or the real problems facing youth at that time. Therefore “paternalistic intentions” and the “maintenance of control” (Hughes, 1980:29) were deemed as poor substitutes for providing skilled help for young people as they made the transition to adulthood; words which were useful to heed within the context of this thesis.

1.5.3 Pastoral Care as Process

[T]he structure of pastoral care has usually received more thought than the *actual events that should make up a pastoral occasion* (Button, 1974:170, my emphasis).

This short and concise statement offers a useful starting point in the consideration of pastoral care as ‘process’. Previously, I have argued that the territory of pastoral care has been and remains a contested area, assumed to be a domain of the teaching profession for many years. But this begs the question of whether members of the teaching profession always wanted this role? Some commentators identify the existence of an alternative ‘everyday’ version of pastoral care in which it is perceived by some practicing teachers as “a nuisance, a crashing bore [and] an impossible, impractical, and largely unnecessary diversion from the real job of teaching” (Best et al, 1980:10). If this ‘professional’ view of pastoral care work does indeed have currency, it is not surprising that it has come to be seen as a marginalised or liminal activity. A slightly different angle to take would be to question the extent to which teachers have been adequately prepared and trained for the task:

We have tended to say to the form teacher, ‘Here is your form. This is not about subjects but about the young people themselves.’ And then we have left them without the help and support that this many-sided operation must receive (Button, 1980:72).

As a result, some teachers have felt inadequate or even embarrassed about this aspect of their role which paints quite a different picture to that given in Blackburn’s earlier assertion that “on the shop floor, person meets person” which argued that the professional teacher already had a holistic view of their pupils and therefore did not need to be additionally trained as ‘tutor’. But establishing a structure and naming a role within it does not mean that the process, or, to borrow Button’s words above, ‘the events which make up a pastoral occasion’, will necessarily take place. In examining why this may not be so, it is useful to

examine earlier critiques of the role that education and schooling played in wider society which as with other aspects of this discussion reveal much in terms of continuities.

The compulsory nature of school attendance (now eighteen, previously sixteen years) produces an uneasy contract between the school and its pupils with teachers often feeling “unsympathetic to unwilling pupils, and taking the compliant for granted” (Watts and Fawcett, 1980:106). If the above description is regarded as an accurate portrayal of schools both past and present, there is a further question to be addressed which is how pastoral structures are utilised specifically to deal with the unwilling, whatever the cause of their apparent unwillingness might be. The concept of “pastoralization” (Williamson, 1980:171) provides a very convincing answer to this question as well as offering one possible interpretation of LM work in the present day. To explain further, any structural changes which occurred through the comprehensive organisation were actually superficial in that the traditional pattern of academic organization persisted and continued to be unduly influential. In practice this meant that whilst the comprehensive school attempted to cater for children of all abilities there was not, in reality, any radical change in the types of learning experiences provided for pupils. So although pastoral care in large comprehensive schools lacked both a unified philosophy and a stable framework of *agreed* practice, it was still essentially a means of support for the school as it performed “those tasks expected of in terms of our present conception of education” (*ibid*). A significant part of this conception is identified as ‘product teaching’ meaning that the activity of education is approached as the production of a standardized commodity in which the raw materials (children and young people in their role as pupils) have somehow to be induced to stay on the conveyer belt and accept the practices of the assembly-men (teachers) as legitimate. Relationships of mutual trust are then formed between those with pastoral responsibilities (identified primarily as form tutors in Williamson’s account) and pupils. These relationships are then utilised in different ways depending on how the pupil responds to product teaching: pupils seen as more able are those who readily (and unquestioningly) accept and experience little difficulty with traditional teaching methods. As such, the type of help these pupils require is normally limited to “answering a few general enquiries about timetable difficulties, subject-option choices” and perhaps providing a sounding board for “the occasional ‘beef’ about having to wear school uniform and attend ‘boring’ assemblies” (Williamson, 1980:173). But for the not inconsiderable number of pupils who are unable to benefit from product teaching and who may rebel against its constraints, the relationship of mutual trust can be characterised across a spectrum from kindly but frequent exhortation to engage in a system which is not openly questioned, to far more explicit and tacit discussions which advise pupils to ‘keep their head down’ and accept the hours of boredom which the current practices of education entail for them. Thus it is ‘pastoralization’ which makes possible, or is even a precondition of, product teaching:

When children question the adequacy of the learning situations provided, the tutor is faced with the difficult task of finding answers which will, at least, avert an open rejection of school and its practices. The type of explanation ... [given] ... for these inadequacies leads, initially, to a spirit of glum tolerance among the pupils. Of serious concern for the secondary school is the way in which, as the pupils progress through the school, this glum tolerance gives way to a variety of attitudes of resentment toward the school in particular and society in general (*ibid*).

In this sense, pastoral care can be thought of more usefully as an organizational prop; pupils are 'pastoralized' in that they are referred to a member of pastoral staff but rarely in these meetings is the teaching (or other aspects of the school as an organization) brought into question, it is the ability (or rather, inability) of the pupil to adapt which is seen as the key issue to be resolved. As such, the 'problems' which pastoral care systems supposedly exist to solve may perhaps be solved by a much wider consideration of the nature and processes of teaching and learning; a point which on its own provides a strong case *against* seeing the academic and pastoral as two separate dimensions of school life.

This section has focused on pastoral care as concept, structure and process, a framework that was utilised by a previous inquiry which sought to reject the conventional wisdom that surrounded pastoral care in the first half of the twentieth century. The critique that ensued was informed by a phenomenological perspective (Best et al, 1980) focusing on the activities of actors in their social contexts and the meanings that they attached to these; as such it offered a clear parallel with the method of inquiry which informs my approach - Institutional Ethnography, which takes as *its* starting point, the everyday activities and experiences of those in the chosen field of enquiry.

Whilst the structures underpinning pastoral care (i.e. those who actually dispense it) may have changed, the concepts and processes identified above reveal a number of continuities. The most obvious of these is that pastoral care remains an elusive and problematic concept *and* a contested term; but however unsuitable and inaccurate it has nevertheless endured as a designation and continues to feature in the lexicon of school language today. Further continuities have emerged through the unearthing of earlier sociological critiques like 'pastoralization'. This concept demonstrates that pastoral care can operate simultaneously as both 'support system' for those pupils who conform with product teaching and require limited support; and 'pastoralizing agent' for those unable or unwilling to benefit from what the school is offering. This dual function bears a strong resemblance to my earlier tentative proposal that LMs took on a dual persona of critical friend and authority figure reflecting the notions of 'support system' and 'pastoralizing agent' respectively. Thus the assertion that pastoral structures actually "prop up and conceal the ailing academic work of the teacher and the school" (Williamson, 1980:180) could be rewritten to take account of present day developments so that the 'ailing academic work of teacher' is replaced with the alienating rigours of performativity.

One of the most significant breaks to emerge from this examination of historical literature is how the respective reach and involvement of key participants has varied according to different eras. In earlier accounts pastoral care is the domain of teachers - unquestionably so; therefore the key issue is identified as the extent to which teachers are able (or willing) to perform this element of their role. Although it is still possible to detect this stance in more recent accounts (Purdy, 2011) the consensus would appear that in reality, pastoral care is now dispensed by a diverse and continually evolving range of practitioners (Andrews, 2006) in which learning mentors have made a significant contribution (Bishop, 2011; Edmond and Price, 2009; Nathan, 2009). This situation is deemed to have a series of advantages and disadvantages specific to each group. For teachers, the pastoral is no longer a viable avenue of career advancement unless willingly taken on alongside more performative activities like the monitoring of pupil progress and achievement. But for non-teaching support staff, the adoption of these roles *has* led to new avenues of career enhancement, although

often time-limited and ephemeral in nature. This state of affairs leads to wider questions regarding the status of these new pastoral participants, particularly in comparison to their teaching colleagues. The earlier examination of the 'New Careers' project suggests a story that does not have a happy ending, but to achieve a more rigorous understanding it is important to fully explore existing conceptualisations and contemporary accounts of professionalism to ascertain whether or not these contribute a more nuanced understanding of the paraprofessional. This then forms the basis of the final section.

1.6. Professionalism and paraprofessionalism – situating learning mentors within a wider literature

As has been noted, support staff have had a presence in schools over a number of years (Best et al, 1980; Power, 1996; Nathan 2011) but the issue of workforce reform has had a relatively short but increasingly significant history (Tucker, 2009). The composition of school personnel has changed dramatically due to a proliferation and diversification of roles leading in to the establishment of 'para' or 'associate' professionals working alongside the more established teaching profession (Edmond and Price, 2009). Part of making sense of these changes is a need to understand the term 'professional' and/or what it means to *be* a professional. In the latter part of the 20th century the concept was noted as ever-expanding with occupational groups as disparate as pharmacists, care assistants, computing experts, the police and the armed forces all claiming to be professions and/or demonstrate professionalism in their occupational work (Evetts, 2003; Fournier, 1999). Therefore one way to understand the greater presence of school-based support staff, particularly those whose work involves comparable levels of pupil-contact with teachers, is to see this as part of the expansion of those laying claim to the term 'professional'. To do so suggests that this diversification in the schools workforce is part of a wider phenomenon of changing public sector roles as new tiers of staff are brought in to carry out tasks previously undertaken by professionals. There are certainly many parallel examples of this: clinical support assistants working alongside nurses in healthcare settings; 'peer mentors' in counselling and psychological therapies services (Gopalan, 2017) and Police Community Support Officers (O'Neill, 2017); to name but a few. In order to address these and further questions this section will undertake a critical exploration of the project of professionalism in order to establish why conceptualizations like the 'para', 'associate' or 'semi' professional have arisen.

1.6.1 Differing conceptualisations of professionalism

Although the teaching profession is not the subject of this thesis, I argue that an awareness and understanding of what has happened to it is imperative. For it is these changes which have led to the creation of the LM and other support roles in schools in both number and significance - to the extent that a school could not be imagined going about its daily business without the work that they undertake in one form or another. Within the sociology of

professions literature, Anglo-American approaches initially offered distinct conceptualisations of what it meant to be a professional. Foundational studies emerging in the early to mid-20th century celebrated the functional role played by the professions and emphasised the idea of professionalism as an occupational value. This gave rise to a series of attempts to analyse and capture the key traits which distinguished the professions from other occupations and the ensuing studies perceived *professionalism* as a positive force, capable of subjecting rampant individualism to the needs of the community and ensuring stability and freedom against the threat of powerful industrial and governmental bureaucracies (Tawney, 1921 and Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933 cited in Evetts 2003). Others emphasized the altruistic orientation of professionalism (Marshall, 1950 cited in Muzio et al, 2013). Further characterisations emerging from this literature are the freedoms that professional practitioners have in their ability to control working conditions, characterised as occupational or 'market closure' i.e. where access to the professions is restricted to individuals with state-certified licences obtained after university education (Klein, 2016). This 'closure' led in turn to the creation of 'market shelters' which supposedly shielded the professions from government interference, competition and other market forces. This paradigm gave rise to a number of core characteristics that were used to distinguish the professions from other occupations and which for the purposes of this discussion can be summarised as an esoteric and systematic knowledge base, achieved through a formal training programme, self-regulation and a publicly spirited ethos (Muzio et al, 2013). This idea of professionalism as an occupational value stresses the important role that professionals play in maintaining the stability and civility of social systems. Most well-known of these functional analyses was Parsons (1939) who is credited as one of the first theorists to articulate how the capitalist economy, the rational-legal social order (of Weber) and the modern professions were all interrelated and mutually balancing in the maintenance and stability of a "fragile normative social order" (Evetts, 2003).

In the 1970s alternative, conflict-based frameworks such as Freidson and Larson (both cited in Fournier, 1999:282) emerged which viewed the professions as centres of power subjecting the public and other occupations to their dominating rules. The positive accounts that had been produced within the functionalist tradition were subsequently attacked for ignoring issues of power and privilege and for being too close to the claims and interests of the professionals themselves (Muzio et al, 2013). This alternative paradigm was centred on the argument that rather than viewing professionalism as an inherent characteristic of an occupation, it was a means of organizing and controlling access to an occupation where producers were empowered and consumers disempowered. Furthermore, this was the result of a conscious and systematic political project. In short, professions were now portrayed as powerful, privileged and self-interested monopolies (Evetts, 2003), a description which is clearly far removed from their supposedly altruistic or at the very least, benign role identified above.

An important characteristic of professionalism which has been noted is the autonomy and self-regulation that certain groups have enjoyed. However, this emphasis on exclusion and social closure overlooks an essential step in the formation of the profession i.e. the *constitution* of the professional field of expertise itself (Fournier, 2000). Thus, to understand these 'turf wars' it is necessary to examine how such territories became constituted as

independent and recognisable entities in the first place. Foucault's 'birth of medicine' is one example of how the constitution of an independent field is contingent upon social, historical and economic conditions. Briefly, from the 18th century, 'health' and then 'medicine' became isolated areas of knowledge and intervention as the 'sick poor' became conceptualised in terms of their economic relevance rather than their need for assistance (Fournier, 2000). At the same time the individual body became normalised and viewed as a 'medical case' which could be understood and acted upon only by a suitably qualified person who, through a process of systematic observation, documentation and registration subjected the body to a homogenous medical code of symptoms. Thus:

The knowledge and expertise of the professions act as a 'centre of translation' [...] it translates a disorderly world made of complex relationships and heterogeneous materials into homogenous, isolated and ordered patterns; it inscribes complex phenomena into categories and laws allegedly governing their operations and relationships (Fournier, 1999:70).

Fournier's observation can be detected in other stories of early professional formation. In exploring the professional merits of social work in the USA in the early 20th century, it was argued by a member of the medical profession that to achieve professional status a group must stake out a monopoly on a set of transmissible skills which were rooted in scientific evidence. At that time, the social work profession was emerging in embryonic form as the paid "friendly visitors" of the poor but in an attempt to establish a distinct identity and direction, early pioneers of this practice turned toward the (then) emerging field of psychiatry (with its emphasis on individual behaviour) and away from sociological theory (Northcott, 1972). As a consequence, clients were pathologised and viewed through a deficit lens rather than being seen as a casualty of a society premised on social inequality. Such 'understandings' then seeped into other areas of human service provision and enjoyed a resurgence in the late 20th century as neo-liberal ideals of individualism and self-sufficiency came to the fore once again. But rather than assuming that professional fields simply emerged as an *outcome* of the division of labour which arose because of the necessity for specialisation within modern forms of production and knowledge, it can also be argued that the professional field is *constituted* through a conscious "labour of division" (Fournier, 2000:72) which is both achieved and self-perpetuated via the establishment of various boundaries which have been erected between different professional groups; the profession and clients/lay persons and finally the profession and the market. This is an interesting point which I return to when considering the challenges that paraprofessionals face in terms of constructing a distinct identity.

The sociology of professions literature also enabled comparisons between the Anglo-American approach (outlined above) and a contrasting approach developed in France and elsewhere in continental Europe. Whilst the former focuses on 'private government' within an occupation (Evetts, 2003), the latter considers questions of occupation more generally including: occupational identity, career trajectories, professional training and expertise and employment in public sector organizations. Thus, the European framework emphasizes the role of managers as "elite administrators" who possess their offices by "virtue of academic credentials" (Collins, cited in Evetts, 2003:17) and have a significant degree of control over professionals.

1.6.2 Contemporary accounts of professionalism

Contemporary accounts argue that professionalism is changing and being changed as both professionals and occupational workers now work in large-scale, organizational workplaces many of which are international. This is due to the fundamental shifts that have taken place in social, political, economic and market contexts. This era of “advanced liberalism” (Rose, 1993) has led to a change in the ‘rules’ by which the professions can establish their legitimacy. In relation to the public sector these developments have been referred to as the New Public Management (Newman and Clarke, 1997) as noted in the earlier discussion regarding performativity. In response to these changes, professionalism has been reconceptualised as a *discourse* rather than an occupational value. Viewed through one such analytical lens, the discourse of professionalism involves occupational change and control in work organisations which is increasingly applied and utilized by managers (Evetts, 2011, 2009). Despite this, it is welcomed by many occupational groups who perceive it as leading to increased status and reward both collectively and individually. Fournier (1999) notes how this has in fact been used as a ‘disciplinary mechanism’ referring to how the discursive resources of professionalism are mobilised in a way which allows for control at a distance through the construction of ‘appropriate’ work identities and conducts. As Evett’s explains:

It is a powerful ideology and the idea of becoming and being a ‘professional worker’ has appealed to many new and existing occupational groups, particularly during the second half of the 20th century... (2011:408).

Clearly, the discourse of professionalism varies *between* occupational groups, a point which Evett’s demonstrates by utilising McClelland’s categorization (cited in Evetts, 2011: 407) which differentiates between professionalization ‘from within’ (i.e. successful manipulation of the market by the occupational group) and professionalization ‘from above’ (domination of forces external to the occupational group). In the case of many public sector workers, professionalism is realised via the latter imposition ‘from above’ i.e. the employers and managers of the service organisations presenting a false or selective discourse to promote and facilitate occupational change. The effects of professionalism ‘from above’ are very different from those achieved ‘within’ in that organizational objectives and thus the content of work activities are controlled by managers. Furthermore, the objectives they are pursuing are often politically driven and it is these which set achievement targets and performance indicators and attempt to define practitioner- client relations. In effect, professionalism in this context is being deployed as a performative discourse (Muzio et al, 2013). The impact of educational reforms on the teaching profession in the last few decades provides an apt example of this as continuing changes in global culture continue to affect national educational policies, practices and institutions (Whitty, 2000; Ball, 2008; Salhberg, 20015).

Developing the theme of professionalization from ‘within’ or ‘above’, Rhodes (2006) offers a more nuanced position in suggesting two competing discourses that are shaping the professional identity of teachers presented as a ‘democratic professionalism’ emerging from the profession itself and a ‘managerial professionalism’ that is reinforced by employing

authorities through policies on professional development which emphasise accountability and effectiveness. Rhodes is interested in the interaction between both person and context as individuals adopt or adapt professional characteristics depending on the necessities of their immediate context and the value they personally place upon these characteristics. This strongly suggests the notion of agency as teachers are active in the process of constructing their own professional development. He also considers how teachers may take on sub-identities as they strive to harmonize differences in both context (including discourses they encounter) and relationships such as how the content of their work and themselves as a discrete group are managed. These questions are then applied empirically to the LM experience, from which it is possible to identify two distinct emerging professional identities: an instrumental technical identity characterised by compliance; and a creative professional identity characterized by an active involvement in the creation of one's own professionalism. These are in turn influenced by factors such as the feelings of security in the mentor's role definition and sense of purpose and the power differential they perceive between themselves and qualified teaching staff. I return to the issues raised by this research later in the thesis.

1.6.3 Paraprofessionalism

What can be extrapolated from the literature thus far in order to understand what it means to be a para- professional? Earlier sociological accounts certainly provide a framework which could be utilised in an attempt to define and categorise those roles that have emerged across the 'human services' of health, care and education. But is this framework fit for purpose given that it offers criteria or traits akin to a 'check list' with questions like: Does the role require a period of training and formal qualifications? Can it self-regulate? Does it have a skills monopoly and so on? I also return to an earlier critique regarding the process by which a professional field is constructed (Fournier, 2000) which interrogates whether there is an identifiable professional field which has been constituted through a *conscious* 'labour of division'.

Such approaches have proved to be problematic within the confines of this thesis however. With the exception of Rhodes (2006) above, the literature outlined thus far is found to be lacking *precisely* because its default or starting position is 'professionalism'. Using the above criteria to judge a certain level of professional status does not clarify what it means to be a 'para-professional'. From the outset, the term itself is confusing and contradictory; the very act of qualifying the word 'professional' with the pronoun 'para' indicates an element of conditionality which implies that such roles stand at the boundaries of professional status but lack the requirements for full admittance. A further issue specific to this thesis is that whilst literature examining paraprofessional roles in education exists, the analyses that result do not extend beyond this setting therefore, the bigger picture, however complex it might be, remains elusive. In casting the net further afield I was able to critically examine how other conceptual frameworks have been deployed to understand the para-professional in UK contexts other than education.

One example is a study of the professionalization project of UK paramedics and other workers such as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) (McCann et al, 2013). This set out to consider the extent to which change initiatives linked to professionalization had affected emergency ambulance staff. Conducted as an immersive ethnographic study, their first task

was to explore how the work of paramedics and EMTs was organized and performed. They then looked at how each worker personally interpreted and then constructed their own occupational identity in response to these changes. Ambulance work was originally seen as a manual occupation, restricted to transportation and not extending to patient treatment and whilst levels of clinical expertise have significantly increased in the last four decades, there remains a fairly clear stratification of emergency medicine with paramedics [and other emergency workers] “cast in subordinate roles as para professions” (McCann et al, 2013: 755-6).

The impetus giving rise to the study was an observation made some years earlier by American sociologist Wilensky that despite many occupations’ engaging in heroic struggles for professional identification, “few[actually] make the grade” (1964: 137). The study also formed part of a wider project which called for an analysis of professions through neo-institutional theory which was articulated through three prominent themes. First, the value of studying professions as institutions and of connecting processes of professionalization to broader patterns of institutionalization. Second, the importance of professions and professionals as agents in the creation, maintenance and disruption of institutions and thirdly, the importance of the organizational context as a key site in contemporary patterns of professionalization (Muzio et al, 2013). Thus, the paramedic study is premised on the notion that professional projects provide important examples of how change is attempted within institutions and furthermore, that institutional change is not only initiated at a senior level but can happen at numerous levels using various modes of influence and action. The influence that NPM has had on the project of professionalization was noted earlier in the discussion. In terms of how this relates to National Health Service personnel specifically was that the formal, senior level professionalization project was driven by external forces of “coercive isomorphism” meaning change which is driven by pressures from other organisations on which the profession or occupational role is dependent (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). The ‘other’ in this case being the New Labour Government (1997 – 2010) whose programme of major reforms included restructuring the medical para-professions or semi-professions [including paramedics] into ‘Allied Health Professionals” (McCann et al, 2013:755). In response, paramedics at a senior level pursued what is described as a ‘classical’ professionalization strategy of “institutional entrepreneurship” (ibid: 751) in creating a professional association named the College of Paramedics. The authors assert that the impact of such professionalization strategies are better understood through a combination of concepts derived from the sociology of professions (such as occupational closure) with institutional theory which urges close analyses of working lives at the frontline or ‘street level’ (Lipsky, 1980). Thus by exploring front-line realities via ethnographic methodology, it became possible to identify how senior level strategic suggestions translated (or fail to translate) into changes to everyday practice:

As perceived from ‘street level’, a variety of practical obstacles serve[d] to problematize and obscure from view the senior level professional project” (McCann et al, 2013:753).

One such of obstacle that they noted was jurisdictional disputes with other professionals. ‘Jurisdictions’ are the tasks and services over which professions claim both expertise and (therefore) their legitimate authority to operate. Wilensky (1964) noted that any occupation

wishing to exercise professional authority must assert an exclusive jurisdiction over its skills set. This phenomenon can be usefully extended to teachers and educational paraprofessionals when focusing on contested 'territories' of pastoral work within schools as seen earlier. In relation to the paramedic study, it was found that paramedics and other street level ambulance workers simultaneously pursued a different kind of professionalization project; one which was based more on institutional work and which comprised an informal, subtle, everyday project that reproduced "blue-collar professionalism" as paramedics negotiated the "tricky pathways of their own organization whilst] establishing for themselves a sense of their own position" (McCann et al, 2013: 751).

The extent to which political and organizational objectives assert control over the nature and content of 'street level' work activities is highly pertinent to this thesis. But conversely, the factors that inhibit such control, which for the paramedics was the continuing social reproduction of 'blue-collar professionalism', also need to be considered as they highlight how practical forces in everyday work can disrupt the prospects for a professionalization strategy. For the paramedics this strategy was institutional entrepreneurship actioned by "a small group of conscientious workers" (McCann et al, 2013:751) who gave significant time to developing and promoting the College of Paramedics. On this point the similarities between these healthcare and educational paraprofessionals like LMs cannot be so easily observed. Unlike the paramedics, LMs lack a professional association or lead body. The closest they came to this was through the Children and Workforce Development Council (CWDC), referred to earlier, establishing a common core of skills and knowledge to ensure that anyone working with children and young people had the appropriate skills to do so (CWDC, 2010) which, along with the General Teaching Council became one of many organisations to be culled by the Coalition Government (2010 – 2015) in its zeal to cut public spending (Curtis, 2011). Further, as a discrete group of workers, the LMs' history is much briefer. Their 'creation' was down to EiC, alongside a remodelling of the schools workforce - two agendas which were driven by the perceived need to improve standards and increase performance outputs from teachers. I have already shown how other policy initiatives like Sure Start and *Every Child Matters* signalled a desire to skill the unskilled and up-skill the low skilled which was to be realised through the recruitment of new workers - mainly but not exclusively women - to work in schools in a range of support roles; a development which was supported by a framework of courses and new qualifications initiated through the same government's programme for lifelong learning and validated by the CWDC. This could be understood as a professionalization project of sorts but I argue that a more plausible explanation was that offered by the 'New Careers' thesis earlier. This is due in part to the response of the professionals who were already established in the teaching, social work and healthcare professions when the ideas underpinning this initiative were actualised. Proponents of 'New Careers' acknowledged that change is not always welcomed by professions and predicted that some teachers would react negatively to what was being proposed, in effect a situation of 'market closure' which was outlined earlier (Pearl and Reissman, 1965). A further issue raised was of other teachers who, far from fearing that their profession was about to be down-graded had already taken refuge in the less challenging aspects of their role such as the clerical and administrative tasks and would therefore need training and support to successfully take on the newly defined teaching role in which as was noted earlier, teachers were envisaged as providing constant and imaginative supervision.

Any opposition and resentment expressed by the teaching profession was seen as having a number of potential outcomes, one being termed 'under-professionalism', meaning that professionals would resist fully utilizing nonprofessionals and continue to take on tasks that could otherwise be given over to them as the 'new careers' project had envisaged. Another outcome, perhaps more damaging to the project, was the substitution of middle-class nonprofessionals for their so-called indigenous counterparts. This was justified with the rationale that such middle-class nonprofessionals would provide a stop-gap or a means to phase in indigenous nonprofessionals. In their response to this the authors outline the dangers of such an approach:

We suspect ... that the real reason is that most professionals find it easier to work with the better educated nonprofessionals *who are more like themselves*. But, unfortunately these nonprofessionals do not typically possess the relationship to the low-income community so necessary for effective interclass communication (Pearl and Reissman, 1965:205, my emphasis).

As a corollary to this, 'Antiprofessionalism' is also identified, i.e. in emphasising the value of the nonprofessional, the professional is devalued and "invidious comparisons are made" (Pearl and Reissman, 1965:202) which are then developed into arguments which purport to show the lack of need for professionals because of their alleged failures in working with the poor. This was a real threat given that an imperative of the 'New Careers' project was the desire to retreat from "middle-classness" in the helping professionals. To address this issue, a position which strongly underlined the separate contributions that both professionals and nonprofessionals made was set out, along with the further argument that the employment of nonprofessionals produced new roles for the professionals as consultants, supervisors, teachers and coordinators.

1.6.4 Does 'Liminality' offer more?

The concept of liminality offers a further lens through which to understand the situation and experiences of educational paraprofessionals. Liminality was first laid down as an analytical tool within the discipline of anthropology. In its original application the word is very much associated with ritualistic social and cultural transitions that are enacted through three identifiable stages: 'Preliminal rites', also understood as 'rites of separation', is the first stage and involves a metaphorical 'death', as a person is forced to leave something behind by breaking with previous practices and routines (van Gennep, 2004). The second stage, 'liminal rites', can be understood as 'transition rites' as in this stage, considerable changes can be made to the identity of the person. It is the crossing over of a 'threshold' which marks the boundary between two phases and where van Gennep borrowed the term "limen" from Latin (meaning 'threshold'). In doing so he highlighted its importance as both physical state and a figurative means of referring to significant life events and/or changes of social status. During the final stage termed 'postliminal rites', the person is re-incorporated into society with a new identity and as a 'new' being.

The concept was then further popularised by Turner (1967) who argued that in the liminal phase, the people experiencing the ritual were "neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (cited in Clopot, 2016:157). However, there are those who feel that the term has been

utilised as “sweeping” in academic parlance, without much consideration of its specific critical origins; accusing some critical discourses of playing “fast and loose” with the term’s descriptive terminology, while sliding away from precise definitions (Downey, Kinane and Parker, 2016:3). Nonetheless, as a concept, liminality has been usefully employed to describe the position and experiences of contemporary groups. This is in part due to how liminal periods are characterised by a lack of categorisation and as intermediary periods when emergent categories and new norms of working can be formed. Although referring to the liminal identities of migrants Clopot (2016) notes that whilst there is an inherent danger in this unstructured position due to ambiguity and a lack of status, there is also potential for categories to be broken and refashioned as those on the margins are free to explore new possibilities.

This idea that both positive and negative experiences can arise as a result of inhabiting a liminal position has been utilised to understand the educational paraprofessional experience. For example, Mansaray’s sociological study (2006) of TAs deploys liminality as a means to unravel what she sees as the complexity of their practice. She argues that the role is a form of “boundary work” which involves “...bridging, mediating, and transgressing many of the hierarchical, symbolic, cultural and pedagogic status boundaries” (such as teacher-pupil), that are reproduced in schools (Mansaray, 2006:171). This perspective challenges both the policy discourse which tends to position the role as peripheral to teaching and learning as well as sociological studies premised on the assumption of the TA as a “deficit teacher” (Moyle and Suschitzky in Mansaray, 2006:173). Mansaray’s working of the concept offers two quite different implications of its meaning. Firstly, the idea of liminality as a transitional process refers to groups who are outside the ‘norm’ thus ‘the liminal’ are viewed from the perspective of the dominant social order which is static:

[The] dynamic energy of the liminal is harnessed towards integration, which is why the liminal is a ‘transitional’ state or process. The end state is decided before it begins.... The liminal is concerned with assimilation and social order (Mansaray, 2006:174).

This positions liminality as a relationship between core and peripheral entities which suggests the TA’s role as “incomplete, ambiguous and incoherent” (ibid). However, Mansaray proposes a further conceptualisation which draws on the second definition of liminality found in the Oxford Dictionary of English (2010): “Occupying a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold”. This she terms the “critical version” as it attempts to break out of the previous dualism (of being either ‘out’ or making one’s way ‘in’) and offers instead a more open form of internal differentiation referring to relations in which the final conditions are not pre-set:

Liminality is the as yet unnamed space *within* a practice, a group or an organisation, a feature of its development, which rather than being *telos* can go any number of ways...

And

Liminality from this perspective allows us to render as problematic the politics of naming practices and organisational development: whose practices, individually and

collectively, are liminal and in relation to what? It turns the gaze and deconstructs the core and provides an opportunity to reveal the practices of constitutive power... (Mansaray, 2006:175).

As a concept, liminality offers a more rigorous means to critically understand the position of educational paraprofessionals and is therefore a concept that will continue to be utilised throughout this discussion. The second conceptualisation offered by Mansaray above, is particularly relevant to the situation of those educational paraprofessionals discussed earlier (Stewart, 1971) as although carried out under the same role heading of 'community agent', their work was in reality, a number of different activities that provided vivid examples of 'boundary work' and did indeed transgress many of the hierarchical, and pedagogic status boundaries both within schools and the wider community. Similarly, the 'bridging' function of LMs presented as a key characteristic of their work by the educational news media also provides a clear example of the "critical version" of liminality above. In summary, Mansaray's work complements this thesis as both studies are premised on the notion that there is a need to pay more critical attention to the perspectives of TAs, LMs and other paraprofessionals in the belief that this will enable a more critical examination of existing power relations within schools and will do so in a way that calls such relations into question, rather than taking them as a given.

1.6.5 Summary

This Literature Review has encompassed a number of discrete areas which, when taken as a whole, provide a coherent picture of the context giving rise to the role of LMs. The first section examined the wider policy agenda in place, specifically NL's quest to identify 'risky' populations and then reverse their social exclusion through a number of initiatives like *Every Child Matters* and welfare to work strategies. The changes that ensued represented a transformative agenda across a range of public services which involved new models of inter-professional working and, new divisions of labour between occupational roles, in an attempt to transform and professionalise 'lower level' workers in care, health and education (Hordern, 2016). In the second section, a retrospective analysis of historical literature shed light on the existence of paraprofessional roles in education and work settings in the USA, demonstrating that this was not the first attempt to introduce new faces into the domains of existing professional spaces and further revealing that such roles had an air of impermanency and were subject to the vagaries of policy. However, the employment of working class people as paraprofessionals in 1960s America took place in a climate of protest and desire for social change; whereas the employment of paraprofessionals in the UK some thirty years later happened in a markedly different context of New Public Management with its associated audit and accountability culture. Within this context of public service modernisation (Martin, 2016) state-run education has become marketised (Mortimore, 2013) through initiatives like high stakes inspections, target-setting, league tables and performance management (Bateman and Rhodes, 2003). Hence, the third section examined the impact of schools as performance-based cultures on paraprofessional roles and activities, giving rise to the question of the extent to which it is possible for LMs to construct and define themselves outside of performativity given that their work is seen as having 'soft' outcomes that are difficult to quantify and measure.

Placing the 'bigger picture' to one side, the following two sections of the literature review focused on the areas of 'mentoring' and 'pastoral care' as the closest 'kin' to the role of LMs. First, I charted the growth and popularity of youth mentoring in the USA and the UK demonstrating how literature emanating from the former, provided useful starting analyses of mentoring as an artificial intervention for young people perceived as disaffected in the latter. This broader discussion of youth mentoring thus provided useful clues as to the intellectual and policy origins of the learning mentor role. The literature specifically focussing on LMs revealed a mixed picture: although it contributed a detailed model of respectful, person-centered practice on which learning mentoring should be premised (Cruddas, 2005), it had an overly optimistic view of what the role could achieve based as it was on exemplar case studies from the field rather than rigorous empirical investigation. Accounts in a similar vein were premised on a liberal consensus which positioned LM's work within an individualistic and/or 'deficit-model' view of the young people they support (Jones et al, 2009). Thus, the social, economic and political context in which young people negotiate their schooling was either underplayed or absent in such analyses. Whilst other research has acknowledged that such a context is necessary (Bishop, 2011), it offered only fleeting research of a reconnaissance nature. Furthermore, official narratives for these roles (embedded in texts, policy documents and role descriptions) may articulate their function and purpose, but tell us little about the way in which such texts are mediated in the actual sites where they are enacted. All of these factors suggest an urgent need for ethnographic immersion in the field.

As LMs are understood as school support staff whose role is viewed as part of a school's apparatus of pastoral care, the fifth section of the literature review undertook a critical exploration of pastoral care as structure, concept and process, and in so doing identified a number of breaks (such as the business of pastoral care being taken away from teachers) but also continuities, in that historical critiques of 'product teaching' and 'pastoralization' were deemed as having continuing relevance particularly when placed alongside more pragmatic contemporary accounts of pastoral systems which tend to lack critical analysis.

The sixth and final section of the literature review was premised on two key issues: first, it is changes within the teaching profession that have led to an increased presence in the number and type of support roles in schools; and second, as the North American literature regarding the 'New Careers' project demonstrated, paraprofessionals are not a new phenomenon. Therefore this section reverted back to a broader gaze to consider existing conceptualisations and contemporary accounts of professionalism in order to assess the extent to which these contribute a meaningful understanding of the paraprofessional experience.

1.6.6 Conclusion and contribution of original knowledge

In the main, school ethnographies have tended to reflect the focal points pursued by educational research more generally, thus being organised around key concepts of curriculum and pedagogy (Somekh, 2005). In taking this path, studies have been attuned to the activities, experiences and perspectives of teachers and pupils (Bird, 1980; Denscombe, 1980; Woods, 1980 and Willis, 1977) but have had less regard for other school-based roles.

Where the focus has been outside of the classroom it has tended toward the upper echelons of the organisational structure as typified by Wolcott's study of a school principal (1973). More recent British school ethnographies have illustrated a continuing move towards questions of voice, multi-locality and agency (Yon, 2003) in focusing on gender and/or ethnicity as categories of identity (Renold, 2005 and Youdell, 2006) , as well as continuing to maintain an interest in pupil subcultures and peer relations (Thrupp, 1999). In terms of research participants however, the focus remains largely on teachers and pupils.

Apart from this thesis there are a very small number of ethnographic studies which signal a move away from the standard classroom-based type of study; each one however illustrates the scope of knowledge and new types of understanding that can be achieved. Firstly, noting the paucity of literature regarding Behaviour Support Units (BSUs) in schools, Gillies (2016) draws on ethnographical research undertaken in three London-based BSU's with the self-declared aim of "shin[ing] a spotlight on the institutional and interpersonal dynamics that characterise internal school exclusion" (Gillies, 2016:1). BSUs were introduced under *Excellence in Cities*, the same initiative that conceived the role of the LM and because such provisions are predominantly staffed by paraprofessionals, this study is a valuable addition to the field.

Secondly, I return to the study which focused on the experiences of those involved in staffing educational provisions across ex-mining communities in Derbyshire (Bright, 2012). The way in which these projects involved the 'reconstruction' of youth workers into tutors has already been noted, but other paraprofessionals (classroom assistants, police community support officers etc) were also present in this study. In their previous guises these individuals had worked across disparate areas which encompassed hairdressing, catering, coal mining and clerical work. Furthermore, Bright's presentation of them as "quite distinct" from the "professional layers of staff that one would find in a school" is put down to them being "organically linked" to the same communities as the young people with whom they worked (Bright, 2012:223) a description echoing earlier constructions of UK LMs providing a 'bridging' function and US paraprofessionals as 'community agents'.

Like these studies above, this thesis sets out to broaden the parameters of a 'standard' school ethnography in going *beyond* both the classroom and the 'teacher/pupil' dichotomy. It will demonstrate that the education of young people occurs in other types of settings, both within and outside schools, and that such work is undertaken predominantly by educational paraprofessionals. I believe it is imperative that school / educational ethnographies accurately reflect the diversity of *all staff* now present in schools and other settings and that their experiences are documented according to ethnographic conventions, rather than merely 'show-cased' through "illustrative case studies from the practice community" (Cruddas, 2005:111).

Chapter 2: Methodological Approach

Through working with selected literatures (Kamler and Thomson, 2006) in the previous section I considered the wider policy context giving rise to LMs, framing this as one example of a number of paraprofessional roles. I also interrogated varying theoretical lenses such as 'performativity', 'engagement mentoring' and 'pastoralization' - analyses which offer potential in seeking a better and more coherent understanding of the context that educational paraprofessionals are situated within and the work that they do. Despite the understandings that these readings bring I am also aware of what they lack in relation to my research: whilst the performativity literature offers a critical examination of how the teaching role has changed, it does not acknowledge the presence of paraprofessionals in support roles. This is odd given that they now make up a significant part of the schools workforce due in part to the 'remodelling' of the teaching role as discussed earlier. Omissions are also to be found in critical analyses of youth mentoring because although they provide a valuable starting point in understanding the possible dynamics of the pupil-learning mentor relationship, their focus is on engagement mentoring for labour market entry which is clearly a very different context to that of school-based mentors. Furthermore, utilizing concepts like 'pastoralization' (Williamson, 1980) as means to understand the LM role, i.e. where the role of the pastoral worker is to 'socialise' the pupil to accept the negative consequences of 'product teaching', seems particularly at odds with a model of learning mentoring presented by Cruddas (2005) which is premised on respectful practice.

It is issues like these which, as argued earlier, make a strong case for ethnographic immersion. In this chapter I discuss the methodological approaches that have helped inform my understanding throughout the doctoral journey whilst the chapter that follows deals with the more practical aspects of how the study was undertaken. Both chapters convey how an ethical and reflexive approach was pursued at all stages of the research process and how Institutional Ethnography was useful in this respect.

2.1 Introducing Institutional Ethnography

I wanted to utilise a method of inquiry that would reveal the 'story' of activities deemed as 'support' or pastoral care work in one setting initially, but then, through processes that will be outlined in due course, enable an understanding beyond that of the local. I initially considered Critical Realism, as a methodological premise for critical ethnography, as the most obvious path to take (Porter, 2002) however as shall be shown in the proceeding discussion, it was IE, viewed by some as a current of critical ethnography (Anderson, 1989) that eventually became the key informing approach when carrying out the study and transforming the data generated. Dorothy Smith, the founder of IE (1990, 2005) argues against a "conventional strategy" when outlining a chosen methodological approach. By this she means ones which typically involve looking at its history or antecedents before presenting its key characteristics and distinctive flavour, invariably followed by an acknowledgement of how the methodology may vary from similar approaches, as well as how it has been critiqued by opposing paradigms. IE should not be understood as a 'boxed-off' theory that is taken into the field and applied to the research topic in an unproblematic way but rather IE as a project proposes:

... to realize an alternative form of knowledge of the social in which people's own knowledge of the world of their everyday practices is systematically extended to the social relations and institutional orders in which we participate (Smith, 2005:43).

And furthermore,

Its methods of research work with people's work knowledges of what they do, as these are collaboratively produced in the research process as well as with the texts that are essential to the production of the generalizability, generalization, and objectivity of institutional regimes. The regimes' objectification is explicated ethnographically rather than assumed (Smith, 2005:44).

Described as both a form and critique of sociology (Walby, 1990), IE has informed and guided many aspects of the research process in this doctoral project. For example, it prevented me from 'blindly' entering the field with pre-set categories and concepts plucked from established sociology which are then imposed, however well-intentioned on the research participants therein. Again, Smith argues that what can typically happen in the early stages of writing a thesis is the tendency to latch it on to a discipline, showing how the chosen focus of research is a problem within an already-existing theoretical and conceptual framework. The boundaries of inquiry are thus set within the framework of what is already established. For example, in my study I could have started by scouring the existing body of knowledge contained within the Sociology of Education to find out what it had to say about pastoral care in state education; or literature which explored the interactions of those undertaking pastoral roles with 'disaffected' (another pre-existing conceptualisation) young people. Smith warns researchers off this approach describing it as "conceptual imperialism" in which a practice of "sociological subsumption" is learnt (Smith, 1990:15) i.e., discarding our personal experience as a source of reliable information about the character of the world and confining our insights within pre-existing conceptual frameworks. This is precisely what I wished to avoid.

Given that an IE approach rejects the idea of conducting research within a pre-existing theoretical framework it could be asked: Is it not just Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) by another name? When this question was put to Dorothy Smith herself she was emphatic in her response that despite generating good empirical investigations, Grounded Theory was a "disaster" because studies undertaken did not "hook the local to the extra-local and trans-local" thus making "spurious theorising possible" (Smith in discussion with Widerberg, 2004:4). Smith's original driving inspiration was to research the everyday lives of women from a feminist perspective by challenging how many aspects of experiences like parenting, care and caring work have been erased by masculinist approaches to sociology. An early example is her work on the mothering discourse (Smith, 1987; Griffith and Smith, 1987) which established how single-parents and their children are constructed and designated as 'different' through a text-mediated discourse which is explained further on. This concern to explicate the social through starting with people's daily experiences as *they* see them, has been taken up in further studies encompassing a diverse range of human phenomena such as policing of the gay community (G. W. Smith, 1988); systems in place to 'protect' women experiencing domestic violence (Pence, 2001); the experiences of nursing assistants caring for elders in nursing homes (Diamond, 1992) and a more recent study of

how 'evidence' is constructed through institutional processes to make decisions and/or justify interventions for young people deemed as 'at-risk' (Nichols, 2017). In all of these institutional ethnographies, the researchers' starting point was to learn about these 'erased experiences' *before* going on to investigate the institutional processes that were shaping them. This in essence is what I aimed to do in my study as many of the experiences I wished to learn about were subsumed under headings of 'mentoring' or 'pastoral care'.

2.1.1 The ontology of IE

Writing an ontology of IE is done so in part as a form of resistance to the features of mainstream sociology which are seen as being "amazingly cluttered with theory". Smith continues in this vein saying:

...Research it would seem, cannot proceed without theory; without it, what is discovered could not be recognized as sociology (Smith, 2005:50).

Thus, echoing Walby's assertion above, IE is proposed as an alternative sociology, not merely an alternative methodology. If we understand ontology as a theory of reality, of what we can know, IE seeks to write a theory of how the social is real:

The term [ontology] appears abstruse and esoteric...but what I am writing is more modest. I want a theory of how the social exists of such a kind that it will help us see what we might be observing, listening for, recording, and analysing (Smith, 2005:52).

As it has become more well-known, explanations of and references to IE have often appeared in the sections of text books dealing with qualitative methods and methodology, maybe (Smith suggests), because she herself has referred to it as 'a method of inquiry'. But what is actually meant by this is a form of inquiry where the findings are not already prejudged by a conceptual framework that regulates how data will be interpreted; rather "exploration and discovery are central to its [IE's] project". This is in stark contrast to mainstream sociology which clamps a conceptual framework over any project of inquiry:

[thus]...such a framework determines how the actual will be attended to, dominating and constraining selection and interpretation, setting up what Mikhail Bakhtin calls a "monologic" that suppresses and displaces the essential dialogic of the social (Smith, 2005:50).

So for example, types of formalized questions used in survey research and even some forms of qualitative research lead to 'data' which may, Smith argues, suppress dialogue before it even arrives at the analytical site, or, deploy a theory which converts "the many-voiced into the monologic" (Smith, 2002:28). Thus, as is explained in more depth in the following chapter it was important that I understood interviewing or observation as essentially dialogic because doing so enabled me to acknowledge both my interests in the study as integral to the dialogue, whilst at the same time relying on the other (the LM, the pupil, the teacher etc.) to 'teach' what I as the researcher needed to learn from them.

Of course, this is not to say that IE does not proceed without *any* theory nor draw on the theoretical thinking of predecessors. As shall be shown when looking at the notion of

'Standpoint', much of Smith's thinking draws on the work of Marx; not however, 'Marxism' which implies later interpretations of his original writings – this is an important distinction in IE terms. A discussion of Marx's original formulation of ideology which insisted on the discovery of relations and processes that arise in, *and only in*, the activities of actual people, is one such example. Smith notes how established sociology has come to identify 'ideology' as the biasing of sociological statements by special interests or perspectives. But, she argues, a sociology for people *must begin* with the actual subjects and to disclose the interests and perspectives of these sociological knowers does not invalidate such a knowledge (Smith, 1990). Along with Bakhtin, Smith also further cites George Herbert Mead and to some extent Garfinkel (founder of ethnomethodology) as being "kin" i.e. providing important readings to the making of IE; but she still emphatically maintains that she is not a symbolic interactionist, a phenomenological sociologist, a Marxist sociologist, nor an ethnomethodologist:

The sociological strategy I have developed does not belong to or subject itself to the interpretive procedures of any particular school of sociology. It is constrained [only] by the project of creating a way of seeing, from where we actually live, into the powers, processes, and relations that organize and determine the everyday context of that seeing (Smith, 1987:9)

Although not referring to IE, Van Maanen (2011) helpfully illustrates this point when he argues that it has become a standard (and often unquestioned) practice to cherry-pick field data in order to exemplify generalised constructs. The following excerpt illustrates exactly how this "interpretive omnipotence" happens and in doing so, provides a sharp contrast with what Smith is seeking to achieve in developing her "sociological strategy" outlined above:

The dividing up of a society or organization into its functional, systemic, symbolic, dramatic, or other analytically required elements, *as dictated by an acclaimed theory*, allows the humble fieldworker to stand on the shoulders of giants (and see farther) *by using well-received constructs as receptacles for field data* (Van Maanen, 2011:52, my emphasis).

Smith acknowledges that it *is* hard to avoid introducing concepts in capturing and analysing data because this is how researchers have been schooled; but within the project of IE it is crucial that such concepts are *held up* to the actualities with which the researcher is engaging, along with a commitment to learning from those actualities as they are experienced, spoken or written by those actively involved in them. This commitment to 'write the social from the ground up' (Smith, 2006) is essential and with regards to my own doctoral journey has enabled a greater degree of authenticity, not to mention good ethical practice, in the endeavour of qualitative inquiry.

2.1.2 Coming to know IE

I will now foreground those aspects of IE that have held particular significance for me in the duration of this project. Distilling the learning and understandings gleaned from numerous books and journal articles as cited above has been a daunting task but I begin with a discussion of the idea of a 'bifurcated consciousness' which enabled, in turn an understanding of Smith's working of 'standpoint'. The idea of a bifurcated consciousness arose from her direct experiences of being present in two 'worlds'; on the one hand lone parenting / running a household and on the other being employed as an academic in a university (Smith, 1987). Through the process of reflection, Smith realised that the inhabiting of these two worlds required an appropriation of two radically different modes of consciousness that could not easily co-exist. In making this point she presents a series of illuminative examples which contrast the daily unpredictable and messy minutiae of family life, with the detached and anonymous world she entered when going to work and reading these prompted me to reflect on my return to work in 2006 six months after giving birth to my youngest daughter. Having narrowly missed redundancy whilst employed as a lecturer within the 'widening participation' provision of the University, I was redeployed into a different faculty and handed the course leadership of an undergraduate Politics programme. Here, I found myself working alongside a group of warring (male) academics who were engaged in long-standing disagreements and personality clashes, (presented as personal political positions) over curriculum content. Just like my new colleagues I was attending to those activities associated with our professional role in preparing and carrying out lectures and seminars, assessing student's work, attending cross-faculty meetings and so on; but the actualities of *my* working day also entailed a twice daily short walk from the university to the local nursery, to feed my daughter who was not taking a bottle at the point I had to return to work.

This experience held a significance which I 'felt' but was not at that time able to verbalise. Through coming to know IE I now understand in a much sharper way why I was struggling with the actualities of *my* two worlds imbricated as they were in such an acute fashion. Whilst sitting in the nursery and attending to my daughter in her full organic and inescapable immediacy for nourishment, I had struggled to see the relevance of the 'office politics' I was shortly to return to, but my default reaction to the internal conflict I was experiencing at that time was always a stern self-reprimand. I would tell myself that the work-based animosity I had to preside over and 'referee' must be important - I just wasn't recognising it as such because having spent six months at home on maternity leave, I was struggling to get back into that 'work' mind-set.

Moving between family work and professional work represented a daily chasm to be crossed (Smith, 1990) and it would have been useful at that time to heed the words of Smith "...that home and work were two subjectivities which couldn't be blended ... where memory, attention, reasoning and response were organised quite differently" (Smith, 2005:11). This 'juggling' of home-life and paid work that many women undertake had of course been acknowledged within (feminist) sociology long before my experience; identified as either the 'dual shift' of domestic and paid work (Hochschild, 1990) or 'triple shift' if the 'emotion work' involved in family management is also factored in (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993). In this sense women's labour undertaken in the private sphere did eventually become part of

accepted sociological discourse such as Oakley's seminal study of housework (1974); but the project of IE is not about making established sociology more inclusionary in terms of whom or what it pays attention to. Studies like Oakley's are seen, in IE terms as illustrating an additive approach to the pre-determined agenda of the discipline; in this case, work being previously constituted as a waged, time-bound activity which takes place outside of the home and is situated alongside 'leisure' to distinguish time other than that spent at work.

IE offers a critique of early feminist studies whilst also proposing a method of inquiry which is markedly different. To illustrate these points I draw on a further study informed by IE (De Vault, 1991). Whilst Oakley's study focused on 'food shopping' or 'cooking' as discrete activities coming under the umbrella of "housework" as it had *already* been defined, De Vault describes the work *processes* (plural) of "feeding the family", with the aim of bringing into view the coordinative, often invisible work that produces 'family life'. This element of invisibility is significant as it is women's labour that directly maintains and sustains both men and the places they inhabit. (Similarly, the work of LMs has an element of invisibility within the wider school context, as shall be shown later). It is these actions that free men up to immerse themselves in the world of abstract concepts and the more successfully women perform this domestic work the more invisible it becomes to men. As a result, women's work is seen as instinctual or 'natural', not as a real activity. Through her research, DeVault encountered a range of views on the work of feeding the family: some who took pride and satisfaction in their work, others who expressed a kind of pragmatic indifference, and others who experienced numerous difficulties and felt significant resentment in carrying out this role. In all accounts however the language used revealed both an "unlabelled dimension of caring", and the difficulties that arose in describing family work as "not quite a job" but "something different" (De Vault, 1991:10). The purpose of her research was thus:

.... [To] explore the territory around the line of fault I have begun to excavate...
Though based on analysis of people's accounts of the day-to-day work of feeding their families, this exploration will go beyond the everyday. *It will show that this line of fault is part of a larger structure of social relations of caring and power* (DeVault, 1991:29-30, my emphasis).

The last part of this quote is particularly significant within the context of this discussion because it illustrates that although an institutional ethnography starts with both a description and an expression of people's lived experiences within the local, it is not about producing an account of relations as a system in and of themselves. The standpoint of individuals (those who feed families in the above study; the LM offering support to pupils in mine) located as they are in the everyday world, is the point of leverage for an explication of the relations in which our everyday lives are embedded. DeVault enables us to see what is lacking with the conventional approach of taking pre-existing categories into the field which have not come directly from people's own experience. Whilst these provide knowledge about discreet aspects of human activity which in relation to "housework" could be the time allocated to each domestic task, how they are performed, or even how women feel about doing them, such accounts neglect the planning and coordination involved, and the "constant juggling and strategizing behind physical tasks" (De Vault, 1991:95). Furthermore, if the activity is thought of only in terms of relationships and emotions, the necessary and arduous work of

physical maintenance disappears. Conversely, if it is thought of only in terms of the tasks like those of wage-workers – as discrete “products” or “services” – the most significant interpersonal parts of the work disappear. This, DeVault argues, is why analysis should *begin* with everyday activity:

Women’s own language suggests that material and interpersonal dimensions of these tasks are joined in their lives, and that these aspects of the work should not be separated in an analysis of what they do (DeVault, 1991:10).

It is the social organization of the family setting (rather than a study of discrete tasks which are carried out within it) which provides a way of understanding both how women are recruited into the work of feeding as an activity and how feeding the family then contributes to women’s oppression:

Women learn to “care” because the production of a “family” as a socially organized material setting requires particular kinds of coordinative and maintenance activities. Women are not the only ones who can perform these activities, but the concept of “family” (maintained over time in its shifting forms by a variety of interlocking social discourse) incorporates a strong and relatively enduring association of caring activity with the woman’s position in the household (“wife” or “mother”) (DeVault, 1991:12).

Once I started to understand IE I grasped that in taking my standpoint in the everyday world as a starting point, I could view the social relations of *my* work in the university in a new way. I now had words with which to express my experience and could recognise what Smith described as:

... [The] daily traverse across the line of fault between a woman’s life in the particularities of home and children and the impersonal, extra-local relations that the university sustains (Smith, 2002:17).

In the next chapter where I set out how the study was undertaken, this very issue arises in terms of how some of the women informants came to work in a support role in the school (see page 110). The “line of fault” as quoted above, can also be understood as a disjuncture between the world as it *is* known and directly experienced on the one hand, and the ideas and images “fabricated externally to that everyday world *as a means* to think and image it” (Smith, 1987:55). In my earlier study (Bishop, 2011) the aim had been to undertake a type of ‘inventory’ which resulted in a snapshot enquiry, the purpose of which being to gain a picture of the various tasks LMs were involved in and to what extent the role had changed since its inception; whereas in *this* study my starting motivation was to know ‘how it is’ for this particular group of workers. Through an IE approach, I aimed to develop a more complete picture of the actual work activities of LMs (and other educational paraprofessionals) and the material conditions that reproduced the types of interventions they carried out across many (school) settings. As we shall go on to see, a striking part of the study was how the pupils often used familial terms such as “big sister”, or “like a mum” to describe their relationships with the mentors rather than just talking about the discrete activities that the dyad was premised on. Such relationships enabled pupils to feel positively regarded in a tangible way. These actualities of the mentor / pupil relationship stood in stark contrast to those official

accounts, previously observed, of how support and care within a school-based context should be provided and using adjectives like 'role model' and 'professional friend'. Such accounts are often set out in accordance with the wider constructions of 'pastoral care', a pre-existing concept which as previously discussed is in itself problematic.

But it is also important to make it clear that undertaking an IE is not about resorting to simplistic macro/micro distinctions such as seeking an ethnographic understanding of learning mentoring as it happens in the field, and directly comparing this with the more sanitised guidance provided in government-produced or commissioned literature. This would miss the point that social relations exist as *extended* sequences of action which link together individuals' experiences and institutional processes. They do not exist, nor can they be discovered, as self-sufficient phenomena or self-enclosed spheres of organization (Grahame, 1998).

2.2 Standpoint in IE terms (in contrast to Feminist Standpoint Epistemology)

Earlier I stated that it was the notion of 'bifurcated consciousness' that enabled an understanding of 'standpoint' in IE terms. The idea of a bifurcated consciousness emerged out of the "early adventures of the women's movement" in which there lacked a developed discourse to translate women's everyday experiences into public language. Says Smith: "Talking our experience was a means of discovery" so eventually terms like 'oppression', 'harassment' and 'rape' gave "shared experiences a political presence" (Smith, 2005: 7-8). This insufficiency of language is an example of a more general problem, described as "a ... pervasive lack of fit" between women's lived realities and the forms of thought available for understanding these (DeVault, 1991:5). Initially, 'standpoint' was understood (and crucially) *practised* as a means to organise politically within what is retrospectively referred to as 'second wave feminism'. On this, Smith notes:

In those early days, taking the standpoint of women transformed how we thought and worked [in] ...almost every aspect of our lives. *Remaking sociology was a matter that arose out of practical demands* (Smith, 1992:89, my emphasis).

