



University of **HUDDERSFIELD**

University of Huddersfield Repository

Ali, Majid

Perceptions of learning difficulties: a study examining the views of Pakistani and white children with learning difficulties, their parents, peers and school staff

Original Citation

Ali, Majid (2008) Perceptions of learning difficulties: a study examining the views of Pakistani and white children with learning difficulties, their parents, peers and school staff. Doctoral thesis, University of Huddersfield.

This version is available at <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/729/>

The University Repository is a digital collection of the research output of the University, available on Open Access. Copyright and Moral Rights for the items on this site are retained by the individual author and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full items free of charge; copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided:

- The authors, title and full bibliographic details is credited in any copy;
- A hyperlink and/or URL is included for the original metadata page; and
- The content is not changed in any way.

For more information, including our policy and submission procedure, please contact the Repository Team at: E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk.

<http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/>

PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

**A STUDY EXAMINING THE VIEWS OF PAKISTANI AND WHITE CHILDREN WITH
LEARNING DIFFICULTIES, THEIR PARENTS, PEERS AND SCHOOL STAFF**

MAJID ALI

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

February 2008

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Table of Figures.....	4
Acknowledgements	5
Abstract	6
Chapter 1 Introduction	7
1.1 Research aims.....	14
Chapter 2 Literature Review	16
2.1 Personal Construct Theory	18
2.2 Pakistani children	24
2.3 White children.....	29
2.4 Differentiation.....	31
2.5 Working with parents.....	34
2.6 Self-concept.....	36
2.7 Self-concept scales	46
2.8 Promoting children's views	52
2.9 Research questions.....	65
Chapter 3 Research Design.....	67
3.1 Case study	68
3.2 Case study definitions and challenges	71
3.3 Ethnography	77
3.4 Definitions and key features of ethnography	79
3.5 Ethics	87
Chapter 4 Research Methods	95
4.1 Interview sample.....	98
4.2 Interviews	101
4.3 Observation	109
4.4 Focus group interviews	115
4.5 Meeting the participants.....	125
4.6 Conducting the interviews	128
4.7 Re-interviewing participants and sharing findings	130
4.8 Strategies employed to ensure a better interview response.....	132
4.9 Recording the interview	143
4.10 The pilot study	146
4.11 Lessons learnt from the pilot study	149
4.12 Sampling	151
4.13 Seeking consent	152
4.14 Ensuring validity and reliability of the study	154
Chapter 5 Data Analysis	159
Chapter 6 Key Findings: research questions and research findings	179
6.1 The importance of relationships.....	181
6.2 Qualities of children with learning difficulties and those identified as being able	191
6.3 Describing children with learning difficulties.....	217
6.4 Wanting help to succeed inside and outside the classroom.....	225
6.5 Bullying, sadness, shame and guilt.....	236

6.6	Understanding of learning difficulties	258
6.7	They have a feeling but no denial	261
6.8	Causes of learning difficulty.....	265
6.9	Parental support.....	271
6.10	Ambition.....	277
6.11	School culture	288
Chapter 7	Reflections on Methodology	294
Chapter 8	Conclusion, Recommendations and Implications.....	299
8.1	Contribution to research.....	300
8.2	Children with learning difficulties – perceptions of learning	301
8.3	Peer perceptions of children with learning difficulties.....	307
8.4	Parent perceptions of children with learning difficulties	310
8.5	Staff perceptions of children with learning difficulties.....	315
8.6	Next steps	319
8.7	Implications for pupils.....	321
8.8	Implications for schools	322
8.9	Implications for parents	324
References	325
Appendices	345
1	Glossary.....	345
2	Research context.....	348
3	Background to Bradford	350
4	Researcher's personal values	352
5	Inner City Primary School (Context)	354
6	Outer City Primary School (Context).....	355
7	Letter sent to the school informing them of the research	356
8	Letter sent to parents informing them of the research	357
9	Introduction to all interviews	359
10	An example of a pupil interview schedule	361
11	An example of a parent interview schedule.....	367
12	An example of a school staff interview schedule.....	371
13	An example of a focus group interview schedule	374
14	Observation schedule.....	376
15	Completed Self-image Profiles (Butler 2001)	377
16	Character names and profiles	379

Table of Figures

Table 1: The Research Sample.....	99
Table 2: Cut off scores for a positive/negative self-image.....	162
Table 3: Completed Self-image Profile (Butler 2001).....	163
Table 4: An example of how data was coded from a question.....	171
Table 5: How the research questions relate to the research findings	179
Table 6: Words and phrases used to describe children with/without learning difficulties.....	195
Table 7: Words and phrases used to describe children with/without learning difficulties.....	202
Table 8: Words and phrases used to describe children with/without learning difficulties.....	214
Table 9: Words and phrases used to describe children with/without learning difficulties.....	215
Table 10: Characteristics of Inner and Outer City Primary School.....	349

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank a number of individuals whose support has been greatly valued and without which I would have been unable to complete my research. I would first like to thank my late father for his high expectations of me throughout my life. I would also like to thank my mother for her ongoing encouragement, warm wishes and prayers. I would like to thank my wife for her patience, support and for offering a real sense of understanding. I cannot forget to thank my supervisory team for their continuous support and invaluable comments. Finally, I would like to thank the special people including, the children, their parents, the peers, and the school staff who enabled this research to go ahead, for their participation in the research.

Abstract

This research investigates cultural differences and similarities in the perceptions of four British Pakistani and four British white children aged eleven with learning difficulties. This is pursued through four main aims that examine how aware pupils are of their learning difficulties; how they and their significant others perceive their learning difficulties; how they respond to key labels used to refer to them; and to what extent there are cultural differences and similarities between the two groups of pupils. This work has been carried out because there is currently limited research in this area. The pupils' views are explored in two contrasting Bradford (West Yorkshire) primary schools where the cultural population is either predominantly Pakistani or white.

A variety of data collection methods, including semi-structured interviews, a self-image profile, focus group interviews and observations have been used to collect data. The findings indicate that there are more commonalities between the Pakistani and white cultures than there are differences, for example although Pakistani and white children enjoy coming to school and want to do well, they are unhappy, embarrassed, and humiliated about having a learning difficulty and hence face these additional pressures in school. Pakistani children expressed more of an interest in attending university and then embarking on professional careers compared to white children.

Peers of average/higher ability perceive children with learning difficulties to be more prone to bullying, slow learners, unpopular and these peers have low expectations of what the children with learning difficulties are able to do. Staff view children with learning difficulties as lacking in confidence and self-esteem, experiencing unhappiness, having a low self-image, working at a slower pace and often lacking motivation.

The implications of this research indicate that schools need to raise the self-esteem and confidence of children with learning difficulties, so that these children are able to view their learning difficulty in a positive way. Schools need to be aware of the pressures that children in the low ability groups face, and schools therefore need to maintain a balance in providing children with a basic skills curriculum matched to the individual needs of children and yet continue to promote their personal development and well-being.

Chapter 1 Introduction

This chapter considers why the research is being carried out; it also looks at some of the terms and phrases associated with the research. The research aims are explored followed by a discussion of the background to the research including the two primary schools and Bradford as a city.

The aim of this research project is to investigate cultural differences and similarities in pupils' perceptions of their learning difficulty (moderate learning difficulty) in two contrasting Bradford primary schools, which are anonymised as Inner City Primary (the researcher's own school, where he works) and Outer City Primary. The study ascertains views of significant others, including parents of children with learning difficulties, their peers, teachers and support staff, in order to obtain a fuller picture of perceptions of those with learning difficulties.

The research has been carried out for a number of reasons. The first comes from the researcher's personal experience of education and schooling as a child. The researcher was identified as having learning difficulties (namely moderate learning difficulties) during his primary and early secondary school years. The researcher, at the time, was aware that he was "slow and behind" in his learning; this was reinforced by significant others, parents, teachers and peers, in particular. He compared himself with others, and felt inferior and was distressed about why he found learning difficult. The researcher clearly

recalls working hard, but for some reason he was unclear of what more he needed to do to achieve and "be like the rest". The researcher recalls sitting in the classroom and looking at the "red crosses" in his books with comments like "See me" from the teacher. The researcher remembers his teacher saying to the children "when you have finished your work, turn over to the next page". The same work was presented for all children regardless of their abilities. The researcher also remembers being picked on and bullied both in the classroom and in the playground for being "slow". He was embarrassed to tell his parents how poorly he scored in tests as this disappointed them.

Having these beliefs about learning made the researcher determined to fight against his learning difficulty by sheer hard work, motivation, determination, accessing support from many sources including home tutoring and persevering with learning when approaching tasks. The researcher was fully aware that for him to succeed, he had to work twice as hard as others. He placed this internal pressure on himself and was aware that what kept him going were his ambition, drive and high expectations from his parents who had already mapped out his life, expecting the researcher (their son) to go to college and university.

The researcher chose this study in order to affect school policy and practice and establish what feelings children with learning difficulties face. Are these the same challenges as 25 years ago, given the "Every Child Matters" (DfES 2003) agenda where schools are expected to provide learning that pupils

enjoy and achieve? Are there children in the classroom feeling inferior and sad about their learning? Do children with learning difficulties want to do well?

Regarding the researcher's experience of school improvement, the second reason the research is being carried out is that schools are driven by targets. The aim for many schools is to get as many pupils to National Curriculum (NC) Level 4 (national average) in English, mathematics and science by the time children leave primary school in Year 6. The Year 6 teacher focuses his or her energy on providing additional support to the children who have a chance of getting an NC Level 4. Enabling children to get a Level 4 is fine, but what about the children who have learning difficulties? These are the most vulnerable group of children and are possibly at the greatest risk of underachievement; what about these children? How do these children feel and view their learning in what can be deemed as a pressurised environment where the teacher is focused on working with children to ensure that as many children as possible get a Level 4? How do children with learning difficulties feel given the competition they are faced with from their peers? Do the children think that they are going to get a Level 4? If not, how do they feel when the support is focused on other children who have a chance of getting that Level 4?

Thirdly, the research is being carried out at the present time since the focus of the researcher's school development plan is looking at the progress of

vulnerable groups of pupils, in particular those with learning difficulties. The “Every Child Matters” (DfES 2003) agenda highlights the importance of providing pupils with opportunities to achieve and enjoy as well as to give pupils an opportunity to make a contribution in decisions that affect them. This research aims to provide pupils with an opportunity to talk about their learning difficulties. It also seeks pupils’ views about their learning difficulties since pupils’ perspectives on school and schoolwork have been relatively under researched especially from a British perspective, involving ethnic minority groups (Norwich and Kelly 2004). Furthermore, in a report by the DoH (2001), the authors claimed that little work has been undertaken regarding people with learning difficulties from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The inclusion of children and young people with learning difficulties is central to government policy on inclusion. Whilst there is increasing government research and debate on inclusion (DfES 2003), the government is stressing more importance on seeking children’s views on their own learning and involving pupils in decisions that directly affect them (DfES 2002).

The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) calls for parties to:

‘Assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.’ (Article 12)

Since the introduction of the Education Act 1981, the trend has moved towards a decreasing number of children in special schools and towards their inclusion in mainstream settings. Estimates in 2002 indicated that there were about 1.3% of pupils in special schools in England (Norwich 2002). Over 50% of pupils with significant learning difficulties, including those who have statements of special educational need, are now receiving their education in mainstream schools. One of the key reasons for focusing this study on pupils with moderate learning difficulties is because this group constitutes the largest group amongst those with learning difficulties in schools. Since the learning difficulty for these pupils is moderate, they are able to take part in the interview process. Kavale and Forness (1995) argue that learning disability and difficulty is the largest category in special education.

The terms "general learning difficulty", "learning difficulty" and "moderate learning difficulty" will be used synonymously throughout the research.

The term "Pakistani" is used to refer to British born children whose parent(s) were born in Pakistan, are of Pakistan heritage and are Muslim. The researcher is aware that if the terms Pakistani and Muslim are used separately, they can have different meanings; for example, one can be Muslim but not Pakistani. The term "white" is used to refer to British white children who are born in Britain, and whose parents are of British origin. The researcher is aware that there are many white children living in Britain who

belong to different religions and cultures. In his report, Cattle (2001) uses the terms Pakistani, Muslim and white to refer to groups of people.

For the purpose of this research, the term culture is used to refer to values, beliefs and practices of these two groups of people (Fenton 1999). Although many different characteristics may distinguish one ethnic group from another, the most usual consist of language, religion and styles of dress (Giddens 1989). Thomas (1994) argues that ethnicity is a label that reflects perceived membership of, and has a sense of, belonging to a distinctive social group; some of these distinguishing features include physical appearance, first language, family structure, religious beliefs and practices. Frederickson and Cline (2005) argue that culture encompasses the learned traditions and aspects of lifestyle that are shared by members of a society. This includes their habitual ways of thinking, feeling and behaving. The researcher is aware of the complexities of culture and the varying aspects of culture (Rooney 1996); however this research considers culture in terms of children's ethnicity (Pakistani and white), everyday views, attitudes, beliefs and values on how they make sense of learning within the classroom. Other facets of culture may emerge from the research.

The terms "participant" and "informant" are used interchangeably and refer to the interviewees who provide information for this research. The term "special educational needs" (SEN) refers to learners whose learning and/or behavioural difficulties cannot be met without an individualised learning

programme; hence these children require an IEP (individual education plan, DfES 2001). This study reports on working with those pupils who have moderate general learning difficulties, a term which is commonly used in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES 2001) to refer to pupils with general learning difficulties. This study investigates pupils' attitudes towards their own learning and investigates the views of significant others. The researcher's school has predominantly Pakistani pupils in attendance; this school is referred to as Inner City Primary School (ICP) throughout this research. Where the research is being carried out in a predominantly white school, the school is referred to as Outer City Primary School (OCP).

1.1 Research aims

Considering one in three children are assessed as having special educational needs (DfES Code of Practice, 2001), there is currently very little research describing Pakistani and white children's experiences of their learning difficulties (Norwich and Kelly 2004). Knowing how children feel and what they experience is central to understanding and planning for their needs. This research investigates how Pakistani and white children view their learning and establishes whether there are cultural differences and/or similarities.

The main aims of the study (or statement of objective) are to examine:

- How aware pupils are of their learning difficulties
- How pupils and significant others perceive their learning difficulty
- How children with learning difficulties respond to labels used to refer to them
- To what extent are there cultural differences and similarities between the two groups of pupils (Pakistani and white)

These research aims contribute to knowledge through an in-depth study exploring Pakistani and white children's perception of their learning difficulties, drawing out similarities and differences. The research aims will explore pupils' positive and negative attitudes towards their learning difficulties and whether there are differences or similarities between the two

cultural groups. The research aims will be explored through a case study and an ethnographic approach in Chapter 3.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This chapter aims to summarise, analyse and critique the literature review undertaken to support the aims of the research. Literature that has been reviewed includes research on ethnicity, SEN and inclusion, differentiation, using labels to refer to children with learning difficulties, the importance of schools working in partnership with parents to promote effective learning, recognising feelings and attitudes of pupils with learning difficulties, personal construct theory, identifying the self-concept of pupils with SEN and involving pupils in decision making. The final section of this chapter offers a critique on current research literature. The above literature has been reviewed as it supports the research aims but it also shows where there are gaps in knowledge; this research addresses this through its research questions.

Prior to commencing the research, a detailed literature review was undertaken to establish what was already known about the topic in question. The main aim of the current literature was to gain a fuller understanding of the existing research so that new research could be presented taking into consideration current research and recommendations that could be used to advance the understanding of how Pakistani and white children perceive their learning difficulties.

As stated earlier, the SEN Code of Practice (DfES 2001) claims that, at anytime, approximately one in three children is assessed as having SEN of some type. Hart *et al* (2004) argue that children who are labelled as the “bottom or lower achieving group” experience low self-esteem. This research considers whether children with learning difficulties have a low self-image, given that the government and school focus is on removing barriers to learning and raising standards for all children. This research seeks pupils’ views on their learning difficulties, which is crucial in driving the special educational needs agenda forward since this allows practitioners to have a better understanding of pupils’ needs. The government document “*Working Together: Give Children and Young People a Say*” (DfES 2002) encourages practitioners to involve pupils in matters that affect them. This research looks at listening to children about their learning difficulty experiences, which in turn will lead to transforming school policy and practice. At present there is limited research that considers pupils’ perspectives on their learning difficulties, especially Pakistani children, but also white children who are in their primary school years.

2.1 Personal Construct Theory

This research takes an ideographic approach, as this allows for a more thorough inquiry into how pupils think and feel about themselves from their own perspectives in their own terms (Kelly 1955). An ideographic approach supports this research, which uses interpretive methodology (case study and ethnography) and qualitative data collection methods. This is fully explored in Chapter 3 (Research Design) and Chapter 4 (Research Methods). Construct theory is discussed below because the researcher uses key principles of the theory to support this research. Kelly's infamous first principle is "if you want to ask what's wrong then ask"; this asking could be in a questionnaire or interview format. The latter was used in this research. Kelly proposed the personal construct, as his basic unit analysis, as the means by which an individual accesses the world through making sense of it by giving it meaning. Kelly believed that individuals categorize, interpret, label and judge themselves and their world. Kelly further argues that children behave in particular ways because it makes sense to them no matter how bizarre, deviant and self-defeating it may appear to the onlooker and is a pivotal theme arising from personal construct psychology. For this reason, the researcher chose to adopt this approach for this research project.

Another reason for using principles from personal construct psychology is that such a theory stresses how individuals differ from each other and how they perceive and interpret events; given individuals may confront common

difficulties or share similar backgrounds. Life is not experienced uniquely by all. This is not to say that there are commonalities in experiences. The key principle behind personal construct psychology is the way in which individuals view the world, not how they are viewed by the world.

Kelly was interested in how individuals, children, perceive themselves, for example asking children for three things that best described the way they were. If the children had described themselves as active, the researcher would then ask the child to describe someone who is not active and then the researcher would ask the child to give a preference as to which end of the pole the child prefers to be at and why. Through effective questioning, Kelly aimed for children to elaborate so that one could understand the actions or behaviour that underpin the construct. According to Kelly, constructs are often polar, in that they have opposites. Thus, the construct of good implies another of bad. Polar constructs create one another: thus "good" cannot exist without "bad". Kelly's central belief is that if one is to understand people's actions in order to resolve their problems, one must make a determined effort to see the world from their eyes. The child is the expert of his or her own experience. The researcher in this study ensured that he learnt from the child through seeing the world through the eyes of the child.

Ravenette (1977), in using personal construct psychology, favoured a particular line of questioning as a means of eliciting constructs. He suggested asking children to evaluate themselves as they think others see them. The

child is first asked who knows him or her best and then taking this individual from the list, for example the mother, the teacher, the friend, the child describes him or herself as others see them. In this way, the child is encouraged to think if the mother is asked to say something about her child, what she would say. In this way, the child is trying to stand in another person's shoes and possibly the child feels less apprehensive about describing him or herself. Other types of questioning favoured by Ravenette include "tell me three things about the sort of girl who worries about going to school". Part of this questioning was used in this research. Jackson (1988) argues that by writing or thinking in the third person, an individual can step back from himself, making it perhaps easier to answer the questions.

Kelly uses other strategies to ensure pupil engagements, such as self-characterisation when children are invited to describe themselves as if they are characters in a play. Kelly also proposed the idea for children to draw images of themselves and portraits of faces with a variety of facial expressions. Through this approach, the children are then asked questions like "How is this person feeling? Have you ever felt like that? What has made this person feel this way?"

The researcher was aware of some of the critiques of personal construct theory. For example, Fransella (1981) argues that Kelly (1955) implicitly assumes that all individuals seek a sense of order and predictability in dealing with the external world and hence this is achieved through acting like a

research scientist whose central aim is to predict and control. Peck and Whitlow (1975) argue that Kelly (1955) trivialises important aspects of behaviour such as learning, motivation, emotion and situational influences on behaviour, hence personal construct theory places the person in an “empty world”.

To overcome the criticisms of personal construct theory, the researcher used elements of the theory such as Ravenette’s (1977) line of questioning and seeking how individuals view the world. Furthermore, the researcher used aspects of the personal construct theory by ensuring that, when using the self-image profile (SIP), he gave the participant a construct and asked them to indicate how they perceived themselves against the construct. Following this, the researcher asked the children to elaborate on why and how they perceived themselves in given ways. Other theories including Mead’s (1934) symbolic interactionism were considered, where Mead argued that self-concept is created by society and needs social support to maintain it; however, the researcher favoured the personal construct approach as this theory has a line of questioning that is appropriate to the research.

The researcher also considered the use of Gardner’s (1993) theory of multiple intelligences, however he decided against this as outlined below. Gardner believes that individuals have multiple intelligences, rather than a general intelligence that underlies performance in all tasks. Gardner initially formulated a list of seven intelligences, including linguistic and logical mathematical (typically valued in schools); musical, bodily-kinaesthetic and

spatial (associated with the arts) and the final two which Gardner refers to as 'personal intelligences', interpersonal and intrapersonal. Subsequent research and reflection by Gardner (1999) has looked at three other forms of intelligences; naturalist, spiritual/existential and moral.

Kornhaber (2001) argues:

'... the theory validates educators' everyday experience; students think and learn in many different ways. It also provides educators with a conceptual framework for organising and reflecting on curriculum assessment and pedagogical processes. In turn, this reflection has led many educators to develop new approaches that might better meet the needs of the range of learners in their classrooms.' (p. 276).

As argued by Kornhaber (2001) Gardner's theory has a number of strengths, including that it offers different forms of intelligences thus allowing practitioners to teach in different ways; it also helps practitioners and educators to question their work and encourage them to look beyond the narrow confines of the dominant discourses of curriculum and testing. Further strengths include that Gardner's multiple intelligence theory helps to explain the variety of individual differences in different types of mental performance. However, his theory of multiple intelligences has not been readily accepted within the academic psychology domain. There are significant issues around individual criteria, for example 'how are the criteria applied?' as argued by White (1998), who also states that Gardner's theory derives more strongly from his own intuitions and reasoning than from a comprehensive and full grounding in empirical research. Further critiques of Gardner's theory include to what extent are these intelligences or just

'abilities' (for example what is the difference between musical and bodily-kinaesthetic?). The theory also does not explain why some people are more intelligent than others (White 1998). Stenberg (1990) argues that whilst Gardner's theory is at present too vague to be substantiated in detail, nevertheless it represents an important contribution in understanding the human mind and intelligence. The researcher decided not to use Gardner's theory for the above reasons. Furthermore, the researcher wanted to conduct a thorough and in-depth inquiry into how children and significant others perceive learning difficulties, hence he chose to use principles of Kelly's (1955) personal construct theory from which the self-image profile draws upon.

2.2 Pakistani children

Before looking at research on special educational needs, it is important to consider research on ethnicity, as this will provide an increased understanding of the ethnic group, Pakistani. A report by the DoH (2001) claimed that minority ethnic communities face substantial inequality, discrimination and disadvantage in education, health, employment and social services. Research on ethnicity from the work of many writers, including Shain (2003), suggest that images and ideas that referred to Asians as being heathen, backward and barbarous emerged in the racialisation of immigration that took place from the 1950s in England when Asians came to Britain. This presented a threat to the "British way of life". Shain (2003) argues that, since the 1950s, Asian men have been regarded as fundamentalists, cheats, hotheads and welfare scroungers, whereas Asian women have been referred to as welfare dependants who breed like rabbits and threaten to use up resources. Shain (2003) refers to the current discourses, which refer to Muslims as terrorists and asylum seekers. Shain suggests that such discourses imply that something is inherently inferior in the cultural backgrounds of those from ethnic minority groups, and this places them in a relationship of inferiority to a white majority group.

It is worth noting that there are differences between groups within the black category. For example, Shain argues that the culture and family life of African-Caribbean families is currently regarded as problematic because of an

apparent lack of discipline and absence of family ties. This is the opposite for Asian families where there is an over focus on “too much” discipline and the family is seen as highly close-knit.

According to the cultural discourse, problems arise for Asian youths because of the family and cultural constraints that are imposed on them. Asian girls are regarded as shy, timid and passive and are caught between two cultures, that of school, which is equated to freedom, and that of home, which represents restriction to the traditional role, a strict upbringing. Hence, Asian girls in the classroom have limited ideas because of their culture (Brah 1996).

The Asian culture is defined as constraining, where Asian girls feel they lack control, and the western youth culture is regarded as “freer”. However, the term “freer” has been open to question since western women are pressured to go to discos to find a partner. It could equally be argued that they have little freedom (Parmar and Amos 1981). Having discussed that the Asian culture may be defined as constraining, it is worth noting that parents and grandparents of British Asians migrated from different parts of the Indian subcontinent, and there are different religious, linguistic patterns and castes associated that may influence cultural practices of individual Asian families in Britain. Brah (1996) argues that the cultures of Asians are highly differentiated according to factors such as country of origin, rural/urban background prior to migration, regional and linguistic background, and social class. Thus, Brah argues that Asian cultures may be distinguished from their

counterparts in East London and those from West London. This research looks at children whose parents live in Bradford but have a particular link (relatives, including grandparents) in small villages surrounding Kashmir in Pakistan.

The following quote is important, as it demonstrates Asian children's exposure to British values, norms and attitudes and that of their parents' traditional authority.

The Community Relations Commission (1976) argued:

'The children of Asian parents born or brought up in Britain, are a generation caught between two cultures. They live in a culture of their parents at home, and are taught a different one at school, the neighbourhood, at work ... parents cannot fully understand their children and children cannot fully understand their parents.' (p.30)

In a study conducted by both Shaw (1988) and Mirza (1989), Muslims made distinctions between the religious teachings and cultural interpretations of Islamic teachings. The girls in both studies were clearly able to distinguish between Islamic teachings from the Koran and cultural interpretations of Islam. This research asks parents what expectations they have of their children, given that some Pakistani children attend mosque school, and that some Pakistani parents are unable to speak English. It also asks the value of education for both Pakistani and white parents.

In her study, Wright (1992) found that from an early age children were showing a preference for friends from members of their own racial/ethnic group and a desire to mix and play with them. This research asks children

about friends and, in terms of culture, which group of children they prefer to play with and why.

Whatever the ethnic or religious background of pupils, teacher expectations can have powerful consequences for young people's career paths. Wright (1992) argues:

'Teachers expect pupils of Asian origin to be industrious, courteous and keen to learn. They also tend to assume that Asians are well disciplined, highly motivated children from family backgrounds where educational success is highly valued.' (p.39)

Asian youths have been portrayed as hardworking and passive but, since the 1980s and in the wake of the Rushdie affair, new discourses of Asian masculinity have emerged that regard young Asian youths as volatile, aggressive, angry, hot-headed and as posing a threat to social order (Solomos and Back 1994). This is partly because they refuse to accept the passive status. Since the "riots" in English towns and cities such as Burnley, Bradford in 2001 and the September 11 attacks on America, these discourses have been further strengthened and connect Muslims with being barbaric and backward (Shain 2003). This research considers teacher expectations of children with learning difficulties and to what extent children with learning difficulties can access the curriculum given the difficulties they face.

In his work, Gilborn (1990) argues that Asian pupils were frequently subjected to attacks from their white peers, usually in the form of racist name calling but also physical attacks and assaults. Gillborn also argues that classroom observation indicated that Asian pupils experienced teacher-pupil

relations, which were similar to those of their white peers with similar degrees of academic involvement. However, staff tended to assume that Asians were well disciplined and hardworking pupils who came from stable families where educational success was highly valued (in direct contrast to Afro-Caribbean families). However, Gillborn further argues that it is still the case that many ethnic minority pupils suffer inequality of opportunity, where schools and teachers retain the ability to affect pupil progress and achievement drastically. Pupil progress can also be affected by the extent to which work in the classroom is differentiated to meet the individual needs of children. In their study, Crozier and Davies (2007) found that Pakistani parents were interested in education and wanted their children to do well. In some cases, the response by Pakistani parents was more positive than that of white parents.

2.3 White children

In his study on pupils' views on schoolwork and school, Blatchford (1996) found that, at the age of 11, white children had lower academic self-concept scores than black (Caribbean) children. Black children also were more likely to cite going to college as more important than white children.

In a study by Mortimore *et al* (1988), where academic self-concept was measured at 11 years of age, the authors found ethnic differences such as that white children had lower academic self-concept than Black Caribbean and Asian children. From the SDQ (Self Description Questionnaire), white children were more likely to agree that they were not likely to go to university because they perceived themselves to be "stupid, not clever". They were likely to agree that they got bad marks in most subjects and that they performed poorly in most subjects, hence they perceived and labelled themselves to be "stupid and not clever". Furthermore, white children were more likely to agree that schoolwork was a waste of time and that they did not want to come to school. Overall, the authors found few differences between girls' and boys' attitudes to school and schoolwork. However, there were ethnic differences in that white children were less positive than black children about their attainments; they also felt less positive about themselves at school and generally. Differences seem most evident with regard to more general attitudes to school and schoolwork rather than attitudes to particular school subjects. This study analyses to what extent this is true where children have

special educational needs. The study examines whether there are any cultural differences and/or similarities. In his study, Blatchford (1996) found that white working-class parents gave their children significantly less help with schoolwork than did black working-class parents. White parents were also less positive about helping their children at home and were less likely to stress the importance of passing exams.

In his study, Willis (1977) discussed the emergence of an aggressive, white working-class masculine culture. He claimed that these boys were quick to fight and were also sexist and racist. In racial terms, the boys defined themselves as against Asians and West Indians, seeing both as "foreign", smelly and dirty. Willis (1977) argued that these white working-class boys were involved in masculine kinds of labour activities, the type of work associated with manual labour and heavy industry. Further, Willis (1977) stated that these children were prepared for life on the shop floor as a result of the kind of dispositions they generated in school. Willis (1977) found that the lads were consciously aware that they would probably not get "good jobs". The lads' "culture" therefore led them to reject, make fun of, and ignore most of what they were given in career lessons. Mac an Ghail's (1994) ethnographic research in a predominantly working-class inner city industrial area confirmed the presence of a group of what she termed as "Macho Lads", not dissimilar to the "lads" in Willis's study.

2.4 Differentiation

The model of differentiation is based on early writings, including the more recent work of Gardner's (1993) thoughts on children's learning styles. Visser (1993) defines differentiation as a process whereby pupils' needs are met through the teacher differentiating the curriculum in order to ensure that all pupils are able to access this, with or without some support. This model is used in this study. McNamara and Moreton (1997) argue that differentiation is about equal opportunity; it is children's right to access the same curriculum; it is about recognising and meeting individual needs. Differentiation stretches the most able pupils and ensures that the less able do not get lost. Having said this, there are repeated complaints that teachers do not differentiate adequately among their pupils in order to take into account the wide range of differences in ability, and that tasks are poorly matched to pupil needs (Nind *et al* 2003).

The inclusion of children and young people with disabilities and learning difficulties into mainstream schools remains a central government policy issue in school education (Kelly and Norwich 2002). There continues to be a growing debate in schools taking positive steps towards promoting inclusive practice. One important feature of inclusion is taking into account pupil perspectives of their learning. This research contributes to finding out from significant others (pupils with and without special educational needs, parents of pupils with SEN, teaching assistants and teachers) their perceptions of SEN

pupils' attitudes towards learning. The research focuses on looking at cultural differences and similarities between the Pakistani and the white participants.

Hart *et al* (2004) suggest that, from an early age, young people begin to hear and understand the judgements that their teachers make about them and everything they do. They learn very quickly about their ability position in class in relation to their peers. They learn where they belong and what is expected from them (Elliott *et al* 1999). Using categories helps the class teacher to make tasks manageable, especially if children have similar levels of ability; it is assumed that they have similar learning needs. However, labels have been used to refer to children with special educational needs. These have sometimes been criticised as children are seen as different and are perceived in negative ways, and this devalues them and lowers their perception of themselves. Furthermore, labels can also "pigeon-hole" children defining what they are able to do or not do (Corbett 1995). This research looks at how children with learning difficulties respond to varying labels used to refer to them, and to what extent they are aware of their position in class in relation to their peers.

Learners' beliefs are very powerful in their learning. Dweck (2000) has used the phrase "self theories", and she argues that what we say to ourselves about our learning is based on our beliefs. Dweck's research suggests that most people respond to learning in one of two ways as a number of factors, including contextual, personal and social, affect the way learners learn. One

group holds the belief that supports “learning orientation”. This group argues that learners have a love of learning. They seek challenges, value effort and persist in the face of obstacles. The other group holds certain beliefs that prevent them from learning, especially in challenging situations, because they link lack of success to lack of ability; this is called “performance orientation”. Freire (1985) similarly suggests that when learners come to believe that they are unable, or are not good at certain things, it is this that prevents them from learning, rather than any other factor. This research looks at the beliefs held by children with learning difficulties and whether these beliefs are associated with success or failure.

2.5 Working with parents

Nind *et al* (2003) argue that meaningful education of the “whole child” depends on many factors, including schools working effectively in partnership with the parents. The Plowden Report (1967) clearly demonstrated that children’s progress and success throughout schooling was closely related to the nature of their home background. The Warnock Committee (1978) suggested that the relationship between parents and professionals should be conceptualised as a partnership and ideally an equal one. Research, including the work of Tizard and Hughes (1984), found strong correlations between the school and the home. It emphasised the need for schools to work in partnership with parents, the primary educators of their children, in order to bridge the home-school gap. The idea of parents and teachers as partners in supporting young people’s learning may not sit so comfortably with teachers.

Throughout the history of education, a very strong boundary division can be traced between teachers and parents, which is to some degree still strong today. Parents are viewed as passive recipients of information who are not necessarily valued. There may be an imbalance of power between the teacher and parent (Tizard and Hughes 1984). Although this reference is over 20 years old, it is still supportive of the more recent research from Elliot *et al* (1999), which suggests that children who are helped by their parents make greater progress than if no help is received. In a study by Rehal (1989) involving Punjabi-speaking parents, only one was aware that their child had

been assessed formally under the Provisions of the Education Act 1981 and hence issued with a statement of special educational need. However, over the years, the guidance has significantly improved. This research investigates to what extent parents are supportive of their children's education and whether this support is helping their child to do well in school. Crozier (1999) explored parents' expectations of teachers and of the school. The findings indicated that parents expect quality of teaching, their child's academic progress and happiness, homework, fair discipline and information. The author further argued that parents of children with SEN might develop similar expectations.

2.6 Self-concept

The terms "self-concept" and "self-esteem" (global self-worth) are used in educational literature sometimes distinctively and sometimes as if they were synonymous. When distinctions are made, "self-concept" is viewed as cognitive understanding about one's ability, while "self-esteem" is viewed as an evaluative judgement reflecting the individual's sense of worth. These constructs are often interdependent and difficult to assess as separate entities (Cosden *et al* 1999). Emler (2001) argues that those with low self-esteem treat themselves badly and may invite bad treatment by others, but that they tend not to treat others badly.

In this study, self-concept is used to describe perceptions of competence in academic and social domains; self-esteem (global self-worth) is used to describe one's overall sense of worth.

Self-concept is broadly defined as a person's perception of him or herself. Individual perceptions are formed through experience with and interpretations of one's environment. These perceptions are influenced especially by evaluations of significant others, reinforcements and attributions for one's own behaviour (Shavelson, Hubner & Stanton 1976). People come to value themselves as they are valued by significant others, and the developing self-images of young children are particularly vulnerable (Sullivan 1953). Acceptance by parents and that of siblings, teachers and peers are crucial for

the formation of a positive self-concept (Coopersmith 1967). Because school represents the first occasion in which children act on their own and measure themselves against others, schooling plays an important role in the formation of self-concept (Hart *et al* 2004). This will be explored with pupils during their interviews. Several studies, including that of Black (1974), have shown that pupils with learning difficulties have lower self-esteem than those without learning difficulties. See also Chapter 6, where findings from the research are discussed.

The self-concept of pupils with learning disabilities has been the subject of considerable research since the mid-1970s (Chapman 1988). Studies, including that of Bryan (1986), indicate that pupils with learning disabilities and difficulties have problems in social and emotional areas as well as academic performance. Studies show that the fewer areas in which pupils experience mastery, the more negative their self-concept may become. Furthermore, Mercer (1987) has argued that pupils with learning disabilities have a more negative self-concept than pupils without learning disabilities. This research evaluates to what extent pupils with learning difficulties have low/high self-concept, since at present there is limited research that indicates the self-concept of Pakistani pupils with learning difficulties and how this differs from white children.

Kloomak and Cosden (1994) argue that pupils with learning disabilities rated themselves as less competent in scholastic abilities than did students without

learning disabilities, but not less competent on global self-worth or some of the non-academic domains. The writers looked at factors that contribute to a positive global self-concept in pupils with learning disabilities and they found that most of the pupils in the study have a positive global self-concept. However, when academic self-concept was examined, the majority of the pupils reported a negative academic self-concept. This has been consistent with findings of Chapman and Boersma (1979) in which children with learning disabilities tend to feel good about themselves in general but less adequate about their scholastic and academic competence. This research explores this issue, particularly looking at the similarity and difference between Pakistani and white children.

It is believed that, by the time pupils with learning difficulties reach adolescence, they will have poor self-concepts (Alley and Deshler 1979) because of their extensive histories of failure and being aware of their learning difficulties and problems in forming good relationships with peers (Bryan 1986). Declines in ability perception occur for most children around ages seven and eight (Eshel and Klein 1981). This is particularly true today, where children as young as seven take part in SATs (Standard Assessment Tests) and are very much aware of the national curriculum level they should be achieving. As failure for pupils with learning difficulties builds, academic self-concepts become more negative. Many studies, including Chapman's (1988), show that pupils with learning difficulties have lower self-concepts

than those children without learning difficulties. This is particularly true for academic self-concept.

Pupils who have positive self-perceptions usually try harder when faced with difficult or challenging tasks. Pupils who feel worthless tend to reduce their efforts and give up when work is difficult (Bandura 1982). Pupils who experience learning difficulties have been subject to considerable research in terms of self-concept. Deci and Chandler (1986) claim that emotional and motivational variables including self-concept are central to some if not all learning disabilities either as initial causes or as factors that compound the source of the learning problems. Persistent failure is seen as negative and long-lasting, particularly in terms of social-emotional development (Bryan 1986). It has been argued that pupils with learning difficulties have low self-concepts, and negative self-beliefs that are associated with poor achievement, social and emotional behaviour (Mercer 1987). This research explores the self-concept of both the Pakistani and white children and considers differences and similarities.

Academic self-concept is more closely related to school achievement than general self-concept (Byrne 1996). Actual performance in school, therefore, would seem to have a direct bearing on ability perceptions, whereas the more global self-perceptions involving the non-academic, social and physical factors extend beyond the school environment. However, Chapman (1988) found that some children with learning difficulties have low general self-concepts.

Poplin (1984) argues that many children with learning difficulties are able to maintain a sense of self-worth in activities such as sports, music and hobbies. These help the children to have feelings of accomplishment that may help compensate for academic failure and prevent substantial decrements in general self-concept. This research considers whether children with learning difficulties excel in any particular activities such as sports.

Criticism from teachers and parents probably reinforces negative self-beliefs (Brophy 1983). Because academic self-concept is partly a function of feedback from teachers, peers and parents (Bloom 1976), this type of feedback is probably more negative for children with learning difficulties, since these children spend most of their time in school being compared with the more competent class peers. Research from Bandura (1982) indicates that children with learning difficulties consider their learning abilities to be relatively unchangeable, hold lower expectations for future achievement, and give up tasks more easily in the face of difficulty; where successes do occur, they are likely to be attributed to easier tasks and help from others. Continued failures are viewed as confirmation of known ability and the vicious circle appears to perpetuate itself. For children with learning difficulties who may have the potential to perform at higher levels, negative self- and achievement-related beliefs would impede increases in academic performance (Bandura 1982).

It can be argued that children with special educational needs experience difficulties in identified areas of academic functioning (Cambra and Silvestre 2003). Furthermore, children with special educational needs may also experience difficulties surrounding their social or behaviour skills (Bryan 1986); these children may further encounter peer rejection. Studies by Bear *et al* (2002) have shown that children with learning difficulties perceived their academic ability less favourably than those without learning difficulties. This research sets out to investigate to what extent this is apparent and explores whether there are any cultural differences and similarities in the ways pupils and significant others (peers, parents, teachers and support staff) perceive SEN.

There is limited research to suggest that children with special educational needs experience feelings of low global self-worth, or self-esteem. Global self-worth is the "*overall evaluation of one's worth or value as a person*" (Harter 1999). Global self-worth is measured by its own set of items that tap general happiness, satisfaction, and overall affect about oneself. Poor achievement in education, a lack of motivation, and mental health problems, in particular depression, are commonly associated with feelings of low self-worth (Harter 1999). On the one hand, low global self-worth can be predicted for pupils with SEN, based on their self-perceptions for academic, behavioural and social domains, especially since these are the key areas that children with SEN value highly (Clever, Bear and Juvonen 1992). However, Morrison and Cosden (1997) argue that the "risk" presented by having learning difficulties does not

in itself result in poor self-esteem. They argue that academic and non-academic factors can result in high self-esteem such as positive factors of one's physical appearance. Harter (1999) also argues that there is not necessarily a direct relationship between a child's academic, behaviour and social ability and his/her global self-worth. Children with learning difficulties may have positive feelings of self-worth, particularly in areas of talent such as sports (Harter 1999). This then suggests that children with learning difficulties may have positive global self-perceptions on the basis of their non-academic skills and strengths. This research investigates cultural similarities and differences in children's feelings of self-worth in relation to their academic and social domain. Furthermore, the research reviews to what extent a child's self-worth is protected by social support from parents, teachers and friends; as Harter (1999) suggests, self-worth can be protected by biased, exaggerated self-perceptions of competency.

Chapman (1988) suggests that children with learning difficulties evaluate themselves lower in the academic domain than those children who do not have learning difficulties. However, caution should be taken when looking at such findings, since popular measures used by Piers (1969) to measure self-concept have been criticised for being inconsistent with modern day theories of self-concept, and especially since its development was based on an outdated model of self-concept. Recent measures of self-concept have been used including the multidimensional self-concept scale (Bracken 1992).

Self-concept is built in our own perception of how we perceive ourselves and are valued by significant persons in our environment. Self-concept is constructed from social experiences in the family and at school. The study of self-concept requires information not only on what the individual thinks about him/herself, but also about the variables related to identity, the persons close to him/her and the effects of group membership on the construction of social identity (Kelly and Norwich 2002). For this reason, the views of significant others are sought.

Hamachek (1991) argues that self-concept involves at least four separate but interrelated components; a physical self-concept, a social self-concept, an emotional self-concept and an intellectual self-concept. Hamachek argues that each self-concept has a uniqueness of its own, but that they are also interrelated and influence an individual's self-concept in other areas. For example, an individual's physical self-concept may be low and this may inhibit the risks that the individual is willing to take with his or her social self. This low self-concept may stand in the way of the individual's emotional self. On the other hand, if the individual has a positive self-concept, it may help him or her to feel more confident about social self and it may enable him or her to express emotional self more frequently. This research takes into account the various domains of self-concept through the use of a self-concept scale, which establishes a child's academic, social and personal self-concept. The researcher is aware that pupils may have high self-concept and may experience significant learning difficulties. The researcher is not assuming

that low self-concept is related to learning difficulties. The researcher is also aware that the various domains of the self that contribute to the overall feelings that individuals have are protected from each other; for example, what is felt in one area filters over to some extent to other areas.

Hamachek (1991) draws a distinction between self-concept and self-esteem. He argues that the former is purely a descriptive aspect of an individual's self-perceptions. For example, an individual might say "I have many friends"; this descriptive statement can be verified. On the other hand, Hamachek (1991) argues that self-esteem is the evaluative component of self-perceptions and is reflected in statements such as "I am an excellent student". Self-esteem is then constructed out of our evaluations of the things we do, of who we are and what we achieve in terms of our assessments of the goodness, worthiness or significance of those things.

Burns (1982) argues that there are two elements that form the basic parts of an individual's self-concept. First is the descriptive element, which is often termed as the self-picture or self-image. The second is the evaluation element; this is frequently referred to as self-esteem or self-worth. Self-concept then comprises all the beliefs and evaluations an individual has about him or herself. These beliefs (self-images) and evaluations (self-esteem) actually determine not only who individuals are, but also what they think of themselves, what they can do, and what they think they can become. For example, if a child does not see him or herself as academically able, he or she

may come to evaluate his/her academic ability in a negative way (self-esteem), and may more easily be swayed into doing something about his/her educational ability, or in extreme cases he/she may withdraw and do nothing to improve the situation.

Furthermore, Burns (1982) argues that a child views him or herself in a certain way and this determines how he or she is going to develop his/her expectations and consequently how he or she will perform and behave. Every individual carries with him/her a set of expectations, which determine how an individual is going to act. If the expectations are about good experiences, the individual will act in certain ways, which brings them about. If expectations are about bad experiences, the individual will act in ways that make these expectations come true, and then the individual will say to him/herself "See, I was right." Although definitions of self-concept/self-esteem remain contentious, there is gathering acceptance that self-concept refers to an overarching view of the self and self-esteem refers to an individual's evaluative assessment of him/herself (Butler and Gasson 2005). Various self-concept/self-esteem scales are considered below.

2.7 Self-concept scales

The range and variety of self-concept/self-esteem scales is vast. Blascovitch and Tomaka (1991) argue that there have been at least 200 measures of self-esteem that have been developed; Wylie (1961) claims that of these scales, many tend to be short lived and of debatable quality. The researcher looked at a number of self-concept scales and considered the value of each. A number of scales were looked at, including the Piers-Harris Children's Self-concept Scale (SCS), which was regarded as the most frequently reported measure. Other self-concept scales were considered, including the Self-image Profile (Butler 2001), the Tennessee Self-concept Scale (Fitts and Warren 1996), the Multidimensional Self-concept Scale (Bracken 1992), the Self Perception Profile for Children (Harter 1985) and the Self Description Questionnaire (Marsh 1988). The researcher in this study discounted many of the frequently reported scales. The Tennessee SCS was disregarded because it focuses primarily on the adolescent years, with extensions into adulthood.

The researcher chose to use the SIP (Self-image Profile) because this is the only scale that frames the measure within a theoretical stance, drawing on principles of Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly 1955) in which items reflect children's constructions of themselves. An assumption underlying the profile construction is that self-descriptions are contrasts and therefore bi- polar. For example, an individual can only hold self to be honest if one also holds a notion of dishonesty. However, the SIP only consists of one pole of contrast

to facilitate the child making judgements about self. The self-image profile encourages the individuals to describe themselves through verbalised self-representations across a series of domains from appearance, academic, and social to emotional behaviour (a completed profile can be seen in Appendix 15 of this research). The profile contains a set of descriptions along which children are invited to rate where they consider themselves to be. Items on the scale are of necessity and meaningful to the population for whom the scale is designed, and are representative of the events in a child's life (Butler 1994). Because the self-descriptions or constructs are child generated, children are familiar with them. The SIP has been used as all the other scales have been developed and published in the USA, with American norms.

In addition to this, scales have been based on geographically limited samples with problems in generalizability. The SIP involved children and adolescents (males and females) from a range of schools with differing socio-cultural populations. What the scale does not do is provide norms for ethnicity, unlike the Piers Harris SCS and the Bracken (1992) Multidimensional Self-concept Scale that considers both gender and ethnicity with samples fairly closely representative of the USA population census. Butler and Gasson (2005) argue that current scales are of Western origins, which take little account of "cultural philosophies".

