Therapeutic Storywriting: BPRS Action Research Project Report

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Names of children in the case studies have been changed. I am grateful to parents for permission to use their children's work in this research paper.

Research Question

In what ways can storywriting be used therapeutically to develop both emotional and academic literacy with children on the special educational needs register due to emotional and behavioural difficulties?

Abstract

The current education policy is one of increased inclusion of Special Educational Needs (SEN) children in mainstream schools, including those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. These children are on the SEN register because their emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBDs) are preventing them accessing the curriculum. According to the Croll & Moses analysis (1985p22), two-fifths of children on the SEN register have emotional and behavioural difficulties while the Warnock report (1978) stated that 20% of all children have SENs. Current mainstream provision for these children generally includes on-site educational special needs teaching, behaviour support from a pupil referral unit external to the school and a small amount of off-site therapeutic counselling provided by the health authority. This paper looks at the possibility of supporting the child's emotional development in the context of teaching english literacy. By using story writing as the context for working therapeutically with children with EBDs it may be possible to integrate emotional and academic support in the mainstream school. In this paper I have drawn on psychotherapeutic concepts in order to describe the emotional development of the child as evidenced in relationships at school and home as well as through the metaphor of their story writing. The work described and evaluated in the three pupil profiles is set within a mainstream junior school where I work as the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) and has been possible to pursue because of my additional training as a counsellor. While this is obviously a particular case I will also discuss implications for teacher training that could make such an integrative approach more widely available. This integrated approach is referred to as educational counselling in this paper. The research indicates that by encouraging storywriting

which engages unconscious aspects of the self and which is expressed through the story metaphor, the children's motivation to write may be increased. It also indicates that this may, in turn, lead to an improvement in academic literacy skills and improved self-esteem in the school environment.

Contents

A. Introduction to the Topic

This paper emerges and is a natural progression from the previous three topics explored within my research. These examined, firstly, the link between cognitive and emotional development; secondly, the development of the self-concept; thirdly the play therapy provision for children with EBDs both in the specialist clinic setting and within an inclusive primary school. My research highlighted the scarcity of therapeutic support for primary age children, as well as the split that can easily develop between health and education departments in working with these children. In the conclusion of my writing on the last topic I stated that,

> *"According to the Code of Conduct for SEN any referral for special educational needs is made because the child is not progressing with their learning due to EBDs. Any therapeutic work will therefore need to be evaluated on whether this has helped the child progress socially, personally and academically as a result."*

In this paper I will integrate the themes developed in these other writings and consider whether it is possible to address both the emotional and cognitive needs of children with EBDs within the everyday context of the teaching of literacy. I would also like to consider whether by holding such a bi-focal picture, i.e. the emotional and academic stage of development of the child, it may even be possible to accelerate cognitive learning.

While emotional and behavioural difficulties are mostly considered as a unit, as the special educational needs advisory sub-committee (NAGSEN 1998) state many behavioural programmes have been put in place but there has been very little to address the specific emotional needs of these children. Therapeutic storywriting is an attempt to offer what the NAGSEN report highlighted as the need to address the 'E' in 'EBD' and not just the 'B'.

The term emotional literacy, included in my title, has recently become widely used particularly in the United States where Goleman has been influential in introducing an emotional literacy curriculum into some schools (www.feel.org/articles/goleman). The National Emotional Literacy Interest Group defines emotional literacy as *"the ability to recognise, handle and appropriately express emotions"* (www.nelig.com). FEEL (Forum for Emotional Literacy) similarly defines it as "*The ability to recognize, understand and appropriately express our emotions" (www.feel.org/literacy).* Through the process of bringing into consciousness by identifying and naming emotions, which may previously have been unconscious, the individual gains both greater understanding of themselves and an increased possibility of choice in the way that they may react in the future This can in turn lead to an increased sense of self as will be explored later in the section on psychosynthesis theory.

I have chosen to focus specifically on the process of story writing. When I began my teaching career in a special school for boys with EBDs I remember being struck by how much their stories said about themselves. With my later training in counselling and psychotherapy I gained a deeper understanding of the potential therapeutic effect of encouraging children to express themselves through their stories. Often these are children whose life 'story' has been a painful and complicated one, which they have felt powerless to affect. By playing with different characters, scenes and plots of which they are the creators, writing seems to provide a way of exploring who they are and what they feel within the protected world of the imaginary.