The new forms of knowledge it gave rise to coordinated the political struggle against patriarchy in creating for women what had been missing - a subject position in the public sphere. In theoretical terms 'standpoint' has come to be understood as an epistemology in that it is concerned with how knowledge has evolved through "strategies of action by particular collectivities in specific social relations in given periods" (Cockburn, 2015:331). The concept however, primarily derives from Karl Marx's critical explanation of class relations in capitalism - a point to which Smith continually returns in relation to the formation of consciousness and particularly when focusing on the historical trajectory of gender within the 'ruling relations'. By this she is referring to a new and distinctive mode of organizing society that came to prominence during the latter part of the nineteenth century in Europe and North America (Smith, 1987, 2005). An early working of Feminist Standpoint theory was challenged on the basis that it gave rise to essentialist forms of knowledge which excluded

other bases of oppression and inequity that intersect with the category “women”. Smith described this development as “the implicit presence of class, sexuality and colonialism [beginning] to be exposed” (2005:8). According to other significant thinkers such as Harding (1986), feminist standpoint epistemologies were in danger of returning to the empiricism that feminism had claimed to have gone beyond. My experiences as an activist in the National Union of Students (NUS) Women’s campaign in the mid-1980s provide a telling example of this. Here, the dominant discourse which came to be known by “As a... [insert one, some or all of the following] *lesbian/black woman/ disabled woman, single parent*” was one where women, far from encouraging a further understanding of how other forms of oppression might intersect with gender, actually led to a stifling of discussion and debate between women of differing ‘categories’, self-defined or otherwise. Furthermore, women with socialist perspectives were accused by the various caucuses of ‘infecting’ the autonomous women’s space with ‘male’ views. Unlike Smith and those others involved in the “early adventures” of the women’s movement a decade or so before, simply talking, was in this particular context no longer a means by which to share our experiences and make new discoveries as participants placed a great emphasis on meeting and organising autonomously so our rare ‘mixed’ gatherings were often highly charged, emotive and confrontational affairs. The “As a...” discourse thus became a perverse form of standpoint, ultimately leading to a form of inward-looking self-segregation. Smith’s notion of standpoint would have enabled discussions with women who were different to me “as a ground[ing] in experience from which discoveries are to be made” but in reality I was presented with a version of standpoint as a “given and finalized form of knowledge” (Smith, 2005:7) to which I was told I had no right or business to theorise about or agitate for.

One response to this critique of standpoint theory was feminist postmodernism which developed an epistemology that relied on a diversity of subject positions along with the assertion that ‘master’ or ‘grand’ narratives should be replaced by multiple partial knowledges, drawn from multiple sites and informed by multiple interests, all of which should be seen as equally valid (Harding, 1986). Such fractured identities and the resulting hyphenized feminisms (e.g. Disabled-feminist / Black-feminist) represented an “exhilaration felt in the differences of who we were” and provided an “appropriate politics for navigating our way through social relations” (Harding, 1986:163). However, Smith questioned this degree of “ontological tolerance” believing that it defeated the essential character of inquiry as a project:

If we set out to discover, we want our inquiry to produce a knowing that can be relied on in an ordinary and unproblematic way. We want to be able to say, “Look, this is how it works; this is what happens.”...We want to know because we also want to be able to act and in acting to rely on knowledge beyond what is available to us directly (Smith, 1990:34).

This is one instance where IE and Critical Realism can be seen as sharing a common ground. Speaking specifically of ethnography through a lens of Critical Realism, Porter offers a critique of post-modernism which strongly echoes Smith’s challenge above when he argues:

The difficulty with such a position is that, if ethnographies are simply authorial inventions, rather than reflection, of greater or lesser accuracy, of social reality, then

what is the point of ethnography? While the problem of intellectual arrogance is solved, it is done so at the cost of abandoning the very *raison d'être* of ethnographic research. This, I believe, is the *reductio ad absurdum* of the postmodern position. If absolute uncertainty and relativism are accepted, there is little else for ethnographers to say about the social world..." (Porter, 2002:59).

Whilst the effects that such an uncritical appropriation of postmodern ideas produce, is summed up simply as "nihilistic" by another critical commentator (Carspecken, 1996:15).

Despite Harding's nomination of Smith as a feminist standpoint epistemologist⁴, Smith is clear in her use of the term 'women's' (rather than 'feminist') standpoint as integral to the design of what eventually became IE, envisaged as a sociology for *people*. Arguing that the theorizing of 'standpoint' within feminist discourses has displaced the *practical* politics that the notion originally captured, the concept is described as having "moved upstairs" and in doing so being reduced to having a purely discursive function (Smith, 1992:89). She is explicit in how her work differs from those she has been aligned with asserting that standpoint in IE terms does *not* identify a position or a category of position (for example: gender, class or 'race') within society, but it *does* establish (as a subject position for IE as a method of inquiry) a point of entry for the knower which is open to anyone and which actively works against subordinating the knowing subject to objectified forms of knowledge of social or political economy (Smith, 2005).

2.2.1 The 'relations of ruling' and the notion of the problematic

So far I have set out how IE starts with both a description and an expression of people's lived experiences within the local. It was noted earlier that IE isn't about producing an account of relations as a system in and of themselves. The standpoint of individuals, located as they are in the everyday world, is always the "*point d'appui*" (Smith, 1987:158) or, as described earlier, point of leverage for an explication (note, not the more neutral term 'exploration') of the relations in which our everyday lives are embedded:

The everyday/everynight of our contemporary living is organised by and coordinated with what people, mostly unknown and never to be known by us, are doing elsewhere and at different times. IE proposes to address this as its problematic (Smith, 2002:18-19).

Two points require further explanation here: firstly, the extra-local mode of organisation and coordination implied in the quote above are what Smith refers to as the 'relations of ruling'. This means more than just the notion of government as political organisation; it is the total complex of activities, differentiated into many spheres, by which Western industrial societies are ruled, managed and administered:

⁴ A move Smith objects to and describes as being "caged in Harding's creation of the category of "standpoint theorists"", (Smith, 1992:91) feeling this has led to a misinterpretation of her work.

It includes what the business world calls management, ... the professions ... government and the activities of those who are selecting, training and indoctrinating those who will be its governors... These are the institutions through which we are ruled and through which we, and I emphasize this we, participate in ruling (Smith, 1990:14).

The relations of ruling is a concept that sees power, organisation, direction and regulation as more pervasively structured than has, Smith argues, been expressed in traditional concepts provided by the discourses of power which is, in itself, a much contested concept. An understanding of the relations of ruling further enables one to see how the notion of 'institution' is developed within IE. Somewhat counter-intuitively, the term does not designate a bounded organisational space as might be suggested when undertaking (for instance) a school ethnography; rather it is the multiple activities of individuals, organizations, professional associations, agencies and crucially the discourses they produce and circulate, organised around a particular function. Essentially, the 'institutional' in IE, concerns the ways in which discourses and practices become institutionalised across many different localities. In relation to my study this could be understood as the pastoral care element of state education in its present form (Nathan, 2011; Calvert, 2009) and how it is positioned alongside the other school activities of teaching and learning. But institutional ethnographies have included varied and diverse foci which in addition to those noted earlier further includes differing aspects of healthcare (Mykhalovskiy and McCoy, 2002), CCTV (Walby, 2005) investigations of how teacher's work is shaped by the economic status of the homes of the children they teach (Manicom, 1988). These may present as a rather disparate collection of studies initially but:

Fragmentary as these studies may seem, they teach us more and more about the complex and interwoven organization of the relations of ruling, and more and more about how institutional processes are "run" (Smith, 1992:97).

Although eclectic in topic and scope, such studies also provide an understanding of how 'Institution' in IE terms, further contrasts with concepts such as 'bureaucracy' in that it does not identify a determinate form of social organisation, but rather the intersection and coordination of more than one relational mode of the ruling apparatus (Smith, 1987).

Turning now to the notion of the problematic which through an IE lens is not meant in the sense of everyday life being troublesome, perplexing or difficult; or as something which can be used to refer to a set of theoretical questions and related concepts which are there prior to the researcher accessing the field. Rather, it is best understood as a research tool (Campbell and Gregor, 2004) which enables investigators to treat everyday life as sociology's problematic i.e. the complex of concerns, issues, and questions which "generate a horizon of possible investigations" (Grahame, 1998: 348). It identifies how the researcher will take up the inquiry to achieve a standpoint, directing attention to a set of possible questions, some of which may not have yet been formulated but are implicit in the way the everyday world is organised. Smith refers to these as "puzzles" which are "'latent' in the actualities of the experienced world" (1987:91). As will be discussed later, it was through achieving the standpoint of the LMs, that the problematic became apparent.

The notion of the problematic is not however based on a simplistic model of manipulation and deception which implies that because we fail to recognise how our everyday lives are defined by relations and forces external to them, we are simply “dopes or dupes” (Smith, 1987:110). Rather that the structures that ‘rule’, organise and control are constituted on the bases of common perspectives thus ‘consciousness’, when considered from an IE stance is defined as properties of organisation and discourse (Smith, 1987). In this sense, the ruling relations are forms of consciousness and organisation that are objectified in the sense that they are “constituted externally to particular people and places” (Smith, 2005:13).

2.3 Texts and text-mediated discourses and practices

The question of *how* institutions succeed in generalising across multiple local settings and coordinating our activities with unknown and never known others brings the discussion onto the final characteristic of IE - that of ‘texts’. The purpose of this, the final section of this chapter, is to gain a meta-understanding of texts within an IE approach illustrated by examples emerging from the data.

Defining Texts

In institutional settings texts are integral and ubiquitous in how people’s work is organised. The form of text can be many and varied encompassing the written, spoken, visual, digital and numeric. It is the proliferation of these texts and the extent to which they are embedded in social relations which enables an understanding of how social life is organized *across* geographical sites (Campbell and Gregor, 2004). As shall be shown in later, it was policy texts that featured most in discussions with the Head and Deputy Head teacher. Other staff participants made reference to ‘policy texts’ but more commonly to those which appeared as ‘home-grown’ initiatives around pupil enrichment; or the ‘every-day’ rules of a school’s existence such as uniform and behavioural policies. My primary task as an IE researcher was to gain an understanding of these texts and the forms of knowledge that they gave rise to, *in operation*. But, asks Smith, how is this achieved given the apparent inertia of texts? Two approaches will be outlined here which will be explicated in more depth later on.

Texts in operation

The first approach is described as a ‘text-reader conversation’ (Smith, 2005) where a person activates the text by responding to it and taking it up in some way. This of course can differ according to who is taking the text up and furthermore, whether they apply a set of informal rules about how they take it up (Walby, 2002). For example, during the ethnography I noted a marked difference in the approach of LMs and other members of staff to applying school rules about (for example) permissible school uniform or what was deemed appropriate behaviour. These different approaches arose from the different types of interactions between staff and those pupils who did not conform. Thus the text, in this case the school rule, was successfully imposed but that imposition was experienced differently depending on the approach of the particular member of staff. The text-reader conversation can also be explored as a process that translates the *actual* into the *institutional* and conversely, the distinctive ways in which institutional discourse subsumes and renders “institutional” the particularities of everyday experience. A clear example of this was how staff articulated their

varied understandings of the term 'Barriers to Learning' which has already been noted numerous times as being very much connected with the learning mentor role. Initially, I was interested to see if there was an overall consensus on what such barriers might be which would then suggest a 'whole school approach' to tackling them. What emerged in actuality was that a myriad of divergent issues were bundled together under the label 'Barriers to Learning'.

The second approach involves focussing on texts as they enter into and coordinate people's doings, bringing an external regulation into the immediacy of the everyday/everynight world. This is described by Smith as having the "extraordinary capacity of double presence" (Smith, 2002:45). It is precisely this ability to replicate themselves in multiple different settings that enables people's work and other activities to become standardized:

It is, I suggest, texts that produce, in and out of the ephemerality of people's everyday activities, the stability and replicability of organisation or institution (Smith, 2002:45).

Put more simply, if people handle and process the same texts, they find their actions coordinated by the requirements of working with that text. At an early stage in the data generation period I had written up one of my first chunks of data into a vignette which went on to appear as the incident of 'Eddie and the missing mobile phone' in Chapter 4. This critical incident became an important piece of data in its own right in that it established marked differences in the approaches of varying support staff despite the fact that their activities were generically described as 'pastoral'. But in regards to the point being made here I was interested to see how someone with many years' experience of working in a school would respond to the critical incidents outlined in the vignette. Thus I sought out a secondary school teacher with many years' experience and who, based in an academy on the opposite side of the country had more recently taken on school leadership duties. Her immediate reaction on reading the vignette was "That's spooky; you have just described a typical day in *my* school!" Thus in returning to Smith's words above regarding the 'double presence', 'replicability' and external presence of texts, the onus that schools place on dealing with problematic behaviour alongside staffing structures and strategies that are in place clearly have a commonality across geographical sites. As this critical account illustrated, what takes place in one school is seen as highly familiar and relatable to what takes place in another. This demonstrates how it is not only the activities of those people who produce texts but how these conceptual frameworks are then taken up and circulated (DeVault and McCoy 2002).

Within IE, the materiality of texts is emphasised because it is this which enables us to see how they create a "crucial join between the everyday actualities of people's activities and the social relations they coordinate" (Smith, 1990:45). Specific to *Priory Park High*, the pseudonym given to the school featured in the ethnography, texts were many and varied, encompassing: guidance documents around a new behaviour policy; dicta given to teaching staff on how different learning styles should be accommodated within the classroom; staff performance reviews; school marketing and promotional literature in the public domain;

Ofsted reports and national policy imperatives discussed earlier (for a full overview see Figure 4 in the following chapter). However, it is also important to note at this early stage the scarcity if not indeed *absence* of school-generated texts in relation to the work of the LMs specifically.

Also integral to an IE approach is the recognition that text-based forms of knowledge give rise to discursive practices which are central to large-scale organisations and relations of ruling in contemporary society (DeVault and McCoy, 2002). These text-mediated discursive practices have varying functions: they can frame issues in a particular way; establish terms which then become the lexicon associated with a particular role (such as 'Removing Barriers to Learning' in relation to learning mentors) and serve, in varying ways, as resources that people draw on to direct and describe their everyday work processes. Further illustrations of textual practices featuring in the ethnography to come were those 'bought-in' interventions such as behaviour modification sessions on anger management. Similarly I discussed earlier, how discourses framed within Developmental Psychology have come to dominate understandings of young people's development and then go on to form the premise of many mentoring interventions or practices.

Having set out how my methodological approach was informed by many tenets of IE, I now turn to discuss the more practical aspects of the study in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Research design and methods employed

[L]earning institutional ethnography commits researchers to a particular way of looking. There is something distinctive not only about *how* the institutional ethnographer looks at the world but what she *looks for*...She asks and sets out to discover: “How does this happen as it does? How are these relations organized?” Institutional ethnographers cannot step out of their bodies and histories to know “in general”. They explore the everyday world (Campbell and Gregor, 2004:7).

The above excerpt conveys the fundamental underpinnings of what this research set out to do: to undertake an enquiry which explicates the social relations of the setting in which learning mentoring is conceptualised and practiced and to understand how the translocal organises such relations and support roles in formal education more generally.

3.1 Common trajectories within IE inquiries

As explained in the previous chapter, IE turns away from a prescriptive orthodoxy which means institutional ethnographies as analytical projects can be realized in diverse ways (DeVault and McCoy, 2002). That said there are some common trajectories or ‘shapes’ to be found within this method of inquiry although they are not necessarily undertaken in the linear fashion suggested by this narrative. The aspect of IE inquiry that I hoped to draw on the most was the premise that field research begins in a particular *experience* and the conditions under which that experience arises and is lived by *someone* “...and although this person is not actually studied, the ... investigation does keep the subject at its centre” (Campbell and Gregor, 2004:59). As such, this project began with a desire to learn about the experiences and everyday practices of LMs in English state secondary education. The concept of standpoint is integral to a project premised on IE, understood as both ‘starting point’ - meaning that the investigation is initiated via the experience of a person or group; and ‘process’ in terms of how this leads on to an understanding of how local and translocal institutional processes have shaped that experience. During the early stages of the research, I could guess or have a hunch about what or who informed a school’s understanding and operationalization of the LM role, but it was only through an explication that was both materialist and empirical that such processes could be identified and confirmed. The ‘materiality’ of texts has already been emphasised in the previous chapter as the “crucial join” between everyday activities and the social relations they coordinate (Smith, 1990). By ‘empirical’ I am referring particularly to the fact that although texts are often rendered invisible, they produce very tangible social, economic and cultural realities which are (as previously explained) essential in how institutions are able to produce generalizability and apparent objectivity within their regimes (Smith, 2005).

The next stage of an IE requires a shift in focus. Once I had achieved the standpoint of the LMs, it was necessary to do the same for other groups. Firstly, those also designated as ‘support’ such as Behaviour Support Workers (BSWs); Higher Level Teaching Assistants /

Teaching Assistants (HLTAs/TAs) and Year Managers (YMs). Alongside these were pupils, school leaders and teachers and finally those who described themselves as “guests” in the school such as the attached Police Officer (who was in actuality a fairly constant figure) and a Careers Advisor. All of the above groups positioned and participating differently in the social relations of the setting as they are, provided their own organized standpoint which then afforded a broader picture that revealed the multiple activities required to sustain the day-to-day business of the school.

The next part of the trajectory is where the researcher examines the textual forms and practices of knowledge that organise the work processes. Whereas the previous chapter contained a more detailed discussion of texts in terms of how they are defined and activated within an IE approach, the focus in this chapter is to demonstrate how texts were ‘listened for’, asked about and explicated in a more practical sense as well as considering the problems that arose in attempting to do so – an issue already flagged up in the closing pages of the previous chapter.

Having given an overview of what my approach entailed I turn to the more practical aspects of the project starting with how an ethnographic study was managed alongside full time work which also links to the factors affecting the selection and accessing of the research site and the participants therein. A consideration of ethical issues and power relations present in the research forms the next part of the discussion, along with the reflexive practice that was required to address these. The following section sets out how ethnographic research tools were employed in a practical sense including the role I adopted whilst in the field. Of particular significance in this chapter is an explanation of how the interview was utilised in a way that was very much informed by previous IE researchers, such as the importance of distinguishing between institutional and experiential accounts of work. This is important because it is here that the discussion departs from a mere description of research tools employed to how I started the process of transforming the data leaning on IE as method of inquiry.

A commentary on the challenges and obstacles that were faced during time spent in the field is also woven into the discussion. Although not intended as a self-absorbed “confessional” account, elements of this particular genre of ethnographic writing are included because I feel it important to document my own “minimelodramas of hardships endured” (Van Maanen, 2011:73) whilst conveying something of the “concrete cultural particulars that baffle the fieldworker” (Van Maanen, 2011:91); for this is surely what a researcher is faced with when attempting the ethnographic task of documenting the minutiae of everyday life and ‘writing the social from ground up’ (Smith, 2006). Moreover, it was reassuring to know that my experiences were not atypical or dissimilar to fellow ethnographers who reassured me that the *lived* experience of their school based study was in reality, far more fraught than their apparently “smooth narrative” suggested (Busher and Cremin, 2012:8).

3.2 Time to do Ethnography?

An ethnographic study is traditionally understood to entail a commitment on the part of the researcher to full immersion in the field for a considerable period of time (Van Maanen, 2011). Initially I questioned if this was achievable alongside my full time role as a university lecturer and everyday work as a parent, but a proposal of differing time modes in order to

carry out an ethnographic study, as an alternative to lengthy and continual immersion provided the answer (Jeffrey and Troman, 2010). I therefore adopted a “selective intermittent time mode” where the length of time spent conducting the research is longer than in an ethnography based on (for example) a “compressed time mode” in which researchers inhabit a site almost permanently for a short period of intense ethnographic research (for example, from a few days to a month). This means that although I was not present on site continually, I was there regularly and consistently. Once the initial period of broad familiarization had been achieved, I was directed to “specific rich contexts” (Jeffrey and Troman, 2010:540) which, in line with the first trajectory above, was the day to day work of the learning mentors. Thus, the fieldwork component of the ethnography was conducted over an eighteen month period attending one day per week in the first nine months and starting at the beginning of an academic year and then attending on a different day each term. The decision to select different days came about due to a number of staff participants expressing the sentiment that the school was a very different place at opposite ends of the week in terms of varying behaviours and levels of stress exhibited by the pupils as well as interactions between staff and pupils (and between staff themselves, as I went on to observe). In the last six months of the eighteen month period, I attended according to participants’ availability for interviews; or to attend certain school ‘fixtures’ such as: a governor’s meeting in which staff were presenting the school’s pastoral strategies, a Year 10 assembly where I was given a brief slot to launch the pupil aspect of the research and other such serendipitous events.

This length of time spent in the field, albeit intermittently, afforded greater opportunities for relationships to develop and thus ensure a more collaborative investigation between myself as researcher and the varying participants, be they staff or pupils. This was especially important when relying on the good will of administrative staff working the student reception and therefore able to speedily relay practical but vital information about (for instance) pupil absenteeism, which rooms could be utilised and locating where staff were at any given moment. Although I did not initially appreciate it, the most valuable aspect afforded by the ‘selective intermittent time mode’ approach was that it enabled time *between* visits to reflect on my field note observations and conversations that had taken place which meant I could identify issues that required further information or clarification on entering the site again. As shall be shown later on, this continual need to look, learn and ask questions which would then lead to further looking and learning, was vital.

3.3 Site selection, access and ‘sampling’

Gaining access in order to conduct a school or any ethnography can carry a degree of difficulty, so it makes sense to initiate a study in an organisation with which the researcher may already have links. Yet Walford warns against this strategy of (what he calls) “perceived convenience” believing that this could lead to limitations in the research:

...for many researchers the problems of gaining access seem to have been the defining factors in the choice of site rather than any thorough consideration of what the ideal site might be. Thus, it is crucial that a distinction be made between site selection and access to that site (Walford, 2008:17).

The main criteria for selection of the site should, he argues, be the particular theoretical or practical issue that the researcher seeks to investigate. However, with regards to this study I take issue with Walford on two counts. As an IE approach is premised on *not* taking pre-existing conceptualisations into the field, his point that a theoretical issue should serve as one of the main criteria for site selection is of less importance. Instead, the initial task is to discover the standpoint or the actualities of the everyday world as they are experienced by someone who is deemed to be the expert of *their* situation.

I would further suggest that what Walford presents as “perceived convenience” on the part of the researcher may be more about the realistic practicalities in their endeavour to access a school and to do so alongside other work activities. For example, in thinking about where this ethnography would be conducted my primary aim was to select a school that would have maintained the LM role as it had originally been conceived, and this was most likely to be one that was still under the governance of the local education authority. What I then saw as the practicalities (as opposed to ‘convenience’) of managing this project alongside fulltime work and caring commitments also played a part as the schools which I considered were ones with which I had professional links through student placements *and* were close to my home and place of work. Two schools met this criterion, but one was discounted on ethical grounds as my daughter would be attending the school towards the latter part of the fieldwork period thus my relationship with the school as researcher, visiting university tutor and now parent would undoubtedly lead to a clear breach of boundaries. Thus, by undertaking a continually reflexive approach to those issues of selection and access with which the researcher is faced, I argue that it *is* possible to achieve a good outcome.

3.4 Considering ethics, power relations and reflexive practice

Despite the observation above that gaining access to Priory Park High, the school eventually selected, proved relatively unproblematic. I made an initial contact with one of the LMs working there to explain my intentions and seek advice on what my next steps should be. Given that my research would inevitably lead to an additional presence in the school over a significant period of time, and within those areas that the mentors inhabited to a greater extent, the learning mentor and myself agreed that it was important to, first, informally consult the other mentors to gauge their views on accommodating my presence alongside their daily workloads before making a formal approach to the school. Once their broad support was confirmed, an outline of the study was presented to the Head teacher and Board of Governors. Although permission to enter the school and carry out the ethnography was granted by the Head Teacher with relative ease I would wholeheartedly agree with Walford’s observation that access should not be seen as “total” but more usefully viewed and approached as:

... [A] type of incremental continuum, where the researcher is gradually able to move from the initial permission to enter the buildings to a series of developed and trusting relationships with some teachers⁵ and students (Walford, 2008:16).

⁵ But in relation to my study, teachers and a range of support workers such as HLTAs, TAs and BSWs.

Thus, I remained aware that although the Head Teacher had agreed to the ethnography being conducted and then further facilitated the 'launching' of the study by allowing me to speak at the weekly staff briefing, it was imperative to apply the notion of situated ethics (Piper and Simons, 2005) in terms of seeking ongoing, informed consent from participants for all aspects of the data collection, from formal interviews to lengthy *and* fleeting observations of staff-pupil interactions (See Appendix 1 for all consent forms and participant information sheets constructed and disseminated). But the issues I have outlined above only scratch the surface of what constitutes ethical conduct. I felt it necessary to take a far more reflexive approach in terms of understanding how I positioned myself as a researcher and the power relations that were present within the research dyad. It is to these issues that I now turn.

Although relieved to receive permission to commence the ethnography, I was immediately aware that there could be potential drawbacks to the apparent seal of approval received from the Head Teacher such as concern amongst some informants about how any insights or information they volunteered might be used. This issue, which I have termed 'researcher-participant associations' did give rise to an incident which in hindsight was not considered or reflected upon adequately enough prior to the fieldwork taking place and could therefore be seen as one problematic aspect of an approach that was so heavily informed by IE in this early stage. As explained in the opening part of this chapter, an IE begins in a particular experience and from a specific standpoint which in this case was the desire to learn about the experiences and everyday practices of learning mentors in English state secondary education. Thus in taking this approach I was seen around the school as a visitor (i.e. outsider) who was spending a significant amount of time *with* the LM team, accompanying them at Breakfast Club, spending time in the Mentor Base and so on. This association could have resulted in a reticence or unease for other staff to be open and honest when asked to share their understanding of and views about the LM role (even though I was always careful to stress that it was the *role* as opposed to the person or people carrying out that role that I was keen to learn about). Indeed, in one incident when I was thanking a participant for their time and insights at the end of an interview, they suddenly became visibly agitated and sought reassurance that their anonymity would be upheld in relation to what they had said about the LM role. My response was of course to reassure them that it would be, referring them again to the participant information sheet which explained how data would be utilised and also to remind them that any of the comments made in the interview could be taken out of the study should they so wish. On reflection, I feel that their perception of the relationship I had established with the mentors (as opposed to the area of pupil support that this particular participant worked in) could have prompted this obvious discomfort and unease on their part.

The issue of power relations in research is one that I believe all researchers need to acknowledge, grapple with and ultimately attend to and I have served my apprenticeship in this respect in a number of ways. The pilot study conducted prior to the ethnography consisted of a small-scale qualitative enquiry with LMs who were former university students so I needed to think about the obvious power differentials that could have been present during the interviews conducted here. Furthermore, earlier doctoral work undertaken enabled me to reflect on how my own understanding of feminist research methodology has

developed over time, from its early claims to equalize research relations⁶ (Oakley, 1981; Roberts, 1981; Finch, 1984) with later critiques which questioned those apparently mutually reciprocal relationships assumed in earlier accounts (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008).

Action Research is another approach which claims to offer the potential to equalize research relations (Noffke and Somekh, 2005; Lewin, 1988) but a study which adopted this type of participatory approach within an IE concluded that such notions were in fact “an ideological construct and not an achievable goal” (Campbell et al, in Campbell and Gregor, 2004:68). As a result, the ideal of equality was reconceptualised over the course of the project as according to the researchers:

We are no less committed to participation but are learning to see it as a practical activity that does not put it outside the ruling relations of research...Participation, we argue, must be understood within a research framework that addresses power as enacted in everyday life (*ibid*).

In trying to apply these sentiments to my own study I understood that participation is not itself an answer to the exercise of power in research because it is not possible to extract the research relations *from* the setting, situated as it is in the everyday world and understood as the material context of each embodied subject (DeVault and McCoy, 2002). The potential of IE is to rethink social settings taking existing power relations into account, thus a study which is informed by this method of inquiry aims to produce an analysis that is in the interests of those about whom knowledge is constructed:

It is that frame for the research that established the orientation of the analysis and redressed the exclusion of some knowers. This is quite a different matter from democratizing the interpersonal relations among the researchers and informants (Campbell and Gregor, 2004:68).

As shall be seen in the following chapters, data generated in the study suggested that the needs of some of the most marginalised young people were being met by what appeared to be some of the most marginalised staff – i.e. the mentors. Furthermore, their approaches and practices were not always understood by other school staff. Thus, it is important to make it transparently clear that in adopting an approach that is influenced by IE, I, as researcher, am championing a particular group and doing so unapologetically. In an early Institutional Ethnography which looked at the normative ordering of families through schooling (Griffiths and Smith, 1987) the single mother is depicted as the “small hero” peering up into the ruling relations that tower above her. In a similar vein, the research presented here aims to give a significant platform to the mentor’s own “work knowledge” with the belief that this not only offers a more authentic account of the role in comparison with how it is portrayed in government commissioned “Good Practice Guidelines” (DfES, 2001b) but in doing so seeks to “redress their exclusion” as argued above. Finally, as the pupils of Priory Park High formed a significant participant group within the study it is of primary importance to consider how ethical research is designed and carried out with young people. This will be presented

⁶ As an undergraduate student in the late 1980s who had only been taught positivist research methodology and methods, I found such ideas to be revelatory and initially very enticing in the context of planning one’s own research

in the following section as it forms part of a broader discussion regarding how actual research methods were employed.

3.5 Employing ethnographic tools to generate data

3.5.1 Observations-and-talk

Ethnographic data collection draws on “a repertoire of methods” (Bright, 2012:221) encapsulating recorded conversations, observations, imaginative memos, the study of institutionally-driven texts and comparisons with other research (Smith, 2005, 2002). Although all of the above were utilised in this ethnography, this particular section focuses on the interview; understood in its widest sense from the pre-arranged and formally conducted, to ‘observations-and-talk’ - meaning participant observation leading to further questions in order to glean greater understandings. This latter approach was particularly useful in developing an understanding of how the mentors’ work differed from other support roles (such as behaviour support) which despite being two quite different interventions were still conceptualised broadly as being ‘pastoral’ or ‘inclusive’ in approach. This is a problem that clearly extends across the education system (Purdy, 2013) where the term ‘pastoral care’ in reality means an agglomeration of different activities, a point which has already been noted in the literature review and will continue to play a part in later discussions. Thus, observations-and-talk took place with the mentors as I accompanied them in the running of Breakfast Club; the staffing of the Mentor Base at breaks and lunchtimes and (where appropriate) during their one-to-one interactions with pupils, both planned and ad hoc throughout the school day. Time spent with the BSWs was mostly through ‘on-call’ activities which involved patrolling the corridors during lesson times and assisting teachers in resolving behavioural issues as they emerged in class sessions, often leading to the removal of pupils if deemed necessary. BSWs also accommodated pupils on a reduced timetable and therefore arriving later in the school day and were then escorted to other in-house provisions so as to prevent wider contact with their peers. Accompanying this group of support staff whilst they carried out these activities, enabled me to speak with them about their work and seek almost on-the-spot clarification if required. For example, I shadowed one particular BSW a number of times whilst she was carrying out her ‘on-call’ duties which together added up to a number of hours of observation-and-talk. Finding our discussions highly pertinent, I would think “I must arrange an interview with this person!” but then realised that a substantial amount of relevant data duly recorded in my field notes had already been generated as we walked and talked, with the added advantage that much of it was directly applied to incidents as they were occurring, one of which went on to form the critical incident of ‘Eddie and the missing mobile phone’. In addition to these longer periods of time afforded by ‘on-call’, I also gleaned greater understandings of the BS role by conducting shorter observations of provisions run by this team such as Internal exclusion (the isolation facility) and one or two sessions of an Anger Management course which some pupils were referred to.

Wolcott (1999) devised three categories which are intended to prompt the researcher to think about and disclose the role they actually assume during their fieldwork these being,

'active participant'; 'privileged active observer' and 'passive observer'. In the contexts described above I was an active participant in helping out at Breakfast Club and a privileged active observer throughout the day in the Mentor Base and whilst accompanying the BSWs on their 'on-call' duties. I viewed the third category of passive observer as less desirable in a school setting where young people often want to know (and should be told) who unfamiliar adults are. Furthermore it is methodologically impractical in the sense that a school is not a controlled environment so the researcher is simply not able to remain aloof or detached from what is going on.

3.5.2 Speaking in social relations – using an IE approach in planning and executing the Interview

Within IE, interviews are conceptualised as a tool to investigate organisational and institutional processes that have generalizing effects. To explain further, they are utilised as a vehicle to explicate the relations of ruling that shape local experiences rather than as a means to reveal the subjective states of individual participants (Smith, 1996; DeVault and McCoy, 2002). The inquiry is viewed as open-ended in the sense that further avenues of investigation emerge as more is learnt about the social relations involved:

The field continuously opens up as the researcher explores the institutional nexus that shapes the local (Grahame, cited in DeVault and McCoy, 2002:753).

Smith (2006) contends that when anyone speaks in a sensible and coherent manner about their lives, they also speak in 'social relations', thus interviews are a method of capturing informants talk in ways that direct analysis towards those relations. The key when talking with informants then is to listen for and probe towards institutional connections so that you can build, piece by piece, a view of the extended organizational process. This might mean that a standard set of questions is not always used but that each interview is based in part on what was learned from previous ones. Thus, it is also useful to think of the IE interview as a co-investigation in which both the interviewer and participant build a knowledgebase around the actualities of their work. At this point, it is pertinent to return to an argument made in the previous chapter that 'work' as conceptualised within a patriarchal sociology, is constructed as a paid activity which takes place away from the home and has as its corollary, 'leisure time'. In great contrast, an IE lens defines 'work' generously as:

...anything done by people that takes time and effort, that they mean to do, that is done under definite conditions and with whatever means and tools, and that they may have to think about it (Smith, 2002:151-2).

In this sense then, 'work' is taken as a metaphor that focuses the examination of experience on what people do, rather than on the idea of work as competency-based activity. Building on Smith's original discussion, DeVault and McCoy develop this notion further by offering three broad categorisations as a useful framework to plan and guide interview talk. Briefly, these are: organisational paid work (encompassing frontline workers and the "ruling work" of managers); the 'everyday life work' of (for instance) parenting, managing an illness or feeding a family and thirdly, the activist work of challenging a regime (DeVault and McCoy, 2002:761). In relation to my study I utilised organisational paid work and everyday life work. I

then extended the latter in consciously and deliberately describing young people as ‘pupils’ in terms of their ‘everyday life work’ of schooling, by which I mean navigating through formal learning situations, problem-solving to overcome any barriers to their school experience (be these external to or originating from within school itself) and ultimately attempting to make what is deemed to be a ‘successful’ transition to adulthood. However, regardless of which of the above categories is being deployed, the primary focus of interest for a researcher adopting an IE approach is the informant’s activity, as it reveals and points toward the interconnected activities of others:

The point is not to insist on the categorical status of any activity, but to hold in place a *conception of the social as residing in the concerting of people’s actual activities* (DeVault and McCoy, 2002:758, my emphasis).

3.5.3. Organisational Paid Work: Frontline Workers

I now move on to discuss how I utilised the above framework starting with frontline workers which were first and foremost the LMs but also BSWs, HLTAs and TAs. These groups are particularly significant because they make the linkages between ‘clients’ - in this case pupils - and ruling discourses. As frontline workers, the LMs could also be seen as intermediary actors, positioned as they were between the actualities of pupil’s everyday worlds and the school’s decisions about what ‘should’ happen to them; decisions which are informed by state imposed prescriptions of what schools are for. Thus, when focusing on the work situations of those on the frontline, I was looking at how their activities were organized, controlled and directed by managers whose actions might limit their capacity to act autonomously. Without directly applying earlier professional constructions afforded to LMs by Rhodes (2006) i.e. ‘instrumental technical identity’ or ‘creative professional identity’, I was nevertheless interested in how the mentors’ consciously or unconsciously modified their work in response to this perceived control in a way that coalesced with their own values (which in some cases were predicated on professional youth work values) or conclusions about what they felt the ‘correct’ course of action to be.

3.3.5 Organisational Paid Work: The “Ruling” Work of managers

Also within the categorisation of organisational paid work is “Ruling” Work explicated through interviews conducted with those who were implementing policy that had been formulated elsewhere at the translocal or extra local level. These enabled myself as researcher to move beyond the interchanges of frontline settings and track those macro institutional policies and practices that organise local settings. For example, any policy initiatives that were cited during interviews required a synthesizing or piecing together of the institutional complex, in that I had to constantly move back and forth, tracing and investigating particular policies that participants had named and then going back to an interview recording and transcript done at both the ruling and frontline levels to listen again and understand how that text organised actual systems and actions at a local level.

3.5.4 “Everyday life work” – the experiences of support staff

Apart from the pupils whom I have already made brief reference to, the categorisation of “everyday life work” may not seem immediately obvious to this study as participants have

been presented thus far as paid organisational workers. But IE's 'generous definition of work' reminds us that what people's daily lives require them to do is in itself a significant data resource meaning that it is important to underline that the overwhelming majority of support staff at the school were women and their paths to employment at Priory Park High were inextricably bound up with the care work of their "everyday/ everynight worlds" (Smith, 2002:42). As the following interview extracts illustrate, the 'everyday life work' of these participants becomes central to the question of how they came to be employed at the school as frontline workers:

1. *[My path to Priory Park High] ...was purely and simply, looking at being a better parent for my children. I was working full time and it got to a point where myself and my husband were separated and his part of looking after the children disintegrated. [The situation] wasn't working and I had to look at an alternative career - a job where I could look after the children and be part of their lives in holidays and make sure that they were safe and happy and had the interaction that they needed (Year Manager).*
2. *I went to work in the NHS, just twenty hours a week, at (-----) hospital, in the pharmacy department, just doing clerical work. But as the kids got older, as they got to ten or eleven year olds, they didn't want to be uprooted and go to my mum's through the holidays, so that I could work. So I decided to look for somewhere that I could work term-time. [Priory Park High] were advertising for teaching assistants and I had helped out a little bit at primary school with my own kids with reading ... So I applied for that and got it ... I've been here for seven years (Pat, a TA running the ASDAN foundation curriculum).*

This next excerpt is particularly illuminating in evidencing how care work as both paid work and 'everyday life work' is carried out across different spheres of production, rendering conventional conceptualisations of 'work' and 'leisure time' at best inadequate if not entirely redundant:

3. *I left school, trained as a nursery nurse and worked in a hospital for about four years in an intensive care unit for babies that were having operations. Then I left there to have my own children and then I became a child minder because that fitted in with the role of, you know, being able to stay at home and work and sort of used my qualification that I had. I did that for fifteen years, was successful at it, and employed two other people to work with me, so it was like a small business. But then I was just, you know, being at home, working all the time, the children were getting older, I had four children. So I went to work in a nursery and also did homecare for the elderly. Then, what did I do then...? Then I became quite ill, I had cancer, so [after recovery] decided to change direction and went to work in a high school as a teaching assistant at (-----) and worked there for a couple of years, and then I came here (Marie, former learning mentor, year manager and currently teaching assistant).*

As with some of the views expressed in DeVault's study (1991) which was examined in the previous chapter, the above excerpts demonstrate how work processes are typically reconstructed as social or psychological. The respondents describe and present their

decisions as related entirely to their individual situations, and/or as responses or adjustments they have had to make in relation to 'what life threw at them', be that marital breakdown, juggling paid work with parenting or long term illness. But this has the effect of omitting or depriving them of what Smith calls their "necessary anchorage in an economy of material conditions, time and effort" (1987:163). Thus this type of data enables us to keep the social and its interconnectedness in view which is an important facet of IE as a method of inquiry.

3.5.5 'Everyday life work' – the experiences of young people as 'pupils'

I argued above that pupil work could also be viewed as a type of everyday life work. In the research conducted with young people, my aim was to draw on their experiences or "work knowledge[s]" (Smith, 2005:151) within the school system but at the same time remain mindful of conducting ethical research; for example, not asking direct or sensitive questions that may have caused harm. When drafting the interview questions for pupils, I drew on literature which provided practical guides for conducting ethical research with children and young people (Lewis, 2004; Clark, 2004) and devised a number of strategies such as posing questions in the third person so that participants were not under pressure to draw directly from their own experiences; giving the option of paired or small group interviews in addition to one-to-one; providing paper and pens so that participants could doodle whilst talking or express their answers pictorially and in doing so redirecting the emphasis away from (just) the spoken word (Shaw et al, 2011). As useful as these were, my approach to the pupil-research was influenced to a greater extent by Youth Work National Occupational Standards such as facilitating 'young people's exploration of their values and beliefs' (nya.org.uk) which I adhere to in my work as a lecturer and practice tutor within this discipline. I had a strong desire that the research should enable young people to speak about issues which had a clear impact on their lives, in this case, their school experience, but to do so in an ethical manner. Thus in considering and putting into practice the above issues the opening question set out below provides one example of how pupils' thoughts and insights were generated:

You are walking down the street one day and you bump into an alien who has just landed from another planet. The alien tells you that it has to go to school but doesn't know *anything* about it. They want to know what it is like and what they should expect. What do you tell them?

This is clearly not what many of the pupil participants were expecting and although some were initially a little taken aback, most seemed to relish the idea of talking about school from this 'fresh' perspective and in a way that afforded them the opportunity to draw on their own experiences, albeit indirectly and should *they* wish to do so. Their responses generated much discussion around the varying factors that can shape formal educational experience, such as the physical and social environment of the school; and (for some participants) the relentless pressure to do well. The open-endedness of this question further enabled the pupils to make observations which *they* identified as relevant as shown in the response given here by two Year 11 girls - 'Serena' and 'Louise':

Serena: *is it a boy or a girl?*

Jo: *It's just an alien... [pauses] ... would that make a difference?*

Serena: *I think it would make a big difference*
[Louise nods vigorously in agreement]

Jo: *Okay, let's just pretend for now it's a female alien*

Louise: *I think you get a lot of different expectations, simply because teachers feel we [girls] should be on top of things, more organized...which is not always the case*

Serena: *First of all we're teenagers, second of all - girls, ...there's a lot to say about high school girls [pauses] like expectations to look perfect; then there's all the high school drama... that people get over eventually' (Interview 3).*

The need for a 'gender lens' in order to describe an educational experience was clearly important for these two young women. For other pupils the 'alien' question did not lead to such an immediate response but helped to convey that I welcomed a 'warts- and- all' pupil-take on their schooling. 'Eliza' was a case in point. She had initially volunteered to take part in the research when it was first publicised at a Year 11 assembly. Her Year Progress Leader (PL) had described her as an exemplary pupil in terms of her academic performance *and* what she contributed to the school community as a whole remarking that "she could have been the school Head Girl, if we had such a position" (Interview 3). Eliza's initial response to the alien question offered a 'common sense' description of school which was very much in contrast to Serena above:

A place where you learn stuff ... I don't know ...you'll get up, you'll spend most of your day there, you'll have different lessons and learn about different things...meet up with friends, come home, do some homework and basically you'll learn and get educated...(Interview 4).

But as the interview progressed, her presentation altered dramatically from the articulate model pupil she had (knowingly) been presented as, to an agitated young woman who seemed intent on delivering a damning critique of the school system (as shall be seen later on). The more cynical researcher may simply interpret this as a case of 'tales told to tourists' – i.e. you have entered a young person's space as an outsider and invited them to tell you what they think of that space which could potentially lead to sensationalized accounts. But I offer a counter argument in drawing on the afore-mentioned youth work ethics and principles which believe a young person to be a competent witness of their experience, *alongside* the idea of IE "work knowledges". Many of the observations that Eliza made further into the interview, mirrored those in the wider literature such as her concerns about "the overlooked middle" (Hodgson and Spours, 2013) which, she understood as those pupils who "didn't get noticed by teachers", as opposed to the "top pupils" (which, pragmatically and without vanity she understood to be her own position in the school) and the "bottom pupils" – two groups who received a disproportionate amount of attention from school staff, albeit in different ways. Towards the end of the interview she disclosed that despite the regard with which she was held by teaching staff she had in fact lost motivation and was not currently doing any homework or revision:

They [teachers] say: “your homework is to learn this part of the spec because we haven’t got time to teach it” so I know I need to do this for my exam but you just... get to a certain point where you can’t be bothered....I say I’m busy but I literally just sit in my bed or at the kitchen table and do nothing all night. I’m not tired but I’m just at that stage where ... I’ve had enough (Interview 4).

This incident illustrates my belief that the approach I undertook generated authentic, rather than sanitised or, conversely, sensationalised accounts of schooling. But this then gave rise to another ethical issue: did my invitation to young people to speak honestly about their experiences of education, open up (for some at least) a Pandora’s Box? Although support mechanisms had been put into place in the event of a pupil becoming distressed, I was concerned at how much Eliza’s emotional state altered during the course of the interview and could not help feeling that these avenues of support amounted to little more than a disingenuous tick-box approach that I was required to put in place in order to generate data. I am aware that some of my negative feelings about this situation arose due to a wider issue which was that the school did not honour a request that I had made when negotiating the setting up of the pupil interviews which was that I would be permitted to organise a low-key celebration event for the pupil participants where I would provide refreshments, present each one with a personalised certificate of participation and thank them formally for their time and insights. I made numerous attempts to set this event up through repeated email communications to the relevant PL but these were not acknowledged. Spontaneous face-to-face meetings about this felt like an impossibility given the frenetic nature of the school day. I surmise that such an event was a long way down the list of priorities for a member of staff who is under pressure to ensure and evidence continuing improved academic performance, but I was disappointed at the lack of response feeling that I had failed on the ‘reciprocity’ front. Following my (then) supervisor’s advice I resolved the issue as best I could by delivering the certificates in person to the school, along with a small gift card for a local milkshake emporium and a personal note of thanks to each pupil, asking if the school’s administrative office would be kind enough to post these out.

Further issues were explored in the pupil interviews by posing questions framed in the third person in order to prevent young people feeling as if they had to draw on their own experiences. The following question was intended to identify which staff roles pupils associated with offering help:

Who could a pupil go to if they were experiencing difficulties in the school day or having a tough time generally?

And then later:

How might someone explain what learning mentors do to people who didn’t know about the role?

The data that was generated with the pupils’ will be discussed at varying points in the following chapters but what I wish to emphasise at this stage is that their viewpoints and experiences (where they wished to share them) provided important descriptions and insights

into their 'everyday life work' of being a high school pupil which was clearly invaluable for me the researcher, very much removed by age and other factors, from this experience. It also added a greater degree of authenticity and validity to the mentors' perceptions of pupil experiences as *their* accounts corresponded with many of the issues identified and raised by the pupils themselves.

3.6 Distinguishing between institutional and experiential accounts of work

So far I have set out how the interview enables an explication of "work knowledge", a concept I have touched upon but not fully explained. The term is used to denote a person's experience of and in their own work meaning what they do, how they do it and what they think and feel. It also refers to the implicit or explicit coordination of their work with that of others (Smith, 2005). The data that are generated by this type of knowledge are a major resource for IE, but they are not always accessible to the researcher if she or he cannot differentiate between institutional and experiential accounts. It is common (and understandable) that people in an institutional setting like a school describe their work using the language of that institution, or describe a work process as if it were performed by a position or category rather than by the person the researcher is talking to. Such accounts are viewed as problematic through an IE lens as they can subsume or displace descriptions based in experience, containing little usable data beyond the expression of institutional ideology- in- action described helpfully as "institutional capture" by Smith (2005:156). This was a situation that arose not infrequently in my study, the most apposite example occurring during an interview with a Year Manager who as seen in Chapter 6 drew heavily on the 'outcomes' speak established by *Every Child Matters* – essentially using this policy agenda as a vehicle to describe her everyday work (see page 204). Further accounts of how texts shape work practices are given in various parts of the thesis; at this stage the key point to make is that institutional language conceals those discursive practices /discourses or processes that IE aims to discover and describe. The oft cited term 'Barriers to Learning' is one example because getting to the core of what people meant by this gave rise to an array of answers with many staff (both teaching and support), locating pupils' barriers to learning in their "chaotic family backgrounds" or coming from a "workless household" which had been so "over three generations" (field notes and varying interviews). Within Priory Park High or any all-inclusive secondary school, these may well be recognised as commonly-used terms and descriptions of pupils and their situations but during the study I observed that the terms were used as kind of verbal shorthand and/or as a means for staff to talk about their day-to-day activity which, despite research which presents challenges to these as authentic depictions, (MacDonald, Shildrick and Furlong, 2014) demonstrated how such characterisations have entered the dominant discourse in people's acceptance of them as credible and believable. But whilst the discourses driving these concepts are of course an important piece of the analysis in and of themselves, the terms could not be treated as straightforward, unproblematic descriptions of work as it was performed on a day-to-day basis. They have derived from *somewhere*; they are made up of views which may have come through 'bought-in' training on INSET⁷ days, or are tied up in ruling depictions of those

⁷ An acronym for IN-Service Training day. Sometimes known as Baker Day after the politician who enacted them.

experiencing poverty as portrayed in a significant number of TV programmes identified within the genre of ‘poverty porn’ (Jensen and Tyler, 2015) at the time of the study. Thus, my primary objective as an IE researcher was to attempt to shift participants out of such discourses and encourage descriptions of their actual work processes. Thus, in contrast to institutional accounts, are experiential accounts or “work knowledges” as defined above. One strategy to encourage experiential accounts and thereby prevent institutional accounts from dominating interviews was to utilise questions such as those below which enabled participants to recognise this distinction for themselves:

Can you tell me your job title and something of what this *actually* entails?
(And/or)

Does your job title and job description reflect what you actually do?

Having a grasp of institutional and experiential accounts also made it possible for me, as researcher, to reflect during, and immediately after the interview on what type of data had been produced, and decide whether any follow-up was necessary to get beyond an institutional account that may have been presented. For example, in a formal, pre-arranged interview conducted at a relatively early stage in the IE, Paul, one of the mentors, seemed quite nervous at the start, disclosing that he had been quite worried about whether he would be able to answer one of the questions in the pre-seen interview schedule which was attempting to establish if, and to what degree, the work of mentors was evaluated by the school. As the interview progressed it became increasingly apparent that he, as interviewee, saw his task as giving a good account of Priory Park High to me the outsider. The interview recording (and resulting transcript) therefore produced a mix of institutional and experiential accounts as Paul attempted to present more sanitised or official explanations of his work. As the fieldwork progressed, I came to realise that formal interviews were not always as productive for those with whom I was spending a significant amount of time, and it was eventually through more informal discussions with Paul, both one-to-one and alongside the other mentors, that he gave increasingly more experiential accounts deriving from his work knowledge. One such example was when I asked Paul about the frenetic nature of the mentor’s day, having just observed his work one morning, which consisted of a series of one-to-one interventions with pupils, interspersed with his facilitation of a particularly lively break time in the mentor base, and now as the lunch bell was sounding the further facilitation of a lunchtime football club after gulping down a hastily microwaved meal. Commenting on this he shrugged saying:

“I love football and besides I never go to the staff room at lunchtime. I did once years ago but I was so disgusted at some of the things staff were saying about the kids, I’ve never been back [at lunchtimes] since”.

I asked him whether he felt it [discussions held in the staffroom] might be better now, to which he frowned, reflecting for a few seconds before saying:

“This is a good school, we just need a break [then smiling] ...we’re all working together and we’re all knackered. The signs are good.”

This extract from an experiential account, demonstrates what I would have missed if I had not gone beyond the formal interview with Paul. It reveals that there were certain parts of the school that Paul, as a LM, did not feel entirely comfortable in and why; it also acknowledges that although the school had been through challenging times this experience had, in some ways, brought staff closer together.

Campbell and Gregor suggest that the test of whether you are getting an institutional account as opposed to an account of what *actually* happened is if you, the listener, cannot see every step without having to imagine or insert missing pieces. They advise that questions need to be asked at every point in the story, especially where “steps are skipped or discourse words substitute[d] for “what actually happens”” (Campbell and Gregor, 2004:78). They further urge the researcher to avoid the ordinary conversational etiquette where people assist each other in making meaning by (for instance) completing a person’s sentence with a suggestion of what they might have been about to say. Alas, the recordings and transcripts of the interviews I conducted early on in the ethnography evidence all too well how I failed miserably at the ‘avoiding conversational etiquette’ part (See self-transcribed interview with additional reflective comments in Appendix 2a). Through reflection I now understand that this is partly because I was still developing my understanding of IE as an approach and as noted earlier I was influenced by early feminist writings on establishing ‘rapport’ within an interview. I had also had a brief flirtation with Kvale and Brinkman’s (2009) metaphors of interviewer as “miner” or “traveller”, the latter of which views the interview as the site of a co-construction of knowledge. In drawing on differing research paradigms to understand my actions better I can now see that I was veering too much towards pure (rather than critical) interpretivism in the sense of *individual* meaning-making. In later interviews, my interjections emanating from a desire to co-construct were greatly reduced and when they did occur, were far more geared toward clarifying my understanding of the actual, and filling in those missing pieces of the jigsaws as outlined above by Campbell and Gregor. As a result, fieldwork interactions coming later in the study felt much more akin to those of other institutional ethnographers who describe the interview as an “analytic rehearsal” where they are checking their understanding as it develops and offering it up to the informant for confirmation or correction (Mykhalovskiy, 1999 in DeVault and McCoy, 2002).

As explained earlier, experiential accounts as a form of work knowledge also enable an explication of the implicit or explicit coordination of a participant’s work with the work of others i.e. the ubiquitous “they” familiar to us all when referring to aspects of our working and wider lives and described by Smith as “the nebulous other” (2005:151). Thus, the mentors’ verbalisation of the “they”, was often accompanied by a vague wave of their hands in the direction of the door to ‘somewhere’ beyond the immediate vicinity. In this example, the ‘they’ was clarified (through the “analytic rehearsal” described above) as being the middle managers in the school hierarchy whose own prescriptions of the mentoring role were often influenced by objectives handed down to them from senior management which as we shall see were themselves often lacking in coherence. These then had an ongoing and direct impact on the mentors’ formal work activities. It is useful to think of this aspect of people’s experiential accounts of their work as doors through which the ethnographer may go to open up further resources of knowledge from those at work on the “other side of a particular story”

(ibid). In concluding this section, fieldwork conversations within an IE approach, can be seen as both potentially problematic but also a rich resource. The objective for the researcher is two-fold: firstly, to obtain a description of the actuality rather than descriptions which are couched in institutional language; and secondly, to explicate how such terms, and the discourses they carry, operate in the setting.

3.7 Texts – listening for, asking about and explicating

One way of explicating the discourses that organise people's work narratives and practices is through focusing on texts. In the preceding chapter I explained how integral 'texts' are to the ontology of IE; in this chapter the focus is more about conveying the varying ways in which texts were both listened for and asked about in this study. Before the researcher even enters the field texts may be identified through the researcher's prior knowledge, or, it may be useful to map out the main textual processes at work in an institutional setting and in some cases this 'mapping' might precede initial interviews. Here an IE researcher comments on the latter approach:

We used to start by going out and blindly interviewing. Now we prepare. But we do find out things [about texts] when we interview that we didn't know were there (Pence, 1999 in DeVault and McCoy, 2002:766).

I combined these approaches to some extent as there were explicit policies of which I had prior knowledge and was interested to see how they had been operationalized within the school. For example, in the interview with the Head teacher, I specifically asked about *Excellence in Cities*, the policy which gave rise to the learning mentor role. In discussing this however, more extensive information was gained regarding other text-mediated discourses around supporting pupils in state education both past and present.

Once in the field, it is important to be alert to catching informants' references to texts/text-mediated processes. They may be explicitly mentioned or shown, such as resource sheets which formed part of the afore-mentioned anger management course or session plans originating from a local education authority volunteer mentoring initiative which were sometimes used by learning mentors when conducting an initial one-to-one mentoring session with a pupil. Thus, texts are explicated through a combination of approaches: harvesting pre-existing knowledge prior to entering the field; then once in the field being identified by the participants themselves or observed or explicated by the institutional ethnographer. Figure 4 shown below provides an overview of texts that were identified in the field of which some are examined in more depth at different points in the thesis:

Texts identified prior to entering the field	Texts identified by participants	Texts observed / explicated once in the field
<p><i>Excellence in Cities (EiC)</i></p> <p><i>Education Leeds, EiC – Draft Learning Mentor Policy</i></p> <p><i>Good Practice Guidelines of Learning Mentors (DfES)</i></p> <p><i>Resources for Learning Mentors: Practical Activities for Group Sessions</i></p> <p><i>Every Child Matters</i></p> <p><i>Excellence in Learning</i></p> <p><i>Supporting the new agenda for children’s services and schools: the role of learning mentors and coordinators (DfES)</i></p> <p><i>Learning Mentor National Training</i></p> <p><i>CWDC Induction Training Programme for level 3 / 4 children’s workforce practitioners</i></p> <p><i>Local Authority 5 year plan</i></p> <p><i>School Ofsted reports</i></p> <p><i>School website / prospectus</i></p>	<p>Passport curriculum Standards Fund Gaining Ground Building Schools for the Future ASDAN foundation curriculum (cited by the Head teacher).</p> <p>Excellence in Cities (cited by the Head Teacher, the LMs and the HLTAs).</p> <p>Every Child Matters (cited by numerous staff operating in both the core and periphery).</p> <p>Restorative Practice (cited by the Head of Behaviour Support)</p> <p>Safer Schools Initiative (cited by the school’s attached Police Officer).</p> <p>Kidscape - A Behaviour Support intervention ‘Aims’ work – a previous mentor intervention undertaken with young male pupils around appropriate / inappropriate sexual behaviours, (cited by the Director of Pastoral Care).</p>	<p>National: <i>Time for Standards:</i> <i>Transforming the School Workforce</i> document (and the ‘touching tomorrow’ by the national remodelling team)</p> <p>Local: LEA mentoring initiative forms used with mentees</p> <p>School-based: Institutionally-generated learning strategies such as the ‘Priory Park Learner’.</p> <p>Staff briefings – weekly and one-offs</p> <p>Institutionally-generated notice boards for staff (and the presentations which activate them e.g. Bankers / RAPs)</p> <p>Institutionally-generated notice boards for pupils (attendance, punctuality, attainment)</p> <p>Subject-specific posters to ‘sell’ to pupils and signpost classrooms</p> <p>Posters generated by mentors and pupils</p> <p>Communications from VIP’s displayed in public domains e.g. letter from Education Minister in visitor reception</p>

Figure 4 Overview of texts identified at Priory Park High

3.8 Transforming the data

The final part of this account sets out some of the issues to be considered when analysing and writing up an ethnography which has drawn significantly on IE as a methodological approach. As has already been conveyed, this is a method of inquiry which finds and uses data to discover the connections between peoples' activities; what triggers these activities; and how they are coordinated. The task of the researcher then is to reveal these material connections and make explicit and understandable the implications they carry, in short, to enable others to see what the researcher sees. This obviously requires data that differs from those approaches which interpret and then formally codes people's talk into themes, topics, or variables. For IE researchers, this type of analysis is "constructing objectively the phenomenon in discourse" (Campbell and Gregor, 2004:69) so that such phenomena lose their meaning as *situated* activities. Given this assertion it is of no surprise that I decided very early on not to use data analysis software or other numbers-based coding and analysis methodologies. Initially this was based on little more than a gut instinct but through reading about similar choices made by researchers in other ethnographic studies I found the words to express my unease. For example, I strongly identified with the researchers' explanations of their methodological procedure in the study of paramedics referred to in the Literature Review who felt that such an approach would impose arbitrary structures onto what were essentially ideographic interpretations of participants' feelings about and descriptions of their work, a decision justified in the following way:

We were, after all, researching accounts of street-level events that were usually dynamic, sometimes chaotic, and often emotionally-laden (McCann et al, 2013: 758).