Western and Eastern cultures differ in how the self is defined. The Western culture construes the self as being independent and typically characterised by

notions such as physical appearance and achievement. In contrast, the Eastern culture considers the self in relation to others and specific social contexts. The self is viewed as inter-dependently connected with the social context, (Markus and Kitayama 1999). Another disadvantage of the SIP is that it only has 25 items; it is not the shortest or the longest of scales. Wells and Marvwell (1976) argue that scales with a greater number of items yield a more heterogeneous and representative instrument with increased validity and generality. Given the child generated nature of the self-descriptions, Kelly (1955) equated validity with usefulness and increased understanding. If the profile makes sense to the child and it taps into his or her vision of self and reveals patterns, then it will have served its purpose. Winter (1992) argues that, given that personal construct psychology is primarily concerned with the viewpoint of its object of study, namely the child, any measures derived from the child are thus objective. Unlike other scales, Winter argues that the SIP has no hidden agenda, no intent to disguise the purpose of the scale, nor does it wish to catch the child out.

The self-image profile has 25 items in total, 12 of a positive nature and 12 of a negative tone; there is one neutral item on the scale. Individuals are presented with short self-descriptions where they are asked to consider how they see themselves. For most scales, items are generally "author generated". However, the SIP requires children to understand the concepts. A feature of the scale is that items on the scale were child generated. Because the SIP elicited self-descriptions from children and adolescents to form the items on

the scale, one can argue that there is a shared meaning of the items on the scale that can be readily understood by the population for whom the scale was designed to be employed (Butler and Gasson 2005).

An assumption underlying scale construction was that self-descriptions are contrasts and therefore bi-polar in nature. For example, one can only consider self to be honest because an individual also has a notion of dishonesty. This is a central principle of personal construct theory (Bannister and Fransella 1986). Where scales are composed of items developed by psychologists influenced by particular models or structures of self, there is an assumption of shared meaning, as items derived by psychologists tend to reflect their thinking rather than the meanings common to the population being studied. Hughes (1984) argues that only instruments that allow individuals to provide their own descriptions of their self-perception should be considered as measures of self-concept.

Items for the Butler SIP were in sympathy with such a view where the children generated items. When the scale was in its construction process, children were invited to describe themselves in three ways. The most frequently reported descriptions formed the items on the scale. Another reason why the SIP was chosen was because of the language that was used; for example from “not at all – very much so” compared to “strongly agree-strongly disagree”. Because the SIP scores indicate different aspects of self-

functioning, it can provide a more comprehensive understanding than single self-concept scales (Butler and Green 1998).

Burns (1982) argues that although there are self-concept scales that are used to measure self-concept, caution needs to be taken when using these scales such as the extent to which the scales take into account a range of an individual's possible self-concept element. One also needs to take into account whether the scale is valid and whether it measures what it says it is measuring. Further difficulties that the researcher may encounter include, does the participant answer honestly, or does he or she give answers that are socially desirable or which defend the "you" that you do not wish to acknowledge?

Family factors also play a key part in influencing a child's reactions and attitudes, which also condition interaction with others (Leigh and Stinson 1991). This study uses a self-concept scale to establish the self-concept of children with learning difficulties and establishes to what extent there are similarities and differences between the two cultures. In particular, the research explores to what extent there are any similarities or differences in the self-concept of children, since a distinctive feature of this study is the collection of information from pupils from two different cultures.

Cambra and Silvestre's (2003) research showed that children with learning difficulties had a positive self-concept, although it was significantly lower than

those who did not have SEN, especially in the social and academic dimensions. Cambra and Silvestre (2003) further argue that pupils with learning difficulties do not have a negative self-concept – although there are differences in personal, social and academic perceptions. Many multiple and interrelated factors play a role in the formation of self-concept, such as teaching style, which has an important bearing on peer relationships in that the teacher may be seen as a model in his or her attitude towards SEN pupils (Cambra and Silvestre 2003).

2.8 Promoting children's views

The original SEN Code of Practice (DFE 1994), which set out procedures for identifying, assessing and providing for pupils with SEN, promoted practices that took account of children's views and feelings about their special provision. In the revised Code of Practice (DfES 2001), these principles have been further emphasised, as they have in other government literature, for example *"Working Together to Give Children and Young People a Say"*, (DfES 2002) which sets out the principle that children should be involved in decisions that affect them. However, it should be noted that for children to give their views, this sometimes goes beyond their language and conceptual abilities, especially for those children with severe or profound learning difficulties (Felce 2002). For this reason, the researcher has chosen to interview those pupils with moderate learning difficulties, in particular those children who are at "school action" on the special education needs register. School action is defined as when a class teacher identifies a child has SEN, the teacher then provides interventions that are additional to and different from those that are provided as part of the school's usual differentiated curriculum. An individual education plan (IEP) will usually be drawn up at this stage. School action refers to the school using its existing resources and taking action to best support the child's needs. If the child's needs are complex, significant and entrenched, the school will take advice from specialist external agencies such as the learning difficulties team. Again, a new IEP will be devised (DfES Code of Practice 2001). The researcher was

aware that had he chosen to interview children at school action plus, children would have been less forthcoming in their response due to their complex special educational needs, as was evident in the pilot study.

Many writers, including Lewis and Lindsay (2000), argue the importance for children to contribute to and participate in decisions about educational provision. This research sets out to invite children to talk about their learning difficulty, which will enable others (practitioners) to gain an increased understanding of children with moderate learning difficulties. The research will enable practitioners to understand what feelings children with learning difficulties experience.

Over the past decade, there has been a growing interest and benefit for involving pupils in the assessment of their educational and other needs. Involving pupils can be seen as a way of respecting their right to have a voice in their education (Davie *et al* 1996). With increasing acceptance of inclusive practice, it becomes important to find out how those who are assessed as having learning difficulties think and feel about their SEN. A number of small-scale studies (Cooper 1993; Cheston 1994) have investigated children's perspectives of SEN. These studies have shown that there is stigma among SEN pupils in mainstream schools.

Lynas' (1986) study showed that pupils with hearing impairments did not like to be "shown up" in front of other pupils, yet overall they did not resent any

special attention that they received. Earlier studies, including that of Cheston (1986), indicate that pupils with learning difficulties reflect a tension of wanting and appreciating help with negative aspects such as not wanting help as this is seen to be stigmatising and devaluing. In his research on exploring the perspectives of adolescents with moderate learning difficulties, Norwich (1997) argued that the majority of children with learning difficulties did not favour getting help in mainstream schools. Many reasons for this were given by the students, such as that teachers did not have enough time for them and pupils cannot get the help they need. Kelly and Norwich (2002) found that pupils reported receiving more help from teaching assistants than from their teachers.

The UN Convention on Rights of the Child Article 12 (DoH 1989) states that children not only have a right to articulate their opinions with regard to issues that affect them but that they also have a right to have these opinions heard (Morrow and Richards 1996). **The first research question** explores pupils' attitudes towards learning and considers how children with learning difficulties are perceived by themselves and significant others as learners. Views of significant others include parents, peers and school staff. Views of significant others are sought as they are likely to contribute an individual's self-concept (Hart *et al* 2004, Norwich 2002, Bear *et al* 2002, Burns 1982, Wright 1992, Shavelson *et al* 1976).

During the 1990s, a number of small-scale studies, including that of Wade and Moor (1993), have investigated children's perspectives on special education. However, more recently, researchers have been interested in the dynamics and processes that are involved in interviewing children with SEN (Christensen and James 2000). Some of the factors include the child's competence and characteristics in engaging in an interview, the questioner's competence, the setting and context, power, relationship and emotional factors, and issues relating to ethical and human rights considerations. The researcher is aware of the extent that he is able to elicit reliable and valid information from pupils as sometimes they may not provide the right information because they want to please the interviewer by giving answers that they think the researcher wants to hear (Stalker 1998). Begley (2000) argues that, for this reason, it is vital to be clear about the initial explanation of the focus of the interview. There is also a growing trend to treat children as participants in the research process, a paradigm approach whose ideal is to empower children and see them as experts (Warren 2000). This is a move against this power differential and this is reinforced by the call for children to have a voice as an expression of their human rights (Davie *et al* 1996). The researcher has taken all of these factors into consideration and addresses these in the methodology section.

Norwich and Kelly (2004) argued that on the whole a majority of pupils expressed positive feelings for their current school. Furthermore, the authors found that boys tended to prefer both withdrawal and in-class support.

Reasons for preferring to be withdrawn from class included the following: better quality support, less noise, more fun, and more attention, less bullying.

The second research question explores how children prefer to be taught, in the whole class or in small groups withdrawn from the class, and the extent to which pupils have positive feelings about their school, and explores similarities and differences in culture.

Cosden *et al* (1999) reported that a third of their sample were not able to explain "learning difficulty" in their own words. The pupils thought that learning difficulties were general problems in learning. Pupils described learning difficulties as not being able to do things that other people can, therefore they thought they are either not normal or are stupid. In their research, Kelly and Norwich (2002) found that pupils with special educational needs reported a high level of bullying. Bullying was used to refer to the various forms, including physical, teasing and verbal. Many pupils reported that bullying was related to their learning difficulties. Cosden *et al* (1999) found that pupils believed their learning difficulty was a temporary problem and that they would outgrow their problems. This study looks at the extent to which pupils feel their learning difficulty is temporary or permanent. However, as indicated in the earlier study, one of the potential problems in asking children to articulate a response to "What is a learning difficulty?" is that pupils would be unable to respond to this question for a number of reasons.

The third research question explores the extent to which pupils are aware of their learning difficulty and whether children experience any difficulties in school from others because of their learning difficulty.

There is some evidence that the cohort broadly categorised as pupils “with moderate learning difficulties” represents the largest within the totality of students with “special educational needs” (DfES Code of Practice 2001). Williams (1993) argues that pupils with moderate learning difficulties have general rather than specific learning difficulties that are linked to a curriculum area. Furthermore, Williams argues that pupils with moderate learning difficulties have greater difficulty in learning. Johnston (1988) suggests that the following features characterise pupils with moderate learning difficulties: deficiencies in cognition, memory and language, short attention span, inadequate achievement, social skills deficit and emotional problems.

Young people labelled as having moderate learning difficulties are a diffuse group with a variety of individual learning needs. However, children with moderate learning difficulties share many characteristics, including low self-esteem and self-confidence, difficulty with basic skills like literacy and numeracy and poorly developed personal and social skills (Lewis and Lindsay 2000). The Warnock Committee (1978), who first introduced the term, argued that moderate learning difficulties might stem from a variety or combination of sources:

'These often include mild and multiple physical and sensory disabilities, an impoverished or adverse social or educational background, specific learning difficulties and limited general ability.' (p. 219)

Bryan (1986) argues that children with learning difficulties experience difficulties in social and emotional as well as academic performance. These children may experience behaviour difficulties such as attention-seeking, difficulty in concentration, lack of motivation, disruption, and displays of frustration and temper. The combination of difficulties that children with moderate learning difficulties encounter makes these children challenging (Lewis and Lindsay 2000). The latter point needs to be taken into consideration when interviewing young people with moderate learning difficulties in that the children may not enter into a deep meaningful conversation with the researcher unless they are given prompts and questions are worded in a manner that enables them to answer appropriately. For this reason, the interview schedule was designed in a way to take into consideration the needs of these pupils (see the pupil interview schedule, Appendix 10).

Labelling continues to be a contentious issue in the field of special needs education. The term "special education" itself is a label, which has been called into question as an acceptable way of referring to the education of pupils with disabilities (Booth and Ainscow 1998). Special educational need is seen to identify the individual as different. Using negative labels to refer to individuals can affect the initial impressions about others' intellectual and other characteristics as well as evoke a patronising style of attributions. If labels are

used inappropriately, a person's failures can be explained in terms of personal deficiencies and his or her successes dismissed as due to external circumstances. Even when labels are not used to refer to individuals, similar responses can be evoked if labels are used through differential treatment in learning. For example, if a support assistant is attached to (sits next to) a child who has special educational needs, this too can act as a sign of a negative identity as this is associated with receiving different kinds of devalued educational provision (Norwich 1997). Contrary to this, using labels has been shown to be beneficial in that they can evoke an accommodating and a protective response (Felner and Hust 1976). The current system of special educational needs requires children with learning difficulties to be identified (and labelled according to need) in order to provide a curriculum that is appropriate, additional and different from the differentiated curriculum.

The fourth research question explores the nature of labels; it seeks children's and others views on the use of labels. Furthermore, the study explores which labels are preferred by pupils and others and compares similarities and differences between the two cultures.

Norwich (1997) has argued that it is important to be clear about using labels for different purposes. Labels can be used to describe syndromes such as autism; they can also be used to plan for provision for those children who require it. Although the Warnock Report (1978) argued against the use of negative aspects of labelling and the use of categories to refer to children, it

replaced one set of labels of special educational needs with another set in terms of a broad label of special educational need. The introduction of the SEN Code of Practice (DfES 1994) brought in specific kinds of SEN, including moderate learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties and others. The focus of this study looks at children who are identified as having moderate general learning difficulties. If some children are labelled as having learning difficulties, there is a risk of negative labelling; if they are not identified, there is a risk that their individual needs will not fully be met (Norwich 1997).

Tomlinson (1996) found that students disliked disability labelling but recognised that labels were useful for receiving the support they required. In their study involving a sample of undergraduate students, Hastings and Remington (1993) found that the students evaluated terms such as "learning difficulties" and "learning disability" more positively than older terms such as "mental handicap" and "mental subnormality". However, most of the labels were evaluated negatively; the only term that received a positive evaluation was "exceptional".

In his study (Norwich 1997) involving professionals (primary school experienced teachers who specialised in teaching children and young people with SEN, trainee primary school teachers and trainee educational psychologists) who work with children with difficulties and disabilities within the education system, he found that the terms "learning difficulties" and "special educational needs" were the only two terms perceived positively; the

term “abnormality” was the most negative term. This study asks teachers, support staff, parents and pupils their preferred term and which they see as being most positive and why.

The use of labels and labelling has been a concern in the special education field (Kelly and Norwich 2004). Labels that are used to refer to people with intellectual impairments such as special educational needs have been criticised for identifying some children to be different in a negative way, which devalues them (Solity 1991). Labels can be used in negative ways, such as limiting people’s expectations, and encourage judgements about those with impairments, stigmatising them.

It has also been argued that labels can be helpful as they can identify a group of children who require help with their education (Norwich 1997). In this study, Norwich (1997) found that some labels such as special educational needs and learning difficulties were evaluated positively by trainee and experienced teachers, whereas other labels that were linked with medical terminology (for example abnormality, deficit, disability and impairment) were evaluated negatively. This study asks pupils to comment on which labels they prefer.

Norwich and Kelly (2004) found that most children were aware of their learning difficulties. Denying or minimising learning difficulties was found to be very infrequent. In terms of educational abilities, mostly mixed self-

perceptions were found in mainstream schools. In their study, the findings indicated that pupils with moderate learning difficulties in mainstream schools had positive self-perceptions of general characteristics, though many had mixed self-perceptions particularly around educational abilities. Some studies make the distinction between global self-concept, sometimes interpreted as self-esteem (Cosden *et al* 1999).

Norwich and Kelly (2004) found that older and more formal terms such as “retarded” and “backward” were rarely recognised by pupils, as a minority of pupils compared to the associated term “learning difficulty” had heard current terms such as “SEN”. The more lay and everyday terms that were also evaluated negatively such as “stupid and thick”, were recognised more frequently. In this study, some of the terms used by Norwich (1999) were used with participants. The reason for using the terms identified in the study (for example, learning difficulty, stupid and thick) was because Norwich (1999) has done some valuable work on examining the connotations of several key terms or labels used in special education. The range of terms identified by Norwich (1999) includes both positive and negative terms, and these can be understood by both children and adults.

Having researched literature on ethnicity, SEN, differentiation, using labels to refer to children with learning difficulties, working in partnership with parents personal construct theory and self-concept, the researcher feels that there are a number of gaps in the present literature that have not been sufficiently

addressed. The aim of this research is to address these gaps. Of all the literature examined, no literature specifically reports on the direct experiences and the attitudes to learning of Year 6 Pakistani children with learning difficulties. Although there is some research on white children's experiences of special educational needs (Norwich and Kelly 2004), this is very limited and it is not clear the extent to which the children have special educational needs (for example, whether the child is at school action or school action plus on the SEN register, or whether the child has a statement of special educational need). It is also unclear whether there are gender differences in children's experiences of their learning difficulty. There is also limited research on examining Year 6 children's perspectives of their learning difficulty. This is a crucial age for many children as it is their last year in primary school and it is the age where children undertake their formal tests and hence are under pressure to achieve their personal best.

Current research lacks a comparison of the experiences of two cultural groups, Pakistani and white, and what their views are on learning. To what extent are they similar and/or different? Current research also lacks the views of peers, parents and school staff of children with learning difficulties, all of which is paramount in understanding the child's view of his or her learning. Literature available on the use of labels to refer to children with special educational needs is limited. There are a few authors, including Norwich (1997) and Corbett (1995), who refer to this but again the research is limited. Another criticism of current research is the limited literature examining

children's views of their learning difficulties. In addition, this has been carried out by "white" researchers in the main, which may have advantages and/or disadvantages. This research is carried out by a British Pakistani researcher who is able to understand the Pakistani culture but also is able to understand aspects of the British white culture as he was born and grew up in Britain. Some of the current research on SEN and self-concept is dated and hence does not take into account the government's drive on "Every Child Matters" (DfES 2003).

2.9 Research questions

Current research acknowledges that children with special education needs have low self-esteem and that a stigma is attached to having SEN. However, given pupil's learning difficulties, there appears to be limited research that considers the type of SEN (as there are many, from moderate learning difficulties to visual impairment etc.), children's perspectives and their attitude to learning, their enjoyment of school and experience of any extra help they receive, their feelings towards having a learning difficulty, their ambitions, expectations and fears, their understanding of their learning difficulties and how they see themselves and others who they regard as being "more able or clever". This research addresses all of the above areas through its research questions.

The four research questions emerged following the review, analysis and critique of the literature; these formed the basis of deciding on data collection tools for the research. The four research questions were grouped with subsidiary questions with cultural (Pakistani and white) differences and similarities embedded in all research questions.

1a. How are children with learning difficulties perceived by themselves and significant others as learners?

1b. What expectations do children with learning difficulties have of their learning and of school? Do these differ amongst different cultural groups?

1c. What expectations do significant others have of children with learning difficulties? What hopes do parents have of their children and to what extent are parents supportive of their children's learning? How do children respond to any special help they receive?

2a. How do children with learning difficulties like to be taught?

2b. What feelings do children with learning difficulties have about school?

2c. What can be said about the self-concept of children with learning difficulties? Do they have a low or high self-concept? Do children with learning difficulties excel in particular activities such as sports?

3a. How aware are children of their learning difficulty?

3b. Do children perceive their learning difficulty to be temporary or permanent?

3c. What if any difficulties do children with learning difficulties experience in school?

4a. How do children respond to labels that are used to refer to them?

4b. Do children have a preference for particular labels?

Chapter 3 Research Design

This chapter looks at case study research, its uses and limitations, followed by a discussion on features of ethnographic research. The chapter ends with a discussion on ethical issues relating to the research. However, before discussing case studies, it is important to state how Kelly's Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) and the use of a self-image profile fits in with the current research design. It was the researcher's intention to use an ideographic approach to research (which is supportive of interpretive methodology and that of Kelly's PCP). This enabled the researcher to carry out a thorough inquiry into how pupils think and feel from their own perspective; this informed the current research design. Although a self-image profile is used, where children are asked to select a statement that reflects them the best, the researcher used the statement as a prompt for discussion and encouraged children to expand on why they chose particular statements. This dialogue provided the researcher with an opportunity to seek clarification and explore meanings further to ensure an interpretive stance to research was followed.

3.1 Case study

This section looks at what a case study is and why it was used.

This study uses case study and ethnographic methodology to address the research questions. The research does not strictly follow a case study or an ethnographic approach, but uses a combination of both.

A case study approach is chosen since it allows the researcher to carry out the research for an extended period of time and study the individual cases in the participants' natural settings (Yin 1994). The researcher spent 12 months in Outer City Primary school in order to familiarise himself with the school. Before entering the school, the researcher read reports about the school; for example, school inspection reports, the school prospectus and school data was looked at. The researcher contacted the identified school link teacher who was also a deputy head and the school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo). He met with him to discuss the nature of the research; he then on separate occasions individually met with all those he interviewed (children, teaching assistants, teachers, focus group children and parents). The researcher also shared the findings of the research with children after the interviews and sent thank you letters to all those who took part in the research. Each case in this study refers to the two primary schools, Inner City and Outer City Primary.

Another real advantage of using a case study is that the researcher is able to conduct the research in the participant's natural setting (not in an artificially created environment for a specific research purpose), in this case, the school (Merriam 1988). Yin (1994) argues that the case is a "naturally occurring" phenomenon; it exists prior to the research project and continues to exist once the research has finished. A case study has been chosen for this research since it invites and encourages the researcher to use a range of research methods in order to capture the complex reality; in this case, semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and non-participant observation is employed.

Case studies have become popular in social science research, particularly with small-scale research projects. A case study is used for this research since the focus is on individual cases. A case study also allows the researcher to make sense of the various parts of information that link and affect the case. Case studies have the potential to be "holistic" rather than deal with "isolated factors". Case studies allow for in-depth studies. They provide sufficient detail, which enables the researcher to deal with the subtleties and complexities of social situations. They create opportunities for the researcher to discover things that might not have become apparent through other research strategies (Merriam 1988). In this research, the researcher interviewed the child, taking into account the home and school factors.

Stake (1995) develops a view of case studies that draws from naturalistic, holistic, ethnographic, phenomenological and biographical research methods. The researcher in this study draws upon ethnographic approaches. Many authors, including Yin (1989), Lee (1999) and Stake (1995), promote the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods when using case study methodology. The use of several methods is used in this study to support a qualitative methodology of triangulation (Denzin and Lincoln 2003). Each method reveals its own aspects and parts of social reality. For example, observation reveals behaviour but no motives for that behaviour. Many authors, including Ragin (1989), Yin (1989) and Creswell (1994), argue that triangulation is an important aspect of case study. The researcher in this study uses semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation to generate data.

3.2 Case study definitions and challenges

This section looks at definitions of case studies, their uses and limitations.

Robson (2002) refers to the case in case study to mean the situation, individual, group, organisation or whatever the researcher is interested in. In this study, the case refers to a group of participants (namely pupils, parents, teachers and teaching assistants) in two schools. Robson (2002) provides examples of what may constitute a case study. He argues that case studies can be anything from individual case studies, where detailed accounts of one person are explored, to sets of individual case studies, which are similar to individual case studies, but common features of the small number of individuals are studied. He argues that community studies can be classed as case studies where one or more local communities are studied. Furthermore, he claims that case studies can be studies of organizations, institutions, events, roles and relationships. Similarly, Hammersley (1992) argues that a "case" can comprise single individuals or a group as well as a social institution.

Robert Yin (1994) argues that a case study is a strategy for doing research; this involves an empirical investigation of a phenomenon within its real-life context. In this study, a real-life context is used, namely the two primary schools that comprise the research population.

Creswell (1994) argues that a case study is the study of one single or a small number of cases. The researcher in this study defines each of the two schools (Inner City and Outer City Primary) to be a case, and within each case or main unit there are subunits; these subunits are referred to as the participants in the study. Given the above definition, this research was bounded by time and activity and collected detailed data about its participants.

Cohen and Manion (1989) state that the case study researcher typically observes the characteristics of an individual unit. This unit may be a child, a class, a school or a community. The purpose of this observation is to probe deeply and analyse intensively this unit with a view to establishing generalisations about the wider population to which that unit belongs.

Sturman (1994) offers the following description of case studies. He argues that:

'Case study is a generic term for the investigation of an individual, group or phenomenon. While the techniques used in the investigation may be varied, and may include both qualitative and quantitative approaches, the distinguishing feature of case study is the belief that human systems develop a characteristic wholeness or integrity and are not simply a loose collection of traits. As a consequence of this belief, case study researchers hold the view that to understand a case, explain why things happen as they do, and to generalise or predict from a single example requires an in-depth investigation of the interdependencies of parts and the patterns that emerge.' (p.61)

Both writers acknowledge that case study involves an in-depth investigation. The researcher in this study achieves this by conducting observations and carrying out in-depth interviews with participants in two schools.

Stenhouse (1985) identified four broad styles of a case study. These are ethnographic, evaluative, educational and action research case studies.

Stenhouse (1985) described the evaluative case study as:

'A single case or collection of cases is studied in depth with the purpose of providing educational actors or decision makers with information that will help them to judge the merit and worth of policies, programmes or institution.' (p.50)

Further, he described an educational case study as:

'Many researchers using case study methods are neither concerned with social theory nor with evaluative judgement, but rather with understanding of educational action. They are concerned to enrich the thinking and discourse of educators either by the development of educational theory or by refinement of prudence through the systematic and reflective documentation of evidence.' (p.50)

In this study, the researcher uses an evaluative case study where two cases (two schools) are studied in depth. Each school represents a case with subunits and each subunit represents a participant. The researcher is also partly using the educational case study where through in-depth interviewing he is aiming to understand social action.

Bassey (1999) describes three types of case studies, "theory seeking" and "theory testing"; "story telling"; and "picture drawing" or "evaluative" case studies. This research falls into the second category, that of telling the story of participants in two settings. The research tells the story of how children with learning difficulties feel about school and learning and how significant

others feel. Bassey's "story telling" case study is similar to what Stake (1995) describes as "intrinsic" case study.

Although Payne and Payne (2004) argue that a case study is a detailed study on a single social unit, these writers argue that the social unit may be one child, a classroom of pupils, a school or a street gang and by definition a case study would not compare two or more schools. For this reason, this research does not use an entirely case study and ethnographic approach.

Although case study research is a popular form of research, particularly amongst the educational practitioners, it presents a number of challenges because the term has not been applied uniformly and there are overlaps with other terms like participant observation, ethnography, fieldwork and life history. For many years, case studies have been considered to have less value than other research designs, simply because they allow for minimal quantification and no scientific generalisations. Case studies have been criticised for not being able to generalise from a single case. However, like experiments, scientific facts are rarely based on single experiments but are based on multiple sets of experiments; the same phenomenon is replicated under different conditions and the results are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to the entire universe. Similarly, a case study does not represent a sample and the researcher's goal is to expand and generalise theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization) (Yin 1994). The aim of qualitative research is not to generalise

findings but to form a unique interpretation of events, which can allow another researcher to acknowledge the limitations of the research and take the research further or relate it to their own setting. Although each case in some respects is unique, it is also a single example of a broader nature of things. The extent to which findings from the case study can be generalised to other examples, and other schools, depends on how far the case study example is similar to others of its type. The findings from this research can be used to apply to other schools if they share similar school characteristics.

One of the characteristics of qualitative research that is most criticised is the lack of external validity and generalizability (Verschuren 2003). Yin (1989) argues that the results of a case study are in principle generalizable to theoretical propositions not to populations or universes. Yin refers to these as analytical and statistical generalizations, respectively. Mitchell (1983) defends the external validity of the case study by arguing that researchers have to rely on logical inference instead of statistical inference, which according to him is the same as Znajniecki's (1934) distinction between analytical and enumerative induction. Mitchell formulates a plausible rationale for generalizing case study results on the basis of analytical induction; these are to be grounded on theoretical knowledge and in-depth analysis of a case.

A further criticism of case studies is the fact it is perceived as producing "soft data". Case studies are accused of lacking the rigour that is expected of social science research. This is supported by the view that case studies rely on

qualitative data and interpretive methods rather than quantitative data and statistical procedures (Denscombe 1998). A further criticism of case studies is that, because case studies require the involvement of a researcher over a period of time, there is a possibility that the presence of the researcher can lead to an “observer effect”. For example, those being researched might behave differently because they are aware they are being observed (Denscombe 1998). The researcher is aware that there are limitations with case studies. Every effort was made to minimise these, including using multiple research methods. Further details of the steps that the researcher took are included in the next chapter.

3.3 Ethnography

This section considers what ethnography is and why it has been used in the research design.

The origins of ethnography lie in the work of nineteenth century anthropologists who primarily observed different and “other” cultures. In the last three decades, educational settings have been used for ethnography (Scott and Morrison 2006). Although ethnographers in the past have chosen data collection strategies that avoid enumeration and standardized instruments, the literature in educational ethnography reflects a more eclectic use of quantitative data collection strategies (Deyhle 1989). The researcher in this study uses non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews to collect data.

According to Brewer (2000), ethnography is concerned with everyday events and its emphasis is on meaning and action. It is not concerned with presenting a distanced, scientific and objective account of the social world, but with an account that recognises the subjective reality of the experiences of those people who constitute and construct the social world. The key aim of ethnography is to understand the social meanings and activities given in the field by the participants. This involves close association with and often participation in the setting. Its main concern is to understand people’s actions

and their experiences of the world and the ways in which their motivated actions arise. Ethnographer researchers access social meanings through observing behaviour and working closely with participants. The research methods chosen for this study are used to understand the meanings of the participants; these include observation and in-depth interviewing.

3.4 Definitions and key features of ethnography

This section considers the various definitions and key features of ethnography.

Many definitions of ethnography have emerged in recent years and the term has been almost used synonymously with qualitative approaches to research, mainly observation but also case study. Brewer (2000) refers to ethnography as a method of collecting data as well as a specific theoretical and epistemological orientation to research. Ethnography is not one particular method of data collection but a style of research that is distinguished by its objectives, which are to fully understand the social meanings and activities that people in the natural setting give. Ethnography is often associated with close contact and participation in the field or setting (Brewer 2000).

Silverman (2001) argues:

'Ethnography puts together two different words: "ethno" meaning folks, while "graph" derives from "writing". Ethnography refers, then, to social scientific writing about particular folks.' (p.45)

Fieldwork is central to an ethnographic research. In classical ethnography, the researcher can be in the field from six months to two years or more. Fetterman (1998) argues that fieldwork is exploratory in nature. The researcher begins with a survey period (to get acquainted with the group) where he or she learns the basics including the native language, kinship ties,

census information, historical data, and the basic structure and function of the group. After the survey period, the researcher identifies significant themes, problems or gaps in the basic understanding of the focus of study. Fetterman (1998) argues that judgemental sampling may be useful in order to establish how a particular group thinks. Judgemental sampling refers to the researcher purposefully selecting the most appropriate participants for the study. The most important element of fieldwork is being there in the field and observing, asking insightful questions and writing down what has been seen and heard. Life histories can provide highly useful information.

In order for the researcher to ensure that any information should become a foundation on which to build a knowledge base, the researcher must cross check, compare and triangulate this information. Ethnography is based on the researcher entering a field and staying in the field for periods of time and gathering sufficient data to describe the culture or problem convincingly and to say something significant about it.

In this research, the researcher entered the field (this field being the school and the classroom) and stayed in the field for 12 months to gather data. The researcher met with participants on a one-to-one basis. Following this, he interviewed each participant. A class observation took place for each pupil, and this was then followed up with meeting the pupil/participant and sharing the findings of the interview.

Ethnographic and qualitative research is often equated with hermeneutic or interpretive research, though not all hermeneutic or interpretive studies are ethnographies. The term "hermeneutic" comes from a Greek word meaning "to translate"; a hermeneutic was an interpreter. Hermeneutic researchers are concerned with explaining, translating and interpreting meaning and perceived reality that participants give (LeCompte and Preissle 1993). Interpretive researchers share commonalities with hermeneutic researchers in that they too are concerned with meaning. Interpretive studies are concerned with descriptions of, explanations for or meanings given to the phenomena by both the researcher and the participants, rather than by the definitions and the interpretations of the researcher alone (Erikson 1986). Atkinson and Hammersley (1995) acknowledge that, although ethnography is a distinctive approach, it can be linked to case study research.

By definition, because case studies are reconstructions of a single culture, most ethnographies are case studies (Merriam 1988). The researcher in this study used a case study and an ethnographic approach in order to get a better understanding of the research area. In the ethnographic tradition, culture is described as a sum of a social group's observable patterns of behaviour, customs and ways of life (Harris 1968). According to the cognitive perspective, culture is described as the ideas, beliefs and knowledge that characterize a particular group of people. This definition of culture excludes behaviour. The ethnographer needs to be aware of cultural behaviour and knowledge in order to adequately describe a culture or a subculture. Although

neither of the definitions is sufficient, each offers the ethnographer a starting point to approach the group under study.

The key role of an ethnographer is to become an accepted member of the group, including participating in its cultural life and practices (Robson 2002). Taylor (2002) argues that some of the common features that characterize ethnography are that it involves empirical work, especially observation, in order to study people's lives. The ethnographer studies the group for an extended period of time in their own natural environment. In order to elicit this knowledge about people's lived experiences, the researcher spends time in the field familiarising himself with daily practices of the group under study. According to the ethnographic approach, the longer the individual stays in a community, building rapport, the deeper the probe into individual lives, and the greater the probability of his or her learning about the behaviour of people. Rapport in this research is built with pupils mainly through interviews.

The central aim of the ethnographic researcher is to understand other people's own world view instead of taking the outsider perspective of the conventional scientist. Ethnographic research is said to produce details of social life through "thick descriptions" (Geertz 1973) and "slice of life" accounts (Denzin and Lincoln 2003), which will enable others to fully understand the culture from the inside in the same way as the participants understand it. The researcher in this study spent almost a year getting to know each participant and their school.

Morrison and Pole (2003) argue that the ethnographic researcher uses a range of tools for collecting data. The tools used may include primary sources of data, such as observation and participant observation, interviewing, life history, and focus groups. The ethnographic researcher may also use secondary sources of data, such as surveys, official statistics, diaries, photographs and artefacts. Ethnographers use many types of data collection techniques so that data collected in one way can be used to cross check the accuracy of data gathered in another way. An ethnographer draws conclusions by triangulating with several sources of data. Triangulation enables the researcher not to accept too quickly the validity of initial impressions. Furthermore, triangulation enhances the scope, density and clarity of constructs developed throughout the research (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Triangulation also helps the researcher to correct biases that occur when the ethnographer is the only observer of the phenomenon under study. The researcher in this study used semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and non-participant observation to gather data. These are fully explored in Chapter 4 – Research Methods.

The ethnographer is the human instrument. Relying on its senses, thoughts and feelings, the human instrument is a data-gathering tool. The ethnographer conducts research in the native environment to see people and their behaviour given all the real-world incentives and constraints. Thus, the ethnographic researcher adopts a naturalistic approach. The researcher may

use a variety of methods and techniques to ensure the integrity of the data. The ethnographic researcher may use a big net approach – observing everyone he or she can, at first. As the study develops, the focus narrows to specific portions of the population under study. The most common form of sampling that is used by ethnographic researchers is that of judgmental sampling; that is, ethnographic researchers rely on their judgment to select the most appropriate members of the subculture to study.

The interview is the ethnographer's most important data gathering technique. Interviews help the ethnographer to explain what has been seen and experienced. Interviews help the researcher to clarify words and expressions that have been used that are pertinent in different cultures. The researcher conducting ethnographic research may use different interview types, including structured, semi-structured and informal. Each interview type plays a role in order to elicit information. The researcher needs to decide which approach to follow by being clear about the advantages and disadvantages of each interview type in data collection and analysis. Informal or unstructured interviews seem to be at the heart of ethnographic research. These interviews generate informal conversations with the group under study. Informal interviews enable the researcher to find out more about what people think and how one's perceptions compare with another's. These interview types are useful to establish and maintain a good rapport with the group under study. The researcher in this study used semi-structured interviews.

In the context of this study, an ethnographic approach has been adopted as it seeks to understand the lives of people. The ethnographer is interested in understanding and describing a social and cultural scene from the emic or insider's perspective. According to Fetterman (1998), the ethnographer is both a storyteller as well as a scientist; the closer the researcher understands the viewpoint of the participant, the better the story and the better the science.

Hammersley (1992) identifies a number of key features of ethnographic research. First, people's behaviour is studied in natural settings rather than under experimental circumstances created by the researcher. Second, data is collected by various means, primarily by observation. Third, data collection is unstructured; there are no pre-determined codes or categories about what people say or do. Finally, research is usually small-scale and focuses on a single setting or a group. Other features of ethnography include the use of verbatim quotations; these are extremely useful in presenting a credible report of the research. Examples of these quotations can be seen in Chapter 6 – Key Findings. Such quotations will allow the reader to judge how close the ethnographer is to the thoughts of the people being studied and whether the ethnographer used such data appropriately to support the conclusions.

Fetterman (1998) argues that ethnography has received criticisms from the natural science or the scientific model. The natural science model does not allow the researcher to become a variable in the experiment as ethnographic

researchers do. Because of the involvement of ethnographic researchers in the field, their obtrusive presence influences the field. Other concerns about ethnography are linked to the methods of data collection, as such methods are unstructured. Another concern about ethnography is that it describes and measures social phenomena by using the natural language of the participants through the use of quotes from interviews and it deals with quality and meaning. Because ethnography deals with meaning, these may seem unreliable and elusive, as data can appear to be “too subjective” and contrast with natural science data, which is more objective. The researcher in this study uses a range of methods to collate data and uses strategies to ensure that bias and personal values of the researcher are minimised in every possible way.

Stake (1995) argues that case studies in education are used to understand specific issues and problems of practice. In conducting case study research in education, case studies draw from other disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, sociology and history, both for theoretical orientation and for tools of data collection and analysis. The term ethnography has been used interchangeably with qualitative research, case study and fieldwork (Stake 1995). The researcher’s approach is to use aspects of ethnography and the case study.

3.5 Ethics

This section considers ethics; in particular, it looks at the ethical issues that are present when interviewing.

Before interviewing or observing any participants, the researcher sought initial permission from the headteachers in both schools by writing a letter explaining the purpose of the research (an example of the letter can be seen in Appendix 7). With the permission of the participants, the researcher tape-recorded the semi-structured interviews. Interviewees were informed regarding who would listen to the tapes and how they would be stored. The interviews were then transcribed verbatim from the tapes; regular checks were made to ensure that the data presented an accurate record. This was achieved through sharing with the participants the transcript and asking participants to comment on the accuracy of the interview at the time of interviewing. The researcher was aware that some participants may have forgotten what was said; he therefore asked participants at the time of the interview if what they said was what was meant.

All participants who took part in the research were informed of the nature of the research, why this research is being carried out, what purpose it serves and what will happen to the findings of the research. The school was encouraged to initially ask identified parents, their children, and relevant support staff to take part in the research. For those parents who were unable

to speak English, the researcher explained to them in Urdu the nature of the research. Once the school gave permission, the researcher contacted parents, their children and relevant support staff. Parents were shown the type of questions that their children would answer.

At the start of the interview, participants were asked if they would take part in the research, even though the headteacher may have given permission for the research to be conducted. The terms confidentiality and anonymity were explained to all participants. The participants were assured that no person would be identified in the research and pseudonyms would be used. Participants were reassured that the information they provided would be treated with the strictest confidence. Participants were informed that they would have the opportunity to verify statements when the research is in draft form. Participants were informed that although the research is to be assessed by the University of Huddersfield for examination purposes only, but should the question of publication arise at a later date, permission will be sought from the participants.

The researcher was aware that the data collection instruments might present ethical dilemmas. For example, in an interview situation, the participants may not answer certain questions because they may be embarrassed about their opinions or lack of opinions, but they feel pressured to respond (Kvale 1996). The researcher was aware of this and ensured that he asked repeat questions

worded differently; furthermore, the researcher created an atmosphere where participants were encouraged to talk and were thanked for their contributions.

The researcher was aware of the possible unanticipated long-term effects (positive and negative) of interviewing. For example, the interview may actually improve the situation of pupils with learning difficulties or cause the pupils to become upset as they realise that they have learning difficulties.

During the observation, the researcher was aware of the extent to which his or her presence is changing what is being observed. He ensured any interruptions were minimised and only intervened when appropriate.

The researcher was aware that analysing data may present ethical problems, namely being aware that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data has been filtered through the researcher's theoretical position and biases; for example, deciding what is important and what should or should not be attended to when collecting and analysing data. For this reason, the researcher asked a teaching assistant to also analyse three interview transcripts and elicit key themes.

To further minimise bias (because the researcher was also a practitioner in ICP), in Inner City Primary the researcher only interviewed the children whom he did not teach; none of the children or the parents were known to him personally. Similarly, the researcher interviewed the teaching assistant and

the teacher, with whom he did not work. In Outer City Primary, the researcher knew no participants. Robson (2002:514) describes the practitioner-researcher as *'someone who holds down a job in some particular area and is at the same time involved in carrying out systematic enquiry, which is of relevance to the job'*. The researcher in this study works in Inner City Primary; this serves as a key benefit as the researcher-practitioner is in a good position to implement some of the research findings (Robson 2002).

In this study, all identified participants except two (a parent from each of Inner and Outer City Primary) took part in the research. One parent from Inner City Primary refused to take part in the interview but allowed his daughter to be interviewed. The parent refused because he was angry and frustrated with the current education system and felt that for many years he had voiced his opinions to the Council on matters other than education. However, he felt that no one listened and he merely wasted his time talking. The parent from Outer City Primary did not take part in the research because she was involved in an accident and subsequently was "hospital bound", which prevented her from taking part in the research. All parents of pupils were invited to take part in the research and to give permission for their children to be part of an interview and an observation.

When interviewing, the researcher was very clear about the practicalities involved during the interview, for example where the child sat in relation to the researcher. The researcher and the child sat on chairs (arranged in an "L"

shape) to indicate equality and to create a less aggressive and powerful feel than if chairs were arranged face-to-face. The children were given the choice of where the interview could take place, for example an office or a classroom environment. Children chose to be interviewed in an office environment. The researcher was aware that, because the researcher did not know participants in the second school and because they were of a different ethnicity, there might be reluctance to talk and animosity from the participants. For this reason, the researcher ensured that ice-breaking games were used and a good relationship was established before and during the interview when the researcher met with participants.

When analysing the data from the interview transcripts, it was pleasing to see rich data emerging from participants in both schools. The researcher was also aware that, because the children he was interviewing had learning difficulties, they may experience feelings of sadness. Furthermore, the children may see the researcher as being someone who is “successful” compared to themselves. For this reason, the researcher aimed to adopt many of the above strategies to make the interview experience comfortable for the children.

The ethics of children’s research can be divided into three key groups, informed consent, confidentiality and protection (Morrow and Richards 1996). In this study, the researcher ensured that children were able to understand through clear questioning that taking part in the research was voluntary and

pupils could end participation at any point. As suggested by Morrow and Richards, in this study, the researcher talked to all the children involved in the research and spoke about why particular research methods and identified children were chosen. Similarly, children were informed of confidentiality of their responses. The researcher was also aware that parents and teachers may ask what their children had said. The researcher remained firm and did not share any information with others; however, he did inform children at the start of the establishment of ground rules, that if the researcher felt that the child said something and the child was regarded to be "at risk," the researcher would need to share that information with someone, but nothing would be done without consulting and informing the child. The researcher was aware of the perception that children are vulnerable and interaction between the researcher and the child involves power relations. The researcher in this study was aware of the pressures children may experience, for example fear of failure, threats to self-esteem, and reactions to invasions of privacy, conflict, guilt or embarrassment when acting as participants. In order to address these issues, an atmosphere of comfort was created; the researcher avoided asking certain questions that could potentially confuse and upset children.

Many writers, including Morrow and Richard (1996) and Beresford (1997), have argued that the power of adults can be reduced by employing a variety of research techniques that will allow children to feel part of the research process. For this reason, in this study, interviews were semi-structured

(informal) in nature; the researcher used various prompts including key words and phrases. These approaches enable adults to allow children to be active participants in the research process (Mayall 1994). Because of the concerns about the power of adults, some researchers, including Mauthner (1997), have employed structured activities as an alternative to interviews. Children have been asked to write about hypothetical situations, such as about their future, and complete unfinished sentences. Some of these techniques were employed in this study.

In this study, the researcher adopted a particular role when interviewing children, that role being a non-authoritarian adult role. Many writers, including Mandell (1991) and Corsaro (1985), recommend adopting the role of a "friend" or "least adult" as this provides the researcher with the opportunity to interact with the children. Fine and Sandstrom (1988) state that the age and authority of an adult means that he/she can never be a complete participant. However, the researcher decided to adopt the "least adult/ friend and non-authoritarian role," in order to establish the rapport with the children and get from them their views on learning difficulties that otherwise would have been difficult had the researcher adopted a dictorial role. Since children are the final gatekeepers to their own worlds, the least adult role helps to reduce the social distance between the adult and the child and ultimately engages the child in a conversation (Mandell 1991). The researcher is aware that there can be no universally successful "children's researcher role".

A consensus has developed in qualitative children's research; that is to empower children. Empowerment is linked to enabling children to become active participants in the research process, giving children the opportunity to allow them to put forward their views and reducing the social distance between the researcher and the participant; employing the "least adult" role helps to achieve this consensus (Mandell 1991).

Like all researchers, ethnographers have a responsibility not only to protect research participants from harm but also to have regard for their rights (Mandell 1991). Beauchamp *et al* (1982) argue that, when conducting ethnographic research, the researcher should avoid harming participants; research on participants should produce some positive benefit rather than simply carrying out research for the sake of it; the researcher should take into consideration the values and decisions of the participants and finally participants should be treated equally. Beauchamp *et al* (1982) refer to this as non-maleficence, beneficence, autonomy and justice respectively. The researcher in this study ensured that no harm was caused when interviewing participants. The researcher was aware of possible harm, for example parents or pupils feeling dissatisfied with their learning difficulties that may result in them challenging current arrangements. This outcome could be either regarded as beneficial (increased self-awareness leading to positive change) or harmful (the disruption of stable family/schooling arrangements) depending on one's ideological position.

Chapter 4 Research Methods

This chapter explores the following areas: reasons for choice of methods, interview sample, interviews, observation, focus group interviews, self-image profile, meeting the participants, conducting the interviews, re-interviewing the participants and sharing findings. This chapter further explores strategies employed to ensure a better interview response, recording the interviews, the pilot study, lessons learnt from the pilot study, sampling, seeking consent, and ensuring validity and reliability of response.

Interpretative research methods have been used because they allow the researcher to see the world through the eyes of those being studied. Morrison and Pole (2003) highlight key features of qualitative research – namely, these researchers are interested in observation, which is described as naturalistic or participant observation. The purpose of observation is to generate rich and deep description of individuals, events and settings. As stated earlier, the self-concept profile was used to establish an individual's self-concept. This was used in an interpretive manner where children were given a statement and were asked to explain and justify why they agreed or disagreed with a particular statement. The researcher was aware that using the profile as it was would generate a closed and quantitative response. For this reason, the researcher asked the children to elaborate and justify their answers.

Looking at it from a historical perspective, it is evident that a large amount of research has been carried out on children as objects of research rather than subjects (Greene and Hogan 2005); this research investigates children's experiences of their world around them. Kagan (1984) argues that, without some kind of access to the content of a person's experience, one has an incomplete account of understanding the individual. For this reason, this research uses semi-structured interviews to find out from pupils what life is like for them while having learning difficulties. Semi-structured interviews are also used to ascertain parent and school staff views on children with learning difficulties. Furthermore, the researcher uses non-participant observation to observe children with learning difficulties in class and he uses focus group interviews to ascertain the views of peers.

It is clear from the review of literature that there has been very little research on investigating children's experience of their learning difficulty using semi-structured interviews and observation (Norwich and Kelly 2004). Similarly, there has been limited research on parents and significant others (peers, teachers and support staff) and their views on children with learning difficulties, especially in relation to white and Pakistani families.

The reliability of data could be judged through many data sources such as observations, parent, support staff and teacher and support staff interviews. Oliver (1986) and Fox and Norwich (1992) have shown that the self-

perceptions of those with intellectual difficulties can be assessed reliably using semi-structured interviews based on elicitation methods derived from Personal Construct theory (Kelly 1955).

4.1 Interview sample

This section looks at the number and type of participants who took part in the study.