As a teacher I have also observed how often children with emotional difficulties, who generally find it hard to stay on task in the classroom, can suddenly become completely focused and motivated when storywriting. Stories are important for all of us but anyone who has told stories to children and witnessed their rapt attention knows that stories hold a special 'magic' for children. This paper will explore three main issues. The first is the nature of story, its role in developing emotional literacy and how this relates to self-identity. The second is how, by working with story in a therapeutic context, children may respond with increased motivation to express themselves through writing and hence raise their achievement in literacy. The third point to be explored is the conditions that are necessary to facilitate therapeutic storywriting within a mainstream junior school. .

B. Critical Literature Review

i. THE NATURE OF STORY

a) What is a story?

Cattanach (1997) in *Children's Stories in Play Therapy* defines a story as,

> *"A sequence of events and these events involve people in places. The plot develops when something happens which requires actions from the characters in the story. A story has a sequence because all the events happen over time. A story has characters who are experiencing the events and the plight into which they have fallen. Their plight may be the consequence of the events or the function of their character or a combination of both." (p23)*

A story, as described in the literacy strategy, is a sequence of events with a beginning, middle and an end. It also has the three components: setting, conflict and resolution. The plot develops when something happens in the story which requires actions from the characters in the story. The response of the characters in resolving the dilemma or twist in the story brings the story to its conclusion.

The philosopher Ricoeur, who has written extensively on the significance of metaphor in story, puts forward what he calls a 'hermaneutic' perspective on story. His definition is similar to Cattanach's but he also says that by story, *" we try to gain by means of imaginative variation of our ego a narrative understanding of ourselves"* (1991 p.437) He considers the purpose of a story to be based not just in the external representation of the content and structure of story but also in the lived personal experience of both composition and reading of a story. He says (1991) that the purpose of a story is threefold: *"a mediation between man and the world, between man and man, between man and himself." (p.431).* The first mediation he calls reference i.e. to the events of the world, the second communication with the audience and the third self-understanding.

b) A story or a narrative?

Is there a difference in what is meant by the terms story and narrative? Cattanach (1997) considers the major distinction to be that,

> *"A story is communicated intentionally, but a narrative can be embedded in a conversation or a communication between people and is not experienced as a story by the speakers and listeners" (p.29)*

A narrative may, but not necessarily, tell a story. In storytelling or storywriting events are set in a structure with a beginning, middle and an end. As most writers whom I will cite in this piece of work, apart from Cattanach, actually use the terms story and narrative interchangeably, I will do so also, although I would like to make clear that it is structured storywriting to which I am referring.

c) Story writing as a progression from play

Winnicott (1971) considered creative cultural expression activities, such as storywriting, to be a natural progression from the play of the young child. Both involve the *"perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated."* (p60). There is clearly a common impulse between the spontaneous role-play of the young child and the junior child's story writing where role-play is structured within the discipline of writing. In facilitating children's storywriting this narrative function is given a new more formalised structure and has the possibility of becoming integrated within the mainstream educational curriculum.

d) The power of story

Why is it that stories - which are after all made up and fanciful can hold our attention and especially so in the case of children? In our modern scientific and technological society, it is still famous actors, as they convince us to suspend our belief in the everyday, who are rewarded with money and status. Watching the absorption of young children as they listen to a story or their complete involvement in writing their

own stories, it is hard not to feel that some 'magic' is at work. My research interest is a result of personal experience of working with particular children who find it generally difficult to stay on task in the classroom yet have become completely engaged and motivated to express themselves through their stories. What is it that attracts them and motivates them in this activity? What is the driving force behind this form of expression? We can quantitatively measure spelling and grammar, and report or persuasive writing but how do we assess the magic and the relevance to a child's psyche of the story they have written?

Hunt (1998) in her book *The Self on the Page* titles the first chapter *'Writing with the Voice of the Child'*. In this she explores the potential for self-development in adults by identifying with the 'inner child' in order to free the process of creative writing. The case studies she describes point to the power of working in this way. This paper attempts to look at the potential for developing a stronger sense of self through the process of creative writing in a therapeutically supportive environment with the actual child.