IE aims towards a different kind of analysis: one in which data is utilised to map out complex institutional chains of action; where the mechanics of text-based forms of knowledge are described and the conceptual schemata of ruling discourses are elaborated (DeVault and McCoy, 2002). Once the task of describing and understanding the everyday work of the LMs from their standpoint had been completed, I had to undertake a back-and-forth method of exploration which traced the connections between what LMs did, what other staff did and the texts and other processes that governed that "work". Analysis in this sense is described by Campbell and Gregor (2004) as a matter of moving back and forth between generated speech and the context that produced it. As has already been noted, this was not always possible in relation to the texts that supposedly governed the LMs work and it took some time to realise why this was the case – an issue I address in Chapter 7. The final stage is the examination of the "ideological character" of the institutional process: for example, the ways that LMs and the people with whom they work (other support workers, teachers, pupils) are conceptualized in both schools and the wider institution of education which is then coordinated and controlled through textual 'facts' about these categories. IE analysts look at those stories provided by informants through both interview data and observation-and-talk in a way that makes visible the juxtaposition of primary narratives and ideologically oriented accounts. As one IE researcher says:

...I'm on the lookout for segments of the interviews where "fault lines" can be detected, as the two modes of telling – the narrative and ideological – rub up against each other (McKendy, cited in DeVault and McCoy, 2002:769).

Whilst other offers:

It's never instances; it's always processes and coordination. It's all these little hooks. To make sense of it you have to understand not just the speech of the moment, but what it's hooked into (Griffiths, cited in DeVault and McCoy, 2002:770).

This thorough and painstaking process is intended to guard against long-standing and common critiques of qualitative data analysis which argue that methods associated with this approach are not well formulated resulting in the analyst having very few guidelines for protection against "self-delusion ... let alone the presentation of unreliable or invalid conclusions to scientific or policy-making audiences" (Miles, 1979:591). I will now set out the process I went through regarding how I worked to transform the data (Wolcott, 1994) and the ensuing commentary will encompass issues like the reduction, display and organisation of data (Miles and Huberman, 1994), associated decisions made regarding the transcribing of interviews and writing strategies adopted.

It is important that the activities of data reduction and display are not viewed as a linear process but as concurrent streams or activities throughout the analysis. My first task was to organise the data by type, the first being the data generated by the formal interviews that had been pre-arranged and recorded ($n=20$). These were then grouped by role for example learning mentors, pupils, teachers, senior leaders, support staff other than mentors and so on. Transcription is an obvious example of data display but the value of a full transcription of interview data in qualitative research remains a contested area. In ethnographic circles it is viewed as a fundamental criterion of what qualifies data analysis as authentic (<http://www.ethnographyandeducation.org>) but in other forums views range from an acknowledgement of the "tremendous if unspoken influence of the researcher as author" (Fontana and Frey, 2005:713) to Kvale and Brinkman's more strongly worded take on this issue:

The transcript is a bastard, a hybrid between an oral discourse unfolding over time, face to face, in a lived situation – where what is said is addressed to a specific listener present – and a written text created for a general, distant public (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009:192).

Within the existing community of IE researchers, there is no fixed view on the issues of whether or not to fully transcribe and what the resulting transcription actually represents. On the one hand, transcripts are seen as important texts in themselves and not only in the obvious sense of facilitating analysis but also as a means for research participants to "speak" in published accounts, an important point given that IE studies are often seeking to promote the experiences of oppressed or hitherto neglected groups. There is some concern however about privileging the textual representation over the embodied actuality of the research conversation. For example, the view of one IE researcher appears to be more in line with Kvale and Brinkman above, but not so much in terms of what the transcript comes to represent, more on the premise that Dorothy Smith's concept of the "everyday" begins with the fundamental fact that we are always in our bodies:

In insisting on bodies being there [Institutional Ethnography] sensitizes us to bodies as part of the data...it's not just about words but how the words live in embodied experience (cited as T. Diamond, personal communication, in DeVault and McCoy, 2002:758).

I made the decision to fully transcribe all of my formal interviews with staff undertaking some myself and paying for others to be produced professionally (see examples of each in Appendix 2a and 2b). Once the transcriptions had been completed it was essential to continue the work of listening to the interviews (usually on numerous occasions) *alongside* the completed transcript, initially to check for errors but also to annotate the transcript with those attitudes, emotions or gestures that went along with the spoken word. Diamond's words above chimed especially in relation to two lengthy formal interviews I conducted with one of the LMs who was obviously a key informant. She spoke in an intricate and rich narrative and without warning would often move from recounting an incident in the third person to actually entering the incident and 'role-playing' interactions she had had with pupils and staff, adopting an array of voices, facial expressions and physical gestures when doing so. As such, it would have been impracticable if not untenable to send her interview recordings off for professional transcription – that task had to be carried out by myself as the person who had been witness to the discussion.

When undertaking my own transcribing and reviewing of the data that had been professionally transcribed, there were further decisions to be made about the issue of what Wolcott refers to as "raw or cooked data" (1994). Raw data relates to the importance of a 'warts and all' transcription which includes unfinished sentences and speech that makes sense when listened to but not as much in the written form, whereas cooked data is the permissible 'tweaks' or minor edits that the researcher might make so that the essence of the content is not lost. A useful strategy to overcome this dilemma is that the researcher presents excerpts from an original transcript alongside what is referred to as "the published version" in that the edited version smoothes over some of the 'rougher' sections of the interview. The aim here is to give the participant's comments a stronger, more engaging narrative whilst not losing the meaning, power or overarching authenticity of their comments which does not "wrench people out of their social milieu in our written portrayals of them" (Bowe et al cited in Forsey, 2008:69). I compared examples of raw and cooked data from my own study (see Appendix 3) and sought third party responses to such data. Ultimately I decided to go with cooked data for *some* interview excerpts but *only* where the paralinguistic of the participant was in danger of subsuming or undermining the issue or subject that was being conveyed.

The second type of data to be grouped were all of the varying ways in which research had been directly generated by the participants and myself which are common to ethnography. This included informal conversations, researcher observations and observations-and-talk recorded through field notes, photographs taken by myself and researcher reflections. The third category of data was the more contextual, drawing on information which had derived from the setting such as staff briefings, information regarding the pupil demographic, Ofsted reports, promotional literature generated by the school such as the prospectus and learning

resources displayed around the school (already referred to in the discussion) and finally news media reports retrieved by myself.

Because qualitative data is often large and extensive as well as bulky and dispersed, data displays help at all stages in the analysis as they organize, compress and assemble information. The earliest data displays in my study were a series of spider grams (see Appendix 4) where data from interview transcriptions were arranged according to issues raised by participants through their respective work knowledges. In the example given, the Progress Leader and Year Manager as participants with middle management responsibilities are placed side by side. This also enables a direct comparison of their work activities and their understandings of commonly used terms like 'barriers to learning'. The spider grams provide an example of both data reduction and data display. Data displays should be repeated and iterative as this shows how analysis is progressing thus Appendix 5 shows a reiteration of the spider gram now developed into two tables; here the key themes have been developed from the work knowledges and are shown down the left hand-side such as the work activities / the actualities of their role. Displayed side-by-side it is possible to see how the wider agendas shape their work: the Progress Leader's role is defined by the academic progress of pupils whereas the year Manager's work has a wider element of working with parents, outside agencies and so on. Also included in each column are my own notes in red which link lines from each transcript with examples of institutional and ruling discourses.

3.9 Writing Strategies: Building composite accounts

As with views on transcribing, there is no fixed writing format in the analysis stage of an IE either, but researchers work toward the goal of keeping the institutional in view. There are a number of ways in which this can be achieved and those outlined below all played a part in the analysis of this ethnography. Firstly, data from interviews (understood in their widest sense) and observations were used to produce a description of the institutional processes under examination, but it is important to note that although penned in the writer's voice, an account of this nature was a composite built up from multiple sources as listed above when discussing different categories of data. This is not dissimilar to other forms of ethnographic writing and in working up some of the data generated by the study, I drew on realist and impressionist writing styles as a means to enable others to see the actualities of the everyday (Vann Maanen, 2011). This was particularly useful when writing about complex incidences involving a number of people or when analysing the detailed observations I had made of interactions between both mentors and pupils, and other staff and pupils which would have been ethically inappropriate to record as they happened. To illustrate my approach Figure 5 below shows how varying sources were utilised to build composite accounts and should be read in conjunction with Appendices 5-10. It uses the example of 'Eddie and the missing mobile phone' which appears at the beginning of Chapter Four. This account is presented at an early stage of the data analysis as a means to foreground a different type of intervention which is carried out by another group of support workers, and is intended to serve as a contrast with approaches adopted by the LMs which form a significant part of this Chapter.

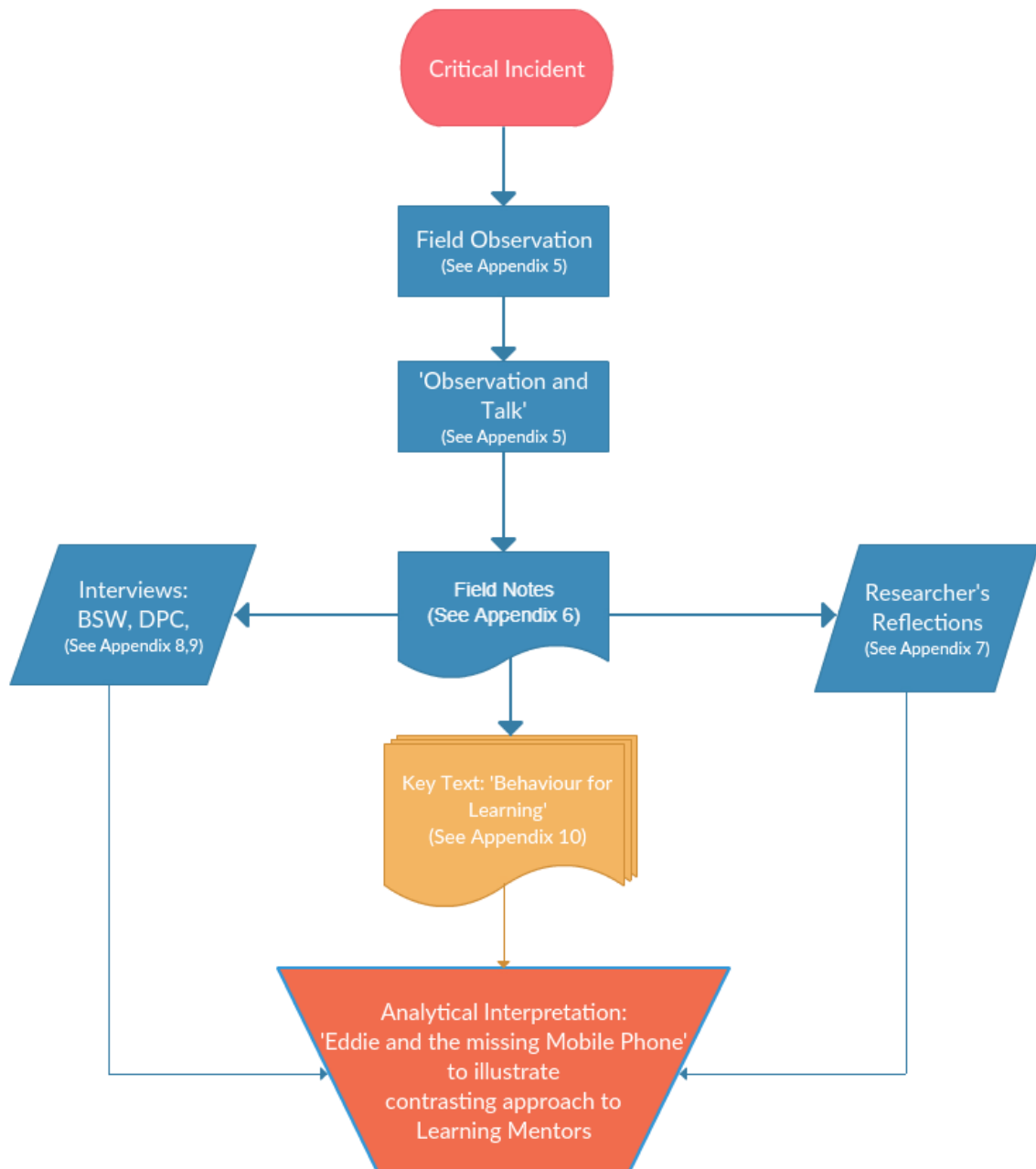


Figure 5 Building composite accounts – sources used.

3.9.1 The use of quotes in analysis

The final two issues under focus are in relation to the use of quotes in the analysis. The first is whether and how biographical details should be included in the analysis. Some IE researchers regard the ‘tagging’ of quotes i.e. including the participant’s gender, ethnicity or class, as problematic because this type of identification may invite an individualizing line of analysis, in which class and ethnicity are treated as inherent in individuals rather than produced through coordinative social processes (DeVault and McCoy, 2002). Thus, writers subscribing to this view suppress personal information about informants in their analyses and identify quoted speakers only by their location in the institutional work process of which they speak (e.g. LM, BSW, Year Manager, pupil et cetera). This was an approach I broadly adopted - seeing the LMs first and foremost as learning mentors; the teachers as teachers

and so on. That said I did waver at varying points throughout the study when reflecting on the relevance of (for instance) the ethnicity of the mentors to the study as a whole. I raised this as a question at my first Progress Review and my examiners advised that including a person's ethnicity was dependent on whether I was using a framework such as critical race theory to inform my analysis. As this was an IE and I was not seeking to import a theory or collapse ethnographic description into generic concepts I decided to continue with the approach outlined above i.e. describing participants and/or tagging quotations by a person's location within the institutional work rather than their biographical details. There were other times where I deemed it essential to not only use life stories in explicating a particular experience but also reveal the gender of the participant such as in the earlier examples of participants whose paths to employment at the school had involved a negotiation of other aspects of their "everyday life work"; also in the example of the pupils who raised the importance of gender as a lens through which schooling is experienced and whose gender was thus identified through given pseudonyms.

The second issue regards how quoted excerpts from interviews are used in the analysis of data aside from the more practical issue of editing considered above. As is a common feature of qualitative enquiry, I utilised quotes to carry forward the description and analysis in the final text but in doing so drew on a useful notion of the "exhibit" (Smith, 1998). This specifies a distinctive use of interview excerpts as creating a window within the text, bringing into view the social organisation of the participants' lives for the reader to examine. Although what is brought into view emerges out of the dialogic relations of the interview, Smith warns that excerpts must not be read simply as extensions of descriptions penned by the researcher. Rather they bring in the actual social organisation of the institutional into the text of the analysis, dialogically, rather than illustratively. I used participants' descriptions in this way when the matter was their actual work and the experience of doing it but then used my own composite accounts when describing generalized relations or chains of action that transcended the local experience of any one person.

Having explained the strategies in the writing and presenting of the data, my final point is intended as a clear instruction to how the reader should approach the data by importing a request from an IE in which the author calls for "respectful attention" to be paid to the life experiences of those whose work does not gain as much exposure as others or which is trivialized as a role that 'anyone could do' (DeVault, 1991). In reading the data which informs my analysis I too am calling on the reader for respectful attention to be paid to the descriptions and experiences of those doing work in schools other than teaching. My goal is that such attention might enable a deeper understanding of the nature and significance of such work; a new and better vocabulary with which to discuss it; and a clear and honest assessment of both the value of such (care) work whilst also recognising "...its darker side [and] the ways it can diminish the one who does it" (ibid: 4).

Chapter 4: The everyday work of the Learning Mentors

4.1 Priory Park High School: significant developments and policy milestones

Priory Park High⁸ is a state-funded and local authority maintained secondary school situated in the suburbs of a northern English city. It started out as two, single sex grammar schools in the 1930s before becoming a co-educational mixed ability school as part of the comprehensive reorganization in the 1970s (Best et al, 1980) at which point it was hailed in the local press as ‘the last word in secondary schools’. At the time of the study the school had 1,247 pupils on roll, a number which had been steadily decreasing since 2009.

Up until the early 2000s the pupil population of Priory Park High had been drawn from two contrasting catchment areas which epitomised its comprehensive status. To the north of the school there is an affluent area containing private housing fetching some of the highest prices in the city, whilst to the south there is a large post-war council estate. Such contrasting demographics had led to a previous (anecdotal) observation that Priory Park High prepared its pupils for “either Oxbridge or ----- [the local prison] and very little in between”. During the study however, many staff, including the Head Teacher voiced a clear sense of pride in that Priory Park High was a school where achievement “happens” whilst remaining “truly a comprehensive”. In its current incarnation, Priory Park High’s all-inclusive status is celebrated with reference to its diverse ethnic make-up of the pupil population (See Appendix 11) noted to be “well above the national average” by Ofsted in 2011. This more recent development is explained by staff as a result of inner-city schools deemed to be ‘failing’ and experiencing falling numbers as a consequence, meaning that pupils are now making anywhere between one and three bus journeys across the city to Priory Park High and other ‘leafy lane’ suburban schools. Longer-serving members of staff described how this situation has then caused a “ripple effect” whereby the school’s more traditional middle class catchment was diminishing in number due to some parents “bussing-out” their children to schools in two neighbouring (and in terms of ethnicity) mono-cultural towns or opting for fee-paying schools within the city. These recent changes in the pupil population of Priory Park High exemplify the “education market” (Mortimore, 2013:157) as illustrated in one teacher’s observation that: “the school is bang in the middle of an affluent area, but the kids don’t come from this area!” Whilst Mortimore believes this education market to be the cause of a high degree of parental anxiety, other commentators are more pointed in their critiques arguing that it is precisely these systems of ‘choice’ that create social spaces within which middle class parents use their social and cultural capital at the expense of others thereby indirectly promoting inequality (Ball, 2008; Gewirtz, 2001). It is indeed hard to see how elements of ‘white flight’ and other prejudices based around social class have not played a part in the changing pupil demographic of the school in recent years. A further useful analogy offered is that of a modified version of musical chairs where although there are enough chairs (school places) to go around, some are more desirable than others (Burgess

⁸ The pseudonym given to the school in this study

et al, 2006) and for reasons which will become clear, Priory Park High became one such casualty of this 'game' in recent times.

The next significant development in the school's history came about as a result of *Building Schools for the Future* (BSF) with Priory Park High becoming one of the first 'new builds' in the city during the early 2000s. BSF, alongside other policy initiatives such as PFI (Private Finance Initiative), was a scheme whereby previous NL administrations controversially reconfigured the relationship between the state and the private sector to enable an overhaul of school buildings and infrastructure, neglected for some time under the Conservative administrations of the 1980s and early 1990s (Ball, 2008). Another policy development in this era which signalled a further disarticulation of the state system (Ball, 2008) was that by the mid-2000s, Priory Park High, along with many other state schools, had secured specialist status by attracting sponsorship from a well-known banking family. At this point, the future of the school looked bright, situated in a new, apparently state-of-the-art building and reported to have the biggest increase of pupils achieving five A* to C grades in Maths and English, it was hailed as the most improved school in the city.

Challenging times were ahead however. Towards the end of the 2010s the school was one of the first in the country to be inspected under the then new Ofsted regime, and was found to be 'inadequate' on the basis of concerns regarding achievement; pupil behaviour; and a failure to improve attendance levels since the previous inspection. The after-shocks of this judgement reverberated across the city, earning 'how the mighty have fallen' type headlines in the local news media. The school was duly placed in special measures and there was an abrupt change in leadership with the instalment of an interim head teacher. This Ofsted judgement proved to be a disastrous chapter in the school's history resulting in falling rolls and, as a consequence, whole-school redundancies affecting both teaching and support staff. Two years later and following a further inspection, the school was deemed to be making good progress in all of the key areas cited above and was subsequently taken out of special measures; however during this time it was also named as being in the bottom fifty schools in England in a national league table highlighting persistent pupil absenteeism.

It is at this point that we join Priory Park High, a school working extremely hard to regain its past status and kudos as one of *the* state schools in the city. At the time of the study (2013-15), the school's results at all Key Stage levels were the best they had ever been but this was not being reflected in recent yearly intakes as parents and potential pupils continued to opt for other schools in the area perceived as better.

4.2 Pen Picture: A guided tour of a typical morning at Priory Park High

So far I have set out a brief picture of how policy milestones and other regulatory mechanisms have been significant in the school's development. Let us now observe Priory Park High in terms of both its physical structure and the activities taking place therein. Viewed from the outside, the school is a series of two storey oblong buildings which radiate out at right angles from either side of an imposing, tower-like structure. This is circular in design and spans four storeys housing the main school entrance used by staff and visitors, and on its upper floors, the library and the sixth form centre. To an observers eye, the tower bears not only an unfortunate visual comparison with Bentham's panopticon (cited in

Semple, 1993) but, given the school's recent inspection history, lends itself metaphorically to another observation of "the dark central tower' of Ofsted [that] is always invisibly watching" (Perryman, 2012:49) even though the inspectors have left for now.

It is about 8.20 am on a Monday morning and we start our tour of the school by entering the staff and visitor entrance. This is a vast, open, light and airy space where huge banners display photographic images of pupils posing with objects denoting different subject areas: one girl in a lab coat holds a telescope; two boys are kitted out in chef's outfits complete with mixing bowls and spoons and to their left are a group of young people in costume for a dramatic production. Previously this area was empty and "sterile", apparently not conveying anything about the school's mission and purpose to parents, visitors or outside agencies thus the images described above were produced and installed as part of a 'make-over' at the behest of the current Head Teacher who expressed reservations about many aspects of the school as a new build. This area also provides comfortable seating for visitors where they can take in many and varied pupil achievements such as the art work displayed on the walls, soft furnishings made from up-cycled old school ties, and of course the obligatory sports trophy glass cabinet. On the reception counter a copy of the school's prospectus is displayed on a stand next to a framed letter from the Minister of State for Schools in which he comments enthusiastically about his recent visit to Priory Park High. Further down the main driveway, the student entrance is, by contrast, much smaller, comprising two parallel automatic doorways which are opened fully at the start and end of the school day to allow for the high volume of human traffic entering and leaving the building. For the rest of the time these two entrances constitute a 'holding area' in which pupils arriving or leaving outside of the formal school day are required to sign in and then wait to be 'bleeped' through the doors or, are collected and delivered to the appropriate classroom by staff who are 'on-call'. The Head Teacher spoke of the refurbishment of this entrance as his "number one job" on arriving at Priory Park High, sharing his observation that the high steel barred gate previously in situ gave the impression of a prison and remarking of the student entrance as a whole: "It didn't say 'welcome', this is for you [or] you are part of this community...We didn't even have a ruddy first aid room, for crying out loud!" Now, running alongside the left of this entrance, are a series of offices which house those staff running the "student reception" as well as other 'services' like attendance- monitoring. Like the staff and visitor entrance, the student 'holding area' has also been transformed, this time with bunting in the form of different countries' flags adorning the walls to provide a visual representation of the pupils' many and varied countries of origin. This project was undertaken by a teacher of textiles who, like the Head, was very vocal in her criticisms of the design and aesthetics of the school as a new build.

Back in the staff entrance we can see people arriving and queuing to sign in before 'bleeping' their way through the double doors that lead through to the rest of the school. Like all schools in this era of safe-guarding, access is highly restricted and dependent on electronic pendants which are essential to move around different parts of the school. Once through the double doors we enter a long, dark corridor which displays yet more pupil artwork. A right turn leads to facilities which house the central nervous system of the school's operations: administration, reprographics, the staff room and the Head's office which was relocated to this part of the school at his behest as it had previously been situated (in his own words) at "the butt end of this corridor that nobody could ever see" which in his opinion did nothing to help his visibility or approachability.

Entering the staff room there is standing room only because on this and every other Monday morning a whole school staff briefing is being delivered verbally by the senior leadership team, backed up by the dissemination of the weekly bulletin intended to outline and reinforce key objectives that staff must work towards. This morning the main part of the briefing is being led by the Year 11 Progress Leader, who draws our attention to a large notice board situated just inside the staff room entrance. This displays three columns, the first two of which are headed respectively as 'BANKERS' and 'RAPs' (standing for 'Raising Achievement Programme'). A small passport photograph of every Year 11 pupil has been organised into one of the three columns and some of these photographs are further bordered in red which denotes that they draw down Pupil Premium funding, a policy initiative spear-headed by the Liberal Democratic component of the Coalition Government (2010-2015). The Progress Leader explains that the first column, the 'BANKERS', are those pupils estimated to get 5 A* to C grades in their GCSE's. The second column - the 'RAPs', are all those pupils who are likely to get *either* Maths *or* English but probably not both and will therefore need targeted support. The final group are referred to only briefly in this presentation because they (as I establish through talking further with staff) are undertaking foundation qualifications and are therefore not significant in terms of the measures which will decide the school's place in the league tables, that being its GCSE results. The language being used here is highly illuminative: the 'BANKERS' are of course those pupils whose results ensure the school's continued post-inspection recovery; but, staff are told, it is the 'RAP' pupils that will make the difference between a 65% GCSE A* - C achievement rate rather than the 44% currently being projected. Thus, all staff are urged to study the board in their break and lunchtimes and sign up an individual RAP pupil for intensive coaching and support over the next few months.

Retracing our steps back down the corridor and continuing on we pass a classroom which houses the school's ASDAN⁹ provision. This is run by a recently qualified Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) named Pat who was approached by the Head teacher "out of the blue" asking if she would consider heading up this provision within Key Stage 4 on the condition that she undertook the HLTA qualification at the same time. Moving through some double doors, we come to the entrance to the Key Stage 3 Diner, directly opposite this hangs a huge institutionally-generated notice board displaying year group statistics on attendance and punctuality - the hidden curriculum is alive and well! The oblong buildings of the school are designed so that they make up an internal space referred to as 'the quad' which is an uncovered outdoor area accessed by some pupils at break and lunchtimes.

A lack of both indoor and outdoor pupil social spaces is another issue that raises concern for some staff and pupils, as is the lack of designated areas for pupils according to their age. Walking past the Key Stage 1 Diner we come across classrooms designed for Textiles and Food Technology. One of these is used as a Breakfast Club which some pupils attend each morning and if we look through the glass section of the door we can see the three learning mentors, Angie, Paul and Cheryl setting out cereal, juice and toast whilst talking to pupils and greeting those newly arrived. This is just one aspect of the mentors' work with which we will soon become intimately acquainted.

⁹ ASDAN is the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network which emerged out of a project to develop alternative education provision in both mainstream and alternative settings

Continuing around the corner we enter a long corridor with pupil toilets which remain locked apart from break times - a measure which was brought in as a means to prevent internal truancy during lesson times. Passing two Design and Technology classrooms, the corridor takes a slight dog-leg and we find ourselves outside the mentor base which in a previous life was a large walk-in storage cupboard but was then converted to serve as a small pupil social space staffed by the learning mentors with a small adjoining office. As with Breakfast Club, we will come to learn much more about what goes on in this space in due course. Towards the end of this corridor is one of two Key Stage 4 Diners, created out of existing classrooms after the realisation that the original Diner was too small to cater for the 1,500 pupils passing through each thirty minute lunch break. At the far end of this corridor is a small office inhabited by the School's attached Police Officer whenever he is on site. This most recent peripatetic role has come about due to the *Safer Schools Partnership* (The Police Foundation, 2011), a policy initiative which was intended to signal a new approach in school-police relations and thus leading to a greater police presence within many English state schools.

Close to the police officer's base is a much larger room which houses the school's own internal pupil referral unit. This provision, run by TAs, is for pupils who, for a variety of reasons, do not access what is referred to as "mainstream classes" but are being offered a final chance to engage before the imposition of permanent exclusion. This is not to be confused with the euphemistically termed 'internal exclusion', rebranded from its traditional name of 'isolation' which is perhaps a more familiar term to readers less familiar with the everyday workings of English schools in their current format. Internal exclusion which is referred to simply as 'inclusion' by staff and pupils alike is staffed by BSWs and is tucked away at the end of a second floor corridor. This provision serves as a means to isolate pupils from their peers on a temporary basis and is a planned sanction for poor behaviour and/or not adhering to school rules. In different parts of the school it is possible to find other rooms which house provisions that have more specialised functions and take place away from the "mainstream".

In continuing our tour of the school we can observe that each corridor is organised by subject area and, like the staff and visitor entrance, photographic images of actual Priory Park pupils have been utilised with the twin purposes of signposting and advertising each subject area in an appealing and marketable way such as the pupil holding up a literary quote for English. During the study, concerns were expressed that no footfall analysis of subject areas had taken place as part of the design process of the new build with the result that the darkest and narrowest staircase and stairwell led up to the busiest classes of Maths, Science and English. Taking into account the colourful bunting in the student reception along with the imaginative subject-signposting seen here, it is hard not to get the impression that staff are 'making the best of a bad job' with this new build.

By now lessons are in full swing and as we pass each classroom we can hear snatches of sound: teachers in full pedagogical flow, the blare of audio-visual resources or the chatter of pupils in small group discussions both formal and informal. At this moment the corridor is empty apart from Kim, a behaviour support worker who is carrying out her 'on-call' duties. The walkie-talkie she is holding crackles into life as someone from the student reception requests that 'on-call' go to the assistance of a Science teacher who, by pressing a button on her classroom laptop has activated this intervention. Such requests come about if a

pupil's behaviour in class is disrupting learning in some way or the teacher needs a pupil to be escorted elsewhere. Confirming that she is on her way Kim breaks into a brisk pace and on arriving at the classroom knocks loudly on the open door asking "Miss" [the teacher] how she can help. In response, the teacher beckons to a pupil named Eddie to come to the front and all three step into the corridor just out of the view of the class, some of whom are watching keenly to see what happens next. The teacher briefs the behaviour support worker that she saw Eddie using his mobile phone to photograph another pupil's GCSE coursework; she then instructed him to hand it over but he had refused several times. Thanking the teacher for this information, Kim now turns to Eddie questioningly. In response to the allegation, Eddie is somehow managing to combine a huge smile with an outward show of being highly offended and suggests to Kim that the teacher has "lost it" and is "proper 'rajed'"¹⁰. Kim informs Eddie that if he hands his phone over now, he can go back into class, get on with his work and the whole incident will be forgotten. Eddie continues to deny the allegation and the teacher, perhaps sensing that this situation is not going to be resolved quickly, leaves them in the corridor and returns to her class closing the door firmly. Kim then tries a number of strategies to get Eddie to "fess up". She appeals to Eddie by pointing out how much more focused and engaged he has been in the classroom recently compared to previous issues with anger and poor behaviour which had led to numerous visits to Internal Exclusion. Eddie however is not receptive and now appearing agitated, challenges Kim to "search me if you don't believe me!" The behaviour support worker shakes her head sadly implying that she cannot believe it has come to this then uses the aerial of her walkie-talkie to prod the pockets of Eddie's blazer. Her search of both Eddie and his bag (which is retrieved from the classroom) fails to reveal a phone so Kim threatens to call the member of senior management who is also on-call, in effect ramping up the potential consequences. Eddie merely continues to protest his innocence and refuses to cooperate with any further requests or instructions. Kim tells Eddie that his parents will now have to be contacted and it is at this point that he explodes and marches off the school premises shouting "Oh my days! I don't believe this place!" Making no attempt to physically stop him Kim is back on the walkie-talkie alerting student reception that Eddie has gone 'AWOL' and it is at this moment that three loud and intermittent beeps blare out signalling the start of morning break. Within a few seconds, doors open and the corridor erupts with the sound and actions of several hundred pupils emerging from their classrooms. Kim can now stand down as another member of the behaviour support team will take over 'on-call' duties once lessons reconvene.

This opening pen picture sets out a 'typical morning' at Priory Park High as viewed through the eyes of the researcher. This and the brief biography presented beforehand, offers a snap-shot of the school at the time of the study. The account describes the school in terms of both a physical structure *and* a community comprising different groups of people engaged in different types of activities. The situations and observations recounted in the pen picture are probably not that unique or remarkable, more than likely mirroring the fortunes and experiences of many other all-inclusive state schools dealing with Ofsted inspections, league tables and the changing demographics of pupil populations. Of central importance however is the prominence given to provisions and activities *away from the classroom* carried out by those who are presented and understood generically (and therefore crudely) as 'support' or pastoral staff, which specific to this pen picture were TAs and HLTAs, such as Pat and Cath,

¹⁰ 'rajed' is slang to describe someone who is very annoyed or something which is seen as strange or weird.

tasked with running different provisions; BSWs like Kim carrying out her on-call duties; and the LMs (Angie, Paul and Cheryl).

It is the latter group - the learning mentors - who form the main subject of this IE as our “small heroes” (Smith, 1987). This chapter will now present the mentors’ ‘everyday work’ in their role of supporting pupils as told from the standpoint of each. The discussion is organised into two parts; ‘Part One’ continues in the form of a ‘typical working day’ account written from composite observations and interviews gleaned during the ethnography. Included in this section are the perspectives of the pupils in terms of their understandings of the learning mentor role and their school experiences more generally. This data, generated by both the learning mentors and the pupils’ work knowledges, enables an understanding of the strategies employed by both parties i.e. those who are ‘officially deemed as having ‘barriers to learning’ and those who follow a more agentic path to mentor support; and the relationships built as a result. Although there is initially much to be seen that is positive in these accounts and stories, ‘Part Two’ exposes the disjunctures that the mentors experience in carrying out this work drawing particular attention to the liminal spaces that they inhabit. It is in this part that the accounts and perspectives of other staff are also introduced into the discussion. This enables an identification of those afore-mentioned institutional connections that are constructed piece by piece so that ultimately, a view of the extended organizational process is achieved. Let us then turn to the work of the LMs of Priory Park High.

4.3 The ‘everyday work’ of the Learning Mentors (Part One)

4.3.1 Breakfast club at Priory Park High

It is about ten minutes to eight on a cold and damp Monday morning and the LMs are setting up Breakfast Club; not the corporate-sponsored “Greggs” version seen in some schools, but a home-grown provision initiated and run solely by the mentors themselves. Paul and Cheryl, are laying out juice, cereal and milk whilst Angie is methodically feeding bread into two toasters, adding to the not insubstantial pile of golden brown toast already plated up. *Diamonds* by Rihanna blares out from the radio, providing an accompaniment to their activities as the pupils of Priory Park High start to drift into the quad from the student entrance, some making their way over to this ground floor food technology class room which accommodates Breakfast Club. On arrival, one or two of them hand over a *Metro* newspaper to the mentors picked up from their bus journey and look exceedingly happy when they are thanked profusely for this act. This is just one of several daily rituals that I have come to observe at Breakfast Club, another being the warm welcome that pupils receive, regardless of whether they are first-timers or regular attenders. The rules of Breakfast Club are simple, pupils must sign in, eat the food which is provided whilst sitting socially and then clear up after themselves before leaving.

During the physical process of distributing the food, each of the mentors takes the opportunity to interact more directly with individual pupils. Their actions suggest that they know each one well, such as the Year 11 girl who gets the crust of the bread saved back

and toasted, this being her personal preference. This morning, Taylor, a Year 7 pupil is excited to show Angie a print-out of her family tree that she and her mum did at the weekend and which seems to indicate that she is a very distant cousin of Justin Bieber. Some of the older pupils seated at the same table pause in their own chat and glance up amusedly at Taylor with one of them starting to say something in a sneering tone but stopping abruptly when Angie, who has been engrossed in Taylor's explanation of her print-out shoots them a warning look. Joe, another Year 7 pupil who I have previously observed as very upbeat, displays a different demeanour today opting to sit on his own at another table. Paul joins him there asking how his recent rugby league trials have gone.

Shaun, a Year 10 boy stands tentatively at the doorway and asks if it is possible to see Angie in private. She beckons him into a small kitchen which leads off from the main classroom. He wants to apologise for "losing it" in the mentor base at lunchtime the previous Friday. They spend a few moments discussing this incident and Angie warns him that if it happens again, he will forfeit the right to come into the base at break times. Shaun agrees looking relieved and Angie invites him to get some toast whilst Cheryl calls back another pupil who has just left, telling him in no uncertain terms to "clear up your mess!" All three mentors 'tut-tut' and shake their heads in humorous mock disapproval whilst the boy in question returns sheepishly to the table and gathers up the remains of his breakfast, the rest of the group looking on laughing. By now it is 8.15 a.m. and a few latecomers are admonished but never-the-less 'clucked around' by being handed hastily buttered toast wrapped in paper napkins which they are instructed to eat en route to registration because, according to the mentors, "it's important to have something in your tummies at the start of the day!" As the last pupil leaves, Paul and Cheryl clear away the toasters, radio and any unused items whilst sharing their observations of the pupils. Angie has left a couple of minutes earlier in order to attend the weekly briefing taking place in the staff room.

Breakfast Club, as the first activity of the LM's working day encapsulates their approach in terms of how they view and work with the pupils, seeing them first and foremost as young people. During the study I became a regular participant and active observer at Breakfast Club and was continually struck by how this one relatively brief intervention met an array of young people's needs from the more obvious supply of physical nutrition offered to the pupils (which they might not otherwise be getting), to the social and emotional dimension which was revealed in varying ways. The distinctiveness of the pupil/ mentor relationship could be readily observed in that pupils referred to the mentors by their first names and as the only staff in the school who were addressed in this way this afforded a different relationship to other adults in the school encountered by the young people. Furthermore, the way in which the mentors' modelled certain types of behaviour also stood out - sitting down to eat, actively listening to and interacting with other people in a genuine and respectful manner and remonstrating or challenging when needed but always in a way which focused on the behaviour, rather than the person. Breakfast Club provided a forum for pupils to spend 'downtime' with one another which, as could be seen in the pen picture, was a facility that was lacking at the school. Pupils attending this provision could rely on a consistently warm welcome and a positive affirmation of themselves as unique individuals be that through an acknowledgement of their food preference, a new hair style being commented upon or the recognition of an out-of-school achievement. It afforded pupils the opportunity to share

problems, seek advice and in the case of Shaun, reflect on and then put right a previous incident before embarking on a new school day. Breakfast Club was where the mentors' daily work began; work which was premised on constantly observing the presentations and demeanours of pupils and looking out for how these might change from day to day and week to week. Interacting with pupils in order to gather, and where necessary, share with other mentors and staff what they had learned about any significant events going on both inside and outside of school. The wider benefits of Breakfast Club to the school seemed self-evident from the outset of the fieldwork period – a nourished and attended-to pupil who was potentially more focused and happier at the start of the school day.

The description of Breakfast Club which emerges from the data suggests that it played a valuable and positive role at Priory Park High, but on arriving for my first day at the school and asking to be directed to this provision, the school receptionist and the three teachers who were also present at reception signing in for the day, were unable to tell me its actual location. Moreover, it received very little mention in the interview data subsequently generated apart from the Deputy- Head teacher, who cited the provision directly when giving an example of how the mentors had carved out an identity around supporting “vulnerable pupils” (Interview 9). As if to confirm this lack of presence in the school's organisational schema, there was no mention of Breakfast Club in the school prospectus either, further suggesting that its place (and thereby those who ran it) was marginalised within the school set up. In IE terms this is a “disjuncture” (Smith, 2005:199) – on the one hand Breakfast Club exists, it is a social reality where, day in day out, a significant part of the mentors' work of establishing and building positive relationships with pupils takes place; but at the same time, in relation to both its (unknown) physical location and its textual absence in the school's promotional literature, it has an element of invisibility. Perhaps it is the comment made by the Deputy-Head teacher above that helps us understand how this situation has come about, specifically her identification of those pupils who use Breakfast Club which casts this as a provision for ‘the other’. I had a brief glimpse of what happened when Breakfast Club was brought in from the margins and actively promoted to the majority which was during the period of GCSE examinations. At this time, both senior and middle managers encouraged pupils to leave home early and have breakfast at school in order to prevent lateness and optimise their performance in the exam itself. Therefore, unless linked directly with the core business of the school, the provision appeared to remain invisible.

4.3.2 Time spent with pupils – building relationships to affect change

Back to Monday morning and the bell for Period 1 has just sounded. As I accompany the three LMs from Breakfast Club to the Mentor Base I observe how their work of interacting and building relationships with pupils continues as they greet, and are greeted, by many pupils moving about the school. For example, one girl calls out to Cheryl: *“Are you around at lunchtime today? Can I pop in to see you?”*, whilst the other two mentors are conveying a sense of urgency to late-comers saying: *“Hurry to your class!”* and *“Get to where you need to be”*, reinforcing this instruction with a mock ‘kick up the bum’ to some. They also use their presence in the corridors to enforce school rules regarding correct uniform such as the boy wearing a prohibited baseball cap and whom Angie is walking right up to whilst exclaiming:

“That’s a nice hat; can I have it? It would look much better on me!”

Their approach in these matters is noticeably less authoritarian in comparison to other staff and the boy half-smiles in response, sheepishly removing his cap before stuffing it into his bag. Acknowledging his compliance Angie shouts a *“Thank you!”* over her shoulder and as we turn the corner, Paul laughs at this exchange informing me that *“We keep them on their toes!”*

We arrive at the mentor base which, as observed in the pen picture, had formerly been a walk-in storage cupboard but has since been reconfigured as two rooms the larger of which acts as a social area, open to pupils during most breaks and lunchtimes for card games (UNO seems to be a particular favourite), chess and general socialising.



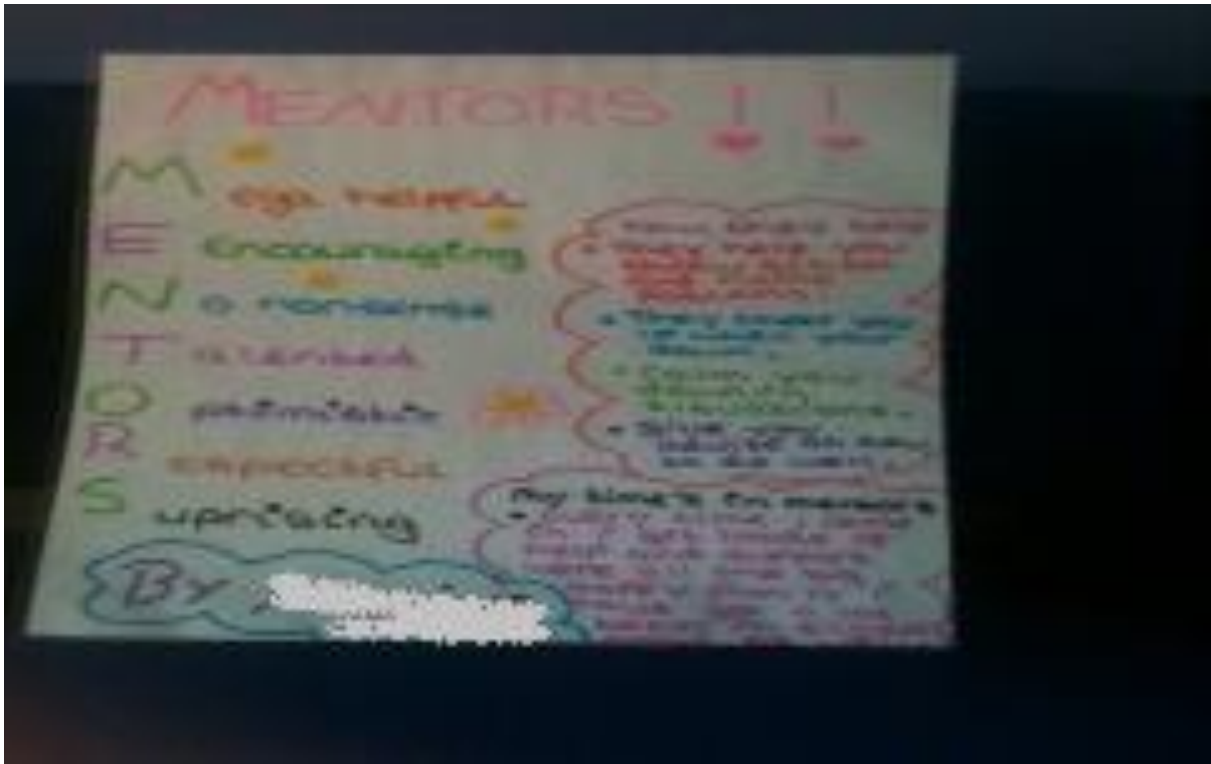
The Mentor base



Leading off from this is the smaller room which is set up as an office and overlooks the quad. Mind maps which are currently being promoted across the school as study aids are displayed on the walls of the mentor base. There are also posters advertising the learning

mentor role itself which have been produced by pupils with experience of this intervention, one of them taking the form of an acrostic as a means to explain what the learning mentors do:

Mega helpful
Encouraging
No nonsense
Talented
Optimistic
Respectful
Surprising



Other posters give pupil perspectives of what learning mentor support entails:

“They help you threw [sic] school and home problems”
“They calm you down in situations” and,
“They give you advice on how to do well”.

Unlike the institutionally-generated notice boards seen earlier which focus on academic progress, attendance and punctuality, it is other examples of learning and achievement that are celebrated here in the mentor base. For example, a sign on the outside of the door to the base reads ‘Aqeel only learned to play chess 5 weeks ago and now he smashes the opposition!!!’

4.3.3 One to one interventions: The “officials”

We are well into Period 1 with lessons in full swing. During this part of the school day, the base is a fairly quiet yet industrious space as one-to-one interventions are carried out with pupils. This activity makes up a significant part of the mentors' work load, so it is important to gain an authentic and valid picture of these. The way in which pupils access time with a mentor happens in a number of ways but can be understood as two broad but distinct 'categories' – the first of which is the “officials”. As the name suggests these are pupils whose need for a mentor is initially instigated by a member of school staff further up the hierarchy, usually a Year Manager or Progress Leader lasting for a period of six to eight weeks. A number of official one-to-one's will be taking place in the mentor base this morning so let us take a look at the first one now.

4.3.4 Engaging 'disaffected' pupils with the core objectives of the school

This morning Cheryl is supporting a Year 11 pupil who has been sent by her Year Manager to complete a letter as part of an application to study at a local College of Further Education College. The pupil however, appears unenthusiastic about the task in hand wailing:

“Oh Cheryl, I don't what to do this, I can't write letters”

In an attempt to combine kindness with a clear sense of purpose Cheryl responds:

“Ah, don't you Honey? Oh well, welcome to the real world”.

With much coaxing and encouragement the letter is eventually completed despite the pupil's reticence. Once the pupil has left I ask Cheryl about her approach and she maintains:

“Well I'm not going to do it for them; that's not the real world and they've got to learn. She's had three months to do this!”

Cheryl goes on to explain that sometimes it is more productive to focus on what pupils are actually doing rather than what they are saying. Angie, who is also present, agrees voicing that other staff can sometimes get too hung up on what is coming out of pupils' mouths rather than whether or not they are actually getting on with a particular task, recalling a recent example which typified this. A pupil had been sent to her by a Progress Leader to complete a piece of coursework but whilst getting on with it hadn't stopped talking or (as Angie described) “complaining, you know, 'effing and 'jeffing'¹¹, being really rude about a particular teacher who apparently 'hated' her and was really picking on her”. Angie had listened to the girl without being drawn into any of the comments about the teacher and spoke only in relation to the written piece as it was taking shape. Angie concluded: “She

¹¹ A colloquial term referring to someone who swears a lot.

returned to the teacher with her course work completed which as it turned out was apparently to a good standard so ... job done as far as I'm concerned"

"Welcome to the real world" along with "Now you're getting [understanding] it!" are phrases heard frequently in mentor-pupil interactions and used not just to introduce humour into a situation but also as a means to encourage pupils particularly in Key Stage 4 (the last two years of High School) to acknowledge that the adult world is beckoning. The two one-to-ones above, (one directly observed and the other recalled) offer further illustrations of the mentor-pupil relationship but also convey how the nature of such interactions lead to the achievement of wider school objectives - two aspects which may initially appear as separate but are in fact inter-connected. Obviously the ratio of time to pupil numbers is clearly in the learning mentors' favour compared to teachers' situations but to see this simply as a matter of constraints on teacher time and numbers neglects the question of the *type* of approach underpinning this support. Specifically, the pupil-mentor relationship begins on first name terms and takes place outside of a formal classroom-setting in a space where hostile outbursts expressed by the young person are tolerated and/or overlooked by the mentor in order to get the "job done". This produces positive outcomes for the school, which in the cases above are a college application and a completed piece of coursework – both tangible items of 'paperwork' which ultimately contribute to official school data regarding pupil destinations and academic attainment.

4.3.5 Official referrals designed to complement other interventions

Paul is also carrying out a one-to-one in the mentor base this morning with a Year 7 boy who, originally from Russia is now residing in the UK which is the fourth country he has lived in to date. This intervention has been set up again by a third party but this time to complement another provision in the school as the boy is being supported predominantly by the EAL (English as an Additional Language) Department. The boy's Year Manager who requested the referral, is concerned that he is struggling to get to grips with this latest culture and language, notwithstanding the idea of forming lasting relationships with both teachers and pupils alike. The sessions with Paul focus on the pupil's social and emotional needs with the intention of building his self-confidence and resilience. Their interactions centre on the construction of a visual time-line which whilst drawing on his previous memories of significant events and people, also ties in with his fears and hopes for the future. In today's session I observe how through stilted conversation, numerous gesturing, written words, doodles and pictures the time-line is starting to take shape and the boy appears to very much enjoy this time spent with Paul.

As we move into Period 2 Cheryl leaves the base to go out on a home visit. Paul's next one-to-one has arrived, someone who is a regular attender of the base at break times and whom Paul immediately takes to task regarding some "silly behaviour" that had taken place in a lesson last week. This time his approach is more direct than the previous one-to-one and when asked about this later on Paul explains that because this particular pupil has been coming into the base for so long he is considered to be 'family' - "...and what happens in families? They tell you when you've messed up!"

4.3.6 Spontaneous interventions – The Angry Year 11 Girls

About half an hour passes and the relative quiet of the base is shattered abruptly as two highly agitated Year 11 pupils, burst in from the corridor asking, if not demanding, to see a mentor. Not wanting to disrupt Paul's session, Angie quickly ushers the girls into the office, asking them which lesson they have just walked out of and gesturing for them to sit down. She contacts student reception requesting that they let the on-call person know that the girls are with her. Now turning to the girls, Angie suggests that they "calm down" and "explain to me what has just happened". Speaking in quick and angry bursts and sometimes at the same time, they tell her that some boys in their class were being racist about their culture "... saying how we live in trees and stuff ... but the teacher did nothing!" The girls are angry saying this is not the first time this has happened by which they mean both the boys' comments and the teacher's apparent lack of intervention. Once the girls have finished speaking, Angie pauses for a moment and then asks for and writes down the names of the boys, informing the girls that she will speak to them and the teacher about the incident over the next few days. She gently puts it to the girls that in one day, teachers will see around 150 different pupils suggesting therefore that it must be difficult for them to remember every single event. Having set out this point she invites them to imagine what it must be like to manage a group of 30 people who, unlike them, don't all want to listen and engage. Angie then suggests a further possibility for what unfolded in the lesson saying:

"Maybe this teacher lacks experience or confidence in dealing with this issue [of racism] - can you blame her for not being bold?"

By this point the girls have visibly calmed down and the mentor asks them to think about other, perhaps more constructive ways they could have dealt with this situation rather than simply walking out of the lesson. Reflecting on this one of the girls suggests "wait until the end of the lesson and then speak to our Head of Year?" (meaning the Progress Leader) and, nodding vigorously in response Angie affirms this to be a very good strategy adding that they could tell her how the situation is affecting their learning, reminding the girls that as part of the Progress Leader's role is to oversee educational attainment "this is the kind of language she will understand!" Angie then advises the girls to keep not only their English teacher but, "all your teachers 'on-side'" pointing out how important it is to maximise their working relations at this point in their school career, a strategy which will give them the best chance to "achieve the results you want". This entire interaction has lasted no longer than fifteen minutes but the girls, appearing visibly placated get up to leave. Switching to a noticeably more authoritarian tone, Angie instructs them to go straight back to class asking: "Do you feel the situation has been dealt with for now?" To which they nod and she continues:

"So there will be no need to walk out again. I don't want to hear that you've gone back in there and kicked off again".

Assuring her that this will not happen, the girls thank Angie and leave. Paul's session has just finished and he joins us in the office to get the 'low down' on what has just occurred. Angie discloses that incidences of pupils racially abusing other pupils have not always been

dealt with effectively by the school, to which Paul agrees, “but” says Angie “I make it my business to ensure that they are taken seriously”.

This incident is a key piece of data. At the micro level it gives a detailed and accurate picture of what learning mentors do in that an incident was utilised as a means to encourage pupils to reflect on events from viewpoints other than their own and develop strategies to deal with conflict constructively. Within exchanges such as these, the mentor ensures that the onus is on what the pupils *themselves* can do to resolve the issue rather than looking to support staff to take it up on their behalf. In that sense it provides an apt example of the model of LM practice proposed by Cruddas (2005) incorporating Egan’s ‘problem-management, opportunity development’ approach facilitated by Angie as the ‘skilled helper’. At the meta level, it illustrates how the mentors often walk a thin line in not colluding with the pupils who are expressing negative views about other staff (in this case their frustration at a teacher’s management of a situation), whilst advocating *for* the pupil/s in the sense of giving them a platform to speak about their experiences, air their views and feel genuinely listened to. What is not known is how the teacher in question felt about pupils simply walking out of their lesson to seek out another member of staff. At a macro level, there is also clear evidence of how performativity influences those everyday micro interactions that go on in schools. The LM recognises that the best strategy for the pupils to secure an intervention at middle management level is to frame it around their learning and therefore the results they may achieve. The incident also raises wider concerns: for instance, was the issue of pupil-to-pupil racism being brushed under the carpet in the school’s haste to drive up its academic standards and regain its previous standing (Belgutay, 2016). In a separate discussion, one of the other learning mentors also identified the issue of pupil to pupil racism, recalling how the school residential had been an effective way of working on this issue intensively with pupils. Unfortunately this was no longer offered by the school and he did not know the reasons behind this.

4.3.7 Morning Break – Mentor Base becomes youth club

The bell sounds again signalling the end of Period 2 and the start of break time. Very quickly the small social area transforms from quiet work space to rowdy youth club. A lot of banter and the occasional swear word can be heard but in this part of the school the pupils generally police themselves, offenders hastily being told to “shut up” because they know that the mentors will close the base temporarily if the rules of its use are not respected. Paul joins in with a round of *UNO* which is played at a furious pace and which he loses, much to the delight of the pupils. I join Angie and Cheryl in the office where they are chatting with Becky, one of the peripatetic careers advisors. A Year 8 pupil hovers at the open door of the office waiting to be invited in. He is eager to show Angie, seated at the desk, the new X-box which came out “literally at midnight just gone!” Searching for an image of it on her laptop, she invites him to pull up a chair and as with Taylor’s family tree at Breakfast Club, listens carefully whilst he tells her all about it. Using her position overlooking the quad she frequently waves and calls out to some of the pupils there, addressing one boy in Jamaican patois to “pull up your trousers ‘bwoy’ – we don’t want to see your backside!” She then beckons two other pupils to the window, asking one about their recent birthday celebration and the other how they have got on with some course work she had supported them with at homework club the week before.

4.3.8 Official referrals over which Mentors have reservations: Michael from Year 8

Break time now over, pupils are hurried off to lessons and the base is restored to its former quiet and calm space. Angie is waiting for her next official referral - Michael from Year 8, and tells me a little of the background to this intervention. Michael has been through most of the support systems in school with no apparent success and is now one step away from a managed move. The time he is going to be spending with Angie is, in her view, a last ditch attempt by her managers “who are scratching their heads about what to do next”. Michael’s behaviour is deemed problematic in that he is described as attention-seeking and disruptive in class but not in a particularly hostile or aggressive way, quite the opposite in fact. Angie tells me that his family are known to agencies external to school such as the Local Authority Social Services.

On seeing Michael approaching the base through the quad, Angie invites me to observe from the office and breaks off from our discussion to welcome him at the door. Far from showing any sign of fatigue at yet another intervention, Michael is clearly upbeat about being here and having his first meeting with Angie whom he knows from Breakfast Club. Angie explains my presence asking him if it is okay for me to remain. Knowing me a little also from Breakfast Club Michael gives me a huge smile and confirms that this is fine. Seated at a table in the social area of the base, Angie starts the session by handing Michael a piece of paper and a pen saying:

“I want you to write down all the people who help you inside and outside of school”.

To which Michael immediately responds:

“I already told Miss ----- [Year Manager] all this. Can’t you just ask her?”

Angie smiles and says:

“The thing you’ll learn about me Michael is that I have a very bad memory so I need everything spelt out to me and written down”.

Michael sets about his task and in less than a couple of minutes he flourishes the piece of paper at Angie asking:

“Can we play cards now?”

Ignoring his request she studies the piece of paper and exclaims:

“This looks like a crime scene! Let’s start again”.

Getting out a fresh sheet she divides it into three columns. In the first column she instructs him to write down all the people that help him, both in and out of school. In the second

column he is to write down what each person does and in the last, how he would describe his relationship with each of them. Angie finishes these instructions by saying:

“I know you have already told Miss this but now I want you to write it down for me. I want to know your take on everyone and what they do”.

She then joins me in the office leaving the door open. Perhaps sensing that the game of cards is not going to materialise soon, if at all, Michael picks up his pen and starts to write calling through to the office:

“Does that kettle work? “

Angie responds that *if* he works hard she *might* make him a cup of tea. Twenty minutes pass and Michael who is now busily filling up the columns hasn't spoken at all. Angie wanders back out to him and peering over his shoulder says “Much better!” before asking “how many sugars?”