Two boys and two girls were interviewed from each school; these children were also observed on one occasion during a lesson. The researcher chose to work with pupils at school action stage, on the special educational needs register because, since these pupils are assessed as having moderate learning difficulties, this represents the largest group of children on the SEN register (DfES 2001). A smaller sample of children was selected as it was envisaged that the data from interviewing eight children would provide rich and in depth data. Parents were given the choice of where they wanted to be interviewed (home or school). Parents from Inner City Primary chose to be interviewed at school, whereas parents from Outer City Primary for various reasons, including convenience and illness, chose to be interviewed in their homes. A discussion with the school link teacher indicated that, although the parents chose to be interviewed at home, they were not afraid to come into school if they wanted to speak to a member of school staff. The researcher was aware that adults including parents could feel incompetent and powerless because of the researcher's language, status and characteristics of the researcher or because of the characteristics of the parent who may have learning difficulties (Alderson 1995). For these reasons, the researcher offered the parents a choice of where they preferred to be interviewed. Teaching assistants (two)

who work closely with the children with learning difficulties were interviewed to ascertain their views on children with learning difficulties. One teacher from each school was also interviewed. Six children of average/higher ability (as identified by teachers) were also interviewed from each school as part of the focus group interview. Chapter 6 considers the research findings.

Table 1: The Research Sample

	Gender (child) (Year 6)	Gender (Parent)	Teachers	Teaching assistant	Focus group (Year 6)
ICP	Male Male Female Female	Male Female Male Male (refused)	1 Female	1 Female	6 average/able pupils
OCP	Male Male Female Female	Female Female Female Female (unable to take part - ill)	1 Male	1 Female	6 average/able pupils
Total	8	6	2	2	12

Families from both schools regarded themselves as being “working-class”. Through discussions, families understood working-class to mean people involved in manual occupations where the bulk of the jobs are unskilled and poorly paid. All children from ICP were entitled to and had a free school meal, compared to three children from OCP who were entitled to and had a free school meal. The fathers of children in ICP worked in factories (2) or were taxi drivers (2). Only one of the mothers from ICP worked; she worked as a school lunchtime supervisor and a cleaner. The remaining mothers did not work. One mother was looking after her newly born child, nevertheless this

parent and the other two mothers did not see it appropriate for women to work. They saw their role being that of looking after their children and their family. In contrast, all parents from OCP worked (with the exception of one who had had a recent accident). The fathers worked in shops (2), factories (1) or had their own business (1); the mothers worked in shops in the main. These mothers saw it as important for them to work as well as look after their families. All parents from ICP lived in mid-terraced housing, whereas the families from OCP lived in semi-detached properties. Space was not an issue for these families, whereas families from ICP did report that their homes were overcrowded and therefore children did not always get their own bedrooms, in contrast to OCP children. OCP families reported about going away on holiday at least once a year; they saw this as being important and spending time as a family. Children from ICP had been on holiday, but this was infrequent and only to Pakistan, where visiting families was a priority and not exploring the country.

The researcher was aware that mainly male parents took part in the interview at ICP and female parents took part in the interview at OCP. The researcher could find no data to indicate why this was so, other than it was convenient for parents to attend the interview. However, further research could explore the role and influence of female parents in schools like ICP.

4.2 Interviews

This section explores the use and types of interviews used in the study in depth; it also takes into account interviewer effects whilst conducting interviews.

Most qualitative researchers prefer to carry out interviews using a conversational style of everyday interaction (Schatzman and Strauss 1973). Writers, including Lofland (1971), argue that a conversational-style interview promotes empathy, encouragement and understanding amongst the participants. Schatzman and Strauss (1973) further argue that this type of interview allows the participants to feel that what they are saying is acceptable and significant. Patton (1990) argues that this type of interview enables the interviewer to respond neutrally to questions without risking the loss of rapport. Furthermore, a conversational-style interview is comfortable to participants and develops trust and confidence, and is more likely to generate valid data. Spradley (1979) identifies the differences between interviews and friendly conversations. He argues that interviews have a script, an agenda and a purpose set by the researcher, and they also require greater clarification and attention to detail than conversations amongst friends who may share “insider information” that is not necessarily accessible to the researcher. Patton (1990) suggests that interviewers talk less than participants. Patton argues that an interview transcript that is surrounded by interviewer remarks indicates a poorly trained or insensitive questioner. This

type of transcript will provide less data than intended. The interview question order was flexible and was changed to follow the flow of the discussion; the researcher felt that this would enable the children to engage in a “real conversation”.

The researcher chose to use semi-structured interviews, since both the researcher and the participant were able to explore the meaning of questions and answers involved, and any misunderstandings on the part of the interviewer or interviewee could be checked immediately. A common interview guide was designed to cover the various aspects of pupil perspectives that related to the research questions. Pupils were told that their responses were anonymous and that any report based on the interviews would under no circumstances reveal their details. Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to work within an informal style to explore a range of ideas, including sensitive and potentially difficult areas (Guba and Lincoln 1981).

Interviews are described as a “conversation with a purpose” (Kahn and Mann 1952). Interviews in this study were more like conversations. The researcher explored a few general topics to help unravel the participant’s meaning. Combined with observation, interviews allowed the researcher to understand the meanings people held for their everyday activities (Marshall and Rossman 1999). However, there are certain limitations with interviews; because they require personal interaction, cooperation is important. Participants may be

unwilling to share all their information that is hoped for by the interviewer. The interviewer may not ask certain questions because of a lack of expertise or skill on behalf of the interviewer. Other limitations of interviews include responses to questions that may not be understood by the interviewer, and interviewees may choose not to tell the truth. In this study, the researcher was aware of key skills that are required of the interviewer, some of these include good listening skills, to be skilful at personal interaction, to frame questions in a particular way that can be understood by the interviewees and that can generate rich data, probe for elaboration when required, and raise awareness of issues surrounding researcher bias and interviewees wanting to please the interviewer.

In discussing interview effects, Selltiz and Jahoda (1962) suggest that:

'Much of what we call interviewer bias can more correctly be described as interviewer differences, which are inherent in the fact that interviewers are human beings and not machines.' (p.41)

The writers argue that social scientists are dependent on data collected by oral and written reports; they argue that these reports are open to the same sources of error and bias as those that are collected by the interviewer.

The researcher in this study ensured that guidance and direction from the interviewer was at a minimum, as stated by Merton (1956). Merton claims interviewer effects cannot be ignored; the researcher needs to be aware of these, such as misdirected prompting and probing, awareness of interviewer

characteristics and behaviour, and problems with question wording. Mayall (2000) argues that adults have authority over children; children therefore find it difficult to disagree or say things that they may view as being unacceptable. For this reason, the researcher, as argued by Mayall, needs to be aware of key factors such as allowing children to choose a time and place for the interview to take place. Barn *et al* (1997) argue that a school is a convenient point of access. Research by Waterman *et al* (2002) showed that children will very often answer "no" when they do not understand a question. For this reason, the researcher used multi methods and frequently asked children to explain what they thought the question meant. Use of multi methods including direct observation allows the researcher to confirm whether children actually do what they have said (Morrow and Richards 1996).

A protocol exists for all interviews, for example respect for the culture or group under study. In this study, the researcher was aware of whom he was interviewing; for this reason, he dressed and spoke appropriately in a manner that reflected the voice of the participants. For example, when the researcher interviewed parents, he did not wear a suit but dressed casually to reflect parental dress. Writers, including Fetterman (1998), speaking about ethnographic research have argued that a consistent disregard or a lack of concern for the group's basic cultural values will severely impede research progress.

In-depth interviewing and direct observation are key methods that qualitative researchers use to gather information (Marshall and Rossman 1999). Both of these methods were used in this study. Clearly, each research method has its strengths and challenges. Using different methods allows the researcher to look at phenomena from a different perspective; it gives a more detailed and balanced picture of the situation. Seeing things from a different perspective can enhance the validity of the data (Denscombe 1998). Using multiple methods gives the researcher confidence that the findings are not too closely tied with a particular method used to collect data (Sarantakos 1998).

During interviews, most people are pleased to be listened to (Stake 1995). The purpose of a qualitative research interview is not to simply get a “yes” or “no” response but to get from participants a description of an episode and/or an explanation. Stake (1995) argues that the interviewer needs to listen to the voice of the participants carefully during an interview and needs to occasionally ask the “dumb questions” to assure what was said “was said” or ask if the participants meant what clearly was not meant. The researcher in this study allowed for ample time after each interview in order to prepare for a facsimile and an interpretive commentary that captured key ideas and episodes. The researcher in the study sent the interview transcripts to the participants and was aware of the possible problems that may arise from this; first participants may be surprised with the construction of their sentences, and they may be grammatically incorrect. Second, participants may feel that the interview did not convey what they intended. Third, because the

transcript may arrive a long time after the actual interview took place, the participants may not fully recall what they said and they may feel that what they said is no longer applicable. The researcher was aware of the ethical issues in sending the transcripts home, for example the issue regarding confidentiality; however, every effort was made to ensure that transcripts reached the hands of the participants. This was achieved through the use of a recorded delivery service. However, there was no certainty that the transcripts would not be shared by others and, for this reason, it would have been better if the researcher had shared the transcripts with the participants in school.

Patton (1990) argues that the main purpose of the interview is to find out from participants the things that cannot be directly observed, for example participant's feelings, thoughts and intentions. Patton argues then that the key purpose of the interview is to enter into the other person's perspective and explore the meanings that people attach to what goes on in their world. Interviews are also important when the researcher is interested in finding out about the past; for example in this research the researcher asked participants about when they first discovered that they had learning difficulties.

Dexter (1970) argues that the participants may get something from being interviewed; this may include having an opportunity for them to tell the researcher something, and this in itself is pleasurable and reinforcing. Dexter (1970) further suggests that interviews may help participants to clarify their

own thoughts and experiences. Finally, according to Dexter (1970) most people are flattered by the interest of a sympathetic listener. The researcher in this study ensured participants felt good about being listened to as the researcher was genuinely interested about what participants had to say.

Participants in an interview may deliberately or unconsciously supply false or misleading data; this distortion can be ameliorated by collating data from other forms of data collection, including observation. Denzin (1989) discusses three types of interviews. These include the standardised interview – an orally administered questionnaire where participants are asked the same questions in the same order, and probes too are standardised. The non-standardised interview – where the same questions and probes are used for all participants but the order in which the questions are asked may change depending on how the participant reacts. The flexibility in question order allows the interviewer to be more natural and responsive. Finally, the semi-structured interview – this refers to an interview guide where general questions are asked informally in whatever order or context they happen to arise. The researcher uses this latter form of interview to collect data from its participants. Patton (1990) also refers to three types of interviews; the first is the informal conversational interview where the participant may be unaware that he or she is being questioned as this interview type is well embedded within a conversation. The second interview type is where a general interview guide is used and the researcher uses this to address a set of issues. The guide is used as a checklist to assure that all relevant topics are covered for

each participant. The third interview type includes the standardised open interview. This type of interview involves asking the participant a set of questions worded and arranged in the same way so that each participant is interviewed in the same way; this interview type is similar to Denzin's standardised interviews.

The researcher in this study conducted interviews in the conversational style of everyday interaction, an approach that emphasises empathy, encouragement and understanding (Lofland 1971). Schatzman and Strauss (1973) argue that this approach allows the participants to feel that what they are saying is acceptable and significant. Furthermore, this approach elicits trust, confidence and puts participants at ease. This style of interview allows the interviewer to respond neutrally without risking the loss of rapport (Patton 1990). Cicourel (1964) argues that the rapport of ordinary friendship increases the "idiosyncrasy" of interviews and poses difficulties for establishing reliability and certain kinds of validity.

4.3 Observation

This section explores in detail the use of non-participant observation as a data collection tool. This section also looks at some of the differences between non-participant observation and participant observation.

Participant observation characterises most ethnographic research and is central to effective fieldwork. This type of observation involves learning the language and seeing the patterns of behaviour overtime. Long-term residence helps the researcher to internalise the basic beliefs, fears, hopes and expectations of the people under study. Participant observation requires close, long-term contact with the people under study. Observation without participation in other people's lives may involve ethnographic methods but is not ethnography. Non-participant observation may involve watching a school basketball game as part of data collection. Applying ethnographic techniques and non-participant observation are acceptable forms of research but labelling the research method is important (Fetterman 1998).

Participant observation involves data gathering by means of participation in the daily lives of participants in their natural settings. This may involve watching, observing and talking to the participants in order to discover their interpretations, social meanings and activities. The aim behind this is to generate data through watching and listening to what people naturally say and do, but also to personally experience what the participants experience by

sharing their same everyday life activities. The researcher thus needs to balance key personal qualities such as maintaining a balance between the “insider” and the “outsider” status as well as maintaining a professional distance with the participants under study. During observation, the qualitative researcher keeps a record of events in order to provide readers with a description of what is happening. The researcher in this instance lets the occasion tell its story (Morrison and Pole 2003). The researcher in this study ensured that he observed participants in their natural settings and interacted when needed.

The degree of participation varies from one study to another and within studies as well. Gold (1958) classifies participations according to the extent the researcher engages with the participants and how aware the participants are that they are being studied. Gold (1958) discusses four types of participation, including the complete participant, the participant-as-observer, the complete observer and the observer-as-participant. The researcher in this study adopted the latter position, as will be explained later in this section.

The complete participant is one who is a researcher who assumes an insider role into the group being researched and whose research identity is not known to the group. This means that the complete participant is working under cover and this raises a number of issues including ethical ones.

The participant-as-observer may assume an insider role but will often play the part of a snoop, a shadow. In this case, the participants know the researcher as a researcher.

The complete observer position is also similar to that of the complete participant in that it is also covert. Participants are following their normal day-to-day activities without knowing that they are being watched through a one-way mirror or by a hidden camera. This type of researcher is completely removed from the social field and hence has no interaction with the participants.

The observer-as-participant is also known to the group as a researcher but the participant has more limited interactions with the group. Gold suggests that interviewers who schedule a single session are observers-as-participants. This type of participant enters the lives of those being studied but social interaction is brief and is focused around the question and response format of the interview.

The researcher chose to use non-participant observation as a research method since it allowed the researcher to observe children with learning difficulties in their classroom and observe their interaction and participation in the lesson. Non-participant observation invites the researcher to observe children from the outside without becoming part of the group (Wragg 1994). The researcher was aware that, although he used non-participant

observation, he was still a participant in the field. Frederickson and Cline (1995) argue that observation allows the expectations of the teacher to be examined in connection with the targeted child. Observation also allows the researcher to record what the teacher and the targeted children say to each other.

Observation in this study context involved noting and recording events that took place in the classroom (see the observation schedule in Appendix 14). In this study, classroom observation was used where the researcher learnt about how the children behaved, responded to certain situations and the meanings that children attached to behaviours. The researcher first interviewed the children, then he conducted a classroom observation where he sought confirmation of pupil interviews; for example, were pupils taking part in the lesson? In this case, observation was used to discover complex interactions in natural social settings. Furthermore, observation enabled the researcher to look at pupil body language in a real-life setting.

Collecting data through non-participant observation is different from participant observation in many ways (Pelto and Pelto 1978). Non-participant observation requires the researcher to remain detached, neutral and become an unobtrusive observer. The researcher in this study partly achieved this by observing the children in the classroom without talking or participating in any activities with the children. The researcher remained focused on looking at children's behaviour and hearing what was being said and how children were

integrating with other children. The researcher avoided seeking clarification with the children by interrupting them, a procedure which is integral to the more interactive methods. However, the researcher did speak to pupils briefly during the lesson and straight after the observation, using an informal interview to explore what pupils were doing and whether they understood the task.

The challenge for using this type of method was for the researcher to remain detached from the situation by fading into the scene. Frederickson and Cline (1995) argue that the presence of the researcher affects the behaviour of both children and the teacher. The authors argue that, because observation is conducted for limited time periods, it is important to consider whether the periods used are sufficient to obtain a reliable and valid sample of the interactions of interest. The researcher ensured that pupils were observed at a time where they were either involved in a literacy or a numeracy lesson. However, as stated in the Chapter 7 – Reflections on Methodology, it would have been better if the researcher had observed the children on more than one occasion.

LeCompte and Preissle (1993) describe three types of non-participant observation used by educational ethnographers. These observations range from recording accurate minute-by-minute accounts of what a participant does and says (stream of behaviour chronicles) or being concerned with social uses of space and with bodily movement (proxemics and kinesics) to

conducting an interaction analysis where the researcher notes how participants interact with each other. The researcher observed behaviour for an extended period of time (during the whole 45-minute lesson) and recorded more or less continuously what was seen under key headings, some of which were devised on the schedule, for example pupil behaviour during teacher input.

The researcher observed a numeracy lesson lasting approximately 45 minutes in each school before morning play. A numeracy lesson was chosen because, during the pupil interview, children said that they enjoyed and found numeracy easier than literacy because they could see patterns and use known methods to work out answers to given questions. The researcher wanted to confirm whether what children said reflected during their interview reflected their classroom experience.

The pupils in both schools did not know that the researcher was coming in to observe them during that lesson; however, they did know that the researcher was coming in to observe them for one lesson. Only the relevant teachers knew that the researcher was coming in at a given time. Within the first few minutes, children soon forgot that the researcher was there to observe them as they were engaged with the activity. Teachers were asked to teach in their usual way and not to change anything such as work with the children with learning difficulties if they do not usually work with them. The researcher wanted to capture how children work in their “everyday lives”.

4.4 Focus group interviews

This section explores the use of focus group interviews; it also looks at some of the differences between focus group interviews and group interviews. Furthermore, this section looks at how focus group interviews were conducted, how data was analysed and how the researcher dealt with different types of participants. Finally, the researcher discusses ethics in relation to focus groups.

Morgan (1988) has suggested that focus groups help the researcher to investigate why people hold the views they do. Kitzinger (1994) offers a number of advantages for using focus groups in that they enable a researcher to gain insight into social processes; they encourage conversation about embarrassing or sensitive subjects and they are used to explore differences in the group. The focus group data was challenging in terms of analysis and interpretation and the researcher was aware of further limitations of focus group interviews, such as the limitations of the findings to a particular group rather than wider population, and where there are certain dominant individuals within the group. Such interviews give the researcher access to a wide range of issues concerning pupils' understandings and views about children with learning difficulties.

Kitzinger and Barbour (1999) argue that focus group interviews are group discussions exploring a specific set of issues. The group is “focused” in that it involves some kind of collective activity such as debating a set of questions. Instead of asking each person in turn, questions as in group interviews, focus group researchers encourage participants to talk to one another, asking questions and commenting on each other’s experiences and points of view. Focus groups can be distinguished from other group interviews that involve face-to-face interaction with more than one participant. Focus groups are focused in that they usually involve collective activities to provide the framework for interaction (Krueger 1994).

Kitzinger and Barbour (1999) suggest that focus groups are ideal for exploring people’s experiences, opinions, wishes and concerns. They also enable participants to examine people’s different perspectives as they operate within a social network. The writers further argue that focus groups are particularly useful to the study of attitudes and experiences around specific topics as in this study.

Conducting focus group interviews requires the researcher to have key skills such as being able to avoid being judgemental, presenting himself as being the expert or making assumptions that lead to the closing of explorations. The researcher ensured that he was able to maintain the balance between keeping quiet and knowing when to intervene, clarifying ambiguous statements, enabling participants to complete their sentences, encouraging all

participants to participate and ensuring interesting and unexpected avenues were pursued as well as ensuring interaction among the children (Krueger 1994).

Interviews were conducted alongside focus group interviews as argued by Michell (1997). In her study, she found that, in interviews, children reveal certain feelings and experiences that would have remained untold if children had only taken part in focus group interviews. The focus group interview was carried out with six children from each school; Kitzinger (1994) recommends working with five or six children. Both focus groups entailed three boys and three girls who were regarded by their class teacher to be of at least average ability.

The purpose of using focus groups is not to infer but to understand, not to generalise but to determine the range, not to make statements about the population but to provide insights about how people in the groups perceive a situation (Krueger 1994). Patton (1990) argues that sampling in focus groups is purposeful because the researcher selects participants based on the purpose of the study. The researcher seeks people who have special knowledge or experiences that are helpful in the study; they are what Patton calls "information rich" cases. The researcher took into consideration a range of voices within the group of six children who otherwise may be excluded, such as shy and quiet children as well as the nervous child who may be nervous about being the sole focus of the researcher's attention.

All focus group interviews were tape recorded as this was described as good practice by a number of writers, including Kitzinger (1994), who argues that there are a number of reasons for recording such interviews. First, it is not only difficult to write down everything people say but also who and how they say it. In an individual interview, it can be argued that one may be able to ask the participant to stop whilst the interviewer writes down the answer, but, in a focus group interview involving several people, this would be highly disruptive. A tape recorder was further used as it allowed the researcher to study the focus group process whereby meaning is collectively constructed. It would be difficult to do this by taking notes because of the need to track who said what.

The focus group interview lasted for at least one hour; the school link teacher and the researcher sought pupil and parent consent. Pupils were informed of why they were chosen, what was expected of them and what would happen to the findings of the interview. Ground rules were established, including not naming any child or teacher, being honest and keeping confidentiality.

The pupils from both schools engaged in a conversation and were able to provide data. The teaching assistant remained in the same room where the interview was taking place. Her brief was to record in as much detail, what the pupils were saying. It was helpful to have the teaching assistant present during the focus interview since the researcher could concentrate on having a

conversation with the children and not worry about note taking; although occasionally the researcher did take notes such as commenting on a child's non-verbal communication. Having the teaching assistant present also increased the validity of the data through her involvement of taking notes as this "freed up the researcher" who could concentrate on engaging in a conversation with the pupils. The teaching assistant available during the interview also helped to increase the validity of pupil response as both the children and the teaching assistant would have known each other. For this reason, the children would be perhaps more encouraged to tell the truth. At the same time, the researcher was aware of the existing relationship between the child and the teaching assistant. Children perhaps choose what to say or not. Koocher and Keith (1994) argue that the presence of an attachment figure may be desirable to reassure a child but equally this may inhibit and influence the child's account in a particular direction. Alternatively, it may give the child confidence to speak. All children in the focus group were informed as to why the teaching assistant was present during the interview and that the rules of confidentiality still applied.

The researcher ensured that questions asked during the focus group were open-ended, short, clear, used words that participants would use and that language was that of the conversation. All these features are the hallmark of focus group interviews (Kitzinger 1994).

The researcher had an interview schedule for the focus group interview, which he used when interviewing children. The schedule contained a basic outline of key questions; this can be seen in Appendix 13. Although the schedule contained pre-determined questions, the researcher was aware that the objective of focus group interviews is not primarily to elicit the group's answers but rather to stimulate discussion and thereby to understand the meanings and norms that underlie those group answers. Ingroup interviews, the researcher seeks answers, whereas, in focus groups, the researcher seeks group interaction. The researcher was aware that interaction among group members is important; for this reason he presented children with statements that enabled them to interact and discuss key topics. The researcher used other activities, such as ranking how children with learning difficulties may feel, as a common focus group activity and that it enables participants to discuss.

When asking questions, the researcher first encouraged children to think individually about the question before discussing it as a group. This, he believed, would enable children to first think for themselves rather than copy what another child had said. The researcher encouraged children to concentrate on what others in the group were saying and defend their differing perspectives. It was interesting that in both schools boys tended to and wanted to dominate the interview. The researcher noted this and ensured that girls were given the opportunity to speak by asking direct questions to girls and praising them when they contributed. It was interesting to note that

two of the girls in Inner City Primary were quiet but when they spoke they gave very deep, thoughtful and well-considered responses. For example, as shall be seen in the findings section of the focus group, two girls said that some of the negative words including thick, dumb and stupid are used to refer to children with learning difficulties and these words are not only harsh as they put it but also they take the “mick” out of the children, they hurt people’s feelings and result in children losing confidence and not wanting to come to school. In Outer City Primary, the opposite was true, even though the boys were dominant; there were two boys in particular who gave very articulate responses; clearly, they were reflecting on the questions asked.

A number of questions were asked to obtain information from pupils about what they thought of children with learning difficulties, in particular their attitudes to learning. For this reason, questions asked were related to feelings towards learning, friendship, labels used to refer to children with learning difficulties, their expectations of pupils who have learning difficulties, how they would describe clever children and those with learning difficulties and what were the types of jobs they thought children with learning difficulties would do when they grow up. The children informed the researcher that they enjoyed the experience of the interview, as they were able to give their views on important matters. The focus groups were reminded of and informed about confidentiality. The children were made aware of not talking to other children outside the group about what was discussed in the group and not to mention any names of children during the focus group discussion.

Focus group research by Morgan and Krueger (1997) has shown that people may be more rather than less likely to self disclose or share personal experiences in group settings rather than dyadic settings. The writers even refer to a certain thrill in discussing openly taboo topics. To those working from a feminist perspective, the fact that focus groups can facilitate rather than inhibit, this may come as no surprise. The writers argue that people can feel relatively empowered and supported in a group situation, surrounded by their peers or friends. The researcher found this in this study when working with children. Hoppe *et al* (1995) argue that children may be likely to share experiences and feelings in the presence of people whom they perceive to be like themselves in the same way. Spencer *et al* (1988) argue that there is a possibility that participants in a group will sometimes feel more comfortable in disclosing information to “outsiders”.

Writers such as Mariampolski (1989) argue that children in a focus group will feel less vulnerable in a group because of the sheer weight of participant numbers. This acts to reduce the relative power of the researcher and this is also true because of the degree of control group participants have relative to individual interviewees in particular, over how much they feel under pressure to contribute to a discussion. Researchers, including Morgan (1998), argue that sensitive topics can be discussed in groups for the above reasons.

Hoppe *et al* (1995) argue that the researcher's role in focus groups where sensitive topics are discussed is that of setting the tone and managing the flow of the discussion; the researcher in this study maintained this role. The writers also argue that discussion of sensitive topics should be preceded by warm-up activities and the setting of ground rules; the researcher again maintained this. The researcher asked children what they thought the ground rules should be. The children came up with the following:

'To give people the chance to speak by listening to them, not to talk all at once, show respect by not laughing at each others' answers, do not mention children's names, do not talk about other children after the interview has finished and say pass if you do not want to speak.'

Hoppe *et al* (1995) argue that discussion should start with less sensitive topics and then move to more sensitive areas when relationships are established. Furthermore, the writers suggest that focus group interviews should end with the opportunity for children to ask questions, to clarify any possible confusions or misconceptions. Again, the researcher in this study maintained this by following these guidelines set by the writers.

Although focus groups are useful, they come with a set of limitations. First, data is difficult to analyse as focus groups can very quickly produce a huge amount of data. Tape recordings are more time-consuming than equivalent recordings of individual interviews. This is due to variations in voice pitch and the need to take into account who says what (Krueger 1994).

Children in the focus group were informed of how the interview would be recorded, what would happen to the records and how their anonymity would be protected in order to reduce anxiety over self-disclosure. Children were also informed of their right to take back any or all of what they had said. No child took anything back.

4.5 Meeting the participants

This section looks at the steps the researcher took when meeting the participants. Furthermore, the researcher discusses the length of the interview and why a semi-structured approach to interviews was used.

Having first written to all parents to ascertain consent for their children to take part in the research process, the researcher then met all the children individually from Inner City Primary and Outer City Primary on separate occasions and explained the purpose of the research. Although consent was authorised from parents, the researcher ensured children were clear about what was expected of them and, even though their parents had agreed for them to be interviewed, the researcher informed the children that should they not wish to take part in the interview procedure that would be acceptable. The researcher asked the children if they had a preference regarding time during the day when they wanted to be interviewed. All the children were happy to be interviewed at any time during the day and on any day. The advantages of the research were explained to the children, namely that it would help teachers and other adults who work with children who have learning difficulties to work better.

All children were able to engage in the interview process, which lasted up to one hour. The researcher monitored the child's concentration and engagement; as a result he adapted the interview to meet the child's needs.

The semi-structured open-question approach enabled an informal style and a wide-ranging exploration of ideas. This approach was suited to the research purpose and was sensitive to potentially difficult areas. Time was spent with pupils before interviews took place to build good relationships with them and to make them feel more comfortable as this helped to elicit valid and reliable information from them.

The interviewer met with the participants individually (support staff, teaching staff, parents and children) for an initial briefing. This was important since it provided an opportunity for both the interviewer and the participants to meet and allay any concerns before exposing their feelings and experiences to a stranger. At the start of the interview, the interviewer delivered an ice-breaker activity as a warm-up to the interview. The interviewer rounded off each interview with a summary of the main points identified in the interview and asked the participant for any feedback on the summary and asked the participant if there was any further information that needed to be raised in the interview. This gave the participants an opportunity to bring up any issues about which they may have been worrying or thinking during the interview. The interviewer followed up the interview with a debriefing with each participant at the end of the interview to eliminate any tension or anxiety that the interviewee may have had due to opening up to personal and emotional experiences, and to address any questions about how the interview data would be used. The debriefing continued after the tape recorder was switched off, giving the participant an opportunity to bring up any issues he or she did

not feel safe raising while the interview was being recorded. The researcher was aware of creating the interview experience to be genuinely enriching whereby the participant was able to talk freely with the interviewer who was an attentive listener and where the participant could obtain new insights into important themes of their lived world. Having conducted each interview, the researcher spent a few minutes reflecting on each interview and made notes on what was learnt from each interview including the interpersonal interaction – this was seen to provide a valuable context for the later analysis of the transcripts.

4.6 Conducting the interviews

This section looks at how the researcher conducted the interviews with pupils. Furthermore, he discusses the challenges that faced him when interviewing children from Outer City Primary where he did not know the children.

Interviews were conducted in a quiet room for about one hour. Pupils were asked whether they preferred to be interviewed in an office, their classroom or the library. The children were encouraged to be as open and honest about their views and feelings. They were reassured that what they said was confidential and would not be reported to anyone and was for research purpose only. The interviews were recorded with their permission and the tapes were transcribed in full. The qualitative data in the form of text was then analysed into broad categories that related to the research questions. Some of the categories had sub-categories. Further themes were then identified within each category, which formed the basis of the results. An example of the coding process has been provided in the following chapter.

Whilst conducting interviews, almost all children from Outer City Primary in particular were initially not very forthcoming with their responses. However, after a warm-up and having asked some general questions, the children became more responsive and began to express opinions rather than give a “don’t know” response. The reason why the children may have been reluctant to speak initially may be because first the children did not know the

researcher and perhaps because the researcher was of a different race, Pakistani, the children may have felt uncomfortable.

One child, Brook, from Outer City Primary became upset and began to cry during the interview. The researcher suspected that this child found it difficult to talk about her learning difficulty experience. The researcher stopped the interview and carried on later. The researcher also asked the teaching assistant from the same school to speak to the child and re-interview her as she became upset when speaking to the researcher.

The teaching assistant who was interviewed from each school was asked to conduct the same interview two weeks later with all the children involved in their school to ensure that the responses sought from the first interview were similar to that of the second. Furthermore, where children gave a "don't know" response or did not elaborate sufficiently on a given question, the teaching assistant was able to explore the question further. The researcher was aware that the teaching assistant was not a trained interviewer and gave clear instructions to each teaching assistant as to when and how to probe. The main aim of the child being interviewed the second time was to increase reliability of the research instrument (the interview).

4.7 Re-interviewing participants and sharing findings

This section looks at why the researcher re-interviewed pupils and what the researcher did to seek clarification from others who were interviewed, parents and school staff.

For all pupil interviews, the researcher sought further clarification through interviewing all children for a second time. This second interview was not recorded but was regarded more as an informal conversation with the pupil where relationships were already established but clarification was needed as well as asking children further questions based on their initial interview.

The researcher did not interview parents and school staff the second time; however, where clarification was needed, the researcher ensured he spoke to the relevant people, namely parents and school staff. The researcher sent parents and school staff from Inner City and Outer City primary school a copy of the interview transcripts with a covering letter informing participants of the taped interview that had taken place, and to check for any inaccuracies in the transcription of the interview. No person responded (despite the researcher sending a stamped self-addressed envelope and providing the researcher's telephone number to parents and school staff from Outer City Primary). One parent was unable to speak English, therefore the researcher did not send him a copy of the transcript but asked him to come into the school where the researcher translated the script in the parent's home language.

The researcher reported the findings of the research to the headteacher, the governing body of ICP and to the deputy headteacher who was the school link teacher of Outer City Primary School on separate occasions. Both schools were surprised with the findings, particularly how many similarities there were in pupil responses. Equally, the schools were surprised at the feelings expressed by children regarding their learning difficulty and how these feelings resulted in children feeling inferior compared to their peers and being faced with additional pressure in school and possibly at home.

The governing body at ICP questioned to what extent there would be differences had children from school action plus been interviewed. The governing body also commented on how much information was gained from pupils, but particularly parents from OCP, considering the researcher was of a different ethnic origin from them. The link teacher from OCP was surprised how children felt about their learning difficulty given the support systems set up in school. Furthermore, the link teacher was surprised that those parents gave a considerable amount of information to an individual of a different ethnicity from the parents.

4.8 Strategies employed to ensure a better interview response

This section looks at a number of different strategies that the researcher used to ensure a better interview response; various strategies are examined in detail including asking participants the same question in different ways, asking non-threatening questions and open questions, as well as using prompting. Other strategies are also mentioned below.

A number of strategies were employed to enhance the quality of the interview, including being honest and remembering that the objective of the interview is to learn from the participant and not to impress the participant with what the researcher already knows about the area of study. Other strategies adopted included asking the participant the same question in several different ways to check both the interviewer's understanding of the response and the individual's sincerity; that is, whether the answer is what the person believes or what he or she wants the researcher to hear. These strategies are also promoted in ethnographic research. The skilful ethnographer learns when to let the interviewee ramble and when to shape or direct the information flow (Spradley 1979).

The researcher began interviewing the participant by asking non-threatening questions deeply embedded in conversation before imposing personal questions, and by developing a healthy rapport before introducing sensitive topics. Whilst interviewing, the researcher was sensitive of the participant's

tone of voice since changes in tone of voice, a puzzled look or an impatient scowl are important cues to attitudes and feelings of the participants; in such cases the researcher proceeded delicately. For example, if a participant spoke softly in a frightened quivering voice, this gave the researcher an idea of how to proceed.

Several strategies were employed whilst wording questions in the interview, such as using indirect questioning, which works on the basis that people are more prepared to reveal negative feelings if they can attribute them to other people, for example, a question on "how do other children feel if they were referred to as being stupid?" Not knowing others' views, participants will offer their view. Furthermore, by asking indirect questions, it is possible to compare a pupil's own views with the perception of others' views, and thus make it possible to explore their own views more fully (Norwich 1997).

The hermeneutical philosopher Gadamer (1975) describes a genuine conversation on the basis of Plato's dialogues:

'A conversation is a process of two people understanding each other. Thus it is characteristic of every true conversation that each opens himself to the other person, truly accepts his point of view as worthy of consideration and gets inside the other to such an extent that he understands not a particular individual, but what he says. The thing that has to be grasped is the objective rightness or otherwise of his opinion, so that they can agree with each other on the subject.' (p347)

The researcher in this study used in-depth interviews to understand from interviewees themes of their lived daily worlds from their own perspectives. Although the research interview is semi-structured, it is strictly neither an

open conversation nor a highly structured questionnaire. It is conducted according to an interview guide that focuses on certain themes that include suggested questions. The key aim of semi-structured interviews is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say (Kvale 1996). For meaning to be understood, the researcher needs to listen to what is “said between the lines”. The researcher may formulate the “implicit message”, “send it back” to the interviewee and obtain an immediate confirmation or disconfirmation of the interviewer’s interpretation of what the interviewee is saying.

In-depth interviews are used since, during the interview process, participants can say things that may be ambiguous, and these ambiguities can imply several possibilities of interpretation. In-depth interviews allow the researcher to unravel such ambiguities with the participants through clarification and establish whether ambiguities exist because of failure of communication in the interview situation or whether they reflect real inconsistencies and contradictions in the interviewee (Kvale 1996).

Spradley (1979) argues that the interviewer can learn from the interviewee; this can be achieved if the interviewer conducts the interview in the following manner:

‘I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them. Will you become my teacher and help me to understand?’ (p.34)

The researcher in this study interviewed all participants by following the above steps and aimed to understand the participant's world from their point of view.

The researcher uses this description given by Spradley (1979) as the basis of his interviews with participants since the research interview is a conversation between two people about a theme of mutual interest. The research interview is a form of human interaction where knowledge is evolved through dialogue. Kvale (1996) argues that in a short space of time whereby the interviewer interviews the interviewee, it is the interviewer's goal to develop a sense of trust and relationship with the participant in order for him or her to open up to the interview situation and talk about his or her feelings and experiences. This involves moving the conversation beyond what could be a polite conversation or exchange of ideas.

In this study, the researcher defined the situation, introduced the topics of the conversation and through further questioning steered the direction of the interview. Although the research interviews follow an unwritten script with different roles specified for the two people involved (Kvale 1996), the researcher was careful not to distract himself from the interview and allow role reversal whereby the participant becomes the interviewer.

Children were keen to talk to the researcher about their experiences of SEN. Semi-structured interviews were used as this encouraged a full and in-depth

exploration of perspectives expressed by pupils, parents, support staff and teachers on their own terms. Eliciting self-perceptions was based on the techniques of Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly 1955), identifying similarities and differences between the child and key young people in his/her life using a simple dyadic comparison, where self is compared to another. Data on self-perception was also obtained by asking pupils to describe themselves and to consider how their parents/support staff and teachers would describe them.

Further strategies employed by the researcher to ensure a better interview included giving children sufficient thinking time to answer the questions and ensuring that the interviewee talked more through the researcher probing motives and encouraging a greater response. Other employed strategies included repeating back to interviewees what they said to check for the accuracy of the interviewee's response. The researcher was careful not to overuse this strategy and only to use it if he needed clarification or to check on the interviewee's response as research by Lewis and Lindsay (2000) has shown that if the researcher repeats the pupil interviewee's response the pupil is likely to change his or her answer as he or she may think that is not the response the researcher is looking for. Repeating a question has been found to lead to fewer correct but not more incorrect answers in six, eight and ten-year-old children; that is when the question was repeated, children did not answer or they said "don't know". According to Moston (1987), there is a possible analogy about repeating a question with classroom talk, where

children are accustomed to the idea that a repeat question may mean that the first response was incorrect. However, one must note that the danger of repeating a question applies to closed and not to open questions (Bull 1998).

A number of strategies were adopted when interviewing participants. These included asking a range of questions for example, experience, hypothetical, opinion and feeling questions. Other adopted strategies included leaving controversial and potentially sensitive questions until the end, using simple words free from jargon/technical phrases, ensuring that questions were specific and unambiguous (as ambiguous questions may result in participants, for example, interpreting the questions in different ways from each other, so the answers are not comparable), keeping questions short and using probes effectively as this encourages the participants to talk, avoiding leading questions that suggest a response and avoiding the use of double-headed questions (two questions in one), using a quiet place within school to record the interview. Furthermore, people may sometimes lie in interview situations in order to gain "social approval". People may say things in interviews that are socially accepted and approved rather than what they actually believe, feel or do (Patton 1990). The researcher in this study aimed to minimise this through asking similar questions worded differently and by asking the child's teacher, teaching assistant and parent.

The researcher was aware that some participants may worry about why they were asked to interview and what use the data will be put to as this may

affect their honesty and openness in the interview. The researcher throughout the interview reassured the participants about how the data would be used, with whom it would be shared and re explained the benefits of the research.

The researcher was also aware of key skills needed when interviewing participants, for example, the skill to know when to probe, listen and be silent, being able to sustain and control the conversation and to read between the lines and know when to stop pushing a line of questioning.

Denzin (1989) argues that triangulation or the use of multiple methods should involve not only multiple methods alone but also multiple investigators. The researcher in this study achieved this by asking the teaching assistant from each school to interview pupils after the researcher interviewed the children. The researcher was aware that characteristics of the interviewer in terms of his gender, age, religion, ethnicity, social class, and educational background could affect the response of an interviewee. The interviewer ensured that the interview ran more or less like a natural conversation and the same person conducted the interviews; therefore participants were subject to a constant interviewer effect. Furthermore, the use of an interview guide minimised researcher influence.

As indicated in the study of Hughes and Grieves (1980), researchers should not merely focus on the “outcome” of the interview but researchers need to focus on the moment-to-moment co-constructive processes through which

meaning is negotiated, renegotiated and contested. For this reason, it is important that children be given the opportunity to explain their response in an interview situation and help them create a meaningful context with the interviewer. In doing this, pupils are active participants in the interview process, therefore the roles of the “teller and the told” are shared and jointly created.

Interview questions in this study were based on research reviewed by Westcott *et al* (2002), who suggested that open-ended questions encourage more detailed and longer responses. Closed questions that require single word responses from children should be avoided. The authors argued that children should not be questioned in a suggestive manner – questions that lead the child to a desired response. Furthermore, the writers state that repeating questions to children in exactly the same way results in children changing their initial response to the question as they begin to think that their first response must be wrong in some way. The writers also state that interviewers should tolerate long pauses and give children time to think without interrupting their thoughts; it is important not to be afraid of silences even in a methodology that is designed for talk. Other factors such as eye contact, actively listening to the participant, posture, general demeanour were taken into consideration as was knowing that trust is not automatically present in the interview situation. Trust emerges through the interview process and the researchers need to plan ahead of the interview how this will

be established with the child. Wade and Westcott (1997) found that humour in an interview was highly valued by children.

The researcher used many techniques outlined above when interviewing children and other participants in the study. Prompting was used frequently as this involves encouraging the participant to produce an answer. Children were encouraged to ask questions if they did not understand the questions. If the participant was unable to answer the question, techniques such as rephrasing the question were used; these were listed in the interview guide. In order to get a fuller response from participants, probing was used; this involved asking participants follow-up questions. Non-verbal cues such as a "glance" were used as well as direct requests such as "please tell me more about that". Probes are seen to be acceptable in non-standardised interviews since people are probed frequently during a "normal conversation" and the objective of in-depth interviews is to have a "guided conversation". It is important to note that probing was used in a neutral way; under no circumstances was it used to lead the participant to a particular response.

Research questions were investigated through several interview questions, obtaining rich and varied information by approaching a topic from several perspectives. The researcher aimed to keep his questions brief and simple thus allowing participants to speak. Dent (1986) argues that the use of open questions appeared to be best with children with mild or moderate learning difficulties, as these questions seem to yield more accurate responses from

the children. In order to generate an extended and longer response from the participants, the researcher asked direct questions about what was said, provided the interviewees with a nod and "mm" and even a pause giving the interviewee time to think. The researcher also repeated significant words of an answer, which led to further elaborations. However, the researcher was careful not to repeat the question as this leads to the participant thinking that his or her original response is not what the researcher is looking for.

The researcher probed each participant often by repeating the significant words from the participant's answer; this gave the participants an opportunity to think about what they said and offer more information. A number of meaning-clarifying questions were used, such as "Do I understand you correctly when I'm saying that you experience ...", which is followed by a confirmation and further elaboration.

The interviewer rounded off each interview by mentioning some of the key points learned from the interview. This was useful as it gave the participant an opportunity to comment on the feedback. After the interview, the researcher set some time aside to recall and reflect on what was learnt from the particular interview. Again, this was useful as it gave the researcher an opportunity to make a note of immediate impressions of how the interview was carried out and record the participant's gestures. The researcher asked each participant his or her experience about the interview. Feedback from this was used to provide information for future interviews. For example, one child

said that it was too warm in the room whereas another said that the interview was too long.

4.9 Recording the interview

This section explores the use and advantages of tape recording interviews. Furthermore, this section discusses how the interviews were transcribed.

All interviews were tape-recorded; one reason for using a tape recorder is that it allows the researcher to listen to the tapes and improve questioning techniques. All transcripts were transcribed in full, as verbatim transcription of recorded interviews provides the best database for analysis (Patton 1982).

All interviews were tape-recorded (interviewees were asked if this was appropriate and acceptable; they were also informed that they could switch off the machine for any particular question should they need to; confidentiality was explained and offered). Since the aim of in-depth interviewing is to carry out a conversation, without recording this conversation data could be lost. Furthermore, without recording the interview the researcher would have needed to stop every few moments to write down what was said in the interview; this could have made the interview a peculiar interaction and distract the normal flow of the conversation. Interviews were transcribed in full for two reasons; first to ensure no data was lost and second the researcher was able to go back to the data that could later become significant. All participants were offered a copy of the transcript so that accuracy of response could be checked. This also enabled the researcher to go back to the interview and discuss it further should the need arise. This

further gauges the reliability and validity of responses. Although transcribing interviews was a laborious and time-consuming task, interviews were transcribed by the researcher since the researcher was able to familiarise himself with the data during the transcription stage and if following the interview, questions needed amending, this could be achieved. The researcher also chose to transcribe the interviews since it gave him the opportunity to make connections with the data and identify themes for analysis. Whilst transcribing, it was very difficult to steer away from “tidying” the language and grammar of the interviewee, the researcher managed to do this and where clarification was required, additions were bracketed.

The researcher transcribed all interviews in full as transcription in itself is an interpretive process (Kvale 1996). The researcher chose to record interviews as it provided him with the opportunity to concentrate on the interview topic, the dynamics of the interview, not lose any participant words or tone, pauses and the like through active listening. By recording the interview, the researcher is able to re-listen to the interview again and again. Because the interview does not include facial and bodily expressions of the participants, the interviewer made a note of this information during and soon after the interview. Although video recording encompasses the visual aspects of the interview and can provide a richer context for interpretation, the researcher decided not to use this medium. The reason for not using a video recorder for this particular study was because the prime interest was on the content of

what is said as opposed to the observation of visual cues. Videotape analysis is also a time consuming process.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim, including the often frequent repetitions, "hm's", short/long pauses, emphases on intonation and emotional expressions like laughter, all of which can be relevant for later analysis. It can be argued that the verbatim-transcribed oral language may appear as incoherent and confused speech; it may even indicate a lower level of intellectual functioning. Participants may be offended and may refuse any use of what they have said (Kvale 1996). For this reason, when the transcripts were shared with participants, the researcher made them aware of the differences between oral and written language styles. Furthermore, the transcripts were shared with the participants to increase the accuracy of the transcripts.

Soon after each interview was conducted, the researcher listened to each interview in full and made some brief notes about the content of the interview. The researcher listened to the interview straight away as this raised awareness of the quality of the recording and the researcher was able to identify unclear or unrecorded material, which was replaced by notes from memory. By listening to the interviews, the researcher was able to add in any field notes about the interview, for example comment on the tone and style of the interview. Codes were identified from the research questions, interview guide, jottings and from the transcripts themselves.

4.10 The pilot study

This section explores how and why a pilot study was conducted.

The researcher conducted a small pilot study with three pupils, three parents and one member of the support staff from the researcher's school to assess the value and the nature of the interview questions. A pilot study also enabled the researcher to identify whether the pupil interview questions needed to be further simplified in order to allow for a more kinaesthetic and interactive approach to working with children who have learning difficulties. The participants who took part in the pilot study did not take part in the subsequent (main) study.

A pilot study was carried out with three parents, three pupils (two boys and one girl) and one teaching assistant from the researcher's school. The researcher knew the children and rapport had already existed. The researcher chose to interview three children on the school action plus stage on the SEN register.

The purpose of the pilot was to test the questions for ease of comprehension and to see if they elicited the required information. The researcher knew the pupils; pupils were also asked to comment on the interview process including the length of the interview, type of questions and how other children would respond to these questions.

The purpose of the research was explained to all participants in order to eliminate any feelings of apprehension that they may have had. The researcher was aware of issues when interviewing children; these were issues of status and position and perceptions of what the interviewer wanted to hear. As Denscombe and Aubrook (2002) state, young people rarely feel that they are able to say "no" to a piece of research since they feel the research is part of their schoolwork. In this study, the researcher informed all pupils very clearly what would happen to the findings of the study, what purpose it would serve and who would hear what they said. The researcher felt the latter point was crucial since this may have influenced what they said and how much they revealed about their learning experiences.