As will be explored when discussing the psychosynthesis model, a sense of self is intimately connected with awareness of emotions. In working with children on the SEN register due to EBDs, I consider one of my tasks to be to develop their capacity to identify and be aware of different emotional states. It is hoped that through this increased self-knowledge the children develop a stronger identity and the confidence to engage with the learning tasks set in the classroom.

e) Narrative as a specific mode of thought

Bruner (1986) contrasts the logico-scientific and the "narrative" modes of thought. He says,

> *"There are two modes of cognitive functioning, two modes of thought, each providing distinctive ways of ordering experience, of constructing reality… A good story and a well-formed argument are different natural kinds. Both can be used as means for convincing another. Yet what they convince of is fundamentally different: arguments convince one of their*

truth, stories of their lifelikeness. The one verifies by eventual appeal to procedures for establishing formal and empirical truth. The other establishes not truth but verisimilitude."(p11)

The psychologist Kopp (1971) suggests three categories - the rational, empirical and metaphorical -to divide the way human beings learn about things. He considered that metaphor, which is an important tool in narrative, has the power to expand and even supersede the rational and empirical processes. He says,

"Understanding the world metaphorically means we depend on an intuitive grasp of situations, in which we are open to the symbolic dimensions of experience, open to the multiple meanings that may all co-exist, giving extra shades of meaning to each other." (p 17)

ii. THE THERAPEUTIC USE OF STORY

a) A psychodynamic view of story metaphor

In the Freudian view of the psyche, the unconscious is a powerful determinant of behaviour. Freud developed his ideas on the workings of the dynamic unconscious in the context of dreams, his *'royal road to the unconscious',* and considered the symbols and narratives unfolded therein to be the working through of repressed emotions. This process, he believed, could be supported by the analysis of the dream content in the therapeutic setting. While Freud did not use creative writing as a vehicle for working with clients on the unconscious, a paper that he wrote late in his life does refer to his curiosity in this area. He begins his paper *Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming* (1959) by wondering,

"from what sources that strange being , the creative writer, draws his material, and how he manages to make such an impression on us with it and to arouse in us emotions of which, perhaps, we had not even thought ourselves capable" (p. 143)

Jung who initially worked with Freud went on to do a wealth of research in the area of archetypal mythical images found in both the personal and collective unconscious. He showed (1964) how many of these images are embedded in the stories of particular cultures. In his autobiography (1973) he also talks about a technique he explored called conscious dreaming whereby it is possible to dip into the unconscious while awake, thereby increasing the accessibility of the dream images and narratives. This technique of conscious dreaming may also be called visualisation or guided imagery when led by another. It involves sitting still with the eyes closed and using the imagination to work with different images. These may be images from past dreams, which are then developed, or images suggested by a therapist because of their relevance to the person's psychological state. Oaklander (1978) writes extensively of her application of this technique to her work with children in *Windows to Our Children*. The technique is also used in psychosynthesis therapy which is discussed in detail below. I have often found this a useful way to help children access their inner worlds prior to writing and there is a brief example of this way of working in my third pupil profile.

b) Bettelheim

However, it seems to me that it is Bettelheim who gives in *The Uses of Enchantment (1997)*, the most persuasive account of how the significance of stories is intimately connected with the unconscious process in children. While this work is mainly concerned with the traditional stories told to children, it illustrates the use of stories as a medium for the workings of the unconscious. In his work with severely emotionally disturbed children he saw his main task as that of restoring meaning to their lives. He says,

> *"Regarding this task, nothing is more important than the impact of parents and others who take care of the child; second in importance is our cultural heritage… When children are young, it is literature that carries such information best." (p.4)*

He considers that the search for meaning and purpose can only happen by their becoming more aware of unconscious processes. This is done, he says,

> *" not through rational comprehension of the nature and content of his unconscious, but by becoming familiar with it through spinning out daydreams- ruminating, rearranging, and fantasising about suitable story elements in response to unconscious pressures." (p7)*