Afterwards I ask Angie how she felt the session had gone. As often happens in our discussions she smiles ruefully and shrugs her shoulders saying:

“If they [the school] want to tick a box because they want to exclude them, they are going to ask: ‘have they had a Learning Mentor’ and if they have, they can get rid of them”

She expands on this remark explaining that as a team, the mentors feel that their work of building relationships in order to effect change is often used to meet another objective. She is concerned that this hidden agenda might undermine what her and her colleagues are attempting to do in their work of assisting pupils in removing their barriers to learning so that their participation in their schooling is either supported or resumed. The question regarding the ‘real’ purpose behind this particular intervention with Michael is of course impossible to verify. Priory Park High, along with many schools are under pressure to reduce exclusion figures and thus a variety of strategies are implemented, often underpinned by little more than a fervent desire that one of them ‘might just work’ for the pupil in question. However Colley’s observation that the needs of the institution determine the agenda and goals of mentor relationships is useful to note here. In posing the question: to what extent does the mentor become the “vehicle for external interests” (Colley, 2003:37), rather than a facilitator for the mentee she argues that in cases such as these it would be more accurate to see the mentoring relationship as *triadic*, rather than in its traditional construction of dyadic. Later, I return to this issue utilising an IE lens alongside Colley’s observation above, in order to verify exactly who or what the ‘white elephant’ present in mentoring interventions such as the ones we have seen is.

4.3.9 “I make it voluntary” – The mentor’s perspective on Official referrals and pupil choice

The interventions presented thus far are those which came about through an official referral. The vast majority of pupils referred in this way accepted a mentor intervention and appeared happy to receive their support and guidance. In spite of this, the mentors themselves felt it important that the referral was presented as an option rather than something the pupil was compelled to undergo as explained here by Angie:

I'll say to that young person *'Miss --- [the Year Manager] has come to me because she thinks you could do with some help. Do you know who I am? What my role is?'* And I'll go through the reasons...what the Year Manager thinks and I'll say *'do you feel this is right what they are saying? Do you think you might benefit from talking and looking at different ways of coping and dealing with that situation? Does that sound alright? Are you interested? You can say 'no' I won't cry, I'm a big girl'* then they'll laugh and go 'yeah, ok then'. I say *'I just have to make it clear that nobody is forcing you to have a meeting'* I make it voluntary, because you can't force someone to come and see you. That just wouldn't happen, it wouldn't work. It might be the perception of others of how it should work but no.

In the earlier discussion of the literatures I raised the issue of whether it is possible to see the LM role as a type of youth worker operating in a school setting (Bishop, 2011). Angie, who possessed a youth work qualification practises a key professional principle here i.e. the emphasis on a voluntary relationship. Within the Youth Work profession, this is viewed not only as an abstract principle but also as a practical justification in that young people involved by choice are much more likely "to own whatever gains they take away from that [...] experience" (Batsleer and Davies, 2010:2). Angie is keen to distinguish her approach from that of other staff, based on her belief that an intervention which is imposed on pupils or on which they are not consulted is not only undesirable, but would not achieve what it was intended to: *"you can't force someone to come and see you... it wouldn't work"*. Her comments further imply that other staff, essentially those doing the referring either do not agree with or more notably do not *understand* the need for this premise of voluntary participation: *"It might be the perception of others of how it should work but no"*. At a number of points during the study, the mentors expressed that because pupils had limited opportunities to exercise choice within a formal education setting, they felt it important that they include conversations such as the one outlined above as part of their approach. This contrasts greatly with other interventions based on pastoral or 'inclusion' imperatives that pupils were directed to one of which being the Anger Management programme delivered by the Behaviour Management team.

4.4 Working in the unseen domain: Mentors making time for the 'unofficials'

So far the discussion has set out the more formal aspect of the mentors work i.e. pupils who are referred to them officially and the more ad hoc interventions which arise alongside these such as the incident of the 'Angry Year 11 girls'. However, to look no further at the day to day work of the LMs would be misleading as a significant amount of their everyday work activities occurred in relation to the second 'category' of pupils I described earlier i.e. those young people whom the LMs referred to as their "unofficials". It is this aspect of their work which raise questions about the mentors' visibility, the liminal spaces they occupy and the possible advantages and disadvantages of operating in an "unseen domain" i.e. undertaking

activities which are outside of official prescriptions of the role. A similar observation is made in studies of comparative educational mentors such as Connexion's advisors (Colley and Chadderton, 2012). We now re-join the LMs at Priory Park High in order that we might start to gain a greater understanding of exactly who the "unofficials" might be and how such interventions come about.

4.4.1 Fleeting and/or practical encounters unofficial encounters

It is lunchtime and the Mentor Base is starting to fill up again, reverting as it does during break times to its 'youth club' function. Paul is gobbling down a microwaved meal prior to the lunchtime football club which he runs twice a week. I am struck on how little down-time his day seems to have compared to some of the other support staff who I have observed as regularly inhabiting the staff room and taking a well-earned break during lunchtime. As he leaves, I observe an older pupil, perhaps Year 10 or 11, at the entrance of the mentor base, looking furtively around in the corridor before ducking inside and making a bee-line for Cheryl. A whispered discussion ensues which lasts no more than twenty seconds during which Cheryl reaches for a directory of local health and welfare services, flicks through its pages and then scribbles something on a piece of paper and passes it to the pupil. Nodding her thanks the young person shoves it in her blazer pocket and leaves in a similar manner to how she arrived. I ask Cheryl whether (confidentiality permitting) she is able to explain what has just happened she nods, duly explaining that the pupil is one of their 'unofficials' who had stopped her in the corridor last week to ask for some information to help her deal with an issue that her older sibling was experiencing and that she didn't want anyone, friends included, to know about. In this instance then an "unofficial" is a pupil who needs help of a fleeting and /or practical nature with the mentor acting as a signposting service.

4.4.2 Long term and complex unofficial interventions

More common however are those pupils who refer themselves to a mentor for unofficial meetings which take place intermittently over periods of weeks, months and sometimes even years, which is in great contrast to the prescribed six to eight week period on which official referrals are premised. The "unofficials" in these instances are young people who are dealing with complex issues in their everyday lives. An example we see today is the Year 11 pupil who had initially approached Angie independently of her Year Manager - the person that pupils are normally instructed to approach as their 'first port of call' pastorally speaking. In their first meeting she had disclosed to Angie that her home-life was in turmoil due to her parents separating and her mother leaving the family home but subsequently returning some months later. During the time of her mother's absence, the girl, who was the oldest of three siblings had become more involved in caring for the family in terms of preparing meals and helping her father with other day-to-day domestic tasks. In later meetings, the girl expressed anger towards her Dad, disagreeing with his decision to accept her Mum back into the family home feeling that she was not genuine in her motives.

Being present in the mentor base for at least one of these sessions, I was struck by the way in which the learning mentor supported this pupil in what could be considered a very adult conversation. Through discussion and gentle questioning, Angie helped the pupil explore her own immediate situation and then family relations in a wider sense. In time, she was encouraged to start to see her parents beyond *her* immediate relationship with them, i.e. not

only as parents but people who, like her, faced changes and challenges in their daily lives. This was a young person seeking support that was not so much 'beneath' but entirely 'off' the radar and therefore independent of official pastoral systems. Offered on the pupils' own terms, sessions like this appeared to give those young people who opted to access the mentors of their own volition, the chance to develop skills needed to cope when confronted with and negotiating issues such as those set out above. This particular example of an unofficial intervention also illuminates a number of points presented in the literature review. Firstly regarding whether the mentor relationship provides a compensatory or supplementary function (Rhodes, 1994) we can see how Angie's role could be understood as both, i.e. perhaps compensating for the absence of a strong parental bond but also that it was the young person who sought out the mentor as a supplementary adult and in a way which avoided official systems or procedures. Second, Angie represented and synthesized characteristics of the parent-child relationship and peer support (Levinson, 1978) within this intervention and was perceived as someone who would be accepting of and empathetic to this young person's experiences (Philip and Hendry, 1996) perhaps with some specialist knowledge to impart on the basis of her experiences as an older person. It is these analytical points which provide a more accurate understanding of young people's agency in their decisions to seek support.

This observation was not mine alone but something that pupils themselves identified during the study, specifically when asked a question about who pupils could go to for support *in* school regarding difficulties they were experiencing *outside* of school? One response given in a paired interview (Teisha and Lenny) was that it depended very much on what the difficulty was with the pupils offering two hypothetical situations to explain their answer. In the first scenario they talked of a pupil who was in imminent danger due to a child protection matter which they deemed as "serious" suggesting that in this case they would talk to the Head of Year (meaning the Year Manager or Progress Leader) who they saw as an authority figure and crucially someone who had the power to intervene and "contact social services". For situations which were impacting on the pupil but in a less serious way, i.e. something which didn't necessarily require any outside intervention, they felt that pupils would go to the mentors because they "just talk to you about it more" (Interview 5).

4.4.3 Mentor-initiated unofficial interventions

A further type of "unofficial" intervention that could be observed was that which was initiated by the mentors themselves. Although not pupil-instigated I have classed these as 'unofficial' because the mentors, as a discrete staff team, did not have any say in the formal referral process, a situation which will be examined in more depth in due course. To learn more about this particular aspect of the mentors' work we return to the mentor base today for the final time today. The final bell has just sounded signalling the end of the formal school day and Paul is gathering up the materials needed for Homework Club which he is facilitating. Whilst Angie is waiting for Sally, one of her unofficials to arrive, we are discussing my observations of how pupils perceive and interact with the mentors compared to that of other staff. The meetings with Sally have come about because some months ago Angie had noticed a change in this pupil's demeanour and decided to approach her. Sally had then shared that she was worried about her mum who had started drinking at home during the

day, making it hard for Sally to focus in lessons. Primarily she was concerned for her mum but also how this inability to concentrate was going to affect her performance in her GCSEs. As her disclosure suggested a potential safe-guarding issue, Angie duly alerted and informed the relevant Year Manager and also suggested to the Director of Pastoral Care that Sally might benefit from a LM intervention - in effect asking for the pupil to be officially referred to her caseload. This request was however denied with no reason given. A few weeks after her initial disclosure, Sally had come to the mentor base to speak with Angie, saying she was 'wound up' by the comments of another pupil and feeling as if she might explode. Unable to find Angie who was not in school at that time, she had ended up punching a wall, rather, she said, "than the boy who was winding me up". Having heard about this incident on her return to school, Angie had eventually caught up with Sally and arranged to meet briefly with her after school today. As such an account of this meeting follows.

On her arrival Sally receives the usual warm greeting characteristic of pupil-mentor interactions. Angie explains my presence by telling Sally about my research and given what we had just been discussing asks how she (Sally) sees Angie, in her role as learning mentor. Sally thinks for a few seconds then replies:

"Like an older sister... or maybe mother...?"

At this latter depiction, they both burst into spontaneous laughter joking that if that were the case then Angie should be getting her a Christmas present. Sally says she would be happy with just "a period [session] with you and a cup of tea". Angie agrees to this and jokingly asks what present she will be getting to which Sally replies humorously "my company for an hour!" Angie then raises the 'punching the wall' incident asking Sally if she is happy for me to remain. Sally nods her consent and tells Angie that immediately after it had happened, other staff, including the school's attached police officer had intervened. As a result of her actions she was told she would have to attend the Anger Management programme (run by the Behaviour Support Team) saying to Angie "I told them about my mum but I don't think they listened to me". The discussion then moved on as Sally started to tell Angie about a part time job she had just secured which she was both excited and nervous about. After she left I ask Angie about the decision to refer the pupil to a behaviour modification intervention. Smiling wryly, she expressed that it didn't seem like an appropriate or adequate response given what the girl has disclosed about her home life but that it illustrated what she saw as the increasingly 'tick-box' approach of the school i.e. that a process has been duly followed in that the pupil in question had been referred for an intervention so the matter was dealt with.

What is striking about this account is that the initial request for an official referral by the learning mentor was refused by her line manager whose response to the 'hitting the wall' incident was to make an immediate referral to the school's police officer, followed up with a more long-term intervention of the Anger Management programme. Had the girl had a LM intervention when her need was first identified there is at least the possibility that things might not have escalated as they did. Sally's need for support was subordinated, until a point was reached where she was at risk of being blamed and potentially excluded (had she hit

the boy instead of the wall). Thus it was her angry behaviour, rather than her need for support which came to be seen as the primary issue. This situation further illustrates the earlier discussion regarding the contested nature of pastoral care (i.e. measures which are supportive on the one hand and disciplinary on the other) and the need to have a more nuanced understanding of what is actually meant by so-called pastoral interventions. Some might view a six week course in Anger Management as being supportive but a counter argument is that the programme merely offers pupils the 'opportunity' to take responsibility for this aspect of their behaviour but with minimal support; hence what can be seen as a new chapter in the 'history' of pastoral care provision was summed up bluntly by Marie (current TA and previous Learning Mentor and Year Manager):

We are telling children to be more in touch with their feelings and then when they are, it's like ... well get on with it (Interview 12).

In reality, the mentor's reaction to not being granted 'official' access in their request to offer support to this young person was to offer it anyway in a more informal and again, 'off-the-radar' or unseen way, begging a further question of whether it is necessary to have official procedures in place at all? I will come back to this data and the question it has posed later.

The existence of "officials" and "unofficials" is neither surprising nor unique to Priory Park High as this phenomenon is also illustrated in news media reports (Wallace, 2001) other academic accounts such as Rose and Doveston (2008) and in my own earlier study where a respondent described their work as:

Emotional support is linked to each student who is *targeted* for support. [And] Pupils also ask for this support through [unofficial] *drop-in* sessions (cited in Bishop, 2011: 34, my emphasis).

4.5 Pupils' perspectives of the mentors' work: Notions of the familial in both name and presence

Putting the means of access for mentor support to one side, it is the approach taken by the learning mentors in their everyday work and the subsequent pupil-mentor relationships which are established and grown as a result which now warrant further attention, but this time from the perspective of the pupils.

Earlier Sally's description of seeing the mentor as "... an older sister...or maybe mother" was one of many 'familial' references which emerged from discussion with pupils as well as observations of pupil-mentor interactions. For example, Paul, being the 'elder' of the mentor team was often referred to as "Gramps" by male pupils, particularly when playing card games in the mentor base at lunch times. Another similar viewpoint commonly expressed which again distinguished the mentors from other school staff, was how they were likened to a "friend" as shown here by Eliza, a Year 11 pupil who had worked under the guidance of the

learning mentors when setting up a peer mentoring lunchtime club for Year 7 pupils. In this part of the ethnography, pupils were asked how they would explain the learning mentor role to people who were not familiar with it:

I'm pretty sure they're just here to talk to people. .. I've been talking to Angie about her role...she says 'one of the main things I do is observe' and she observes everyone and even when you don't realise she's doing it she observes everyone, how they look, how they act, how they present themselves, because a lot of people aren't gonna tell you how they're feeling so it's kind of her job to observe how people are feeling. They run clubs and stuff like that, I know Paul goes out and plays football with everyone and I think [pauses] they are just... here. I'm pretty sure they've probably got a deeper job than what they do behind all that but to the kids, their perception, they are there like an older friend... like someone you can talk to, someone you can be close with (Eliza, Pupil Interview 4).

Here Eliza fuses notions of friendship on the one hand with the seniority ascribed to family members expressed by Sally above, describing the mentor *"like an older friend"*. This is reminiscent of the first style of mentoring named "classic" which was presented earlier as part of a typology of mentoring forms by young people (Philip and Hendry, 1996) and which refers to an older, more experienced person who is seen as a role model that gives recognition to the mentee through supporting and challenging them. The typology also referred to "long-term" relationship mentoring with "risk taking" adults who although similar to "classic" mentoring in many respects, were also perceived by the young person as resisting (dominant) adult definitions of the social world (Philip and Hendry, 1996). Although this data was generated in an informal education context, it is possible to see how these formulations of the "classic" and the "long-term" can be applied to the learning mentors in the descriptions of their work given in the typical day scenario above *and* in the words of pupils here. From Eliza's comments it is possible to strip the learning mentor role down into its key functions: someone *"you can talk to"* / *"you can be close with"* and someone who maintains a constant presence - *"they are just here"*, in the sense of keeping a vigil in their work of looking over and looking out for pupils. This constancy, in the sense of being dependable and enduring, contrasts with how other avenues of support in the school were viewed as although some of the pupils talked about having good relationships with teachers, these arose and were premised much more on support with their *formal* learning. Only one member of the teaching staff, a Drama teacher, was perceived in a similar way to the mentors and in this instance the pupil in question had spent a significant amount of time with this teacher through her involvement in school productions and the subject itself.

These themes of an enduring type of friendship were to be found in other pupil interviews:

Teisha: *Everyone in the school...* [Lenny interjects] *loves them* [the learning mentors].

Teisha: *Yeah, they're like trustworthy, they're easy to get on with straight away.*

Lenny: *They are friendly. To be respectful you can call them Miss ----- but when you get to know them you can call them Angie or Paul; you know like at a youth centre? They're like someone you'd see at a youth centre and they are friends with you instead of teachers.*

Jo: So is it a different kind of relationship to other adults in the school?

Both: *Yeah.*

Teisha: *It is more like your friendship group than they are your learning base if you see what I mean. So I talk to Angie in the same way I talk to Lenny.*

Jo: And how would you describe the role to others who didn't know?

Lenny: *They are always there – especially when you need them. When I needed Angie in Year 10 I would come down here [the mentor base] and I would just sit with her. When I first came here to Angie it was then, like hard times, yeah? But now I can just come in and say 'hi' and end up talking for about 20 minutesso it's just somewhere you can go to talk. It's like it doesn't feel like you're at school (Teisha and Natalie, Pupil Interview 5)*

In the first half of this account the mentor is presented as a type of friend “*they are friends with you instead of teachers*”, whilst in the latter half the idea of the constancy is yet again, clear to see: “*They are always there – especially when you need them*”. For Lenny, the relationship had come about due to difficulties she was experiencing, summed up above as “*hard times*”; but its longevity was evident, cemented through her continuing to make ad hoc social visits to see Angie once her difficulties had been resolved and she no longer needed that support. Also of note is how this account views the mentor base itself being likened to a “*youth centre*” (with the learning mentors likened to youth workers) which suggests a space which is perceived to be something different to and separate from the school despite the fact that its actual physical location was positioned deep within the school estate.

4.5.1 Mentors as more ‘available’ and more in-tune

Pupils also voiced how accessible and available mentors and some other support staff were in relation to teachers:

It's not as easy to talk to teachers because you can't go whenever. Support staff are more available during the school day (Alison, Pupil Interview 1).

When asking Alison to clarify who she meant by “Support staff” here, she stated ‘Year Managers’ who unlike their immediate line manager - the Progress Leader, did not teach so were possibly more visible around school. Pupils also perceived the learning mentors as being more in tune with difficult decisions which they, the pupils faced if they needed to talk to someone about one of their peers. Here, the pupils’ perspective was that mentors had a more nuanced understanding about the potential sensitivity of a situation and what the peer group consequences might be if information was disclosed. They saw the mentors as willing

to take the pupil's lead in terms of deciding what type of action should be taken, or, whether any should be taken at all. Here is Alison again:

Angie ... she'd just sit and listen... she'd never go directly to the person unless you asked her to, whereas the teachers, I think they just jump into it and think 'right we need to sort it now' [but] it doesn't get sorted, usually it makes it worse because you end up being [pauses and thinks] a bit of a snitch somehow (ibid).

Shaun, a Year 11 pupil who we met earlier at Breakfast Club, also recognised this ability of the mentors to be closer to and therefore have a better grasp of pupil situations, although he put this down to how their work positioned them much more closely alongside pupils, perhaps based on his own observations from being a regular attender in the mentor base at break times:

Well, their job is better than a teacher, because they get to understand more aspects about pupils and know things about them and they're a lot more social, like a big kid of their own (Pupil Interview 6).

As is apparent from the two examples just given, pupils identified and drew out a number of comparisons between the approaches of the mentors and teaching staff. Shaun's observations that the mentors "understand more aspects about pupils" linked with another issue of concern that some teachers did not appear to know how to 'do' emotional support or didn't feel comfortable in this aspect of their role. Here Eliza explains:

I've noticed how a lot of teachers don't know how to deal with like a crying child! It's difficult but if a person starts crying they're like [quietly] "oh, do you want to go outside?" Or ... "cheer up!" and it's like [they] don't really seem to know what to do in situations like this (Eliza, Pupil Interview 4)

To illustrate this observation she described an occasion where having finished a controlled assessment she returned to a lesson and noticed one of her peers was crying. The teacher present had immediately approached Eliza and whispered an instruction that she should go and talk to the crying pupil. Feeling that this instruction was a bit strange "given that he was the authority figure" she had found herself in the position of encouraging the teacher recalling this situation as: "I told him 'but you can talk to her, you are a teacher!'" to which he responded that he could not because he felt too awkward and as a girl of the same age she would deal with it better. Clearly this is only one example of a teacher not feeling comfortable or confident in tackling an issue they were being presented with and is not intended to represent the profession as a whole but it is interesting that Eliza recalled this incident when asked a question about any changes that she as a pupil, would like to see in schools and/or the education system more widely, ending the account of the incident above with the words:

So that's one of the things I would say; make sure people can deal with it [emotional upset] (ibid).

She clarified that by 'people' she meant teachers in this instance but extended this further still, expressing the view that knowing how to deal appropriately with pupils' emotional upset and distress was "surely a basic skill that any adult working in a school needed to be in possession of!", a comment that was particularly striking coming off the back of a discussion about how she considered the learning mentors to be very skilled in this respect.

4.6 Pupils' school experiences

As was noted earlier in the methodology chapter, it became evident through data generated with pupils that the mentors were very much in tune with pupils' perceptions of and feelings about their school experiences. Of course, this knowledge of pupil experience wasn't exclusive to the mentors and was identified by other support staff. During one of the many 'on-call' (corridor patrol) sessions I undertook with members of the behaviour support team, I could see how they too were able to recognise how pupils were feeling. In one such example, Rose, a behaviour worker talked about how she could see a direct correlation between an increase in disruptive and challenging behaviour in the classroom (where she was required to intervene and remove pupils) and the heightened levels of stress amongst older pupils when coursework deadlines were looming. The crucial difference between the two roles however was that the mentors' everyday work afforded time to explore these incidents and work with pupils in both the short and long term; whereas, the behaviour support role had a more reactive, punitive function of short term withdrawal with little or no opportunity to sit down with the pupil and discuss more constructive courses of action in the future.

The 'everyday life work' of pupils: "...expect to be disappointed because everything you do is never good enough"

I turn now to a more in-depth discussion of pupil experiences which the learning mentors displayed such an acute awareness of. Adhering to ethical practice (in which direct questioning of groups deemed vulnerable is of course avoided), these were investigated indirectly through the afore-mentioned 'alien question' in the previous chapter. Pupils were also asked what changes should be introduced to schooling and education more generally – referred to as the 'magic wand' question. In answering these questions, some participants clearly chose to draw on their peers' experiences as well as their own and the issue most talked about (particularly with female pupils) was a feeling of being under relentless pressure to try and attain what were, in their view, unrealistic academic standards. For many, the locus of this pressure lay in target grades. Here, pupils expressed frustration that assessments they underwent at the age of ten or eleven years, predicted what grade would be achieved five years later. This prediction was then ever-present and, if not being achieved, appeared quite literally as an amber or red area on a pupil's progress report, which in their words "[put] a downer on things" (Alison, Pupil Interview 1) or "[left] you no room for failure" (Eliza, Pupil Interview 4). Alongside this, pupils were extremely aware of a recent shifting of grade boundaries by examination bodies which in their view would lead to lower grades, as Lenny stated:

...grade boundaries keep going up, so it looks like we are going down (Pupil Interview 5).

The conclusion that many pupils drew from this was illustrated by Teisha's apt advice to the alien in its quest to know more about school: "...expect to be disappointed because everything you do is never good enough" (Interview 5), and enlarged on this by explaining how pupils were required to do pieces of work again and again to make it 'better' although 'better' was not always explained sufficiently.

'Enrichment' – attempting to offer something beyond academic targets

In what might initially appear as contradictory to this perceived relentless pressure to achieve academically, the issue of enrichment was also identified by many pupils as a focus of their concern. In this particular context 'enrichment' meant pupils being encouraged to undertake activities other than those associated with formal learning. One pupil said she was aware that teachers were required to fill out spread sheets "on what we do outside of school" but feared that these were "a bit thin". During the period of time that the ethnography was conducted, the school launched a project named 'Recharge and Refuel' with two aligned purposes of increasing in-school enrichment for all pupils in the form of lunchtime and after-school clubs, and to involve older pupils in the leading, organising and running of these activities so they might gain skills beyond those that were purely academic. The rationale for the project was explained by the Head Teacher who felt strongly that within the current context, eleven years of education amounted only to "targets which the school had to hit" and thus neglected other important preparations for the world 'out there':

Children don't see and experience the skills that you learn and acquire across the piste that we apply to the workplace (Interview 13)

The Head teacher envisaged that the project would provide a balance between academic and non-academic activities within school and simultaneously enable some pupils to contribute whilst developing wider skills. However, both pupil and mentor accounts saw the actualities of the project in a different light with the former asking how this could realistically be accommodated alongside the expectations around their academic work? Eliza who, as already noted had been encouraged to get involved in the project to develop her leadership skills, talked about the problems she had personally encountered:

... they [teachers, senior leaders] don't realise that the 'freedom' (uses her fingers as connotation marks here) given to the pupil leaders is hard to put into practice [For instance], getting messages to other pupils, [and] setting up meetings. They [teachers and senior leaders] expect a lot of the older children ... [and when things don't go to plan] ... people feel like they're just disappointing the teachers (Pupil Interview 4).

The introduction of 'Recharge and Refuel' had ironically ended up with herself and her peers actually feeling more pressured. This state of affairs was in turn recognised by the LMs who came to refer to the launch of the project as "Weepy Week" due to the steady stream of

older pupils dropping in to the mentor base, tearful and “stressing” about how they were going to fulfil their new leadership roles *and* keep up with their work.

This tension between off-setting the desire (and need) for pupils to achieve certain grades with ensuring extra-curricular experiences were offered and taken up was explored during the pupil interviews where we talked about which one (academic work or enrichment) they thought the school saw as the more important. All respondents saw it as being academic attainment and for some like Mina (Pupil Interview 2) this wasn't necessarily problematic. She saw the support that pupils received, specifically “the push you get to get your grades” as one of the positives of the school. Others, like Eliza, had a broader recognition of how academic attainment was tied more closely with the school's recent history and was therefore aware of what was riding on her Year's performance:

I think at the moment it's grades because the school was in a bad place quite a while ago because of the whole Ofsted thing so they're very big on getting everyone's grades back up... but they still put on the whole pressure of [mimics teachers] “but you still need to build your CV up... you aren't going to get into university if you don't have all these certain things because a lot of people are getting all the grades now so you have to have the extra stuff” and we are just like ‘oh [exasperated and then resigned] okay then’ (Pupil Interview 4).

Underpinning many of the comments and views expressed by the pupils was a feeling that the higher up Secondary School you went, the harder things became. For example, a viewpoint commonly expressed by older pupils was that they didn't enjoy coming to school anymore. When asked if they could pinpoint the point at which they stopped enjoying it, their response was generally from Year 9 and onwards:

We didn't get prepared for how bad it was going to get. Teachers don't realise the pressure we're under [or that] the enjoyment's been taken out of it... when I think about school now I just think ‘uhh’ (upper body droops) [But] when I was younger I thought school was the best place in the world! (Louise, Pupil Interview 3)

And in the words of another pupil:

Two weeks ago for about a week... I thought I was like seriously depressed because ... I don't even know what was going through my head but it was proper hard. I wasn't suicidal but just being in High School made me think like ‘what's the point in living if we're just going to live to die’ and stuff like that [laughs] but it's because of what High school does to you.... I don't think High School should be fun but it shouldn't (pauses to think) make me think about my life that deep like I did for that week! (Teisha, Interview 5)

4.6.1 Mentor responses to pupil experiences: “...they tread so carefully...some of them don’t even want to tread at all!”

For their part, the mentors were keenly aware of the pressure voiced by the pupils above, particularly those who had been identified as ‘Gifted and Talented’; a strand of *Excellence in Cities* that along with the LM role had survived the policy’s demise in 2008. The mentors however saw the source of the pressure as not just coming from within the school but also the home environment (parents, older peers) and the pupils themselves. As such, one mentor saw part of her approach as reassuring pupils that it was alright not to be good at everything, observing that:

They [the pupils] become despondent and beat themselves up, and there’s so many of them, even when they’ve gone on to the sixth form.....who struggle with failure and think it is better not to try than try and get it wrong.

In relation to this fear of failure, she saw it as her role to reassure pupils that it was acceptable, indeed necessary, to get things wrong:

Giving them that reality check that it is okay to fail.... getting them used to making mistakes.

Here the mentor made specific reference to pupils who spent a significant amount of time playing computer games where repeatedly making mistakes and starting again (and again!), was the order of the day. But this was in great contrast to their real lives because:

...they don’t want to try it [because] there’s no restart button (chuckles) ...they tread so carefully...some of them don’t even want to tread at all! But they have to, they are being pushed and it overwhelms them.

These are extremely useful observations in enabling an understanding of the contemporary experience of youth, particularly for those (myself included) whose age is a hindrance in terms of not having a parallel experience from *their* youth on which to hang their understanding, meaning that schools were not as explicitly the performative institutions that they have become. But there is a clear tension here: LM interventions which give the young person ‘permission’ to fail and (furthermore) encourage an understanding that it is in the making of mistakes that effective learning actually takes place, are at odds with the wider core business of the school which from some pupil’s perception is viewed as a relentless focus on getting better and better results, summed up by Eliza earlier as leaving a young person “no room for failure”.

4.7 The disjunctures (Part Two)

So far, the focus of this Chapter has been an examination of the everyday work of the LMs in supporting pupils, presented as a 'typical-day scenario' and told directly from the respective standpoints of each. The account set out above offered much evidence-in-action of both how the role had originally been perceived, i.e. fairly short term interventions to assist pupils in removing their 'barriers to learning'; but also that the work involved so much more, in terms of supporting young people in their journey to adulthood. It is clear that the extent of LM support was variable and particular to differing contexts so for many pupils the mentors may only ever be seen as a friendly face around school, greeting them in the corridor or when handing out sustenance at Breakfast Club. For others like Michael, they are the visible face of a formally engineered intervention initiated by a third party which, depending on a range of circumstances beyond the reach of both pupil and mentor, may or may not have a positive outcome. For many more still, the LM role at Priory Park High provides a means to access a more inconspicuous and unofficial support base – one which supports and empowers those pupils who are dealing with a myriad of complex issues. Thus, in echoing the conclusions of previous studies (Bishop, 2011; Rose et al, 2009) the role appears to provide a qualitatively different relationship to other adults within the school, as the mentors are afforded the time to spend with pupils. Through their interventions (both official and unofficial) the mentors were able to gain an authentic and accurate picture of pupils' lives, including issues that arose within and school and because of how aspects of it were organised; as well as experiences that had their origins outside of the school gates but nevertheless impacted on the pupils' everyday lives. But is the picture a wholly positive one? As with the curious invisibility of Breakfast Club, we need only to scratch the surface of these observations and accounts to find a number of disjunctures present. These disjunctures are important as they reveal key issues requiring further examination. For the purposes of this discussion they have been identified and presented as follows:

- How the work of the mentors was perceived by other staff;
- The problematic nature of 'official referrals'
- The mentors' experiences of line management
- The invisible and unofficial side of their workload in terms of its extent and impact.

4.7.1 How the work of the mentors was perceived by other staff

The mentors' frequently expressed that their work was hampered by other staff not really understanding what they did, a situation which they felt had existed right from the beginning of the role's conception and establishment in the early 2000s. In one discussion Angie recalled how the Local Authority Lead for the learning mentor role had warned those who were newly appointed that "At first, people [in schools] won't have a clue who you are or what you are doing there" advising them to "make the role their own". This is also reminiscent of the community agents working as paraprofessionals in 1960s American schools as seen in the descriptions given earlier. Again it is possible to see a tension here: an instruction to 'make the role your own' suggests that LMs would be given a free rein in formulating a range of responses and interventions to deal with the complexity of the

'barriers' experienced by the pupils they would be working with. But such an approach is not then easily converted into a single, sole outcome of raising standards.

Of all the staff participants, it was the Head Teacher who recognised most keenly the multi-faceted nature of the LM role, describing it as “an amalgam of social work, health and wellbeing and education” and further acknowledging that the work required a “tough skills set” if it was to be carried out effectively. As featured in both historical accounts of paraprofessionals (Pearl and Reissman, 1965) and news media accounts touched on earlier, his comments also shared the belief that LMs possessed a degree of bridging social capital which meant that they had the ability to access places, people and contexts that other school staff could not:

...they can quietly get in, without suit and tie ... Because I look official I think that there is [a need for] a tier that needs to be not in the face, but getting in there, finding out what those core issues, underlying things are... (Head teacher, Interview 13).

The Head also extended this notion of accessibility to other support roles present within the schools workforce remarking specifically on two Attendance Officers at a previous school as the ones who could:

“...get through doors that any policeman or anybody else who was official couldn't...” (ibid).

Both roles, learning mentors and attendance officers, were products of the New Labour social policy agenda and can be understood as occupations which were required in order to 'fill the gaps' within a supposedly integrated workforce.

In terms of their work within the school, the Head Teacher understood the LM as someone who provided a package of support to identify and eradicate barriers so that learning could take place. Crucial to this was the time that the role afforded – time, which he argued, teachers simply did not have given that they were, “paid to get [me] results, as well as the pastoral side”; implying that the latter had become a secondary issue for the teaching profession. In relation to the mentors he stated:

That is what the child respects, “you [the learning mentor] are sitting with me and talking to me”. Once you have got that, you can start drilling into the learning and supporting them and [get them] doing their bloody homework again (ibid).

Here then we have a clear acknowledgement of the importance of the relationship in order to effect change, albeit with a different emphasis in that the relationship framed within *this* perspective is swiftly and inextricably linked to the imperative of academic outcomes.

However, when examining other staff groupings in the school, it is clear that there were both differing levels of knowledge about the role which led to varying understandings. Despite the official one-to-one's forming a significant part of the mentor's work load, the purpose and

content of this particular intervention was viewed in a number of ways, some of which were wholly negative. For example, some staff expressed that pupils had abused this opportunity to spend time outside of lessons with a learning mentor by seeing it as a temporary means of exit from formal learning:

“... [They] *used it in the past as an excuse to come out of lessons*; [mimics a young person] *‘I gotta go see my mentor’* [laughs] (Interview 2)

This, for instance, is how the ‘Angry Year 11 girls’ could have been viewed. Whereas others, like this teacher below, made the same observation but with a different interpretation exhibiting more empathy for the pupil experience in terms of both what formal learning entailed and the more pressing issues they may be dealing with:

... I think that there is a school of [thought amongst] staff – and it will be in a lot of schools – that just don’t see it [the learning mentor role] as being of value, because they might just see a ‘naughty boy’ ...but me personally when I see Angie with someone I think “well... that kid’s obviously not capable of sitting in a room for an hour with another 30 kids looking at a board”...and who is?! I couldn’t do it! I couldn’t go back to being a student – it’s hard. You’ve got all these other things going on in your life [and] the least important thing is sitting listening to Miss So and So talk about tectonic plates when you’re thinking “I don’t want to go home because... my Dad’s knocked seven shades out of my Mum this morning”.’ I don’t believe that school is the biggest part of a child’s life. It is for some people but there are bigger things going on and I do understand that kids need that extra provision. Sometimes they do need a cup of tea and... just to talk (Interview 6).

The Deputy Head, fairly new in post at the time of the study, was keen to distinguish between what she had observed at previous schools and what she saw at Priory Park High. She felt that some pupils did use the mentor intervention as “a get-out of lessons where they weren’t happy or whatever...” but at the same time was keen to acknowledge the skills-set of LMs she had previously line-managed:

Where they were really good, they did that kind of fire fighting with the child, and actually would say “you know what, I know that you’ve had a difficulty in that lesson, we are going to quickly work through it, but you need to [go] back or you’re going to come and do [the] work with me now, not just sit and get out of the lesson” (Interview 9).

Her main concern regarding the LMs of Priory Park High was whether the one-to-one interventions that they undertook took during lessons were “visible enough”:

... maybe it is because I’m either in classrooms or meetings or whatever, [but] I don’t see so much of what they do outside of breaks and lunch-times (ibid).

But the mentor's action in the 'Angry Year 11 Girls' situation exemplify what she describes above as good learning mentor practice i.e. "firefighting", followed up with a swift integration back into the classroom; however she was unaware of this incident and interventions like this which would suggest that the visibility of their work was indeed an issue.

Another perception of the one-to-one intervention was how it could be used as a type of perverse empowerment for pupils. Referring again to other schools she had worked in, the Deputy Head felt that this happened where the role had "moved away from learning" and become more about supporting young people with behavioural difficulties, describing how learning mentors ended up becoming a "sounding board" or a means of retreat for some pupils. Aspects of the pupil-mentor relationship then became problematic once the mentor was identified by the pupil as someone who was 'on their side' because situations arose in which some of the learning mentors were described as "...overriding decisions that had been made about children" or "...sort of almost siding with the children" (Interview 9). As a result, relationships between LMs and teachers became fragile with the latter not feeling supported by the former. This was in marked contrast to her perception of the LMs at Priory Park High which was noted earlier as them carving out an identity through their work with "vulnerable" and "marginalised" pupils; a construction of the role which is far removed from them indirectly enabling pupils to wield some kind of power base.

Obviously, some activities within a school *are* more familiar and therefore easier to convey, for example, most people are able to describe the activities of teachers or have some understanding of school provisions like internal exclusion (Isolation). In contrast, many staff struggled to articulate a clear understanding of what the LMs did in their everyday work as illustrated in this attempt by a BS worker:

Well it's more...I guess they deal with the more emotional and social aspects ... I don't really know how to define it in this school, it's [pauses] I don't know. I know that's really bad! But I know that the kids who are referred to them, are kids that are experiencing emotional and social problems and that's part of the reason why they're referred to them... (Interview 2).

Later on this respondent found it easier to describe the LM role when distinguishing it from their own area of behaviour support, drawing particular attention to the differences in approach:

...with the mentors, they're known by their first names...but we aren't known by our first names and because we do the sanction-based side of things and they [pupils] see that ...so we've got that kind of authority as well. We are different, our team [behaviour support] is different to how teachers would work but we are very different to how the learning mentors would work; but we couldn't ...do how they work...it wouldn't work, it wouldn't! (ibid)

Other staff were more positive about the role but still acknowledged their own limited understanding:

I have to be honest...I don't entirely understand what goes on in those rooms [the mentor base] ... in the same way that no one understands what goes on in here at all! [Laughs whilst gesturing to the studio theatre we are seated in] but they are different members of staff that ... are qualified to do different things... (Interview 6).

Interestingly in this excerpt the participant, a Drama teacher, drew on her own experiences and positioning in the school, putting her lack of knowledge about the mentors' work down to a wider phenomenon of people tending not to understand *any* school activities that lay outside the attainment of core and/or traditional subjects like Maths, English and History.

Another reason offered for this lack of understanding was that teaching staff were simply not being told about what *any* non-teaching staff did. The teacher below expressed a desire to not only know which pupils support staff were targeting but also what strategies they were using so that...

[if] that pupil comes to my lesson, it would be really good if I could then follow up with, you know, some kind of positive reinforcement as well (Interview 7).

As readers may have come to notice, the one-to-one aspect of the mentor's work was predominantly characterised as time out of formal learning for "a cup of tea and a chat" Here Marie, a TA at the time of the study, recalls how during her time as a mentor some teachers resented her action of taking pupils out of class despite being instructed to do so by either a Progress Leader or a Year Manager:

... they would think that you were just, you know, mollycoddling them or [mimics teacher] "Oh you know, she just takes them down there and gives them a hot drink and toast" and so didn't sort of always quite understand what we [mentors] were trying to do (Interview 12).

Another teacher stood out because, like her Drama colleague above, she was at pains to distance herself from those who viewed the mentors as taking pupils out of lessons "for no reason" and "being suspicious" about the nature of their interventions, explaining:

I don't personally feel this, but I imagine that ... some staff, don't value what they do and some staff perhaps feel that they are not important. But I know the types of students that they work with and I think they do an amazing job [and] they can really get to know the students exceptionally well and have a very, very close relationship with some of them (Interview 7).

Pat, the HLTA we first encountered in the pen picture was notably more direct than her teaching colleagues when asked about how other staff, specifically teachers, viewed and understood the role of LM:

Pat: *Do you want my honest answer to that?* [Pauses and waits for confirmation] *they [teachers] think the mentors are a waste of time.*

Jo: Would you say this is quite ... a majority opinion?

Pat: *I think it's more than half, yeah, probably sixty, seventy percent of teachers...*

Jo: What would you base that on?

Pat: *I think they probably think, "My budget's been cut and I can't afford this and they are paying seventy five grand a year for three mentors when all they do is take my kids out of class". I think it's a lack of understanding I'm not saying it is all teachers, but there is that core you know?*

She also identified the observation made above that mentors "mollycoddled" the pupils or in Pat's words were there to "give the kids an easy ride". However she qualified this view as an obvious 'given' in that there had to be a reason why a referral to the mentors had come about for some young people in the first place:

Some of it can be very true because we do get kids [that have got mentors] that play on it, you know, [role plays a scenario between a teacher and a pupil] "why are you late?", "oh I went to see my mentor" and you know damn well that they haven't because you've just seen them walk up N----- Drive! So that doesn't help sometimes, but that's the nature of the kids ... they are not going to have a mentor if they are perfectly well behaved and everything's hunky-dory for them, are they?
(Interview 11, my emphasis).

The mentors' concern regarding their work being misunderstood is verified by these accounts which demonstrate that their everyday activities were indeed viewed in a variety of ways and with varying levels of understanding. A small number of staff shared similar insights to the mentors regarding the pressurised school experience of pupils, a view which often premised a more positive view about the mentor's work. A greater number were more suspicious of the mentors' work characterising it as informal, unstructured or as a means to be too 'soft' on the pupil who in turn took this as a tacit acceptance that they could opt out of formal learning as and when they pleased. Let us put these criticisms to the test by revisiting the intervention with Michael from Year 8. The session had a clear sense of purpose and structure in terms of the task that he was initially given to do. Rather than starting with an assumed or 'third-hand' knowledge which had originated from outside of the dyad, Angie sought to gain an authentic understanding of the young person's situation *from their own perspective*. Michael was challenged and given further instruction when he failed to engage sufficiently with the work that was set. Finally, the fear expressed by staff that pupils may use the session for more leisurely purposes is simply not acknowledged or entertained by the mentor in this instance. Thus, by deconstructing and extrapolating its varying strands,

the intervention takes on a far more sophisticated and rigorous approach than that revealed in the assumptions of others. The discussion will now move on to consider further disjunctures which arose.

4.7.2 The problematic nature of 'official referrals'

Ever-changing systems

The mentors were extremely vocal in their concerns about the system for official referrals and this was often easily observable in their body language. One reason for their discontent was the frequency with which the system underpinning this process changed both before, during (and I was to later find out) after the period of the study. Early on in the ethnography, Paul had initially conveyed a fairly simplistic and 'glossy' process of how official referrals for one-to-ones came about:

Paul: *If we've been given a referral, we're given a sheet on the top, there's the [pupil] name, form, issues as to why this student has been referred to us. And then we're kind of given a blank canvas and we put a programme together of what we think would suit that particular individual...and that's based on experience*

Jo: So in that sense you make all those decisions?

Paul: *Oh absolutely, oh yes. Senior leadership basically say 'get on and do your best with this student' which is good. You know, there's no written rule 'you have to do this, you have to do that'. You are left to your own devices.*

Although, his account suggests that the mentors had a degree of autonomy in deciding what to do within the intervention, it was a piece of data that I eventually interpreted as an example of 'institutional capture' because later discussions involving all of the mentors revealed the tensions and conflict that actually existed around *who* referred the pupil and *how* that selection was carried out. Firstly, Angie described the referral process in one of its (many) iterations as amounting to little more than a "bun fight" where Year Managers met with a panel which included the Director for Pastoral Care and in a one hour meeting slot were required to argue their case for pupils who they thought might benefit from an intervention, in effect competing with one another as to which pupils got the referral. The LMs and BSWs were not invited to these forums unless as occasionally happened they made a strong case to attend. Then, in the latter part of the study, I had learned from a staff briefing that a reorganisation of pastoral staff had taken place and duly consulted the mentors to ask if and how this impacted on the process of official referrals. Paul's response, given below, could not have been in more contrast to his earlier explanation and thereby exemplified an experiential account:

“What process? Seriously, I would settle for a scrap of paper with a name on it at this point”.

Lack of input / lack of knowledge

Placing the system for selecting official referrals to one side, the mentors were also frustrated with their lack of input into these decisions, a situation that has already been illustrated in the case of Sally (whom Angie requested to see officially but who was eventually referred for Anger management). Marie also commented on how this aspect of her work was handled by her immediate line managers during her time as a mentor:

Marie: You could maybe mention that you'd seen something that you felt needed picking up on, but on the whole, they would just get referred to you, with very little detail of what the problem was. There was a high level of secrecy that I found frustrating at times. I know there is child protection and all that kind of thing, but sometimes...

Jo: So might child protection have been the reason for the secrecy?

Marie: [nods]

Jo: But that wouldn't be necessarily shared with you? They would just say “we think this person could do with a mentor”?

Marie: [Agrees] ... *and there would be general issues [of concern] like you were supposed to get a form, you never did. So basically you would just meet with the child and assess it for yourself really.*

Marie felt that such a position had both benefits and drawbacks describing the mentoring job as “a double edged sword”:

Marie: You were left mostly to your own devices and at times, that can be good, but I felt some of the time, I would have needed, you know, some more guidance or help or support from upper [middle] management (Interview 12).

Her account also highlights a further issue raised by all of the mentors i.e. the limited amount of information they were given about the pupils they were supporting with the withholding of child protection information being identified as a particular thorn in their side. Here Paul talks of his experience:

It is hard because we are coming at it blind. We might do or say the wrong thing. I once asked a kid I was mentoring if maybe they could seek support from their dad who as it turned out had left the family home due to child protection issues. I felt so bad to that kid but angry that nothing had been said to me. Then there was another time when I was told I wasn't allowed to 'hug' a pupil any longer, as in, you know, I'd

just give a brief 'one arm around the shoulder' [gestures] at the end of a session ... but I wasn't told why.

Angie (also present in this conversation) talked about how these issues then had an impact on their work more generally:

... And how many times do we get pupils coming in saying they are upset. They don't want to talk; they just need a hug and a tissue, someone to mop them up. I 'get' the sensitive nature of child protection issues; I accept it is a thin line but how sterile do they want us to be? They want us to toe the line but they don't work our reality!

Both of the LMs present in this discussion felt that being in possession of confidential information at Priory Park High, somehow equated with power and position in the school hierarchy in that the more you knew, the higher up you were. Correspondingly, a *lack* of information denoted a person's more lowly position and from the mentors' perspectives was used as a means to keep them there. Thus, the withholding of information had come about in part because access to staff development appeared to equate with opportunities for promotion and as such were guarded, over-zealously so in some cases. The origins of those situations disclosed above had come about some years earlier before the creation of the Year Manager role (and thus more formalised systems of pastoral care), when the mentor role still involved "doing a bit of everything" which was a description given by the Director of Pastoral Care (Interview 14) and reinforced by Angie when reminiscing of the time when learning mentors "scurried around what were to become the pillars of the Every Child Matters initiative" (Interview 5). At this time, the mentors had approached their line manager to request enhanced Child Protection training which they felt was an important part of their ongoing professional development. The response to their request, explained here by Angie, was as follows:

... and I remember her face, mock horror! She said "no ... I think this school has got other plans for all of that". We [the mentors] argued that we should be utilised better ... and this is something we would like to do...but she wasn't interested [pauses for effect] and do you know who the lead Child Protection Officer is for the school now? [Names the afore-mentioned line manager] And that was years ago... so you see, it's all about [whispers] people keeping people in their station!

Some years later when it had become the norm for Child Protection training to be rolled out to the schools workforce more generally, the mentors again experienced frustrations in terms of their manager's interpretation of how this information sat alongside other policies like Data Protection, this being given as a reason, once again, to withhold child protection information from the mentors. As Paul said:

[So now] we have had child protection training; we have had Data Protection training and when there are issues and concerns, we know that we don't speak with lots of people – I get all that. But with your immediate colleagues it is like "you have given me a young person, you have said there are child protection concerns, but you have not told me what they are; yet you expect me to work with that young person. That shows exactly what you think of me as a professional.

The incident accounted here is reminiscent of the notions of ‘under-professionalism’ identified in the ‘New Careers’ project earlier (Pearl and Reissman, 1965) i.e. where established professionals would resist fully utilizing nonprofessionals and continue to take on tasks that could otherwise be given over to them as proponents of the project had envisaged. In actuality, many LMs did eventually take on more child protection responsibilities and in many cases became the legally required named person in the school, a role always previously the reserve of the teaching profession (Bishop, 2011).

The time limited nature of one-to-one interventions: “... and that would be hard - telling the child that I couldn’t see them anymore”.

The time limit imposed on their official interventions was another source of frustration expressed by the LMs. Here Marie articulates their collective experiences on this issue:

Marie: We would meet maybe every other week with the Inclusion manager, to talk about the cases and then they [the panel] would suddenly decide that particular pupils didn’t need mentoring anymore. You wouldn’t really.... well you could object, but on the whole, they would decide. They would say “well I think six to eight weeks is fine”. I always felt it wasn’t long enough; six weeks and you are only just getting to know somebody, building up for them to trust you. So that I found really frustrating, not having enough time, it was like half doing a job and that was a bit, you know, I felt that was a bit annoying.

Jo: [clarifies] But you didn’t actually have any influence or sway over how long you could see them for, that wasn’t a decision you could make?

Marie: Well somebody would say “oh I think they’re doing well now, I think they should come off” and you would say “well no, that is because I am still supporting them, I’m trying to step back a bit, they are doing well, but there could be a fall around the corner” and they would say “oh no, there’s somebody else who’s more needy, so they’ve got to come off now” and that would be hard, telling the child that I couldn’t see them anymore. Well you didn’t, you did carry on seeing them, you know? So as time went on, your workload got bigger and bigger because once you had mentored them, you would always have them kind of thing. I mean that should be, they [pupils] should always know that they can come to you if they need to. But yeah, I had to sometimes be inventive of how I saw people because they [middle managers] would say “no you can’t see them anymore” (Interview 12).

This account is invaluable in that it encapsulates the contested process of the mentor intervention in its entirety; demonstrating not only how mentors’ assessments of pupils in their care were overridden but also their reaction to this in continuing to offer support to the pupil anyway albeit off the radar. One interpretation of situations like this and the earlier case of Sally is to ask whether it matters if the official referral route fails to give rise to an

intervention seemingly desired by both the pupil and mentor if it is going to happen unofficially anyway? This then begs the further question of whether it is necessary to have official procedures in place at all. These are important issues which will be dealt with at a later point in the discussion.

Marie's account also indicates the pressures which members of middle-management were under in moving pupils through the support systems from the perspective of there always being somebody else who was deemed as in greater need of support. As explained earlier, Marie had 'acted up' in the position of a Year Manager, an opportunity she initially relished assuming it would entail having more pastoral dealings with pupils compared to that of a TA, as well as meeting and making relationships with their parents. However once in role, the reality turned out to be somewhat different:

Marie: I was quite surprised ... you're dealing mostly with negative things with the children, time seems to be spent dealing with problems that have arisen and also some menial tasks that I felt that we were too well paid to do, if you know what I mean, I don't mean it was beneath me, but ... I felt that if you had more time for positive things, then the negative stuff wouldn't happen.

Jo: Could you give an example of something that you felt was quite menial?

Marie: Like giving out detentions, writing out the slips, finding the kids, giving the slips to the kids, you know ... it would take ages and then they wouldn't turn up and then you'd have to go back to the data sheet and fill it in, ... you were doing it with the same kids though. To me it was pointless, it wasn't working. Surely you'd have been better getting them kids to talk about...more like you would as a learning mentor, to stop it from happening, so you didn't have to do that (ibid).

The lack of actual pastoral work involved in this role was a key factor leading to Marie's decision not to make the move from TA to Year Manager a permanent one, even though the opportunity arose to do so:

I felt that it wasn't a role for me full time. There is a lot of admin, a lot of paperwork, a lot of people wanting stuff there and now and I just thought ... I don't actually need to do this. Yes I would like to earn more money and respect, but... (ibid).

Marie's take on the Year Manager role were extremely frank and without a trace of institutional capture, perhaps because some time had passed which enabled her to reflect on this period. As shall be seen, these provided a useful counter when compared to an existing Year Manager who we meet in Chapter Six.

In relation to the Year Managers' situation, Angie made a similar comment to Marie in stating that she had "a soft-spot for their reality" which when asked to clarify was an acknowledgement of their heavy work-load and the pressure on them from *their* immediate line-managers to 'come up with the goods'. However, this did not mean that she agreed with

(some of) their approaches or would not speak out against them. One situation when she did just that proved to be a critical piece of data in evidencing how the LM's lack of status led to their exclusion from key events. This is recounted below and provides the most illustrative example of the mentor's position in the school.

Daniel, the meeting and the missing Learning Mentor

Daniel was a Year 10 pupil who Angie had taken on both officially and unofficially for a significant period of time prior to and throughout the ethnography, which meant that I was able to observe their interactions on numerous occasions. Their relationship could be described in colloquial terms as 'straight-up'; Angie was constantly challenging Daniel about aspects of his behaviour or poor choices he had made, in her words "always bending his ear about something". For his part, Daniel responded well to Angie and demonstrated a desire to engage with her and a respect for her that was not usually extended to others. Angie's work with Daniel had also involved one or two home visits enabling the beginnings of a relationship with his mother whose previous reluctance to engage with the school was seen as a real problem by middle managers. Daniel's home life was complex in that one of his parents and an older sibling held numerous criminal convictions, leading to custodial sentences so that their presence at home was sporadic. Although often reticent to talk openly, Daniel did, on a handful of occasions, disclose to Angie that he feared for his own future but expressed a kind of fatalism given the path that others in his family had taken and his own record of school exclusions.

Angie suspected that Priory Park High's real agenda for Daniel was one that would eventually achieve his permanent exclusion, a decision that she felt strongly was not the answer, given Daniel's perspective on the situation. She saw the school's stance of trying out varying interventions with Daniel as disingenuous and merely going through the motions in order to provide an evidence trail that they had, as with Michael, 'explored every avenue' before his permanent exclusion. Moreover, it would appear that little or no thought was given to how this hidden agenda could undermine her work with him. The situation as described above culminated in the following critical incident: Angie had been walking past the 'board room' – the room mostly used to hold formal meetings - and glancing through the window in the door caught sight of Daniel, his mother and older brother seated at the table having a meeting with his Year Manager and the Director of Pastoral Care. She recalled that her immediate reaction to this had been "oh that's good" as this was the first time that Daniel's mother had actually been into the school. However this had been followed with a mixture of puzzlement and anger, as her obvious exclusion from the meeting started to dawn on her given that she was the member of staff who had been the most involved with Daniel's family to date. Angie spoke about this incident later that day:

Angie: I had done the initial home visit and filled out all the paperwork ... but hadn't been invited to the meeting!

Jo: Why do you think that happened?

Angie: Maybe the Year Manager was overworked and just didn't think, I like to think it wasn't malicious..... maybe we [the mentors] are an afterthought or maybe we are

still thought of as like on the TA side... you know "Oh we don't need them, we can just do this".

Despite these eventual painful reflections on her exclusion from this meeting, Angie had, at the time, made a swift decision to intervene in order to ensure that Daniel did have someone present who could ensure that his viewpoint was put across:

Angie: Anyway...I made sure I put myself in there! I just walked in and sat down. That boy is not going to be able to voice in that meeting how shitty and upset and low he's been feeling. He was just sitting there with his head down waiting to get a bollocking¹², he's not going to speak up and express that. ...They [pastoral and middle managers] need to know...and if they don't know how can they help him? And that can be forgotten about, it [pastoral interventions] is about helping someone.

Once again, we see the different motivations at play and at odds here. Angie views her role as being primarily *"about helping someone"* but recognises that other agendas and pressures are present, leading to outcomes which she considers to be harmful to pupils. Daniel was a pupil who was deemed as problematic but needed intensive support. For her part, the LM felt that there was no path back to mainstream education for Daniel once he was excluded. The outcomes for young people who are permanently excluded from mainstream education suggest that her fears were well founded as they are far more likely to become NEET (not in employment, education or training) on leaving compulsory education (Ogg and Kaill, 2010; Vincent et al, 2007).

Angie expressed that situations like the one above came about primarily because those that directly managed the mentors had never themselves worked in these roles. As such they lacked a genuine understanding of what the LMs did during what she termed their "grass roots hours" which she saw as vital in building up a relationship and "giving a good type of practice and service" (Interview 5). Seeing her role essentially as a service to young people is clearly at odds with how it has been envisaged by others and perhaps explains her exclusion from the meeting with Daniel. This sentiment was expressed many times during the study no more so than her earlier comments where she rounded on her line managers in relation to their "sterile" stance on child protection matters leading to her earlier exclamation of: *"They want us to toe the line but they don't work our reality!"*

Unofficial interventions: Unseen, unacknowledged?

Never far from the surface of mentors' accounts of their work, along with my own observations, was the extent of their unofficial interventions illustrated in the typical day account by the Angry Year 11 girls, the pupil who sought support when experiencing her parents' separation and subsequent reconciliation and Sally, whose concern for her mother was not fully acknowledged by the school. This gives rise to the issue of whether the middle and senior managers were aware that these two cultures co-existed and the inherent contradictions in having mentoring interventions alongside the dominant agenda of progress and attainment in a wider sense. Both the Head and Deputy Head made comments about

¹² A colloquial term for a severe reprimand

the mentor role not undermining teachers (despite interventions like the Angry Year 11 girls showing how the mentor input could be construed as supportive of the teacher role) and a wider concern expressed amongst many staff was that pupils should not be able to 'misuse' the mentoring provision. It could be argued however that this is the reality - the role at one and the same time contributes to the "fire-fighting" as termed by the Deputy-head, but in doing so its very existence as a 'facility' that pupils can turn to may well undermine the teaching role. It is that 'messiness' or incoherency which is the reality of having support roles like the LM, alongside teachers, two cultures sitting uneasily as they are side-by-side. The contested and contradictory ways in which the mentor base was seen at varying points in the study particularly illuminated this issue seen here in this Progress Leader's comment:

What we do have to put our foot down with every so often is the learning mentor base becoming a haven where the students decide they can go down there and hide from their lessons and their work and their teachers ... you know when things get overwhelming for them, which yes in a way we've encouraged that by providing the support...but we have to discourage them from doing that when it's not really necessary or when they are doing it too often and [need to] talk about what the problem is as opposed to just going and hiding from it. [Also] when they [pupils] are doing it because ... they are being a bit lazy or today they are tired or overwhelmed or have missed a deadline or just because they haven't organised themselves... But then for other students we use it almost for that purpose where it is a haven for them at certain times in their school career because of what's going on at home or because they just need it...