The findings of the pilot study indicated that it would be better to carry out an introductory/"ice-breaker" activity for a few minutes with pupils to put them at ease. Activities such as those promoting self-esteem may be useful, where pupils are given a card with the beginning of a sentence written. Pupils would read out the sentence and complete the sentence accordingly. Pupils in the pilot study thought this would be good, especially for those pupils who are not from the researcher's school since they would feel more relaxed and willing to talk. Ice-breaker type activities will not only open communication but also give the researcher an idea of what type of pupil is being interviewed (quiet and shy or loud) and therefore proceed with the interview in a way that would enable the child to take part fully. The pilot study also revealed for all participants, it might be better to identify themselves on the tape to get them

used to the tape recorder and to aid transcription. On the whole, some minor alterations were made to the interview questions to make them clearer for pupils to understand. The pilot study also indicated that because of the children's complex and significant learning difficulty at school action plus, these children were much less forthcoming and confident with their responses and were unable to clearly understand what was expected of them. For this reason, the researcher decided to interview children at school action in the main study. In the main, the findings from the pilot study concurred with the main study, particularly in relation to pupils' experiences of their learning difficulties.

4.11 Lessons learnt from the pilot study

This section looks at what lessons were learnt from the pilot study and how the pilot study informed the main research.

The researcher learnt from the pilot interview that interviews lasted for approximately one hour. For this reason, the researcher ensured that pupils were given a short break during the interview where they were offered a drink of water and a piece of fruit. The tape recorder was switched off and the pupils were encouraged to move around in the room in order to stretch their legs. The researcher also learnt not to ask loaded questions as this confuses the participants.

During the parent interview, the researcher did not read words and phrases to describe children with learning difficulties such as "fool, stupid, thick and dumb" as parents felt uncomfortable and at unease when asked if they thought children with learning difficulties were the above. In the main study, the researcher (towards the end of the interview where relationships were established) showed parents a number of words and phrases to describe children with learning difficulties and if parents could read (with the exception of one who was not able to read, therefore words were translated in Urdu, the parent's home language), the parents were asked to look at the words and either point to the words or tell the researcher which words and phrases

in their opinion are used to describe children with learning difficulties. This strategy was much better as this did not demean the child to its parent.

The researcher allowed ample time for all interviewees to respond, as he was careful not to rush any interview. This allowed both the interviewee and the researcher to relax and talk about key issues. Furthermore, this allowed the researcher to look deeply into and explore issues that were brought up during the interview.

The children were asked to give feedback at the end of the interview as to how the process had been for them. In the main, children said that they would prefer a break in the middle of the interview, as this would have helped them to think better. The researcher ensured that this happened in the forthcoming interviews. Children also said that they would like some easier questions.

4.12 Sampling

This section briefly looks at the type of sampling used to select participants for the study.

The researcher used purposive sampling to select its participants. This type of non-probability sample is the most suitable for this type of research since the researcher identifies participants (pupils, parents, teaching assistants and teachers) with a particular purpose in mind and this purpose reflects particular qualities of people and their relevance to the topic of investigation (Sarantakos 1998). In this case, the research looked through the SEN register and identified children who were at "school action". The researcher spoke to teachers initially to establish whether the child was able to take part in an interview. After this, parents were contacted, followed by pupils themselves.

4.13 Seeking consent

This section looks at how consent was sought from those interviewed. Furthermore, the researcher discusses why interview transcripts were shared with those interviewed.

Parents of pupils were invited, through school, by letters to give their permission for their children to take part in the interview and for the researcher to introduce himself to the parents and explain the purpose of the research. Following this, the researcher approached the pupils and asked if they would like to take part in the interview. Meeting with children prior to the interview related more to the natural methods of the classroom used with pupils. The researcher described the nature of the study and the length of the interview including any follow-up work that may be required of pupils. The researcher met on separate occasions individual parents, children, relevant support and teaching staff in the two primary schools, first to seek their participation in the study, and second to describe to them the aims of the study and discuss their level of involvement in the study. The researcher felt this was a positive step since he was able to establish relationships with relevant individuals before interviewing. Also, the participants could meet the researcher informally, find out about what areas were to be covered during interview and seek clarification on any issues and discuss any concerns.

Following interviews, the researcher carried out an informal observation in the classroom to look at how children learnt in the classroom context. The researcher devised an observation schedule (see Appendix 14) and observed children in both schools once, after interviews had taken place. Having interviewed the participants, the researcher sent a copy of the transcript to all participants except children, whom he met individually to discuss the accuracy of their response during the interview. The key benefit this served was the researcher was able to confirm with the pupils that what they said was true at the time of the interview; it also gave the researcher an opportunity to clarify any misconceptions during the pupil's interview. Although the researcher sent a copy of the interview transcript to its adult participants for them to check the accuracy of the script, no participant responded.

4.14 Ensuring validity and reliability of the study

This section explores what steps the researcher took to ensure validity and reliability of participant responses and the study.

Reliability refers to the extent to which one's findings can be replicated. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest thinking about "dependability" or "consistency" of the results obtained from the data. They argue the use of a number of strategies to ensure reliability. These include using multiple methods of data collection, as triangulation strengthens reliability as well as internal validity. Furthermore, they suggest the idea of an audit trail whereby the findings of a study are authenticated by following the trail of the researcher. For example, the researcher describes in detail how data was collected, how categories were derived and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry. The researcher in this study ensured that an audit trail was in place.

A number of strategies are used to check the validation of qualitative research conclusion; one device used is respondent validation. In this study, the researcher kept detailed records of his observation notes and interview transcripts and talked to the participants about the notes in order to ensure accuracy. The great advantage of respondent validation is that it gave participants an opportunity to confirm that the data they provided is an accurate representation of their beliefs, attitudes and constructs at the time

of the interview or observation. Secondly, respondent validation informs participants that the interpretations and data reduction made by the researcher are fair and have not distorted the data. In order to increase the reliability of data, Argyris *et al's* (1985) "ladder of inference" was used. The researcher reported back the results of the observation/interview to teachers, parents, support staff and pupils in order to check whether the findings reflected the voice of the participants.

A number of writers, including Kirk and Miller (1986), argue that, because qualitative research is based on different assumptions about reality and is based on a different paradigm, this research should have a different form of validity and reliability. For example, Guba and Lincoln (1981) suggest using the terms "truth value" for internal validity, "transferability" for external validity and "consistency" for reliability. Regardless of which terms are used, researchers using qualitative research need to ask themselves to what extent the researcher can trust the findings of a qualitative study? For this reason, the researcher ensured that various steps were taken to ensure reliability and validity of response.

Writers including Denzin (1989) offer many strategies to ensure internal validity. Firstly, is the use of multiple researchers and sources of data. The researcher in this study used a range of data collection methods including semi-structured interviews, focus groups and non-participant observation to collate data. Furthermore, the researcher asked interviewees a number of

similar questions worded slightly differently to ensure that interviewees were being consistent and truthful with their responses. The researcher also used support from a teaching assistant from each school to observe and take notes whilst conducting the focus group interview. Guba and Lincoln (1981) talk about the concept of “member checks” where data and interpretations are taken back to the participants and they are asked if the results are plausible. This was done throughout the study, as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1981) as a way to increase validity.

External validity is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations. For example, to what extent are the results of the research study generalizable? Guba and Lincoln (1981) argue that the study must first be internally valid before considering its general applicability. To enhance generalizability of case study results the researcher needs to provide the reader with as much detailed information as possible as so that anyone interested in transferability has the appropriate information to understand the findings (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

When interviewing young children with moderate learning difficulties, it is particularly important that questions are framed in a way that will enable the child to clearly understand the question and respond appropriately. To increase the validity of the research, the researcher met with pupils individually after the interview had been analysed to share the findings of the research. However, the researcher was aware that because pupils had

learning difficulties, some pupils may not remember what they said; nevertheless, sharing the findings with pupils enabled the ability to clarify any misconceptions. This further increases validity, in particular, internal validity, of the research and avoids issues such as pupils being tempted to please an adult by saying what they think an adult wants to hear. The researcher carried out internal consistency checks throughout the interview. The researcher asked a number of similar questions worded differently that required a similar response to previous questions. Using internal checks and asking parents enabled the research to gain increased reliability.

Having ground rules, which were co-constructed at the start of the interview, reminded the participant of the importance of their views and the research. Reliability is more difficult to achieve since questions are framed differently depending on the response from an individual to previous questions; however, the researcher aimed to ask key questions to all participants, all interviews were transcribed, and the interviews were carried out at the same time, in the same room and by the same researcher.

In order to ensure reliability of the interview transcription, for three of the interview transcripts, a teaching assistant from Inner City Primary analysed and transcribed part of an interview. The typed/transcribed passage was checked by the researcher for the number of words that differed between the two transcriptions, thus providing a quantified reliability check. The researcher ensured that a second person from each school re-interviewed all

children for a one-to-one interview. The teaching assistant from each school interviewed all the children two weeks after the interview was conducted by the researcher; the main aim of this was to establish accuracy of pupil response, in particular, did pupil answers differ significantly when the teaching assistant carried out the interview? The researcher acknowledged that the teaching assistant was not a trained interviewer; nevertheless the researcher provided the member of staff with key protocols and a set of questions when interviewing children. These included, asking children open questions (not leading and multiple questions) and providing identified prompts where appropriate. The researcher asked the teaching assistant to particularly focus on areas on the schedule where pupils did not elaborate or answers were vague. A discussion with the researcher soon after the interview was carried out by the teaching assistant indicated that pupils provided very similar responses to their first interview and in some cases they elaborated on certain questions. The researcher gathered these notes to support the findings of this research.

Chapter 5 Data Analysis

This chapter looks at how the data from the SIP (self-image profile), observation and interviews, including focus interviews were analysed using manual methods and why computer assisted programmes such as N6 were not used. Furthermore, this section looks at the work of Miles and Huberman (1994). Their approach to data analysis was used in the main, however other approaches to data analysis are also mentioned.

The SIP was used in the following way. The researcher met with children with learning difficulties from both schools individually to ascertain what children thought about themselves. The researcher read each statement; the children were asked about their "Actual Self" by indicating "How I Am" against each of the 25 items using a 0-6 likert scale.

Children were informed from the start that there were no right or wrong answers. The researcher ensured that he did not say to the children that items on the scales were ways in which children describe themselves. Children were asked to look at each item in turn and shade the box according to how they thought they were, a "0 indicating 'not at all' to a '6' meaning 'very much like the description.'"

The researcher read the first item "kind" and explained to the children that if they thought of themselves being not kind at all then score 0; score a 1 or a 2

if children thought they were a little kind. Children were asked to shade a square on the scale to show the strength of their kindness and the more kind children thought they were the higher the score would be; therefore a score of 6 would mean that a child thought he or she was very kind. Children were asked to complete the remaining items 2-13, however the researcher stopped the children at item 14 to check accuracy of individual response by getting feedback and asking them questions such as why they had scored in the way they did. The purpose of this activity was first to encourage children to elaborate on their response and second to check their understanding of the 0-6 scale idea. Children were finally asked to complete items 15-25. At the end, the researcher checked with pupils individually on what they did and why they scored in particular ways. The objective of this was to clarify pupil understanding of the activity.

Wylie (1989) argues that there are a number of issues to take into account when using a self-concept scale, such as words do not mean the same to all participants. The researcher addressed this issue in his research by asking each participant to tell the researcher in his/her words what they thought relevant statements meant. Wylie further argues that there are no measuring instruments that are perfect and reliable when measuring self-concept. Wylie argues that, in order to measure the reliability of the self-concept test, the researcher needs to give the test to participants on several occasions with a short time lapse (a couple of months). The researcher administered the test initially; he then asked a member of the support staff who was also

interviewed as part of the research process and was involved in the focus group interview, to administer the test on two different occasions (in a space of one month). The researcher looked at the responses to each item on the scale and took the “true” score as being the one that frequently occurred.

When looking at individual pupil responses and their response to these, overall children responded similarly in all three tests; there were some minor discrepancies among all three tests. The researcher was also aware that retesting children might present difficulties for children such as loss of motivation and actual change in the participant over a period of time. Wylie argues that the simplest definition of reliability is the degree to which the testing instrument yields consistent scores when the test is applied on a number of occasions to the same participants. The test scores in this study indicated that the results in sum were consistent when the test was applied on a number of occasions to the same participants.

The scores were analysed as follows. According to Butler, for a positive self-image, the sum of scores on items 1-12 will range from 0-72; for a negative self-image the sum of scores on items 14-25 will range from 0-72. Item 13 ranges from 0-6 and reflects a neutral statement; this score is not calculated when establishing a self-image score. If the lower half of the SIP (self-image profile) is loaded with high ratings, the individual could be said to have a more negative outlook on self. The table below shows the cut-off scores for positive and negative self-image by gender for a child who is aged 11. For

example, if a male child scored below 35 on items 1-12, he would have a negative self-image; however, if he had a score of above 35, he would have a positive self-image. In terms of negative self-image, if the male child, aged 11, had a score of below 52, this would mean the child viewed self as having some negative attributes.

Table 2: Cut off scores for a positive/negative self-image

	11 years
Male Child Self-image Positive	35
Male Child Self-image Negative	52
Female Child Self-image Positive	32
Female Child Self-image Negative	46

Through further questioning, the researcher gained more information from the pupils:

- "How come you gave yourself a rating score of ...?"
- "How do you know you are kind?"
- "When you are like that, what is it that you do?"
- "How does being that way make you feel?"
- "How is it that you are like this? How did you get to be like this?"

Children were asked to shade in boxes that represented their view of themselves; this gave the researcher an initial visual display of the child's actual self (see Table 3 below). For example, the completed SIP for the male (aged 11) shown on the table below indicates that the child has a positive self-image with a score of 40 (above the cut off score of 35) but has negative aspects of self as he scores 19 (which is below the cut off of 52). The negative aspects of self for this child include that the child regards himself to be lazy, picked on and messes about in class. The researcher analysed the responses from the self-image scale by first reading through each response on the scale for each child for the first statement. He then made a note of the response and continued this activity until all statements were read. The researcher tallied pupil responses on a grid, which gave him an overview of who said what (see Appendix 15).

Table 3: Completed Self-image Profile (Butler 2001)

		Not At All			Very Much			
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Kind				*			
2	Happy					*		
3	Friendly	*						
4	Funny	*						
5	Helpful					*		
6	Hardworking			*				
7	Lively				*			
8	Honest						*	
9	Like sport							*
10	Brainy					*		
11	Sensitive					*		
12	Like the way I look						*	
13	Feel different from others	*						
14	Lazy							*
15	Picked on						*	

16	Moody				*			
17	Mess about in class					*		
18	Shy		*					
19	Always in trouble	*						
20	Cheeky	*						
21	Teases others	*						
22	Easily upset	*						
23	Bossy	*						
24	Bad tempered	*						
25	Get bored easily	*						

Having devised the observation schedule, the researcher observed behaviour for an extended period of time (during the whole lesson) and recorded more or less continuously what was seen under key headings, some of which were devised on the schedule, for example pupil behaviour during teacher input. The researcher made notes throughout the lesson and then made sense of the notes through categorising behaviour under the following codes:

- Context of lesson
- Teacher expectations
- Independent learning
- Role of support staff
- Resources including differentiation and challenge
- Pupil participation and attention
- Enthusiasm and enjoyment
- Encouragement, support and praise from the teacher and teaching assistant
- Relationship with other children
- Understanding and outcome of activity

- Behaviour and attitude
- Targets

The findings of the observation were reported under the above headings. The findings were also shared with the teacher to ensure validity of the data.

Watling (2002) defines analysis as “the elusive process by which you hope you can turn your raw data into nuggets of pure gold”. The researcher listened to the tapes on his way home from work to fix the voices of the participants in his mind. He also took notes as soon as possible after the interview, while participant voices were still remembered and the context of the discussions could be added. The initial analysis was content based and responses were identified to particular questions. The researcher made notes on the main issues discussed during the interview that were linked to the research questions.

Data was analysed using a range of manual methods. Data analysis is about bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data (Becker 1993). All interview transcripts were transcribed in full and content analysed in terms of emergent themes that related to the research questions. In light of the pilot study, themes were identified. Data analysis was conducted simultaneously with data collection and data interpretation (Tesch 1990). Three semi-structured interview transcripts were coded by a second person to check for coder reliability – these transcripts were coded and analysed by the

teaching assistant from the researcher's school; this teaching assistant was also interviewed as part of the study.

Qualitative research is based on the theoretical and methodological principles of interpretive science. As a result, qualitative analysis contains a minimum of quantitative measurement, standardisation and mathematical techniques (Sarantakos, 1998). Qualitative data can provide rich descriptions and explanations that demonstrate the chronological flow of events as well as can often lead to serendipitous findings. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative studies have a quality of "undeniability" because words have a more concrete and vivid flavour that is more convincing to the reader than numbers. However, qualitative researchers have been criticised for lacking methodological rigour, research being prone to researcher subjectivity and often based on small cases or limited evidence. Nevertheless, qualitative data analysis is and should be a rigorous and logical process through which data is given meaning. Through analysis, the data can be reduced into smaller chunks (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). One of the key issues in qualitative research is the extent to which data should be reduced for analysis. Strauss and Corbin (1998) argue that some researchers believe that no data should be reduced for analysis, rather it should be presented in the way it is. This allows the data to "speak for themselves", untouched by the potential subjective interpretations of the researcher. Other qualitative researchers are concerned with theory building, interpreting the data to build concepts and categories that can be brought together into theoretical frameworks, whereas

others see qualitative research primarily being about storytelling and description (Wolcott, 1994).

The most basic level of recording a focus group discussion depends on note taking, with a tape recorder providing richer access to the discussion. A tape recorder can be used to refresh memory and clarify notes (Kitzinger 1994). Krueger (1994) argues that transcription is not always necessary and in some cases analysis can be carried out on the notes or the memory of the researcher. The researcher used both a tape recorder and the use of a teaching assistant to note pupil responses. The researcher recorded the interview so that no data would be lost and so that a detailed and rigorous analysis could be carried out. Because of the nature of focus groups, the number of people involved in speaking makes the transcription of the focus group more complex than transcription of data collected by other qualitative methods. For this reason, the researcher asked the teaching assistant to record in detail speech, particularly taking note of the dominant speakers including non-verbal language. The researcher felt that it was necessary to identify the speaker; this was achieved by conducting a warm-up exercise whereby the participant was asked to introduce him/herself and say a few sentences about themselves. In this way, the speech served as a reference point for transcription. The researcher also asked participants to say their name where possible when saying something.

Furthermore, the researcher used other strategies such as saying "thank you" and saying the name of participant, as well as saying "the name of the participant you mentioned". The researcher made use of the participant's name where possible, thus providing reference points for the identification of the speaker throughout the tape. The researcher transcribed the interview in full and content analysed the data in terms of emergent themes and trends. For example, the theme "children with learning difficulties have less friends" came up several times. The researcher then looked at the interview transcript and found all data linked to friends. The researcher linked all data to the questions on the interview schedule.

The researcher was aware of the different types of children who may be present in the focus group, from the expert, dominant talkers to the shy and rambling participants. The researcher was aware that all these types of participants could present challenges. Experts, what and how they say something, can inhibit others in a group situation. The dominant talkers sometimes consider themselves to be experts, but much of the time they are unaware how others perceive them. The researcher ensured that dominant children were identified and they were asked to sit next to the researcher to exercise control by the use of the researcher's body language. Furthermore, the researcher used comments like "thank you, name" and asked if there were other children who wanted to contribute to the issues raised and did anyone feel differently from what the dominant speaker had said, and whether anyone would like to offer a different point of view.

The researcher was aware of the shy and reflective participants in the group. These were placed directly across from the researcher in order to maximise eye contact. The aim of this was to provide encouragement for participants to speak. Finally, the researcher was aware of the rambling participants who use lots of words to get to a key point. The researcher was aware that this type of participant likes to talk; for this reason the researcher discontinued eye contact with this type of participant after 30 seconds as a rule of thumb, as suggested by Krueger (1994). The researcher also used other strategies such as looking at other participants and asking other questions.

The researcher reminded all children at the start of the focus group about different types of participants, whereby some like to talk a lot, others like to talk a little. The researcher reminded all children that it was important to hear from everyone because everyone has different experiences. The researcher also informed participants of the fact that he may interrupt children if one particular child was talking a lot and that he may call on individual participants if individuals did not say much. Furthermore, the researcher was aware that some children may naturally have more to say than others and if children were on track in giving helpful information, the researcher allowed the children to continue.

A focus group interview can generate a large amount of rich data, and the steps for analysis are similar to analysing qualitative data. Analysis at the very

least involves drawing together and comparing discussions of similar themes and examining how these relate to the variation among individuals and among groups. Many researchers, including Coffey and Atkinson (1996), describe the process of indexing, where pieces of transcript are not assigned a single code, rather each piece of transcript being assigned several codes referring to several analytic topics. The steps to analysing data in this manner include reading the transcripts as a whole several times to ensure familiarity with the content and enabling the researcher to note patterns and themes of interest that were recurring with the data. The next step includes the process of attaching index code words or labels that relate to the content of the text. This analysis process was used to analyse the focus group data.

Data analysis was informed through the use of the approach suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). The authors define data analysis as three linked sub-processes; data reduction; data display; and drawing conclusions and verification. Using this approach, the interview transcripts were first read a number of times. Using the margins on the transcripts, the text was marked to elicit key words and brief notes were made.

Having read each transcript, the content of each interview was summarised using key words. A matrix was composed that entailed the interviewee's pseudonym, the question that was asked (for example, describe how your special education needs make you feel) and the abbreviated version of the answer (see Table 4 below). Composing a matrix was extremely useful since

it was possible to see key information at a glance. Having undertaken this first stage of analysis in particular, “data reduction”, the next stage according to Miles and Huberman (1994) involves data display. This enables the reduced data to be displayed in diagrammatic, pictorial or visual forms in order to show what the data refers to (see Table 4 below). As Miles and Huberman (1994) argue:

'Data display should be viewed as an organised, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and/or action taking.' (p.429)

Table 4: An example of how data was coded from a question

	Question
	Describe how your SEN makes you feel (pupil question)
Interviewee Response	Sad, not happy, bad, embarrassed, not liked, disappointed

Having listed the key words that represented the interviewee’s feeling of SEN, the next step involved thinking of appropriate codes to represent each segment of the interview data. Each data item was coded in a way that best described the data. Some of the codes were used several times because several items of data referred to the same topic. After this initial analysis, some codes were linked. This task was repeated with all scripts and new codes continued to be identified. Having analysed all the transcripts, the researcher went back to the original copies of the transcripts where initial notes were made in the margins and considered whether any of the

previously excluded data was relevant now that themes and codes had been identified. The evolution of codes came from a process, which involved further reading, interviewing and highlighting interview transcripts and thus linking key words to appropriate codes.

Listed below are codes that were used for interviews:

- The importance of relationships
- Qualities of children with learning difficulties and those identified as being able
- Describing children with learning difficulties
- Wanting help to succeed inside and outside the classroom
- Bullying, sadness, shame and guilt
- Understanding of learning difficulties
- They have a feeling but no denial
- Causes of learning difficulties
- Parental support
- Ambition
- School culture

Key words that represented for example "school likes" were attached to the code, "The importance of relationships." This procedure for connecting key words to codes was undertaken for each of the scripts. The process of coding was useful since it referred to clustering codes and developing themes from

these concepts that helped to link different segments of data and hence explained the phenomena under investigation (Miles and Huberman 1994). In practice, coding can be thought of as a range of approaches that aid the organisation, retrieval and interpretation of data. Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that coding is a process that enables the researcher to identify meaningful data and set the stage for interpretation and drawing conclusions.

Miles and Huberman (1994) describe codes as:

'Tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes usually are attached to "chunks" of varying size – words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting. They can take the form of a straightforward category label or more a complex one.' (p.56)

On the one hand, coding can be thought about in terms of data complication; on the other hand it can be viewed as data simplification and data reduction – reducing data to manageable proportions. The data from the interview scripts were reduced to form broad categories. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) argue that coding enables the researcher to communicate and connect with the data; this supports the development of the emerging phenomena.

As stated earlier, when the interview data were analysed, data was first reduced into connecting words and phrases that allowed for data to be coded. This led to the development of broad categories namely "positive experience" and "negative experience". Generating categories requires a heightened awareness of the data, and the ability to identify salient themes, recurring ideas and language (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

Grouping codes into categories is important as it allows the researcher to reduce the number of units with which he or she is working. In addition, categories have the potential to explain and predict trends (Strauss and Corbin 1998). For example, when the interviewees were asked to describe their most positive experience of being identified as SEN, it became clear that there were benefits for the individual in that they received additional support to help them move to a different (better) group. A running theme that emerged from the interviews was all the children wanted to work in the higher ability groups and expressed sadness about having a learning difficulty. Although coding data was helpful, since chunks of data were attached to groups of words, the researcher found the process of coding a subjective experience since the definition of "code names" can vary from researcher to researcher. This inconsistency among codes can cause problems of coder reliability; as a result this can produce hidden and systematic bias (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). However, precautions were taken when thinking of code names in order to ensure there was no overlap among codes. Furthermore, the researcher used a teaching assistant, from his school, to identify codes when analysing three interview transcripts; this gave the researcher an opportunity to check coder reliability.

The final phase of data analysis involves drawing conclusions and verification; this includes interpreting the data and drawing meaning from the data. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that this can be achieved by employing a

variety of different tactics, for example looking at comparative and contrasting cases, exploring themes, patterns and regularities. When the data was analysed, the researcher looked at the responses to the question "describe the most positive experience of your SEN." The researcher searched for similarities in the responses as well as differences among interviewee response. McCracken (1988) explains that the purpose of analysing qualitative data is to determine the categories, relationship and assumptions that inform the respondents' view of the world in general, and of the topic in particular. When the interview data was analysed, it was apparent that, although there were benefits for the individual to have been identified as SEN, there were also some concerns, concerns that appeared to be similar for many interviewees, for example concerns including having few friends and being called names for being in the low ability group.

Miles and Huberman offer a systematic approach to the process of qualitative data analysis. They argue that in order to describe and explain qualitative data, it is necessary to work towards a set of analytic strategies that are conceptually specified. As the data is coded, new understandings emerge. These understandings are tested through exploring the data, searching for negative instances and incorporating these into larger constructs. The process of content analysis involves continually revisiting the data and reviewing the categorisation of data until the researcher is sure that the themes and categories used to summarise and describe findings are a truthful and accurate reflection of the data.

The methods presented above are all ways of handling data in qualitative research and they provide a guide to data analysis and have informed the researcher with strategies to analyse data. The procedures for analysing data vary significantly; for example Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest a model that starts from coding data to developing concepts, and with the assistance of memos, develops new categories. This process leads to the development of new hypotheses and new-grounded theories.

Many software programs can be used to analyse qualitative data (Flick *et al* 2004). N6 (NUD*IST) is one of many that can help with qualitative data analysis. This software package employs techniques that allow qualitative researchers to manipulate data in a similar way to that in quantitative research (Flick *et al* 2004). The main aim of N6 is to make sense of complex data. Its underlying framework fits most closely with grounded theory and is promoted as facilitating theory building from the data (Silverman 1997). The researcher did not use N6 because it distances the researcher from the data; the software gets in the way of the researcher and the data. Pole and Lampard (2002) argue that the researcher in qualitative studies has an “intimate relationship” between the researcher and the data upon which analysis depends. Furthermore, computerised analysis has the potential to lose some of the connections to the detailed understandings of the subjective world of educational actors.

The researcher read each interview transcript a number of times to ensure familiarity with the data. The researcher then identified codes and wrote these in the margin of each transcript where he was able to identify patterns. As he read more interviews, he added further new codes and at the same time he re read previous interview transcripts to ascertain whether new codes from later interviews were in earlier interviews. The researcher ensured that all codes, where possible, related to interview questions and key words; for example, the code "the importance of relationships" was linked to what children liked and enjoyed most in their school. Having coded each interview transcript, the researcher looked at the first group of interview transcripts, these being *Inner City Primary pupil interview transcripts*; he read each pupil transcript and under each code the researcher noted what each pupil said.

The researcher asked several questions of the data. He asked the questions such as "*Is data this significant?*" The researcher decided on the significance of the data by linking the data to the research questions.

After the researcher analysed the first interview transcript and noted the themes, he then analysed the second interview transcript and looked to see if similar themes were emerging; if there were some different themes emerging, he went back to the first interview transcript to see if particular themes were evident in the transcript. This process of analysis was repeated for all interviews to ensure rigour and validity in analysis.

Data collection and analysis is a simultaneous activity in qualitative research. Merriam (1988) argues that analysis begins with the first interview, the first observation. Emerging insights or hunches direct the next phase of data collection, which in turn leads to refinement of the interview questions.

The researcher in this study wrote many field notes; these were used as an "aide memoir". These notes enabled the researcher to recall and reflect on key events from the interview and stimulate critical thinking.

Chapter 6 Key Findings: research questions and research findings

The following table illustrates how the research questions directly relate to the research findings. Some sections have a number of research questions attached to them; this is because several questions are addressed in these sections. The research question on similarity and difference in response by different cultural groups is implicit in all research findings.

Table 5: How the research questions relate to the research findings

Research question	Research finding
How are children with learning difficulties perceived by themselves and significant others as learners?	Qualities of children with learning difficulties and those identified as being able (6.2)
What expectations do children with learning difficulties have of their learning and that of school?	The importance of relationships (6.1) Causes of learning difficulties (6.8) Qualities of children with learning difficulties and those identified as being able (6.2)
What expectations do significant others have of children with learning difficulties? What hopes do parents have of their children and to what extent are parents supportive of their children's learning? How do children respond to any special help they receive?	The importance of relationships (6.1) Parental support (6.9) Ambition (6.10) Qualities of children with learning difficulties and those identified as being able (6.2)
How do children with learning difficulties like to be taught?	Wanting help to succeed inside and outside the classroom (6.4) The importance of relationships (6.1)
What feelings do children with learning difficulties have of school?	Bullying, sadness, shame and guilt (6.5) They have a feeling but no denial (6.7) School culture (6.11)
What can be said about the self-concept of children with learning difficulties? Do they have a low or high self-concept? Do children with learning difficulties excel in particular activities	Bullying, sadness, shame and guilt (6.5) They have a feeling but no denial (6.7)

such as sports?	Qualities of children with learning difficulties and those identified as being able (6.2) The importance of relationships (6.1)
How aware are children of their learning difficulty?	Understanding of learning difficulties (6.6) They have a feeling but no denial (6.7) Bullying, sadness, shame and guilt (6.5) Qualities of children with learning difficulties and those identified as being able (6.2) The importance of relationships (6.1)
Do children perceive their learning difficulty to be temporary or permanent?	Bullying, sadness, shame and guilt (6.5)
What if any difficulties do children with learning difficulties experience in school?	Bullying, sadness, shame and guilt (6.5) They have a feeling but no denial (6.7) The importance of relationships (6.1) Ambition (6.10)
How do children respond to labels, which are used to refer to them?	Qualities of children with learning difficulties and those identified as being able (6.2) Describing children with learning difficulties (6.3)
Do children have a preference for particular labels?	Qualities of children with learning difficulties and those identified as being able (6.2) Describing children with learning difficulties (6.3)

6.1 The importance of relationships

'Children with learning difficulties like to do easy work like art, ICT and PE; they like to do this work because they don't have to work hard and use a lot of their brain.'

This was the opening to the start of the focus group interview from Hamad in ICP (Inner City Primary). All children felt that those with learning difficulties enjoyed practical subjects and these were seen by the children to be less demanding. All children felt that those with learning difficulties find English and mathematics most difficult. Uzma said:

'You have to work by yourself and you are asked hard questions, there are also difficult things to do and this sometimes confuses you. Also if you can't read then you can't really understand what is going on, you can't write if you can't read.'

Maria argued the difficulties children with learning difficulties face are in literacy in particular because this subject involves a lot of reading, writing and spelling as well as having to remember a lot of hard things that then are used in writing. Kvale and Forness (1995) argued that children with learning difficulties experience difficulty in identified areas of academic functioning. This research extends this argument by suggesting Pakistani children with learning difficulties experience difficulty in literacy.

Tom from OCP (Outer City Primary) argued that children with learning difficulties have less brainpower than "normal people". When questioned further to define "normal", he referred to "normal" being clever children,

clever as in intelligent and brainy. Similar to Inner City Primary, Charlotte and Luke agreed to the following:

'Although children with learning difficulties enjoy coming to school, they really like the treats and rewards given to them by the teachers; they do find schoolwork difficult so they don't try as hard and will only put some effort in their learning.'

This suggests that peers of white children with learning difficulties are aware that a group of children in their class find learning difficult and that such children do not find schoolwork easy. When asked if children with learning difficulties saw their school being important, all children from ICP and OCP felt that school was not seen as important to these children. A number of reasons were offered to support their argument such as *'they come to school to see their friends'*, and *'they come for the fun of it and use school equipment which they don't have at home. They think sport is better – learning does not matter'*. All children felt that Pakistani and white children with learning difficulties did not necessarily understand the value and importance of school.

The focus group from OCP further argued that children prefer fun subjects like science, design technology and art, where they can make things and not think as hard.

Tom said:

'Children with learning difficulties also like PE where they don't have to work as hard.'

Clearly, children regard English and mathematics as harder subjects compared to the arts, the practical subjects. Kloomak and Cosden (1994) argue that children with learning difficulties rated themselves less competent in scholastic abilities but not less competent on some of the more non-academic domains.

Children with learning difficulties (in a one-to-one interview) in Inner City Primary, when asked about school, all children said that they enjoyed coming to school, they learnt a lot of things and did many fun activities such as playing with friends, doing art, PE and ICT. Children liked these subjects, together with subjects like science and numeracy (two children reported being good in science). All children stated that the most important subjects are literacy, numeracy, science, geography and history. When asked why, they said that there was a lot of writing and working out to do in these subjects and that is why they were seen to be important.

Sabrina commented on how important literacy and numeracy are and related this to how important it is to read, write, count and add, as these skills are needed for adult life. Fahid said that literacy and numeracy are the most important subjects as they help people to read, write and know their tables. This suggests that children with learning difficulties enjoy coming to Inner City Primary and appear to enjoy practical subjects where they feel that their skills are put to good use. Norwich and Kelly (2004) found that the majority of children with learning difficulties expressed positive feelings about school.

All children reported liking numeracy better than literacy because they were able to use known strategies, patterns and methods, for example number lines, to calculate answers to questions. This suggests that children respond better to structure and logic where they are able to get to answers using particular methods to solve calculations, for example using the number line to subtract. Furthermore, this suggests that children respond better to practical type subjects where a greater emphasis is on “kinaesthetic learning” and therefore schools need to do more of this to suit pupils’ learning styles.

One main aspect of schooling that was not liked by many pupils was that of bullying. This happened to children, in particular verbal bullying, in both English and Punjabi, where other children called pupils with learning difficulties names such as “dumb or fool” due to their learning difficulty. This frightened the children; as one child (Sabrina) said that she did not like it when some children say “nasty things” to her suggesting that she did not know anything. This child reported that this did happen to her frequently. People said things because they (the cleverer children) think they are better than those who have learning difficulties. Another child (Simon) reported not liking Outer City Primary because he got the blame when someone did something wrong; he did not like this as he wanted the teacher to believe him and listen to his story, but this did not happen. This suggests that children with learning difficulties are bullied verbally and hence the children feel sad and inadequate about themselves leading to a poor self-concept and image.

In their study, Norwich and Kelly (2004) also found that pupils were bullied because of their learning difficulty. Other aspects of schooling that children did not like was that of feeling worried and disappointed about being in the low ability group and thus not having the ability to achieve a Level 4 in SATs.

All children reported numeracy, literacy and science being the most important subjects; this may be because at the end of Year 6, children take SATs in these three core subjects. All children reported wanting to make their parents and teachers happy and for this reason it was important for them to do well in school. If this did not happen, and this did not happen all the time, children felt that they had let down their parents who in return would feel sad and disappointed in them.

Billy said:

'I really want to do well and get a Level 4 for my SATs but I know I won't; my parents will feel sad for me and they'll probably say 'it's okay' but I know they'll be sad because they wanted me to get higher scores.'

This suggests that children are very much aware of how well they are doing in school. They want to do better if only to please their parents and teachers as it matters for children to achieve and work hard.

All children felt that they received praise from their teachers, but this was less frequent than the praise that was given to those children who they identified as being clever. Children enjoyed praise and wanted what their teacher thought about their work mattered to them greatly.

Neelam said:

'If my teacher said to me 'You've worked really hard today, I'm really pleased,' I would be so happy that I would want to work harder the next time to make my teacher happier.'

This suggests that children welcome and want praise but they feel that they rarely get it from their teachers compared to those children who are able. Teachers need to ensure that praise is given to celebrate and promote pupil learning as children with learning difficulties feel praise in the main is given to able pupils. Covington and Beery (1976) argue that an environment of acceptance, praise and success raises self-esteem, whereas an environment of failure and criticism lowers self-esteem.

Children with learning difficulties in Outer City Primary also enjoyed and liked coming to school. The best things about school were playing with friends, doing ICT and numeracy. Furthermore, children reported on Outer City Primary being a good place because it helped children to learn. Similarly, Inner City Primary children also said that they find literacy difficult in Outer City Primary because they could not always read and understand the question. This suggests that literacy, in particular, reading, is a key area for schools to develop with children who have a learning difficulty because if one is unable to read fluently then this affects how the child may achieve in the rest of the curriculum.

Similarly, children in Outer City Primary felt that it was important to do well in Outer City Primary because it pleases the teacher and that was important.

Brook said:

'It makes you feel really happy if you please the teacher.'

Similarly, Inner City Primary children also wanted to please their parents. This suggests that children want to do well if only to please significant others. Brophy (1983) argues that praise from teachers and parents raises self-esteem, whereas criticism from teachers and parents reinforces negative self-beliefs.

When parents from Inner City Primary were asked if their children enjoyed learning, all parents claimed that if their child understands something, they like it as they tell them at home what they did. This issue confirms what children said in their interviews about when they understand something, they enjoy learning.

When parents from Outer City Primary were asked about whether their children enjoyed school and learning, all parents were positive particularly when they talked about practical subjects. This suggests that parents discuss school with their children and are happy when children enjoy learning. This is

also supported by children who say that their parents help them with their homework.

Samantha said:

'My son doesn't say that school is bad or says anything negative towards the teachers. He enjoys football, art and things where he doesn't have to sit and write. He likes practical subjects like DT, PE and science but when it comes to writing, recording and thinking about things – he doesn't like.'

Parents from both schools expressed an interest for children with learning difficulties to be taught together with their peers in class (as long as there was no disruption, argued one parent, Abid) rather than to be withdrawn in smaller groups as then children feel different from other children and they feel that they do not belong to their class. This suggests that parents want their children to be taught as part of a class; this may be because they do not want their children to be “singled out” from others. Children from OCP in the main preferred in class support compared to those from ICP.

When parents from Inner City Primary were asked about the ability group their children were in, all parents knew that their children were in the low ability group.

Freedra said:

'I know my child's below average, I can tell from his homework which when he remembers he brings it home, even his younger brother can do that homework. I can tell my child is in the low ability group because when I talk to him, it's like he's got it

in his head that he can't achieve no matter how hard I tell him that he can do it. I feel bad and I have a lot of guilt in me because after mosque he goes to his grandma's house till seven o'clock because no one can pick him up till then. If he could come home earlier maybe I could help him more and not feel as bad.'

The researcher found little evidence to comment on the extent to which an extended family acts as an aid or as a barrier to learning. This could be explored through further research.

Abid said:

'He won't get a Level 4 for his SATs because he's just not got it up there. I know he's in the below average group. Ali tells me too, he's in the right group because he is learning.'

This suggests that parents use a range of sources to identify which group their child is in. The range of sources may include asking their child to compare their child's ability to their peers. Having said this, when asked, if their parents helped them with their homework, Pakistani children said that they did not get help from their parents.

Parents from Outer City Primary were asked about their children's ability group. Similar to Inner City Primary, all parents except Bianca (maybe because she only knew when her daughter was in Year 6 that she had learning difficulties) were aware which group their children were in; they also said that their child had hopes of being in a higher ability group.

Bella said:

'My child knows that he is in the low ability group; I want him to do well in school for his SATs because that's what you go to school for (to learn and to do well) but I don't think he will do very well in school, particularly for his SATs. He'll feel disappointed and he'll think we'll be disappointed in him too, he wants us to feel proud of him.'

Bella talked further about how Billy feels:

'Billy knows that he is further behind in his learning than his peers; he compares himself to his cousin who is eighteen months younger than him. She reads lovely and this hurts Billy.'

This suggests that, although parents are aware of their child's ability group, they wish and prefer for their children to be in a higher ability group. This may be because parents associate the higher ability group with more academic success and opportunity.

6.2 Qualities of children with learning difficulties and those identified as being able

All children from the focus group interview from ICP and OCP felt that those with learning difficulties needed more help. Children from both schools argued that if they were a teacher they would give more help to children with learning difficulties, since these are the children who need help the most with their reading and writing. Furthermore, all children including those from OCP agreed that those with learning difficulties need extra help and some of this help could come from the clever children as children with learning difficulties may understand other children better than adults. Children clearly recognise that children with learning difficulties are in need of support. Children also appear to be caring, as they would offer support to those with learning difficulties. This view suggests that children are supportive of peers with learning difficulties and prefer to help these children.

James and Tom from OCP felt that children with learning difficulties are liked mainly amongst those who have learning difficulties themselves and not amongst the majority, for example, children who are of average ability, because children with learning difficulties cannot do the same things as clever children can.

Laura said:

'I feel kind of sorry for the children with learning difficulties, they don't really have many friends and they can't do much. I think that's why people don't say much to them.'

This view is supportive of what children with learning difficulties said during their one-to-one interview, that is, they feel they cannot do as much as those who they identify as being able.

All children from the focus group felt that those with learning difficulties have fewer friends because of the verbal abuse and bullying they are prone to from others. This is evident in the statement, *"no one wants to hang around with them"* as one child said. The classroom observations indicated that children with learning difficulties sat together and were not given any opportunity to integrate with other children. This may be because of the nature of the subject; mathematics was being taught and the teacher may have wanted children to sit in ability groups. School staff also talked about the limited circle of friends that children with learning difficulties have. Bryan (1986) argues that children with learning difficulties have problems in forming good relationships with peers. Children clearly have formed an opinion of those children with learning difficulties and they clearly distinguish themselves from these children who they see as different and needing more help. Children from OCP stated that although children with learning difficulties have a few friends, these children would prefer to be in a better group where they can make more friends because children are cleverer. This view suggests that peers recognise that children with learning difficulties would like more friends

and one way of gaining more friends is to be in a better ability group where other children are more clever.

All children from the ICP focus group felt that those with learning difficulties may have friends. Having friends depended on what they are good at; for example, if they are good at sports, people will want to choose them for their team and they will make friends. However, if children are not good at sports, others will not want to befriend them because they may feel embarrassed by "*hanging around*" with someone who is not clever, (children understood the term "clever" to mean someone who is intelligent, brainy, in higher ability sets and someone who is good particularly in numeracy and literacy). All children felt that those with learning difficulties have fewer friends because there are more clever children than children with learning difficulties and clever children do not like to hang around with those who have learning difficulties. Bryan (1986) argues that children with learning difficulties may encounter social difficulties and peer rejection. Poplin (1984) claims that children with learning difficulties are able to maintain a sense of self-worth in activities such as sports, music and hobbies as these help children to have feelings of accomplishment, which may help compensate for non-academic failure.

Children from the ICP focus group were asked to think of a child in their class who has learning difficulties and to describe this child using their own words. The researcher was aware that children will have thought of perhaps individual children and what they say is not generalizable to all clever children

and children with learning difficulties. However, what children said did give a picture of how children (who do not have learning difficulties) view children with learning difficulties. Many words and phrases were used such as:

'They go to bed late, not smart and not good looking, sleepy, can swear, day dream, does not concentrate, uses muddled up words, may act as a class clown, talk when the teacher is talking, offer 'dumb' answers, does not listen so misses part of the lesson.'

These were some general characteristics that peers used to refer to children with learning difficulties. Furthermore, all children said that these children always required help, they were lazy and could be mean but also funny at times. Words such as "stupid" (referring to behaviour) and "shy" (depending on activity) were also used to refer to these children. When asked if children with learning difficulties followed rules, worked as part of a team, were generous, work hard, were successful, clever, polite, caring, pupils responded with a "no". Johnston (1988) argues that children with learning difficulties are characterised with deficiencies in cognition, memory, language, inadequate achievement and short attention span. Lewis and Lindsay (2000) argue that children with learning difficulties have difficulty in acquiring basic skills, particularly in literacy and numeracy. It is clear that Pakistani peers view children with learning difficulties more negatively compared to white children. This may be because children with learning difficulties from ICP are regarded by peers as having fewer friends and are unable to do many of the things they can do, such as, answering questions and completing harder class work. Westbrook *et al* (1993) argued that there have been negative attitudes to disability; the authors found that in some communities people may feel

greater shame with respect to a disabled family member and attempts may be made to keep the existence of such members a secret.

This focus group from ICP was asked to undertake a similar activity to describe children who are clever or more able. Children used a number of words and phrases including “*clever, kind, generous, sometimes bigheaded, cheeky and show offs because they know they are good, funny, may lack confidence, do not always listen because they think they are the 'know it alls'.*”

This view suggests that peers think positively of Pakistani children who do not have learning difficulties. When asked what children’s understanding of clever was, children took this to mean clever as being in the “top ability group” and clever as in being brainy in numeracy, literacy and science. Clearly children regard an individual as being clever in the academic sense, particularly in the core subjects and yet they do not recognise that an individual can be clever in sports, art and music or even be talented in a particular aspect of school life.

The focus group from OCP offered the following set of words to describe a child with learning difficulties and a child who they identified as being a clever child. See the table below.

Table 6: Words and phrases used to describe children with/without learning difficulties

A child with SEN	A clever child	Both
Always needs help	Always gets the right answer	Follow rules Works well in a team

		Works hard
		Funny
		Kind
		Lazy
		Brainy
		Scared
		Stupid
		Caring
		Shy
		Bad tempered

When children were probed as to why they gave the answers they did, children said a child with learning difficulties always needed help and clever children always got the right answer. The remaining characteristics could be found in any child. Luke and James also felt that children with learning difficulties might feel scared, as they will feel the pressure of doing certain things that they feel they cannot do. Charlotte and Jane said that with many of the above words it depended on the context, for example a child with learning difficulties might be scared because he or she may be bullied; this child may not always get the right answer in mathematics but may do so in other subjects. This suggests that peers believe that with the exception of one characteristic, many of the above characteristics can be found in any child. This was different from Inner City Primary School, where Pakistani children with learning difficulties were thought of less well than their able

peers. Data from the research suggests this was because children with learning difficulties were seen to have fewer friends and were less popular than other children who were more able and could answer a lot of questions in literacy and numeracy. All children from Outer City Primary said that those with learning difficulties gave up on tasks more easily than others; this argument is also supported by Bandura (1982) who claims that in the face of difficulty, children with learning difficulties give up on tasks more easily than their peers.

Children with learning difficulties from ICP were able to comment on the types of children who received extra help. They felt a sense of sadness and sympathy towards these children because they were in the low achieving group; however, children welcomed and felt good about receiving this extra help and strongly felt that they needed this to do well. All children said that children who have a learning difficulty received additional support from a teaching assistant. It was interesting to note all children received help from a teaching assistant and not a teacher. In their study, Kelly and Norwich (2002) found that pupils received more help from teaching assistants than teachers.

Ali said:

'I like getting help from Miss because she explains things to me in detail, she helps me to think; I know some children laugh at me when I get the help.'

Some children experienced tension and conflict from other children when receiving support, as Fahid said:

'Some children take the mick out of me when I get extra help. I then feel sad, it's hard them saying nasty stuff, calling me names because I want the help because I want to learn more.'

All children reported that other pupils were jealous because they did not receive the support. Children said they were one of six or seven children receiving this help because they needed it and it would help them to achieve a Level 4 in English and maths. When asked whether they will achieve it, all said "no" as they felt that only clever children could get a Level 4. All children said that it was important for them to get a Level 4 because they would be in the high ability group. This was important as other children in the class would like them more. This suggests that children want to be liked by other children and the one way of being liked by others is to be in the high ability group. Furthermore, this suggests that children feel inferior compared to the able children. Although children welcome the support they receive, given the chance, if they could, they would like to work independently.

Children with learning difficulties from Outer City Primary in a one-to-one interview reported that they were one of seven or eight who received extra help; they were able to say why they received it (because they could not always do their work on their own and therefore needed help) and enjoyed getting this help as this would help them to prepare for their SATs.

Similarly, Inner City Primary children stated others were sometimes jealous as to why they got help.

Sarah said:

'Sometimes other children in my class ask me why I get extra help; I tell them that I'm in the lower set. I don't think they like me getting this help.'

This suggests that children appear to be happy and proud of getting the extra help as it helps them with their work and to do better in school. However, they still would like to be in a better group and given the chance they would prefer not to have learning difficulties as they associate being in a better ability group with more academic and school success.

Brook said:

'One child I know gets extra help; he finds learning difficult. He has no proper friends and no one likes him; he doesn't listen to the teacher. He gets help.'

This suggests that children are aware why certain children may get extra help and are also aware that some children with learning difficulties may have fewer or no friends. This awareness may result in children with learning difficulties feeling "singled out".

Children with learning difficulties in Inner City Primary were asked what they understood by the term "a clever child", and to think of a child who they would describe as being clever. The following qualities and characteristics

were used to describe a clever child. Many positive contributions were offered (similar to the ICP focus group) including someone who is good looking and slim, has lots of friends, good at writing, good at literacy, numeracy, science, geography and lots of other subjects, puts up his or her hand when asked a question and often gets the right answer, can work on their own without any help, good at thinking, often gets a Level 4 or five in practice SATs, a good learner, listens carefully, sensible, does the right thing for example, if asked to do something by an adult, the child will do this straight away, thinks about questions carefully, answers questions, is liked by the class teacher and other children because he or she is good at lots of subjects, is intelligent and brainy, reads well and does a lot of good writing. When asked was there anything the child is not good at, many children responded to art and PE.

It is important to remember that in an earlier section of the research children who were part of a focus group interview from OCP said that in the main a child with learning difficulties could have similar characteristics to someone who has been identified as being "clever", but children from ICP (focus group sample) spoke less favourably of children with learning difficulties. When children with learning difficulties from both schools were asked to identify characteristics of those who they see as being clever and those who they see as having learning difficulties, all children again spoke less positively of children with learning difficulties.

When these children were asked to describe a child who has a learning difficulty and the type of children who need that extra help, children began to describe themselves and the answers that they provided; some were the opposite of what they used to describe a clever child. The children described a child with a learning difficulty as someone who always needs help, someone who struggles with reading, writing and spelling, someone who cannot speak very clearly, someone who is not very good at subjects such as literacy, numeracy and science, and hence gets help from another adult in the classroom (the self-image profile too indicated that children in both schools did not see themselves to be brainy and clever in the academic domain, though they were happy). They do not always know what to do and may mess about (the self-image profile revealed that all Pakistani children were easily bored in lessons), someone who has a few friends, and is not sure if other children like children with learning difficulties because sometimes these children do silly and nasty things, such as hurting other children and not listening to the teacher, which upsets the class, and also someone who is okay looking, not pretty or handsome like a clever child. One child reported on the biggest difference between a clever child and a child with learning difficulties is the former can nearly do everything compared to the latter that cannot do much. When asked whether this child may have any strengths the children said that such a child might be good at playing football and doing science. Data from the interviews suggest that children with learning difficulties are viewed negatively (compared to the more able pupils) and these perceptions come from what children with learning difficulties can and

cannot do in the classroom and in the playground. This is further reinforced by how other children in class treat them.

This suggests that children from an early age have clearly identified differences in characteristics between the clever children as well as those who have learning difficulties, and hence use this knowledge to formulate their expectation of what they can and cannot do. As a result, children with learning difficulties view themselves negatively compared to their able peers and this has been possibly reinforced by significant others. Children with learning difficulties present a low image of themselves compared to the image presented of the clever children. Elliot *et al* (1999) found that children from an early age learn what is expected of them. In their study, Cambra and Silvestre (2003) argue that children with learning difficulties may have a positive self-concept but this will be significantly lower than those without a learning difficulty, especially in the social and academic dimensions.

When children were given a list of words and phrases describing children’s characteristics (these words and phrases were derived by children during the pilot phase), children very quickly were able to arrange this list in three categories, those that belong to the clever children and those that belong to children with learning difficulties, see the table below.

Table 7: Words and phrases used to describe children with/without learning difficulties

	Clever children	Children with learning difficulties
--	-----------------	-------------------------------------

Yes	Always gets the right answer, follows school rules, works well in a team, generous, hard working, kind, successful, funny, kind, confident, intelligent, brainy, caring, polite, listens well, does not mess about	Always needs help, lazy, mean, selfish, scared, shy
No	Always needs help, bad tempered, cruel, lazy, mean, selfish, scared, stupid, shy	Always gets the right answer, follows school rules, works well in a team, generous, hard working, kind, confident, intelligent, brainy, caring, polite, listens well
Sometimes		Bad tempered, cruel, funny, stupid, successful

Given that the words were explained to the children and some of them were dependent on context, many of the positive words and phrases have been associated with clever children, whereas the negative words such as mean, lazy and selfish are associated with children with learning difficulties. When asked why certain words and phrases were used to describe clever children, children offered a range of responses from “clever children put their hands up, listen to the teacher” to children with learning difficulties that “don’t listen

and take part in their learning". Again this issue supports the view that from an early age children have formulated an expectation of who they are and what they are able to do and feel a sense of inferiority between themselves and the clever children. As a result, some children are living up to this low expectation. Bandura (1982) argues that children with learning difficulties are likely to give up on tasks more easily than those without learning difficulties.

Children with learning difficulties from Outer City Primary again used a range of words and phrases to describe a child who is clever such as this child being smartly dressed, good looking, nicely styled hair, is better than children who have learning difficulties, good at football, fashionable, wears nice clothes, helps others in class, neat handwriting, good at running, good at everything for example science, literacy and numeracy, liked by class teachers because he helps other children, popular with other children, makes you smile and happy because they are happy children, kind, follows rules, never gets into trouble, tells good jokes and makes people laugh, cannot shout out answers and answer back. When children were asked if they would choose any of these characteristics to describe themselves, all children said that none of the above characteristics reflected them.

Sarah said:

'Because I think I can't do things properly, I mean like learn like the other kids, I get things wrong so sometimes I give up and think I'm not going to try. I know I'm not as good as the clever children because they can do a lot of things.'

The self-image profile indicated that white children viewed themselves to be friendlier, kinder, helpful and were happier about the way they looked compared to Pakistani children.

When asked to describe children with learning difficulties, the following words and phrases were used by children from OCP, has freckles (a child described himself), not good looking, not popular, does not always wear school uniform, never listens to the class teacher, everyone picks on him, cannot always do the work, gets lots of help. This issue, similar to that of Inner City Primary, suggests that children have formed a positive image of the more able pupils who they possibly see as "role models" and when it came to describing children with learning difficulties, they in the main described and formed an opinion of what they are able to do for example, cannot always do his work, others pick on him. Clearly, children with learning difficulties view themselves as having a negative self-image.

When the researcher asked children to explain why they chose to describe able children and children with learning difficulties in particular ways, the children responded as follows.

Billy said:

'Clever children work hard and are successful because when the teacher tells them to do something, they do it straight away and they get it right. They are helpful because they help other children with their work.'

Sarah said:

'Clever children aren't stupid because they know what is happening in the lessons, they don't fall asleep in lessons, and they go to bed early and have a good breakfast. Clever children are not cruel because they don't pick on anyone.'

Simon talked about a child with learning difficulties and said:

'These children always need help because they don't listen to the class teacher. They have bad tempers because when people pick on them, they say something back and so they get into trouble. These children are scared because they get picked on by others.'

Again, these results suggest that children with learning difficulties see themselves to be different and inferior compared to those children who they perceive as being clever. The self-image profile indicated that the majority of the children felt different from others; however, the SIP indicated that children with learning difficulties had a positive self-image.

The researcher observed the children in the classroom. Children in Inner City Primary took part in a maths activity on "coordinates and shape". All four children with learning difficulties were placed together at the front of the class and were encouraged to work in pairs, as were other children. This confirms what children said in the interview that all children with learning difficulties are placed to sit together and usually at the front of the class.

During the introduction to the lesson, the teacher encouraged children to take part in the learning by asking them direct questions, which were

differentiated according to their ability. This strategy was used to ensure children feel part of the class where their contributions are equally valued.

The children were interested in the activity and tried extremely hard to concentrate given the lengthy introduction to the main activity and some of the mathematical concepts that were beyond their ability. The children were eager and keen to get started. They listened well and their responses were also well received by other children and their behaviour was exemplary. This disproves what children said during their interview, which was that children with learning difficulties do not listen well and do not behave well all the time. Clearly, pupils with learning difficulties do have qualities within them such as "good listening", which they seem to shy away from and do not promote. This may be because they have been told by others, such as parents, teachers and peers, that they have learning difficulties because they do not listen in class. There was no evidence seen of other pupils laughing at pupil responses; this may be because of the calm and positive classroom environment created by the teacher.

During the activity, there was a good deal of paired talk, by each pair, where ideas and thoughts were exchanged; opportunities for independent learning were also promoted where children were encouraged to think by themselves and then share their thoughts with a partner. This helped the children to think out loudly what they were doing. It was clear that the children were benefiting from working in pairs and enjoyed this approach as it helped to

build their lack of confidence. The teaching assistant supporting the group took on various roles such as explaining the activity again to the children in simpler terms, working with one or two pupils and providing reassurance and praise to pupils. During the course of the activity, all children worked extremely hard. They persevered and did not give up; where they were unable to do something, they asked for help; the children were desperate to get it right; they wanted to do well and meet high teacher expectations set by the teacher. This confirms that children with learning difficulties are keen to do well in their learning, yet need reassurance and support. Children with learning difficulties want to do well. It is important to recognise that they want to achieve and succeed in certain tasks. Schools need to provide opportunities to children for this to happen before it is too late, at which time children are totally disengaged with the education system.

The children could explain to the researcher what they were doing, given their limited vocabulary. Again, this disproves what children said during the pupil interview, which was that they did not always know what they were doing. This may be the case but, when they worked on the given activity, the four targeted children explained what they were doing and why and were making good progress. However, the children would have made more progress if structural apparatus (that is, practical resources) were used to support their learning. When the children were asked if they met the learning objective at the end of the lesson, all pupils responded with a "yes" and said that they achieved the learning objective because the given task was easy.

Clearly, children with learning difficulties can achieve and succeed in tasks. It is important that others such as peers and parents are aware of pupil success and also for teachers to ensure that there is sufficient challenge in pupil learning. Bandura (1982) argues that where successes do occur, children with learning difficulties are more likely to attribute these to task ease and help from others (for example the teacher, teaching assistant or peers) rather than saying that they were able to complete the task with sheer hard work and determination.

The children in Outer City Primary were learning their times tables and again, similarly to Inner City Primary, these children were also placed to sit together at the front of the class with a teaching assistant who again guided them to achieve the learning intention and reinforced teacher expectations. The teaching assistant worked similarly to the teaching assistant from Inner City Primary, where she provided reassurance and support to pupils.

Similarly to Inner City Primary, children from Outer City Primary took part in their learning; they answered questions through encouragement and direct questions from the class teacher. Where the teacher in both schools gave children pre-warning about asking them to think about a particular question, children welcomed this approach as it gave them extra time to think about the answer to the question and liaise with the teaching assistant. When completing the activity, the children sought reassurance from the teaching assistant to check whether what they were doing was right. The children

needed reassurance and ample praise to support their lack of confidence. This suggests that these children are not confident and this supports what the children said during their interview that they do not see themselves to be confident. The children's lack of confidence may be because of earlier experiences where failure may have been experienced. Because children with learning difficulties lack confidence, schools need to create additional opportunities to build confidence for all children, but in particular for those who have learning difficulties.

Again, similarly to Inner City Primary, the children listened well and behaved well during the lesson, though due to keenness and excitement, they did not always put up their hand to answer questions. Nevertheless, their response was valued by the teacher and other children in class. This suggests that children can behave well if they are enjoying an activity and know what they are doing. The teacher asked children questions, the children were keen to do well and answered these well with reassurance from a teaching assistant. There were limited opportunities for independent learning activities compared to ICP. This may be because of the nature of the activity. There was an "obvious feel-good factor", which children experienced when they correctly answered a question, and this shows children's keenness to get involved in the learning process.

Where a multisensory approach was used, the children benefited. It was clear that the children enjoyed and welcomed more kinaesthetic learning. This

suggests that children with learning difficulties benefit from multisensory teaching, and in particular kinaesthetic teaching. Most pupils in both schools were aware of their targets but were not involved in target setting and did not know what steps they had to take to achieve their target; this confirms what children said about not being involved in target setting.

The researcher spoke to the class teachers from both schools briefly after the pupil observation to confirm his findings. Teachers from both schools argued that it is true that children are keen to do well and like to participate in lessons; however, they need a good deal of practice as learning is not always retained. This then suggests that, although children need practise to retain learning, they also need challenge; without this, children may choose to misbehave, not listen and make slow progress.

When the researcher asked a teacher and a teaching assistant from Inner City Primary to identify characteristics of pupils with learning difficulties, staff claimed that these children have moderate learning difficulties; although they are aware of their learning difficulties, they do not realise how important learning is.

One member of staff said:

'Children with learning difficulties have low self-esteem, they are unable to articulate clearly, they can be timid to boisterous and loud, some are disruptive, lazy and mean, they can be mean because they are dealing with an internal feeling, others are kind. Children with learning difficulties are scared; this is to do with their lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes.'

Winter (1992) argues that a sense of not being good is potentially fostered when teachers focus their concerns on pupil ability as opposed to their efforts. Staff from Inner City Primary reported that children with learning difficulties seem to be better at and enjoy subjects such as science, sports and art. This view confirms what pupils and parents said in their interviews, which was that pupils enjoy practical subjects. Staff also reported on children with learning difficulties enjoying routine tasks that involve basic literacy and numeracy work.

When the researcher asked staff from Outer City Primary to identify characteristics of pupils with learning difficulties, the following was said:

'Children with learning difficulties lack confidence, they do not have a very good/positive self-image, they don't believe they are able to do things even when they can do them. These children work at a slower pace, their responses are much slower, they always find it difficult to know what is required of them particularly in a group situation. Children with learning difficulties need individual instruction. They don't understand what the class teacher has requested of them. This all comes from early experiences, their upbringing, there is no answer.'

This is similar to ICP. This confirms with pupil interviews that children have a lack of confidence and a low self-image. It is also true that children with learning difficulties work at a slower pace. Staff members have associated lacking confidence with a low self-image where children with learning difficulties do not feel good about themselves; this then results in the teacher and the child having a set of expectations about what can be achieved by children.

Staff argued that children with learning difficulties have low self-esteem. In some cases, children do not have the spark and enthusiasm or motivation to work. They also said (similarly to Inner City Primary) that children with learning difficulties do not like change, they like routine. Furthermore, staff argued that children with learning difficulties are not focused when taking part in an activity; this, as the school said, may be due to poor attention span, poor listening skills and difficulty in recording work. Children with learning difficulties become easily bored and they tend to rush through their work. When the researcher observed the children in class, he did see children keen to rush through their work and children struggling to concentrate. This confirms what the children said in their interviews about wanting to do well and learn, though they lack confidence and have low self-image. Staff members have formed a link between children with learning difficulties and their attitude to work; this link suggests that children with learning difficulties have negative traits when approaching learning. Hart *et al* (2004) found that children with learning difficulties experience low self-esteem.

When asked to identify character traits of children with learning difficulties and those who they see as being clever, parents from Inner City Primary argued that there was a clearer contrast (especially in the eyes of one parent, Freeda, compared to what parents said from Outer City Primary) between both groups of children. This was similar to what children said in their interviews.

Table 8: Words and phrases used to describe children with/without learning difficulties

Clever Children	Children with Learning Difficulties
Always gets the right answer, follows school rules, works well together in a group, generous, hard working, successful, funny, kind, confident, brainy, caring, polite, shy, listens well, helpful, intelligent	Always need help, bad tempered, cruel, lazy, mean, selfish, scared, stupid, forgetful, bored, struggles with work, poor concentration, compulsive in a lot of things

Freedra said:

'Because children with learning difficulties, mine certainly, have bad behaviour, there are a lot of negative things about them.'

Sohail said:

'My daughter Sabrina is hard working, she tries hard and works hard by herself, I can't help her much because I'm not that educated and I can't speak the language (English).'

Abid said:

'Whether children are clever or not, all children can be bad tempered, not follow school rules, lazy, funny, kind, listens well.'

This suggests that parents have clearly distinguished the characteristics of both groups of children and believe in the main that their child is capable of any of the more positive characteristics that some may believe are inherent in clever children only, for example "hard working". Therefore, regardless of a

child's learning difficulty, a majority of the parents from ICP are positive about their child's capability (this was not the case for children who doubted their abilities). A similar response was offered by parents from OCP, who argued that children with learning difficulties enjoy a practical approach to work and can find it hard to concentrate.

Table 9: Words and phrases used to describe children with/without learning difficulties

Clever children	Children with learning difficulties
Confident, always gets the right answer, follows school rules, works well together in a group, generous, hard working, successful, funny, kind, confident, brainy, caring, polite, shy, listens well, helpful, intelligent	Caring, kind, funny at times, works hard sometimes, shy, listens well, polite, generous, scared when they can't do something, sometimes lazy, clever depending on activity, follows school rules depending on behaviour

This suggests that, in the main, parents from Outer City Primary see children with learning difficulties to be similar to any other child. It is worth noting that parents were given the above set of words in Tables 7 and 8 and were then asked to sort them into characteristics of the least and most able child. All parents were asked to explain what they understood the words to mean in their words; for example the word "cruel" was described as someone who upsets and hurts people's feelings, the word "generous" was described as someone who is kind and the word "confident" was described as someone

who knows what they are doing and is not afraid to talk in front of a large group of people.

6.3 Describing children with learning difficulties

During the focus group interviews, children from both schools were asked which words they had heard used in reference to children with learning difficulties. All children from ICP and OCP had heard of the following terms: learning difficulties, special educational needs, learning disability, spastic, slow, stupid, not normal, handicapped, thick, dumb, something wrong with you, loser, idiot and fool. Uzma, Aneela, Maria and Hamad from ICP and all children from OCP liked the term "learning difficulty" the best as this clearly explained to the children that a child has difficulty with his or her learning. Norwich and Kelly (2004) argued that most children had heard of the term learning difficulty and viewed this term positively. All children from ICP and OCP also liked the term "special educational needs" since they claimed that this phrase is closely connected to education and this is what the children have, a special educational need. All children from OCP liked the term "disabled" to refer to children with learning difficulties, but they could not explain why they liked this term. Laura and James also liked the words "learning problems" since this means that children have problems with their learning.

All six children from OCP said that they like the word "slow learner":

'We like this word because these children cannot do things as quickly as we and other children can, they do things a lot slowly and need lots of help, we think they are slow learners.'

All children from both schools did not like many of the negative words such as “thick”, “dumb” and “stupid” as these they referred to (Uzma and Maria) were *“harsh words and take the mick out of the children”*. These children said that such words hurt children’s feelings, *“children lose their self-confidence and won’t like coming to school”*. Children also said that if negative words are used, children may believe that what the words mean is true and then they may give up (and make excuses) and not work because they will live up to that negative expectation. All children acknowledged that, although some negative words are used to refer to children with learning difficulties, the group of children who were of average and above average ability said that they did not use negative words to describe the children with learning difficulties. When the researcher observed children with learning difficulties in a lesson, he did not see any child with learning difficulties being bullied or laughed at by other children; though this is not to say this does not happen around school. Luke and Jane from the OCP focus group felt that certain negative terms are used particularly in the playground.

Charlotte from OCP said:

‘I have heard other children call these children spastic, dumb, thick and stupid and they laugh when they say it, it’s not nice because it hurts their feelings.’

This view suggests that children with learning difficulties are prone to verbal abuse because of their learning difficulty. Equally, this issue also suggests that peers are aware of both the positive and negative terms used to refer to

children with learning difficulties and that they themselves have a preference for certain terms.

During the one-to-one interviews, children with learning difficulties from Inner City Primary were asked which words and phrases they had heard of when referring to children with learning difficulties. The following were recognised: learning difficulties, special educational needs, special needs, learning problems, disability, slow, stupid, not normal, thick, dumb, something wrong with you, loser, idiot, fool. The following were not heard of: learning disability, spastic and handicapped. All children were quickly able to distinguish words that were offensive in nature, for example slow, stupid, not normal, thick, dumb, something wrong with you, loser, idiot, fool, spastic and handicapped and disliked these, as one child referred to them as "*swear words*", another referred to these as "*not nice words*" and a third child said that these words were "*mean*". Children felt some of these words such as "*idiot, fool, stupid, dumb*" were used particularly by other children (similarly argued by children from the focus group interview) to refer to them, but the children did not believe, for example, that even though someone called them stupid, they did not believe that they were stupid and would not use any of the negative words as described above. Most children (three out of four) liked the terms learning difficulty, learning problems, special needs and special educational needs. These words and phrases were liked because they meant getting special help from an adult either in the classroom or in a special place somewhere in school. All children liked words such as learning difficulty and

special educational needs, as these phrases were seen to be "*nice and caring*" words and not words that, as one child referred to, "*take the mick*". The use of certain words and phrases are favoured as they are seen as supportive of children's needs and hence regarded as positive in the eyes of the children. Children with learning difficulties preferred teachers and parents to use the positive words when describing a pupil's learning difficulty. However, one child said that her parents would use words such as "dumb" and "fool" to describe her learning difficulty.

Hastings and Remington (1993) found that undergraduates evaluated the terms "learning difficulty" and "learning disability" more positively than older terms such as "mental handicap". However, Norwich (1997) found that professionals, including educational psychologists, experienced and trainee teachers, perceived learning difficulties and special educational needs positively and again labels linked to medical terminology such as disability were evaluated negatively, as were terms such as "stupid" and "thick".

Children with learning difficulties from Outer City Primary had heard of most of the words that have been used to describe children with learning difficulties. The main phrase that was unheard of was learning disability, similarly to Inner City Primary. This may be because children may associate disability with physical difficulty and do not make a connection to learning.

Similarly to Inner City Primary, children with learning difficulties from Outer City Primary welcomed words such as learning difficulties, SEN and special needs because again they felt that these words best helped to describe a child who has learning difficulties. Using these words and phrases may inform the child that he or she is special.

Simon said:

'I like the word special educational needs because you feel kind of supported if you use this word, you feel special, the other words make you think there is something wrong with you, these words take the mick out of you. Children sometimes use these bad words and words like "spackers" which means something is wrong with you because you find work difficult to do. Sometimes children in school call me thick, handicapped and stupid, this makes me feel angry and sad.'

Sarah said:

'I don't like some of the bad words like stupid, dumb, idiot and thick, they make me feel ashamed of myself, sometimes children use these words to take the mick out of me. I feel sad and scared when they use them because I feel I'm going to get battered.'

Clearly, children have distinguished between the most positive and negative words that have been used to describe a child who has learning difficulties. Furthermore, children feel that some of the children in school would use the negative and mean words towards children with learning difficulties, which further lowers their self-esteem and makes them feel inferior. All children from Outer City Primary said that sometimes other children would use mean words such as "loser, dumb and idiot" to refer to the children, especially when they got low test marks. Furthermore, most children (seven out of eight) felt

that, although teachers and parents did not use any of the negative words towards children with learning difficulties, their parents and teachers thought that there was something wrong with the children. This then may contribute to children with learning difficulties having a low self-image and feeling a sense of sadness because of others using negative words to refer to the children.

Staff from Inner City Primary had heard of various words and phrases that have been used to refer to children with learning difficulties. Many of these, including the word 'handicapped', were viewed as too negative as they could lower a child's confidence if used, and many words and phrases had a stigma attached to them. Preference was given to words and phrases such as "learning difficulties", "special needs" and "special educational needs", which would be merely used as professional terms with staff.

Similarly to Inner City Primary, school staff from Outer City Primary had heard of all given words and phrases that have been used to refer to children with learning difficulties, but preferred the following: learning difficulty, special educational needs and slow learner. These phrases were liked as they best described children who have learning difficulties. Staff claimed that occasionally children would use negative words and phrases towards children with learning difficulties. Again, staff reported that parents would also use some of the words in a negative way. Similarly to Inner City Primary, the word 'handicapped' was viewed to be negative. It is clear that staff in the

main would use some of the more neutral terminology to describe children with learning difficulties, with the exception of staff from OCP who would also use the term "slow learner" to describe children's learning difficulty.

Parents from Inner City Primary preferred terms such as learning difficulty, learning disability and special educational needs as they saw these to be a polite way of defining their child's needs. Parents viewed many of the words including "*stupid, fool, slow, spastic and handicapped*" to be negative, as these they felt would discourage their children from working. Parents are therefore aware of both the positive and negative terminology that is used to refer to children with learning difficulties.

Freeda said:

'When I sometimes say to my child that you're stupid, it makes him so angry that he doesn't want to work, he refuses to do what has been asked of him so he walks away.'

Abid said:

'I like the term special educational needs because that's what my son has and for this reason he has special help.'

Parents from Outer City Primary had heard of the words and phrases used to refer to children with learning difficulties. They quickly distinguished the positive and negative words.

Samantha said:

'I don't like the word stupid because you shouldn't put a name to a person, it gives children a complex, it's a negative word. I also don't like words like dumb, thick, loser, something wrong with you, not normal because they are demeaning. I would use the word 'learning difficulty' because it tells you that the child has something wrong with his learning.'

Bella said:

'I don't like the word learning disability because I don't think SEN is a disability. I also don't like the word 'learning problems' because I don't see my child's learning difficulty as a problem, I just see it, as he needs help. I don't like the words not normal, handicapped, thick, stupid and dumb, they're not nice words but these are words which children call children with learning difficulties definitely. I like the words special needs, special educational needs and learning difficulties because these words are about children getting help with their learning, help from maybe someone special.'

Bianca said that she liked the words learning difficulties and special educational needs as these words sounded polite and more appropriate to describe a child with learning difficulties.

Bianca also said:

'I don't like the words thick, dumb and stupid because children with learning difficulties are not dumb and stupid, it's not their fault if they get something wrong.'

This issue confirms what children said in their interview about preferring some of the more positive terms to describe their learning difficulty.

6.4 Wanting help to succeed inside and outside the classroom

All Pakistani children interviewed during the focus group interview argued that those with learning difficulties will certainly not achieve a national curriculum Level 4 for English, maths and science in Year 6 (national expectation); they believed that these children could potentially achieve a national curriculum level of 2C if they tried hard (the national average for a child leaving Year 2 is 2B).

Imran said:

'Because these children have problems in their learning, they can't do things by themselves always so they get lots of help from Miss and when they do their SATs, they will have to work on their own and it's gonna be hard for them to get a Level 4.'

This view suggests that children have low expectations of peers who have learning difficulties. Because of what children can and cannot do, all children from ICP felt that those with learning difficulties will not go to university as they first needed to ensure that they have the basic skills (reading, writing, number work), which they lack. Faisal and Maria felt that the secondary school experience may give children with learning difficulties the basic skills; the children may find the experience both exciting and enjoyable and this may help alleviate their learning difficulties, which could help with a university application.

All children with learning difficulties were able to clearly identify which group they were in for literacy and numeracy. Many words and phrases were used by children to describe this group including “the low group”, “the support group” and “the bottom group”. All children knew of the group they were in; some of this came from teachers, others came from the pupils themselves’ who said they knew because of the work that was given to them was too easy compared to the rest of the children, an adult was seated at their table supporting them, or they knew other children on the table who were not the cleverest of the class. Some children reported having an internal feeling that they knew they were not good in a particular subject; one child said that she was in this group because she did not listen to the teacher and another child said he was in the low group because he found it difficult to learn anything. All children felt sad about being in the low ability group for many reasons, including other children in the class thinking and saying that they are “stupid” or “dumb” or saying “rude names” because a child is in the low ability group. Pakistani boys in particular had a lower self-image than Pakistani girls during the self-image profile assessment. Mercer (1987) reports on children with learning difficulties having low self-concepts and negative self-beliefs, which are associated with poor academic achievement.

Fahid said:

‘I’m not in the top group, I know that, I’m in the bottom group because I don’t learn anything, no one tells me that, I just know it and I feel sad because other people think I’m stupid.’

Sabrina said:

'I feel sad that I'm in the low group, I wish I was in the top group.'

Simon said:

'It's not a nice feeling being in the bottom group because you've made your mum and dad sad.'

Billy said:

'I don't like being in the low group, it's not nice, I wish I was in the top group. I know I'm in the low group because I'm not quite good at stuff (reading and maths) like other people.'

When Sarah was asked which group she was in, she responded by saying:

'I'm in the down below group, it's not nice being here, and people laugh.'

Children with learning difficulties felt that they should and wanted to be in a better group as this would not only please their parents but also they would be able to do work that was harder and this would help other children in the class like them because they would be like the rest. Gettinger and Kosciak (2001) claim that because of their learning difficulties, these children may encounter peer rejection.

Children with learning difficulties said that they would prefer to be in the middle or top ability group because, in these groups, children do work that is much harder. Children prefer to be in these groups because parents tell children that these are the better groups and if children are in these groups then, according to children, their parents say that children have a better chance of getting a higher SAT level; they have a good chance of going to

college, university and getting a good job. All children felt that being in a lower ability group meant low test results, and this was upsetting and embarrassing for them. These thoughts have also been confirmed by children themselves, who said that they wanted to be in a better group because of the above reasons. This suggests that children can clearly distinguish between the work that children are given in different groups. They can also identify the type of children in these different groups (in terms of their ability). They also form an expectation of what they are able to do and not do by being in a particular group. As a result, children see themselves as being academically different and inferior to their peers. This issue also suggests that children feel a sense of sadness, inferiority and disappointment about being in the low ability group; this is further strengthened by feeling not liked by other children who they perceive as "clever". As a result, these children have a low self-academic concept compared to their able peers. Bryan (1986) argues that children with learning difficulties encounter difficulties in social and emotional areas as well as academic performance. Furthermore, children with learning difficulties experience sadness about their position in class compared to their peers. Cooper (1993) argued that there is a stigma among children who have learning difficulties; these children may experience feelings such as shame and guilt.

Again, similarly to Inner City Primary, all children with learning difficulties from OCP were able to identify the ability group they were in for literacy and numeracy, although similarly to Inner City Primary, all children welcomed the

support provided by a teaching assistant. However, all expressed dissatisfaction and sadness about being in the low ability group. Children have correlated being in the low ability group with sadness.

Sarah said:

'I know I'm in the low group, I'm not happy because I know I'm not doing good, no one tells me I'm not doing good, I just know it, I feel it.'

Billy said:

'I know I'm in the low group because I don't do good in my work, that's why they put me down there, I don't know if I will ever move to a higher group.'

This same child said that his parents were unaware of the group he was in for literacy and numeracy because they rarely came into school to see his work (however he argued that his mum supports him with his homework). This child would like his parents to see his work; he felt sad that this did not happen other than on parents' evening. This suggests that children want their parents to come in to see their work because to children it matters what their parents think. Nind *et al* (2003) argue that meaningful education of the whole child depends on many factors, including schools working effectively in partnership with parents. Tizard and Hughes (1984) claim that a strong correlation between home and school enables a child to work better.

Again, similarly to Inner City Primary, children with learning difficulties from OCP had an internal feeling within them that informed them of the group they are in; this feeling seems to be an uncomfortable feeling, a feeling that makes children feel sad and negative about themselves compared to others.

Billy from Outer City Primary said:

'If I was in a different group I would feel so good about myself because I know I would make my parents happy and people would like me more in school.'

This suggests that children feel differently and possibly inferior about being in the low ability group. Clearly, children want to do well and be in higher ability groups, if only to please significant others, for example their parents. Children want to feel good about themselves, and for this to happen they want to be in a higher ability group. Schools need to do more work on personal and social development with children and to be aware of the pressures children in low ability groups are under.

All children with learning difficulties from Inner City Primary said that it was important for children in Year 6 to get the national expected Level 4 in English, maths and science; however, all children felt that for literacy and numeracy they will only achieve a Level 2 or possibly a Level 3. This disappointed the children, since they felt sad and again different from those who will get a Level 4, the clever children. Furthermore, children felt that they would again let down their parents if they did not achieve a Level 4. Children said that they would blame themselves for not achieving a Level 4, since they should have concentrated and listened more in class. The children stated that a group of children will not get a Level 4 in literacy and numeracy; these children would be those who do not listen to the class teacher, do not learn at

home, and keep asking the class teacher what to do next, and hence get a lot more support than pupils who are in a lower group. Children from Inner City Primary are aware that they have learning difficulties and question whether they will get a Level 4 yet have the ambition, the desire and expectation of wanting to achieve a Level 4. Children have distinguished the type of children who may not achieve a Level 4 and know that they are one of these, yet they want to do well in school as they associate this with success and this is what they want. This conflicts with Bandura (1982) who claims that children with learning difficulties hold lower expectations for future achievement.

Similarly to children from Inner City Primary, all children with learning difficulties from Outer City Primary thought that they may get a Level 3 if they worked hard for their SATs. Similarly to children from Inner City Primary, children from Outer City Primary thought that if children did not achieve a Level 4 in Year 6, they would remain in the low group and be prone to some type of bullying, as others would make fun of children not getting a Level 4. This suggests that children with learning difficulties are faced with an internal pressure to achieve a Level 4; if they do not, they are faced with bullying from others. Having let down their teachers and parents, they feel a sense of sadness.

Staff from Inner City Primary argued that children with learning difficulties do make progress, but it is very slow progress and sometimes this is hindered due to inappropriate and disruptive behaviour. They claim that staff attitude

towards children is a huge factor that influences what progress children make. Furthermore, they argued that some children would make more progress if they were thought of more in class, and were provided with activities that cater to their individual needs. This confirms with what the researcher saw when he observed the children, that is children were making progress in the lesson but this was slow progress compared to their able peers. Clearly, staff are able to provide reasons why children with learning difficulties may make slow progress. None of these reasons takes into account home factors.

School staff from Outer City Primary said that children with learning difficulties make progress, but it was slow progress. Staff said that each year these children fall further behind because the learning gap between themselves and their peers becomes wider and wider. Staff reported that children make progress, in small steps compared to their peers. It was noted that some children may occasionally make no progress, as they will have had the same reading age in Year 1 and the same in Year 6, despite receiving a great deal of support, particularly if it is out of class support. Children preferred out of class support. Three out of four pupils in Outer City Primary prefer to be given support in the classroom. When discussing progress, it is often compared to peers. Staff from OCP feel that children are well supported in terms of adult support, but if children still do not progress, this may be because of factors outside the school.

A teacher from Inner City Primary claimed that children with learning difficulties should be taught in smaller groups. They also felt they should be withdrawn from class, as they would benefit from more attention, and would not face any embarrassment from others knowing that their task is much easier than others, hence this will build their confidence (parents disagree with this view). Furthermore, this member of staff argued that if children are taught outside the classroom, children will not be comparing themselves to others, which hinders progress, and results in children not achieving their personal best. This confirms what most pupils (three out of four) said in their interviews about preferring to be supported outside the classroom. This issue then suggests that Pakistani children with learning difficulties prefer to be supported in small withdrawal groups. Staff also feel that withdrawing children in small groups better provides for pupils' needs.

Staff from Outer City Primary claimed that children are set and grouped (for literacy and numeracy) according to academic ability, and therefore children with learning difficulties are placed in the lower ability set, namely Set 3 (the lowest ability set), where there are approximately seven children in the group. Here, children receive support from a teacher and a teaching assistant out of class. Staff reported that children enjoy the dedicated out-of-class help that they receive as there is a higher adult-child ratio because children find it difficult to work in larger groups. This confirms what children said about how they enjoy the extra help they receive, although three out of four children would prefer in class support. Again, staff have formed a clear view about

how children with special educational needs should be taught, as they feel withdrawing children from class enables pupil needs to be met. Cheston (1986) argued that there is a tension amongst children with learning difficulties from wanting and appreciating help to not wanting help because it can be seen as stigmatising and devaluing.

Parents from Inner City Primary said their child will continue to have learning difficulties in secondary school. All parents said the learning difficulty would remain with their child in secondary school, whereas three parents in their interview said that their child's learning difficulty would go away when they go to secondary school.

Freeda said:

'My child's learning difficulty will get worse when he goes to secondary school because he will not get the kind of help which he needs and I will feel hurt because I won't be able to do anything to help him. If I had the choice and money, I would send him to a school where he gets the help which he deserves.'

Sohail said:

'As Sabrina becomes more mature so will her mind also grow mature and I think her learning difficulty will then go away. She is getting one-hour tuition a week to help her with learning. Sabrina takes an interest in learning and any child who takes an interest will become educated.'

Abid said:

'My son will always have learning difficulties but he will still achieve in his own way because he is bright in practical areas, he opens up a computer and is able to put it back again, he's a hands on person.'

This suggests parents believe that their children will have learning difficulties in secondary school. With the exception of Freeda, the remaining two parents feel positive about how their children will cope in later life, given that children from ICP said that their parents do not help them with their homework.

When the researcher asked parents from Outer City Primary about whether they thought that their child's learning difficulty would disappear or stay with their child until adulthood, similarly to Inner City Primary, all parents except Bianca thought that their child's learning difficulty would stay with them until adulthood. Bianca felt that her daughter's learning difficulty would disappear as she goes into secondary school.

Samantha said:

'He has no patience to sit and read so I'm not sure if his learning difficulty will ever go away.'

6.5 Bullying, sadness, shame and guilt

The SIP indicated that all boys in ICP had a lower self-image compared to the girls. All children from ICP said that they were easily bored in lessons, either because the learning was too easy for them or it was difficult and they therefore did not understand what they were supposed to do in lessons. During the observation carried out by the researcher, the researcher saw all children enthused with the given activity and they were able to explain their work. In the SIP, all children rated themselves as being "kind" to some extent; however, children felt that they were not the kindest people in class. This may be because teachers and parents have told them. Although children did not see themselves as academic and clever; in the main, they were happy children and happy in terms of how they looked. They did not regard themselves as being "lazy". However, children felt "different" from others, this difference was because children felt that they could do less in class, they had fewer friends and were not liked by others in class. Most children (three out of four) felt that they were always in trouble because they "messed about in class". When asked why this happened, children said that they were bored. This questions to what extent the learning is challenging and relevant for children with learning difficulties.

The SIP indicated that all children from OCP had a positive self-image in terms of being kind, happy, helpful, friendly and liking the way they looked (three out of four children). However all children had negative attributes in

terms of messing about in class and always being in trouble. Children from OCP had a more positive self-image compared to Pakistani children at ICP. Children from both schools appeared to be happy children. However, similarly to ICP, children felt that they were not clever and half the sample felt different from others. When asked in what way, children responded by saying they were “slow learners”. It may be the case that children feel different given their low ability. However, three out the four children expressed more satisfaction about the way they looked compared to children from ICP. How children look physically was important to them; all children associated looking good with a positive feeling. Children from ICP primary felt that they “messed about in class” and hence they were always in trouble. However, the majority of children did not become bored easily compared to children from ICP (data from the observation supports this finding); this may mean that those children perhaps are sufficiently challenged when approaching learning.

Hamad, Aneela and Imran from the ICP focus group stated that those with learning difficulties might not always ask for help because of other children watching them; for this reason, they may then feel shy or afraid.

Aneela said:

'It isn't nice if you can't do something and you know everyone can, you don't always want to ask for help because other children may say nasty things like 'you're stupid, you're always asking for help.'

When the researcher observed children with learning difficulties in a lesson, children did not ask questions (like many others) about what to do if they were unsure; however, during the small group work, children did ask the teaching assistant questions about what they needed to do. Children were not afraid to seek reassurance. Equally, children during the whole class input were not afraid to give an answer to a question, even if they did not get it right. Faisal, in a focus group interview, said that children with learning difficulties feel bullied by the pressure of first getting help and then being teased for getting help. Furthermore, he said that children with learning difficulties feel a degree of pressure that teachers put on them by asking them to take part in tests that they cannot do. All children argued that those with learning difficulties may feel guilty because they may have copied other people's work in tests and this does not reflect their ability.

Faisal and Imran felt that both white and Pakistani children have learning difficulties, because both groups of people may live in poor housing, but Pakistani children are more likely to have learning difficulties as they are disadvantaged because of their inability to speak English as it is not their first language. This issue is supportive of what Shain (2003) argues that discourses about Asian cultural backgrounds imply that something is inherently inferior in the cultural backgrounds of those from ethnic minority

groups and this places them in a relationship of inferiority to a white majority group.

All children from the ICP focus group interview felt that those with learning difficulties come to school feeling upset because they look at other children who put up their hands to answer questions and they cannot do this themselves, so they compare themselves to others. They carry feelings of shame and embarrassment because they do not feel positive about their learning experience. At the same time, they think about the future and this makes them upset.

Maria said:

'I think these children always look at the top group children, they look at what they can do and because lots of other children in class like these top children, the children with learning difficulties want to be like them.'

Furthermore, Hamad and Imran from the focus group interview at ICP felt that those with learning difficulties may experience more negative feelings than others; for example Hamad said that those with learning difficulties may feel left out during the lesson because *"they can't seem to catch up with what the teacher is saying or they don't know what to do"*. Bloom (1976) argues that children with learning difficulties spend most of their time in school being compared with the more competent class peers and this may evoke feelings of inferiority. In addition, the research findings suggest that peers of Pakistani

children with learning difficulties appear to have a particular view about children with learning difficulties.

All children from the OCP focus group offered a range of feelings and words that they felt a child with learning difficulties may experience throughout the day; these included being nervous because such a child may not be able to do the work. Charlotte and Luke said that children with learning difficulties might be shy because others may pick them on. These children may also feel unhappy since they are constantly comparing themselves to “brighter and cleverer children”. Those with learning difficulties may feel embarrassed because others would laugh at them for being “slow and in the lower group”.

Jane said:

'Children with learning difficulties feel left out and rejected because no one wants to be with them.'

This view suggests that peers are aware of the difficulties that white children with learning difficulties may be faced with. This argument is also supported by Kelly and Norwich (2002); they claim in their study that children with learning difficulties reported a high level of bullying. All children reported this bullying to be physical, verbal and teasing. Tom said that parents of children with learning difficulties may feel worried because their children have a learning difficulty; they may also feel sad because their child may be picked on, similarly to the view at Inner City Primary.

All children from the ICP focus group felt that those with learning difficulties liked the way they are in terms of their body, face and hands but felt negative about their learning. Chapman and Boersma (1979) claim that children with learning difficulties feel good about themselves in general but less adequate about their academic performance. This extends the argument of Chapman and Boersma (1979) by suggesting that Pakistani and white children with learning difficulties feel less good about their learning experience. A similar view was also echoed by the children with learning difficulties themselves. Furthermore, all children argued that those with learning difficulties often thought to themselves that they are bad at a lot of things and this also affects their friendship since they find it difficult to make and maintain friends. However, if they recognise what they are good at, for example sports, this may help with their confidence and in return, this may give them friends. All children acknowledged that those with learning difficulties find it difficult to study. When they have a problem in class, they do not necessarily always ask for help; this may be because they are embarrassed to ask, or, lack the confidence to ask for help. This suggests that peers of Pakistani and white children with learning difficulties are aware of the difficulties faced by those with learning difficulties.

Although all children with learning difficulties accepted that they had a learning difficulty, when asked if children in Inner City Primary and Outer City Primary had heard of an IEP and whether they knew what their targets were, no child was able to comment on knowing what an IEP was; however, all

children in Inner City Primary and two of the children in Outer City Primary knew what their target was that they were working towards, but were not involved in setting this target and did not know what steps they had to take to achieve their personal targets. Because children are not involved in target setting, they are not necessarily contributing to achieving their targets. Lewis and Lindsay (2000) argue the importance of children to contribute to and participate in decisions about education provision. Furthermore, the Code of Practice (2001) promotes the idea of consulting children on their IEP targets and when this happens children are more likely to achieve their targets, as they know what they are working towards.

Some children with learning difficulties from Inner City Primary thought that they would continue to have learning difficulties, whereas others thought they would disappear when they moved into Year 7, since they would learn more and the more learning they did the less difficulty they would have in learning. This suggests that some children are more optimistic than others about their learning difficulty disappearing. One would need to investigate further to find out to what extent children fully understand the nature of their learning difficulty. Bandura (1982) found that children with learning difficulties considered their learning difficulty to be relatively unchangeable.

Simon from Outer City Primary gave a similar response to those from Inner City Primary when asked about whether they thought their learning difficulty will stay with them into adult life. Simon thought that his learning difficulty

could disappear when he grew older but this depended on how hard he worked.

Simon said:

'I think my learning difficulty will go away when I go to Upper School because I will get more support with my work.'

This suggests that children are aware of their learning difficulty and think that if they work hard enough their learning difficulty may disappear. Therefore, working hard is connected to not possibly having a learning difficulty.

Three of the four children with learning difficulties from Outer City Primary said that their learning difficulty will stay with them until adulthood because the learning they do will get harder and harder, different from what children from Inner City Primary thought. This may suggest that children from Outer City Primary may be more sure and aware of their difficulties than those in Inner City Primary. Hence, these children perceive learning difficulties to be permanent given the learning they will experience in secondary school.

Sarah from Outer City Primary said:

'I really want my learning difficulties to go away so that I can become more confident. I think I will still have problems when I go to Upper School.'

Children with learning difficulties from Outer City Primary said they understood what the term learning difficulty meant to them:

'Children who are thick and don't do as they are told, they mess about.'

'Children who are stuck with their work and need lots of help.'

Billy talked about his learning difficulty in the following way:

'I feel out of line, I don't get good marks, I feel I'm not going to make it and not do well for my SATs and in school. I want to continue with learning but I feel it's too late. I feel scared, worried and angry because I don't get good marks. I feel alone. I don't blame anyone. My parents keep telling me to carry on and do my best, I don't want them to tell me no more because I don't know if I can ever do any better.'

This supports an earlier view indicating that children are unhappy, anxious and feel a sense of disappointment with their learning difficulty. Winter (1992) argues that a sense of not being any good is potentially fostered in children when they receive low test marks.

All children with learning difficulties from Inner City Primary said that school would be much better if they did not have learning difficulties. Children said that they did not want to have learning difficulties and having learning difficulties meant that they had more pressure, such as not always knowing what to do and how to achieve and complete a particular task. All children felt that if they did not have a learning difficulty they would be able to do more, for example, get a Level 4 in their SATs, answer all questions asked by their teacher and have "so much more" fun. All children reported on being much happier because their parents and teachers would be pleased with them. Furthermore, children reported that other children liked them more if they were in a higher ability group. Clearly, children with learning difficulties do not feel happy about their academic ability. Children associate parents, teachers

and peers as being happier if they did not have a learning difficulty. Having a learning difficulty makes them feel that they are unable to please significant others.