This rather confusing narrative conveys how the Progress Leader veers between seeing the value of the mentor base as means of support, just as long as some pupils don't use it too much! She provides clear examples of how some pupils 'misused' certain aspects of the mentoring provision but at the same time recognises that for some pupils, the support provided by the mentors in the base, represented something of a 'life-line'. This further reinforces Pat's earlier comment about pupils not needing mentors "if they are perfectly well behaved and everything's hunky-dory for them..." making the point that those problematic behaviours some pupils presented with when 'using' the mentor intervention either in reality or as a 'fictional' means to get out of class, were to be expected.

4.7.3 The Mentors' experiences of line management

The mentors recounted incidences of being overlooked by their immediate managers both in relation to their more normal day-to-day work and when critical events took place. During the study, the school implemented a second round of redundancies as a direct result of losing funding after the Ofsted inspection previously noted in the pen picture. As a result of this process the mentors, being one of the staff groups targeted for cuts, were required to attend an interview which would be used as a means to decide which two would remain. In the weeks leading up to the interview it was possible to observe visible changes in the dynamic of the mentoring team as they struggled to support one another whilst fearing for their respective futures and for ethical reasons I withdrew from the team during this period quite significantly. The outcome was that Cheryl was unsuccessful in retaining her position and for

a number of weeks was facing redundancy. At the eleventh hour she was redeployed into another newly emerging paraprofessional role, that of Parental Advisor, and became extremely withdrawn in terms of her contact with myself as researcher. A few months later, there was a further staffing restructure at the start of the school year, which wasn't communicated very clearly to the two remaining mentors, leaving a question mark in their minds over what their role would actually be. Angie in particular viewed this as the final straw:

In December, our line management changed. Again. Or you know, was passed on to another hand although it's still a little bit blurry ... I said [to middle management] "Look what's going on? Last year, we lost a colleague...we weren't even asked our opinion, we were told how things would be, then we started back and no one's even met with us! Yeah we've got thick skin but how do you think that makes us feel? What type of professionalism is that? Is there something that we are missing here, do we [both] need to start looking for another job?"

Chapter Six examines why there was often a lack of clarity or confusion about what the school expected of the LM role but what is important to note here is how this resulted in feelings of uncertainty and anxiety amongst the mentors in terms of how their work was perceived by others in the school, to the extent that they expressed genuine surprise when their work was noticed and validated by a higher source. For example, during the study a further Ofsted inspection took place during which the Head Teacher actively arranged for one of the inspectors to meet with Paul and observe a one-to-one intervention. Within Paul's animated retelling of his Ofsted experience, his surprise and pleasure at being singled out by the Head Teacher was evident:

...even though we have said it would be nice if people at least pretended to take an interest in our work the Senior Leadership Team were confident about sending inspectors to see us...

The mentors' dissatisfaction with how they were line-managed also came up when discussing their opportunities for formal appraisal and continuing professional development (CPD) such as the earlier example when they were excluded from child protection training. Further examples of this occurred during the study such as when they appeared to slip through the net in relation to a new appraisal system which required all staff to complete their own personal development review under the guidance of their respective line manager. Angie and Paul did not receive any training or information on the new system so were surprised when late one Thursday, they were contacted by their line manager instructing them to submit their reviews promptly due to the submission deadline being the very next day. Concerned about not having had any guidance about something that could potentially impact on their career path and pay, they had gone to talk to the member of staff who was the school lead on this. He in turn expressed concern agreeing that they had been left out of things. In their frustration, the mentors decided to boycott the official process and their line manager completed and submitted their individual reviews on their behalf.

The final example provides a contrast between one mentor's experiences of seeking further professional development with teachers pursuing the same objective. As noted in the Literature Review, an up-skilling of the schools workforce had led to the then Department for Education and Skills (DfES) commissioning the development of national occupational standards and a qualification framework for Learning, Development and Support Services (DfES, 2004). For LMs the first step into this was a national training programme which involving constructing a portfolio of evidence-based work. This then led on to a Foundation Degree (FD) written by the LEA, in partnership with a local Higher Education provider for those wishing to continue their professional development. Angie had completed the national training whilst working at a previous school but already held a Higher National Diploma (HND), an academic qualification which is equivalent to the FD. Exploring her options, she asked her immediate line-managers if she could enrol to do an MA in Youth and Community Studies which included a professional youth work qualification, reflecting how school work had become a significant employment destination for this type of graduate (National Youth Agency, 2013; Nathan, 2011) reflecting the wider trend of having a multi-disciplinary base in school settings (Calvert, 2009). Making the case that her attendance on the course would have a limited impact on the school in terms of time away from the job (missing one half-day a week) and funding (financial support was not requested), Angie asked to be released to undertake the course. The initial response from her line managers was less than enthusiastic, declining her request that one of them take on the role as her nominated practice supervisor, this being a requirement of the course. Formal confirmation of whether she could or could not do the course was not given despite numerous requests so feeling frustrated at this lack of clarity, Angie made a direct approach to the then Head Teacher who granted permission for her to undertake the course. She then doggedly approached three teachers with whom she felt she had good working relationships in the hope that one of them would be willing to undertake the supervisory role mentioned above, despite the fact that the one of the middle managers would have had a better understanding of the course requirements and content being more involved with the pastoral functions of the school. This rather drawn-out process was one I explored further with Angie:

Jo: Was it a bit stressful? I mean doing something that you knew you didn't have your manager's support and approval of, in terms of actually applying for and then doing the course?

Angie: *It was weary ...but you know summat [something] I was like... for the microphone, I'm sticking two fingers up! (Gestures) Do you know what I mean? But if I had to wait on them to make a decision, I'd still be waiting!*

When asked if the process was as arduous for teaching staff wishing to undertake further courses for *their* CPD Angie laughed bitterly exclaiming "Hell no!"

As seen with the requests to undertake enhanced Child Protection training, it was never made clear to Angie by her immediate line-managers as to why this course was not seen as an appropriate path to pursue in their eyes. Also unclear, is why the apparent indecision on the part of her line managers was eventually and rapidly overridden by the Head Teacher. What *is* clear is that Angie faced her own 'barriers to learning' in her desire to take on continuing professional development.

4.8 Conclusion - Assembling and mapping work knowledges

Smith (2002:46) argues that “dialogues with experience can participate in many discourses” and although ‘experience’ is often equated with the subjective and the personal, it is the discourse of IE which selects ‘work’ as a metaphor that focuses the examination of experience on what people do. Thus the concept of work as it is used here is:

...to focus the attention of both parties [institutional ethnographer and mentor(s)] to the dialogue on what is done and being done, *under what conditions, in relation to whom, and with what resources (ibid, my emphasis).*

Put simply, the “dialogue on what is done/being done” was established through getting alongside the mentors in order to grasp their standpoint. By doing this I was able to realise the second part of the above quotation: “under what conditions, in relation to whom, and with what resources”. To illustrate this I undertook a mapping of the mentor’s work knowledges as a means to understand the actualities of their role. This is not, however, about seeing LMs as the sample of a population but rather a starting place that orients the direction of the research. It quickly became apparent that the school was organized around a curriculum / pastoral split with the activities and staff associated with the former attaining a higher status, more secure conditions of employment and a more transparent and accessible career path. This was reminiscent of the notions of core and peripheral labour that had emerged from debates around labour flexibility since the early 1980s (Pollert, 1988) and which have concentrated on flexibility in both employment status and in work activities. For the core, the model rests upon the assumption of a direct relationship between primary employment conditions and the business concept of an organisation’s ‘core activity’. In contrast, the periphery provides a ‘numerical flexibility’ in which workers are employed in less secure or irregular ways. The employment of school support staff on a pro-rata basis i.e. where they are employed contractually for nine months of the year but receive a salary spread across twelve months is one such example. The precarious nature of the employment relationship is another feature of the periphery aptly illustrated by one of the LMs being served a redundancy notice during the ethnography due to falling roles. Peripheral workers are also seen as less central because their activities are either not viewed as part of the core business of the organisation or the contribution that their work makes to the core business takes place in far less visible and measurable ways. Thus, by taking these notions of ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ I applied them to workers *and* their activities which then enabled a means to visualise a template of the school structure on which I could start to map the everyday experiences of LMs.

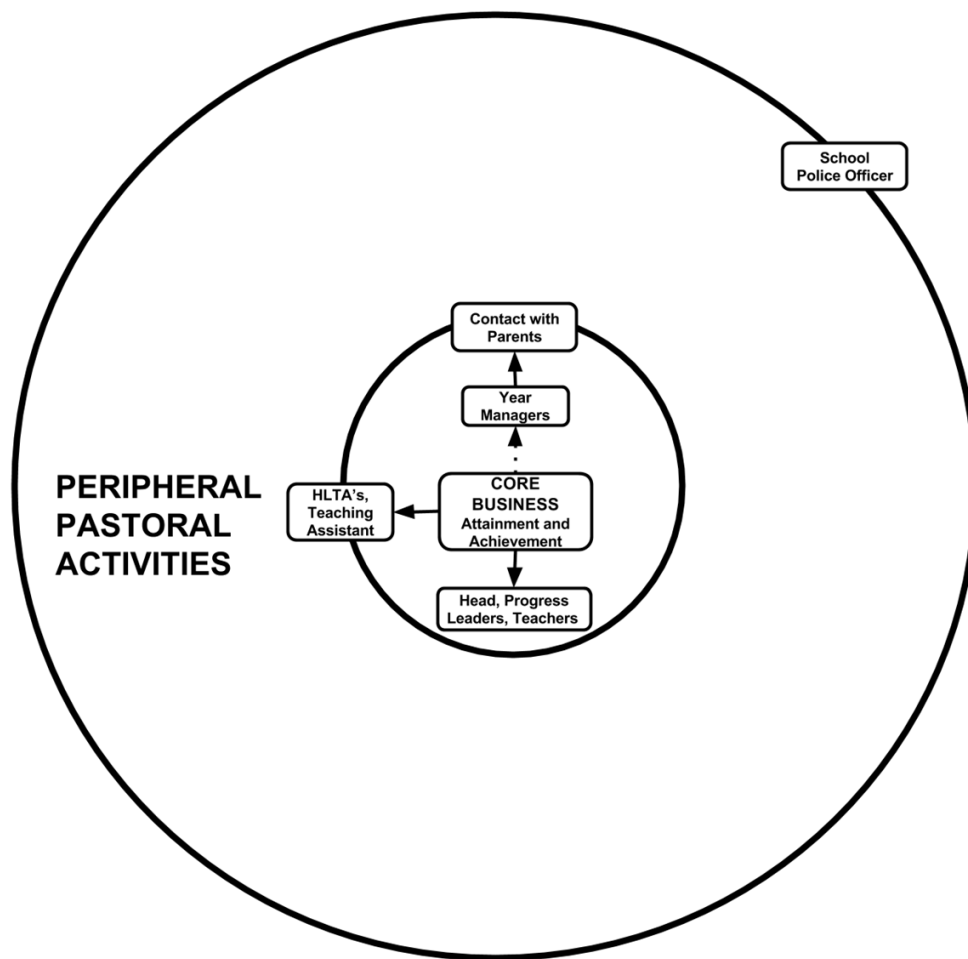


Figure 6 Understanding the school's activities as 'core' and 'peripheral'

This first 'map' above takes as its premise that the core business of the school is attainment and achievement realised through the teaching and learning components of school activities. This is particularly significant in Priory Park High, given its (then) recent Ofsted judgement of a school that 'Required Improvement'. The core workers inhabiting the inner domain are the Head Teacher (and other senior leaders), the Progress Leaders (those teachers with responsibility for overseeing that attainment levels were secured for each Year) and of course the teachers themselves. The broken line connecting up to the Year Managers denotes that whilst their work activities helped to 'prop up' the core business of attainment, they came under the pastoral 'business' of the school in terms of overseeing attendance, contacting parents, identifying pupils perceived to have 'barriers to learning' and referring them on to mentoring or behavioural interventions. Other peripatetic workers such as the school's police officer and the careers advisor can be seen hovering on the boundaries, poised, in the case of the police officer to intervene in sometimes quite dramatic fashion, as and when required (Interview 8).

HLTAs and TAs hover between the core and periphery as on the one hand they are classroom based (supporting the teaching and learning activities of the core business) and in the case of HLTAs run provisions in the school outside of the main arenas of progress these being the mainstream classrooms occupied by those pupils designated as 'Bankers' or 'RAPs'. But as will be shown in the following chapter, experiential accounts of their work demonstrated that they too had a different relationship with pupils to that of teachers and their work had numerous pastoral elements.

The next map (Figure 7) locates the LMs within the core-periphery structure in terms of depicting the *official* version of their activities (shown in green ink), described here as the 'Seen' as expanded further in the accounts of Breakfast Club, the Mentor Base and most significantly their 1:1 work arising from official referrals. The broken line connecting to parents symbolises two key issues. First that the role was seen as enabling a more informal means to engage parents, particularly those deemed as hard to reach, reminiscent of the bridging function noted in the 'New Careers' thesis. But once established, this was an area of their work which could be taken over or which they could be excluded from at any point. The example of Daniel and Angie illustrates both these situations.

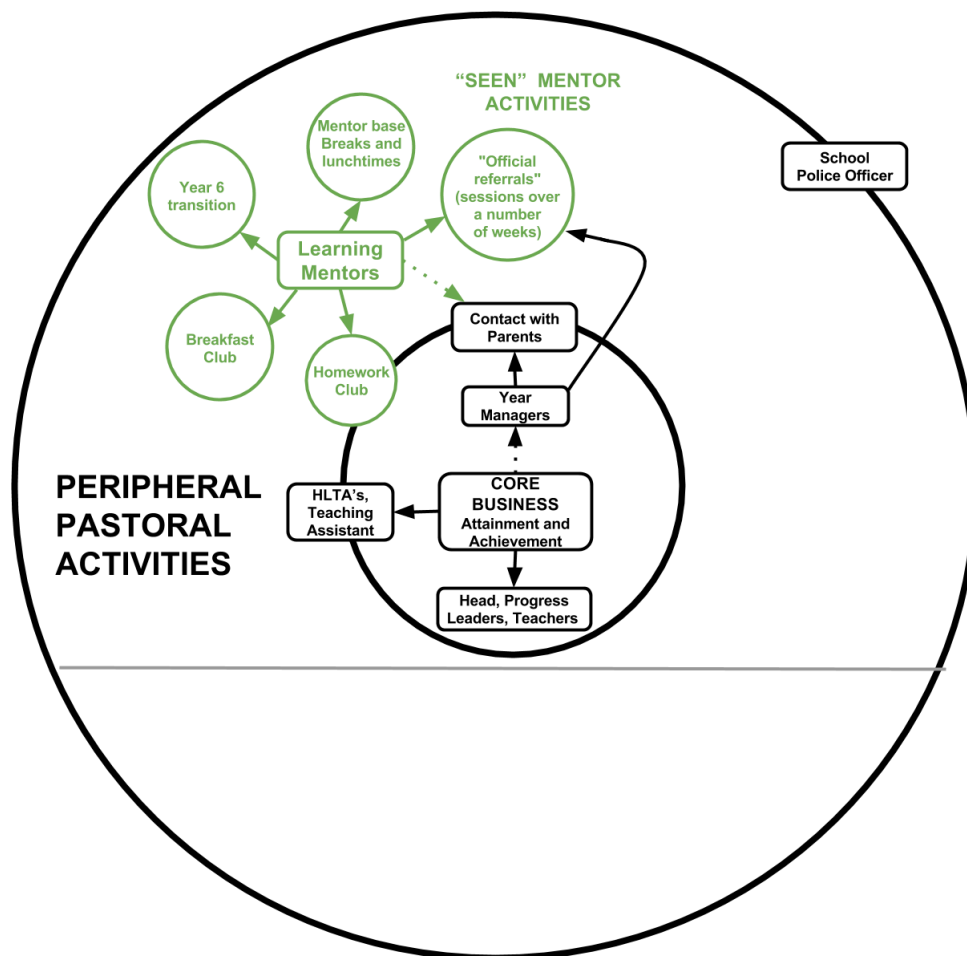


Figure 7 Mapping the Learning Mentor 'seen' activities

Whilst, the 'Seen' domain outlined above illustrates an understanding of how the learning mentor role was practised through 'official knowledge' i.e. how the school presented and made sense of this role; Figure 8 below depicts the significant amount of work that could be mapped into an 'unseen' domain (as denoted in the purple ink). By this I do not mean that this aspect of their work was literally invisible but more the lack of recognition (and thereby value) that was ascribed to it by those operating from within the core. This aspect of the map is based on observations, interviews and informal discussions with both mentors and pupils which tell stories of spontaneous one-off interventions; the application of 'emotional first aid' and what I refer to as 'tacit conversations' with pupils regarding how they negotiated and handled problematic aspects of their formal learning or balanced their schooling with significant events going on at home. The many incidents and accounts of pupils self-referring to the mentors and/or pupil-mentor relationships which continued once they had been formally ended by the middle managers underlined the essential but marginalized position of this aspect of the mentor's work.

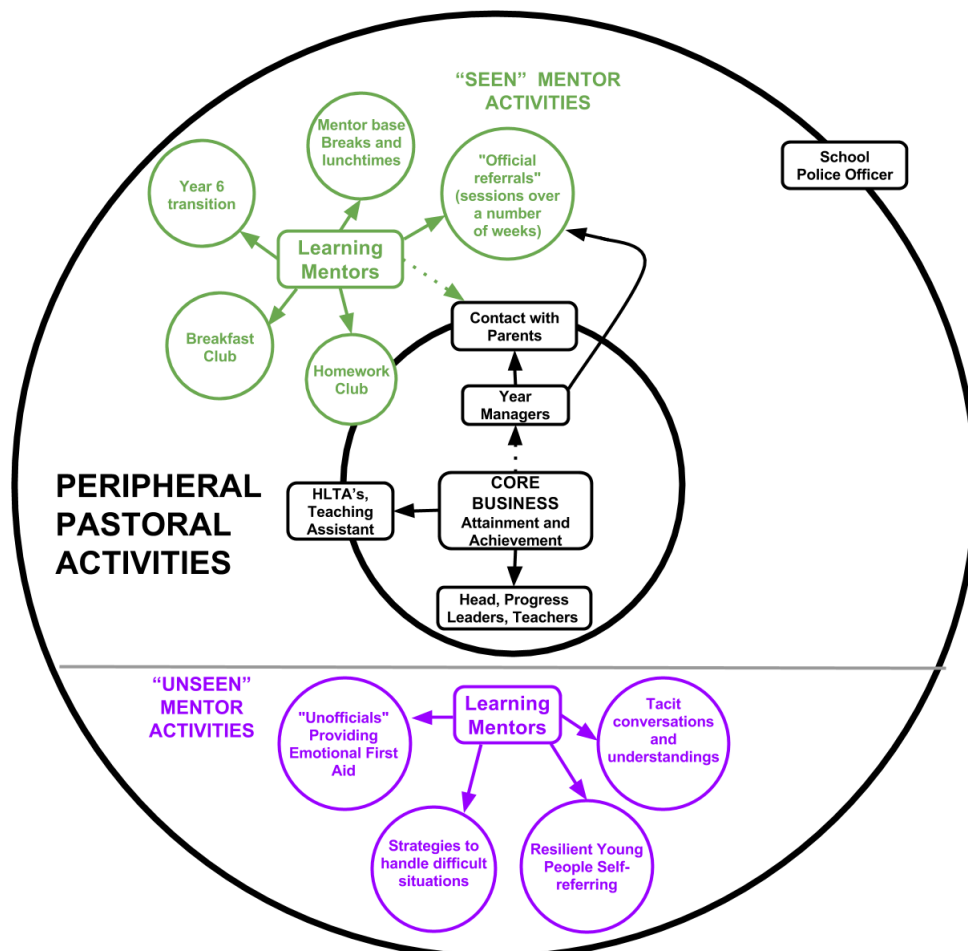


Figure 8 Mapping the Learning Mentor 'Unseen' Activities

People's experiential accounts can act as 'doors' which may lead to further work knowledges which provide a means to look at another angle of a particular story. Thus, through hearing about the experiences of members of a particular group, the researcher can

identify the relations that are to be explored looking particularly at how their work is articulated to and coordinated with others active in institutionalized processes. One of those 'particular stories' was that of the BSWs whose work activities are set out in the next map (Figure 9) denoted in red ink.

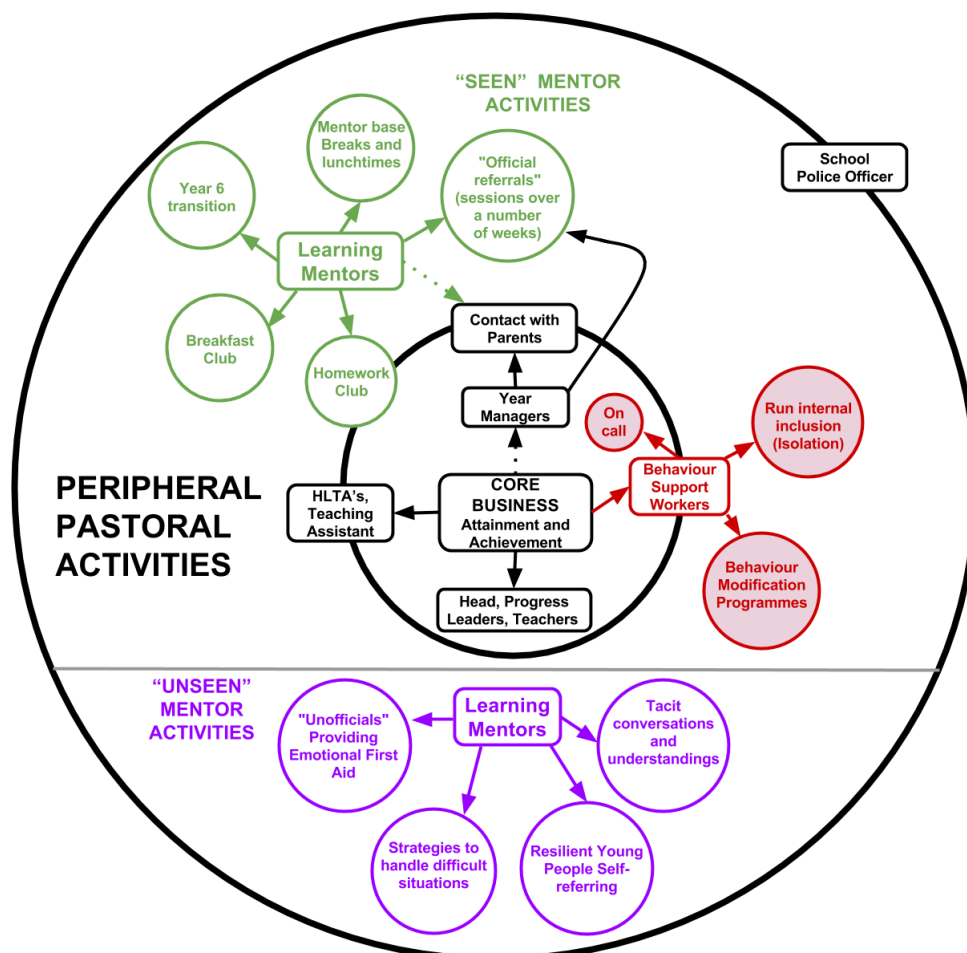


Figure 9 Others active in the institutional process – Behaviour support workers

As stated earlier, activities like this are placed alongside the mentors in being described as 'pastoral', but at Priory Park High there was a marked distinction in both philosophy and approach (a fact that was recognised by the Head Teacher but not it would seem by others in senior and middle management positions). The work of the BS team is depicted here as hovering between the core and periphery. This is because some aspects of their role, such as being 'on call', directly supported the activities of teaching and learning in that those pupils whose behaviour or actions were deemed as disruptive were withdrawn almost immediately from the classroom at a teacher's request. The rest of their 'business' was about containing pupils who had had a sanction of exclusion from class / daily school life placed upon them; or, who were withdrawn from some lessons over a number of weeks to attend behaviour modification sessions such as 'anger management'. On more than one occasion the Senior Leadership team required LMs and BS staff to work more closely together, a process that was viewed as problematic by each group. The mentors also viewed

the BS duties like 'on-call' (corridor patrol) as completely alien and anathema to their role. One institutional ethnographer warns that the period of data analysis is a time of vulnerability in ethnographies informed by IE due to an "unintended analytic drift" (McCoy, 2006:109), meaning that the focus can shift *from* the institution *to* the informants, with the danger that the researcher may get caught up in conflict among the different informants' stories. This issue did occur whilst gaining the respective standpoints of these two groups of paraprofessionals which I explore further in Chapter Four.

Through this mapping of the varying work knowledges, the problematic emerged: that the needs of the most marginalised young people were being attended to by one of the most marginalised group of staff – the learning mentors. Their marginality occurred in varying ways: through the way in which their work was perceived by the wider staff (it was striking that the School's Police Officer had one of the most accurate understandings of the LM role), and how it was organised and (mis)managed by their own line managers. Many interventions carried out by the learning mentors and other paraprofessionals were driven by third party agendas be that 'readiness for learning' or behaviour support. Within a school, it is these which represent the 'white elephant' in the mentoring 'triad' referred to earlier and their very presence casts doubt on Cruddas's absolute faith in these types of interventions being premised on a genuinely person-centred practise. However, the LM's decision to sometimes work in a more unofficial and liminal way did result in a more powerful mentoring dyad in terms of enabling young people to develop a greater understanding of their situations raising questions regarding 'structure' and 'agency' which are taken up in the final chapter.

In IE terms, the ruling relations have been revealed and made visible given that the data presented in this chapter reveals how a performative culture drills down and impacts the minutiae of everyday interactions, particularly in this ethnography which focuses more on those situated outside of the core business of progress and results. One of the clearest disjunctures to arise is how the LMs were often shut out from the very processes in which the Head Teacher envisaged they made such a positive contribution. These examples reveal the "fault lines" or "hooks" (DeVault and McCoy, 2002) which are duly investigated in Chapter Six, the primary focus of which is the work knowledges of senior and middle management members of staff.

Chapter 5: View from another marginal group (HLTAs and TAs)

The data presented in this chapter was generated through discussing the work knowledges of two HLTAs, Cath and Pat and Marie who at the time of the study was working as a TA, but, as already noted, had also undertaken other support roles in the school including LM and those at a middle management level. The initial premise for including the HLTAs and TAs in this study was to gain their perspectives and understandings of the LM role. However, when talking about the work of the mentors, they made a series of comparative references to their own work and it became apparent that their experiences as more established paraprofessionals who pre-dated the notion of a 'schools workforce' (Calvert, 2009) offered many similarities with the LMs, particularly in terms of how their role had initially been perceived and understood by the teaching core.

5.1 Current roles and specialisms of the HLTAs: Cath and Pat

Cath was employed to run the PDC which supported pupils who, for a variety of reasons were deemed to be vulnerable and/or new to the school. Originating from a nurturing intervention used in primary schools, this particular provision is accessed by pupils who are unable to participate in an ordinary classroom situation for a range of reasons (such as): a recent bereavement, being identified as a 'school refuser' and therefore having problematic attendance or being new into the locality mid-way through the term; so here the PDC is used as a means to induct the pupil into the school. This provision also accommodates those pupils who have come to the school via a 'managed move' a process whereby pupils who, for a number of reasons, are given the potential for a fresh start in a new school or maybe just a few weeks away from their original school thus also providing some respite for the teachers and support staff who may have had intensive dealings with that young person.

Cath had started her working life as a teaching assistant working with pupils with challenging behaviour in a time before the role of 'behaviour support' had become established and formalised to the extent that it has. She described her work activities in the PDC as:

Looking at pupils a bit more closely, giving them time to talk... just getting an overall view of the pupil really, not just in terms of learning but the whole picture ... So although pupils will work in there and bring work from other lessons it's also giving us a chance to have time to talk and to do other things as well, maybe put some programmes of work in ourselves... (Cath, Interview 1).

To her mind this was an extremely positive approach as it ensured that each pupil had a connection with a member of staff as soon as they started attending the school. This was seen as particularly beneficial for pupils entering the school via a managed move as they were likely to have behavioural problems and would benefit from this more personal approach, an observation which has been echoed in the wider literature (Vincent et al, 2007).

As well as the PDC, Cath has recently been appointed to run a new provision called the Key Stage 3 (KS3) Learning Centre. This intervention has come about to replace a previous system known as the 'withdrawal room' where pupils were taken if teachers felt that they were disrupting "other pupil's learning". Overtime however this came to be seen as ineffective as explained by Cath: "we were finding that it was ... the same group of pupils there most of the time ... particularly out of Year 9". Thus the KS3 Learning Centre is designed as an intensive catch-up mechanism for those pupils that had "gaps in their learning" from the previous year, whilst trying to keep abreast of the current demands of the curriculum. Despite heading up both provisions Cath disclosed that she hadn't "...got a new contract or anything so I don't know what my title is yet" (Interview 1) suggesting that the school's approach to appointing HLTAs was in a state of flux and/or that their job titles and the contractual obligations that accompanied them were not as explicitly set out as those for teaching staff.

Pat's path to Priory Park High (touched upon in a previous chapter when discussing IE's "generous definition of work"), had come about due to her need to find a job which fitted around her work as a parent. She talked passionately about supporting pupils, especially those who had a particular type of barrier in accessing the curriculum:

Pat: I've always been involved in the nurture groups and the access groups. So it's the kids with moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and autism.

Jo: Is that something that you just kind of fell into? Something you found out that you like and you are good at?

Pat: It was a case of we had one boy, who was severely autistic... speech and language problems, communication difficulties. He communicated by the odd word and grunts ... and I just fell in love with him; he was a handful, but he was wonderful to support, and so I went on then to look at 'Asperger's Syndrome' and... 'Teenagers'... the reaction with the hormones and everything else to these 'isms' so to speak, you know? And found a little niche there that I really enjoyed doing.

The fact that both Pat and Cath managed provisions which supported those pupils who were situated *outside* of mainstream class settings is an important point to note as it questions existing descriptions and understandings of the HLTA and TA which see such roles as predominantly based *in* the classroom and are then used as a means to distinguish it from LM activities which take place elsewhere (Cruddas, 2005). Thus, the activities of both TAs and HLTAs are clearly ripe for re-appraisal in the wider literature. I also underline the importance of looking beyond institutional discourse to gain an accurate understanding of people's work activities when interpreting data. If I were to go no further than the participants' descriptions (i.e. the institutional discourse) of the PDC, the Key Stage 3 Learning Centre or the ASDAN provision that Cath and Pat were tasked with running, they would be understood, somewhat uncritically, as the different facets you would expect to see in the day-to-day functioning of an all-inclusive school. Once attention is paid to the actualities of their work it is possible to explicate how the institutional order *creates* the conditions of individual experiences (McCoy, 2006) which specific to this study are those

whose work entails supporting young people who for varying reasons are on the margins of mainstream provision. Thus as the work knowledges of both HLTAs unfolded, it became ever clearer that a number of striking parallels could be drawn between *their* accounts and those of the learning mentors. The key issues to emerge were: the importance of the relationship, the pastoral elements that were integral to their work tasks and their starting points in relation to their work as paraprofessionals. These are now presented prior to examining their understanding of the learning mentor role.

5.2 The importance of the staff/pupil relationship – “I wanted to have that relationship with young people that maybe you don’t always get as a teacher”

Cath’s response to the question of what she enjoyed about her work was immediate and emphatic:

Spending time with the young people really, that’s the most important part of my work. And also that it’s very varied so it changes all the time...because I never really wanted to be a teacher, I didn’t want to stand in a classroom and do ... (pauses and thinks) I wanted to have that relationship with young people that maybe you don’t always get as a teacher, and I like the challenge of doing something a bit more... a bit more difficult...I think (laughs a little) (Interview 1).

Similarly, the positive regard that Pat had for the pupils she worked with was easily observable in her earlier comments regarding the boy with autism: “*he was a handful, but he was wonderful to support*”. Furthermore, when recalling some of the pupils she had worked with when first appointed, although relatively inexperienced in a school setting, it was evident that Pat had significant insight into the time and patience that was required to actually establish the relationship in the first place, particularly, as she explains in this account, with those pupils who were initially extremely hostile to offers of support:

*I was in a class where I was pushed in at the deep end because they were so short staffed and it was exam time as well. I came in at the beginning of May, so it was straight into GCSEs ...So I was put in the bottom set English, Year 11, and there was a group of kids at the back, these girls, and they were just horrible. They were foul mouthed, their every other word was ‘f***ing’ and they were rude ... if you walked near them to see if they wanted any help they would say [mimics] “oh miss, your breath stinks!” and this kind of thing. I didn’t give up... I’m a stubborn little mule! I thought “no, you are not going to get rid of me that easily”. So the more they persisted in telling me my breath stank, the more I used to pull up my chair and see if they needed any help; and eventually it got through to them that I wasn’t there to put any barriers in the way, or to take the mickey out of them. I did really want to help ... and then you get talking to the individuals and you see the barriers that they’ve got ... and then you really get to know the kids (Interview, 11).*

This is reminiscent of Cheryl and Angie’s earlier comments about not allowing pupils’ hostile behaviours and/or verbal outbursts to become the primary focus of their interactions with them. Pat’s resilience and patience in seeing beyond the behaviours displayed by the pupils

meant that she could develop a deeper understanding of the young people she supported. In our discussions she went on to cite a myriad of barriers that pupils encountered including for some a reluctance to acknowledge that they had a learning disability/difficulty in the first place, due to the stigma that they perceived to be attached to these. The 'barriers' she refers to in the account above were personal issues faced by some, specifically one of the "horrible" girls above who eventually disclosed to Pat a recent suicide in the family - an event that her younger brother had not coped well with by disengaging from school and turning to heavy drug-use much to the concern of his older sister - Pat's pupil. In her recounting of this situation, Pat spoke directly about the area where this pupil lived, and how she saw it as representing both positive and negative elements in their lives:

...in some ways [it is] a fantastic community because they look after each other; but in other ways, it becomes the norm for them to be out on the streets doing the drugs because ... that's their life (ibid).

This knowledge of locality offered a further parallel with the notion that some LMs are somehow more known or embedded in the local community than their teaching counterparts. It also ties in with the Head teacher's earlier observation of some school staff having a greater ability to access, through discussion and understanding in this case, the "places, people and contexts" that perhaps other school staff could not.

5.3 Delivering pastoral care within their provisions

Perceptions of the spaces that HLTA and TA interventions took place in proved to be another aspect of the data which offered parallels with the mentor experience. Like the Mentor Base and Breakfast Club, the Pupil Development Centre (PDC) was characterised as an inviting and nurturing place but, unlike the mentor-led provisions, it was not open access:

Cath: We get loads of kids going "can I come in the PDC?" [Mimics young children] Do you know what I mean? ...little faces at the window... [laughs]

Jo: And why do you think they want to do that? What is their perception of what you do?

Cath: I think they think we have a nice time [Mimicking pupils again] "oo are you giving them a cup of tea! Can I have a cup of tea too?" Do you know what I mean? Like we have quite a lot of kids [coming to the PDC] who don't have breakfast for example...you know there's a bit of that really so those not coming to the PDC think it's someone nice to be with for a bit and it's a bit of a chill out... and I think they see that probably with the mentors as well.

Jo: And what do you say to them then when they ask to come in?

Cath: We just say "no you can't sorry" and they say "if I'm naughty can I come in?" and I say "no if you were naughty you would definitely not come in!" I think ... very

few kids don't appreciate coming in [to the PDC], very few. One or two, perhaps quite high achievers who say "Why am I in here? Is it the stupid room?"

Although pupil perceptions do not figure in this chapter to the extent that they did when discussing the Mentor's work previously, it is interesting that some pupils saw provisions like the PDC (above) and the Mentor Base (below) as something for the 'other' characterised by stigmatising comments like: *"Is this the stupid room?"* This is ironic given that such provisions originate from an agenda based on notions of Inclusion but also entirely consistent with the idea of 'master status' constructed within Labelling theory (Becker, 1963). Marie also noted this reticence to engage with support mechanisms on the part of some pupils during her time as a LM:

[There is a] perception [of] what you class as the academic 'good' kids [that] think they [the mentors] are just here for the naughty kids ... if you've got a mentor, it means you are naughty and that's what they think about somebody that has a mentor [so] sometimes pupils would want to be quite secretive about them having a mentor. They didn't want their friends to know... you had to meet with them in secret (Interview 12).

Returning to the HLTAs, Pat was also keen to convey what she very definitely saw as the pastoral dimension of the Teaching Assistant role along with other elements which could be likened to the mentoring interventions:

I think the majority of TAs have a part- mentoring role; we all key- work certain kids, so we've got children that have got whatever difficulties they have in class and we are kind of responsible pastorally for them. So we meet with them, however often we can; sometimes it's easy because you are doing class work with them, so you can have a chat, find out what's going on in their lives or whatever. So we do kind of have that ... little bit of a rapport there with them (Interview 11).

It is accounts like these which raise the critical question of whether the title of a support role actually matters if they are effectively all providing support and care. Marie's experience forms a key piece of data here having held the unique position of being employed *simultaneously* as both TA and Learning Mentor. Her comments below suggest that there were clear differences between the mentoring and TA role and performing both at once presented problems for her and the pupils:

[It] was quite difficult because half the time I was a mentor and half the time I was a teaching assistant. The kids were a little bit confused as to why I was in the class or not, and then I found a pull because I knew there were children that would need me and I was in school, but I couldn't, I couldn't help them at that time because that was my teaching assistant time (Interview 12).

A further potential parallel revealed in these discussions was the familial aspect of the relationship; however, rather than this perception coming from pupils as it did in relation to the mentors, it was Pat explaining how in her early days as a TA, she had drawn on her skills and experience as a parent in order to build relationships with pupils:

[I would] *think from a parent point of view because that's where I was at that time, I was like their parent* (Interview 11).

It was also apparent that autobiographical aspects of her background were utilised as a means to build relationships with some pupils on the basis of what she perceived as shared experiences:

...And you say to them [pupils] "look, pack it in, you're talking to someone who's already converted, I've lived there, I've been in that council estate ..." But yes, you have got to find ways to break down those barriers and it's ... by just carrying on and trying and trying...

Also of note here was her determination not to 'give up' on a pupil.

5.4 Initial perceptions of the TA role: "I didn't realise that ordinary people could help ordinary children..."

The way in which the work of TAs had been perceived by teaching staff in its early days provided a direct parallel with the experiences of the LMs. For Cath this was in relation to how she felt some teaching staff had viewed "the pupils that I work with" meaning the issue or barrier she was supporting them to overcome:

Well I've done it for 12 years - worked with pupils with mostly behavioural difficulties. When I first started, the issue was kind of brushed under the carpet and you felt like you were under there with them, but now it's changed and I think people have a different view of it really (Interview 1, my emphasis).

She believed that this change in attitude had come about due to the time and effort put in by both herself and her line manager in going directly to teachers, initially, to encourage them to develop an understanding of some pupils situations "and some of the difficulties they experienced at home" and then crucially, showing them the work that they had done whilst being supported by the TAs outside of their class sessions:

And I think once staff [teachers] have seen what we've actually achieved... for example in PDC in the last couple of years, we've had Year 10s and 11s who have done their GCSE course work with us [and] I think staff have been ... impressed that we have managed to get that sort of work out of pupils and ... at that level as well. We have actually taken some kids ... for a whole year and got them through Maths GCSE and things like that. So I think that's made a difference...that they can see that we are not just kind of patting [pupils] on the head and giving them a cup of tea, we are actually getting some real learning work out of it and this is really where the Key Stage 3 room has sprung up [a recognition that] we can get some real work out of the pupils we work with (ibid, my emphasis).

Pat also recognised this lowly position that was occupied by TAs, but her account of her early experiences was far more agentic. Not only did she compare her own (employment)

transition to adulthood unfavourably to that of her two siblings who had entered the teaching and legal professions respectively, she also reflected on how her own time at school had gone on to affect her earlier views of who did (and more tellingly did not) work in schools:

I wish I had done it [the TA role] years and years ago [but] I left school and ... I did alright with my O-Levels, I passed everything that I took, but I was never an academic ... I think my view of school was a bit coloured because ... I didn't realise that ordinary people could help ordinary children just as much as we do, you know? (Interview 11, my emphasis).

In further contrast to Cath who had cited the attitudes of some teachers as being a significant obstacle to her work being valued, Pat believed that in some instances it was the reluctance of TAs themselves to “change with the times” referring to some as “the old wood”, who “just wanted to come in and be classroom assistants” and not step-up to the then new TA role which she described as “being a pastoral role and getting to know the children”. This view of how the TA role had developed was also recognised by Marie although she did not share Pat’s assessment of their peers:

I mean it's like when the Teaching Assistants have gone from being called ... Learning Support Assistant, 'LSAs' and they'd be mums whose children went to the school, you know? We've stepped up, not that there was anything wrong with them, but you know, we've moved on and a lot more is expected as a Teaching Assistant, much more, which is good. Whereas now, there's more striving towards working together with the teacher (Interview 12).

Despite this development she did express that she avoided getting into direct conflict with other staff due to a fear of not appearing professional coupled with a belief that staff occupying lower positions in the hierarchy found it difficult to challenge those higher up:

One thing that I'm not very good at although I've got better at it is conflict with other people. I really struggle with it, having to say to somebody “I don't like how you did that” or “I don't agree with that”. If something's happened in a classroom that I've been unhappy with, I find it difficult to go back and talk to somebody about it... (ibid).

Once we had clarified that the “people” cited here were in fact teachers and middle managers, Marie distinguished between younger teaching staff (who she felt could see the benefit of having a TA in the lesson) and their older counterparts. She also identified that middle managers could and did undermine the actions of those teachers and TAs who might be seeking a more equitable working relationship recalling a recent incident where a TA in the school had been reprimanded by a Progress Leader for following a teacher’s instruction to sign the report card of a pupil she had been working with pointing out that this was not part of a TA’s role. Marie felt that the overriding position of TAs, which she saw as being located at the foot of the school hierarchy, was one which defined them:

Marie: I don't feel that there's any professional ... [searches for a word]

Jo: [offers] recognition?

Marie: [nods] ... [Because] as *Teaching Assistants, we are the lowest paid members of staff probably in the school ... I think that, you know, they [middle and senior managers] feel that we are at the bottom of the pile. Often most of the Teaching Assistants do it because they love the job, it wouldn't really be for the pay because you could earn more in Tesco's or wherever really* [laughs].

Although Marie presents her own lack of confidence and the lowly position of TAs in the school hierarchy as separate issues, I argue that they were very much connected. If a group of staff are used to carrying out instruction-based tasks, they are not going to feel comfortable when 'suddenly' given more autonomy in drawing on their own assessments of pupils, especially when there is a perception or fear that to do so may be deemed as an inappropriate action by a higher authority.

The accounts given thus far paint a puzzling picture. As a support, non-teaching role, TAs are much more long standing and arguably therefore established in the mind set of teaching staff and the fabric of a school more generally. In many cases they have taken on further education and training to achieve HLTA status, enabling them to run interventions that were previously seen as falling within the domain of the teaching profession. Yet they continue to struggle with their professional identity and their place in the school hierarchy, not to mention remaining as some of the lowest paid members of staff.

5.5 HLTAs perceptions of the Learning Mentor role

Did their position as support staff enable them to have a better, more nuanced understanding of the LM role, particularly in relation to the teachers' accounts presented in the previous chapter? Both HLTAs were noticeably more forthright and confident in conveying their understandings. Cath described them as "a significant adult for pupils to go to in crises or [at] other times" to which the mentor would respond as a "sort of coach" in talking things through with pupils. She also identified their signposting function in providing pupils and/or their families with connections to other services should that be necessary. One of the ways in which she distinguished the role from her own was how it tended to be "much more mobile" compared to her work which took place in one of two rooms. Like the Head teacher, she was also aware of the nature of the contact that mentors had with parents describing it as a "friendly link" with school and contrasting that with her own form of contact with parents which was likened to more of "a sort of teaching role".

But even when questioned specifically about the LM role, Cath's explanations continued to draw on her own experiences as a TA. For example when asked how she felt the role was perceived by other staff in the school, she observed a similar shift in attitude from the negative to the largely positive (as per her earlier account) which is illustrated again here:

Jo: And how do you think the Learning Mentor role is perceived in school by other staff?

Cath: *I think it is ... good. When I first started it was awful!*

Jo: Was it?

Cath: *Yes ... and my role as well, I think people used to think “oh they [mentors and pupils] just sit about, drink cups of tea, have a few sweets then pat them on the head and off they go”. I honestly think that that was the idea ... Because it was all new, having people in school who were not teachers or teaching assistants [but] even teaching assistants ... when I first got here, they used to have their lunch in a different room – how weird is that? You know? Whereas now it is a lot different; they [learning mentors] are more accepted ... they have managed to get pupils in for exams...I think once teachers see that they have got a hand in learning through what they are doing then that’s something they are more comfortable with. That is what they know and they think “... they are actually doing something that is helping” ...but I don’t think a lot of them have seen it beyond that really. I don’t think they see that other part of what they do that much (Interview 1, my emphasis).*

Cath’s words suggest that the school struggled to accommodate another new ‘non-teaching’ role and this experience of the learning mentors reminded her of her own early days at Priory Park High, when shockingly, TAs were designated separate staff room facilities from their teaching counterparts. In what seems to be a shared, common perception, out of class interventions are once again characterised here as sitting about and drinking cups of tea thereby trivialising or denying their potential impact. Cath also provides further evidence regarding the contribution of the mentors in helping pupils to complete and submit GCSE course work; here it is the mentor action of ensuring that pupils are physically in school to sit their exams which reassures teaching staff that their work is of value. Thus, the mentors are portrayed, like the TAs before them, as a group who have had to prove their worth to teaching staff in terms of delivering the learning and achievement ‘goods’ on which the progress of the school is assessed and which clearly have a currency within the school context. However, lacking in currency and therefore less visible are the more pastoral dimensions of the mentors’ work vis-à-vis Cath’s belief that teachers are not able or willing to see beyond the academic to “*the other part of what they do*”.

Similarly, Pat conveyed a good understanding of the learning mentor role describing a person who was there for pupils having difficulties and thus providing “another pair of ears”. She was also one of the few members of staff who was aware of the Breakfast Club as an intervention that was bound up with the role. It was notable that when talking about the approach of the mentors in building relationships with pupils she drew on, and likened the role to, her own youth work experience as a Duke of Edinburgh Leader implying once again the informal and voluntary elements of the role. She was also keen to highlight that nature of the support provided by the mentors insofar as this took place *outside* of the classroom responding to “outside things”, meaning issues which pupils experienced *beyond* their formal learning. Having identified this distinctive aspect of the mentor role she went on to question if this was actually the most effective way for learning mentors to carry out their work:

It makes me wonder if the children who have got a learning mentor might perform better in class if the mentor was there to support them ... as well as outside on the social and emotional aspects of things... because they must only see one side and then get reports from teachers ... and in fairness, there are still some teachers that, if a kid's tarred with a bad brush, then they are never going to be any different in that teacher's eyes. They [teachers] don't give them second chances and poor 'Johnnie' because he swore at them once, they're never going to forgive him as long as he lives, until hell freezes over; he is still going to be [mimics teachers] "that nasty boy that swore at me" and you know that's an adult wrong really, that should be righted.

Once again, the visibility of the mentors is raised as an issue in this account. Whereas Cath had an understanding of the mentors' role as "much more mobile" in that, unlike many staff roles, they were not always going to be carrying out their work in a particular place at a specific time, Pat asks whether they should actually spend more time in the classroom if only to verify whether a teacher's perception of a pupil is correct. This questioning of *where* mentors might be most effective was also shared by Marie who when working as a mentor had drawn on her experience as a TA and taken it upon herself to go into class sessions, explaining her rationale for doing so here:

Because I'd been a TA, I did like to go into lessons with them, I found that really useful to be able to see what they were like, or their perception of [mimics the pupil] "oh this teacher hates me and I don't do anything wrong". So I'd think "right, ok, I'll come in and see what's happening"... and because you weren't in that conflict with them, like the teacher was, it was easier to point out things that they might be doing that could be frustrating for the teacher. They would often confuse 'the teacher hated them' as opposed to 'the teacher doesn't like their behaviour'... well they [pupils] do, don't they! You know, [role plays a pupil/mentor interaction] "She hates me!" "No she doesn't, she just doesn't like how you behave. It's not the same thing at all" (Interview 12).

Thus for Marie, classroom observation was used as *one of many* strategies in working with young people and challenging their perceptions and behaviours. This is a different position to Pat who is essentially questioning how effective the mentor's role can be when they are not linked explicitly to the key site where teaching and learning takes place, i.e. the classroom.

These accounts also indirectly revealed something of how the HLTAs perceived power differentials between pupil and teacher seen in Pat's desire to advocate for young people who may have been labelled or "*tarred with a bad brush*" which she viewed categorically as an "*adult wrong*" in need of remedying. This empathy with and desire to support pupils where teachers had been too heavy-handed bore another striking similarity with the mentors' perspectives and experiences outlined in the previous chapter.

5.6 HLTAs explanations for divisions between teaching and support roles

The above accounts relating to the experiences of both TAs and HLTAs suggest that clear divisions or 'camps' were seen to exist between teaching and support staff supporting the idea of a curriculum/pastoral split. Pat's explanations as to how this had come about pointed to how both the positions and practices of support staff afforded them greater opportunities to really know the pupils:

[Support workers] *do have a bit more empathy with the children ... I mean there are no excuses for rudeness and swearing and things like that, but you can have an understanding of it when you know the kids and I think as a Learning Mentor or a support worker, you do get that, you know?* [Emphasises this point] You do! (Interview 11).

Her comment which directly followed the one above implied that the reason for this was that teachers were now facing ever greater pressures to deliver on the academic side given the recent Ofsted history resulting in a judgement of 'Special Measures' and as a consequence, falling rolls:

I think the teachers probably do [empathise] but they have just got so much else on their minds anyway, with the finances and the situation they are in and pressure that they are under to deliver...

And later on:

Getting results, getting them through their exams ... that's more what the teacher focus is going onto, which is the business side of the school rather than ... the pastoral care ... side (ibid, my emphasis).

Cath's views on this topic also pointed to how the teaching role had changed (for the worse in her view) but believed that such divisions between support and teaching staff had come about as an unintentional consequence of previous policy:

Cath: *I think over time ... some of the onus [meaning emphasis] on the whole child has been taken away from some form tutors and I think that's coming back, now that they're taking on that job of ringing up parents and talking and thinking a bit more about the children they've got in their class.*

Jo: And you think it was missing for a while in school?

Cath: *Yeah! I think it was kind of ... the mentors used to work in a room with me – we all used to work together at one point, and I think we always felt like we were taking that on...you know it was kind of left with us in a way, well not just us, but ... a handful of people ... and because teachers are so busy as well and they have got all the data and whatever to do I think actually spending time with their kids...[trails*

off]...and really it should be the whole school that takes it on, shouldn't it? You know everyone.

Jo: I remember reading that one of the purposes of *Excellence in Cities* and the subsequent creation of roles like the learning mentor was that it 'freed up teachers... [Cath interjects and we both say] ... to teach!'

Cath: *But it's not just about teaching... I don't see why you would come into a school just to teach when you are with young people ...there's more than that isn't there? But I think people have realised that now. They have a form period time, although they [SLT] are putting quite a lot of learning stuff back in that! But ... I would like to see people [teachers] just play games with their class or you know doing something like ... [pauses and thinks]*

Jo: Something that is not all about learning?

Cath: *Yeah!*

Jo: And did you just say that you think this is coming back again?

Cath: *I think it is just that everybody felt, you know, that they needed to take that onus back on again ... of caring for the child and I think that is important ... it is like... you know that saying 'it takes a village to bring up a child' well I think it takes a school to bring up [a child] ...and that's the whole school. Not just a couple of people...*

This rather lengthy extract has been included in full as it identifies a number of issues which are key to this discussion. Cath starts by questioning the ethos of the school in terms of how it cares for its pupils. She is convinced of the need for a whole school approach: "*I think it takes a school to bring up [a child] ...and that's the whole school. Not just a couple of people...*" But wider policy initiatives had ended up channelling school staff into these respective 'camps' and effectively separating the academic from the pastoral: "*it was kind of left with us in a way*". To explain further, her previous training and qualifications were undertaken during the era of New Labour which as discussed in the literature review envisaged, and talked positively of, a burgeoning 'Schools Workforce'. She herself had undertaken the *National Programme for Specialist Leaders of Behaviour and Attendance* (DfCSF, 2007) an initiative that formed part of the Social Inclusion agenda. She also referred to the *Every Child Matters* agenda and the *Learning Mentor National Training* as part of this discussion. However, in her view qualification and policy initiatives like these had effectively led to a 'giving up' or jettisoning of teacher-responsibility for the care of pupils. The loss of this relational element for teachers clearly comes out in this discussion countered by Cath's enthusiastic promotion of the need for a 'whole-school' approach. The Deputy-head, offered a similar viewpoint, observing as a relative new-comer that the staff-pupil relationship was an area that "all staff at the school could work harder on" (Interview 9). Comments like these suggest that the school had indeed struggled with this issue of who should 'do' the caring, evidenced above by Cath's observation that whilst form tutors were being handed back some pastoral time as a means to re-establish that building of relationships with pupils, SLT were "putting quite a lot of learning stuff back in that" suggesting that the function of form time was ill-defined and when seen as a forum to 'do' pastoral care was under threat.

The tension between the academic and the pastoral was clearly an issue in the school at the time of the study as borne out not only by Cath's comments above but also further observations. Once, when attending a meeting in the Board Room, I spotted multiple copies of an article published in the teacher CPD section of the *Times Educational Supplement* entitled 'Rapport is the key to re-engaging students' (Maddern, 2012). It advised teachers to (amongst other things) "show teenagers respect, and let them know they are cared about and understood" and to "ensure students develop a relationship with a trusted adult who can help them to keep on track with their learning", advice which strongly illustrates the mentor approaches outlined in Chapter Four. Although I was not able to discover who had disseminated this article, its very presence suggested that some staff in the school were thinking about and trying to promote a teacher-pupil relationship that went beyond a purely 'learning for results' function.

Like the LMs, the HLTAs recognised the difficulties experienced by teachers in imbricating the pastoral and academic strands into their everyday practices but more fundamental questions about the purpose of education were also raised in their accounts. Cath's rhetorical questioning of why someone would come into a space where there are young people "*just to teach*" is an observation which reflects the impact of performativity on the teaching profession where their role has been stripped down to producing results in schools which have, in turn, been recast as exams factories. Her plea that "*there is more than that* [to school] "*isn't there?*" reminds us that school should also be seen as a place that engages with broader understandings of pupils and "their lives outside of the classroom" (Martin, 2016:4).

This chapter shows that staff working in other support roles have a number of comparative perceptions and experiences with the LMs. The early experiences of the HLTAs suggest that schools have struggled to understand and integrate new forms of working not fitting that rather limited pedagogical model of 'teacher and learner' and this is therefore not unique to the learning mentors. Both groups' work has been (wrongly) characterised and misunderstood by teachers which has led at times to both a feeling of inferiority and conversely, a desire to prove their worth. Perhaps most striking were the similarities in their respective approaches to supporting pupils. Both groups talked of the pupils they supported in a way which demonstrated that they were sensitively attuned to the needs of those young people who found themselves at the margins of school provision. The relationships that resulted further suggested that these staff had a more nuanced understanding of the pupils' experiences. The mentors and HLTAs / TAs both recognised the pressures that teachers were under to deliver results and how this limited their ability to include pastoral elements into their everyday interactions with pupils. For some support staff there was also an awareness of the extra-local when pointing to the impact of previous policy initiatives on theirs' and teachers' roles with their comments suggesting that *compared* to teachers, their everyday work placed them *outside* of that performative context. The extent to which this might be so is a critical issue which will be discussed later on in the thesis.

There were however important differences to note as well. The activities comprising the HLTA/TA role meant that the purpose of their work was less likely to be questioned,

misunderstood or misinterpreted. Provisions like the PDC and ASDAN embodied something that teachers, Progress Leaders and Senior leaders (the latter two being exclusively from teaching backgrounds) could recognise and relate to in terms of their own work activities both past and present. Thus although not under the gaze to the same extent as, for instance, teachers of 'Banker' and 'RAP' pupils, the work of HLTAs/TAs was more embedded into the academic side of the school compared with that of learning mentor provisions and interventions hence why they are depicted as hovering over both the core and periphery components of school provision in Figure 1 presented earlier. For their part, pupils were clear that the roles were qualitatively different and when a member of staff (Marie) was employed as a TA and learning mentor simultaneously, the result was confusion for pupils and a feeling of being conflicted for that member of staff. This suggests that the degree to which schools actually think about different areas of 'pastoral' support in terms of their impact and how they are positioned alongside one another appears to be somewhat lacking. In the discussion chapter we will return to the issues raised by this data.

Chapter 6: Contradictions and incoherencies in senior and middle manager views of the Learning Mentor role

In Chapter Four, the focus was at a grass-roots level in finding out about the everyday work of the LMs. But of course, the potential for what the pupil/mentor relationship can achieve extends beyond that of the mentors and pupils so to view it as an independent entity, disconnected from the rest of the school is meaningless. Hence, it is necessary to learn something about the wider context in which the LMs were carrying out their role. The purpose of this chapter is to go to the opposite end of the hierarchy starting with three members of staff from the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). The formal interviews that were undertaken for this part of the study were structured around three main areas:

- The participant's path to Priory Park High and the role they currently occupied;
- Their understanding of the LM role (and)
- Their thoughts on whether it afforded a qualitatively different approach to that of other staff.