When children from Outer City Primary were asked what kind of things they would be able to do, and what would school be like if they did not have a learning difficulty, all children stated that school firstly and most importantly would be better as they would be happier, they would be in a higher ability group, they would have more friends and other children would like them better and not pick on them. Again, this suggests that school would be better if children did not have learning difficulties, as children would have fewer pressures. Children have associated learning difficulties with additional pressures placed on them.

Three out of four children with learning difficulties from Inner City Primary said children with learning difficulties should be taught separately outside the classroom where there would be fewer children and hence children would get more support, attention and explanation of work. There would be less noise and distraction and this would help children to concentrate (a differing view from what their parents said). In the main, children associated working outside of the classroom environment as being effective and supportive of children with learning difficulties. However, one child welcomed working in separate groups outside the classroom as he thought this would not allow

other children to make fun of him whilst working. Norwich and Kelly (2004) found that boys tended to prefer both withdrawal and in class support.

Simon from OCP said:

'I like it when Miss takes me out of class to give me help because then other children don't take the mick out of me because I'm in the low group. Sometimes people call me names like stupid and idiot, I know I'm not clever but it's not nice.'

Only one child with learning difficulties from ICP reported wanting help in the classroom because other children could help her with her work and, if she went to a different classroom to work, some children may "mess about" because there is no teacher to look at what they are doing. This suggests that a few children like to work in the classroom where they can rely on the support of other children who they see as their role models for learning.

With the exception of one child (Brook, hence three out of four children) the remaining children with learning difficulties from Outer City Primary preferred help in the classroom with other children rather than to be withdrawn from class and to be taught in small groups, as expressed by children from Inner City Primary. Children from Outer City Primary felt that being in the class with other children would help them to learn from the "brighter" children who could also help them. This issue is interesting because the teacher and teaching assistant interviewed from this school suggested that children like to come out of class and work in a small group setting.

Simon said:

'Bright children can learn from dumb people.'

Billy said that it would help others to like him better if he stayed in class so that they would know what he could do.

Sarah said:

'I like Miss to help me in class because it's not as embarrassing that, if she takes me out of class, I sometimes feel ashamed like I don't know anything.'

This suggests that most children prefer to stay in class for a number of reasons. It will help other children to get to know them in both the academic and social dimension; this could help children with learning difficulties to obtain more friends, reduce any type of bullying and enable other children in class to have empathy towards children with learning difficulties, whereas some children prefer withdrawal support. This also suggests that children feel a sense of inferiority and difference whether they are given support in or out of class. Children associate staying in the class with a sense of belonging. Without this, they feel they experience difficulties. Shavelson *et al* (1976) found that the perception of one's self-concept is formed through experience with and interpretations of one's environment; these perceptions are influenced by significant others. In this study, children with learning difficulties may feel different and inferior due to the influence of significant others, for example, their peers.

When asked if children with learning difficulties saw themselves as special in any particular way, they were unsure if they were, as no one told them that they were special. Occasionally, parents told children that they are special. Sarah from OCP said that only clever children are special because they always get things right so their parents like them. Billy from Outer City Primary thought that he was special to his parents because they wanted him and loved him, but he felt his teachers did not want him so he did not feel special.

Sarah said:

'I don't think I'm special because I'm not good at a lot of things like the smarter kids.'

This suggests that children with learning difficulties feel inferior compared to those children who they class as clever. Children associate those with learning difficulties as not being able to offer anything special and hence they do not feel special. Schools and parents need to create opportunities to raise the self-esteem of children with learning difficulties.

Children from Inner City Primary felt that they needed more praise from their class teachers and this would help them to do better.

Sabrina said:

'I think my teacher thinks I'm doing okay but I really want her to tell me more that I'm good in some things, this will make me happy and work harder, I know this will make my mum and dad happy.'

All children with learning difficulties argued that class teachers felt a sense of sympathy for them because they were in the low achieving group. Children said that class teachers would prefer to have more clever children in class because these are the children who would get higher scores, which would in return make the class teacher happy. This suggests that children have an internal feeling that is teachers are happier when they have clever children in class. If children believe this, they may come to think that they are not wanted in class because of their low test scores. Children have associated teacher happiness with clever children and, because they do not regard themselves as clever, children feel that they cannot make their teacher happy. Schools need to ensure that all children are aware that all children are clever in different ways. Everybody has a talent and sometimes this talent may be hidden.

All children with learning difficulties from Outer City Primary thought that their teachers did not like them because they are slow and they do not do as well as other children in class. Furthermore, children said that clever children are liked by many because they are helpful and polite. These children get lots of good work "stamps" and teachers like these types of children. This suggests that children have internalised a belief and have made a connection, that teachers like clever children, and children with learning difficulties are not clever. Alley and Deshler (1979) argue that by the time children reach

adolescence, they will have poor self-concepts because of their extensive histories of failure and being aware of their learning difficulty.

Staff from Inner City Primary argued that children with learning difficulties are not happy with their learning experience. This was also confirmed by children themselves, but staff said that these children were happy to see their small circle of friends and play with them.

A teaching assistant also said:

'Children with learning difficulties are aware of their difficulty, it bothers some and that is why it is best for them to be in class most of the time rather than be sent to work outside the classroom. Teachers could plan better for children possibly throughout school, more could be done to support their needs and make learning personal, fun, practical and relevant. This all takes a lot of effort and a lot from the class teacher. If the children are given hard work, which they cannot do (and this happens sometimes), they are going to get fed up, become bored, fiddle with their pens and swing on chairs. Children with learning difficulties know that they are not as clever as the other children, they also know that they are given different work and know that the easier questions are for them, they're used to it, they just get on with it and they don't question it, however, they feel better when they are in class with friends. If children with learning difficulties are out of class, they do not feel part of the class.'

This confirms what the children said about wanting to be with their friends and becoming bored easily.

Staff from Inner City Primary claim that children with learning difficulties think that they are failing. For this reason, it is important that their responses to questions are not dismissed, even if they give the wrong answer. Staff argued that it was important that children with learning difficulties are given praise and encouragement for their efforts. This has not always been the case. The

children themselves also echoed a similar view. Staff recognise that praise is vital for all children, but in particular for those with learning difficulties as they are a vulnerable group of children who have a low self-image. Brophy (1983) argued that criticism from teachers and parents reinforces negative self-belief. Praise supports the child and encourages them to do well.

Furthermore, staff argued that because children with learning difficulties may not necessarily achieve the expected national curriculum Level 4 for literacy and numeracy at the end of Year 6, these children are not seen as important. Staff also said that a minority of teachers do not like children with learning difficulties, as they do not want to know them because they see them as a nuisance and they would prefer to have them out of the way, out of the class, someone else's responsibility. This confirms what children said: that they are unsure if teachers liked them because they have learning difficulties. How well children with learning difficulties achieve is very much dependent on the teacher, and on how much the child is valued for his or her contribution.

Although staff from both schools said that children with learning difficulties enjoy coming to school, staff from Inner City Primary claimed that the school was very academic for children with learning difficulties and as these children have other qualities and strengths, they tend to do better in areas where there is less recording or written work such as art, DT, PE and even science (carrying out investigations). This confirms what pupils said in their interviews about enjoying particular areas of the curriculum more. Staff have come to

believe that children with learning difficulties do better in the more practical subjects.

Staff from Outer City Primary said that children with learning difficulties are aware that they are less able. Whether children feel different in any way will vary from child to child and depend on their friendship circle. This confirms that children are aware of being less able in class and in terms of feeling different; children talked in their interview about feeling different and inferior compared to their peers.

Staff from Inner City Primary argued that some children with learning difficulties are faced with additional pressures as they have learning at the forefront and know what they can and cannot do and therefore they may worry about this. This confirms what some pupils said about being faced with additional pressures. Because children with learning difficulties may be faced with additional pressures, one would need to investigate further how schools might support children, not only in the academic field but also in their social and emotional development.

Furthermore, staff argued that children with learning difficulties were faced with the pressure of not always being listened to. Staff claimed that because of the pressures on class teachers to get through the learning and the curriculum, children with learning difficulties become stuck; they are unable to do tasks and do not always know what they are doing (again supported by

children in their interviews) therefore these children get lost in the learning process. For this reason, staff suggested that children with learning difficulties need a basic life skills curriculum such as knowing how to use a ruler accurately, buy something from a shop, post a letter and how to get on a bus as more able children have the confidence to learn and pick up these skills. This then suggests that children with learning difficulties need a refined and relevant curriculum linked to their individual needs. A teacher from ICP reported that some staff would make a token effort to listen to the children, whereas the teaching assistant and the teacher from Outer City Primary reported that the class teacher listens to children.

A teacher from ICP said:

'Children are aware of their boundaries and limits – how far they can go. Parents get a tutor for their child thinking that all is okay. Parents are not sure of their child's needs, they are not aware that they are sending their child to school who may be feeling unhappy, who may be feeling pressured to be like his or her peers and to achieve what is the norm.'

Staff reported that as children grow to become more mature and know what they want in life, they will realise where they are compared to their peers and they may catch up, given the wide range of doors open to them to succeed. The vocational route, for example, enables young people at the age of 14 to choose a mix of learning that motivates, interests, and challenges them and provides them with knowledge, skills and the attitude they need to succeed in education, work and life. Staff from ICP claimed that the vocational route had a stigma attached to it, this being that this particular route is for children who are less able and not academic.

Furthermore, staff from ICP argued that, because of their limited communication skills, children with learning difficulties gravitate more towards like children and are hence ostracised as they have a community (and have a limited circle of friends) of their own with which they are happy. This confirms what children with learning difficulties said in their interview about socialising with like children. It is clear that staff think children with learning difficulties feel more confident if they play with children who are of a similar ability. Furthermore, staff stated that children with learning difficulties are not disliked by able children but are not thought of or respected as one would respect a child who is similar to themselves, an able child. The reason for this is that able children think they are superior and because they excel in learning, their communication skills are far better developed; this enables them to make their point and get through thus having fewer obstacles in their way. Again, this is supported by what children had to say about more able pupils.

Whether children with learning difficulties are liked by their class teacher, as argued by staff from Inner City Primary, is dependent on each class teacher and whether they are able to cope with the demands of the children with learning difficulties and differentiate to meet the needs of the curriculum.

School staff from Outer City Primary acknowledged that children with learning difficulties would sometimes encounter other children making fun of them

when they were unable to do things. Other children may call them unkind names and make unkind gestures towards them. This confirms what pupils said in their interviews, that other children may “take the mick out of them” because of their learning difficulty. It is evident that staff are aware that bullying may take place in schools, particularly against those who have learning difficulties.

All parents from Inner City Primary said that, although their children know that they have learning difficulties, they do not fully understand what this means. This confirms what children said in their interview about not knowing how their learning difficulty will affect them in later life.

Abid said:

'My son knows that he has learning difficulties, he just gets on with it, he doesn't make a fuss.'

All parents from Inner City Primary argued that children with learning difficulties are faced with more problems than children without learning difficulties. Children themselves echoed similar views. All parents said that children with learning difficulties experience problems in reading and writing and, because children know that they are behind with their learning, they feel humiliated when they are sitting away from their friends who are in a higher

ability group. Furthermore, all parents claimed that children felt embarrassed and ashamed about being in the low ability group. This confirms what children said in their interview about being in the low ability group. One parent, Freeda, said that class teachers do not necessarily like children with learning difficulties, therefore children with learning difficulties in her opinion are faced with this additional issue (a similar view expressed by the children themselves).

Freeda said:

'Teachers have to nag at these children, do this and do that, you're not doing this right, I've told you so many times, with clever children, teachers just have to tell them once and they do it straight away, that's why I think teachers like clever children best.'

All parents from Inner City Primary said that their children would make more progress if they received more help either one to one or in a small group. All parents said that children are faced with the pressure of sometimes working without any support in the class.

Sohail said:

'Sabrina does not always understand her work when she works in a large group.'

Clearly, parents from ICP are aware that there are additional pressures faced by children with learning difficulties and some of this pressure could be reduced if their children were given more support in class.

All parents from Outer City Primary also argued that children with learning difficulties are faced with a number of pressures when in school; this includes some children being "*left out and not thought of*" by class teachers and thus teaching assistants are expected to work with these children (even though, as Bella said, children with learning difficulties need to be taught by the most experienced and professional person, the teacher). Other problems faced by children include difficulty in reading, other children bullying the children by calling them rude names (as one parent Bianca said, "maybe the children call others rude names because they do not know what the words mean"). Furthermore, all parents argued that because children with learning difficulties cannot do as much and as quickly as their peers, they compare themselves to others and therefore feel different. All parents said that children with learning difficulties do not have a wide mix of friends because children with learning difficulties only have a few friends and their friends are similar to them in terms of their ability; children with learning difficulties tend to "stick together" as do clever children.

Bella said:

'Children with learning difficulties are faced with a further problem of being different to their peers, they think to themselves that others can do this and they can't, this upsets the children. These children have the additional pressure of wanting to succeed and competing with other children by desperately wanting to get a Level 4 for their SATs.'

6.6 Understanding of learning difficulties

At the end of the interview, all children from the ICP focus group interview used their own words to define what they understood learning difficulties to mean.

Uzma defined learning difficulties to mean:

'Children finding things hard to do in their learning, they have difficulties in reading, writing and doing sums, they need more help than others, they may speak a different language so they might not know how to say or ask for something, it can also mean everyone else can do things which they can not do.'

All children used the term “*more help*” to refer to children with learning difficulties. It is clear from these children’s point of view that children with learning difficulties need more help. This suggests that peers hold a particular view about children with learning difficulties; that these learning difficulties will not disappear, and that children with learning difficulties will need help of some kind. Cosden *et al* (1999) found that pupils thought learning difficulties meant general problems in learning.

When staff from Inner City Primary described learning difficulties, they said that one often thinks of those children with moderate learning difficulties who do not find concepts easy to grasp. Staff also commented on how children with learning difficulties struggle with learning. They are often low achievers and not academically clever children.

In defining learning difficulties, a teacher from Outer City Primary said:

"When you think of learning difficulties you think of the least able academically plus those who have emotional behavioural difficulties. These children find most areas of the curriculum challenging; occasionally some are pretty good at art or sport."

This confirms with what children with learning difficulties said about finding learning difficult. Staff have forged a view about the types of children who have learning difficulties; this then influences their expectations and how the children learn.

When parents from Inner City Primary were asked to define what they understood learning difficulties to mean, this varied from parent to parent, but the common features shared by all included where a child struggles to learn and grasp some of the basic concepts, a child does not understand anything in reading, writing and maths, a child is behind in learning compared to peers, a child does not always understand what is going on in lessons or with homework even when answers are given, or a child needs extra help with work from a teacher or a teaching assistant. This suggests that parents have an understanding of what is meant by learning difficulty. Parents therefore are aware of what their children are able to do or not, despite children from Inner City Primary School stating that their parents did not help them with their schoolwork.

When parents from Outer City Primary were asked to explain what they understood learning difficulties to mean, similarly to Inner City Primary, the responses varied from children struggling to read, write and learn, getting help with their work to children getting one to one support or support in a small group. Again, this suggests that parents have a relatively good understanding of what is meant by learning difficulties and this may have emerged from parents working with their children on homework or other related tasks.

6.7 They have a feeling but no denial

All pupils with learning difficulties from Inner City Primary found out for themselves that they had learning difficulties. Children knew at various times from Year 3 to Year 5. Most came to know about their learning difficulty by realising that they were in the low ability group, or they found learning difficult in particular subjects like literacy, numeracy and science. Children said that they had a “bad feeling” in them which informed them that they had difficulty in doing their work and they compared their low test results with other children, the clever children. Furthermore, children knew of their learning difficulty because of the extra help they were given from a teaching assistant, some of which was withdrawal from class. Decline in ability perception occurs for most children around ages seven and eight (Eshel and Klein 1981). Norwich and Kelly (2004) found that most children were aware of their learning difficulty; denying or minimising their learning difficulty was found to be very low.

Sabrina said:

'I knew that I had problems in my learning in Year 3. I used to find literacy and numeracy difficult so I got help from Miss; she used to take me to a special classroom.'

One of the reasons why children knew of their learning difficulty from Year 3 onwards might be because they may be mature and aware that the gap between them and a child without learning difficulties is widening. Children

reported feeling sad when they discovered their learning difficulty because it made their parents, in particular their mothers, unhappy.

Children with learning difficulties in Outer City Primary reported knowing about their learning difficulty later (mainly in Year 4 or 5; though one child found out in Year 6) than those children in Inner City Primary (note that children from OCP were identified as having learning difficulties in Nursery or Reception). Similarly to children from Inner City Primary, children discovered their learning difficulty themselves. They reported having a feeling, a bad feeling that informed them that they did not always find learning easy and did not always know what they were doing. This suggests that children in Outer City Primary had the same feeling of knowing about their learning difficulty but were aware of their learning difficulty at a much later stage. This could be due to maturity, of recognising their learning difficulty and because of the pressures in Year 6, the SATs; they came to realise the learning gap between themselves and others was wide.

Billy from Outer City Primary came to know of his learning difficulty in this way:

'I knew I had problems with my learning because I had a lot of red crosses in my book and because the crosses were in red, it meant I had a lot of wrong answers. I knew I had learning difficulties since year four, I feel sad.'

Similarly to children from Inner City Primary, children came to know of their learning difficulty themselves because they knew they were getting low test marks.

Sarah said:

'I found out that I had learning difficulties when I was in Year 5 because of my low test marks, I felt ashamed because I couldn't do what other children could do.'

Again, this suggests that children with learning difficulties feel sad and worried about having learning difficulties. Had they a choice, children would not opt into having a learning difficulty despite enjoying the help they receive.

All parents from Inner City Primary claimed that they knew of their child's learning difficulty from an early age (Reception and Year 1), mainly because their child was in a low ability group and was making little progress.

Freeda said:

'I knew my child had learning difficulties because he could not do some of the things which his peers could.'

This suggests that parents recognise their children may have a learning difficulty by comparing their own children with significant others, their peers.

Parents from Outer City Primary said they knew themselves when their children began to bring books home from school, books which were "*too young or too easy*" for children of their age. Bella said that she knew that her

child had learning difficulties from the age of two, when her child could not speak properly. When she compared her child with others, she knew that her child was slower than other children in terms of his language skills. Another parent, Samantha, argued that she discovered her child's learning difficulty from Year 3 onwards; the learning difficulty became more noticeable at this age. Bianca, another parent, knew of her daughter's learning difficulty when she was in Year 6; she argued that before this she thought her daughter was doing well in school. This suggests that parents discovered their child's learning difficulty at different times by comparing what their child could or could not do compared to their peers.

6.8 Causes of learning difficulty

When asked why children with learning difficulties may have such difficulties, children from the ICP focus group offered a number of reasons. Faisal said:

'Children may have learning difficulties because they may be going to bed late or when they were younger, someone will have told them the answers and they may have got away with a lot of cheating.'

Hamad and Maria argued that those with learning difficulties are not necessarily lazy, but they do give up easily and giving up is an easier option than persevering. Aneela commented that children may have learning difficulties because they may have gone to Pakistan for a long time and hence forgotten how to do the work. All children thought that children may have learning difficulties because they think to themselves that they cannot do their schoolwork so they may give up due to low or poor expectations about their ability. This argument is supported by Freire (1985). He argues that any learner who comes to believe that they are no good at certain things or are unable to do them, is creating a barrier that prevents them from learning. This is similar to Dweck's (2000) argument on "learner's beliefs".

James from the OCP focus group said:

'Children may have got learning difficulties because something might have happened to them when they were younger, they might have had an accident and this could have affected their brain, that might be why they can't do much like us.'

Luke and Laura from the OCP focus group said that they may not have tried with their work when they were younger, or they may not have listened to their teacher and therefore became further behind in their learning. Jane said that their learning difficulty might have been passed on to them through their family. This suggests that white peers think that children may have a learning difficulty because of something that has happened to the child. It suggests that there is an internal cause within the child, leading to the child having a learning difficulty; it is not suggesting that external factors cause the child to have a learning difficulty.

All children with learning difficulties from ICP blamed themselves for their learning difficulty and said that it was their own fault that they had the learning difficulty because they did not always listen to their teacher (this links with an earlier section where children identified negative characteristics for children with learning difficulties). This raises questions because, although children blame themselves and not others, to what extent do parents support their children? Is there regular contact between home and school? To what extent is homework and schoolwork differentiated for pupils? How effectively is support used to target for individual needs? Butler *et al* (1994) argue that children may experience a sense of not feeling good about themselves and this may be reinforced by parental annoyance, anger and intolerance towards their child including the use of negative comments thus placing the child in a position of internalising the feeling and hence blaming themselves for their learning difficulty. As a result, children may come to feel useless and may

perceive themselves as not worthy. This was the case for the children where they felt less good about themselves compared to those who they saw as being more able. Data from the interviews did not indicate parental annoyance towards their children, although one parent from ICP, Freeda, did refer to her child as being stupid on occasions.

Neelam said:

'I'm not good at a lot of things, I wish I was because then I would be clever and my teachers would be happy.'

Fahid said:

'I get sad when people say horrible things about me, it's hard when they say stuff, like call me names and say I'm stupid, I'm not but sometimes I think I am.'

Similarly to Inner City Primary, all children with learning difficulties from Outer City Primary said that if anyone were to blame for their learning difficulty, they would blame themselves. As Billy said:

'I blame myself for having this learning difficulty because I'm not taking the stuff in they're telling me. I would like to work harder and take in the learning so that I can get a good job which pays a lot of money when I'm older but I find it hard.'

Another child (Simon) said that because he did things wrong, the only person to blame was himself. This suggests that children take the blame for their learning difficulty; they want to learn but they find it difficult. The children's own belief system has informed them that they are to blame for their learning difficulty. This may have been reinforced by significant others, hence children feel a sense of anger and disappointment at having a learning difficulty.

In a recent DfES report on "Ethnicity and Education" (2005), the authors found many reasons why Asian children were identified as having special educational needs; this ranged from deprivation and inequality to genetic factors including consanguineous marriages (first cousin), misidentification of SEN due to English being a second language and teacher perceptions and low expectations of some of their pupils. This could lead to over identification of SEN amongst pupils. The authors also found that, because some practitioners appear to have low expectations of language development in South Asian children, this prevents parents and their children accessing support from speech therapy. Ahmad and Atkin (1996) argue that the term "South Asian" itself is misleading as it includes a range of very different religious and ethnic communities and there are differences as well as similarities among these different community groups in terms of language, beliefs and diet. Mirza (1996) found that health professionals often associate learning difficulties with consanguineous marriages and as a result are unsympathetic towards parents as they then consider the learning difficulty to be self inflicted, even though consanguinity has now been effectively ruled out as a single explanation for learning difficulties.

All children with learning difficulties from Inner City Primary reported that they had fewer friends than the cleverer children because the latter group like to "*stick to their own*". Furthermore, children reported that the clever children did not always want to be friends with those who have learning difficulties

because these children sometimes make wrong choices and did “bad things” and hence got into trouble; clever children did not want this to happen to them.

Neelam said that:

'Bad people go with bad friends, sometimes children with learning difficulties are bad people because they won't learn anything, they mess about in the classroom, clever children are not bad people.'

Fahid said that one of the reasons why children with learning difficulties are not liked by others is because children with learning difficulties are seen as “*dumb, not knowing anything*”. Other children who were interviewed also supported this view. Children have made a connection with why certain groups of children are not liked.

All children with learning difficulties from Outer City Primary reported having friends and felt they were important because they played with them, shared things with them, helped them with their work or when they were “picked on” by other children. One girl (Brook) said that she had lots of friends; when asked how many, she said “*one*”.

Sarah said:

'Children with learning difficulties don't have many friends like clever children do because smart kids think we're strange, we know nothing so they tease us and call us thick and stuff like that.'

This supports the view that children with learning difficulties have fewer friends and hence they feel sad, negative and inferior about themselves.

Butler *et al* (1994) argue that, although peers can offer a safe haven and nurture a child's sense of competence, they can also be a source of threat as in social exclusion, not allowing the child to join in on activities; this may lead to the child feeling isolated and lacking in social competence. The authors also argue that flippant jokes, banter and critical remarks about the child not being good with his or her learning endanger the child's notion of self as competent. Mercer (1987) argues that children with learning difficulties have a more negative self-concept than those children without a learning difficulty. Furthermore, Mercer argues that the fewer areas the children experience mastery in, the more negative their self-concept becomes. Therefore, if children experience difficulty in making and maintaining friends (have poor social skills), they may have a negative self-concept. This research supports this idea that the fewer areas the children master, the more negative their self-concept becomes.

6.9 Parental support

All children from the ICP focus group felt that those with learning difficulties do not get the help they need from their parents at home, since parents may not be able to help because they cannot speak English or parents are too busy with other children in the family. This suggests that Pakistani children with learning difficulties are not necessarily supported at home with their learning. Elliot *et al* (1999) argue that children will make greater progress if they are helped by their parents.

Children from the ICP focus group, Imran, Hamad, Aneela and Uzma, said that parents of children with learning difficulties may feel worried about their child not having a good life ahead of them (i.e. no money, no property of their own) and parents themselves may feel worried because they may worry about who will look after them when they become old. Parents may also become upset because they may not know what to do to help their child. All children agreed that parents might feel disappointed about their child having learning difficulties because they and others will compare their children to the more able pupils.

All children with learning difficulties from Inner City Primary said that they worked at home either reading or doing their homework. The time they worked varied from 15 minutes to two hours each week. All children said that

they went to mosque or learnt to read the Koran at home after school each day and only after mosque did they have time to do their schoolwork.

Fahid said:

'I don't always find it easy or have the time do to my homework because after school I go to mosque till five o' clock, then I go to my cousin's house because my mum can't pick me up, she's at home with babies, my dad picks me up at seven so I don't do my homework till night or the next morning.'

All children received help from home with their homework, but it was mainly from a sibling or an older cousin. Children said that it was difficult for their parents to help them at home (although they would like their parents to help them, similar to OCP) because either parent was not able to speak English or they did not have time for them, as they were busy with other siblings. This suggests that parents do not play an active part in supporting their children with their homework. As a result, parents may not have a clear view how well their children are doing in school. In a report by DfES (2005), the authors found that Pakistani parents are less confident in helping their child with their homework partly because of their own language skills.

Knowing that these Pakistani children have been identified as having learning difficulties, all children are learning to read a second language namely Arabic and two of the four children are fluent in Urdu or Punjabi. The remaining two pupils, both boys, are able to understand their mother tongue, Punjabi, but may choose not to speak this language because their mothers are British born, and possibly see no need to speak in it.

Most children with learning difficulties from Inner City Primary reported that they sometimes visited a library outside school because they liked to look at the range of books available. Children in Outer City Primary had not visited the library but expressed an interest in looking at the wide range of books that were available. All children had associated books with reading, and reading with success in school.

Children regard it as being important for their parents to know how they are doing in school; it matters to the children.

Billy from Outer City Primary said:

'I would like my parents to come into Inner City Primary and see my work so they can tell me that I'm doing good in my work, parents should do that, it will make me happy if they do that, it will make me work even harder.'

This suggests that children welcome praise and in return will work hard to do well. Children associate praise with wanting to work even harder. Schools need to create opportunities for parents to see their child's work. Parents need to make time to see how well their children are doing in school.

Whereas children with learning difficulties from Inner City Primary had no help with their homework from a parent, children in Outer City Primary had

the advantage of their parent, in particular, their mum, helping them with their work such as reading.

Simon said:

'It's important for my mum to help me with my homework, she helps me to learn more and know more words.'

Brook said:

'My mum helps me to do my homework, she says it's important to do well in school and gives me extra pocket money if I do well in school.'

None of the four children with learning difficulties from Outer City Primary had any commitment to attend a place of worship after school such as the church as the children from Inner City Primary have, attending mosque daily for one to two hours after school. Children from Inner City Primary have the additional pressure of learning a second and a third language (Urdu or Punjabi and Arabic). In addition to this, they feel the pressure of not having a parent working with them to help them with their homework as children reported that parents were too busy with other siblings. This is not the case for most of the children from Outer City Primary, with the exception of one child, Brook, who is one of six. Nevertheless, her mum still helps her with her homework on a rota basis. However, all children welcomed receiving praise from their parents. Mortimore *et al* (1988) argued that white parents gave their children significantly less help with schoolwork than did black parents (it is worth noting that Mortimore *et al* (1988) defined black as "Caribbean").

The results of this research indicate that white parents support their children more with schoolwork than do Pakistani parents.

Staff from Inner City Primary argued that learning difficulties are not always acknowledged and accepted in the Asian community. They said that parents need to be taught to accept and think positively of their child's learning difficulty and work with school to consider ways to best support their child, rather than denying the learning difficulty or becoming angry with the school. Mir *et al* (2000) argued that, for many parents of children with learning difficulties and physical impairments, religious beliefs play a significant role in enabling the acceptance of impairments and learning difficulties. Parents often rely on faith to provide them with the strength and resource to help them manage their caring roles.

Staff further argued that, because children from Inner City Primary come from larger, possibly extended families and because there are a lot of children to focus on and hence a lot of responsibility for parents, parents may not realise their child's low attainment level and therefore may not be "realistic" about what the child is able to do. Staff also said that parents leave it to the school to work with the child and do not necessarily support their child with their homework; this may be due to parents having lack of time and/or lack of basic skills (this was also said by the children about parents not supporting them with their homework). Clearly, staff feel that parents of Pakistani children with learning difficulties are not supportive of their child's learning

difficulty. This is either because it is not acknowledged, or because parents do not have the time and skill to support their children. Because of this, further works needs to be carried out looking at to what extent parents have an accurate understanding of their child's academic development.

When staff in Outer City Primary were asked whether parents were supportive, staff argued that in the main all parents are supportive, including helping their children with their homework and that they want their child to do well in school. This confirms what children said about their parents supporting them with their homework and wanting the best for them. Staff reported that although none of the parents are "*pushy parents*", they do want their child to be happy in Outer City Primary and to feel good about themselves. Staff stated that, although parents want their children to be happy, they do not necessarily take a long-term view about where they want their children to be in ten years. Staff stated that parents work in the same way themselves, which is very much based on a day-to-day basis without much planning ahead. From this finding, it is clear that parents of white children with learning difficulties are supportive of their children's learning and their key objective is for their children to be happy in school. This view is supportive of the study by Crozier (1999), where parents expected their children to be happy in school.

6.10 Ambition

Children from ICP and OCP focus groups identified practical jobs that would suit children with learning difficulties. These included working as a car mechanic, a taxi driver, a lunchtime supervisor, a hairdresser, and working in a shop or factory. Other commonly listed professions included working as a window cleaner, a gardener, a gambler, a refuse collector, and working as an athlete or an artist. Furthermore, Imran and Hamad from ICP felt that those with learning difficulties might rely on state benefits. Children from both schools said that those with learning difficulties would not be able to work in a profession that required a great deal of reading, writing and number work. Charlotte and Tom from OCP felt that a child with learning difficulties would not be able to do the more demanding professional jobs, such as become doctors, solicitors, teachers, engineers, dentists etc, since they require degrees and lots of "brain power", a term used by a particular child. This suggests that Pakistani and white children have made up their minds from an early age about which kind of jobs are suited for children with or without learning difficulties. This clearly suggests that peers have judged themselves to be able and hence work in challenging professions compared to their peers who have learning difficulties. This is supported by Dweck (2000), who argues that children link lack of success with lack of ability.

All children from the OCP focus group were clearly able to explain that children without learning difficulties are working at the expected national

curriculum Level 4, whereas children with learning difficulties are working well below this level and may only achieve a maximum of Level 3. All children felt that those with learning difficulties will not achieve a high national curriculum level, since they have not got the ability to do so.

Tom said:

'I know these children won't get a Level 4 because my younger brother is in Year 2 and he can do work harder than these children, my mum is really proud of my little brother because his teacher said he can get a Level 3 in Year 2.'

Luke from the OCP focus group said that, if these children with learning difficulties were not bullied, they would not feel scared and rejected by others who see them in the lower group; they may feel good about themselves. Then, maybe they could concentrate more and get a higher level. Clearly, all children interviewed believe that those with learning difficulties have less chance of achieving the "national expectation" for a number of reasons. Coppersmith (1967) claims that the perception of self-concept is formed through experience and interpretations of one's environment; these perceptions are influenced by significant others.

All children with learning difficulties from Inner City Primary were clearly able to explain what a university was (*"a place where you go to study and get a degree"*) and all said that they would like to go to university.

Sabrina said:

'I really would like to go to university because I can then get a good job, it's important to get a good job. I don't want to stay at home and be lazy.'

Fahid said:

'I would like to go to university but I don't think I'll go because only clever children go, they are more sensible than people like me and they will get a Level 4 or 5 in their SATs.'

Although children said that they would like to go to university, and their parents would like them to go to university, they were unsure whether they would go, given the learning difficulties they have. Children said that one has to be of a certain type in order to go to university. They said they had to get a Level 4 at least at the end of Year 6 and be sensible in order to go to university. Children could not associate themselves with any of these characteristics. They said it was important to get a good job otherwise one could stay at home and become very lazy. This suggests that although children have a long-term view (that is wanting to go university and getting a good job), this vision is hindered by their learning difficulty. Crozier and Davies (2007) found Pakistani parents were interested in education and wanted their children to do well; because of this positive encouragement Pakistani children may want to go to university. The results from this study indicate Pakistani children are keener to attend university than white children.

Children with learning difficulties from Outer City Primary did not know what a university was. It became clear in the interview, when asked whether they would like to go to university, children asked "*What is that?*" whereas children in Inner City Primary knew what it was because the researcher asked them if they knew what a university was and why people go there. Only one child

from OCP expressed an interest in going to university, though he had not given much thought to it. The remaining three children were not interested. One child said that her parents did not want her to go to university. Children from Outer City Primary wanted to work as "a roofer" (one boy, Simon) and "a hairdresser" (two girls, Brook and Sarah). One child (Billy), who expressed an interest in going to university, wanted to work as a police officer or a vet. This suggests that either children from Inner City Primary are ambitious and are not being honest about what they can do, or that children from Outer City Primary have low expectations and have come to believe that they have little chance of going to university given their abilities.

Children from both schools have different views on where they see themselves in a number of years. This may be influenced by peers, parents and school. It could also be linked to the cultural and educational orientations of the communities in which they are located. For example, the Pakistani community is not established as long as the white community and hence the former community may feel that they want their children to have a better life than they have and be educated and get good jobs. Mortimore *et al* (1988) found that working-class white children were more likely to agree that they were not likely to go to university because they perceived themselves to be "stupid". The writers report that white children from inner city schools felt less positive about themselves at school, in particular about their academic attainments.

When asked what children with learning difficulties meant by a "good job" in Inner City Primary, they reported this as working in an office, working with computers, or working as a doctor, teacher, solicitor, dentist or police officer. Children in Inner City Primary themselves said that they would like to work as a dentist, teacher, a police officer, or work in the office. Children were very sure about the type of people who would enter these professions; the cleverer children, they said. When asked what types of jobs children with learning difficulties would take, this ranged from refuse collector ("dustbin men" in pupil language) and sweeping roads to working as a window cleaner; a painter, a hairdresser or working in a shop seemed to be the most common jobs stated by the children. Others said working as a builder, a plumber or a car mechanic could be done by those with learning difficulties, since people do not need to be clever to do these jobs, hence they could be done by those with learning difficulties. Most children (six out of eight) said that those with learning difficulties may struggle to get some of these jobs because they require an individual to be able to count, add, read and write and some children with learning difficulties find it difficult to acquire these basic skills. This suggests that children in Year 6 in Inner City Primary who have been identified as having special educational needs are aware of their learning difficulty, yet they have an internal desire to want to achieve beyond their limits given the difficulties they face. This desire and ambition may emerge from the pressure put on the children by their parents, who may think that after school one attends college, followed by university, work and then

marriage. This pressure may plan an individual's life, which some children may feel they have to achieve.

All children with learning difficulties from Outer City Primary argued that if children are in a lower ability set then they are unlikely to get a good job; this is different from what children from Inner City Primary said. Children from Outer City Primary found it difficult (unlike children from Inner City Primary) to state which jobs could be done by those with learning difficulties. They said that clever children can do anything they want, but that children with learning difficulties would find it difficult to do many of the jobs, including working as, for example, a painter or a builder.

Simon said:

'You have to work out prices if you want to be a painter and a dumb child cannot do that.'

However, all children from Outer City Primary were quickly able to say the type of jobs that could be done by clever children, for example working as a doctor, solicitor, vet or teacher. Simon said that clever children could do these types of jobs because they were smart jobs where suits have to be worn. The same child said that these jobs pay a lot of money and "people need to have brains" to do these jobs. In his study, Willis (1977) argued that white working-class boys were aware that they would probably not get "good jobs".

Children with learning difficulties from Outer City Primary did not appear to be as ambitious as those from Inner City Primary, maybe because they were being more honest in what they felt they were able to do. Simon said that he would like to work as a “roofer”. That is what his dad does; he has a “roofing” business. This child said he would like to follow in his dad’s footsteps because he sees this job being a “good job” where he will be happy. Children from OCP associate those with learning difficulties as lacking basic skills.

When asked about whether children with learning difficulties may go to university, ICP staff were positive.

One member of staff said:

‘It’s a myth that children with learning difficulties cannot go to university. I’ve seen children with moderate learning difficulties going to university.’

This confirms what most children (three out of four) in Inner City Primary said about wanting to go to university. Staff from Inner City Primary reported that children may go to college. With regards to going to university, staff were unsure as this was dependent on a lot of factors, including the level of learning difficulty for the child as well as how hard the child worked in secondary school. However, staff felt that children with learning difficulties had a good chance of going to college and with support and guidance they could embark on a vocational route. They also said that the types of jobs children with learning difficulties may be suited to would be those involving a kinaesthetic and practical approach, those which are perhaps repetitive and

clerical in nature. Children themselves confirmed this finding when they talked about the type of jobs that children with learning difficulties would be suited to. Staff felt that, once children get the job that they want, they will not necessarily excel at it compared to their peers. This is because of their lack of confidence and the stigma of having a learning difficulty, which will stay with them for the rest of their lives. Given the learning difficulties that children have, staff felt that children would be best suited to vocational professions that do not require academic intelligence.

When staff from Outer City Primary were asked about the likelihood of children with learning difficulties going to university, the response was different from that of Inner City Primary:

'Children with learning difficulties have no chance of going to university, but they could go to college and get a vocational course, having said that the world is changing so much and those who have difficulties in reading, writing and numbers – unskilled jobs are diminishing.'

Staff from Outer City Primary argued that children with learning difficulties might work in service industries or local shops and supermarkets as shelf stackers, checkout operators or supervisors. Furthermore, they stated that such children, because they like caring for and looking after others, may work as care assistants. Again, similar to Inner City Primary, this confirms what children said in their interviews about the type of jobs that children with learning difficulties may do. Furthermore, this confirms what most of the children (three out of four) said in their interview: they have no interest in attending university. Staff have already formed an opinion that children with

learning difficulties are not academic; they are the future generation who will work in low paid jobs.

All parents from Inner City Primary stated that they would like their children to go to university but because of their children's learning difficulty, they thought that it might be unlikely that they would go. This confirms what children said in their interviews about wanting to go to university. When parents were asked about what they would like their child to do when he or she grows up, all parents said that they wanted their child to "*earn an honest living by having a respectable job*". When parents were asked what they meant by a "respectable job", parents argued that this could be any job where they go out and get paid for what they do, for example working in a shop. When asked why they thought it was important for their children to do well in school, all parents said that it was very important for their child to do well as doing well in school equates to getting qualifications and then a better job. This confirms what children said in their interview about getting qualifications and a good job. This suggests that parents want their children to do well; they have a long-term view about supporting and encouraging their children to get a good job.

Sohail said:

'I would like Sabrina to go to university and get a good education. I'm not sure what kind of job she will do but as she gets older she will make her own decision. I think Sabrina wants to go to university because she likes school and takes an interest in studying, when we buy her books she takes good care of them. At the end of the day it's up to Sabrina, it's all about how hard she works.'

Furthermore Sohail told the story of a boy and girl who were talking on a street pavement in Pakistan:

'I was walking down a street and I saw two children playing, a boy and a girl, the boy said to the girl 'What will you be when you grow up, a doctor or an engineer?' The girl said, 'Well I'm a girl but you tell me what you want to be?' In Pakistan parents want their sons to be doctors or engineers, this is how they think.'

This suggests that certain parents have certain ideas as to what they want their children to do when they grow up, and this message is translated to their children who in return have certain expectations of themselves.

Abid said:

'Ali does not have a chance of ever becoming a doctor but because you have to be really clever and intelligent to do that, Ali, he enjoys practical things he could become a builder, an electrician, a mechanic, a decorator, work in a shop or even become a teacher. I hope he does not work as a taxi driver. I want my son to do well.'

When parents from Inner City Primary were asked whether they would like their children to go to university, all parents expressed a preference for their children to go to university. This was different from Outer City Primary, where parents thought that, given their abilities, it was highly unlikely that their children would go to university.

Samantha said:

'I would like him to go but he wants to be a roofer like his dad and take on his business. I encourage him that he needs qualifications and that he needs a good education so that he can expand his dad's business.'

All parents claimed that they would like their children to have a good job when they grow up; this “good job” could mean working in a shop or working as a car mechanic. Bella said that she would like her son to become a dentist or a doctor. Billy, her son, also had high expectations. This suggests that with the exception of one parent (Bella), the remaining parents did not have high expectations in terms of their children’s careers or their children going to university; this may be because parents were being honest as to what their child can and cannot do.

6.11 School culture

When asked about whether children with learning difficulties prefer to be in a school of their culture, i.e. mainly Pakistani in Inner City Primary, two girls preferred to be in a school where there was an equal mix of both Pakistani and white children as this would allow them to find out more about other religions and make friends with white children. This argument counteracts what Shain (2003) claimed, that the majority of girls preferred Asian females as friends. However, the remaining two children, both boys, Ali and Fahid, said that they would be frightened to be in a school with white children as they feared bullying and racial tension. These children felt that they would have little to talk about with white children since they (the white children) are not able to understand them, because of the language spoken by the Pakistani children. Furthermore, children said that if they were not able to speak English, the white children might not play with them, which in turn will mean they will have no friends to play with. Having no friends was a real concern for all pupils.

Fahid said:

'I don't like White people, I don't have any White friends, I won't know what to say to them if I was their friend, I don't know what to talk to them about.'

None of the children reported playing outside school with white children; this is due to there being no children from white families living close by the Pakistani children.

In his report, Ouseley (2001) identified one of the reasons behind community fragmentation as the deterioration of relationships among different cultural communities. It is important that schools that are monocultural like Inner City Primary create ample opportunities for children to mix in with children from other cultures. If this does not happen, there is a danger that children will grow up with a feeling of resentment against other pupils who are not from their culture. Without reason, they may continue to have these negative feelings towards others and potentially pass these on to their own children. Children with learning difficulties not only may face verbal bullying towards them but added to this half of the sample (children from both schools) interviewed feel that children from other cultures may bully them because of their culture. In his study, Gilborn (1990) argued that Asian pupils were frequently subject to attacks from white peers, usually in the form of racist name-calling, but also physical attacks and assaults.

Simon and Brook (like pupils from Inner City Primary) preferred to be in a school with white children. As Simon said:

'I'm not used to them, I feel a bit scared if Black or Pakistani children came to our school, I don't know them or what they'll do, they could batter me. I don't play with Black children out of school; I'm used to playing with White children.'

In his study, Willis (1977) found white working-class boys perceived West Indian and Asians as "foreign", dirty and smelly. Brook from Outer City Primary expressed a strong interest in attending an "all white school". As she said:

'I like to go to a school with all white children. I feel sad if there were black children because they would pick on us because we're white and they're brown.'

Similarly to Inner City Primary, there were two children with learning difficulties from Outer City Primary (a boy and a girl, Billy and Sarah) who said that it would be fun playing with children from different religions as this would allow them to make more friends. This suggests that half of the children from the two mono-cultural schools have a sense of fear about attending a school where there are a mix of both Pakistani and white children.

In her study, Wright (1992) found that, from an early age children were showing a preference for friends from members of their own racial/ethnic group and had a desire to mix and play with them. Shain (2003) found that Asian females chose Asian girls as friends. One of the reasons for choosing Asian friends was that of conforming to peer group pressure, security, friendship and empathy. In a DfES report by Cline *et al* (2002), the authors found that in mainly white schools (where mainly a white school is defined as one that has 4-6% ethnic minority population) children are not prepared adequately for adult life in a society that is culturally and ethnically diverse. The researcher believes that the same could be said for Pakistani children.

When asked about what kind of school (in terms of the school culture and ethnicity) parents from Inner City Primary would like for their child, two parents said that they did not like their child attending an all "*Pakistani*" Inner City Primary school; they preferred a mix of children from various cultures.

When asked why parents sent their children to a predominantly all “Pakistani” school, parents gave a number of responses from the school being good and providing their children with a good education to the school being near where parents live.

Freeda said:

'I would like more white children in the school my child goes to because in my day there were only two to three Pakistani children in my class and the majority of the children were white and because of this we learnt a lot. The reason for this is because white children, in my opinion, are very well disciplined, no bad language is used whereas with Pakistani children they get involved in family matters, extended families and family arguments and so children pick up bad language and they begin to swear. This affects children, it causes problems and I know it varies from family to family. I know my son does not want to go to a school where there are white children because he thinks that he will get bullied, it's wrong.'

Clearly, this parent's early school experience has influenced her thinking on discipline in “white” families. The researcher did not find any data to suggest that discipline in one community is better than another; however, this could be scope for further research. With regards to discipline, the view of the parent, Freeda, slightly differs from what Shain (2003) argued in that the culture and family life of Asians is focused on “too much” discipline. This parent is suggesting that children who come from white families are well disciplined compared to Pakistani children.

Sohail said:

'I'm not that fussed what kind of school Sabrina goes to, as long as she is happy; a child can be successful in any school, every child has a mind of its own.'

This suggests that parents would like their children to integrate with children from other cultures. Some Pakistani parents, in particular Freeda, view white

children as being better behaved than Pakistani children, hence Freda wanted her son to go to a school that has white children.

All Pakistani parents argued that, because boys are cheekier and a lot of things are done for them at home by their mothers, they get away with a lot in terms of their behaviour. This is one reason why they do not always listen and have respect for their mothers and their teachers, in particular, female teachers; because of this they have behaviour problems. Freeda argued that, because her son sees very little of his dad who in her words "*is always working*", when Fahid does see his dad he shows respect to him and is much better behaved. From this, it can be argued that Pakistani mothers may have different expectations for their sons and their daughters, for example sons may not be expected to do as many domestic chores as girls.

When parents from Outer City Primary were asked what kind of school they would like their child to attend, parents claimed that they encourage their children to speak to everyone regardless of ethnicity and religion. Similar to Inner City Primary, all parents wanted their children to mix with other children from different cultures; no parent reported not wanting their child to attend an "*all white school*". Parents from Inner City Primary did say they did not want their child to attend an "*all Pakistani school*". This may suggest that Pakistani parents see children from other cultures as having a positive effect on their children since they directly said that they wanted their children to be in a multi cultural school. It can therefore be argued that all parents

interviewed are in favour of wanting their children to integrate with others from different cultures.

Chapter 7 Reflections on Methodology

This section considers the limitations of the methodology.

Like all studies, this study has limitations. The study is based on a case study of two primary schools and, whilst every effort was made to ensure the chosen schools were representative as possible (in terms of inner city primary school, size, catchment area, location etc.), care needs to be taken when generalising the findings to a wider population. One also needs to be aware of the fact that the research was geographically limited to Bradford. The research has other limitations, such as the research sample constituted of children who have moderate learning difficulties. The Code of Practice identifies many other needs, such as hearing impairment, physical difficulties, specific learning difficulties and many more. Again, one would need to be careful when generalising the findings. Furthermore, the research was limited to children in Year 6 (the children's last year at primary school). Had the research been carried out on younger or older children, there may have been different findings. Other limitations of the research include that, because children at school action were chosen for interviews, there is no national record of moderating what a school action child looks like or what this child can or cannot do in one school to another. Therefore, this needs to be taken into account when using the findings for future research. The researcher used a number of strategies to identify school action children; this included discussing the children with the SENCo and establishing that children were

functioning well below the expected national curriculum level (following guidance provided by Education Bradford and the DfES Code of Practice 2001).

The research may have benefited from the researcher carrying out a pilot focus group interview to draw out any key issues that may have emerged; lessons learnt from the pilot could be then used to inform the main study. Equally, the research may have benefited from a pilot observation study for similar reasons. The research could have also benefited from observing children on more than one occasion in order to analyse patterns across several situations, including the playground and quieter areas in school, as children said that those with learning difficulties are prone to bullying. The research could have perhaps benefited from the self-image profile being piloted out before its use in the main study. Perhaps the SIP could have also been used to ask the children to rate how important it was to be like that, how they think they should be, what their parents and their teachers think about them and how would they be without their learning difficulty.

Similarly to the one-to-one interview, which was carried out first by the researcher followed two weeks later by the teaching assistant, a similar exercise was undertaken with the SIP.

The researcher carried out focus group interviews with a group of six average to able children from each school. The researcher could have used a mix of

children who were of different abilities to seek their views. It is known that there are lower attaining pupils who are not identified as having special educational needs but still struggle with their learning. The researcher interviewed a teacher and a teaching assistant from each school; the research could have been perhaps strengthened if more than two members of staff from each school were interviewed. It is important to bear in mind that the research involved a small number of participants and it may further benefit from a larger sample. It is important to note that the Pakistani parents interviewed migrated from rural areas in Pakistan. Had they migrated from urban areas/large cities, their views may have been different.

Brah (1996) argues that Asian cultures are highly differentiated according to factors such as country of origin, rural/urban background prior to migration, regional and linguistic background, and social class. Writers, including Ansari (2004), Modood (1992), Crozier (2000) and Reay (1998), argue that there are differences within the Pakistani community and these are marked by ethnicity, tradition, beliefs, values, social class and gender. The researcher may have gained more information from parents and children had he told them of his own special educational needs. The research could be further strengthened if children themselves were involved in designing the interview schedule. For example, the researcher could have set up a working group of children with and without learning difficulties and asked children what kind of questions should be asked. Involving children in the research process not only supports the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child, which emphasises the

importance of enabling children to express their opinion on important matters and decisions that affect them, but also it empowers them from the outset of the research process (Cloke 1995). The researcher could then have taken the children's suggestions along with his own to put together a schedule. Furthermore, the researcher could have undertaken a similar exercise with adults (teachers and school staff). Having involved the children and others in the research design, as a courtesy, the researcher could have sent thank you letters to all those involved in the research and brief written summaries or tape recorded explanations for those with reading and language difficulties.

With regards to the interview transcripts, for ethical reasons, it would have been better had the researcher shared the transcripts with the participants in school as opposed to sending them via the post to parents and staff.

Children will assume that the adult questioner knows more than they do; this is especially the case if the adult has credibility with the child. A possible way to deal with this would have been to use a "ventriloquist" interviewer effect, where a soft toy was used to ask children questions. In this way, children may more readily perceive the soft toy as asking a genuine question whereas the sincerity of the adult questioner may be perceived as false (Morgan *et al* 2002).

Regardless of the research limitation, the research has made a valuable contribution in that it has provided an insight into investigating cultural

differences and similarities in children's perception of their learning difficulty and taking an account of the view of significant others.

Chapter 8 Conclusion, Recommendations and Implications

The research set out to establish cultural differences and similarities in children's perception of their learning difficulty using a case study and ethnographic research design. Furthermore, the research set out to seek views of significant others (parents, peers and school staff) of children with learning difficulties. It is intended that the research findings from this study can be used to give practitioners a better understanding of special educational needs and therefore enable them to work more effectively with these children. This chapter initially revisits some of the key findings followed by defining areas for further investigation and the implications of the research.

8.1 Contribution to research

The research has added to and developed current literature in that it has provided an insight into perceptions of learning difficulties of Year 6 Pakistani and white children in two urban primary schools in Bradford, drawing out similarities and differences. Literature has been developed further in that the research has sought views of peers, parents and staff on learning difficulties. Although Cattle (2001) has argued that towns and cities like Bradford show a depth of polarisation around segregated communities living a series of parallel lives, this research indicates that there are more commonalities and similarities between the two cultural groups than there are differences.

8.2 Children with learning difficulties – perceptions of learning

The findings from the pupil interviews indicated that children with learning difficulties enjoy coming to school and want to do well in school; however, they do not see themselves to be academically able. Children felt that they did not have many friends and therefore they “stuck” to their own kind. Children had mixed views about wanting to be in a predominantly mono-cultural school.

Children with learning difficulties were aware of and could define their learning difficulty. They knew which ability group they were in and why, but they expressed an interest of aspiring to be in a higher ability group. The children discovered their learning difficulty themselves and viewed themselves negatively (in terms of personal, social and academic attributes) compared to the more able children. They were not aware of what was an IEP but children in ICP knew what areas of learning they are working on.

Children from both schools had heard various words and phrases that were used to refer to them and were clearly able to identify the most positive ones and those that were regarded as offensive. Children liked others to refer to them as having “special educational needs” or “learning difficulties”. All children claimed that teachers liked children who were more able and, because they saw themselves as being not able, they felt that they were not as well liked by their teachers. All children argued that school would be better

and that they would be happier if they did not have a learning difficulty. Children were aware of the importance of getting a National Curriculum Level 4 at the end of Year 6 and they aspired to getting a Level 4 but thought that this would be difficult given their learning difficulty. All children believed that their parents would be let down if they did not do well in school. The majority of children (from all in ICP to half of the sample in OCP) felt different and inferior to others who they identified as being able.

The key differences identified by children with learning difficulties from both schools were that children from OCP preferred to be mainly taught in class compared to those from ICP who preferred to be withdrawn. Children from OCP were supported with their homework by their mums compared to ICP who secured help from others e.g. siblings. This may be due to the language (English) barrier as argued by children. Children from ICP indicated a preference for wanting to go to university compared to children from OCP who in the main do not want to go to university and were initially unsure as to what a university was. Children from ICP expressed an interest in highly skilled jobs such as becoming a teacher, as compared to children from OCP where children showed a preference for becoming a hairdresser/a roofer, in the main.

The SIP indicated that Pakistani boys with learning difficulties had a lower self-image than Pakistani girls with learning difficulties. White children with learning difficulties had a positive self-image, particularly the boys.

Furthermore, Pakistani children argued that they were easily bored in lessons compared to white children (although this was not evident in the lesson observed). White children regarded themselves as being kinder, helpful and friendlier than Pakistani children and white children appeared to be happier about the way they looked compared to Pakistani children.

Following pupil interviews, pupils' views about their experience of their learning difficulties suggest that, although children from both schools are aware of their ability group, they want to be in a higher ability group, if only to please their teachers and parents as this mattered to all children. Half the sample (from ICP and OCP) preferred to stay in a mono-cultural school as children felt threatened and a sense of fear about mixing in with children from other cultures. All the children with learning difficulties interviewed felt academically and socially inferior compared to those without learning difficulties; this was because of their learning difficulty. All children with learning difficulties argued that they wanted to be liked by others, including their teachers, have more friends and do better things in class, but this was hindered by their learning difficulty.

Although the children appreciated and liked the support they received from teaching assistants, they yearned to work independently because this is what most children without learning difficulties did and children wanted to be "a child without a learning difficulty". Children with learning difficulties were clearly aware of which type of children received help; this awareness left

those with learning difficulties to be “singled out” as others in class knew about a group of children who were of a low ability and hence these children were picked on by others. Children viewed themselves more negatively in social and academic respects than their able colleagues. The children also formed a view of what they were able to achieve and do; this view was formed because children compared themselves with their able peers. This led them to feeling ashamed, worried, sad and disappointed. In a government strategy that saw the launch of the “Excellence and Enjoyment” publication, the former secretary of state (2003) argued that:

‘Excellent teaching gives the children the life chances they deserve...our systems must not fail any child...our primary education system must not write off any child through low expectations.’ (p.1)

Despite the government strategy, which has now been in place for almost four years, children with learning difficulties still feel inferior and disappointed with their learning difficulty. Clearly, children with learning difficulties were able to explain in their own words what was meant by a learning difficulty and how it made them feel as well as what it meant for them, for example having a selected group of friends, not necessarily being liked by others, being in the “bottom group”, and picked on by others.

Compared to children from ICP, most children from OCP felt that their learning difficulty was permanent because of the basic skills work they were doing with a high degree of support. Children with learning difficulties from both schools had heard of a number of words and phrases to describe children’s learning difficulties. Although they distinguished the positive

language from the negative, children argued that some children would use the negative language against them. This reinforced children's beliefs that they were different and inferior to their able peers. Children argued that they would be much happier if they did not have a learning difficulty; in this way, children felt that they would be able to achieve more, please others, have more friends, do things that other children can do, for example answer more questions in class.

Children from ICP preferred to be supported out of class, in small withdrawal groups, as they felt this helped them to learn, concentrate and focus on the given task. This was different from those from OCP who wanted to work in class where the more able could help them with their work and they would feel a sense of belonging to the class, which could increase their chance of being liked by other children and making more friends. All children wanted to do well and achieve the national standard at the end of Year 6; however, they associated the national standard with success, and this with able children, which they did not see themselves to be. Children from both schools saw themselves being "not important". They blamed themselves for their learning difficulty, and hence these children did not feel special, as they could not offer more contributions to the class than able children. One of the things children felt that they could not offer is that of making the teacher happy. Clearly, for children with learning difficulties, it matters what their parents think of them and their schoolwork. Pakistani children with learning difficulties appeared to be more ambitious about going to university and getting a high skilled and

good paid job than white children. This may be because (as the data suggests) parents of Pakistani children have high expectations.

8.3 Peer perceptions of children with learning difficulties

From the focus group interview, children from both schools argued that children with learning difficulties have fewer friends (than able children) and are unpopular amongst their able peers. They argued that clever children are embarrassed to play and work with those who have learning difficulties. Children commented that children with learning difficulties find mathematics and English difficult and that they have learning difficulties partly because they believe that they cannot do the work and also because they do not view school as an important institution of learning. Such children are described by their peers as being slow learners who have little chance of going to university and are likely to get a job in practical professions.

Peers from both schools believe that children with learning difficulties are not only ashamed and embarrassed of their learning difficulty but also they are prone to bullying and are rejected by other children because they are in the low ability group. Peers claim that these children impose a worry on their parents because they have a learning difficulty. The key difference that emerged from peers in both schools was that children with learning difficulties were viewed more negatively in ICP compared to OCP.

The research suggests that Pakistani peers have an established view as to why children have learning difficulties. This suggests that those with learning difficulties think negatively about the things they cannot do and hence this

negative thinking prevents them from achieving their potential. Pakistani peers also think that another reason why children may have learning difficulties is because such children are not supported at home. Peers are aware that children with learning difficulties are faced with additional pressures, such as being prone to bullying. Peers have low expectations about those with learning difficulties. Peers think that these children will struggle to achieve the national standard at the end of their primary school career and that they will find it difficult to engage in highly skilled professions compared to themselves.

Similarly to ICP, white peers from OCP are aware that children with learning difficulties are not only in the low ability group but also these children find many aspects of learning challenging. However, peers appear to be supportive of children with learning difficulties and thus want to help them. From an early age, peers have made up their minds about the types of jobs children with learning difficulties could do, these being low paid and low skilled jobs. Peers from an early age have also formed a view about those with learning difficulties; this view being that such children are faced with a number of additional pressures compared to those who do not have learning difficulties. Similarly to ICP, these pressures include forming and maintaining friendships and knowing that the learning difficulty would not disappear. This in return will affect many aspects of their lives. Similarly to ICP, peers are aware of both the positive and the negative words and phrases used to describe children with learning difficulties; peers were sure that, although

they preferred some of the more positive terminology, they knew that negative language was used in the playground to refer to children with learning difficulties. Peers were positive about children with learning difficulties suggesting that any characteristic could be found in any child. A child with learning difficulties is not for example always shy and cruel. This was not the case for peers from ICP.

8.4 Parent perceptions of children with learning difficulties

The findings from the parent interviews indicated that parents from ICP would like to move out of Bradford at some point in their lives, as there were limited opportunities in terms of career prospects for their children. Another reason for wanting to move out of Bradford was because of the racial tensions that took place in 2001 in Bradford. Because of this, all parents expressed an interest to move out of Bradford. The majority of parents preferred their children to integrate with children from other cultures so that they could get to know about different cultures and religions. Two parents from ICP said that they did not like their child to attend a "predominantly Pakistani school". Parents from ICP identified differences and similarities in children with learning difficulties compared to those who are more able. One parent identified contrasting differences and similarities between children identified as having learning difficulties to children who are seen as being able. The former was portrayed as being "lazy, stupid, someone who struggles and is always dependent on help" to the latter who was regarded as "being clever, always getting the right answers, funny, kind, caring, confident and polite". Parents from OCP identified minor differences and similarities between the two groups of children; these were that all children could be generous, clever (dependent on activity), kind, shy and polite. Children who are more able were seen to be more confident, always got the right answers, were seen to be successful and brainy as in academically able.

Parents from both schools were aware that their children were in a low ability group. This awareness emerged from school and parents comparing their children with their peers, the progress children made and the homework children brought from school and attendance at some parent evenings. Parents from ICP were able to define learning difficulties in terms of children struggling to learn, not understanding anything in reading, writing and maths, were behind in learning in relation to peers, not understanding what is going on in lessons and needing extra help. Parents from OCP defined learning difficulties to mean a child struggling to read, write and learn, getting help on a one-to-one basis and/or help in a small group setting. Parents from both schools claimed that their children enjoyed learning if they understood what they were doing and if the subject was of a practical nature. Parents from both schools preferred their children to be taught together in class with their peers rather than to be withdrawn. In this way, children begin to feel different and lose a sense of belonging.

Parents from both schools expressed an interest in their children going to university but saw this as being an unlikely option because of their child's learning difficulty. Parents wanted their children to have "good honest jobs", for example working in a shop. Parents from ICP claimed that children with learning difficulties are faced with a number of problems in school from reading and writing to social and personal problems, which include feeling humiliated, ashamed and embarrassed, not being liked by their class teacher and sometimes having to work on their own without any support.

Similarly, parents from OCP argued that problems experienced by children with learning difficulties include being left out, and having reading difficulties as well as being prone to bullying. Other difficulties experienced by these children include not being able to work as quickly as their peers, comparing themselves to peers and hence feeling different. Parents from OCP also claimed that children with learning difficulties had fewer friends. These friends were those who themselves have learning difficulties. The majority of parents (except one) believed that their children would continue to have learning difficulties in secondary school. Parents from both schools were clearly able to recognise and identify a set of positive and negative words and phrases used to describe children with learning difficulties. Most parents were in favour of phrases such as learning difficulty, special educational needs and special needs as these were seen as polite words. Many of the negative words including "stupid" and "fool" were seen as discouraging the child from working.

The parent interviews suggested that, although they wanted their children to do well in school and have a better future, they did not see Bradford as a city of opportunity (in terms of career prospects); hence parents expressed an interest in moving out of the city at some point in their lives. Parents argued that they wanted their children to mix in with children from other cultures. This may be because parents are aware of the importance of community

cohesion and the 2001 Race Riots, which took place in Bradford and other Northern towns.

Although the majority of parents were positive about what their children could do and what characteristics their children may have, parents were able to distinguish some of the qualities, which were inherent only in able pupils such as “always getting the right answer”. Parents felt that their children did better in the more practical subject areas of the curriculum, as their children preferred a “more hands-on approach” to learning. Parents expressed an interest in their children being taught together in class with other children as they felt this helped to create a sense of belonging for their children. The majority of parents from both schools were aware of the low ability group their child was in. Parents wished for their child to be in a higher ability group, as they saw this being beneficial to their child who in return would be able to do more and achieve better; clearly parents associate achievement with high test scores.

Parents from both schools were able to define learning difficulty as children lacking key basic skills. It was evident to parents from ICP that their child lacked these skills from when their child was in Reception or Year 1, compared to OCP, where in the main parents discovered their child’s learning difficulty from Year 3 onwards. This was because the parents did not think initially that their children had learning difficulties or their children were identified late in the school career as having learning difficulties. Parents were

able to discover their child's learning difficulty through either working with their child or comparing what their child could or could not do with other children.

Although the majority of parents from both schools felt that their child's learning difficulty would continue in secondary school, parents from ICP held a long-term view about their children. They wanted their children to go to university and get a good job and not to be like them by working in low skilled professions. This was similar to parents from OCP, but parents felt given their child's low ability, it was difficult for the children to go to university, therefore, parents argued that they would support their children in their chosen profession. In many cases, this chosen profession was hairdressing for two of the girls or becoming a roofer for one child. Parents from both schools felt that children with learning difficulties are faced with more pressure, and some of this pressure would be relieved if the children received more support.

8.5 Staff perceptions of children with learning difficulties

The findings from the staff interviews indicated that, although children were aware of their learning difficulty, they did not fully understand the importance of learning. Staff argued that children with learning difficulties are characterised as having low self-esteem, limited communication skills, being timid, boisterous, loud, disruptive, lazy and lacking confidence because they are dealing with an internal feeling. Staff from ICP felt that these children enjoy routine activities and enjoy particular subjects such as art, sports and science. Staff from OCP argued that children with learning difficulties lack confidence, they do not have a positive self-image, they do not believe they can achieve something, hence they work at a slower pace, respond slowly, have difficulty in knowing what is required of them, and lack enthusiasm and motivation.

Staff argued that such children like routine activities, they have a poor attention span and poor listening skills, they become easily bored, rush through their work, have difficulty in acquiring key concepts and processing language, have difficulty in expressing language, retaining and applying previous learning. Staff from both schools argued that children make slow progress, and in some cases they make no progress; what progress children make is dependent partly on the teacher's attitude towards children with learning difficulties.

Staff argued that children experience a range of feelings that emerge from their learning difficulty. This ranged from feeling unhappy to feeling a sense of failure, and not being seen as important and wanted by the other children in class, a similar view echoed by children themselves. Staff understood learning difficulties to mean where children have difficulty in grasping concepts to low achievers who have difficulty in accessing the curriculum. Staff from ICP argued that learning difficulties are not always understood by Asian parents; parents do not always know how well their child is doing in school because of the other commitments parents are faced with, such as caring for extended family members and other children, hence parents do not have sufficient time to spend with their children. Whereas staff from OCP claimed that parents want their children to do well in school and want their children to be happy; they do not take a long-term view as to where they want their child to be in ten years.

Staff from ICP indicated that children are not always listened to in class because of the pressures teachers are faced with, for example getting through the pace of a lesson. They felt that school was too academic for children with learning difficulties as the children are faced with the pressure to be like their peers and achieve the "norm". Staff from OCP believed that children are faced with the additional pressure of not being respected by their able peers. Children are listened to in class but are prone to bullying and unkind name calling from peers. From the list of many words and phrases used to describe children with learning difficulties, a number of words

including “handicapped” were viewed negatively. Staff felt that parents and children would sometimes use the negative words and phrases to refer to children with learning difficulties. Both schools preferred phrases such as learning difficulties, special educational needs and special needs. The term “slow learner” was also liked by OCP staff.

Staff from both schools suggested that children with learning difficulties have a low self-image and lack confidence. This results in children not feeling too good about themselves in many respects such as in struggling in class and being low academic achievers. Many negative traits were used to describe children with learning difficulties; however, staff said that this was dependent on each child and whether children themselves wanted to learn. Staff were quickly able to distinguish the positive and negative language used to describe children with learning difficulties; although staff preferred the more positive language, with the exception of OCP staff who also preferred the term “slow learner”.

Parents of children from OCP appeared to be more involved in their children’s homework, compared to parents from ICP where parents did not help their children with their homework, though sought help from other sources. Staff from both schools believed that children with learning difficulties benefit from working in small withdrawal groups where they are able to get dedicated support and attention in a small group setting.

Staff from both schools felt that children with learning difficulties are faced with more pressures than their able children; this ranges from bullying, not listened to, liked and respected by peers. Staff from ICP claimed that children with learning difficulties could go to university but this was dependent on the level of their learning difficulty and the child's attitude, but children could go to college and take a vocational route and enter a profession that entailed practical and repetition work. This links in with what staff said about children and the practical areas of the curriculum, where children appear to enjoy and do better. Staff from OCP argued that children with learning difficulties do not have a chance of going to university but they could go to college and work in a field such as stacking shelves in a supermarket. Staff from OCP felt that there was no chance of children going to university; staff felt that these children would enter low skilled professions.

8.6 Next steps

It is important to take into account the sample of pupils. This was from largely working-class backgrounds (as stated by parents themselves) and relatively from disadvantaged homes (as school data indicates). It is important to recognise that this study was a small study, which took a small sample from two primary schools. It would be unwise to generalise across the whole population. However, despite the small sample, the findings provide an account of SEN pupils' attitudes towards their learning. There is clearly much scope for further exploration of investigating cultural differences and similarities in SEN pupils' attitudes towards their own learning.

The conclusion of this study opens up the opportunity for further research into a number of areas. The research sample could be extended to include more participants. This would help to provide greater validity to the findings. The research could look into interviewing children who are at school action plus on the special educational needs register. The research could be taken further by looking at the impact of learning the Koran (for two hours after each school day) on pupil motivation and attitudes to learning. Further research could be conducted by looking at how rote learning in mosque shapes and influences learning for Pakistani children. The extent to which an extended family is an aid or barrier to learning could also be further investigated. How teachers respond to and promote inclusion of pupils with learning difficulties is an area that could be explored further. Further research

could investigate how a different social class of Pakistani and white parents impact on pupil perceptions of learning difficulties. It is important that readers are aware of the broadness of the concepts of “white” and “Pakistani” and further research on differences within cultures would be welcomed, particularly, social class, gender, religion and family patterns.

Before the implications for pupils, parents and schools are considered, it may be worthwhile to remind the reader of **the aims of the research**:

- How aware pupils are of their learning difficulties
- How pupils and significant others perceive their learning difficulty
- How children with learning difficulties respond to key labels used to refer to them
- To what extent there are cultural differences and similarities between the two groups of pupils

8.7 Implications for pupils

- Talk to an adult or a peer counsellor if children are being bullied or if children have difficulty in completing given work
- Have high expectations of what they are able to do and what they want to do
- Be proud of their learning difficulty
- See themselves as equally important as other children, everyone is special
- Play and work with children from different ability and ethnic groups
- Know at which targets/areas of learning children need to become better
- Think positively and believe in an "I can do it" culture and think "It's good to be me"

8.8 Implications for schools

- Provide training to teaching and support staff on strategies to ensure better inclusion of all children, particularly those with learning difficulties
- Praise and value children's effort regardless of them achieving a national curriculum Level 4 at the end of Year 6
- Ensure schools share with and involve children and parents with IEPs (individual education plans)
- Ensure that there are opportunities for children of all abilities to socially mix in with a wide range of pupils, and celebrate success
- Consider providing a differentiated, relevant basic skills curriculum for children with learning difficulties (including developing reading)
- Review the anti-bullying policy
- Ensure staff have high but realistic expectations of what their children are capable of
- Raise the self-esteem and confidence of children through providing a social and personal skills curriculum where children feel good about themselves
- Because half of the sample prefer to stay in a mono-cultural school, create opportunities where children can integrate with different cultures and overcome any prejudices
- Be aware of the pressures children in low ability groups face and ensure that children view their learning difficulty positively

- Bring out a talent for children with learning difficulties, share it with the rest of the children

8.9 Implications for parents

- Ensure that parents do not make comparisons with other children
- Celebrate children's contributions and successes
- Work with children at home
- Have high but realistic expectations of what their children are capable of
- Consider supporting children during the early years of identification of SEN e.g. become involved in setting IEP targets with the school
- Provide education activities/opportunities for children outside of school
- Find a talent within children, build on it and share it
- Find out what services are available to support families of children with learning difficulties

This section has considered the conclusion, areas for further investigation and implications of the research.

References

- Adler, P.A. and Adler, P. (1993) Ethical issues in self-censorship: Ethnographic research on sensitive topics in C.M. Renzetti and Ahmed, B. (1996) Reflexivity, cultural membership and power in the research Situation: tensions and contradictions when considering the researcher's role. The British Psychology Society, Psychology of Women section Newsletter. 7: 35-40.
- Ahmad, W. and Atkin, K. (1996) Race and Community Care. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Ainscow, M. Muncey, J. (1991) Meeting Individual Needs. London: Fulton.
- Ainscow, T.B. Hawkins-Black, M. Vaughan, K. Shaw, L. (2000) Index for Inclusion – Developing Learning and Participation in Schools. Bristol: CSIE.
- Alam, M.Y. and Husband, C. (2006) British-Pakistani men from Bradford. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Alderson, P. (1995) Listening to children. London: Barnardos.
- Alley, G. and Deshler, D. (1979) Teaching the learning disabled adolescent: strategies and methods. Denver, Co: Lone.
- Amos, V. and Parmar, P. (1981) Resistance and Responses: the experiences of black girls in Britain', in A McRobbie and T McCabe (Eds) Feminism for Girls: an adventure story. London: Routledge.
- Ansari, H. (2004) The infidel within: Muslims in Britain since 1800. London: Hurst.
- Argyris, C. Putnam, R. Smith, D.M. (1985) Action Science. London: Jossey-Bass.
- Atkinson, P. and Hammersley, M. (1995) Ethnography – Principles in Practice. London: Routledge.
- Bandura, A. (1982) Self efficacy mechanism in human agency, American Psychologist, 37, 122-147.
- Bannister, D. and Fransella, F. (1986) Inquiring Man: The Psychology of Personal Constructs. London: Croom Helm.
- Barker, M (1981) The New Racism. London: Junction Books.
- Barn, R. Sinclair, R. and Ferdinand, D. (1997) Acting on principle. London: BAAF.

Basit, N.T. (2003) Manual or electronic? The role of coding in qualitative data analysis. *Educational Research*, Volume 45 (2), pp. 143-154.

Bassey, M. (1999) *Case Study Research in Educational Settings*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Baxter, C. (1998) 'Learning Difficulties.' pp. 231-242. In Rawaf S and Bahl V (Eds) *Accessing health needs of people from minority ethnic groups*. London: Royal College of Physicians/Faculty of Public Health Medicine.

Bear, G.G. Minke, K.M. Manning. M.A. (2002) Self-concept of students with learning disabilities. *Psychology Review*, volume 3, number 3, p405-427.

Beauchamp, T.L., Faden, R.R., Wallace, R.J. and Walters, L. (1982) *Ethical issues in social science research*. Baltimore. MB: John Hopkins University Press.

Becker, P. (1993) Pitfalls in grounded theory research. *Qualitative Health Research* 3 (2), pp.254-60.

Begley, A. (2000) The Educational Self Perceptions of Children with Down's Syndrome – in A. Lewis and G. Lindsay- *Researching Children's Perspectives* (p98-121). Buckingham: Open University Press.

Beresford, B. (1997) *Personal accounts: involving disabled children in research*. Social Policy Research Unit.

Black, F.W. (1974) Self-concept as related to achievement and age in learning disabled children. *Child Development*, 45, 1137-1140.

Blatchford, P. (1996) Pupils' views on schoolwork and school from 7 to 16 years. *Research Papers in Education*, Volume 11 (2), pp.263-288.

Blascovich, J. and Tomaka, J. (1991) Measures of self-esteem. In *Measures of personality and social psychology attitudes*, (pp. 115-160). New York: Academic Press.

Bloom, B.S. (1976) *Human characteristics and school learning*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Bogdan, R.C. Biklen, S.K. (1992) *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods*. Boston: Allyn Bacon.

Booth, T. and Ainscow, M. (1998) *From Them to Us: An International Study of Inclusion in Education*. London: Routledge.

Bracken, B.A. (1992) *Multidimensional self-concept scale*. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

- Brah, A (1996) *Cartographies of Diaspora*. London: Routledge.
- Brewer, J.D (2002) *Ethnography*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Brophy, J.E. (1983) Research on the self-fulfilling prophecy and teacher expectations. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. 75, 631-661.
- Bruner, E.M (1984) *Text, Play and Story: The Construction and Reconstruction of Self and Society*. Washington: The American Ethnological Society.
- Bryan, T.H. (1986) Personality and situational factors in learning Disability. In G.T. Pavlidis. and D.D. Fisher (Eds) *Dyslexia: Its neuropsychology and treatment* (pp. 215-230). Chichester: England: Wiley.
- Bull, R. (1998) 'Obtaining information from child witnesses.' In A. Memon, A. Vrij and R. Bull, *Psychology and Law: truthfulness, accuracy and credibility*. London: McGraw-Hill.
- Burgess, R.G. (1982) *In the Field, An Introduction to Field Research*. London: Routledge.
- Burns, R. (1982) *Self-concept Development*. London: Holt Education.
- Butler, R.J. (2001) *The self-image profiles*. London: The Psychological Corporation.
- Butler, R.J. Redfern, E.J. and Holland, P. (1994) Children's notions about enuresis and the implications for treatment. *Scandinavian Journal of Urology and Nephrology*. Supplement 163, 39-48.
- Butler, R.J. and Gasson, L.S. (2005). Self-esteem/self-concept scales for children and adolescents: A Review. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*. Vol. 10, No. 4, pp. 190-201.
- Butler, R. and Green, D. (1998) *The child within – the exploration of personal construct theory with young people*. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann.
- Butt, J. and Mirza, K. (1996) *Social Care and Black Communities*. London: HMSO.
- Byrne, B. M. (1986) Self-concept/academic achievement relations: an investigation of dimensionality, stability and causality. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, 18, 173-186.

Byrne, B. (1996) Measuring self-concept across the life span: Issues and Instrumentation. American Psychological Association. Washington DC.

Cambra, C. and Silvestre, N. (2003) Students with special educational needs in the inclusive classroom: social integration and self-concept. European Journal of Special Needs Education. Volume 18 (2). pp. 197-208.

Cantle, T. (2001) Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team. London: Home Office.

Central Advisory Council for Education (1967) Children and their Primary Schools (The Plowden Report) London: HMSO.

Chamba, R. Ahmad, W. and Jones, L. (1998) Improving services for Asian deaf children. Bristol: Policy Press.

Chapman, J.W. and Boersma, F.J. (1979) Academic self-concept in elementary learning-disabled children: a study with the student's perception of ability scale. Psychology in the Schools, 16, 201-206.

Chapman, J.W. and Turner, W.E. (1995) Development of young children's Reading self-concepts: An examination of emerging subcomponents and their relationship with reading achievement. Journal of Educational Psychology, 87, 154-167.

Chapman, J.W. (1988) 'Learning disabled children's self-concepts.' Review of educational research, 58, 1, pp 347-371.

Cheston, R. (1994) 'The Account of Special Education Leavers'. Disability and Society. 9, 1, p 59-69.

Children's Act (England and Wales, 1989) Part V, 43, (8), HMSO: London.

Christensen, P and James, A. (2000) Research with Children. Perspectives and Practices. London: Falmer Press.

Cicourel, A.V. (1964) Sociology. New York: Free Press.

Clever, A., Bear, G.G. and Juvonen, J. (1992) Discrepancies between competence and importance in self perceptions of children in Integrated classes. Journal of Special Education, 26. 125-138.

Cline, T., Abreu, D.G., Fihosy, C., Gray, H., Lambert, H., Neale, J., (2002) DfES Report Number 365 – minority ethnic pupils in mainly white schools. London: HMSO.

Cloke, C. (1995) Forging the circle: the relationship between children, policy, research and practice in children's rights. In C. Cloke and

- Coffey, A and Atkinson, P. (1996) *Making Sense of Qualitative Data*: London: Sage.
- Cohen, L. and Manion, L. (1989) *Research Methods in Education*/ London: Routledge.
- Community Relations Commission (CRC) (1976) *Between Two Cultures*, CRC.
- Cooper, P. (1993) *Effective Schools for Disaffected Students*. London: Routledge.
- Coppersmith, S. (1967) *The antecedents of self-esteem*. San Francisco: Freeman.
- Corbett, J. (1995) *Bad Mouthing: The Language of Special Needs*. London: Cassell.
- Corsaro, W. (1985) *Friendship and peer culture in the early years*. Ablex.
- Cosden, M. Elliott, K, Noble, S. and Kelemen, E. (1999) Self understanding and self-esteem in children with learning disabilities. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 22, (4), pp 279-289.
- Covington, M.V. and Beery, R.G. (1976) *Self-worth and school learning*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Crabtree, B.F. and Miller, W.L (1992) The Case for Participatory Evaluation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 14, 397-418.
- Cresswell, J.W. (1994) *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Crozier, G. (1999) 'Is it a case of "We know when we're not wanted?" The parents' perspective on parent-teacher roles and relationships.' *Educational Research*, 4, (3), 315-328.
- Crozier, G. (2000) *Parents and schools: partners or protagonists?* Stone-on Trent: Trentham Books.
- Crozier, G. and Davies, J. (2007) Hard to reach parents or hard to reach schools? A discussion of home-school relations, with particular reference to Bangladeshi and Pakistani parents. *British Educational research Journal*, Vol 33, No. 3, 295-313.
- Curry, S. and Russ, S. (1985) Identifying coping strategies in children. *Journal of clinical child psychology*, 14, 64-69.

- Davies, M and Dotchin, J. (1995) *Improving Quality through Participation: An Approach to Measuring Children's Expectations and Perceptions of Services*. London: Pitman.
- Davie, R. Upton, G. and Varma, V (1996) *The voice of the child: a handbook for professionals*. London: Falmer Press.
- Deci, E.L. and Chandler, L.L. (1986) The importance of motivation for the future of the LD field. *Journal of Learning Disability*, 19, 587-594.
- Deci, E.L., Hodges, R., Pierson, L. and Tomassone, J. (1992) Autonomy and competence as motivational factors in students with learning disabilities and emotional handicaps. *Journal of Learning Disability*, 25, 457-471.
- Denscombe, M. (1998) *The Good Research Guide: for small scale-projects*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Denscombe, M. and Aubrook, L. (2002) The ethics of questionnaire research pupils in schools: 'it's just another piece of schoolwork.' *British Educational Research Journal*, 18, 113-31.
- Dent, H.R. (1986) An experimental study of the effectiveness of different techniques of questioning mentally handicapped child witnesses. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 25, 13-17.
- Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (2003) *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*. London: Sage.
- Denzin, N.K. (1989) *Interpretive Interactions*. London: Sage.
- DES (1978) *Special educational needs. Report of the committee of enquiry into the education of handicapped children and young people*. London: HMSO.
- Dexter, L. (1970) *Elite and specialised interviewing*. Evanston, Ill. North Western University Press.
- DfES (2001) *Special Educational Needs Code of Practice*, London: TSO.
- DfES (2002) *Working Together: Giving Children and Young People A Say*. London: TSO.
- DfES (2003) *Every Child Matters*. London: TSO.
- DfES (2003) *Excellence and Enjoyment*. London: TSO.
- DfES (2004) *Removing Barriers to Achievement*. London: TSO.

DfES (2005) Ethnicity and Education – the evidence on minority pupils. London: HMSO.

DfES (2006) Getting it right for every child. London: HMSO.

DoH (1989) The Children's Act. London: HMSO.

DoH (2001) Learning Difficulties and Ethnicity. London: HMSO

Dolby, N., Dimitriadis, G. and Willis, P. (2004) Learning to labour in new times. London: Routledge.

Donnellan, C. (2003) Self-Esteem. Cambridge: Independence.

Dweck, (2000) Self Theories: Their Role in Motivation, Personality and Development. Philadelphia: Taylor and Francis.

Eiser, C. Eiser, J.R. and Havermans, T. (1995) The measurement of self-esteem: Practical and theoretical considerations. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 18, 429-432.

Elliott, J.G. Hufton, N. Hildreth, A & Illushin, L. (1999) Factors influencing education motivation: a study of attitudes, expectations and behaviour of children in Sunderland, Kentucky and St Petersburg. *British Educational Research Journal*, Volume 25, pp. 75-94.

Emler, N. (2001) Self-esteem: The costs and causes of low self-worth. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York Publishing Services Ltd.

Erikson, F. (1986) Qualitative Methods in Research on Teaching. In M.C. Witrock (Ed) *Handbook of Research on Teaching* (p119-161). New York: MacMillan.

Eshel, Y. and Klein, Z. (1981) Development of academic self-concept of lower class primary school children. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. 73, 287-293.

Farquhar, C. (1996) Lesbian Perspectives on HIV and Sexual Health. Paper presented at teaching to promote women's health international multidisciplinary conference, June, Toronto, Canada.

Felce, D. (2002) Gaining views from people with learning disabilities: authenticity, validity, reliability. Paper presented at ESRC seminar on interviewing children and young people with learning difficulties, Birmingham.

Fenton, S. (1999) Ethnicity: Racism, Class and Culture. London: Macmillan.

- Fetterman, D.M. (1998) *Ethnography: Step-by-Step*. London: Sage.
- Fine, G.A. and Sandstrom, K.L. (1988) *Knowing children: Participant observation with minors*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Fitts, W.H. and Warren, W.L. (1996) *Tennessee Self-concept Scale Manual: Second Edition*. Los Angeles, CA: Western Psychological Services.
- Flick, U. Kardoff, E.V. and Steinke, J. (2004) *A Companion to Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.
- Fox, P. and Norwich, B. (1992) 'Assessing the Self Perceptions of Young Adults with Severe Learning Difficulties'. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 7, 3, 193-202.
- Fransella, F. (1981) Nature babbling to herself. In H. Bonarius, T. Holland and S. Rosenburg (Eds) *Personal Construct Psychology: Recent advances in theory and practice*. London: Macmillan.
- Fransella and L. Thomas (1988) *Experimenting with Personal Construct Psychology*. London: Routledge Kegan Paul, pp. 223-229.
- Frederickson, N. and Cline, T. (Eds) (1995) *Assessing the learning environments of children with special educational needs*. London: Educational Psychology Publishing.
- Frederickson, N. and Cline, T. (2005) *Special educational needs, inclusion and diversity*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Freire, P. (1985) *The Politics of education: culture, power and liberation*. London: Macmillan.
- Gadamer, H.G. (1975) *Truth and Method*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Gardner, H. (1993) *The Unschooled Mind: How Children Think and How Schools Should Teach*. London: Fontana.
- Gardner, H. (1993) *Frames of Mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gardner, H. (1998) A multiplicity of intelligences, *scientific American presents: Exploring Intelligence*, 9, (4), pp. 18-23.
- Gardner, H. (1999) *Intelligence reframed: multiple intelligences for the 21st century*. New York: Basic Books.
- Geertz, C. (1973) *The interpretations of Cultures*. New York Basic Books.

Gettinger, M. and Koscik, R. (2001) Psychological services for children with learning disabilities. In J.N. Hughes, A.M. LaGreca, and J. C. Conoley (Eds.), *Handbook of psychological services for children and adolescents* (pp.421-435). New York: Oxford University.

Giddens, A. (1998) *Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gilbert, N. (2003) *Researching Social Life*. London: Sage.

Gillborn, D. (1990) *Race, ethnicity and education*. London: Unwin Hyman.

Glaser, B. G. Strauss, A. L. (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Gold, R.L. (1958) Roles in Sociological Field Observations. *Social Forces*, 36, pp217-223. Reproduced in G.J. McCall and J.L.Simmons (ed) (1969) *Issues in Participant Observation: A Text and Reader*. Reading: Addison-Wesley.

Greene, S. and Hogan, D. (2005) *Researching children's perspectives, approaches and methods*. London: Sage.

Gross, R. (2005) *Psychology – The science of mind and behaviour*. Dubai: Hodder Arnold.

Guba, E.G. Lincoln, Y.S. (1981) *Effective Evaluation*. New York: Jossey-Bass.

Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1994) Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research. In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds) *Handbook Of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Gunaratnam, Y. (2003) *Researching 'Race' and Ethnicity*. London: Sage.

Hamachek, D. (1991) *Encounters with Self*. New York: Harcourt BJC.

Hammersley, M. (1992) *What's Wrong with Ethnography?* London: Routledge.

Harris, M (1968) *The rise of anthropological theory*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.

Hart, S. Dixon, A. Drummond, J.M. McIntyre, D. (2004) *Learning Without Limits*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

Harter, S. (1985) *Self-perception profile for children*. Denver, CO: University of Denver Press.

Harter, S. (1999) *The construction of the self: a developmental perspective*. New York: Guildford Press.

Harter, S. and Pike, R. (1984) The pictorial scale of perceived competence And social acceptance for young children. *Child Development*, 55, 1969-82.

Hastings, R. and Remington, B. (1993) 'Connotations of labels for mental handicap and challenging behaviour: a review and research evaluation. *Mental Handicap Research*, 6, 3, 237-249.

Hatton, C. Azmi, S., Caine, A. and Emerson, E. (1998) 'Informal carers of adolescents and adults with learning disabilities from South Asian Communities. *British Journal of Social Work*, 28: 821-837.

Hoppe, M.J., Wells, E.A., Morrison, D.M., Gillmore, M.R. and Wilsdon, A. (1995) Using Focus Groups to Discuss Sensitive Topics with Children. *Evaluation Review*, 19, (1), 102-14.

Hughes, M. and Grieve, R. (1980) On asking children bizarre questions. *First Language*, 1, 149-60.

Hughes, H.M. (1984) Measures of self-concept and self-esteem for children ages 3-12 years: a review and recommendations. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 4, 657-692.

Jackson, S.R. (1988) Self Characterisation: dimensions of meaning. In F.

Johnston, G. (1998) Students at Risk: Towards a New Paradigm of Mild Educational Disabilities. *School Psychology International*, 19, 3, 221-237.

Kagan, J. (1984) *The nature of the child*. New York: Basic Books.

Kahn, R. and Mann, G. (1952) Developing Research Partnerships. *Journal of Social Issues*, 8, 3, 4-10.

Katabamna, S. Bhakta, P. and Parker, G. (2000) Perceptions of disability and care-giving relationships in South Asian Communities. Pp. 12-27, in Ahmad, W. (ed) *Ethnicity, disability and chronic illness*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Kelly, G. (1955) *The Psychology of Personal Constructs*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Kelly, N. and Norwich, B (2002) The perspectives of children with moderate learning difficulties on their educational provision and themselves, *SENCO*, 42, 8-9.

Kelly, N. and Norwich, B. (2004) Pupils' perceptions of self and labels: Moderate learning difficulties in mainstream and special schools. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*. 74, pp.411-435.

Kirk, J and Miller, M.L. (1986) *Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research*. Beverley Hills: Sage.

Kirkbride, L. (1999) 'I'll go first'. *The Planning and Review TOOLKIT for use with Children with Disabilities*. London: The Children's Society.

Kitzinger, J. (1994) Focus Groups: Methods or Madness? In M. Boulton *Challenge and Innovation: Methodological Advances in Social Research on HIV/AIDS*. London: Taylor and Francis.

Kitzinger, J. and Barbour, R.S. (1999) *Developing Focus Group Research: Politics, Theory and Practice*. London: Sage.

Kloomak, S. and Cosden, M. (1994) Self-concept in children with learning difficulties. The relationship between global self-concept, academic 'discounting', non-academic self-concept and perceived social support. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 17, 140-153.

Koocher, G.P. and Keith, S. (1994) p.94 Scientific issues in psychosocial and Educational research with children. In M.A. Grodin and L.H. Glanz (Eds) *Children as research subjects: science, ethics and law*, pp. 41-80, New York: Oxford University Press.

Kornhaber, M.L. (2001) *Thinkers in education: from Piaget to the present*. London: Routledge.

Krueger, R.A. (1994) *Focus groups: a practical guide for applied research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Krueger, R.A. and Casey, M.A. (2000) *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. London: Sage.

Kvale, S. (1989) *Issues of Validity in Qualitative Research*. Studentlitteratur: Sweden.

Kvale, S. (1996) *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. London: Sage.

Kvale, K.A. Forness, S.R. (1995) *The nature of learning disabilities*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Lawton, D. Gardner, R. Cairns, J. (2000) Values and the Curriculum. London: Woburn Press.

LeCompte, M.D. and Preissle, J. (1993) Method and Measurement in Ethnography and Qualitative Design in Educational Research. Academic Press: London.

Lee, R.M. 1998 (Ed) Researching sensitive topics. Newbury Park: CA Sage.

Lee, T.W. (1999) Using Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage.

Leigh, I. W. and Stinson, M.S. (1991) Social environment, self-perceptions and identity of hearing impaired adolescents. Volta Review. 93, 7-22.

Lewis, A. and Lindsay, G. (2000) Researching Children's Perspectives. Buckingham: Open University.

Lewis, A. (2004) 'And when did you last see your father?' Exploring the views of children with learning difficulties/disabilities. British Journal of Special Education, volume 31, number 1, pp. 3-9.

Lincoln, Y. S. and Guba, E.G. (1985) Naturalistic Inquiry. Beverley Hills: Sage.

Lofland, J. (1971) Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis. Belmont. CA: Wadsworth.

Lofland, J. and Lofland, L.M. (1984) Analysing social settings: A guide to qualitative observations and analysis. Belmont: Wadsworth.

Lynas, W. (1986) 'Pupil Attitudes to Integration.' British Journal of Special Education. 13, 1, 31-33.

Mac an Ghaill, M. (1994) The making of men: Masculinities and schooling. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Mandell, N. The least adult role in studying children. In Waksler. F.C. (1991) Studying the social worlds of children. Sociological Readings: Falmer Press.

Mariampolski, H. (1989) Focus groups on sensitive topics: how to get subjects to open up and feel good about telling the truth. Applied Marketing Research, 29 (1) 6-11.

Markus, H.R, and Kitayama, S. (1999) Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion and motivation. In R.B. Baumeister, The self in social psychology (pp. 339-367). London: Psychology Press.

Marsh, H.W. (1988). Self-description questionnaire 1. San Antonio, TX: The Psychological Corporation.

Marsh, H.W. (1990) Self-description questionnaire one (SDQ1). Manual and research monograph. University of Western Sydney, Australia. The Psychology Corporation.

Marshall, C. Rossman, G.B. (1999) Designing Qualitative Research. Newbury Park: Sage.

Mauthner, M. (1997) Methodological aspects of collecting data from children. *Children and Society*, 11, 16-28.

Mayall, B. (1994) Children in action at home and school in B. Mayall (Ed) *Children's childhoods observed and experienced*. London: Falmer Press.

Mayall, B. (2000) Conversations with children: working with generational issues in P. Christensen and A. James (Eds) *Research with children: perspectives and practices*. London: Falmer Press.

McCracken, G. (1988) *The Long Interview*. Beverley Hills: Sage.

McNamara, S. Moreton, G. (1997) *Understanding Differentiation – a teacher's guide*. London: Fulton.

Mead, G.H. (1934) *Mind, Self and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mercer, C.D. (1987) *Students with learning disabilities* (3rd ed). Columbus OH: Merrill.

Merriam, S.B. (1988) *Case Study research in education: A Qualitative Approach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Merton, R.K. Fiske, M. and Kendall, P.L. (1956) *The Focused Interview*. Glencoe: Free Press.

Mezaros, P. (2001) Behind the Bradford Riots. *Searchlight Magazine*, August 2001.

Michell, L. (1997) Loud, Sad or Bad: Young People's Perceptions of their Social Worlds. *Health Education Research, Theory and Practice*, 12, 1-14.