Different lines of enquiry were then obviously followed for each participant, according to their respective roles and the issues that their "work knowledge[s]" (Smith, 2006:7) gave rise to. The discussion is centred initially around the Director of Pastoral Care (DPC) as this person had overall responsibility for all support staff. The contributions of the Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher whose viewpoints have already had a presence in previous chapters, are also considered. The discussion then moves on the tier of middle-management which appeared to be the source of the mentor's frustrations. The data in this section was generated through discussion with a Progress Leader (PL) (teaching background) and Year Manager (YM) (non-teaching background).

6.1 *The Director of Pastoral Care*

The DPC was the only member of the SLT who had spent her entire professional career at Priory Park High, joining the school twenty-four years earlier as a 'probationer' now termed 'NQT' (Newly Qualified Teacher). The activities of the DPC were organised around the two strategic areas of 'Attendance' and 'Behaviour'. The former entailed a whole-school statistical monitoring alongside targeted interventions with 'offending' pupils to ensure that the school performed above the national average this being an inspection measure on which it had previously failed. It is, however, relevant to note that according to the Local Authority's own strategic Children's plan, poor school attendance was a city wide phenomenon. Despite the school moving back into a 'Good' category after its most recent Ofsted inspection, the DPC believed that her second area of responsibility – Behaviour - was one which the school needed to show continued improvement in:

We have been judged as good, now our next step is to be judged outstanding, so we need to have a behaviour that follows suit... (Interview 14).

In addition to leading on these two areas, the DPC oversaw all the varying pastoral interventions including the LMs, as well as line-managing other provision deemed as 'Inclusion'. This encompassed the school's on-site pupil referral centre, the behaviour support team whose duties, as stated before, included being 'on-call', running the internal exclusion provision and working with pupils targeted for behaviour modification programmes. Given the nature and scope of her day-to-day work and the documentation of increasing numbers of non-teaching staff into schools reported earlier in the wider literature, I was eager to know the breakdown of pastoral / inclusion staff in relation to teaching staff, as well as how these were allocated within the school. Her response caught me a little off-guard as the following interchange illustrates:

DPC: *I don't know what the ratio is, do you?*

Jo: (somewhat taken aback) Er not off the top of my head I don't.

DPC: *No I don't either, because I don't deal with the teaching and learning, that's somebody else's role... (ibid).*

She went on to say that the school had "a lot of pastoral people" and she was aware of "what was going on" in this field of activity¹³. Despite her comment that teaching and learning were the responsibility of another person, I nevertheless pressed on, wanting to know if she felt the school had struck an appropriate balance between the two areas, but her response served only to underline yet again, a definite line between the pastoral (her business) and the curricula (not her business) which apparently rendered her unable to comment on the relationship between the two: "Like I said, I don't know, because that's not an area I am involved in".

6.1.1 The Learning Mentor role – "a bit of everything"

Initially, the DPC said it was hard to describe the LM at that time because it was changing. In the early days it had involved "a bit of everything" going on to cite predominantly one-to-one work for "emotional and social reasons". But her perspective was that the role was "completely linked" to wider changes that the school was going through both past and present; so for a time, the mentors had been much more involved in working with pupils with behavioural issues particularly during the latter part of the *Excellence in Cities* era (2001 – 2008) when the team had been larger, "much larger than the behaviour support workers in fact". This had led to a grey area in terms of who should manage the provision and direct line-management had switched, more than once, between varying middle managers who held both Inclusion and pastoral responsibilities before finally going back to herself as overall pastoral manager. Now that behaviour was no longer perceived as "the first barrier" at

¹³ The actual staff breakdown, drawn manually from school documentation are as follows: **SLT** – 9; **Teaching** (including Year Progress Leaders) – 78; **Pastoral Support and Inclusion** (including Year Managers) – 34; **Other** (Administration; Technicians including IT support) – 29.

Priory Park High she expressed that the LMs were in a position to focus much more on the academic and learning side, returning in some ways to their original remit. Somewhat contradictory to this pronouncement however, was her observation that the mentors also now performed other roles which meant they no longer “[had] a proper caseload” thus limiting their time and availability for one-to-ones which focused on the academic side. Here she gave the example of Paul’s increasing involvement visiting feeder primary schools and putting on school open day events for Year 6 pupils, which although she referred to as “transition”, an area that learning mentors have traditionally been involved with (Bishop, 2011) this could also be interpreted as the school marketing itself in order to restore pupil numbers back to what they were prior to its poor Ofsted judgement some years earlier. I raised the issue of redundancies as a possible further impact on the mentors’ workload but her only comment was that whilst these were regrettable, the decision was effectively a fait accompli:

Well we have lost a full person with a full caseload, plus other things ... which [have] had to be redistributed or abandoned. Unfortunately that’s the way things go, no matter which area of any job, you know, if you lose staffing, you lose staffing (ibid).

6.1.2

The Learning Mentor approach – ‘it is unique but more staff need to be aware of what they do’

Despite these changes to and pressures on, the ability of the mentors to provide a service, the DPC remained positive about what she saw as the unique approach of the mentors. This is illustrated in the following extract where she also makes a direct comparison with the behaviour support role which she refers to here as the ‘Positive Behaviour Team’, due to a rebranding of their title which had just occurred at the time of the interview:

My thoughts on [the] Learning Mentors is that they are invaluable in the sense that they have got that special relationship that nobody else will have. The Positive Behaviour Team would not have the kind of relationship with the kids as the mentors have, because the mentors’ role is not to sanction or impose sanctions, whereas the Positive Behaviour Team is; therefore they [the mentors] have that completely separate view, like they are kind of separate from the school, even though they work in the school.... and that is because that relationship is different, [and] ... the pupils who we know will not respond to authority or rules or whatever are better off working with the mentors because of that (Ibid, my emphasis).

She recognised the mentors’ concern regarding how much their work was understood within the wider school but put this down on the one hand to the mentors not advertising their work “loudly enough” but then also to a failed initiative led by her:

We did start last year working on ‘what are your roles’ ... I made a list and I wanted that list to be put up everywhere in the school for everybody to see (ibid).

I asked if this publicity exercise had been intended for pastoral roles in general but was told it had related only to the mentor role because “everybody else knows what everybody else is doing, but the mentors... not enough people knew what their role was”. Ultimately, this advertising campaign had not happened and when I asked why, she simply shrugged and said she did not know.

6.2 Other members of SLT

In contrast to the DPC, both the Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher had worked across a number of schools prior to their employment at Priory Park High. The Head Teacher’s career path and reputation had been built whilst working within a number of policy initiatives of the last Labour Government (1997 – 2010) specifically *Gaining Ground* and *Building Schools for the Future*. Once these had ended, his stated desire for “a new challenge” apparently coincided with a national recruitment agency ‘head-hunting’ him as a school leader in possession of those skills deemed necessary to either improve ‘coasting’ schools or turn around failing ones.

The Deputy Head’s previous experiences were more operational in that she had held middle-management positions in different schools overseeing provisions for pupils deemed as having Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Emotional and Behavioural difficulties (EBD) respectively. These roles had involved line-managing LMs, BSWs, and TAs.

Like many of the staff in the study the Head Teacher was keen to emphasise the inclusive nature of Priory Park High in order to make clear the challenges that he and his staff faced:

I want this on record, this is a true comprehensive. When you look at the measure(s) ... on race, we are a large school, we have a large EAL population; we have a large transitional [population], you know, children who come in and go out, because of the nature of [-----] as a city. We have more boys than girls, and we have a large percentage of free schooling. You couldn't be more comprehensive because we equally have affluence at this end [of the city]. We are absolutely on every level. So it's a tough management because you need varying strategies for all these varying groups and needs change every time (Interview 13).

6.2.1 Understanding of the Learning Mentor role: Outside the school gates

Both the Head and Deputy Head Teachers’ understandings of the LM role had been formed to a greater extent by previous experiences at other schools and interestingly, conveyed some marked differences. In Chapter Four, I noted the Head’s observation of the LM requiring a “tough skills set” due to the multi-faceted nature of the role; he saw them as people who had the ability to access “places, people and contexts” that other school staff could not as a means to bring about an engagement with school where this was not happening. The Deputy-Head also recognised how the role had the potential to keep the channels of communication between school and home open but her chosen examples were more conventional and premised through a more traditional ‘teacher – parent’ relationship:

I've seen it work really well where, children have had difficulties and needed to be at home, whether they be medical or, family difficulties ... and the Learning Mentor has actually liaised between home and school... you know, [encouraging the pupil to] keep up with course work and revise for exams and things like that and that's neededI think it is right that we are positive [about LMs] because they are..., well when they do it well, ... they are talented. They have got lots of different subjects and then [they] take that and almost do that teaching job (Interview 9).

Thus, the Deputy Head's view of the LM role reflects how it was originally envisaged, i.e. centered around formal learning to the extent that their contribution and worth appeared to be conditional upon how far they could replicate a teacher.

6.2.2 Within the school

Like the DPC, the Head Teacher saw the approach of the LMs as one that *did* differ to other staff citing examples of pupils addressing them by their first name and using their relationship when enforcing schools rules around uniform etc. However this was conditional on whether or not such an approach undermined the rest of the school. His concern here was whether pupils had the ability to understand, distinguish between, and conduct themselves appropriately in the less formal context inhabited, and in part created by the LM, as opposed to the more formal classroom situation:

So whilst I accept, you know, the [pupil and mentor] being on first name terms and all the rest of it, I think they do a good job and they are able to diffuse things like that (clicks fingers) ... whether it is ... anger management and all the rest of it. They are very skilled, because of ... their approach and their relationship but a teacher is there to teach and you can't have one position undermine another (Interview 13).

In sharp contrast, the Deputy Head did not see the approach adopted by LMs as particularly unique and therefore did not feel that they had a qualitatively different relationship with pupils. Rather her view was that every member of staff should build relationships with children and on this point disclosed that "if I am honest, this is an area that all staff at this school could work harder on" (Interview 9). Whilst agreeing that the mentor role did afford the time to do this, she strongly believed that teachers also had opportunities to make those types of relationships with pupils if they chose to do so through (for instance) allowing pupils to stay in their base room at lunch and break times and using this as social time to chat, or eat packed lunches together rather than attending to other duties like marking work. Like the Head Teacher, she saw the 'success' of the mentor role as conditional on teacher authority not being undermined – a viewpoint revealed in Chapter Four when describing how in some instances the role had evolved into one which was less about supporting pupils with their learning and more about supporting young people deemed to have behavioural difficulties. Pupils then came to see the mentor as an advocate (with the latter allegedly accepting and acting on this) leading to fragile relationships between teachers and mentors which from a senior management perspective indicated that support staff had too much of a power-base.

Of the two, the Head teacher was far more optimistic about what the LM role could, and was, contributing at Priory Park High. He commented on one of the mentors' practice specifically which he saw as being "on the same page" as him with regard to the importance of impact:

Here, we have an exceptional person, who actually clicks into it and not only will say, "Do you know what ... [but] I think some strategies we should employ are ..." That to me is exactly what it is about and once that [pupil] engagement is there, then you get onto the learning, because otherwise, you are just going to go round and round and round... (Interview 13).

However, alongside the obvious positives that can be identified within this assessment, he also expressed that LMs needed to demonstrate a greater degree of accountability both nationally and as one of many groups of "stakeholders" within the structure of the school. Accountability in this context was equated with "impact" and in reference to the national picture, he felt that there were cases where the role *had* been used astutely i.e. in a way in which the impact could be measured. But he also described some mentor inputs as "... pink and fluffy, [because he] couldn't quite grasp what the heck they were there for". Interestingly, he did not offer any concrete examples to illustrate this observation but did then extend this critique to support staff more generally arguing that they *all* needed to evidence their contribution more explicitly by benchmarking the point at which their support began and then using various means to measure the progress that their intervention had brought about. Here he did offer an example relating to young people with poor attendance:

... If they come to school, that's the measure! If they happen to stay, for some children, more than two hours, that's a measure and actually I'd rather they were here than out there... (Interview 13).

6.3 Summary of data generated with the SLT: incoherencies, inconsistencies and disjunctures

The standpoint of the LMs suggested that a coherent viewpoint of their role and what it contributed to the school (be that assumed or actual) did not exist. Coming at the issue from a senior leadership perspective I was able to see how far this group's understanding of the role had led to those actualities as told by the mentors. It was clear that at a Senior Leadership level there were differing understandings of the LM role which were arguably informed by many of the texts operating at the extra-local level and the discursive practices they give rise to. For example, there was clear evidence of how staff roles were shifting and changing in line with the school as a performance-based culture such as the Head Teacher viewing the interventions offered by the mentors as part of a wider move to not only take up, but *take away* from teachers the pastoral demands that arise in a school, particularly an all-inclusive institution such as Priory Park High. But in this handing over of pastoral territory to support staff, both the Head and the Deputy Head expressed concerns about how the different approaches of the mentors might undermine teaching and learning, illustrated by the comment that "... *a teacher is there to teach and you can't have one position undermine another*". In contrast, the DPC did not get as far as even recognising the potential conflict in this interplay of the pastoral and the academic; worryingly so given that someone managing

this provision simply did not see the academic business of the school as part of her remit, so was unable to anticipate or act on tensions which might arise. What this suggests is a stark academic / pastoral split which as we shall see shortly, is actualised materially at the middle management level.

Interestingly, the potential of the LM role *beyond* the school gates was noted by the Head and Deputy Head, albeit from entirely different angles. For the Deputy Head, the LM was at their best when they facilitated learning in the home, in effect “almost doing that teaching job”. But for the Head teacher, it was precisely because the role *was not* a teacher and something which was *not* a part of the school establishment that it had the potential to access complex and ‘difficult’ family situations outside of school, building relationships where others had tried and failed. This quasi detached community worker, who, as stated previously could “get quietly get in, without suit and tie” i.e. physically entering marginalised communities and forging links with young people and families who might be disengaged from formal education. This notion of the LM role as a type of credible ‘go-between’ in terms of building bridges between a school and the community/ies is a recurring issue, observed first via educational news media articles in the Introduction where it was presented uncritically as a positive aspect of the role; then later on in the Literature Review with the experiences of 1960s American educational paraprofessionals termed explicitly as “community agents” (Stewart, 1971). Although presented in more cautious manner we also saw how other academic commentators believed that a key strength of LMs was their ability to interface between pupil, school and wider community in order to develop “effective, highly personalised relationships” (Jones et al, 2009:45). The work knowledges in this IE also show how this issue was not exclusive to the mentors with one of the HLTAs explaining how they drew on their background of shared locality with pupils as a means to build relationships. Despite this it was not possible to ascertain a coherent SLT view on this aspect of support staff’s work. The Head Teacher’s interpretation of this type of bridging social capital (Power and Willmott, 2007) which he saw as a highly valued resource for the school, was seen as a more problematic case of ‘boundary blurring’ from the perspective of the Deputy head in that the LM might start to advocate too strongly for the pupil.

One of the clearest disjunctures to emerge from the data presented in this chapter was that although the Head Teacher did not directly manage the LM role on a day-to-day basis, his remarks suggested that the mentors held a far greater degree of autonomy and influence regarding, amongst other things, decisions around which pupils were selected for official referrals. This could be seen in his assumption that at least one of the mentor’s had the power to not only identify pupil issues but crucially decide what type of support should be put into place, referring to the “exceptional person who actually clicks into it”, which to his mind, would obviously utilise their (afore-mentioned) “tough skills set” to good effect. However, if we think back to the mentor’s activities presented in Chapter Four including their own accounts of how they were directly line-managed, a far less optimistic picture emerges than that assumed by the Head Teacher.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the DPC, as both the longest-standing member of staff at Priory Park High *and* the LMs line manager had the most accurate picture of the *actual* activities that made up the role in its current incarnation, especially in terms of the mentors taking on

other duties alongside their more traditional activities. She willingly subscribed to the notion of the mentor role as offering a qualitatively different working relationship with pupils to that of other staff and (unlike her colleagues in SLT) regarded this as a positive *unconditionally* rather than how it might sit alongside the work of teachers. Thus far from undermining the teaching role, the PDC saw mentors as operating in an entirely separate context albeit one that the teaching staff needed to have a greater awareness of.

A further disjuncture arises when we place the Head Teacher's view that LMs needed to evidence their impact more explicitly. Placed alongside the DPC's comments that the mentor role involved "a bit of everything" and was constantly changing according to wider issues faced by the school, (for example, Ofsted judgements) the question arises of how this evidencing is to be done, particularly when a continual blurring of lines between the work of LMs and other roles, could be seen in many of the accounts. For example, the Head Teacher made reference to how the mentors could quickly and effectively diffuse pupil outbursts of anger whilst the Deputy Head was aware of how in the past the LM role had been used in a BS capacity in all but name and with varying degrees of success. Their respective comments were largely made in reference to other school contexts though and it was the DPC who (again through sheer length of continuous service) held the most accurate picture of this issue in relation to Priory Park High seeing a marked difference between the two roles as they were *currently* organised within the school which could be identified in terms of how she described the behaviour workers approach as "more punitive" and "sanction-based" and one which definitely wouldn't work if taken up by the mentors, a view that was echoed by the Head of BS (Interview 2). Despite the DPC's earlier observation that it was wider changes in the school that determined what activities comprised the mentor role in that the mentors' had had more to do with behaviour work some years earlier, she either did not know or would not be drawn on why the school had ended up in a situation where they currently had more BSWs than mentors, merely saying "That's the way the staffing structure is". When pressed as to who led this allocation of roles, she initially named the Head Teacher but then qualified the above situation as just one decision within the staffing structure as a whole which "... SLT and the governors work on together". Curiously, the DPC constantly talked about the SLT in the third person, as "they", not "we" i.e. a group of which she was a part. Whilst this does not explain why initiatives such as the wider publicising of the mentor role had not taken off, it does at least give a sense of how the DPC was positioned within the SLT, having a place but (possibly) not a great deal of influence within the hierarchy.

6.4 Keeping the institution in view

In both this and the previous chapter, participants beyond that of LMs and pupils have been introduced into the discussion. During the writing up process, this proved a useful point at which to remind myself that the task of IE is to analyse data generated through interviews in a way that *keeps the institution in view*. As disclosed in Chapter Four, when mapping the work knowledges of both LMs and BSWs, there was a period of "unintended analytic drift" (McCoy, 2006:109), as I found that I was starting to focus more on the participants as

individuals, rather than their work activities, with the danger that I would miss the institutional order which gave rise to that conflict in the first place. The discussion which follows is therefore intended to offer continuing analysis of the issue regarding the blurring of support roles set out above, whilst demonstrating how I sought to avoid “unintended analytic drift” and keep the institution in view.

There were times when a degree of animosity could be observed between the LMs and the BSWs and in heeding McCoy’s warning above, I utilised as ‘clues’ the information provided by the senior leaders in Priory Park High in relation to these two roles. This led to a recognition that ‘behaviour’, or more specifically the managing of pupils’ behaviour that was deemed problematic, had become a contested territory of practice within Priory Park High as each type of worker (learning mentor and behaviour support) were called to work in this area both simultaneously *and* at different times. However, to focus on these two approaches as discrete ‘stand-alones’ - maybe by undertaking a ‘compare and contrast’ exercise, was a ‘rabbit hole’ that I almost went down, and which would have resulted in the institutional relations and thus the social organisation of experience (Smith, 2005) slipping from my view. Therefore those ‘clues’ provided by the data generated with members of the SLT enabled a recognition that the afore-mentioned animosity could be attributed to the changing degree of importance that they, as school leaders, attached to each approach which was in turn, entirely dependent on the wider imperatives the school faced. To explain this point further, the advent of the LM role was tied inextricably with a focus on raising standards through *Excellence in Cities*. This coincided with the *Raising Boys Achievement Project* between 2000 and 2004 (DfES cited in Ball, 2008) another initiative which targeted specific groups such as young black boys of African-Caribbean heritage and giving some context to Paul’s pathway to employment at Priory Park High as a Learning Mentor (Interview 4). Some years later, when the role of the LM had evolved in terms of both title and activities, the initial focus on raising standards was less identifiable within mentors’ *own* accounts of their work (Bishop, 2011) and the notion of ‘barriers to learning’ started to include issues like behaviour more explicitly. Thus, at Priory Park High, the mentors were additionally tasked with this area of work, which they attended to first and foremost by using the notion of building a person-centered relationship envisaged in earlier models of learning mentor practice (Cruddas, 2005) and clearly representing a very different approach to the more punitive activities of corridor patrol and running Internal Exclusion. Moving forward a few years, 2008 marks the end of *Excellence in Cities* and its ring-fenced funding. Local authorities are left to decide if they will continue to fund the LM role out of their own budgets meaning that positions which become vacant are not automatically replaced. This typified the situation at Priory Park High where the number of learning mentors dwindled over time from five or six¹⁴ to three, and then as a result of further redundancies occurring at the time of the study, down to two. The demise of the *Excellence in Cities* initiative, coincided with disruptive pupil behaviour being seen as a significant factor in the school receiving a poor Ofsted judgement in the late 2010s. In the re-organisation which followed another group of frontline staff, this time BSWs, came to the fore and gradually start to outnumber the LMs. Not only were they cheaper to employ but the activities that they were tasked with required a different approach,

¹⁴ Confirming the maximum number of learning mentors that had been employed at Priory Park High historically remained a contested issue throughout the study. The mentors stated emphatically it had been 6 whilst both the DPC and a Progress Leader stated 4 and 5 respectively.

summarised earlier by the DPC as “more reactive and punitive”. The BSWs were also charged with performing other interventions like ‘anger management’ which notably had been within the domain of the LMs up until this point. Delivered in the form of ‘bought in’, ‘off-the-shelf’ programmes that pupils were targeted for, these ‘educated’ pupils about “healthy anger” and “unhealthy anger” encouraging them to identify what their own triggers were and moderate their behaviour accordingly (Field notes based on observation of an Anger Management Session). This is clearly very different to the mentors’ more organic approach of initiating a conversation (as shown earlier when examining the everyday work of the mentors) in which the young person is invited to talk freely. Despite this, it appears that little thought was given to how these two approaches would sit alongside each other or moreover *relate* to one another within the institutional complex.

In summary, an IE approach enabled a critical explication of the social organisation of experience providing a more authentic understanding of how changes in and between the work activities of support staff impacted on those working in these roles in very real ways. Thus, it is the institutional order which creates the conditions of those individual experiences (McCoy, 2006) and with this in mind I turn to examine how the LM role was perceived and understood by middle managers.

6.5 Middle Management: The Progress Leader

The Progress Leader (PL) was a role which required a teaching background, and was positioned at the middle management level of the school’s staffing structure, directly line-managing the Year Manager (YM). The contribution of the Progress Leader as presented here added a valuable longevity of scope to the study in that she had had a number of experiences in other schools where she had moved from teaching only to gradually spending more time working in Year Leadership roles at a time when the idea of having a significant non-teaching staff presence in schools was in its embryonic form. As such, her previous experiences of year management had included *both* pupil progress and wider pastoral issues, not surprisingly a huge, if not impossible undertaking and one which, as she explains below, led to her departure from her previous school:

I was Head of Year’s 7 and 8 then the whole of Key Stage 3 ...it was a different set up to how it is here; I had no non-teaching person to work with me and it was just far too much for one person to keep their head around and [the school] weren’t able to shift how they managed that... so that’s when I looked for another job (Interview 3).

As indicated in earlier discussions, the increasing separation of the academic functions of schooling from wider pastoral concerns have become more pronounced with a greater emphasis being placed on what I have argued and presented previously as the core business of a school (Figure 6) - that of results and outcomes. Within this high stakes culture, the worth of pupils is measured by their academic attainment, both potential and actual, whilst ‘barriers to learning’ are deemed as problematic especially if impacting adversely on academic outcomes. The way in which roles were allocated at Priory Park High, evidenced this increasingly formalised separation between the pastoral and the

academic and can be easily observed in the following extract where the PL described how her role differed to that of a YM:

The attendance and behaviour part is done by the Year Manager who is non-teaching, and they deal with that. [The] Progress Leaders' focus is their [the pupils] academic progress ... I line-manage the Year Manager and we come together to put the child back together and see where, if, there are barriers to learning or where we can support them if they are struggling (ibid, my emphasis).

It is clear that the pastoral/academic split continues at this level of middle –management. This situation is critically interpreted as a fragmented approach where the pupil is essentially ‘dismembered’ according to whether their need is ‘academic’ or ‘pastoral’. An alternative argument is that given how patchy and/or inconsistent ‘good’ pastoral care of pupils was in the past (Best and Jarvis, 1980; Williamson, 1980 and Calvert, 2009) this clear separation of roles provides a better experience and outcome for the pupil who is in need of support with issues other than the academic. However from a LM perspective this way of working was strongly contested, described as “colleagues taking a snippet of *their* perception of a young person’s situation” according to “their own agenda” and seen as a wholly inferior approach to that of the LMs which was explained as:

...not to be a piece from the side, we are actually...in the middle there with that child... [asking] where is that young person at, right now? Yeah, we know where we would like them to be and how we would like them to be, but where are they at now? How do they perceive things? Because that [starting point] is more important than what anybody else thinks (Angie, Feb ‘14 field notes).

Thus the mentor’s desire to take a holistic approach in their work with pupils is underlined once again here.

Furthermore, it is possible to detect an advocacy function to the role - “we are actually...in the middle there *with that child*... [asking] where is that young person at, *right now*” which is reminiscent of the earlier stark example provided where Angie entered a forum to which she had not been invited, in order to speak on behalf of Daniel and ensure that his voice was heard, even when at the brink of exclusion. However, putting the mentors’ qualms to one side for now, the PL felt confident that by working in conjunction with a YM, her role afforded her an “holistic view of the child and the curriculum” (Interview 3). Perhaps this belief was borne out of a (relative) comparison with subject teachers whom she described as “more insular”; a situation which she believed had come about as a result of them having to increasingly protect their subject area “with all the changes that have happened”. Although the PL did not expand on this specifically, her comments allude to the start of what has now become an explicit policy named “Progress 8” a way of measuring the progress of a school, alongside “Attainment 8”, a device to measure pupil achievement across 8 qualifications taken from a DfE approved list (gov.uk). This essentially involves the tier-ing of subjects into a hierarchy with differing values being placed on subjects, and teachers having to make a strong case for the survival of their discipline if it is not automatically considered within the approved list.

6.5.1 Understanding the Learning Mentor role as ensuring pupils are ‘learning-ready’

The PL understood the role of the LM as one which primarily supported her role of ensuring academic attainment.

We would hope that they [the mentors] would be including and focussing on [the pupils] academic progress, or monitoring what the student thought they might need support with or how they felt about it: they might be doing very well with it but not feeling confident about it, you know it's getting into those things. Talking to them about their organisation and their preparation; have they got equipment, planners, and a place to work at home? (Interview 3).

Here, the mentors' contribution is seen first and foremost as ensuring a young person's readiness to learn in terms of working with the pupil on their time and self-management, assessing the practical context in which their learning takes place outside of school (which arguably may be outside of their control anyway) with only a nod given to wider affective issues that the pupil may be experiencing such as a lack of confidence.

In terms of how teachers viewed the LM role and specifically interventions which required a pupil's removal from class, the PL confidently expressed that teaching staff understood why pupils went to the mentors and that there was some flexibility for teachers in this:

They know that they can say “no not today, not this lesson, you could have them this time next week but they are in the middle of a controlled assessment” and the Learning Mentor will switch it round if needs be...(ibid).

On this issue of taking pupils out of certain classes, she believed that teachers of non-core subjects probably saw some of the interventions connected to extra support with Maths and English as more problematic, given that these involved larger groups of students being absent from certain classes. She further identified a distinct part of the LM role as working in partnership with teachers with the former ensuring that pupils completed work set by the latter. In her view, LMs were now widely “accepted” by teachers and seen as a “completely embedded thing that is “necessary” and “just the way a school works” (*ibid*).

But how far were these sentiments shared by teaching staff? As has already been seen, the one-to-one aspect of the mentors' work was talked about positively although often without a contextual understanding of what actually happened in those interventions. However, the issue how the one-to-one's impacted on teachers' work was most definitely called into question. As one teacher explains:

... it is difficult when you've got registers to fill out and you don't know where kids are. And it is annoying having kids taken out of lessons ...and they [Progress Leaders] will specifically target non-core subjects as well ... but you have just got to go with it

because I see it as if they are going there [the mentor base] they've got to be there, [and if] it is obviously of benefit to the child, then it is going to benefit me in the long run because they are going to be a calmer, more well-rounded individual to teach (Teacher of Drama, Interview 6).

One of the issues which was revealed in the accounts of teachers was how the core subjects of English, Maths and (at the time of study) Science were taught entirely independently of pastoral interventions whereas teachers of non-core subjects had to accommodate these disproportionately in their view. As such their comments certainly did not reflect the flexibility or indeed autonomy suggested by the PL above. This is illustrated above by the Drama teacher's comment about it being "*difficult when you've got registers to fill out and you don't know where kids are*" and explored further with a teacher of Food Technology:

Teacher: I never know when students are going to be taken out of my lesson, so that's really bad and I know that they [the mentors] will try and not hit the same lesson, but then they are told not to hit the core as well, and I am not important! (laughs).

Jo: Is that what it feels like? [Domestic Science teacher: *yeah, yeah*]

Jo: And who decides about not withdrawing pupils from certain subjects? Where is that decision made?

Teacher: *I don't know* (Interview 7, my emphasis).

The decision not to remove pupils from core subjects for pastoral interventions seemed to be a given, not just in Priory Park High but in many other schools I have visited in my professional capacity; but the origins of this decision could not be discovered in either the wider literature or this particular school.

When comparing the views of the PL to those of the teachers, there are clear disjunctures in terms of both how aspects of the learning mentor role were understood (for example, the rationale for and nature of one-to-one interventions), and moreover how these were accommodated by staff. The PL portrayed teachers as staff who saw withdrawals from their classes as not only problematic but also as something that they had a degree of control over. This ready acceptance was not discernible in the teachers own accounts however as although some teachers expressed a desire to support the mentors in their work, they also expressed a sense of frustration at being required to support an intervention of which they were told little about and which they felt they were disproportionately targeted for. This latter point gave rise to a further disjuncture which suggests the existence of a hierarchy of subjects deems the commonly held view of an academic / pastoral split as too simplistic in its analysis.

6.6 Middle Management: The Year Manager

This section begins with the perspective of a YM who we initially met in the Research Design Chapter as one of a number of support staff whose paths to Priory Park High were based

around the need to find paid employment which allowed a continuation of their everyday life work as carers. An issue that was first noted when discussing the interview through an IE lens was that of “institutional capture” (Smith, 2005:156). To remind the reader, this is where certain language is used which subsumes or displaces descriptions based in experience. In developing this notion further, another institutional ethnographer talks of “intentional institutional capture” (Eastwood, 2006:193) in an attempt to provide a more detailed explanation of why a practitioner may do this and thus describing it as a process that people self-consciously go through whereby they translate their own “interests” (i.e. the activities which arise from their position in the institutional complex) into institutional discourses, doing so because they recognise that they must work within the conceptual frames of the organization to appear ‘credible’. Moreover their participation is actually circumscribed by the appropriate terminology, as well as their role in that process. The YM featured here, provided a highly pertinent example in using the “outcomes speak” (Frost, 2009) of the *Every Child Matters* policy¹⁵ whilst describing how she supported those Year 7 pupils finding the transition to High School challenging:

[The Year Manager’s role is about] ... *how we can support that particular student to attend school, to be happy in school, to be safe and to achieve in school* (Year Manager, Interview 10, my emphasis).

In addition to this I observed two self-generated sheets of paper displayed on the wall of her office entitled ‘Jargon’ and ‘More Jargon’ which listed varying terms and phrases that had become the lexicon or discourse that someone in her position needed to draw on in order to operate effectively, or at least be *seen* to be operating effectively, in the YM role.

6.6.1 Understanding the Learning Mentor as ‘in-service’ to the Year Manager role

The Research Design chapter set out the strategies that can be employed in listening for “institutional capture” (Smith, 2005:156) when initially conducting interviews and as a means to see beyond it when listening to interview recordings and reading transcripts. In employing this approach I was able to ascertain two main strands which the YM identified as organising her day to day work which were: ensuring the smooth transition of pupils from primary to secondary school and in doing so; establishing a relationship with pupils’ families where possible and if necessary. These two situations also provided the basis of her positive account of the LM role and as such I shall now explore each one in turn.

In relation to transition, joint visits to feeder primary schools were undertaken by the YM and one of the LMs (usually Paul) taking place with more frequency and a greater sense of urgency once the Schools Admissions process had ended and pupils had been formally allocated to Priory Park High. During these visits each of their roles was distinct from the other as Paul would meet with the pupils for an informal chat based on the ‘circle time’

¹⁵ To remind or inform the reader these are: Be Healthy, Stay Safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Make a Positive Contribution and Achieve Economic Wellbeing

format¹⁶ where he facilitated a discussion in which Year 6 pupils were invited to explore their hopes and fears around their imminent move up to Secondary School; whilst the YM would meet separately with the primary school staff in order to gain their perspectives on the new intake. As with other aspects of the mentor role that I witnessed during the study, Paul's role in supporting pupils in their transition from primary to high school was typical of mentors in other contexts (Bishop, 2011). This also offers a further explanation as to why pupils went on to view the support staff differently once they were settled at their new secondary school given that their first direct experience of secondary school staff was via this relaxed and fairly unstructured time where the adult in authority was introduced to them by first name rather than 'Sir' or 'Mr -----'.

Once settled in at Priory Park High, this partnership between the YM and LM was further accounted for with descriptions such as the one given below which can be noted as similar to the DPC's perspective on the mentor role as encompassing "a bit of everything":

I have to praise them because without the Learning Mentor, my job would be so much harder. You know, basic things from helping the student with hygiene, right up to the academic side of things, you know, helping them with their homework, helping them with self-esteem... it's a massive, massive area of different things that they can help the child and support [me] with (Year Manager, Interview 10).

Despite YMs being the designated pastoral lead, this YM saw the mentors as "more the pastoral carers" in comparison to her own role which was essentially about 'managing' significant numbers of pupils:

I, as a Year Manager, have to deal with every single child, whether it's ... a student who's highly academic or a student who has severe SEN issues, whatever it could be, I need to know everything about that particular child. Now currently I've only got a hundred and sixty eight students in my year group. Other Year Managers have got two hundred and sixty students ... So it's really, really vital that we've got an additional person there to actually help us with whatever situation comes along ... and just [to] be that friendly face, to actually say [to pupils] "right ok, how can I help you?" (ibid).

She went on to describe the mentors as the "eyes and ears" of the YM in that "they identifi[ed] a lot of the problems for us as well" (ibid). This view of the YM's role corroborates Marie's earlier comments in her assumption that it would involve more pastoral dealings with pupils but the reality was something quite different in that she was dealing with "[mostly] negative things" like handing out detentions and filling out data sheets.

Given the significant number of pupils (although to in the view of the YM) "only" one hundred and sixty-eight) that she was required to keep track of, it is not surprising that the LMs were perceived as the ones who were actually 'doing' the pastoral care and as such, agreed with

¹⁶ This is an approach which has been utilised for some time in Primary schools and has started to be used increasingly in Secondary Schools. Group sizes are typically small so that all members can participate, with a particular onus on the promotion of oral communication and the development of listening skills.

the notion that their role provided a qualitatively different type of relationship / support for the pupils:

It's completely different. Whereas the students would have a lot more respect for myself, as in 'Miss ----' and they know that I've got a little bit more authority, they [pupils] actually refer to the mentors ... by their first name and it's more of a ... (thinks) ... a role of like a friend... I mean with a Year Manager role, they [pupils] do still come to you and talk to you about personal things. But with the mentor role, it's more of a friendship relationship, than it is an authority kind of relationship (ibid, my emphasis).

Her observations are remarkably similar to those many facets of the LM role identified by the pupils in the earlier chapter, namely her perception of the mentor as a friend to pupils and once again, a staff/pupil relationship that differs to others in the school. This praise was not wholly unqualified however in that she also identified a group of pupils who relied on the mentors to “be there twenty four seven for them”. This she deemed problematic as it gave her the (additional) task of saying to pupils “actually yeah, they [the mentors] are there for you, but we are here for you as well and this is what we need you to do”.

As identified above, the other area which the YM saw as key to her role was in establishing a relationship with pupils' families; something which had increased out of necessity over the last few years due to what she saw as a greater number of families facing complex and challenging issues and therefore being under the gaze of outside agencies compared to the past. When asked to clarify these 'issues' she cited poverty, drink and drug addictions and parents being younger and/or not coping with aspects of parenting. This suggests that although YM's did indeed form relationships with parents, these were not necessarily as positive and/or freely entered into as those envisaged and hoped for by Marie when she had taken up the role. An example is given here where the current YM is talking about the difficulties in supporting parents who resisted the often assumed notion of a home - school partnership:

...because a lot of parents who come from certain areas ... think that school is where you palm your child off... [speaks as a parent] “let them deal with behaviour, let them deal with the attendance, because it's our time now, we can do what we need to do” you know? And it doesn't work that way [so] it is breaking down that particular barrier to say “actually no, we need to work together, this is your child, yes we are looking after your child in school, we are trying to help your child achieve, but we need your support as well...” (ibid).

In situations like this, the YM (like the Head Teacher previously), saw the mentors as offering the potential to be seen by parents as someone different to her role, at one point actually framing the mentor and herself within a “good cop / bad cop” scenario. This was more likely to happen in situations where parents might be in conflict with the school over a decision or course of action regarding their child. So in following directly on from the quote above she went on to express:

... and that's where mentors come in really handy because they can come out with us to do home visits ... they can come into meetings [in school] with us, with a parent there and say "actually look, we're not all bad guys, this is the reason why we [the mentors] are here..." (ibid).

6.7 A shared middle-management perspective of the Learning Mentor role?

When looking at how the LM role was understood by those occupying (varyingly) higher levels in the staff hierarchy, it was clear that such perspectives were developed entirely from how the role was positioned in relation to their own. This is a significant disjuncture which merits further explanation. The PL and the YM saw the LM role as 'in service' to their position but with each one placing an entirely different onus determined by their own specific area of responsibility. Thus for the PL, the role of the mentor was, above all, to ensure that the correct conditions were in place for the pupil to access formal learning. In contrast, the YM saw the LM as the 'face' of pastoral care, the mentor's role being to provide the actual relationship with pupils, something which the YM was not always afforded the time to do. She also saw them as conveying the friendlier aspects of the school to parents as and when required. When placing the account of the YM alongside that of the PL, the approach of dividing up a pupil's needs between what was required to progress (the academic view) and their social and emotional needs (the pastoral view) becomes even more explicit.

6.7.1 Conclusion

This chapter has enabled us to make further sense of the disjunctures that emerged in Chapter Four as it sheds further light on how those occupying senior and middle management positions lacked a shared and coherent view of the LM role. Part of the reason for this were the numerous and sometimes contradictory texts which give rise to certain discursive practices. In the methodology chapter it was noted that texts are integral and ubiquitous in how people's work is organised in an institutional setting such as a school. The Head Teacher made explicit reference to no less than eight (see Figure 4 on p.118) whilst others made their presence felt albeit implicitly. For example, his and other staff's assertion that the 'comprehensive' attributes of the school should be recognised in relation to how the school was appraised and presented, makes reference to historical texts of school reorganisation initiated in 1965 which, as discussed earlier, were a means to bring about greater equality in educational experiences and outcomes. Placed within a wider context, educational policy developments from this era can be linked to comparable policies such as the *War on Poverty* programme in the USA (Lowe, 2005) illustrating that social life is textually organized across geographical sites. Whilst there exists a large critical literature base regarding how such policies have shaped professional groups like teachers, there has not been a critical examination of the impacts they have had on the not insignificant numbers who make up the body of support staff in English secondary schools. In the Discussion Chapter which follows I address this and other issues by re-visiting the Research Questions that were set out at the end of the Methodology Chapter.

Chapter 7: Discussion and conclusions

7.1 What parallels can be drawn from earlier accounts of educational paraprofessionals vis-à-vis their current experiences?

The 'New Careers' project, (Pearl and Reissman, 1965) demonstrated that paraprofessionals have existed within, and made significant contributions to, earlier systems of formal education. In terms of how the role has been understood and utilised, it is possible to draw a number of parallels between that initiative and the findings emerging from this thesis. Although differing in historical and geographical context, both studies demonstrate how paraprofessional roles arose through projects that had explicitly political overtones, although each one places a different emphasis on structure and agency as the cause of enduring inequality. Both are also predicated on the notion that the background of the paraprofessional contributed to a type of organic skill-set enabling them to act as a 'Bridging' person between institution and community. Figure 10 expands on these parallels offering examples where appropriate:

USA Mid 1960s Policy Climate	UK Early 2000s Policy Climate
'War on Poverty' realised through the Economic Opportunity Act 1964, giving rise to federal programmes such as <i>Head Start</i> and providing the impetus for new initiatives like 'New Careers for the Poor'.	New Labour's policy agenda premised on the identification and elimination of risk and the centrality of work giving rise to new forms of working through initiatives like <i>Every Child Matters</i>
Compensatory Education based on the belief that a human potential for learning could be sharply curtailed by poverty.	'Compensatory' initiatives are implemented to ensure that underachievement in areas of deprivation is "eliminated and never excused".
Objectives	Objectives
To resolve unemployment and enable social mobility.	To reduce unemployment and enable social mobility through up-skilling sections of the working class.
To eradicate poverty amongst the "indigenous poor".	To utilise employment (accompanied by a system of working tax credits) as a way out of poverty.
Based on a belief that:	Based on a belief that:
The utilisation of "community agents" (Stewart, 1971) i.e. those persons only "one step removed" from the client will improve services (HARYOU cited in Pearl and Reissman, 1965: vii).	The utilisation of people whose own biographies of school and 'growing up' offers a form of empathetic support to some young people that professionals might struggle to deliver. These also represent more closely those forms of mentoring defined as 'natural' rather than assigned.
Underpinned by:	Underpinned by:

On-the-job education and training of paraprofessionals in collaboration with higher education institutions.	The creation of academic and vocational qualifications at Levels 3 and 4 which were validated by new government bodies as part of a (now defunct) Lifelong Learning agenda
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Figure 10 Parallels between earlier accounts of paraprofessionals and contemporary experiences

When considering the two eras together it is possible to identify a number of potentially progressive elements within a model of the paraprofessional workforce:

- It offers social mobility on behalf of disadvantaged adults.
- It may have the capacity to operate in part outside the gaze of performative discourses and thereby offer a space in which workers can work more creatively and in a more child (or more broadly) client-centred way, a point which is explored further below.
- It offers more diversity for children and young people in terms of adult role models within a school
- Such roles may have the potential to relate more personally to young people by partly drawing on shared biographies.

Conversely there are potential downsides within this model:

- Less pay and job security in comparison to colleagues identified as members of a profession (despite some supposed ‘paraprofessionals’ actually holding professional status such as Youth Workers; or teachers who have left the classroom in order to work more pastorally with children and young people).
- Less status which automatically accompanies the above.
- The question of whether their role represents a form of social control given that in the ‘seen’ aspect of their work, paraprofessionals are more likely to be found working with those perceived as the ‘drop-outs’, the ‘disruptive’ and the ‘deviant’. In relation to education settings specifically, this means that paraprofessionals exist to simply ‘warehouse’ the bottom 40% (Garner, 2013) reflecting the earlier critique of ‘pastoralization’ (Williamson, 1980).

By looking at how the LMs, and to a lesser extent other paraprofessionals at Priory Park High were situated, managed and organised, it is possible to further address some of those issues outlined above. For the LMs specifically, it was the contradictory views held by senior and middle management which impacted significantly on how they carried out their everyday work. For example, the Head Teacher’s perspective that the further the LM appeared to be

from the 'professional' teacher, the more effective they were, contrasted with the Deputy-Head Teacher's view that LMs were at their best when they closely resembled the teaching role albeit operating in a peripatetic fashion. Inconsistencies were revealed once again at the level of middle-management in that the role was seen as directly in-service to what each party had to 'produce'. Thus for the Progress Leader, the LM was there to assist the teacher in driving up academic standards, whereas for the Year Manager, the mentor role was understood as being entirely bound up with the delivery of pastoral care. Those at the top of the school hierarchy also had an overly optimistic view of the mentors' ability to act on their observations of, and knowledge about, pupils. This was down to a lack of awareness on the part of senior managers of what the mentors actually did but was also due to the constraints placed on the mentors' work by those in middle management. This playing out of contradictions and differing viewpoints is illustrative of a 'distributive' model of leadership in which responsibility for different aspects of schooling is devolved to increasingly complex tiers of 'senior and middle leaders'. This became the standard model for school leadership during the New Labour era (Wilkins, 2015).

Accounts by the HLTAs and TAs regarding their early days in post, suggest that the mentors' perception of their work being misunderstood or trivialized by other staff was not a unique experience. Such accounts demonstrate that elements of the teaching profession have previously struggled to accommodate 'new' school roles which have the potential to give rise to different experiences of, and viewpoints about pupils, an issue which was also identified by proponents of the 'New Careers' project. The reasons for this are outside the boundaries of this thesis, focusing as it is on the paraprofessional as opposed to the professional; but, whether consciously or not, there has been a move to maintain professional and nonprofessional distinctions within English systems of formal education, a phenomenon named in the Literature Review as the "pitfalls of [nonprofessional to professional] assimilation" (Goldberg, n.d. cited in Pearl and Reissman, 1965:196). This underlines once again, the continued need for a role in human service organisations which affords a qualitatively different client-experience from that provided by the professional in situ.

7.2 What does the enactment of the Learning Mentor and other recent paraprofessional roles tell us about how practices previously conceived as 'pastoral' are evolving?

Earlier constructions of pastoral care were based on a model in which the day to day work of 'caring' for pupils was assumed to be an implicit part of the teaching role, supplemented where necessary by peripatetic specialists in the areas of careers advice and guidance or psychological support through counselling (Best et al, 1980). In its current stage of evolution, changes to how pastoral care is conceived and understood is down to a more diverse schools workforce which has come about through a number of individual policies outlined previously. But to achieve a complete understanding of the changes initiated by these policies they need to be viewed through a wider lens of schools as performance-based cultures; in other words, to understand how and why pastoral care has evolved, we have to look at how schools as a whole have changed.

State education is currently based around the 'standard school offer' (Martin, 2016) which is premised on the narrow idea that school is a path to A levels and then University. As graduates, many teachers will themselves have gone through the standard offer, even more so in the present day with current routes into teaching based on initiatives which assume that graduates from more prestigious Universities possess a far greater degree of social and cultural capital in comparison to the pupils they seek to transform. Schemes such as 'Teach First' which targets 'challenging' schools which are generally located in areas of marked social and economic deprivation is one recent example. Whilst this represents for graduates, an opportunity that combines both altruism and ambition, it has been criticised for simultaneously reproducing middle class values whilst stereotyping the working class 'other' (Smart et al, 2009).

For varying reasons there are a significant number of pupils who cannot engage with the standard offer. New Labour recognised this and devised a 'compensatory offer' through policy initiatives like *Excellence in Cities*, *Extended Schools*, and *Every Child Matters*. In order for it to be actualised, the compensatory offer relied on groups of less-qualified, more peripheral staff ; all the better if people taking up these roles had similar class or ethnic backgrounds to those young people under the gaze of these provisions. In the literature this was exemplified in the idea of LMs interfacing between schools and communities (Jones et al, 2009) and illustrated in several ways in this study from Paul's path to Priory Park High as a working class man of African-Caribbean origin to the Pat, the HLTAs 'realisation' that "ordinary people" had the skills to help "ordinary children". Thus key participant groups in this study, as well as examples given earlier from the wider literature (Rhodes, 2006; Odih, 2002), suggest that pastoral care work continues to be extremely feminised and in some schools has become noticeably racialized. Not surprisingly, those who work in such provisions have lower pay, lower status and less career progression.

When schools are driven to be so fixated on the core aspect of their business, represented above as the standard offer, there is a danger that the processes and practices making up 'pastoral care' become a second thought. This was illustrated through the processes for pupils receiving official referrals to a number of pathways in the school which demonstrated that pastoral care provisions which operate in a siloed fashion conflicted with one another in both ethos and practice. As such, a question posed some years ago regarding whether a school's existing "pastoral teams" were simply "ineffective groupings" which made little corporate contribution to "the pastoral endeavour" (Best et al, 1980:150) would appear to still hold currency. Other critiques from this era also resonate in the present day:

In some cases new labels have been attached to old systems, but generally neither material provision nor educational thinking and practice has been applied to providing the resources and techniques needed to meet the very wide range of individual needs within the comprehensive school. Thus what happens is that the problems of the individual child become apparent through the pastoral system (Williamson, 1980:176).

As such, strategies of 'care' designed for uniform situations continue to be imposed on to non-uniform groups; but the major pre-occupation is still with the child or young person's capacity for learning, that is, the antecedent qualities which they bring into the school such as their 'intelligence', their motivation and various other factors which are understood as the

product of a home background and in the study presented in this thesis, bundled together and called 'Barriers to Learning'.

It would appear that many the issues that were identified by commentators in the 1980s remain unresolved. I argue that 'pastoral care' is still a problematic, 'slippery' and diffuse concept (Calvert, 2009) some forty years after seminal critiques offered by those authors cited above. It continues to be viewed as a separate enterprise from a school's academic endeavours with the increased presence of staff other than teachers only serving to underline this continuing split. Within current 'how to' texts this is no longer questioned but accept it as the norm; for example, Nathan (2011:8) sets out the advantages and disadvantages of the separation of teaching and pastoral roles identifying the "grey areas between behaviour and welfare" which have resulted in tensions and boundary disputes over 'who does what'. The ethnography reinforced this point because the demise of *Excellence in Cities* coincided with the school being judged poorly in terms of behaviour which led directly to the *reduction* of the LMs and the *expansion* of the behaviour support workers. Although each approach is needed, seemingly little thought was given to what the impact would be when the LM role, which had been previously described by the Director of Pastoral Care as representing an "invaluable" and unique relationship for pupils to access, was replaced in large part by another role, based predominantly around sanctions and the correction of behaviour. This example illustrates how the terrain of pastoral care continues to be fought over according to wider school agendas and increasing job insecurity. It also reinforces the findings of other studies (McCann et al, 2013) which document the difficulties that paraprofessionals face when attempting to put down 'professional roots' in terms of permanence and career / pay progression.

7.3 How does the evidence of the ethnography suggest the influence of texts on the work activities of those situated in schools?

The sociological strategy outlined by Dorothy Smith is intended as a means to see the "...powers, processes, and relations that organize and determine the everyday context" (Smith, 1987:9). A key way of doing this is through texts, and the study demonstrated clearly how texts at the *trans-local level* had a direct impact on the nature of work activities within the school, particularly the teaching staff and pupils. In terms of policy, it was the agenda of workforce remodelling that led to the creation of new roles like the LM in the first place. A further example was changes to school inspection criteria and what it meant to be a 'good' school, which led to significant changes in the types and numbers of support staff as outlined above. Both examples enable a 'complete story' in terms of the 'rise and fall' of the LM as an educational paraprofessional. Being at the mercy of ever-changing policy agendas presents challenges for all paraprofessionals working in performative systems; how exactly are they able to demonstrate their impact as discrete groups of employees if the conditions that frame their work activities are in a continual state of flux?

The overview of texts explicated before and during the ethnography presented earlier (Figure 4) illustrates how integral and ubiquitous texts are in terms of how they organise

work activities in institutional settings and succeed in generalising across multiple local settings by hovering over, or seeping into, everyday activities. A vivid example of this is the 'Priory Park Learner', cited in Figure 4. This was a colour-coded grid used as a tool to guide discussions initiated by staff with pupils. The purpose of the grid was to enable each pupil to explore what type of learner they were in relation to pre-determined categories like 'Engagement and Participation' and 'Conduct in Class' and then assess themselves in each category using the criteria of: 'Excellent Learner'; 'Good Learner'; 'Requires Improvement Learner' and 'Unsatisfactory Learner'. Those familiar with the English schools inspection system will recognise the presence of Ofsted language in terms of how judgements made about schools are adopted here as a means for a pupil to monitor their own individual performance. The grid was heavily promoted around the school during the ethnography, including an expectation that the LMs would include them in their discussions with pupils during interventions. At the same time, the school was also pushing 'learning strategies' and 'growth mind-sets' via colourful posters displayed around the school. The LMs expressed that they found the 'Priory Park Learner' less useful to their way of working with pupils as it took the focus straight to formal learning; however, the material introducing the ideas of learning strategies and growth mind-sets was seen as far more beneficial as these enabled the mentors to explore with some pupils what made formal learning problematic in the first place.

The mentor's response described above, illustrates the 'text-reader conversation' first identified in the Methodology Chapter where texts are responded to in different ways according to what the reader brings to the situation. This was also demonstrated through the 'Restorative Practice (RP) 3 Questions card' used to structure an RP meeting. Restorative Practice is a form of conflict resolution that was being implemented in many schools across the city at the time of the study and based on the notion of 'doing things with people' rather than 'to them'. When adopted holistically it is used to resolve conflict between parties regardless of their position in the school and was talked about enthusiastically by a behaviour support worker, who having no prior knowledge of this initiative, had attended the training and was excited to implement the strategy. In contrast it was viewed rather scornfully by one of the LMs, who in drawing on their youth work background, saw the initiative as a cynical rebranding of an approach which would be recognisable to anyone with knowledge and practise of social pedagogy. Both the Priory Park Learner and the Restorative Practice card demonstrated how texts are features of discursive organization that relate people purposively to events, organisations, resources and one another. Once this is understood it is then possible to see how people participating in discursive activities can be brought into line with ruling ideas (Campbell and Gregor, 2004); but also that this process can happen less explicitly as people consult their own understandings of prevailing and dominant discourses and act accordingly.

Ultimately one of the difficulties in realising this project as an Institutional Ethnography was that the textual analysis in relation to LMs was only partial. Whilst it was easy to evidence the impact of extra or trans-local texts, the way that school-generated texts impacted and shaped the work of the LMs was less easy to unearth especially when compared to both the teachers and other support staff. Consider for example the staff room notice board displaying pupils as 'Bankers' or 'RAPS'; this designation of pupils determined their interactions with teachers to a greater or lesser extent. Support staff other than the mentors were also mentioned in specific school policy documents such as the school behaviour

policy (Appendix 11) which makes explicit reference to staff involved in on-call activities, i.e., behaviour support staff undertaking corridor patrol. This visibility and accessibility of texts contrasts starkly with the difficulties I encountered in extracting textual information from the Director of Pastoral Care regarding information about the learning mentor role and the work they undertook such as the lack of clarity regarding the numbers of learning mentors and the failed initiative to publicise their work more widely. Furthermore, whilst the system for referring pupils to the mentors by middle management also suggested a means to look at how texts shaped the mentor's work initially, I now realise the full significance of Paul's comment, first noted in Chapter 4 as part of a discussion looking at the problematic nature of official referrals (p.165). His exclamation: "What process? Seriously, I would settle for a scrap of paper with a name on it at this point" sums up how my own quest to locate this particular text in *any* of its previous iterations proved fruitless. It is possible that these difficulties arose partly because I was not researching the part of the institution from which texts were supposedly generated but I concluded more generally that texts *belonged* within the sphere from which the learning mentors were excluded, illustrated diagrammatically as 'the core' at the end of Chapter 4. Those school-generated texts which shaped the day to day work of *other* staff were largely absent when it came to the learning mentors which, on the one hand, serves to emphasise yet again the marginal and ambiguous nature of their work, but on the other, the potential to work creatively, that such a liminal space gives rise to.

This aspect of the study also raises a broader issue. Whilst Institutional Ethnography as an *approach* proved invalid in helping me to understand the materiality of social relations and the day-to-day reality of lived experiences (both my own and those of the participants), it is an approach which is premised on the importance of texts in shaping those experiences. If, however, these texts are elusive or even non-existent, then IE as a *form of inquiry* is problematic.

7.4 How do helping relationships develop and operate within the context of a performance based culture?

There are a number of real and concerning consequences when a school's success is viewed as synonymous with narrow performance measures. Teachers are reduced to classroom technicians charged with the delivery of an instrumentalist curriculum (Wilkins, 2015), whilst pupils are reconstructed purely in terms of what they contribute to the school's academic endeavour, as evidenced through the designation of Priory Park High pupils as either 'BANKER', 'RAP' or the irrelevant 'other' i.e. young people who were unable to access the standard offer. One step up the hierarchy, middle managers' views of children and young people are fragmented according to their specific area of responsibility be that academic achievement or pastoral well-being. This shift is taken as read by school leaders reflected in the Head Teacher's comment of LM interventions not just 'taking up' but actually 'taking away' from teachers, the pastoral demands that arise in a school. But this view of formal education fails to see schools as key spaces of childhood thereby downplaying or ignoring major aspects of children's development leading ultimately, to partial understandings of children and young people (Martin, 2016, Frost, 2005).

In contrast, the nature of the work undertaken by paraprofessionals has the potential to enable a wider concept of 'childhood'. In the study, it was possible to see how the LM approach led to qualitatively different relationships with pupils as compared to those of staff working in the core whose activities didn't always allow for these types of 'critical friend' or 'familial' relationships. One interpretation of the role is an informal educator who operates outside of the classroom and within the broader context of the child or young person's life. This means that they are able to facilitate young people's learning in a wider sense be that about dealing with conflict and managing relationships both within the school and beyond; or strategizing to make a 'success' of their schooling, which could represent anything from achieving academically to avoiding permanent exclusion and any number of scenarios in between. In essence, the key focus of their work was found to be assisting a child or young person in their social development and for that reason it has to be seen as having great value in a wider educative sense.

But this work should not be regarded uncritically as the interactions that took place between paraprofessionals and pupils clearly involved a number of complex interactions and are therefore open to a number of interpretations. For instance, whilst the work of LMs could be interpreted as a type of social pedagogy, or in an English context, a form of quasi youth work in schools, it could also be perceived as a modern-day example of 'pastoralization' (Williams, 1980); i.e. a structural device where the relationship- forging skills of the LMs, are used to reduce the resentment / dissatisfaction felt by those pupils unable to benefit from 'product' teaching and who may rebel against its constraints. I propose that the mentor's official interventions, i.e. those that were orchestrated by a third party working within a more rigidly performative agenda did contain elements of pastoralization in that they were based on the notion of getting a child or young person 'learning ready' in order that they could cope with the demands of a performative system. But given the many non-classroom issues that pupils brought to these meetings, despite the fact that they were supposedly official constructions of support, the work of the learning mentors can be more usefully understood as 'picking up the pieces within a performative system' rather than 'removing barriers to learning'.

The notion of engagement mentoring (Colley, 2003a) as outlined earlier, also offers further possibilities in gaining a critical understanding of learning mentorship if, like pastoralization, it is interpreted as a device that seeks to transform the habitus of young people but with an emotional cost to each party. Examples within this study indicated that the LMs did indeed struggle to synthesise their personal and/or professional values with the demands and structures of the institution in which they were situated. Colley argues that the power relations implicit in engagement mentoring are far wider than those which may exist within the mentoring dyad itself because the 'players' within the 'field' are not just the mentors and mentees but extend to those who set up and organise mentoring schemes . In IE terms these are governments and policy-makers who conceive and produce the textual discourses on which mentoring programmes are predicated. This interpretation of mentoring re-affirms an earlier call for a serious evaluation of the practice given that it has its origins in the developmental relationship of one individual with another, but is now being "structured, directed and redefined to satisfy institutional as well as individual needs" (Gay and Stephenson, 1998:54).

However, neither 'pastoralization' nor engagement mentoring can fully explain those interventions which were carried out by LMs with their 'unofficials' in the *unseen* domain as

these *did* enable a genuinely open and interactive educational process that was based on lived experiences and informed by the personal values and beliefs of both mentor and mentee. In this domain, it was indeed possible to witness the conditions for respectful practice as envisaged by Cruddas (2005), and even revealed glimpses of the emancipatory potential of the pupil-mentor dyad which she rejected. But although such interventions were powerful and empowering they were also unnoticed and unacknowledged within the wider institution. This issue of the invisibility and peripherality of the mentoring team is a key finding of the study but the reasons as to why it happened are varied and complex. This aspect of the mentor's work could be understood as structural in terms of how they worked outside of the core or standard offer (as shown in Figures 6 and 7 on pages 173 and 174). It could also be explained as a product of incremental change in that the policy which created LMs is now defunct but the role has endured, albeit in response to local and extra-local situations such as whether a school continues to fund the role through its own budgets or whether it remains within the governance of the local authority. But the mentors' working within this domain could also be down to agency i.e. that they *chose* to construct their work *outside* of the performative gaze as this modus operandi enabled them to work in ways that by-passed formal structures, be that applying emotional 'first aid' or holding tacit conversations with pupils over the course of their school careers. This freedom to act intuitively was clearly of benefit to the mentors and was also bemoaned as a loss by teachers in earlier accounts presented in the Literature Review. This also helps explain why others whose work is so relentlessly monitored might have felt ambivalent or just plain negative towards the LMs.

But it is also important to remember that the decision to operate in the unseen domain was partly as a result of frustrations expressed by the LMs in relation to how aspects of their work were organised and imposed upon them. Therefore rather than interpreting this as an aspect of 'creative professional identity' as proposed by Rhodes (2006), I argue that this is better understood as a form of "Psychic Stretch", although not in terms of how it was originally envisaged within the context of the 'New Careers' project i.e. practitioners experiencing "immense personal strain" due to being pulled between the demands of the agency and the demands of their community. Within this thesis, "Psychic Stretch" represents the disjuncture experienced by the mentor when they must somehow align what the school has decreed as the 'solution' for young people with what they feel the best course of action to be. Thus, in overriding decisions about which pupil should be seen and for how long, LMs expressed a feeling of being pulled in two directions, attending on the one hand to the varying and complex needs of pupils whilst trying to meet the expectations of middle managers who, in turn, had their own performative agendas to adhere to. In managing this disjuncture, it would appear that they had to adopt a form of bifurcated consciousness (Smith, 1987) in order to do their job and successfully inhabit both the official and unofficial domain. The other meaning originally given to the notion of "Psychic Stretch" was how the paraprofessional had to negotiate the expectation that in order to maintain their integrity and skill as an indigenous worker they were expected to question practices within professionally-led institutions. This translates less well into a present day context of performativity given that the mentors were never employed to offer a counter narrative to the official school discourse of 'Achievement! No matter what'. Thus, although not employed for their deviance there is one obvious parallel remaining: the paraprofessionals of 1960s America had to negotiate the realities of organizational working such as project monies disappearing and the ever-present threat of job-loss. Cheryl's situation as the LM who narrowly faced redundancy,

only to be redeployed into another temporary, policy-driven paraprofessional role of Parental Advisor, aptly illustrates those words cited earlier that, although “hired as their brother’s keeper” (Austin, 1972:61), the mentors of Priory Park High ultimately had to look out for themselves.

Earlier in the thesis the concept of emotional labour (Hochschild, 2012; Steinberg and Figart, 1999) was considered as a potentially better way to conceptualise the experiences of educational paraprofessionals, noting the negative consequences that the ‘doing’ of this type of work entailed along with its compensation practices i.e. its invisibility. Whilst both of these do offer another means to understand the work carried out in those marginalised, unseen and liminal spaces that the LMs occupied there are questions that remain unanswered if the concept of emotional labour is applied *wholesale* to the situation of the LMs. In Hochschild’s original study considerable attention is given to how managers engineered and orchestrated certain types of emotion in both the workers and those they administered to through explicit and thorough training programmes. For the LMs and other paraprofessionals at Priory Park High such ‘investment’ was absent. Thus both the emotional states that they were supposedly required to bring about in others, and the emotional labour arising from their own work was clearly not so regulated nor directly managed, particularly in the unseen domain.

Whether through choice or design, the liminal spaces occupied by the LMs contribute to establishing broader understandings of educational paraprofessionals who I identify as one of many 21st Century occupational roles that inhabit an undefined space and have an air of impermanency. Such roles are subject to the vagaries of policy and whatever initiatives happen to be in vogue: thus the LM can be understood as both a descendent of the community agents created by the ‘New Careers’ project in 1960s America *and* a product of more recent initiatives such as workforce remodelling along with the ‘arrival’ of a youth mentoring movement in the UK during the early 2000s. Such developments exemplify how approaches are recycled again and again, leading to paraprofessional roles which, although given different titles, are designed to prop up or fill the gaps within more formal structures.

In the short term, I reassert the earlier call for “respectful attention” (DeVault, 1991:4) to be paid to the experiences of those doing work other than teaching in schools, in order to achieve a more nuanced understanding of how their varied approaches impact on children and young people as pupils, and schools as institutions. In the longer term a more transformative course of action is needed. A greater degree of permanency being given to paraprofessional roles is one way in which ‘helping relationships’ might become more integral to the ‘business’ of schools; but the example of the learning mentor demonstrates that when new roles are conceived and then grafted onto schools *as they are currently imagined*, the outcome is little more than a crystallization of paraprofessional roles as the inferior ‘other’. The increasingly diverse nature of the English schools workforce that has been witnessed in recent years, does offer the potential for a more diverse and therefore relevant school experience for greater numbers of young people in terms of both *who* they see around school and what type of support they can access. But for this potential to be realised there needs to be a radical shift in the dominant discourse of what constitutes ‘learning’ and a move away from the idea of schools as institutions of purely academic endeavour. Thus in this re-imagining of education, the pastoral endeavour, which I define as the supporting and ‘critical friending’ of young people during their transition to adulthood, becomes the concern of everyone, not just the marginalised few.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethics Paperwork

Participant Information Sheet: Pupils

Parental Consent Form

Participant Information Sheet: Staff

Staff Consent Form

Participant Information Sheet for Yr 11s and 6th Formers

Are you interested in being involved in some research about your school?

Hello. My name is Jo Bishop and I have been spending some time in your school as a researcher.

As a pupil at this school your thoughts and ideas are important so now I am inviting you to take part in my research. I also believe that as a young person, you have a right to be involved in research which is looking at issues which concern you.

What is the research about?

- I am interested to find out about how pupils are supported and cared for in schools. I want to know your take on all the different staff roles in a school like this one.
- I also want to know what it is like being at High school today as it is a long time since I was a school student!

Things I should know before I decide whether I want to take part?

I am carrying out interviews which will either be a 1:1 interview (just yourself and me) or a paired interview (you and a friend and me). If you want take part you can choose which one you would prefer.

The interview will last about 30 minutes and will be recorded. The recordings will be held securely and then deleted once the research project has ended.

The information you give me will be used in my thesis which is like a long essay that I have to write up as part of my research.

I may also use some of the information in articles which may get published.

When I am using the information you give me I will not reveal the identity of the school or use your real name. You can choose the name that will be tagged to what you say.

What are the advantages of taking part?

- ✓ Your voice gets heard! You will be helping adults have a better understanding of what school is like and will contribute to improving services in schools for young people.
- ✓ Your thoughts and ideas will get published and will be used in teaching sessions for people at university who want to work in schools.

- ✓ You will receive a certificate confirming your participation in this research which you could include on your CV.
- ✓ Once all the interviews have been completed you will be invited to a small celebration event to thank you for your input and participation in this research.

What are the drawbacks?

- You would be giving up a lunchtime.
- You might feel shy or uncomfortable about sharing your thoughts with someone you don't know.

Other things you should know...

One of the rules I have to follow as a researcher is to uphold your safety so if you tell me something during the interview that I think may cause you or someone else harm, I will have to tell a member of staff at school.

At the end of the research I will write a summary of my findings and send you a copy if you wish to have one.

If I do the interview and then feel unhappy or want to ask any questions who should I talk to?

The learning mentors will be available for you to talk to or you can go to your Year Leader.

If I agree to take part, can I then change my mind later on?

Yes. You can decide you'd rather not be involved right up to and even during the interview. If you decide once you've done the interview that you don't want your contribution to be used you can tell me or the mentors.

The letter below was reproduced onto school letter-headed paper

Dear parent/carer

My name is Jo Bishop and I am currently undertaking some research at -----
School. I am exploring how pupils are supported and cared for in secondary
education and I also want to learn more from pupils about their experiences of being
at High School today, in the 21st Century.

The research with pupils will involve a 30 minute recorded interview. Their identity
will remain anonymous throughout the research process.

The findings of the research will be published as part of a doctoral study and
possibly in relevant academic/practitioner literature.

Your daughter/son has indicated that they would like to part in this research.

Please indicate below if you do not wish for them to take part in this research and
return the slip by Friday 17/1/14.

If you are happy for them to take part no further action is required.

Yours faithfully,

Jo Bishop

I do not want my daughter / son to take part in this research.

Pupil Name:

Signed:

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title of Study: *The business of removing barriers to learning - an ethnographic study of learning mentoring.*

Name of Investigator: Jo Bishop

Contact details: Room A216, Broadcasting Place, Leeds Metropolitan University, Leeds LS2 9EN, 0113 8124905, j.bishop@leedsmet.ac.uk

Invitation to Participate

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If anything is not clear to you or you would like more information please contact Jo Bishop using the details given above.

Purpose of the Study

As part of my Doctorate in Education at the University of Huddersfield, under the supervision of Professor Helen Colley, I am carrying out a study of learning mentoring within a high school setting. Part of this research involves interviewing various people, including staff and pupils, within the school to gain their views on learning mentoring.

Does the research have ethical approval?

My research plan has received ethical approval from the University, and I will abide by the ethical research guidelines of the British Educational Research Association, whose key principle is that anyone invited to participate in research should be treated fairly, sensitively and with dignity. (Please note that the guidelines can be viewed in full at www.bera.ac.uk/files/guidelines/goodpr1.pdf.)

What will I be asked to do in the study?

First Stage: Agree to be interviewed at a time which is suitable to you. I would like interview you for between thirty minutes and sixty minutes; depending how much time you have available.

Second Stage: You will be sent a list of topics/questions to be covered in the interview if you would like to see them beforehand. I will also be interested to hear about other issues you feel are important to learning mentoring.

Third Stage: Undertake the interview

How will the information be recorded?

I would like to record the interview using an MP3 recorder, the files of which will be downloaded and stored electronically in a password protected location. In the event that extracts from the interviews are transcribed then these will be anonymised with the use of pseudonyms (fictional names). Only my supervisor, Professor Helen Colley will have access to the raw data whilst other staff and students may have access to the anonymised data as part of my research training. The research data will be stored in this way for up to two years after the project has been completed.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of taking part?

Advantages:

- It gives you an opportunity to reflect on your role and an understanding of how it sits within the wider schools workforce.
- You will be contributing your ideas on what constitutes barriers to learning as experienced by children and young people.
- You will be contributing to a research study which seeks to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of the learning mentor and other support roles.
- You will contribute to informing policy-makers and practitioners on the learning mentor role and associated issues.

Disadvantages:

- Finding the time to participate in the interview.

How will my information be used?

Your information will be collated together with other participants' data and used to gain a better understanding of learning mentoring, how it is experienced, and any improvements which could be made. The findings of the study will be reported in my doctoral thesis and in papers for professional and academic conferences and journals.

Will my information be confidential?

Your name and any other personal information will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be used solely for the management of the research project.

Will my comments and views be anonymous?

Your responses will be recorded in a way that conceals your identity and your school's location and identity. As stated above, this will be done by using pseudonyms and taking care not to reveal other facts which might identify you or the school.

What happens if I want to withdraw?

If you decide to take part in the research, you are still free to withdraw the information you have given at any time during the project. You do not have to give a reason. Simply contact me at the above address to let me know, and your information will be securely destroyed.

If I am not happy, to whom do I complain?

Firstly to myself; if still unhappy please contact my doctoral supervisor whose details are given below:

Professor Helen Colley
School of Education and Professional Development,
University of Huddersfield,
Queensgate,
Huddersfield, HD1 3DH.

Email: h.colley@hud.ac.uk

Telephone: 01484 478114

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: *The business of removing barriers to learning - an ethnographic study of learning mentoring.*

Name of Investigator: Jo Bishop **Supervisor:** Professor Helen Colley

Please read the statements below and then print and sign your name where indicated.

I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above study and understand what my role will be.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at anytime during the project.

3. I give my consent for my opinions to be used in the study as data and understand my data will be kept confidential.

4. I confirm that I have been given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the study and if asked, my questions were answered adequately and to my full satisfaction.

Your name (print)

.....

Your signature

.....

Data Protection Act

I understand that data collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored securely on computer.

I agree to the University of Huddersfield recording and processing this information and that it will be used by Jo Bishop and may be presented in other academic forums (e.g. academic journals, at conferences or as part of teaching and learning). I understand that it will be used only for these purposes and my consent is conditional upon the University complying with its duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act.

Your signature.....

Date.....

Thank you for this information. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Appendix 2a: Interview transcribed by myself with reflections

Interview 1 with Learning Support Assistant, based in the Pupil development centre and KS3 Intervention (qualified Higher Level Teaching Assistant).

Conducted on 10/12/12

Key to symbols used

(...) is used to denote laughter or speech, either when the interviewer and interviewee are talking in quick succession or at the same time. Or when a name place is mentioned.

[...] is used to describe an action like a pause in the talking or an interruption or a guidance note or a point of clarification.

__ (?) denotes where a word is not absolutely clear on the recording so I've put in what it sounds like.

Preamble to interview: we went through the rationale for the research e.g. reason for doing a case study of one school as opposed to a series of interviews with LM's across a group of schools. Checked and signed consent form and participant information sheet which had both been sent out prior to interview taking place.

Said she had the hour but had some data work to do as well

1. Could you start by telling me your job title but describe what it entails?

Ok, well it's changed recently and I haven't got a new contract or anything so I don't know what my new title is. But I used to be coordinator of PDC which is Pupil Development Centre, which is based on the model of primary schools, which some of them have a pupil development centre which is about looking at barriers to learning and bringing children out, erm, doing assessments on pupils, looking at pupils a bit more closely, giving them time to talk...so just getting an overall view of the pupil really, not just in terms of learning but the whole picture, so that's, and then you can do referrals to other agencies, put other things in place if that's what you think needed.

Ok

But it's that time to take, and to have that time to look really look at pupils and see what they need.

Right. And so do you still do that...

Yep, yes

...but the title's altered but you're still basically doing that...

*Yes because that's the room we have downstairs, so although pupils will work in there and bring work from other lessons it's also giving a chance, you know, to have time to talk and to do other things as well and maybe put some programmes in ourselves of work ermmm but my other role that I've just taken on is to run the **KS3 learning centre which is what this is [the room we're situated in] and that is based entirely on work**, on learning so it will be where there are barriers to learning, yes we'll do something towards that but, really it's getting the*

work done. We had a lot of pupils last year who were in withdrawal. So we used to have a ... I don't if you've looked at the isolation room...

I've had a visit, yeah

so as well as the internal isolation we also had a withdrawal room so if a pupil misbehaved in a lesson they were taken there...ermm and they couldn't be put back into the room, they were taken there so they wouldn't disrupt other pupils' learning and what we were finding is that it was a similar/same group of pupils there most of the time...ermm particularly out of year 9 so what we've done is we've opened up this room and those pupils that missed a lot last year, and have got a lot of gaps in their learning will come here and fill in those gaps as well as trying to keep up with the work that they're doing in their lessons now.

Ok, ok,

So I might have some ...and also if they're struggling at the moment with some of their learning so for example I might have a group out for English and I might have a group out for...Maths and I've got a couple of literacy groups as well and they're all pupils that have missed a lot of work last year, so it's to plug the gaps really, particularly with year 9 it's important because next year they'll be moving onto GCSE's...so no, *I don't really have a title really at the moment* (small laugh) but yeah, that's what I do.

Ok, thank you. And what would you say you enjoy about your work? And also what are the challenging aspects...

Spending time with the young people really, that's the most important part of my work. And also that it's very varied so it changes all the time...because I never really wanted to be a teacher. I didn't want to stand in a classroom and do...you know I wanted to [pauses] have that relationship with, with young people that maybe you don't always get as a teacher, ermm and I like the challenge of doing you know something a bit more really, a bit more difficult...I think (laughs a little),

Is there anything that frustrates you; is there anything you wish you had more of or...

Erm...[longer pause] oh it's a hard one that one. I think support really; I think you know you *need more people* you know to deal with some of the pupils that we've got. I mean, say, say if you've got a group of four, they all need one-to-one in a way; that would, be the ideal but you know that's, that's not going to happen so....,

So it's more of, kind of a resource issue?

I think that's probably frustrating. And I think, although it's changed a lot over the last few years I think the sort of, maybe *the view that some other staff have of the pupils that I work with...but I think that's changed* a lot recently, in fact I'd say that's hardly even a problem now, I think the views very much changed...

From what to...?

Well I've done it sort of for 12 years, worked with pupils with behavioural, mostly behavioural difficulties, so, yeah, I would think when I first started it was, yeah, a bit kind of brushed

under the carpet and you felt like you were under there with them, but now it's changed and I think people have a different view of it really.

Why do you think that? Like it sounds like what you're describing is almost like a shift in culture... (Erm, yeah, yeah), from those sorts of attitudes. Why do you think that happened?

I think because, erm, I've been lucky with the line manager I've had that we've worked, it's [gives name of line manager] we've worked really hard to change people's views and we go back to classrooms and we'll talk to the teaching staff and the pupil...cos they're not with me all the time, you know eventually they will go back into class. So talking to teaching staff and sort of saying, maybe saying a little bit about these pupils and some of the difficulties they experience at home without giving confidential information away. But erm, you know showing them the work that they've done in here, that they can work and 'look what they've done' and sort of 'bigging them up' a lot, you know and a lot of that really,. And I think once staff have seen that we've actually achieved, for example we had, when I was in PDC the last couple of years, we've had 10's and 11's who've done their GCSE course work with us I think you know staff have been sort of you know quite impressed really that we've managed to get that sort of work out of pupils and that we've managed to get work at that level as well. So that's been, we've actually taken some kids from all, for a whole year and got them through maths GCSE and things like that. So I think that's made a difference...that they can see that we're not just kind of patting them on the head and giving them a cup of tea, we are actually getting some real learning work out of it and I think this is really where the key stage 3 room's sprung up really, we can get some real work out of the pupils we work with.

(7.24 on recording) Just so it's clear in my head then, there is the isolation which is what? where students go to when they're being disruptive in class?

No! That's where they've had some poor behaviour and they've gone to internal exclusion rather than be excluded outside. It used to be 'isolation' but now it's internal exclusion

(And that's what it's called)

...so instead of being excluded and staying at home and not doing any work or whatever, they're now internally excluded so they might be in there for a few days even or it might just be a day but that's where they go and we don't have a withdrawal anymore [ok] we just have maybe department withdrawals, so we're not getting the same pupils withdrawn all the time so it's to prevent that really, who are missing out on work, so we can quickly pick up on those pupils that are and maybe they'll come here.

I see so if they've spent significant amounts of time in internal exclusion, they might then come to you as a next step, as a way of getting them back/ [Interviewee nods in agreement] And what about the pupils who've been, say have had long periods of time off for other reasons like bereavement?

Yes for illnesses and things. Well they'd probably go down to PDC downstairs which is the other room. You might want to go and visit it [names a member of staff] works in there. So yeah, bereavement...pupils who've erm like school refusers as well, we have school refusing. We also have pupils who have moved schools and for various reasons: so they may have moved district; their parents may have broken up; or they may be on a managed

move which means they'll come here and have like a time period, maybe for 6 weeks and see how they do, whether they'll stay on or go back to the old school and that will be pupils with behaviour problems. But that's quite good because that means they've got a connection with somebody as soon as they come in to school so they can kind of come back, you know, for bits of support now and again; and often those kids – they've all moved for a reason; even if it's a house move, ...it can feel like a, you know, it's a big wrench for some kids leaving their friends behind and things, so you know we're there to provide that bit of support as soon as they come in and then they've got somebody else besides their form tutor or whatever that they can go to if they've got a problem during the time their settling in.

Ok thank you. And do you think. I mean this is a really general question, but do you think that people who work in schools need to have a particular set of values and attitudes. You've kind of touched on that a little bit in terms of teachers understanding of the work which you do...

I think it's, I think over time it's sort of like some of the onus on like the whole child has been taken away from some form tutors and I think that's coming back now that they're taking on that onus of ringing up parents and talking and thinking a bit more about the children they've got in their class. You know sort of looking at that thing I think it should sort of definitely be the onus on everyone in school...

[Interruption as a staff member enters room looking for someone]

And you said that you felt that had gone away for a while and is coming back again? What (yes, *I think it is*) what were the reasons for that then?

I think it's just everybody felt, you know, that they needed to take that onus back on again really of caring for the child and I think that's important you know, it's like, you know that saying 'it takes a village to bring up a child' well I think it takes a school to bring up...and that' the whole school. Not just a couple of people...

And you think it was missing for a while in school

*Yeah! I think it was kind of, I think in a way, I think, cos I used to work, **the mentors used to work in a room with me – we all used to work together** at one point, and I think we always felt like we were taking that on...**you know it was kind of left with us in a way**, well not just us, but you know with a handful of people, and really it should be the whole school that takes it on, shouldn't it? [said rhetorically] you know, everyone.*

And do you think that was something that was lost a bit at *this* school or was that happening at schools in general?

I think it probably happens all over; I think you know when Excellence in Cities came in I think people thought, 'ooh yeah, I can push that ...and because teachers are so busy as well and they've got all the data and whatever to do I think actually spending time with their kids...[trails off]

So it's almost like 'because we've got these other roles which aren't teaching, they can deal with the whole child we can get back to the business of...[interviewee agrees] and I think it's often how it's put across isn't it? That there are certain staff who deal with the whole barriers

to learning issues and then that frees...I mean I've read and heard of this so many times. That frees up teachers to teach

[joins in] *to teach. But it's not just about teaching...you know, I don't see why you would come into a school just to teach when you're with young people, you know...there's more than that isn't there...so. But I think people have realised that now. They have a form period time, although they are putting quite a lot of learning stuff back in that! But you know, I'd like to see people just play games with their class or something, or you know doing something...[thinks] like that.*

Something that's not all about learning?

Yeah!

Because obviously I'm trying to have a whole kind of experience here, I'm here one day a week which I know is just a fraction of the time and I think as well that what I've learned about schools is that a Monday is very different to a Friday ...you know (*Yeah, yeah*) but it is very interesting to sit in the briefings first thing and it feels like, from an outsiders perspective...it just feels like such a *complex* kind of organisation, with so *many* things going on...

I know...it's like a little town of its own I always think...especially as you're kind of isolated from the city (?)...it's like your own little, I don't know, your own kind of [thinks] township. You know, there's so many different things, yeah...

But all the kinds of statistics that are gathered in, that people have to input. I just think 'gosh, that must take up so much time' really..(*It does yeah*) And all the kinds of walky-talkies and, you know, I kind of sit down there in the mentor's base and hear all that going on, you know all day [interviewee laughs] who's where they shouldn't be... and you know, I just think that people, just don't. People outside of schools don't...

People don't have any inkling, they think 'oh teachers' and 'they get all that holiday' and I think they've got no idea. I think, cos my partner works at [...] city council, he's in planning but he doesn't realise that when you go into school it's like bang, bang, bang from the minute you go in to the minute you leave I think you know the pace is...

Amazing

Yeah yeah,

From someone who comes in and sees it

I mean, I think it's similar in hospitals or you know...it's a similar environment in a way, so complex like you say and so many different things going on yeah, yeah...

So I'm not really sure about how I would ask you the next question because, I don't really know anything about your background...

I'm not a teacher, no

Ok, so how did your role come about and was there any training

Well I didn't know what I wanted to do, so I kind of toyed around with things and I'd worked at (...) you know ? (...) [names an Alternative Education provision] So I worked there for a bit and then this job came up here and I thought 'oh' cos I didn't really fancy working there, it was quite a tough place, it was the one on (.....) road, you know it?

Yes I do

*And that was about 12/13 years ago? So I came up here and yeah there was a Behaviour support job going working in this sort of, well it was the unit downstairs, very similar to that, so that's what I started doing and just kind of took it from there really **and then when the teacher left I took over her role** and it just went on from there I guess.*

And so what kind of training would you say you have had and has it been in-house or external or...

All sorts, all sorts

Or is it just on the job...

Yeah, all sorts of different things. I've done counselling, solution-focussed therapy. I've done the National Leaders in Behaviour and Attendance and I've done a HLTA [clarifies what this is] so it's kind of all sorts of different things really.

And when you say you've done kind of Maths and English course work are you kind of quite good at those or have you had to learn how to do those?

I'm reasonably good at those, yeah I wouldn't be able to teach to a higher level (Cos the thought of teaching maths kind of horrifies me!) I could teach to a C or a B in English maybe but higher than that, no I think I'd struggle. And I have had a couple of difficulties with maths now and again (Laughs) Oh I do get work from staff and I look throughand there's stuff on the computer, you know on one of the drives I can look at and follow the scheme of work for example so I know where I'm going and I go through in-house training on how to assess work and that sort of thing and lesson-planning.

And do you think ever, 'oh I wouldn't mind going off and doing a course', like if there was a course that recognised what you do, you know because I remember for a while there was the foundation degree Working with Young People and Young People's Services [yeah] and it was for people who worked with young people but weren't youth workers particularly or weren't teachers or anything like that. Have you ever felt as if you've needed that external endorsement as it were....

***Well I've got the National Programme in Behaviour and Attendance and that was the big thing that was going on for a while...**so no, not really, nothing to endorse what I do here. I think I'm lucky really, people kind of recognise...I think if I was in a school where maybe they didn't recognise that then yeah, then maybe I would, I don't know.*

But you've kind of felt, I think what I'm asking is have you kind of felt invested in over the years?

*Yeah, yeah I do. I mean if I found something you know I'm sure they'd let me do it. So yeah, **I do feel invested in; I've had a lot of training!** (Laughs)*

That's good. Ok and the next question is: are: are you familiar with the phrase 'barriers to learning'?

Yes, very familiar [laughs]

Which you clearly are! Without me prompting, you just used it. Can you tell me, this might sound like a strange question but can you tell me if you were conscious of the time when you started using that; if that kind of came into your professional speak, kind of what it means to you?

Ermm, probably right from the beginning really, when I started work, maybe not when I was at the (Alternative Education provision) but here definitely because we had quite a bit of training with Excellence in Cities so that you know, it came up then and it was all the things that you know, like from the basic Maslow things to what, you know other more complex issues that are in place in a child's life that stops them from learning, right through to learning difficulties...right through from simple physical things to other difficulties that's inherent in a child that you might not notice at first. And that's why its good when we have pupils in PDC because it gives us that time of observation...[yeah] maybe you know, I don't know everything...but it makes you aware of when maybe there is something else, some other difficulty there.

And if it was, and I mean I don't even know if it's possible for you to answer this question [My reflection: Oh god, I say this all the time during this interview, I don't know why but have noted this to avoid for future interviews] but if I kind of said to you almost like what are the most common barriers to learning you've probably come across with young people or dealt with or experienced over the last, sort of, ten or so years, do there seem to be ones that kind of often crop up?

Yes *social and behavioural, definitely, they're the most that I work with.*

Such as?

Well just from coming from families who've got no interested in learning or education...ermm poor attitude, poor social housing, lots of, you know, all those sort of things. And then the next one probably would be issues that have not been raised at primary school owing to some kind of learning disability for example. I mean we've had pupils with dyslexia and that's not been recognised at primary school or have dyslexic tendencies...

But there's been a policy of it not being recognised isn't there? |

I think there is but there's no funding for it unless parent funds it themselves for tests for example, yeah and also I've heard that's it not going to be a learning difficulty anymore, it's going to be a way of learning, a different way of learning...

Right...

So [laughs] I don't know how that's going to affect anything but yeah.

Another phrase you seem to hear a lot now is self esteem and certain pupils or students having low self-esteem. What are your thoughts about that?

Ermm

Cos that's quite a hard one to measure isn't it?

Yeah, yes it is. *I think, ermm, oh I think it's a tough one and I think it's a tough one in this school because it's such a widely comprehensive school this school. We have pupils from all sorts of mixed abilities; from all sorts of different backgrounds and I think sometimes...it's hard because we've got kids who have a lot and kids who have very little and I think once, you know, it must be hard for some of those kids who have very little sometimes.* So...cos I've not, I didn't, I went to a grammar school and I just didn't have experiences of that when I, you know when I was older but I just, I don't know what it must be like because my daughters came here and they kind of didn't notice the difficulties that other pupils had whereas for me, because they were there in my face because it's glaringly obvious. But even though they're alongside in class with them they're so tunnel visioned ...and I don't know if the other kids feel like that as well.

Yeah

...the kids who have little, if they're quite tunnel visioned about...

yeah, if they don't kind of feel that...

I don't know...so I sometimes wonder if that affects self-esteem here.

That's really interesting because...

Cos I came from the grammar school, secondary school in my, well I'm 50 so that was my age group of what we went through but you know sometimes I think...I'm not saying the comprehensive systems wrong by any means but...

I just, it's kind of, I do look back at that and sometimes think well you know what if these kids were more...[pauses] with their peer group, working at the same level whether they'd worry about it as much.

Because of course the original principle of the comprehensive system was

Or put themselves down as much...yeah yeah

...And put everybody from different backgrounds together as much as possible and break down barriers,

Yeah, yeah and that's really important but then I think it still goes on, I really do because for example I have kids from the nearby estate and some of them don't even go to town on a Saturday. You know its, its not so much their experience, its, they just lack so much experience of things. Like, you know if we talk about Macbeth, some of them haven't even been to a castle! Do you know what I mean and for me the whole thing is kind of set around those things, those important things that happen around a castle. If you've got a child who's never even been to a castle, what experience can they have then of reading that novel. So now when you think about poverty, I now tend to think its more kind of like around poverty of experience for some of our kids here. so the 'have's' is that not just the material things they've got all that experience of you know being taken out at the weekends, doing all those things and the have-nots just don't have that... and that's you know a lot of it. They might have the latest game or consul or whatever, but they just don't have wealth of experience

and sometimes you know I think we could do with putting that back in to schools as well.

[Interviewee really warms to her subject here]

Back into the curriculum you mean [agrees] sort of more trips

Yeah, yeah, definitely. Because we have so many kids who just don't have that knowledge of what other things are like.

It feels like we're a long way away from that at the moment doesn't it though, having those sorts of things back because if anything it feels like we're going back to more book...head at the desk...

Head at the desk learning. But how can our kids do that if they've not got the experience to start with? You can't...you know...I don't know. I can't image what it must be like.

Okay, ermm. I think we've probably answered the next one: what do you feel are the barriers or challenges some children and young people face in pursuing their education.

*That would be it, I think that's the biggest barrier, the experience, though **not having the experiences** and its not just because you know there are some parents who do have, suffer from poverty or what have you, they do take their kids out but you know there are a lot that don't.*

Yeah, sometimes it can be that both parents work and there's actually quite a good income coming in but because it's so geared around work there's not much time for other things really

So they miss out on a language in English and all sorts of things, you know when they do humanities they're missing out on all those kinds of experiences and they find it boring because they just can't picture it in their heads so it must be like...you're talking about something and they must just see a sea of grey cos they can't...they don't have the mental picture in their head of what you're talking about. So that's, you know, I think that's difficult.

Ermm, what is your understanding of the learning mentor role? I know you obviously don't...but you have worked very closely with...or maybe at times you've felt as if you are a learning mentor, I don't know, but how do you see that role in relation to yours?..

*I think that **they are there as a significant adult for those pupils to go to in crises or other times, ermm there to sort of coach or talk through things with pupils...ermm to provide like connections to other services ermm...***

Cos you've kind of seen them from the beginning in the sense of if we think of EiC's as their birth as it were...

*Yeah, yeah-yeah. **I mean it's changed a lot... since then...***

How has it changed?

*Well **they used to work together as a unit and now they're kind of split up within different year groups and things**, so...it would be when they were before trying to find the right fit(?)...I think they still do some of that, they do still work across the board really but now they're*

mostly with their year group I think? I don't know it's hard because I've not really...I don't have much connection with what they've been doing over the last couple of years really...

Compared to when you sort of shared a space with them?

And were there more roles, when the EiC's...the sort of funding and so on. Were there more mentors at [school name] can you remember?

Ermm yeah. I think they had four at one point and they had a TA as well attached to them who would work with pupils in lessons as well.

So if you were to kind of summarise how their role is different to yours, what would be the main differences do you think?

That they don't do so much of the teaching and learning

Whereas you're kind of classroom based?

Yeah, yeah

And they're much more moving around and seeing people in their base and seeing people in different places

Yeah, yeah...and they used to do a lot of group work as well; I don't know if they do so much of that now. I think the behaviour team do quite a lot of group work now.

And what was that around? The group work?

Ermm friendships, bullying, all those sort of things whereas now the Behaviour Support team do a lot of that now.

Ok. Cos at the moment I'm just going through the process of trying to as an outsider trying to make sense of who does what and how it kind of fits together and so on.

And they do quite a lot with parents as well and I probably tend to do less of that, you know mine's probably more like in a sort of teaching role that I'll ring parents up or the year managers role you know and talk to parents about what issues the kid has had that day whereas they're probably more trying to find out more about the children and have that link with the parents as well ...a friendly link with the parents...

So kind of 'this is the kind of experience of school we think your child is having at the moment and we think it's not so good and what can we do'?

Yeah, and they do home visits as well yeah, we probably do, we don't do that at all.

Okay, okay thank you. And how do you think the role, the learning mentor role is perceived in school by other staff?

I think its...I think they have, I think it's good. When I first started it was awful!

Was it?

Yeah...I think that, well and my role as well, I think people used to think 'oh they just go and sit about, drink cups of tea, have a few sweets then pat them on the head and off they go. I

honestly think that that was the idea. Because it was all new, having people in school who were not teachers or teaching assistants and even teaching assistants when I first got here, they used to have their lunch in a different room – how weird is that? You know? So whereas now it's a lot different, yeah. They're more accepted that they're actually working towards...and I think as well that's changed, that they've managed to get pupils in for exams...I think once teachers see that they've got a hand in learning through what they're doing then that's something they're more comfortable with? That's what they know and they think 'oh well, yeah they are actually doing something that is helping. So, yeah...but I don't think a lot of them have seen it beyond that really. I don't think they see that other part of what they do that much.

Do you think that...this just links to some research I did about 3 years ago where I looked at, I did kind of send out questionnaires to lots of mentors across high schools in Leeds just to find out how the role had evolved really since EiC's; and from their answers I was able to detect like a bit of a dual role thing where they were obviously working within the wider rules and regulations and sort of systems of the school and following rules and so on [yeah] you know I was with Liz this morning when she sort of tackled a lad who had a baseball cap on and so on. But they do definitely have what you might call a kind of more of a youth work approach. So on the one hand they are an authority figure ...

But it changes in different schools. So I think here its always been quite good that they've had that separate role but in some schools you have learning mentors working on like more of a learning role, you know like D's to C's for example in Maths and that sort of thing. So here it's very different that they don't sort of do that and I think that's good really...

And you don't think that the young people might ever be a bit confused by that; is this an authority figure or is it a youth worker type person?

No I don't think they are, no, no. I think they kind of know, they know more than the staff do here. You know, they've got exactly in their heads what a learning mentor is there for...

Yeah, yeah, ok.

(29.52)

So how do you think the pupils perceive them then? Is there a difference between those that have direct contact? Those that have a mentor and those that don't?

Yeah.

What do you think? How do young people sort of make sense of the role?

Do you mean maybe people who don't have a mentor?

Yeah both, those that do and those that don't.

Oh...that's a tough one actually, I don't know. I don't know.

I mean at some stage I am going to talk to the pupils,

It'll be interesting, yeah, I'm not sure actually...

But I just wondered from your time that you spend with them, you know if someone's ever taken out of a class to see a mentor is there like a 'oh, I wish...

Oh yeah, I do think some kids go 'yeah, can I see a mentor'. For example in our room downstairs, not so much here because I think they see heads down, they know we work in here but downstairs in PDC we get loads of kids going 'can I come and be in PDC?' [said in a mimicking of young children way]

Really

(laughs) Do you what I mean?...little faces at the window...

and why do you think they want to do that? What's their perception of what you do?

*I don't know, I think they think we have a nice time and 'ooo are you giving a kid a, what you giving, and 'ooo can I have a cup of tea' do you know what I mean? Like we have quite a lot of kids who don't have breakfast for example...you know there's a bit of that really. **They think 'oh it's someone nice to be with for a bit and it's a bit of a chill out'.***

A bit of a haven, kind of thing?

A bit of a haven, yeah....and I think they see that probably with the mentors as well

What do you say to them then when they ask?

We just say 'no you can't no, sorry' they go 'if I'm naughty can I come in?' I say 'no if you were naughty you would definitely not come in!' You know I think most kids, very few kids don't appreciate coming in, very very few. One or two perhaps quite high achievers who probably say 'why am I here, is it for, is it the stupid room' [mimics a student, uses a low voice] I say 'well no, no why?'. 'I've heard some kids say 'what do I need a mentor for?' so yeah...

Or 'what do I need extra support for?'

*Yeah, yeah. But I mean I have pupils that the mentors have that mentor and that's quite good really having that link so yeah, cos **Liz and I have shared quite a lot of information over the past few years and now we're not in a room together that's been [trails off] I mean it's worked quite well, we had one girl who didn't come to school for a long time and Liz went home and did that and we did the bit at school, getting her back into lessons ...and she still saw Liz occasionally and that worked really well that partnership.** I mean sometimes, you know, very, very occasionally in the past it hasn't quite worked as well because the pupil might use you against each other, you know [mimics] 'I've just come back...and she said blah, blah, blah...' you know and there's been a bit of that and we've had to sort that out but mostly it works really, really well.*

I suppose because you really are like you said at the beginning it's about the whole child isn't it?

Its different [but] so long as they know the roles and the boundaries that you both set then it works really, really well I think.

Ok, thank you. Yeah, when the role is covered in the news media this is, I've just done like surveys over the last couple of years about, you know, whenever in the Times Ed or Guardian education or wherever the learning mentor role is mentioned it always seems to be put across as this figure who is almost like a bridge between the local community and the school and is somehow deemed to have a bit more credibility because there kind of more of the local community than say the teachers and so on. That's probably the case a bit more with primary schools but also with high schools and I just wondered if you kind of recognised that at all?

No, I'm not sure I, no...do here so much. I think maybe because they don't get time to go out and do those things as much as they used to do. I think we're more, I think for example Liz is a bridge between lots of different things like the university and other learning establishments rather than the community. And also don't forget, this school, we don't really have a local community anymore because we have so many feeder schools, you know we've got over 57 feeder schools from you know right down that side of the city. Used to be, we used to be kind of this side of the road and then over there but now we such a widespread, I think it would be hard to define a community that we have here...|

Yeah I can see that ...

So I think the community aspect...[trails off]. I think school's building on that but not necessarily with the learning mentors.

But like you say when pupils are coming really from everywhere, here there and everywhere

Yeah it's hard...

And I wonder if that would probably be the same for a lot of high schools now

There'll be some, for example like (.....) [names a school a few miles up the road in a small town] that probably have more of a community because of where it is, more isolated. But I think...there might even be some city schools that do but I think for a lot of schools, no, you're probably right actually.

Ok. And is there anything my questions have raised that you've not had a chance to say or anything at all that you...

Errmm, no I don't think so [long pause] no I think that's fine.

If you do think of anything afterwards please do, kind of, get in touch. If you find my email, if it does sort of surface ...my contact details are there so if you think of anything that you want to add then that would be really useful,

Ok, alright.

And you're my very first member of staff that's agreed to be interviewed and hasn't cancelled so thanks for that, I really appreciate it. |

That's ok, you're welcome.

Reflections immediately after interview:

After the interview (as in recorder being switched off, not sure if this is significant) we also talked briefly about the multi-cultural nature of the school; she saw this as a positive and observed how kids who transfer in from white working class schools struggle with this/are quite racist.

I also shared with her and asked about her thoughts on the 'Oxbridge/A*****' quote and as a result understood more about this in relation to what were the traditional geographical catchment areas (on the one hand – W***** - very middle-class, and H***** Estate - very working class, on the other). In the last 5 years one of the inner-city schools has been threatened with closure so more pupils from the inner-city* (such as the **** area) have come up to the school as well as more pupils of international university students – she feels this has been one of the main shifts in Priory Park High becoming more multi-cultural.

*arguably this may have happened anyway with the whole marketisation/ league tables' agenda.

Reflections after transcribing:

This was my first interview. I think I was terrible: I butted in far too much, I was leading in places ;I went way off track a couple of times etc. In part the reason for this on reflection was that I was trying to adopt a qualitative, (feminist?) approach in the sense of an interview as a collaborative site of mean-making, a site where knowledge is co-constructed, certainly not a neutral tool to 'dig out' information. I was also so nervous and I always talk more when I'm nervous.

I'm aware that in transcribing fully, there's a lot of unfinished sentences, some speech that might not make sense in the written form although it does when you listen to it. I know I am way off in terms of writing up but I've found Martin Forsey's chapter: *'Ethnographic interviewing: from conversation to published text'* (in Walford (2008) *How to do Educational Ethnography*) really useful as he gives an example where he presents, side by side, the transcript and then what he calls the published version which is more summarised but retains much of the context. He says: "the comparison between the raw transcript and the final published product offers a means for reflecting upon the impact of preparing research data for re-presentation to an imagined audience. It should be obvious from comparing the two that the edited version smoothes over some of the rougher sections of the interview..."

Although he later qualifies this by saying he doesn't subscribe to the view that we should 'interfere' with our data in the move towards publication and cites research done by Bowe, Gewirtz and Ball (1994) who highlighted the importance of "not wrenching people out of their social milieu in our written portrayals of them".

He also makes the point that his apprenticeship into qualitative research was "probably best served by my having to grapple with the enormous amount of data generated. How else would I have learned about the 'economy' of interview production?" This is also helpful for me in developing a more efficient approach in conducting future interviews; I will avoid interruptions, talking over the interviewee etc It all has to be transcribed so I've quickly learned not to do it!

October 2015 – now I'm a lot further on I can see how the above links with a lot of what I've put about IE thoughts on transcribing or not and also how interview data is presented. The stuff by Forsey links to what Helen's suggested I look at by Walcott in terms of raw and cooked data. It's great that I have this very early reflection on my transcription that I can use as an appendices to evidence my thinking.

Despite the above points regarding my approach in the early days of data generation, I think some useful things came out of this that might help me discover the problematic...(if I'm understanding this properly)

Presented in no particular order...

1. Notion of how support staff (mentors and TA's) have been viewed in the past by teaching staff and how this was probably supported by the school hierarchy as in it was a culture that was established overtime and tolerated (eating lunch in a separate room etc).

Also noted was the idea that mentors (and HLTA's) almost had to prove their worth to teachers in terms of delivering the 'learning and achievement' goods (helping pupils to complete and submit GCSE course work etc)

2. Interviewees thoughts on young people having a poverty of experience as their greatest barrier to learning and seeing that parents should take responsibility for this, as it was possible for even lower income parents to provide this. .

3. Her view that despite saying she supported the principle of comprehensive schooling, that things might have been easier in terms of the have's and the have-not's when schools were more class-based (tri-partite system) cos she seems to argue there was more uniformity i.e. the 'have-nots' were schooled together and therefore didn't have as much contact with the 'haves' so less awareness of what they didn't have (?) **therefore less prone to peer pressure**

4. When talking about the learning mentors **now**, the interviewee was much more hesitant in her responses as if she wasn't fully aware of what they do, particularly over the last two years.

5. She didn't agree with/recognise my tentative suggestion of mentors having a dual role and pupils struggling with this. Her comment that "pupils had a clearer understanding of what the mentors were about than the (teaching) staff" was very interesting.

6. Her view that EiC had allowed or encouraged a lesser whole-staff approach to dealing with pupils barriers to learning as it 'shunted off' that responsibility elsewhere (i.e. with the mentors) was also interesting as I'd never thought about that as one potential outcome of the policy; although this is slightly contradictory with what she said later about how the school has more recently moved back to seeing pupils more holistically, including teachers as well.

7. Her view that the school lacks a local community due to the sheer volume of feeder schools coming from many parts of the city was also very interesting. I should have explored this further with her but this will be useful as an observation to include in the (ethnographic) pen picture of the school.

October 2015 continued

Having just listened to this again I can see how I'm going to start to construct it as I have the others (landscape, A3 box, starting with background etc). The 'messiness' of the non-teaching side is coming out even more now I've read this. There are many similarities with the LM role when she operates in the PDC in terms of the relationship with pupil's element – that could be describing the work of learning mentors.

I also get a grasp of the experiences that pupils have alongside their schooling.

I need to look up the National Programme in Behaviour and Attendance.

She didn't mention the term 'Pastoral Care' in relation to her role?

I need to start working this up into a box by listing the questions I asked, then compare this to the next HLTA (Linda Park) who runs another provision in the school. – now started.

Appendix 2b: Interview professionally transcribed with corrections and reflections

Please note, the original transcription received had line numbers for each line. This was impractical to import into this thesis although a screen shot below illustrates the original transcription and the rest of the content is inserted further down.

Lawnswood_12

1 I: Firstly, well is there anything else you wanted to ask about the research
2 before we actually begin the questions, in terms of like what I'm looking at
3 and particularly, like you've got a clear picture.

4 R: Sort of what are you going to do with it?

5 I: What am I going to do with it? Well I'm doing it because mostly because
6 I'm doing a Doctorate in Education, part time, while I'm working. I am
7 going to put some of my findings into a report for the school, but it won't be
8 written in the way that I'll be writing up the doctorate and then hopefully
9 some of it will get published and it will add to what's out there, the sort of
10 body of knowledge really about learning mentors and also just which, of
11 which there's very little. Actually I can count on four fingers the number of
12 articles that have been actually written about learning mentoring, given its
13 quite a big role, its quite surprising.

14 R: It is, I mean recently, in the last sort of, I'd say, what, ten years, its become
15 more prevalent in schools.

16 I: Yeah, yeah and something different to a teaching assistant, you know [R:
17 yeah], a lot of people think its just the same, but obviously its very
18 different, isn't it [R: yeah]. Yeah, so that's probably what's going to
19 happen. So some of your quotes could well be in print or something like
20 that. But what I'd like to do in the interview today is just sort of really find
21 out a lot out about you, your background and what led you to, because you
22 did used to be a learning mentor, didn't you [R: mmm], it's a role that
23 you've done in the past. So could we start, where I put number one, could
24 you tell me a little bit about yourself [R: ok], where you were born, grew up,
25 went to school and your memories of school?

26 R: Yeah, I was born in (A****), erm, lived there till I was five and then we
27 moved to (O****), which is a small village outside -----.

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- I: Firstly, well is there anything else you wanted to ask about the research before we actually begin the questions, in terms of like what I'm looking at and particularly, like you've got a clear picture.
- R: Sort of what are you going to do with it?
- I: What am I going to do with it? Well I'm doing it because mostly because I'm doing a Doctorate in Education, part time, while I'm working. I am going to put some of my findings into a report for the school, but it won't be written in the way that I'll be writing up the doctorate and then hopefully some of it will get published and it will add to what's out there, the sort of body of knowledge really about learning mentors and also just which, of which there's very little. Actually I can count on four fingers the number of articles that have been actually written about learning mentoring, given its quite a big role, its quite surprising.
- R: It is, I mean recently, in the last sort of, I'd say, what, ten years, its become more prevalent in schools.
- I: Yeah, yeah and something different to a teaching assistant, you know [R: yeah], a lot of people think its just the same, but obviously its very different, isn't it [R: yeah]. Yeah, so that's probably what's going to happen. So some of your quotes could well be in print or something like that. But what I'd like to do in the interview today is just sort of really find out a lot out about you, your background and what led you to, because you did used to be a learning mentor, didn't you [R: mmm], it's a role that you've done in the past. So could we start, where I put number one, could you tell me a little bit about yourself [R: ok], where you were born, grew up, went to school and your memories of school?
- R: Yeah, I was born in (A****), erm, lived there till I was five and then we moved to (O****), which is a small village outside -----.
- I: Is it a mining village?
- R: Yes, my father was a miner, yeah. Erm, and my mum was a social worker assistant, err. I think my parents were quite progressive because they actually built their own house. Erm, my dad built it on a weekend and helped the builders and that kind of thing. Err, I went to school in, (O****) Primary

School, then I went onto (-----) Comprehensive School. Erm, I didn't *mind* going to school, but I didn't like it, really like it that much. I liked sports. I had very low concentration, talked a lot in class, got up, sharpened my pencils, all that kind of thing, you know. It was, the report was always '(-) is a lovely girl, but she's easily distracted'.

I: Yeah, sort of formal sit down learning didn't come easily.

R: I found very difficult and even now, I like to be doing lots of different things because I don't have a big concentration span. *I enjoy school much more now - than I did! But sometimes I think its not always a good time to go to school, erm, especially when you're, you're in teenage years, you've got so many other distractions.* Erm, my mother and father were supportive, but I felt their feeling was well just do your best love and that'll be alright and it, me mum would say things like 'oh well we're not very good at maths' and so I had that image that, you know, I wouldn't be very good at maths and so I didn't like it, but it was just the thought of it. I actually really quite like maths the best now, erm, because it's a straightforward answer, its either right or its wrong as opposed to English where you're, you're never quite sure because you're putting your own opinions and things into it. Erm, [thinks] yeah, so oh and yeah, so then I left school, trained as a nursery nurse and worked in a hospital for about four years in an intensive care unit for babies that were having operations. Then I left there to have my own children and then I became a child minder because that fitted in with the role of, err, you know, being able to stay at home and work and sort of used my qualification that I had. I did that for fifteen years, was successful at it, employed two other people to work with me, so it was like a small business. But then I was just, you know, being at home, working all the time, the children were getting older, erm, I had four children. So I went to work in erm, a nursery and also did, erm, homecare for the elderly. Err, then, what did I do then, then I became quite ill, I had cancer, so err, decided to change direction and went to work in a high school as a teaching assistant at (-----) and worked there for a couple of years, erm, and then I came here. (used this in methodology chapter to illustrate everyday life work and care work (blurring between the two))

I: And when you came here, what did you come here as, was that as a TA?

- R: Teaching Assistant, yeah, but the reason I left (-----) it was obviously it was a Catholic school, my children went there, I'm not a catholic, but the children are. Erm, and I felt I wanted the more mixed...of children, you know, err, from different ethnicities and religions and things sort of.
- I: And wasn't (*the school above*) like that at that time?
- R: No, I think its more like that now, you get a lot of other, err, people from other countries [I: who are Catholic?] yeah, yes [I: come to live in (-----?) yes, but [I: what sort of era was that then, about what year?] About ten years ago, it would be about ten or twelve years ago, twelve years ago, yeah, you might get a few Polish children, Chinese maybe, but that would be the amount of, err, yeah.
- I: So why did you want that mix? Where does that come from, do you think?
- R: I think that came from me probably because I wasn't a Catholic and I lived in a society with all sorts of different people from all over the world, I just felt it would be more interesting, so yes, I erm, came here.
- I: So you came here as a TA [R: yes] and then can you tell me what your first impressions were of the school when you came here.
- R: It was very loud, noisy, really because it was much bigger than (-----) So I found it really loud, I found the children not as respectful as the children who were in (-----). I don't know if that was to do with where the children came from or whether it was partly to do with the religion as well. I felt that it did keep it more, everybody had something in common more than just going to that school [I: yeah, like a shared kind of value], yeah, value, ethos [I: culture or, yeah] yeah, even if they didn't go to church or you know, particularly believed in, err, the Catholic faith, yeah. So, yes, when I came here, yeah, I liked it and erm I quickly moved on to become, erm, err, in charge of Key Stage 3, coordinator for the Teaching Assistants. Then I, well before I came here, I did a counselling course and then I did a Certificate in Counselling and after I'd done that, I thought oh, I'd quite like to do something else. So it must have been when I was about forty five, I did, erm, a Foundation Degree in Child and Youth Studies at erm, (*Horsforth Trinity*), so I did that and got my HLTA there and my foundation degree. Then there was an opportunity to work here as a Learning Mentor because (S*****) was on

maternity leave, so I applied for that, did that. Then ('Paul') was on long term sick for six months, so then I carried on doing that and then I job-shared with ('Angie') because a position became available for Aim Higher, for three years. So that was quite difficult because I was, half the time, I was a mentor and half the time I was a teaching assistant. The kids were a little bit confused as to why I was in the class or you know [I: or not], or not and then I found a pull because I knew there were children that would need me and I was in school, but I couldn't, I couldn't help them at that time because that was my teaching assistant time. But the school was very good, they were very flexible. Erm, so I did that for three years and then the, erm, the funding ran out, so obviously I went back to being a TA and (Angie) went back to being a full time mentor.

I: So that was the funding for the Aim Higher?

R: Aim Higher, yeah. Then there was a job advertised as a cover year manager, so whenever the year managers were off, because there was a year manager at that time who was having an operation that was going to be off quite a while. So I applied for that and got that, erm, and I still do that whenever anybody's off or [I: as a cover?] as a cover. So I've covered all the years, mostly Year 10 because then, erm, that year manager left, erm, people presumed I would apply for it, erm, but I didn't because although I enjoy the job doing it on a temporary basis, I felt that it wasn't a role for me full time. There's a lot of admin, a lot of paperwork, a lot of people wanting stuff there and now and I just thought, and my friend was very ill at that time and I just thought I don't actually need to do this. Yes I would like to earn more money and respect, but. (Use some of this in middle management section?).

I: And who did you feel you'd earn more respect from doing that?

R: For myself, I think, really, or from other people.

I: Yeah, kids, pupils or just staff do you think?

R: No, no, staff, yeah, no not children, no, erm, so I still enjoy doing that when necessary. It varies my role because obviously after being a learning mentor, then going back into the classrooms at first, I found it boring, I suppose is the honest answer.

I: I mean because you've done those three roles, could you kind of sum up to me like what you do in each one? What was the essence of being a Learning Mentor, what is the essence of being a TA and then the other one?

R: The TAs mostly supporting the pupils mostly with special needs within lessons, differentiation, that kind of thing. Learning Mentors, obviously you're looking more at emotional difficulties, barriers to learning that are stopping them from, I mean you can address them as a TA in the class. Err, also the year manager, you're touching on that a little bit, but in a way I was quite surprised you're dealing mostly with negative things with the children, time seems to be spent up dealing with problems that have arisen and also some menial tasks that I felt that we were too well paid to do, if you know what I mean, I don't mean it was beneath me, but I, I felt that if you had more time for positive things, then the negative stuff wouldn't happen.

I: Yeah, could you give an example of something that you felt was quite menial, and I do know what you mean, you're kind of saying not a good use of you as a resource in that sense.

R: No, like giving out detentions, writing out the slips, finding the kids, giving them to the kids, just you know, it would take ages and then they wouldn't turn up and then you'd have to go back to the data sheet and fill it, you know, it just didn't, you were doing it with the same kids though. To me it was pointless, it wasn't working that, surely you'd have been better getting them kids to talk about...more like you would as a Learning Mentor, to stop it from happening, so you didn't have to do that.

I: Yeah, kind of trying to deal with the causes.

R: Yeah, anybody could have, as I say, anybody could have done that, I don't mean that, you know, you know what I mean.

I: Is it almost like the sort of system and the things you had to do, you say you had to fill in, was that almost sort of driving the action almost?

R: Yeah, yeah.

I: And has that changed now? I understand there's a new kind of positive behaviour policy...

R: Yeah but no, its still there, erm, and the amount of time you spend on admin, you know, I presume being a year manager, you'd have more to deal with children and I'd enjoy speaking to parents and meeting the parents. Erm, which I found, you know, more effecting than giving the child a detention really, you know. There's always usually a reason behind why they're doing or not doing what they should be doing.

I: So your kind of work history, if you like, is very much about supporting people, caring for people [R: yeah, yeah]. When you first went into the early years work, when you left school, was that, looking back, was that quite a positive choice or was it more of a drifting or what were your reasons for doing that, do you think?

R: I think I did it because I thought well you don't need to be that clever to do this, I'd be able to do this, this is something more practical, that I will be able to do because I didn't have confidence that I could do things that I do now, yeah.

I: And then you kind of stayed with that in one form or another [R: yeah, yeah] because?