Miles, M.B. Huberman, A.M. (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis: A expanded sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Miliband, D. (2004) Choice and Voice in Personalised Learning. London: DfES.
- Mir, G., Tovey, P. and Ahmad, W. (2000) Cerebral Palsy and South Asian Communities. Leeds: Centre for Research in Primary Care.
- Mir, G., Nocon, A., Ahmad, W. and Jones, L. (2001). Learning difficulties and ethnicity. London: Department of Health.
- Mirza, K (1989) 'The silent cry: second generation Bradford Muslim women speak', Muslims in Europe 43, Centre for the study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations.
- Mitchell, J.C. (1983) Case and situation analysis. The Sociological Review. 31, 187-211.
- Modood, T. (1992) Not easy being British: colour, culture and citizenship. Stoke-on Trent: Trentham Books.
- Morgan, D. L. (1988) Focus Groups as Qualitative Research. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Morgan, D.L. (1998) Planning Focus Groups (Thousand Oaks: Sage) – Practical Strategies for combining qualitative and quantitative methods: applications for health research, 8:362-76.
- Morgan, D. L. and Krueger, R. A (1997) The Focus Group Kit, Vols 1-6, London: Sage.
- Morgan, M., Gibbs, S., Maxwell, K. and Britten, N. (2002) Hearing children's voices: methodological issues in conducting focus groups with children aged 7-11 years. Qualitative Research, 2, (1), 5-20.
- Morrison, M. and Pole, C. (2003) Ethnography for Education. England: Open University Press.
- Morrison, G. and Cosden, M. (1997) Risk, Resilience and Adjustment of Individuals with Learning Disabilities. Learning Disability Quarterly, 20, 43-60.
- Morrow, V. and Richards, M. (1996) The Ethics of Social Research with Children: An Overview. Children and Society, 10, 2, 90-105.
- Mortimore, P. Sammons, P. Stolls, S. Lewis, D. Ecob, R. (1988) School Matters: The Junior Years. England: Open Books.
- Moston, S. (1987) The suggestibility of children in interview studies. First Language, 7, 67-68.

Nind, M. Rix, J. Simmons, K. (2003) *Inclusive Education: Diverse Perspectives*. London: Fulton.

Norwich, B. (1997) Exploring the perspectives of adolescents with moderate learning difficulties on their special schooling and themselves: stigma and self-perceptions. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, Vol. 12, (1), pp. 38-53.

Norwich, B. (1999) The connotation of special education labels for professionals in the field. *British Journal of Special Education*. Volume 26, No. 4, pp. 179-183.

Norwich, B. (2002) Education, inclusion and individual differences: recognising and resolving dilemmas. *British journal of educational studies*, 50 (4), 482-502.

Norwich, B. and Kelly, N. (2004) Pupils views' on inclusion: moderate learning difficulties and bullying in mainstream and special schools. *British Educational Research Journal*, 30, (1), 43-65.

Ofsted (2002) *Bradford Education*. London: Audit Commission

Oliver, C. (1986) 'Self-concept Assessment: A Case Study.' *Mental Handicap*, 14, 1, 24-25.

Ouseley, H. (2001) *Community Pride not prejudice – making diversity work in Bradford*. Bradford Vision.

Patton, M.Q. (1982) *Practical Evaluation*. Newbury Park, Calif, Sage.

Patton, M. Q. (1990) *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. Newbury Park: Sage.

Payne, G. and Payne, J. (2004) *Key Concepts in Social Research*. Sage: London.

Peck, D. and Whitlow, D. (1975) *Approaches to personality theory*. London: Methuen.

Pelto, P.J. and Pelto, G.H. (1978) *Anthropological Research: The Structure of Inquiry*. Cambridge: England: Cambridge University Press.

Piers, E.V. (1969) *Manual for the Piers-Harris Self-concept Scale*. Nashville. TN: Counsellor Recordings and Tests.

Pole, C. and Lampard, R. (2002) *Practical social investigation: qualitative and quantitative methods in social research*. Prentice-Hall: Harlow.

- Poplin, M. (1984) Summary rationalizations, apologies and farewells. What we don't know about the learning disabled. *Learning Disability Quarterly*. 7, 130-134.
- Ragin, C.C. (1992) Cases of 'What is a Case?' in C.C. Ragin and H.S. Becker *What is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry* (1-18) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ravenette, T. (1977) Personal construct theory: an approach to the psychological investigation of children and young people. In D. Bannister (ed) *New perspectives in personal construct theory*. London: Academic Press.
- Reay, D. (1998) *Class work: mothers' involvement in their children's primary schooling*. London: University College Press.
- Rehal, A. (1989) Involving Asian parents in the statementing procedure – the way forward. *Educational psychology in practice*, 4, (4), pp. 189-97.
- Robson, C. (2002) *Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researcher*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Rooney, E. (1996) Discipline and vanish: feminism, the resistance to theory, and the politics of Cultural Studies. In Storey, J (ed.), *What is Cultural Studies? A Reader*. London: Arnold.
- Rose, R. (2001) Primary school teacher perceptions of the conditions required to include pupils with special educational needs. *Educational Review*, Volume 53 (2), pp. 147-156.
- Rosenberg, M. (1979) *Conceiving the self*. New York: Basic Books.
- Sarantakos, S. (1998) *Social Research*. London: Macmillan Press.
- Schatzman, L. and Strauss, A.L. (1973) *Field Research: Strategies for a Natural Sociology*. Englewood Cliffs: N J Prentice Hall.
- Scott, D. and Morrison, M. (2006) *Key Ideas in Educational Research*. London: Continuum.
- Scriven, M. (1972) Objectivity and Subjectivity in Educational Research. In L.G. Thomas (Ed) *Philosophical Redirection of Educational Research* (pp 94-142), Chicago: National Society for the Study of Education.
- Seale, C. Using computers to analyse qualitative data. In: Silverman ed. *Doing qualitative research*. London: Sage, 2000: 154-174.

Selltiz, C. and Jahoda, M. (1962) Research methods in social relations. New York: Methuen.

Shain, F. (2003) The schooling and identity Asian girls. Stoke-On-Trent: Trentham.

Shavelson, R.J. Hubner, J.J. and Stanton, G.C. (1976) Self-concept: Validations of construct interpretations. Review of educational research, 46, pp 47-441.

Shaw, A (1988) A Pakistani Community in Britain. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Sheldon, D. (1991). 'How was it for you? Pupil, Parents and Teachers' Perspectives on Integration'. British Journal of Special Education, 18, 3, 107-110.

Silverman, D. (1993) Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analyzing Talk, Text and Interaction. London: Sage.

Silverman, D. (1997) Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice. Sage: London.

Silverman, D. (2001) Interpreting qualitative data: methods for analyzing talk, texts and interaction. London: Sage.

Solity, J. (1991) Special Needs: A Discriminatory Concept?' Education Psychology in Practice, 7, 1, 12-19.

Solomos, J and Back, L (1994) 'Conceptualising racisms: social theory, politics and research. Sociology 28 (1): 143-161.

Spencer, L. Faulkner, A. and Keegan, J. (1988) Talking about sex. London: Social and Community Planning Research.

Spindler, G.D. (1982) Doing the ethnography of schooling: educational anthropology in action. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Spradley, J.B. (1979) The Ethnographic Interview. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College.

Spradley, J.P. and McCurdy, D.W. (1972) The cultural experience: Ethnography in complex society. Palo Alto, CA: Science Research Associates.

Stake, R. E. (1995) The Art of Case Study. London: Sage.

Stalker, K. (1998) Some ethical and methodological issues in research with people with learning difficulties. Disability and Society, 13 (1). p. 5-19.

Stenberg, R.J. (1990) *Metaphors of mind: conceptions of the nature of intelligence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Stenhouse, L. (1985) What counts as research? in J. Ruddock and Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1998) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.

Stroeker, R. (1991) Evaluations and Rethinking the Case Study. *The Sociological Review*, 39, 88-112.

Sturman, A. (1994) Case study methods. In J. P. Keeves (ed) *Educational Research, Methodology and measurement: an International Handbook*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Pergamon, pp. 61-6.

Sullivan, H.S. (1953) *The interpersonal theory of psychiatry*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Taylor, S.J and Bogdan, R. (1984) *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods – The search for meanings*. New York: John Wiley.

Tesch, R. (1990) *Qualitative Research: Analysis Types and Software Tools*. New York: London.

Thomas, R.M. (1994) The meaning and significance of ethnicity in educational discourse. *International review of education*. 40, (1), pp. 74-80.

Tizard, B. Hughes, M. (1984) *Young Children Learning: Talking at Home and at School*. London: Fontana.

Tomlinson, J. (1996) *Working towards inclusive education*. Centre for studies on inclusive education.

UN (United Nations) (1989) *Conventions on the Rights of the Child*. Geneva: Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Verschuren, J.M. (2003) Case Study as a Research Strategy: Some Ambiguities and Opportunities. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*. Volume 6, 2, 121-139.

Visser, J. (1993) *Special Education in Britain after Warnock*. London: David Fulton.

Wade, A. and Westcott, H.L. (1997) No Easy Answers: Children's Perspectives On Investigative Interviews. In H.L. Westcott and J. Jones (Eds) *Perspectives on the Memorandum: Policy, Practices and Research in Investigative Interviewing*, pp 51-65. Aldershot: Arena.

Wade, B. and Moore, M. (1993) *Experiencing Special Education*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Wang, Y. Ollendick, T.H. (2001) A cross-cultural and developmental analysis of self-esteem in Chinese and Western children. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*. Vol. 4 (3). pp. 253-271

Warnock Report (1978) *Special Educational Needs*, London: HMI – Stationery Office.

Waterman, A., Blades, M. and Spencer, C. (2002) How and why children respond to nonsensical questions? In H.L. Westcott, G.M. Davies and R.H. Bull (Eds) *Children's testimony: a handbook of psychological research and forensic practice*, pp. 147-159. Chichester: Wiley.

Watling, R. (2002) Analysing qualitative data in M. Coleman and A. Briggs (Eds) *Research matters in educational leadership and management*. London: Paul Chapman.

Wells, L.E. and Marwell, G. (1976). *Self-esteem: Its conceptualisation and measurement*. Beverley Hills, CA: Sage.

Westbrook, M.T., Legge, V. and Pennay, M. (1993) Attitudes towards disability in a multicultural society: *Social Science and Medicine*, 36: 615-623.

Westcott, H. L. Davies, G. M. Bull, R.H.C. (2002) *Children's Testimony: Psychology Research and Forensic Practice*. Chichester: Wiley.

White, J. (1998) *Does Howard Gardner's multiples intelligence add up?* London: Institute of Education.

Willis, P. (1977) *Learning to labor*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Winkler, G. (2003) Are we nice or are we real? Ethical issues emerging from collaborative narrative research. *Educational Action Research*, Volume 11 (3), pp. 389-402.

Winter, D.A. (1992) *Personal construct psychology in clinical practice: theory, research and application*. London: Routledge.

Wolcott, H. (1994) *Transforming Qualitative Data: Description, Analysis and Interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, Calif, Sage.

Wragg, E.C. (1994) *An Introduction to Classroom Observation*. London: Routledge.

Wright, C (1992) 'Early education: multiracial primary school classrooms'. In D Gill *et al* (Eds) *Racism and Education*.

Wylie, R.C. (1961) *The self-concept: a critical survey of pertinent research literature*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Wylie, R.C. (1979) *The Self-concept*. Lincoln, NB, University of Nebraska Press.

Wylie, R.C. (1989) *Measures of self-concept*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Yin, K.R. (1994) *Case Study Research, Design and Methods*. London: Sage.

Znainiecki, F. (1934) *The Method of Sociology*. New York: Farren and Rineholt.

Appendices

1 Glossary

The following terminology is specific to the current research.

Case study – Sturman (1994) offers the following description of case studies:

'Case study is a generic term for the investigation of an individual, group or phenomenon ... case study researchers hold the view that to understand a case, explain why things happen as they do, and to generalise or predict from a single example requires an in-depth investigation of the interdependencies of parts and the patterns that emerge.' (p.61)

Culture – refers to the symbolic, valued styles, ways of life, manners, rituals to customs with respect to birth, marriage, death, food and dress, (Fenton 1999).

Ethnic group – refers to the social elaboration of collective identities whereby individuals see themselves as one among others like themselves.

Ethnography – this is not one particular method of data collection but a style of research that is distinguished by its objectives, which are to fully understand the social meanings and activities, which people in the natural setting give.

ICP – Inner City Primary School

Learning difficulty – children have a learning difficulty if they have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age or they have a disability that prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age (see DfES Code of Practice 2001).

Method – refers to the tools or techniques used to collect data for example, questionnaires, interviews, and participant observation.

Methodology – refers to the philosophical and epistemological frameworks within which rules and techniques are applied. Methodology is the theory of how researchers gain knowledge in research contexts and why.

Mono-cultural – this refers to schools that have children from mainly one culture.

Multicultural school – this includes a school where children from many different cultures come to.

OCP – Outer City Primary School

Pakistani – The term 'Pakistani' is used to refer to British born children whose parent(s) may be born in Pakistan, are of Pakistan heritage and are Muslim. The researcher is aware that if the terms Pakistani and Muslim are used separately, they can have different meanings, for example, one can be Muslim but not Pakistani (Cantle 2001). A more complex understanding of the term 'Pakistani' can be found in the main text.

Participant – this includes any individual who has been asked to take part in the research either as an interviewee or through observation.

Researcher-Practitioner – this refers to the researcher who has carried out this study, he is also known as the practitioner as he works in Inner City Primary school as a 'deputy headteacher'.

School action – when a class teacher identifies that a pupil has special educational needs, they provide interventions that are additional to and different from those provided as part of the school's usual differentiated

curriculum offer and strategies. An individual education plan will usually be devised (DfES Code of Practice, 2001, p.206).

School action plus – when the class teacher and the SENCO (special educational needs coordinator) are provided with advice or support from outside specialists, so that alternative interventions additional or different strategies to those provided for the pupil through school action can be put in place (DfES Code of Practice, 2001, p206).

SIP – Self-image Profile

Special educational need – children have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty, which calls for special educational provision to be made (Code of Practice 2001).

White – The term 'White' is used to refer to British white children who are born in Britain, and whose parents are of British origin. The researcher is aware that there are many white children living in Britain who belong to different religions and culture (Cantle 2001). A more complex understanding of the term 'White' can be found in the main text.

2 Research context

The research is set in the context of establishing greater inclusion of children with learning difficulties in mainstream schools. Furthermore, by taking account of pupil views about their learning, the researcher aims to establish cultural differences and similarities in the way Pakistani and White pupils perceive themselves as learners, in particular their attitudes towards their learning and whether their perceptions vary according to their cultural group. The practitioner-researcher term is used since the researcher is also the practitioner who will conduct part of the research in his school (Robson 2002). The researcher works in a large (710 pupils) inner city primary school which is predominantly mono-cultural, a term used to describe a cultural group that has pupils who are of the same culture, (Cantle 2001).

The researcher has also carried out the research in a second primary school that is similar in many ways to the researcher's school in terms of social deprivation, social class, the catchment area, and the number of pupils on the SEN (special educational needs) register, although this second school is smaller (375 pupils on roll). The researcher chose this second school since there are a large majority of children who are of British white heritage.

Table 10: Characteristics of Inner and Outer City Primary School

	ICP	OCP
Number on roll	710	375
Number of the SEN register (%)	26	23
Number of children with 'free school meals' (%)	24	22
Attendance (%)	93	94

The researcher joined Inner City Primary in September 2004 as a deputy headteacher with responsibility for coordinating SEN and Inclusion. The researcher has worked in various fields of education over the last ten years, including working as a primary school teacher, an assistant educational psychologist and a consultant for PSHE and Citizenship. The researcher decided to carry out this research and in particular work with pupils and their parents from these two cultures since they provide a clear contrast as in one culture (Pakistani) children live between two cultures (East and West) directed to some extent by religion, tradition and extended families (Pakistani), whereas the 'white culture' children are living by traditions and customs that are associated with one culture. It is anticipated that the findings from this research will provide insights into how Pakistani and white children with learning difficulties experience learning, coupled with how significant others perceive children with learning difficulties.

3 Background to Bradford

In the 2002 Ofsted report on Education Bradford (Ofsted 2002), inspectors claimed that Education Bradford serves a large and ethnically diverse community which is significantly more disadvantaged than most of England. Minority ethnic communities comprise almost a fifth of the authority's population and this is reflected in the school population with a third of pupils having English as an additional language. Educational standards, while improving in line broadly with the national trend, remain below national averages in all key stages (Ofsted 2002).

The relative underachievement of some minority ethnic groups, particularly those of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black African Caribbean heritage, remains a serious concern. In his report, Ouseley (2001) argues that Bradford has struggled to redefine itself as a modern, 21st Century, competitive, multi-cultural area and has lost its spirit of community togetherness. Ouseley set out to identify in his report why the community in Bradford was fragmented along social, cultural, ethnic and religious lines. The report identified one of the reasons behind community fragmentation was the deterioration of relationship between different cultural communities. A study by Mezaros (2001) indicated that Bradford failed to establish itself in the developing post-industrial economy, unlike other towns and cities that have been able to re-establish themselves. Mezaros argued that several areas of Bradford suffer from high rates of unemployment, market failure, social deprivation,

inadequate housing, poor health and social exclusion. These areas are as likely to be predominantly Pakistani and White. This research investigates perceptions of pupils with learning difficulties, in particular their attitudes towards their learning and explores whether there are cultural differences and similarities between the pupils, their parents, teachers, teaching assistants and their peer group in two Bradford primary schools.

4 Researcher's personal values

The researcher believes that every child has an entitlement to a good quality education. Furthermore, he believes that education provides children with an opportunity to learn more about themselves and others and therefore they are able to make informed choices. The researcher believes that learning should be fun, challenging and inclusive. The school should provide pupils with a world-class service where a love for learning should be developed and fostered for all, regardless of ability. Schools should cater for individual pupil need and develop a child's strengths and build on areas for development. The school should provide pupils with a curriculum that equally focused on basic skills as well as personal development.

Schools should enable pupils to become independent learners who realize their full potential. Schools should develop high expectations and work in collaboration with pupils, parents and other services and agencies to best develop the child. Parents are a child's first teacher; parents should play a full and active role in helping their child to achieve. Schools should work with parents to inform them of their child's progress and what they as parents can do to support their child.

The researcher has worked in multicultural schools in three different LEAs (local education authorities). The researcher supports the argument that children should attend schools that are multicultural in nature; this will enable

children to learn from others and about other cultures. The researcher is not in favour of mono-cultural, single sex or faith schools such as 'an all Muslim boys' or girl's school'.

In the near future, the researcher is keen to work as a headteacher of a multicultural primary school,; beyond this he is intending to work for the LEA and work his way through to director of education.

5 Inner City Primary School (Context)

Inner City Primary is a very large (three-form entry) primary school, which has increased in size rapidly (710 pupils on roll). It is situated in the inner city area of Bradford.

The school serves a diverse community, with many pupils coming from socially and economically challenging circumstances. The local area is extremely socio-economically deprived. Most children are of Asian (Pakistani) heritage. However, there has been a recent influx of East European children from migrant workers' families. Many of these children are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language and have limited experiences of formal education. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average.

The school was inspected by OFSTED in May 2006 and they judged the school to be good.

Notes

The SENCo conducting the study is also the deputy head, a trainee Ofsted Inspector and an aspiring headteacher.

6 Outer City Primary School (Context)

Outer City Primary is a two-form entry school. The school serves a community with many pupils coming from socially and economically challenging circumstances. The local area is extremely socio-economically deprived. The school is larger than average, with 375 pupils on roll aged from three to eleven years. The vast majority of children are of white British background and the number claiming free school meals is well above average. The percentage with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average.

The school was inspected by OFSTED in October 2005 and they judged the school's effectiveness to be satisfactory.

Notes

The SENCo is also the deputy head who took retirement in July 2006.

7 Letter sent to the school informing them of the research

EdD Research

I work as a deputy head (and SENCo) at Inner City Primary School, Bradford. I joined the school in September 2004 with responsibility for inclusion.

I am in my second year of studying a doctorate (EdD) at the University of Huddersfield. My research will 'investigate cultural differences in special educational needs pupils' attitudes towards their own learning'. I intend to conduct part of the research in my school (inner city primary, predominantly Pakistani pupils) and part of the research in a second school (inner city primary, similar in size, catchment area, predominantly white pupils). In order to carry out the research I will need to interview five Year 6 SEN pupils who are currently at school action/school action plus, the parents of these pupils and two support staff (teaching assistants) that work with these pupils. Following the interviews, I will need to observe the pupils once in one lesson to explore social interaction and participation.

The aims of the research are to:

- Explore cultural differences in SEN pupils' perception and attitude towards their own learning in two inner city primary schools
- Examine the notion of self-concept and explore cultural differences between two groups
- Ascertain pupils' views on labels used by others to describe them and explore cultural differences
- Investigate parents and support staff expectations and views of SEN pupils
- Explore the problems faced by SEN pupils in their daily life and discuss cultural differences
- Explore pupil and parents understanding of the term 'special educational needs'

The following steps need to be followed in order for me to conduct the research:

- Meet with the headteacher and discuss my plan of work including setting a date to start (September 2005) and arranging a venue for the interviews to take place
- Work with a member of school staff for example the SENCo to identify the pupils
- Meet with the parents and show them the interview questions (which their children will be asked) and seek their consent
- Seek pupil consent
- Observe each pupil in one lesson
- Interview the pupils separately in their school
- Interview parents in their home (if this is regarded as appropriate)
- Interview support staff in school
- Seek clarification and share findings with relevant staff

Kind Regards,

8 Letter sent to parents informing them of the research

Inner City Primary School
Bradford
BD1 0AB

October 2005

Dear Parent,

EdD (Doctorate in Education) Research

I am writing with regards to seeking consent (permission) to interview you and your child about his/her special educational needs (SEN).

I am studying a higher-level degree (EdD) at the University of Huddersfield. My research will 'investigate cultural differences in special educational needs pupils' attitudes towards their own learning'. I intend to conduct part of the research in an inner city primary school that has predominantly Pakistani pupils and part of the research in an inner city primary school that has predominantly white pupils. In order to carry out the research, I will need to interview a total of five year 6 SEN pupils who are currently on the SEN register, the parents of these pupils and two support staff (teaching assistants) who work with these pupils. After interviewing the pupils, I will need to observe your child once in a lesson to explore levels of social interaction and participation.

The aims of the research are to:

- Explore cultural differences in SEN pupils' perception and attitude towards their own learning in two inner city primary schools
- Examine the notion of self-concept and explore cultural differences between two groups
- Ascertain pupils' views on labels used by others to describe them and explore cultural differences
- Investigate parents and support staff expectations and views of SEN pupils
- Explore the problems faced by SEN pupils in their daily life and discuss cultural differences
- Explore pupil and parents understanding of the term 'special educational needs'

If I am allowed to interview you and your child, the following steps need to be followed:

- Meet with you and discuss my plan of work including the benefits of the research and what will happen to the research findings
- Meet with your child and discuss the aims and purpose of the research
- Seek consent from your child
- Observe your child in a lesson
- Interview your child in his/her school
- Interview you at school
- Talk to you and your child about the research findings

If you would like further information about the research that I intend to conduct, please feel free to contact me at the above address, alternatively I can be contacted on 01234 567890.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards,

M Ali

Please return the reply slip below.

I am happy/not happy to take part in the research.

I give/do not give permission for my child to be take part in the research.

9 Introduction to all interviews

- Name of interviewer and organisation conducting research (EdD student at the University of Huddersfield)
- Inform pupils that a sample of ten Year 6 pupils from two primary schools in Bradford have agreed to take part in the research. Five pupils from each school will be interviewed. Give reasons for how and why these pupils have been selected for interview. Remind pupils that although their school and their parents agreed for the pupils to take part in the research, the pupils may withdraw at any point during the interview. Explain the term withdraw.

Conceptual analysis

Ensure the terms culture, self-concept and special educational needs are explained to pupils. Check pupil's understanding of these terms.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to investigate cultural differences in special educational needs pupils' attitudes towards their own learning. Emphasise the researcher is particularly interested in hearing about pupils' views on SEN and their learning experience. Inform pupils how the findings from this research will help practitioners (e.g. teachers, parents and pupils) to have a better understanding of SEN.

The response from all the pupils in all schools who are interviewed will be collated into a summary that will be shared with the two schools and the examiners at the University of Huddersfield.

Tape recording, note taking and confidentiality

Ask interviewee if the interview can be tape-recorded. Let the interviewee know that it is important for the interviewer to 'capture' their words and ideas, and using a tape recorder will allow this, (if a negative response is returned, seek alternative arrangements; inform interviewee who will listen to the tapes and how long will they be kept for). Ask the interviewee if it is possible to take down some notes while conducting the interview, so that a track of the interview can be kept as it progresses.

Switch on the tape recorder and test it together. Explain that the tape recorder can be controlled, switched on and off, by the interviewee.

Inform the interviewee that the interview will last for one hour. Check this is okay with the interviewee, (if not, seek alternative arrangements – negotiate a time).

Inform the interviewees that anything they say will not be identified or described in anyway that would reveal their identity. Ask the interviewee, 'are there any questions you would like to ask before the interview proceeds?'

Check that the interviewee is comfortable in the room and if he/she desires any changes to the seating arrangement.

Ensure interviewees are given the opportunity to ask questions at the end of the interview.

Proceed with the interview.

10 An example of a pupil interview schedule

(Questions in italics are possible probes.)

- Inform children the number and type of questions they need to answer.
- General questions – how are you feeling today? What have you been doing today?
- Ice breaker (mime game – **circle time activity**)
- Give children background information – who I am, discuss likes and dislikes to develop relationships.

Since this research is about finding out what you think about your learning, I would like to start off by reading to you a definition on SEN. After I have read this definition you may ask me some questions about this. Is that okay?

'Children have special educational needs if they have a learning (and/or behaviour) difficulty. A pupil who has SEN may find some or all parts of his or her learning difficult. The child may get extra help from his or her teacher or a support assistant'. He or she may be given work, which is easier than the rest of the class'

Would you like to ask me any questions about this definition? Do you think you have a SEN? Tell me more.

Start recording interview

1. I would like to start with some general questions about school and friendship. I would like to ask you about school.

What do you think of school?

*What do you like about school? Why? What don't you like about school? Why?
Do you have friends? Are friends important to you? Why?*

What makes you feel sad/happy in school?

*Do you like to be in a school with mainly all Pakistani/white/mix culture children – why?
How would you feel if you went to a mainly all white/Pakistani school? Do you see children from other cultures outside school?*

2. Let's talk about school – in particular about **the subjects you like the most/the least**.

Really good at /not good at school – what would it be?

Who tells you that you are good in this subject?

If your teacher had to choose one thing, what would it be? How about your friends? Your parents?

3. The following questions are about the **group you are in for literacy and numeracy.**

Do some children in class get extra help? Who helps them, why?

What do others in the class think when some children get extra help?

Do you get extra help? How do you feel? When do you get it? (all subjects/some). What extra help do you like (in or out of class)?

*Do you **know which group you are in**? How do you know? Do other children in your class know? How do you feel?*

*Do you think that you are in the **right group** or should you be in a different group?*

*Do you get any **help from home** with your reading/writing/numeracy/or other work? Who helps you?*

4. What things do you do when you are at home?

What do you do when you go home after school?

Does anyone ask you about your work/day at school (your mum/dad/carer)?

How do your parents know that you are doing well in school? Who tells them?

What do your parents think of school?

Where do you do your schoolwork?

Which language do you speak at home? Do your parents speak English? Which language do you like to speak? Who do you play with at home?

Do you go to mosque/church? Tell me more.

5. Tell me about your SEN

How many children do you think have SEN in a class of 30 pupils?

Do you think you have SEN? When did you first know that you had SEN? Who told you? How did you feel? Do you think you will always have SEN? Why do you think you have SEN? If you did not have SEN, would school be different?

Do you know what it is an individual education plan? Do you have an IEP? Do your parents know that you have an IEP?

Have you heard of or are aware of any of these words?

learning difficulty, learning disability, special educational needs, learning problems, special needs, disability, slow, spastic, stupid, not normal, handicapped, thick, dumb, something wrong with you, loser, idiot, fool, derr

Which word do you like? Which word would you use to describe yourself? Which word would your parent/teacher/support assistant choose to describe you? What do you parents/siblings/friends think of your SEN? What do they say?

6. The following questions are about the level you are working at for your SATs, your ambitions and your hopes and fears.

*What **level do you think you are working at?** Which level do you think you should be working at? What level will a child with learning difficulties get for at the end of year 6?*

Would you like to go to university? Who thinks that you will go to university – how do you know? What will you like to do when you grow up? Why? What do you think your parents want you to be? Have you always wanted to do that? Who will help you?

Do you think you are special? What do your parents think? What do other people think e.g. your friends, other children, and your teachers?

7. Sometimes children have difficulty/trouble in doing their work – does this happen to you?

A lot sometimes never

8. How much effort do you put into your learning?

A lot sometimes never

9. How clever do you think you are? What would your parents/support staff say?

Very clever middle not clever

10. How do you find school?

Mainly interesting somewhere in the middle mainly boring

11. What kind of things should parents do with their children at home?

12. How do you feel about the work that you do in school? End of term tests?

13. How would a child feel if he/she did not get a L4 in their SATs? What kind of children will not get a Level 4? Is it fair for all children to take tests? How do you feel when you get the marks?

14.How do you think SEN children should be taught?

15.Think of a clever child in your class, now describe this child. What kind of things can this child do?

16.Repeat with SEN child – describe.

17.Which words will you use to describe a clever? SEN child?

Always needs help

Always gets the right answer

Bad tempered
well together with others)

conformist (follows rules)

cooperative (works

Cruel generous

works hard successful

Funny kind

lazy mean

confident

Selfish intelligent

brainy clever

scared

Stupid caring

polite shy

listens well

Now tell me why did you say that?

18. Think of a child who has learning difficulties – how do you think this child feels? why? How would you feel? How do you think his teacher and parent feel?

19. If you were a class teacher whom would you give help to, SEN children or clever children? Why? Does this happen to you?

20. Which of the following jobs do you think a SEN child will do?

Doctor	teacher	window cleaner	builder	solicitor
Shop assistant	taxi driver	painter	car mechanic	dentist
Hairdresser	shop owner	nurse	plumber	
Other				

21. Who told you about your learning problems?

Have you talked to anyone about your learning problems?

How will your learning problems affect you when you grow older?

Is your learning problem permanent or temporary? When you grow up, do you think that your learning problems will go away?

Can you tell me what learning problems mean in your own words?

Do you think chn with learning difficulties have friends? Are they liked by others?

Do you think chn with learning difficulties are happy in school? Home?

Do parents of chn with learning difficulties help them to do better in school?

Why do you think chn with learning difficulties have got problems with their learning?

Do you think chn with learning difficulties are like by their parents? Teachers?

Finish interview recording

21. What are you going to do for the rest of the day now?

22. Closing questions

Summarise some of the things the interviewee has shared with you. Revisit some of the questions.

'We're at the end of the interview now. Is there anything you would like to ask me or tell me?'

If possible, we may be going back to people that have been interviewed to ask them a few more questions. Would you be willing to talk with me again, only for a shorter period of time?

Thank the interviewee, emphasise the help they have provided, and reinforce issues around confidentiality, anonymity and ethics – explain these terms.

11 An example of a parent interview schedule

Proceed with the interview (let the parent know number of question, type of questions, inform the parents few minutes before the interview closes how many questions are there left).

1. **Thank the parent for agreeing to take part in the interview.** Start the interview with some general questions - what have you been doing today? How long have you lived in Bradford? Do you like it? Do you think you would move out of Bradford? Why? Is there a strong sense of community in Bradford since the riots? Do you work – what?
2. Have you heard of the term 'special educational needs'? Do you know what it is? Is there any family history on SEN – has anyone in the family got SEN? Since when? For how long?
3. What does your child think of school?
4. Does your child have any friends – who does he/she mainly play with inside/outside school? (Children from the same culture). Why?
5. When did you first discover that your child has SEN? How did you feel? How do you/he feel now? Temporary/permanent? Which group are more prone to SEN? (Pakistani or white)
6. Can you tell me what learning problems mean in your own words?
7. Do SEN children face difficulties? What are they? Are they different to white pupils?
8. How do you think your child is doing at school? What feelings does your child have about school? Positive/negative? Why do you think this? What is your child's favourite subject? Does your child talk about school – what does he/she say?
- 8a. Think of a child who has learning difficulties – how do you think this child feels? why? How would you feel? How do you think his teacher and parent feel? Are they liked by their teacher?

8b. Which words would you use to describe a clever? SEN child?

Always needs help

Always gets the right answer

Bad tempered

conformist (follows rules)

cooperative (works well together with others)

Cruel

generous

works hard

successful

Funny

kind

lazy

mean

Confident

Selfish

intelligent

brainy

clever

scared

Stupid

caring

polite

shy

listens well

Now tell me why did you say that?

8c Which of the following jobs do you think a SEN child will do?

Doctor

teacher

window cleaner

builder

Solicitor

Dentist

Shop assistant

taxi driver

painter

car mechanic

Hairdresser

shop owner

nurse

plumber

Other

9. Why do you think your child is SEN? What do other people in the community/family say? What do you do to help him or her? How often? Do you know what an IEP (individual education plan) is? Have you seen one?

10. What do you think your child will do when he or she is old? How do you know? Do you think he or she will get there? University?

11. Do you spend time doing things with your child? What kind of things? How often? What does your child do in an evening?

12. Which group is your child in for learning (above average, average or below average?) how do you know? How do you feel? Do you think your child will move to a different group? Is your child in the right group?

13. What do you think your child will get for his or her SATs? How do you know? Do you think your child will catch up?

14. How do you think SEN children should be taught? In a special school? A SEN group? Or in a mixed ability class? Why?

15. How do you feel that your child is in a school with predominantly Pakistani/white children? Is this good? Why? Which school will your child go to next? How do you think he or she will cope?

16. Have you heard of or are aware of any of these labels?

Learning difficulty, learning disability, special educational needs, learning problems, special needs, disability, slow, spastic, stupid, not normal, handicapped, thick, dumb, something wrong with you, loser, idiot, fool, durr

Which word do you like? Which word would you use to refer to your child? Which label is positive/neutral/negative?

17. How are children with SEN treated in class by the teacher? Other pupils? Parents?

18b. Sometimes children have difficulty/trouble in doing their work – does this happen to your child? How much do you cheer you on/encourage your child not to give up trying?

A lot sometimes a little not at all

19. Is it important for your child to do well at school? Why? How would your child feel if he/she did/did not do well at school? How would you feel?

24. For the following statements choose: agree, disagree or don't know

- My child sees him/herself as slow and behind in learning
- The problem is with the child and not the school
- My child gets picked on by other children because he/she has SEN

Expand/probe of some of the bullet points for clarification and further information.

Closing questions

Summarise some of the things the interviewee has shared with you. Revisit some of the questions.

'We're at the end of the interview now. Is there anything you would like to ask me or tell me?'

If possible, we may be going back to people that have been interviewed to ask them a few more questions. Would you be willing to talk with me again, only for a shorter period of time?

Thank the interviewee, emphasise the help they have provided, and reinforce issues around confidentiality, anonymity and ethics – explain these terms.

12 An example of a school staff interview schedule

1. Thank the staff for agreeing to take part in the interview. Start the interview with some general questions - what have you been doing today?
2. Describe key characteristics of a child who has learning/behavioural difficulties.
3. What progress do SEN pupils make compared to other chn?
4. What do you think 'special educational needs' means?
5. What feelings do SEN pupils have about school? Positive/negative? Why do you think this? Do you think SEN pupil like school – how do you know? What is your favourite subject? What in your view are SEN pupils really good at when at school? Do you think SEN pupils are confident in school – tell me more?
6. Why do you think children have SEN? What do other people e.g. the teacher and other children say? Do you think SEN children's' needs are met in school? How do you know?
7. What do you think SEN children will do when they are old? How do you know? Do you think SEN children will go to college? University? How do you think your child will do when he/she is in year 9? Year 11? At age of 20?
8. Do SEN children know that you work with him/her? How does he/she feel? Does he/she like the support? How do others respond to this support? What if the support was taken, how would your child feel?
9. Which group are SEN children in for learning (above average, average or below average?) how do you know? How do you feel? Do you think SEN children will move to a different group? When? Why? Is your child in the right group?
10. What do you think SEN children will get for their SATs? How do you know? Do you think the children will catch up?
11. How much contact do you have with parents?
12. How do you think SEN children should be taught? In a special school? A SEN group? Or in a mixed ability class? Why?
13. Do you think SEN Chn will have SEN in secondary school? After secondary school?
14. How do you think SEN Chn sees self? (academically, socially, personally) What do you/the class teacher and others think?
15. Do SEN chn enjoy learning? What do they like best?
16. What if any are some of the difficulties/pressures SEN children face everyday?
17. Have you heard of or are aware of any of these labels? (has help, learning difficulty, learning disability, special educational needs, special needs, disability, slow, spastic, stupid, spas, abnormal, retarded, backward, handicapped, thick, no hoper, dumb, something wrong with the child). Which label do you like? Which label would you use to refer to SEN chn? Which label would SEN chn choose to describe self? Which label is positive/neutral/negative?
18. Are SEN chn treated differently to other children because of SEN? How do you know?
19. What more could schools do to support SEN children?

20. What do you do when SEN chn are unable to do something straight away? (Provide help straight away, wait a while and let the child work out the problem) why?
21. What will help SEN chn to make greater progress?
22. In your opinion, are SEN chn listened to? Valued? Involved in their learning? How do you know? How do you know?
23. How would you describe fun learning? To what extent does SEN chn experience this? Why?
24. Do you sit/always work with a particular child? Is this good?
25. SEN chn – structure, routine, sameness, compulsive?
26. SEN chn feel regarding their ability to learn and take part in lesson?
27. SEN chn keen and eager to learn?

27. Which words would you use to describe a clever? SEN child?

Always needs help		Always gets the right answer		
Bad tempered well together with others)		conformist (follows rules)		cooperative (works
Cruel	generous	works hard	successful	
Funny	kind	lazy	mean	confident
Selfish	intelligent	brainy	clever	scared
Stupid	caring	polite	shy	listens well

Now tell me why did you say that?

28. Which of the following jobs do you think a SEN child will do?

Doctor	teacher	window cleaner	builder
Solicitor			
Shop assistant	taxi driver	painter	car mechanic
Hairdresser	shop owner	nurse	plumber
Dentist			
Other			

29. Think of a child who has learning difficulties – how do you think this child feels? why? How would you feel? How do you think his teacher and parent feel? Are they liked by their teacher?

Closing questions

Summarise some of the things the interviewee has shared with you. Revisit some of the questions.

'We're at the end of the interview now. Is there anything you would like to ask me or tell me?'

If possible, we may be going back to people that have been interviewed to ask them a few more questions. Would you be willing to talk with me again, only for a shorter period of time?

Thank the interviewee, emphasise the help they have provided, and reinforce issues around confidentiality, anonymity and ethics – explain these terms.

13 An example of a focus group interview schedule

Since this research is about finding out what you think about your learning, I would like to start off by reading to you a definition on SEN. After I have read this definition you may ask me some questions about this. Is that okay?

'Children have special educational needs if they have a learning (and/or behaviour) difficulty. A pupil who has SEN may find some or all parts of his or her learning difficult. The child may get extra help from his or her teacher or a support assistant'. He or she may be given work, which is easier than the rest of the class'

Would you like to ask me any questions about this definition? Do you think you have a SEN? Tell me more.

- SEN chn like school? Feelings re. learning?
- Subjects like, excel in?
- Subjects they find difficult?
- Friends?
- Extra help? Why? Others think? Feelings?
- Group?
- Why SEN?
- Help at home?
- Have you heard of or are aware of any of these words?

learning difficulty, learning disability, special educational needs, learning problems, special needs, disability, slow, spastic, stupid, not normal, handicapped, thick, dumb, something wrong with you, loser, idiot, fool, derr

Which word do you like? Which word would you use to describe SEN? Why?

- Level?
- University?
- Always SEN?
- Special (CTs view, preference)
- Difficulty in doing work (a lot – little)
- Effort put into work?
- Very clever to not clever?
- Who is to blame for SEN?
- How taught?
- Characteristics of a clever-SEN child?
- Which words will you use to describe a clever? SEN child?

Always needs help

Always gets the right answer

Bad tempered
well together with others)

conformist (follows rules)

cooperative (works

Cruel

generous

works hard

successful

Funny	kind	lazy	mean	confident
Selfish	intelligent	brainy	clever	scared
Stupid	caring	polite	shy	listens well

OTHER

Now tell me why did you say that?

- Think of a child who has learning difficulties – how do you think this child feels? Why? How would you feel? How do you think his teacher and parent feel?
- If you were a class teacher whom would you give help to, SEN children or clever children? Why? Does this happen to you?
- Which of the following jobs do you think a SEN child will do?

Doctor teacher window cleaner builder solicitor

Shop assistant taxi driver painter car mechanic dentist

Hairdresser shop owner nurse plumber

Other

- Learning problem permanent or temporary?
- Can you tell me what learning problems mean in your own words?
- Do you think chn with learning difficulties have friends? Are they liked by others?
- Do you think chn with learning difficulties are happy in school? Home?
- Why do you think chn with learning difficulties have got problems with their learning?
- Low expectations?
- Value school, see school as important?
- Good to have SEN chn in class?
- Teachers enjoy teaching SEN or clever chn?
- **Self-concept scale questions**

14 Observation schedule

The researcher used the following statements to gather information about children he observed.

1. Context of lesson
2. Pupil seating
3. Role of the teacher including expectations and opportunities for independent learning
4. Role of support staff and resources to promote learning opportunities
5. Level of participation, attention, enthusiasm and engagement from targeted children in the lesson
6. Level of encouragement from the teacher to involve targeted children in the lesson
7. Responses from other children towards targeted children (and relationships)
8. Understanding and outcome of pupil task (including evidence of progress)
9. Level of enjoyment and challenge (including differentiation)
10. Pupil behaviour and attitude including persevering at task
11. Praise from the teacher and teaching assistant
12. Pupil targets

Protocols taken by the researcher during observation:

- Sit at the back of the classroom
- Allow the children to start the activity before discussing learning with children
- Briefly look at other children's work so that it is not obvious to these who the researcher is observing
- Take notes during (where appropriate) and after the observation
- Remain professional when speaking to the children about their learning

15 Completed Self-image Profiles (Butler 2001)

Not At All		Very Much						
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Kind		A	FS	N			
2	Happy				FA	N		S
3	Friendly	A	F		S			N
4	Funny	N	FA		S			
5	Helpful		A	F		S		N
6	Hardworking			A	S			FN
7	Lively		FA	N	S			
8	Honest	A		S	N			F
9	Like sport	F	S					NA
10	Brainy	F	NAS					
11	Sensitive	F		NS				A
12	Like the way I look	F		NS				A
13	Feel different from others			A		S	N	F
14	Lazy	FA	N				S	
15	Picked on	FA	N				S	
16	Moody	F	A		S		N	
17	Mess about in class		S					FNA
18	Shy	F				N		SA
19	Always in trouble		S				N	FA
20	Cheeky		FA	S				N
21	Teases others		SA				N	F
22	Easily upset	F		S		A	N	
23	Bossy	F			SA			N
24	Bad tempered	S			F			SA
25	Get bored easily							FNAS

F Fahid
 N Nadia
 A Ali
 S Sabrina

Not At All		Very Much						
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Kind				Sa Br	Bi	Si	
2	Happy				Si	Sa	Bi	Br
3	Friendly					Br Si	Sa	Bi
4	Funny	Bi		Br		Sa		Si
5	Helpful						Br Si	Sa Bi
6	Hardworking				Bi	Sa		Br Si
7	Lively				Sa Br Si	Bi		
8	Honest				Si		Br	Bi Sa
9	Like sport			Sa		Si	Bi	Br
10	Brainy	Bi	Sa Br			Si		
11	Sensitive					Sa	Br Si	Bi
12	Like the way I look	Sa						Bi Br Si
13	Feel different from others	Sa	Bi			Br Si		
14	Lazy	Sa	Br			Si	Bi	
15	Picked on	Bi Br			Sa	Si		
16	Moody	Sa	Bi		Br Si			
17	Mess about in class		Si		Bi	Sa Br		
18	Shy				Bi Br		Sa	Si
19	Always in trouble				Br Sa Si			Bi
20	Cheeky	Bi Si	Sa	Br				
21	Teases others	Sa Si		Bi	Br			
22	Easily upset	Bi			Sa			Br Si
23	Bossy	Sa Br	Bi		Si			
24	Bad tempered	Sa	Bi		Si			Br
25	Get bored easily	Bi	Br			Sa		Si

Be Brook
 Si Simon
 Bi Billy
 Sa Sarah

16 Character names and profiles

(names have been changed for anonymity)

Inner City Primary

Child	Parent	Teacher	Teaching assistant
Fahid	Freeda	Rabia	Jenny
Ali	Abid	Rabia	Jenny
Sabrina	Sohail	Rabia	Jenny
Neelam	-	Rabia	Jenny

Outer City Primary

Child	Parent	Teacher	Teaching assistant
Billy	Bella	Roger	Laura
Simon	Samantha	Roger	Laura
Sarah	-	Roger	Laura
Brook	Bianca	Roger	Laura

Character Profiles

Inner City Primary

Name	Fahid
Age	11
Year SEN identified	2003
SAT result	English 2 Maths 2 Science 3
Ambition	Police Officer
Favourite subject	Science
School preference	All Pakistani
English spoken by Mum/Dad	Mum

Name	Ali
Age	11
Year SEN identified	2003
SAT Level	English 2 Maths 2 Science 4
Ambition	Police Officer
Favourite subject	Science
School preference	All Pakistani
English spoken by Mum/Dad	Both

Name	Sabrina
Age	11
Year SEN identified	2004
SAT result	English 3 Maths 3 Science 4
Ambition	Teacher
Favourite subject	Maths
School preference	Mix
English spoken by Mum/Dad	None

Name	Neelam
Age	11
Year SEN identified	2003
SAT result	English 3 Maths 3 Science 3
Ambition	Work in an office
Favourite subject	Science and Maths
School preference	Mix
English spoken by Mum/Dad	Mum

Outer City Primary

Name	Billy
Age	11
Year SEN identified	1999
SAT result	English B* Maths B Science 3
Ambition	Police Officer/Vet
Favourite subject	Maths
School preference	Mix
English spoken by Mum/Dad	Both

Name	Simon
Age	11
Year SEN identified	2000
SAT result	English B Maths 3 Science 3
Ambition	Roofer
Favourite subject	Maths
School preference	All White
English spoken by Mum/Dad	Both

Name	Sarah
Age	11
Year SEN identified	2000
SAT result	English N** Maths B Science 3
Ambition	Hairdresser
Favourite subject	Science
School preference	Mix
English spoken by Mum/Dad	Both

Name	Brook
Age	11
Year SEN identified	2000
SAT result	English B Maths B Science 3
Ambition	Hairdresser
Favourite subject	Art
School preference	All White
English spoken by Mum/Dad	Both

*B Below Level 3

**N Not achieved a national curriculum level

Inner City Primary

Name	Rabia
Experience in teaching/supporting	Eight years
Responsibilities	Upper Key Stage 2 manager
Ambition	Headteacher

Inner City Primary

Name	Jenny
Experience in teaching/supporting	Seven years
Responsibilities	Provides support for a class and cover supervision
Ambition	Teacher

Outer City Primary

Name	Roger
Experience in teaching/supporting	35 years
Responsibilities	Deputy Head/SENCo
Ambition	Retiring Summer 2006

Outer City Primary

Name	Laura
Experience in teaching/supporting	Ten years
Responsibilities	Supporting a group of children with learning difficulties
Ambition	Teaching assistant/learning mentor