R: [thinks] Because its what I could do well and I, erm, probably a lack of confidence on my part to venture out to do something else. I mean now looking back, you know, people say 'I wished I'd done...', now I feel I could have, would have quite liked being a nurse or a midwife and I could have possibly done that. But at the time, I didn't, I don't regret what I've done, but yeah.

I: So could you tell me a little bit about what you do now, what your role is now, where you're based in the school and what that involves?

R: Yeah, erm, I'm a Teaching Assistant. I do work mostly, err, at the moment it seems I work mostly in English and a couple of lessons in Maths. I do, err, reading intervention and err, take pupils out in small groups.

I: Are you based in the, is it the Pupil...?

R: PIP? No, no I've done that, actually no, I forgot to mention that, I did work in there for quite a while, supporting the, that was when it was first set up, I compiled all the Science, they do OCR, which is like posters, but its all on

information, so I had to compile the information together for them to be able to complete that, so, and I enjoyed working there, yeah. But it was more a one to one basis and interesting, a lot of challenging behaviour.

I: Do you quite enjoy that then, working with that sort of challenging behaviour?

R: Yes, yes cos its not boring, its interesting, its different, you don't know what you're going to and you feel as if you are helping, you know, they're on the verge of being excluded, these kids and even if you only make a little difference, one little thing that might make them think about something they do out of school or they don't do, just to try to turn them onto the potential really. I think as well I can relate maybe to some of the children because I found it difficult at school. I wasn't, I don't think I was, I wasn't naughty or didn't get into trouble like some of the kids here do, but I struggled with it and I struggled with my concentration and sometimes that's why kids have ended up where they are. Luckily I had a very stable home life, so I think that's one of biggest things.

I: Do you think that does make a difference?

R: Yeah, yeah, yeah and it doesn't even necessarily mean, err, children who have come from families with low incomes, you know. I have mentored pupils who have come from, you know, well educated, err, comfortable families, that have children, you know, problems, probably because they're either being pushed or what's expected of them. Just because somebody lives in a nice house and wears the right clothes doesn't mean to say that they're happy (laughs)

I: No, so the stuff you do now, is it with a particular key stage or do you tend to go all over?

R: I work a lot with Year 10, which is quite good seeing as though I was year manager for quite a long time. I support certain, same pupils in English, also in Film Studies, which I'm really enjoying because its not a subject I've done before. Erm, pupils that I'm working with have got quite a low reading age of about eight or nine, so they find it difficult to access the reading that we need to do, but they're understanding what's going on in the film, so I've enjoyed differentiating work for them, so they can access it and hopefully do well in

their exam. Err, I work with a couple of year seven classes, but its mostly Key Stage 4 I think.

I: And do you have a preference when you're in a high school setting, about the age?

R: Yes, yeah, I prefer the, I prefer higher, you know, Key Stage 4. I've considered maybe if I'd like to go and work in primary school and I don't think I would.

I: Do you know why, why that might be, why you prefer working with the older end?

R: Erm, again I think it would just be a bit more boring, a little bit, maybe a little bit too much like I did when I first started working, you know, sticking on pictures and displays and things like that.

I: When you were doing the child minding.

R: Yeah, I like, I like somebody with a bit more of an opinion. Sometimes its not always the one you want to hear but!

I: When you were doing any of the roles that you've just mentioned, did you ever have any training? I mean obviously you mentioned about your foundation degree didn't you?

R: Yes, well I have, I've had mentoring training.

I: You did the, was that the national learning mentor training?

R: Yes, after I'd been doing it for about eighteen months, but yes! (laughs)

I: And was that offered to you or [R: yes] was that something you had to ask for?

R: No, they offered it to me, yeah, yeah. I've had, I've been on lots of other courses, erm, whilst I was mentoring and also as a TA for catch up literacy, (*unclear-0:19:18.7*) which is a reading scheme that they do with low readers, erm, numeracy training and lots of other courses to do with CAMH's.

- I: And have you, you know when you did things like the counselling course and the foundation degree, was that something that you sort of proactively opted to go on? [R: yes] or was it kind of were you asked or as part of your role you need to do this?
- R: No, I chose to do that, found the foundation degree exceedingly difficult because I'd not been in education for thirty years, so at times I wanted to give up, but I'm glad I did do it because I probably wouldn't be where I am now if I hadn't of done, you know. It wouldn't have given me the opportunities that now, there's probably the confidence as well, in myself.
- I: Yeah, so its helped in that sense, but also in the sense that when you're applying to do jobs like cover.
- R: Yes, cover year manager or HLTA jobs, you know, I'd apply.
- I: Because do you need, would it be an expectation to have that level of qualification?
- R: It is, well if you were applying for a Higher Level Teaching Assistant, yeah, you'd need some qualifications within there, yeah.
- I: When you were a Learning Mentor, could you describe what you did, like a typical day or a typical week, something like that?
- R: Well usually you'd look at the pupils you'd got. I used to try to, usually we'd have about, how many did we have, probably between eight and fifteen really, depending on various levels of, err, neediness. I used to like to meet most of them if I could on a Monday cos then Mondays and Fridays were always the busiest days, before the weekend, after the weekend, what had gone on, what they were bringing into school. Erm, so you had a range of appointments to see them, set them targets. Because I'd been a TA, I did like to go into lessons with them, because I found that really useful to be able to see what they were like, or their perception of what, you know, they'd say 'oh this teacher hates me and I don't do anything wrong'. So I'd think right, ok, I'll come in and see what's happening. Then it was their perception of what they thought was happening usually. Erm, **and because you weren't in that conflict with them, like the teacher was, it was easier to sort of point out things that they might be doing that what could be frustrating for the teacher, you know.**

They'd often confuse the teacher hated them as opposed to the teacher doesn't like their behaviour, well they do, don't they, you know, 'she hates me', no she doesn't, she doesn't like how you behave, you know, its not the same thing at all. Erm, so yeah, liaise with the teachers, if somebody, if the pupil was having a difficult time in the lesson, find out why, what they were doing, what the teacher was doing. Maybe arrange meetings between the three of us to help sort that out. Err, the biggest thing I felt that helped, which made mentoring successful, would be getting the parents onside and err, usually, nearly always were really pleased that they had a mentor to err, to help them. Erm, so I found that really useful.

I: And at the time when you were mentoring, were the pupils referred to you or were you able to kind of go and pick out, you know?

R: Yeah, sometimes you would say oh, I've seen this kid who doesn't seem to have enough friends and he was crying and I'm worried about so and so and you know, you could maybe mention that you'd seen something that you felt needed picking up on. But on the whole, they would just get referred to you, with very little detail of what the problem was, there was a great high level of secrecy that I find frustrating at times. I know there's child protection and all that kind of thing, but sometimes.

I: So it might, the reason for the secrecy might be child protection?

R: Yeah, yeah, erm.

I: But that wouldn't be necessarily shared with you? [R: no] They would just say we think this person could do with a mentor.

R: Yes, yeah, yeah. There would be general issues that, you're supposed to get a form, you never did. So basically what you'd just do is you'd meet with the child and just assess it for yourself really. We had booklets that we'd work through with them, err, and ask them what they felt. They also would send out, err, err, sheets to teachers asking them about their behaviour, their attitude to learning, err, level of academic ability and what they perceive their academic level to be and then we'd get, I'd get them together, show them to the child, I'd tell the teacher that I'd be sharing them with the child, so they've to be careful what they put on them because they didn't, you know, I didn't want any secrecy. You need to build up a good relationship don't you with a,

erm, pupil and then most of the time, the pupil would actually agree with what the teachers had said and we'd look at ways of, erm, solving that. Other simple things, organisational things, often a lot of children needed help with, especially the younger children. Writing their planner, you know, getting ready for school, knowing where everything is, simple everyday things that maybe there isn't somebody at home to help them with for whatever reason. So yeah, that would be classed as a general week. We'd meet maybe every other week with, erm, the inclusion manager, to talk about the cases and then they'd suddenly decide that they didn't need mentoring anymore. You wouldn't really, well you could object, but on the whole, they'd decide, you know, they'd say well I think six to eight weeks is fine. I always felt it wasn't long enough. Six weeks, you're only just getting to know somebody, building up for them to trust you. So that, I found that really frustrating, not having enough, it was like half doing a job and that was a bit, you know, I felt that was a bit annoying.

I: But you didn't actually have any influence or sway over how long you could see them for, that wasn't a decision you could make?

R: Well they, somebody would say oh I think they're doing well now, I think they should come off and you would say well no, because that's just because I'm still supporting them, I'm trying to step back a bit, you know, they're doing well, but there could be a fall around the corner and they'd say oh no, there's somebody else who's more needy, so they've got to come off now and that would be hard, telling the child that I couldn't see them anymore. Well you didn't, you did carry on seeing them, you know. So as the years went on, your workload got bigger and bigger because once you'd mentored them, you'd always have them kind of thing. I mean which they should be, they should always know that they can come to you if, if they need to. Erm, but yeah, I had to sometimes be inventive of how I saw people because they'd say no you can't see them anymore.

I: Do you think that there's ever a feeling that some of the pupils might get too dependent on a mentor? [R: yes] And what are your sort of thoughts on that?

R: That can happen, yeah, but I think you need to be aware of that yourself, that that is happening and they're not moving forward, you're not, you're hindering them more than helping them. Erm, some teachers and staff would resent

you taking them out, thinking that you are just, you know, mollycoddling them or 'Oh you know, she just takes them down there and gives them a hot drink and toast' and so didn't sort of always quite understand what you were trying to do.

I: Do you think that was quite commonplace in the early years, you know, sort of from 2000, once the Excellence in Cities initiative was really up and running, there was money for mentors wasn't there?

R: Yeah, yes possibly, I mean its like when the Teaching Assistants have gone from being called, what were they called, Learning Support Assistant, LSAs and they'd be mums who the children went to the school, you know, we've stepped up, not that there was anything wrong with them, but you know, we've moved on and a lot more is expected, erm, as a member of staff with a Teaching Assistant, much more, which is good.

I: But with the mentors, do you think that there was not always an understanding?

R: No, they didn't really understand what they were doing, no.

I: They being other staff?

R: Yeah, yeah, yeah and still now, you have some resentment to taking pupils out of lessons and what they actually do with them and like I say, there could be a lack of communication as well between everybody involved. I think often teachers aren't told a lot of things and should be. I mean they should be made aware they've got some family issues. They don't have to know what and they're not and I don't think that's fair for the teacher, you know. So having a go at a kid because he hasn't got the uniform and there's only a poorly grandmother at home, its not fair, you know.

I: Yeah and do you think sometimes that they're not given the whole picture?

R: No, not at all, no, no, I mean usually I try to speak to, all the pupils I was working with, if it would just be in the corridor, just a quick word with them, that they've been referred to me, these are the issues we're going to work on with them, you know, so you know, it might be confidence, whatever, erm, if you have any problems or if there's anything that you know, you feel you

need to tell me, erm, and then anything that you need any help with in your lessons, I'll see if we can help.

I: Ok, thank you. As I'm sure you're aware, the learning mentor role was initially set up to assist young people and this phrase that was used a lot then, 'removing barriers to learning'. What do you think is meant by that phrase, how do you understand it?

R: Things that are just stopping them from learning, their mood, their relationship with teachers, their relationships with other children, err, staff and home, I think there can be various things. I mean I just sort of think of, you know, yourself, if you've got problems and when you have to go to work and cut off and do this and do that, your mind's not on the job. Its just the same for the child, its worse for the child because they're not at that point where they can evaluate how they feel and maybe can't put something in a box till they go home, like as an adult you might do, or they've not learnt strategies to cope with how they're feeling. Erm, yeah, so that's what I think. (laughs)

I: And do you think that some, some barriers, is the source of some barriers within schools, do you think? And then the source of them very definitely outside of school? Is there one weightier than the other, might you say, or?

R: Hmm....(Pauses, thinking).

I: Because when you sort of listed what you understood as barriers to learning and then gave some examples, some of the stuff was very much kind of, it was about relationships within school, then you know, you kind of mentioned home as well.

R: Yeah, I think, I think sometimes its, its more from an outside school, that some things are caused, by how children have to learn in school, like I did for myself. You know, we're very, we're very academic driven now aren't we, lots of the things that I did at school, you can't do now because of health and safety and so depending on what kind of learner you are, its sometimes very difficult and when I'm in a classroom, when I go from one lesson to another to another, by the end of the day, I know I'm dealing with the children, but if I go on a course and you have to sit in the same seat for an hour, I'm fidgeting, you know. They're not the most comfortable seats. So I think sometimes the environment that school builds up and some of the expectations that they

have, erm, I don't know, some of them I feel are a little bit unnecessary and not focusing sometimes I feel on the right thing. I know you have to have order and rules and, as we all do in life, erm, but sometimes there's too much time taken up with things that I feel aren't important and then you know, it only needs a small thing to turn the child off something, subject, teacher.

I: Would you say that the sorts of barriers that children and young people kind of present with, be they from inside or outside the school, have they changed any over the time you've been working in schools? So over the last sort of ten, twelve years?

R: I think so, yeah, I think that you seem to have a lot more, err, emotional problems or that's how it seems, self-harm, drugs, pregnancies, but I don't think, I don't know if that's got any more actually to be fair.

I: Do you think maybe there's just more of an awareness of it?

R: Yes, probably, yeah.

I: I know one of our students at uni, she works in a school in (-----) and she heard one of the deputy heads there say that they felt that young people were much less resilient nowadays than they had been sort of years before and she was quite shocked by that comment and couldn't see the evidence base for it. What are your thoughts on that?

R: Erm, that's difficult, I mean I can, I can imagine how you'd think that could be true and it could be, I don't, I don't know, I think we're in a, like I say, we live in a different society where, you know, 'you can't touch me, you can't do this, you can't tell me to shut up'. Erm, so we're telling children to be more in touch with their feelings and then when they are, you know, it's like well get on with it. Maybe, I don't know if, but I think, I suppose a lot of it stemmed, some of it stemmed, like my parents, who were brought up in the war and you know, we had to do this and we had to do that and we couldn't go to, you know, and they didn't have any shoes nor nowt and I think it's a follow through from that. But in some respects, I feel it was simpler and children have a lot more, erm, pressures on them now to attain, to look like everybody else, to have nice things, what they want, what they perceive that they need. So now, you know, when I went to school, we didn't even have computers, so no, so I wouldn't say that they're less resilient. I think they have more things

to cope with, in a way. Different, but yeah, in some respects my life as a child was much simpler than it is now, its far more complicated now and that, I suppose that'll keep happening, you know, I don't know.

I: Yeah, particularly when you look at things like social networking and so on, the mind boggles really doesn't it as to how far that could go.

R: Where it will go and how it will divide, err, humans really, in a way. Well not necessarily divide them, but in some ways, I see it as making people more isolated. Sometimes there's less of a community because of it. Although I suppose maybe that might build up its own community, I'm not sure really.

I: I've noticed since I've been in the school that the Learning Mentors that are here now, they're the only sort of staff role where the pupils can refer to them by their first names and so that's one way in which, you know, that their role is different and some people might say that learning mentoring might be a balancing act between befriending a young person but also having to be an authority figure, because you work in a school. Is that something that you recognise from doing the role in the past?

R: Yes, yeah, yeah, erm, like I said before, **we need to build up a relationship, we need to get them to trust you, so in their eyes, you're their friend because that's what friends do, isn't it. Erm, so it was always reminding the child, that not necessarily that you weren't their friend, but exactly why, why you were there and if need be, to erm, if you need to pull them up on things, doing it in a non-judgemental way, I think that's the, one of the biggest things about being, not judging somebody, you know, well look, you know, you've done that and maybe it wasn't the right thing to do was it and what could you have done different and you know, you're going to have to apologise and you know, there's going to be some repercussions from it and this is what, you know, I suggest you do. So you're there saying what they've done and you're not saying that it was right, but look, you know, you need to step up to the mark.**

I: Its not like a high, high emotional, highly emotional situation, is it, where, you know, each, I've sort of seen things in the school while I've been here where, you know, a student's feeling quite irate about something and then its dealt with in a way that doesn't kind of calm them down particularly. I'm not talking

about mentors now, you know, usually because its something that's just got to be dealt with there and then on the corridor and but I think, well *I think* something that mentors seem to be able to do, whether its because they have this different kind of relationship or whether they have more time possibly is to try and kind of calm that down.

R: I think its because the kids don't see you as that, you know, they know that you're kind of there to help them, you're not there to challenge them constantly and like I say, often that'll be the case, where somebody will challenge them about their coat or something like that in the corridor, erm and the teacher will come out and have a go and then there'll be a big thing and often, you know, the mentors might be able to mediate. But like I usually point out to the children, you know, *I'll say why are you like that, 'oh I've been in a rush this morning, this has happened and that has happened' and I'll say well, that teacher might have happened, you know, so the same thing might have happened to them, you know. 'Oh well I'd not thought of that, yeah', you know. We have problems too you know! But yeah, sometimes I've seen teachers and you're just like just leave them, just, you're making it worse, you know and yeah, just step back and.*

I: That's what you wanted to say or have you actually said that in the class to teachers?

R: *Well I've stepped in and removed them. I've said do you want me to help or shall I take them away or you know, and we'll see if we can come back and talk to you later, yeah I have stepped in. I'm not very good at, one thing that I'm not very good at, I've got better at it, but is conflict with other people. I really struggle with it, having to say to somebody I don't like how you did that or I don't agree with that, I find it really difficult.*

I: Do you mean conflict, potential conflict with the pupils or with other staff?

R: No, with other staff, no I don't have any problems with the kids. But other staff, yes, yeah. *I mean in my role as a Teaching Assistant as well, I'm never quite sure how to, you know, if something's happened in a classroom that I've been unhappy with, I find it difficult to go back and talk to somebody about it, I find it really uncomfortable.*

I: Why do you think that is?

- R: I think because underneath I'm maybe not confident, but, well I know it's the right, you know, I mean if that's how they've made me feel, say they've done something that's embarrassed me or something like that. If that's how it's made me feel, you know, I suppose I feel that, that they might think I'm being silly or, you know, I'd be worried about getting upset, I might cry, that'd be terrible, you know, I wouldn't be able to be professional and so I'd avoid the situations of conflict as much as possible.
- I: Would that be with someone who was a different role to you, like say with a teacher or a senior person? Or would you feel the same if it was another TA or another Learning Mentor?
- R: Anybody really, yeah, but yeah, I think so, maybe not so much with a, another Teaching Assistant. Erm, yeah, but I'm working on it (laughs).
- I: I mean just, do you feel, in terms of all the various roles within a school, any school really, but this school particularly, because this is where we are, do you feel that there's kind of like a clear hierarchy?
- R: Yes, I mean the Teaching Assistants have, things have become much better, but when I first came here, you know, you might be here to hand out papers and get resources and generally be the teacher's assistant, go and get books and things like that. Whereas now, there's more striving towards working together with the teacher. Erm, and I don't think, that was more so I think in (- ---- -----) because I think they had a lot more old school type teachers. Whereas the staff here are generally younger and sees the benefit of having, err, a Teaching Assistant in the lesson. So but yeah, there is a, I mean only a few weeks ago, a Teaching Assistant told me that she'd got into trouble because she'd signed a pupil's report. The teacher had asked her to sign somebody's report because she was working with that pupil. But then the head of year or something complained and said that the Teaching Assistants shouldn't do it. Well to me, that's not really, is it, you know, it's not being on a par, if the teacher's asked you, because you were working with the teacher, I wouldn't just presume to do it. Erm, I often say to the teacher, they've got a report, do you want to sign it and they'll often say no, you've worked with them, you do it, do what you think or we'd have a discussion as to what level we think they should get. Erm, and I don't feel that there's any professional, and I think, I think as Teaching Assistants, because we're the lowest paid

members of staff probably in the school, well probably the next level within the staff, I think that, you know, they feel that they're at the bottom of the pile. Often most of the Teaching Assistants do it because they love the job, it wouldn't really be for the pay! Because you could earn more in Tesco's, you know, or wherever (laughs) really.

I: Do you think there is a limit to how much learning mentoring can help pupils?

R: Yes, yeah, like I said, I think the biggest thing is the, err, build-up of relationship with the family also, that's a massive thing. If you've not really got them on board, its fairly difficult. Even if they're fine at home and the problem's just in school, which they don't usually, it seems to spill out all over, erm, yeah. I mean I've worked with pupils who I just couldn't engage with at all, you know, just couldn't get anywhere, there was a couple.

I: When that happens, did you sort of feel it was something down to something you weren't doing or?

R: A little bit, but then the other mentors would support you and say well, you know, its not you or what you tried to do, and if it wasn't working with you, we'd swap and somebody, you know, one of the other members of staff would take them and see if they had success, which they could do, and that's fine.

I: Because sometimes there's just more of a natural rapport isn't there, yeah.

R: Yeah, yeah, I always seemed to do well with the, not the brainy kids, but the kids that came from a stable background, but maybe had some learning difficulties or some other autistic tendencies or something more like that.

I: Yeah, that was one of your strengths, do you think, was it?

R: Yeah and I found that, that a lot of children, some, not a lot of children, some children couldn't always relate to me because my experience is, they thought I was somebody different or 'you live in (-----) and your husband works, you've got four children, all to the same man', do you know what I mean. You're talking to a girl, really, you've got four children, yeah, have you, are they all with the same dads? Yeah. Really? And you've only been married, so have you not had a boyfriend? Well before I got married, I did, you know, thirty years ago. Really? You know, and she was, oh, just so shocked that that just wasn't obviously part of, of her circle of friends or family, that

everybody she knows I presume was like that, so it was odd, it was odd, you know.

I: So when you sometimes felt that you couldn't sort of fully support a young person, were there other agencies that you could draw on? Did you have sort of any power, if you like, to refer on?

R: You could look at other agencies that you could refer to them, you know, youth services and CAMHS usually, social services, often, you know, find things out and then social services would become involved.

I: And is that something that you would be actively involved in or was it just then passed back to the sort of heads of year?

R: No you'd just be passed to it and that, no they wouldn't know anything very much.

I: Ok, I think we've covered the next one, about how is the role perceived. Did I ask you how you think pupils perceive the Learning Mentor role? Pupils, not just pupils who might use the services of the Learning Mentor, but just pupils in general, how do you think?

R: Other ones, yeah, I think that the perception of children that don't have a mentor, I think the perception is what you class as the academic 'good' kids would just think oh well they're just there here for the naughty kids, you know, if you've got a mentor, it means you're naughty and that's what they'd think about somebody that had a mentor. Sometimes pupils would want to be quite secretive about them having a mentor. They didn't want their friends to know.

I: Yeah, that's something I've noticed while I've been here, that, mmm.

R: Yeah, especially from maybe that kind of, you know, the academic type, you have to meet them in secret, you know, so their perception of a Learning Mentor is well they just work with the naughty kids, they're just here to deal with the behaviour really, yeah.

I: And that seems to have been there pretty much from the beginning really, doesn't it.

- R: Yeah, which is a shame really, I suppose you can see why they think that actually, you know. You know, when kids have been excluded and all the kids that you work with and they're the ones that, **I think that, its limited a bit, we should be used more widely across the school, as mentors, you know. Other kids, maybe who are struggling academically or to deal, you know, I feel that its, its mostly gone towards the behavioural side of things as opposed to learning as well, supporting them in their learning as well.**
- I: Supporting them in their learning, yeah, yeah, and you did talk a little bit about how you think parents view the role. You thought they were broadly supportive.
- R: Broadly very supportive, yeah.
- I: Can you think of any examples of how that's happened in the past, when you were a mentor and you worked with parents?
- R: Yes, erm, I had one young boy that came in year seven and was, I can't even remember, but he had some diagnosed syndrome thing where basically they call it like, err, its got a fancy name, but it was like a Peter Pan type syndrome. He wouldn't accept any responsibility, didn't want to grow up, erm, constantly would be getting cross and angry and would deny whatever had happened. Erm, and he's in year eleven now and he's fine. I must have worked with him for about three years really. Erm, but I built up a really good relationship with his mother and that I could also see why he was like he was when I met his mother, I could see where the, not these insecurities came, but she was quite an anxious person too. Erm, but what helped, you know, she'd ring me and say oh he's, he's in a really bad mood this morning, he didn't go to sleep last night, we confiscated his Playstation and so then I'd be able to look out for him that day knowing that, you know, he was a bit vulnerable and to maybe, if I knew there would be a situation that would be coming up that he could have a problem with, to move him from it because of him feeling tired and, you know, he'd be likely to lash out.
- I: And when you had to contact parents, did you often find you had to explain quite a lot about who you were and your role as a Learning Mentor then, because is it something that they weren't that familiar with?

- R: No, I don't think so, no, I think on the whole, most people, most parents knew kind of what, what you was about, yeah, **no I think, like I say, more so probably in the last five or six years. Its more well known because people have mentors in jobs and you know [I: yeah, mentoring in general], mentoring in general, it's a more, it's a word that's used far more now than ever was. It wasn't a word that people knew.**
- I: No, I always think in the early days, I probably thought of it in relation to like coaching or, you know, that mental preparation for something, something like that. How do you think, sorry, do you know how the school, or whether the school assesses the effectiveness of learning mentoring?
- R: **I don't think they do, no I don't, I think it's a, a flaw. Erm, I suppose its difficult to measure because even though you might have done everything you could, maybe things might not change. But I always felt that there wasn't enough, erm, not guidance as such, but more, yeah, as to how, how successful things had been and looking at why they were successful when other ones weren't. So then in the future, you could build on that. I felt when I did it, it had a double edged sword. You were left mostly to your own devices and at times, that can be good, but I felt some of the time, I would have needed, you know, some more guidance or help or support from upper management, so yeah, yeah.**
- I: Can you name what type of help / support you might have wanted?
- R: Well when they'd say a pupil needed to come off and I'd say well no, there wasn't really any, it was well no, you have to do that, you know.
- I: But like you say, its quite difficult to see how mentoring might be measured in that sense, without applying inappropriate kind of hard outcomes, you know, this person's off your books in six weeks, therefore it's a good outcome kind of thing. Whereas that's not necessarily appropriate is it.
- R: No, I think, I felt like it was too fixed, well you know, you're going to, when I first started, it was more like, you know, usual mentoring time was six weeks. Well that's just, its not realistic really, **even if it's a small problem, its not really realistic.**

- I: And obviously since I've been coming to the school, which is since September, there's quite big changes afoot at the moment and unfortunately redundancies and so on. What are your thoughts on that?
- R: Erm, you mean to do with the mentors or just generally within the school?
- I: Both really.
- R: Erm, I'm concerned about how the rest of the school will manage when the staff have gone, who's going to do their jobs. I've not really noticed anybody sitting about doing nothing, not much. So that's a concern.
- I: So when the team goes from three to two, do you think that will be, do you think that there will be a noticeable effect?
- R: Yeah, I think there will be more strain on, on the staff, yeah and also, this is just a personal opinion, but erm, at one time we had a withdrawal room where the pupil's withdrawn from lessons, but now they just go to the department. So we have quite a few behaviour support workers. Now they've taken on one to one, err, behaviour issues with pupils and I feel that they've stepped on the toes of the mentors. They haven't got any redundancies, erm, coming up at the moment, I mean they might have in the future. So you know, to me it's a bit, a little bit tricky.
- I: Do you think that role is quite different then to mentoring? They kind of came along a bit after didn't they really. I noticed behaviour support workers popping up in schools a few years on.
- R: Yeah, yeah, erm, I think its similar, I think there's more of an academic base, I think as opposed to..
- I: Is it a different relationship do you think?
- R: Erm, probably, probably just a little bit more on the, on the, erm, behaviour side of it, you know, probably come across stricter. I don't know, this is just my idea, my perception of [I: yeah, perception, yeah] of things, yes, but [I: you'll have to go and do that role and then you'll have another one to cross off!]. I know, but I mean when, when they've been in isolation, you know, I couldn't imagine a worse job than that. To me, that would just be, I couldn't stand it. I couldn't stand being in one place all the time to start with, but just,

you know, treating children like that. Not treating, not meant that we're treating them badly, but I just don't see it as, because its in the same kids in there, I just feel it doesn't really work, its not, its not the right thing to do and I'm not necessarily sure what *is* the right thing to do, but I can't see if the child's continuously going into isolation, *well its not working is it? It's a waste of resources and sometimes a lot of them like it, because you know, they're out of the classroom environment [I: which is what they don't want to be in] they don't want to do. It is difficult to get them to work, they do their best, you know, the behaviour support workers are really good. Erm, but yeah, I do feel that some of the role is a lot like a Learning Mentor as well, yeah. But then in other schools, erm, pupils don't have any Learning Mentors in some schools, my son's school doesn't have one at all. So I was sort of asking him what they do and I don't know if they maybe go more towards the year leaders or the year managers, well they don't even have year managers, so you know, I'm not quite sure who they find a confidante in that could help them. Probably the form tutor, or a particular teacher and maybe because of us, maybe that relationship's been moved a little bit, I don't know, so.*

I: Yeah because these are sorts of issues that pupils will have had for years and years, haven't they.

R: Always had them, yeah.

I: But its about who used to deal with them. I mean I think maybe they're kept in school a lot more now, with those issues. I think you know, when we were at school, it was much easier for young people to just kind of almost disappear and go off the radar, stop coming, it wasn't necessarily picked up, you know, I think like it is now. I don't know, maybe that's part of the reason why. *There's a pressure isn't there put on schools not to exclude [R: yeah], you know, they have to go through various [R: too costly] yeah, yeah.*

R: You know, they're already in deficit, so and as well, like you say, it doesn't, because they've got to go somewhere, you're just really passing on some problems to another school.

I: Is there anything else, any important issues you think that I haven't sort of asked about that have come up in relation to my research which is about the

learning mentor role and kind of barriers to learning and understanding of that?

R: I've just put here non-judgemental, most teachers, erm, some teachers I've found can be and I think that's where the, where the mentor role comes into its own because you're not judging them for either what they've done or what they can't do or have been doing. Erm, and mainly I've put about here, sometimes school withdraw support too soon, so it becomes ineffective.

I: Yeah, when you were, sorry, I keep forgetting the title, the cover [R: the year manager], the year manager [R: yeah], did you find that you had to kind of think in a different way, so did you have to think about for instance the barriers to learning in a different way, or did you have to think about the relationships you may have with pupils in a different way?

R: Yeah, I couldn't probably be as friendly, which I found difficult.

I: That was one of the things that you found difficult?

R: Yeah because then I'd have to, err, you know, discipline them, err, which I didn't necessarily have a problem with, but I'd always be thinking, oh you know, I'd be slipping back into the learning mentor role and you'd have a certain persona as a year manager to uphold, as to what kind of person, because you, you know, you wouldn't want the children thinking you were soft or they could do anything or they could get away with things, all that kind of thing, so, yeah, so yeah, that was tricky.

I: And do you think that with barriers to learning, the kind of cause, if you like, is often placed very much with the young person, its something that they're doing or not doing in their lives [R: yeah] or should we look at it in a broader sense really, about things that are possibly out of their control?

R: Oh yeah, yeah, well like I said, I feel a lot, you know, you can help with the other question you asked, erm, you can help so much, but I think a lot of, I think probably three quarters of issues in the rest of their life as opposed to school and this is where they find it difficult to hold it together.

I: Because I've noticed just from, you know, discussions that I've overheard in the mentor base between pupils and mentors, a lot of them are dealing with, you know, what I would say are very kind of adult issues [R: oh yeah] really

[R: yeah], you know. So they might be being brought into a parental sort of relationship breakdown as a third party in terms of being consulted or who's side are they on, what do they think about it or trying to support a parent through, you know, a significant event, like a bereavement, you know, something like that [R: yeah], mmm.

R: Yeah, I'd definitely say that, but its mostly, coming from outside, that's why I've always thought it was good to, have, you know, a reasonable relationship with the parents, have a home visit, actually just go to the home and meet with them because you have certain perceived ideas of what the parents will be like and maybe they'll be wrong.

I: And how did they go down with pupils, those home visits? What was the reaction from pupils?

R: Oh they didn't really like it, yeah, so they weren't very keen on that idea, I suppose it's because you're stepping into their world aren't you, really yeah.(Pauses) But I found it obviously tied in well with... counselling can help, you know. Wanting to help, because that's not just, **its something that, erm, you know, people will say oh that's great isn't it, its great doing that, but you get something from it, its something that obviously, I don't know if its lacking in a person, but its something that you get from it isn't it, from helping somebody else.**

I: Yeah, yeah, definitely.

R: And not necessarily, I don't know if its, no it might be a selfish thing, I don't know, its something that makes you feel good, if you feel that you've helped somebody else. Its not just all about oh I'm this wonderful person helping, its not like that really, I don't think.

I: Its kind of a real job satisfaction I think isn't it [R: yeah, yeah], yeah.

R: If you've just, if there's just one sort of thing, like I met a girl the other day and she's, I think other children have bullied her or she's slept with somebody and its all talked about at school, other kids give her a hard time and she says 'oh I'm really unhappy, I want to kill myself, have you got a toilet key?', well you're not going to do it in the toilet are you, because you know, if I let you in there, I'm going to be in trouble. She laughed, 'no, no, miss', so I was like oh well,

you know, so I let her into the toilet, then I saw her later at lunchtime and I said are you alright, she says 'oh yeah, thanks, miss', she says ' thanks for earlier, it were just, you know, I were just feeling a little bit down' and I just think well I were glad I were there at that time and you know, just to, just to give her a nice word, sometimes, because sometimes people aren't always, give nice words, do they (chuckles).

I: Especially like you say if they don't know, you know, they've just got in and possibly moved heaven and earth to get into school and then the first thing they get when they get there is you're not doing this or you're not...

R: [mimics] Where's your shoes, yeah, yeah. I'm undecided about the uniform issue, it just seems to be such a major concern. I always wonder what they do in other countries, you know, that don't wear uniform now.

I: Mmm, a lot of time and energy seems to go into it doesn't it.

R: Loads, yeah and then on the other hand you think ah well it does make people a unity and this and that. I don't, I'm quite undecided, what do you think?

I: I'm with you actually, I'm not, I know in schools where they've sort of had real problems around behaviour and so on, possibly they've gone into special measures, often one of the first things they do when they regroup is, you know, have a new uniform *and* be very strict about it and they've said that having a like zero tolerance to things like that often sorts out other, you know, behaviours, it stops, because it can sometimes just start with those little rumbling issues, can't it. So if you stamp on those that can actually sort out other issues. I don't know if there's an evidence base for that really, but that's what I've heard other people say. But you know, something I've noticed that, whilst I've been here, is how the mentors have a completely different approach, but apply the same rules. So I was walking down the corridor once with (*Liz*) and there was a lad, he looked about year ten to me, and (*Liz*) said 'that's a nice baseball cap, can I have that baseball cap, that would look a lot better on me than it would on you' and they had a bit of banter and he got the message and he took his baseball cap off and put it in his bag. That was done in an entirely different way to a teacher that I've seen possibly doing the same thing, but just in a 'you shouldn't be wearing that, take it off'.

- R: Yeah, in a confrontational way.
- I: Yeah, yeah, but I don't know, you know, this is what I've kind of really noticed about mentors. They have a very distinctive style. I've not really seen the behaviour support workers in action as it were, so I can't say and I've not seen, you know, people such as yourself. But there's definitely a different style. I suppose I haven't witnessed lots of teachers doing their stuff, so, but it does seem to be a very different relationship actually, that I think, has very much has its place, you know. I mean I know (*'Angie'*) for instance has a youth work qualification and I think she draws on a lot of those kind of youth works skills and strategies. You can't be a youth worker in a school, that's the thing we say to our students a lot, who want to be youth workers but also want to work in schools. But I think there is room definitely to have a different approach that does work sometimes, you know, for some pupils definitely.
- R: Yeah, yeah, but like I say, there's, its not difficult to get somebody to remove their coat or, if you go about it the right way, I mean some don't always, but often, I just find that, you know, I hear so much, when there's confrontations on the corridors about uniform and coats and hats and everything.
- I: And then I've heard, you know, like (C*****) for instance, I've heard, you know, she has a lot of real nurturing terms, a lot of terms of endearment, you know. She refers to pupils as like sweet-pea and you know, but still be quite firm with them and again, I think its just, its different. Some kind of seem to like that really.
- R: Yeah, is a very privileged really, position to be in, I think, yeah, because it must be, its difficult for the teachers, you know, it's a really hard job. I wouldn't want to do it.
- I: Mmm, no and I think its become, for them its become much more about results, results, results [R: absolutely] hasn't it. Its like almost if you look at a school as a business, each subject area as a department and your department has got to be seen to be [R: absolutely, yeah] producing.
- R: Yeah, I mean a few weeks ago, I brought in my neighbour, she's ninety and she's a piano, or she has been a piano teacher. She still teaches, but she used to work here, err, seventy years ago and she came in and gave a little performance and she was asking about the music department and we were

saying oh well, I think, you know, we've got redundancies, I think somebody's got to go from the music and she was disappointed in the music department for what they did and I said but really there's so many academic things they have to do, so much paperwork, that you know, she was 'oh that's a shame', yeah.

I: And you were saying earlier, weren't you, about how you feel there's such a stress on sort of academic and academic outcomes [R: oh yeah] and to the extent that a lot of other stuff just kind of gets squeezed out really.

R: Yes, yeah, I think when I was at school, I had a lot more fun, you know, I don't think there's a great deal of fun in school, there should be. I mean you can still do learning, you know.

I: Yeah, I'm always really, nowadays, I'm really amazed from such a young age how kids know, you know, in terms of all the SATS grades and what they are and what their target is and its all about outcomes isn't it [R: yeah] and when they come to us at (*names universtiy*) on the degree, the first year of the degree, they get their first piece of work back and they want to know what does a fifty four mean, is that a 2:2, is it a 2:1, is it, you know, and you're kind of like well that's, its not any of those, because this is the first piece of work you've done on your first year. But they're from that culture, aren't they, you know, what am I now, what do I need to do to get to here kind of things and its very kind of, to me its very number driven and not, they're not seeing the whole process of just coming away and studying and learning and immersing yourself in a subject and maybe not doing so well with one piece of work, but doing really well with another, you know.

R: But like you say, that's where we're going, that's where it seems to be and then if they're not, if the kids are not performing at the top level, or whatever, you know, they'll give up, there's no point, you know.

I: I'm going to be doing some research with the pupils, back end of the third term probably and I'm really really looking forward to that, I'm really looking forward to sort of hearing about their views on schooling and what's it like being at school now, you know, in the twenty first century. Like you say, its, you know, lots of changes since we were there, yeah.

- R: I mean I go home and say something to my husband and he'll say oh it all sounds like it's a madhouse, you know, but yet I say well you had boys hiding in the cupboard and smoking when you were at school and putting a pork pie on a bucket of water on top of the door and stuff. I said you know, somebody would be excluded if they do that, you know, some of the things that we did, they wouldn't dream of doing it, you know, I'd be getting the police officer. That's the other thing I find really weird, having a police officer in school.
- I: Is it, you're not, what, do you mind me asking you your thoughts about that?
- R: I can't understand how we've got to a point where we feel that we need to have a police officer in school. If you need to have, there's something either gone wrong, or we're looking too much at, erm, err, what's the word I'm thinking of, conforming, that's gone over the top. To me its not a place where you should have a police officer. If that's the case, then are we not, are we not in control then? Is that what's happened? Or is it that there's that many things that you can't do now, that that's what has to happen. I just think it's a bit weird, although he's lovely and he does a great job.
- I: Yeah, its not the person is it that you're commenting on, it's the position.
- R: Yeah, yeah, I mean I don't know what you'll say, I just find it, I don't know.
- I: Well I know that there's only two schools in (Leeds) that don't, have opted not to have it isn't there, so its almost become a norm really, amongst, you know, within all the schools. I don't know, I do, yeah.
- R: I feel a little bit sad, I suppose, that we feel we have to turn to the police.
- I: Yeah, when I wasn't here, or it had happened later after I'd left one day, the police told me that a girl had been arrested and taken over the road because she wouldn't do something, she was being abusive and verbally abusive and I just kind of thought that's sort of going to be on her record now and yeah, could that not really have been dealt with within school.
- R: Could somebody not deal with it or I suppose they were too busy then dealing with all the academic things, that that's what's happened, I don't know.

I: Yeah, it's a touch one isn't it, mmm [R: yeah]. What would you do then, if you could sort of wave a magic wand and you know, change schools, how would your school be?

R: I think that, that erm, we need to do a lot more training in schools for kids going out and getting jobs, you know, instead of sending them to do hairdressing and things. Why can't we have that here, why can't we have all them, childcare, why can't we have them things on site. You know, we've moved away because we're moving away from, erm, more practical things, which we need and its all focusing on academic, erm.

I: And that would probably hit a lot more learning styles wouldn't it [R: yeah], which means people would be more engaged possibly.

R: Yeah, its like Blair wanted everyone to go to university didn't he and that didn't do us much good really, just everybody with loads of debt, erm, and for a lot of kids that, some of the kids that come to this school, that's never, you know, its not going to be in their psyche at all, whether they're going to go to university. It would be great if they do, but if they're not that's great, if there's something else that, opening them up to other areas of work, because we just don't seem to have that at the moment. I know that some schools do things on, some different parts of the country, have stuff on site. You know, they're keen for peer learning and things like that, but its all classroom based. I mean we, this used to be, erm, this room used to be like a car workshop [I: oh yeah], erm, but I don't know what happened with it, you know, the machines or something or there wasn't a teacher to teach it. Well that would be great, you know, why don't we have a mechanic, going on, then the kids would want to come to school, the ones that don't. At least there would be something that they'd feel that they'd be interested in. Because at the moment, there isn't, its all classroom academic based.

I: And when we're doing something we're good at, it gives us a sense, a sort of positive sense of self-worth, doesn't it.

R: Yeah, yeah it does, yeah, yeah, so, they're not trying to educate everybody the same way and I think that when we were younger, we, when I went to school, we had more opportunities for that and that's been taken away now, so.

I: Thank you very much; I really appreciate your time.

[END]

What really comes through in this interview is the depth of experience that 'Marie' has in terms of all the roles she's carried out in the school on the support side. Also her **non-judgemental value base** from which she speaks from especially when talking about families. She **identifies many of the issues / frustrations that the existing mentors pick out** and also some **new insights as well particularly into the YM role in terms of how negative the activities were**. It makes me realise that the Yr 7 manager's interview feels much more institutional capture / discourse in terms of the content as it was much less critical or questioning of school systems.

What she says about the **TA experience also chimes with the other TA's** in terms of status in the early days.

Also the basis for support roles is not as one of my supervisors suggests in terms of practicalities. She has been willing to take on many personal & professional development opportunities and talks of others doing it for the love of the job.

Appendix 3: Examples of Raw and Cooked Data

Raw Data	Cooked Data
<p>I went to work in the NHS, erm, just twenty hours a week, erm, at (-----) hospital, there in the pharmacy department, just doing clerical work. But as the kids got older, as they got to ten or eleven year olds, they didn't want to be uprooted and go to my mum's through the holidays, so that I could work. So I decided to look for somewhere that I could work term-time. (.....) were advertising for teaching assistants and I had helped out, erm, a little bit at primary school with my own kids with reading. Erm, so I applied for that and got it and so that was about, the kids are year thirteen now and they were just about year six, so its seven years ago, so I've been here for seven years.</p>	<p>I went to work in the NHS, just twenty hours a week, at (-----) hospital, in the pharmacy department, just doing clerical work. But as the kids got older, as they got to ten or eleven year olds, they didn't want to be uprooted and go to my mum's through the holidays, so that I could work. So I decided to look for somewhere that I could work term-time. [Priory Park High] were advertising for teaching assistants and I had helped out a little bit at primary school with my own kids with reading ... So I applied for that and got it ... I've been here for seven years</p> <p>(‘Pat’, a TA running the ASDAN provision)</p>

Raw Data	Cooked Data
<p>Erm, yeah, so oh and yeah, so then I left school, trained as a nursery nurse and worked in a hospital for about four years in an intensive care unit for babies that were having operations. Then I left there to have my own children and then I became a child minder because that fitted in with the role of, err, you know, being able to stay at home and work and sort of used my qualification that I had. I did that for fifteen years, was successful at it, employed two other people to work with me, so it was like a small business. But then I was just, you know, being at home, working all the time, the children were getting older, erm, I had four children. So I went to work in erm, a nursery and also did, erm, homecare for the elderly. Err, then, what did I do then, then I became quite ill, I had cancer, so err, decided to change direction and went to work in a high school as a teaching assistant at (-----) and worked there for a couple of years, erm, and then I came here.</p>	<p>I left school, trained as a nursery nurse and worked in a hospital for about four years in an intensive care unit for babies ... Then I left there to have my own children and then I became a child minder because that fitted in with the role of ... being able to stay at home and work and sort of used my qualification that I had. I did that for fifteen years, was successful at it, and employed two other people to work with me, so it was like a small business. But then I was just, you know, being at home, working all the time, the children were getting older, I had four children. So I went to work in a nursery and also did homecare for the elderly. Then, what did I do then...? Then I became quite ill, I had cancer, so [after recovery] decided to change direction and went to work in a high school as a teaching assistant at (-----) and worked there for a couple of years, and then I came here</p> <p>(‘Marie’, TA).</p>

Appendix 5: Data Display 2 – Table

Overview analysis of Middle Managers

	Yr 10 Progress Leader (Interview 3)	Yr 7 Year Manager (Interview 10)
Background / Path to PPH / First impressions – (Yr Manager only)	Been a teacher for 15 years, became a Head of Year in second year of teaching. Did supply as a C/D borderline mentor and an SEN teacher. Went back to old school as an assistant SENCO and to teach A level (had missed that) and initial teacher training coordinator. Then Head of Yr 7, then Yrs 7 and 8 then whole of KS3 "but no non-teaching person then" (referring to Heads of Yr now) Too big a job so came to PPH as PL with Yr 8 (now Yr 10 as PL's move up with kids) Also has associate head responsibilities so getting some SLT experience.	Been a Yr Manager for 5 years now. Path to PPH was motivated by caring commitments (see red section on p. 1). Initially worked in school as a receptionist, then started working on attendance side then went for job as a YM on a temporary basis, applied for permanent position, didn't get it but person appointed left after 6 months, asked to apply for the role again then offered it on a permanent basis. First Impressions: big culture shock as only had own school experience to compare with. (see red section on p.2) Started to understand needs / situations of children more and being a YM has changed her mind set (see underlined, p.3) and we come back to this below*
Their role (the actualities)	Help the children manage themselves organisationally so they can engage in learning. Inferred that there are now closer working relationships between PL's and teachers. PL's have a more holistic view of the child, subject teachers "more insular, protecting their subject, due to changes etc" (see underlined (1) on p. 3) Explains role of the PL in relation to Yr Heads using what I've called the "Fragmented Child" quote (used in Progress Review piece, see underlined (2) on p. 3).	Manages the transition of pupils coming into Yr 7. Typical activities involve: dealing with silly behaviour (childish rather than malicious) / dealing with "parents who find it difficult to parent" / engaging a lot more with outside agencies / observes an increased emphasis on partnership working with parents and outside agencies (see underlined on p.3 bottom) / discussing with pupils how to tackle situations differently after the fact. The above issue of parental engagement comes up again (on p. 18 underlined)
Barriers to Learning	Cities: Illness – specific to her year as many conditions present linked to unease about MMR vaccination some years before. Medical conditions / unstable home-life in the short and long term / lack of organisation amongst students with dyslexia / lateness to school cos students come from "disparate areas of the city" and changing bus times when university students return / Pupils' own feelings about the school, its size is daunting etc	Uses an example of an intervention undertaken with one of the LM's with a boy who was being bullied to answer this. Good example here of "institutional capture" as uses ECM language (see underlined p. 4) Parents not working in partnership with schools *see red section on p. 5-6 where she sees her role as much about supporting families as pupils through CAF's etc notes some parents want to relinquish their responsibilities once child is in school but she pushes the need for partnership working and sees mentor role as particularly useful here in accompanying on home visits (see 'we're not all bad guys' quote on p.6) This links to my idea of mentors represented in the news media as forming a type of credible 'go-between' function.
What strategies does the school as a whole employ to support children in overcoming barriers to learning (Interview 10 only)		SEN officer / Inclusion officer / Mentors / behaviour support team cited specifically in relation to Anger Management / PD 'unit' / improving attendance strategies (see red section on p. 7) Through the transition strategy a lot of emphasis placed on nurturing more vulnerable students prior to starting through visits and summer school etc (intelligence on vulnerable pupils picked up from feeder primary schools) (see underlined on p.10) Observes how the YM has changed as behaviour has improved.

Appendices 6-11: Sources making up composite account of 'Eddie and the missing mobile phone'.

Appendix 6: Field notes

Clare
to and a
often the role of
"talk the pupil down" & stop things escalating
so they go into Dep. Withdrawal for 20-30
mins, rather than 15 for the rest of the day.
She told me that that particular pupil had had a
big brown who now played prot. R.L. when
had been at the school his behaviour had
sometimes been problematic but ~~not~~ "the
rugby was really well" ~~the~~ as a ~~sort of~~ kind of
sanction to be used. She said the thing about
rugby is "they make a gentleman off them" so
it needn't be a problem with said pupil they would
contact the rugby place.
Next talk: A phone removal (as pupil in qu. was
reluctant to hand it over. The teacher said she'd
seen the pupil with the phone & asked him to hand
it over but he'd refused and denied that he had
a phone. When the pupil came out I could see
that him & Clare had had previous dealings with
each other. Clare's back was different in that she
expl. to him that "all this could be ripped in the
back right now". The pupil was told he would have
to go to 1E if he didn't hand it over. He was saying
the teacher had "lost it" and was "stressing him"
"On my days" etc etc. Eventually a SL came out
and she also tried to reason with him about
not telling the situation escalate. He kept
saying 'you can search me' x 2 and then
appearing agitated and swearing a few times at

Appendix 7: Extract from early summary of observations and knowledge gleaned from the field (not including data from formal interviews)

'Opportunistic' discussions (as opposed to formal interviews)

E.g. - With a behaviour support worker when doing corridor patrol x 3 sessions. **She has become a key informant on many issues** and an incident on one of these patrols is written up in the tale.

E.g. - During corridor patrol – numerous issues coming out of my observations here. Staff view that there are a lot more Yr 11 'incidences to attend to' at this time of year (March) as students are getting stressed about course work/exams etc.

Lots of 'talking irate students down' so that they go into 'departmental withdrawal' and not internal exclusion – it's taken me a while to get my head around this system of sanctions! (see notes from 19/3/13)

Some things which were initially quite trivial but escalated once the pupil was withdrawn (see field notes 23/4/13). As a teacher I also found myself wondering why teachers went for this option of contacting the on-call to have a pupil removed and not dealing with the issue themselves?

E.g. - With a supply teacher in the staff room who expressed her positive views on mentoring and referred to learning mentors as "extra valuable". Talked of previous teaching role in a deprived area where there was a lot of generational pregnancy and felt that mentoring could offer an alternative but also said "it's easy [to apply solutions] when you're looking in and I don't want to sound judgemental".

E.g. – With a pupil in the mentor base when she was waiting for her session to start. Very positive about the mentors "they take the weight of your shoulders". Told me about what she'd done (talking in class, not listening, fighting, having a bad attitude etc) and some interventions she'd had. In response to the question: what would school be like if there weren't any mentors she said there would be a lot more bad behaviour, naughty kids.

Appendix 8: Transcribed extract from audio recording of researcher-reflections on observations conducted.

In this recording I think about the contrasting nature of behaviour support interventions and learning mentor interventions having spent that day (12/6/13) observing Internal Exclusion (Isolation) in operation and also being a participant observer in an Anger Management Session. These experiences enabled a greater understanding of the BSW role and provided a broader backdrop with which to analysis the critical incident which became 'Eddie and the Missing Mobile Phone'.

"I am aware that as I spend most time with the mentors and their approach is one I relate to most I can possibly be a bit... [Pauses] not negative, but not positive either [regarding the activities of the BS team]. I don't get their approach because it feels more 'schooly' than the mentor's approach which definitely feels more 'youth worky'".

Appendix 9: Extract from Interview 2 with Behaviour Support Worker (Self-Transcribed)

Jo: And how do you think the pupils perceive it [the approach of the learning mentors]?

BSW: [without hesitation] *they like it. A lot of the pupils would... well yeah, they liked it because it was a way of ... and they used it in the past as an excuse to come out of lesson; [mimics a young person] they 'had to go see their mentor' [laughs]*

Jo: like their personal advisor almost? (BSW agrees) and do you think they feel in a similar way about your team?

BSW: *No...we work very differently; we don't just have kids...we have proper planned..., I mean if there's something really serious and they/we know...but I think we set it up very differently: with the mentors, they're known by their first names...but we aren't known by our first names and because we do the sanction-based side of things and they see that so we've got that kind of authority as well.*

(And later on in the interview...)

BSW: *we are different, our team is different to how teachers would work but we are very different to how the learning mentors would work; but we couldn't ... do how they work...it wouldn't work, it wouldn't!*

Appendix 10: Extract from Interview 14 with Director of Pastoral Care (Professionally transcribed)

Jo: So in what ways would you say the learning mentor role differs from other support roles in the school, if you had to explain to somebody the difference say between a learning mentor and a positive behaviour worker or TA or?

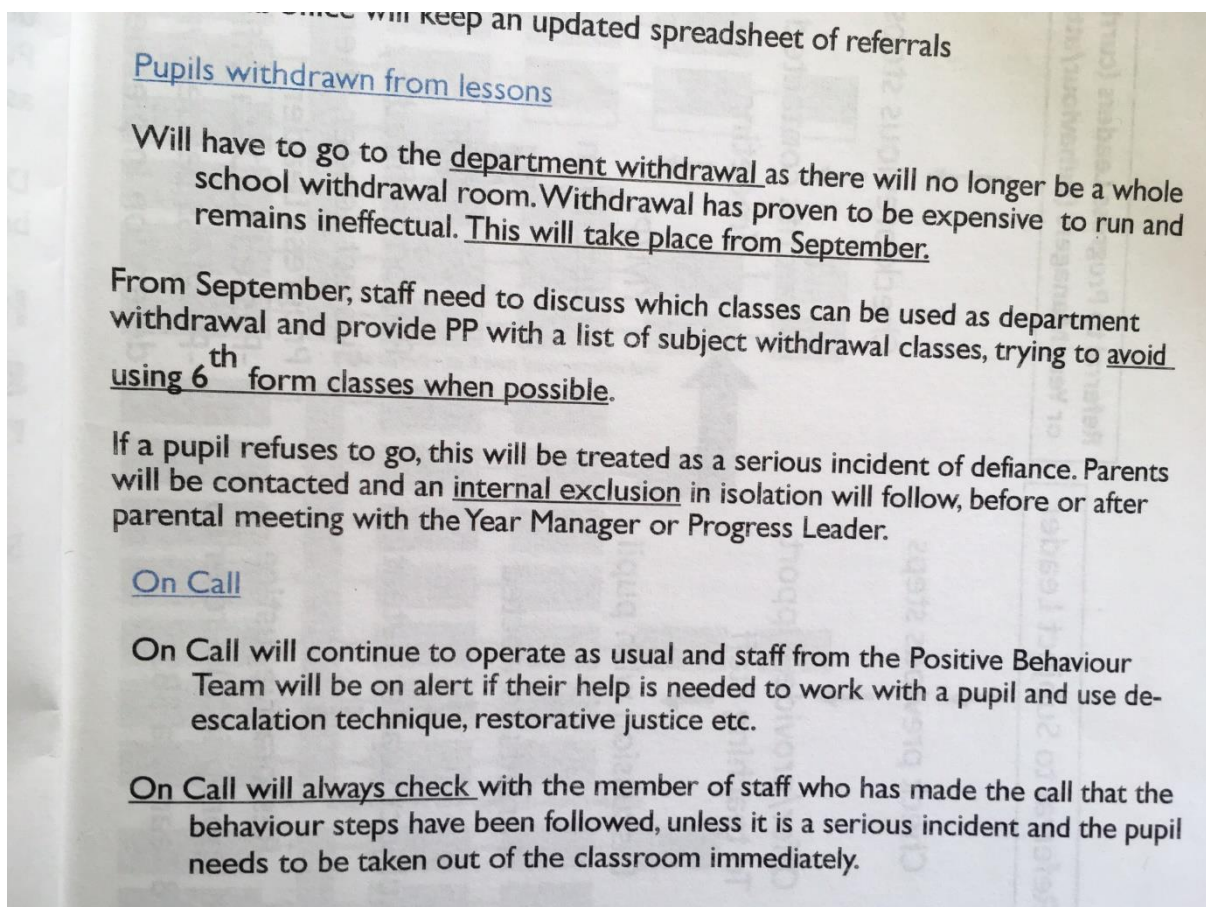
BSW: *Its completely different, completely different. Erm, the role of the Positive Behaviour Team, err, are numerous and are on behaviour, you know, they do one to one, they do Kidscape, they do restorative justice, err, they look after internal exclusion matters, after-school (?) provision. Erm, so their role is mainly on behaviour. Whereas the mentors will be more towards the specific issue. Now (Paul) for instance would work, he's our expert in sexual, err, behaviours, so he will do the Aim work, err, with some of our young men who*

are behaving inappropriately. Err, (*Angie*), err, will concentrate on dyslexia and organisation and err, exam preparation and that kind of thing. So their role encompasses more than one area. Whereas the Positive Behaviour Team will be purely on anything to do with behaviour.

Jo: How do you think the role is perceived by other staff and by the pupils?

BSW: My role, my thoughts on learning mentors is that they are invaluable in the sense that they've got that special relationship that nobody else have. The Positive Behaviour Team would not have the kind of relationship with the kids as the mentors have because the mentors' role is not to sanction or err, you know, impose sanctions.

Appendix 11: Key Text: Extract from school's 'Behaviour for Learning' policy on pupil withdrawal from lessons



Appendix 12: Pupil demographic by ethnic origin

Ethnicity	No of Pupils
Bangladeshi	4
Black - African	71
Black Caribbean	25
Any other Black background	11
Chinese	20
Gypsy/Roma	3
Indian	51
Kashmiri other	5
Kashmiri Pakistani	71
Other Asian	40
Other Pakistani	106
White British	605
White Irish	4
White and Asian	24
White and Black African	8
White and Black Caribbean	35
White Eastern European	10
White Other	15
White Western European	7
Any other ethnic group	29
Any other mixed background	23