This psychodynamic view, which developed from Freud's model, considers that if the contents of the unconscious are repressed and denied entrance into conscious awareness, then eventually the power of these repressed elements will overwhelm the conscious mind and materialise as involuntary emotional outbursts over which there is no conscious control- often the behaviour of children on the SEN register for EBDs resembles this. Bettelheim *(ibid.)* considers that,

> *"When unconscious material is to some degree permitted to come to awareness and worked through in imagination, its potential for causing harm- to ourselves or others- is much reduced; some of its forces can then be made to serve positive purposes." (p7)*

One of the key points in working psychodynamically which was discussed at length in my previous paper on play therapy is whether the therapist makes a direct interpretation or whether interpretation if made at all is confined to the metaphor. Bettelheim talks above about unconscious material being *"worked through in imagination."* As Bruner (1986) above also suggests, Bettelheim considers the imaginary seems to have an intelligence of its own. This implies that direct interpretation by a 'wise therapist' would be inappropriate but rather leads to the view that the imagination has a wisdom in itself which when given the right conditions has an internal healing force. But how can we understand the process by which the imaginary can itself provide psychological healing? This seems to be a crucial point unanswered by even those eminent child psychotherapists Klein, Anna Freud and Axline as mentioned in my last project. It seems to me that it is the French philosopher, Ricoeur, in writing about the role of the imaginary who comes closest to providing some insight into this process.

c) Story writing as a structure for the unconscious imaginary

Ricoeur (1991) considers that stories are not just recounted but *'lived in the mode of the imaginary'*. He distinguishes between the unconscious imaginary where untold stories reside and what he calls second-order narrative thinking where the creative imagination is structured through the formation of a specific narrative. He considers that this structuring also leads to a reconfiguring of the self:

> *"Narrating is a secondary process grafted on our 'being entangled in stories'. Recounting, following, understanding stories is more than simply the continuation of these unspoken stories… it follows that fiction is an irreducible dimension of self-understanding" (p.435)*

I think this is an important point which Ricoeur touches on here. He considers that we each have a pool of unconscious images and stories *'not yet told'* (p435) which can be structured through the process of story writing. He addresses the paradox of how therapeutic benefit can ensue from the process of engaging with unconscious metaphors through storywriting without direct interpretation. What Ricoeur is saying is that the very act of structuring the unconscious through narrative leads to a greater availability of feeling and expression albeit in the metaphor. Thus the act of writing or sharing unconscious images provides a quantum leap of awareness and allows some sort of integration within the psyche of these unconscious elements, independently of whether they have been interpreted or not. Like Bruner, Ricoeur calls this the narrative intelligence at work which seeks *"resolution of conflict*" and to "*organize (events) into an intelligible whole." (p426)*

d) Story as a link between the exceptional and the ordinary

Bruner (1990) considers that one main function of a story is to forge a link between the exceptional and the ordinary. He states that stories get their meaning by making comprehensible, deviations from the norm. He also considers story to be rooted in cultural experience. As a successful culture can be considered to be one that can accommodate differences, the narrative function then becomes a medium for renegotiating communal meaning. Cattanach (1997) relates this point of Bruner's to her work with troubled children.

"This means that stories and narratives are very important sources for the renegotiation of meaning for children who have experienced problematic events or difficult family circumstances. It is a way to place events and characters into a cultural perspective." (p25)

iii. THE THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP

a) Creating the 'potential space' for writing

As mentioned above storywriting can be considered as a progression from play. For the writing process to be both creative and therapeutic, it is useful, then, to remember the conditions that enable young children to play creatively. According to Winnicott (1971) this is when the primary caregiver is able to provide a 'potential space' where the child can feel secure enough to play. This potential space is located between the individual and the environment but

"failure of dependability (of the environment)… means to the child loss of the play area, and loss of meaningful symbol."(p120)

When this environment ceases to be dependable there is, he says,

" a danger that this potential space may become filled with what is injected into it by someone other than the baby. It seems that whatever is in this space that comes from someone else is persecutory material, and the baby has no means of rejecting it." (p121)

What might this mean translated for an older child but who is functioning at the younger emotional level? In the context of a literacy class, I would suggest that it means that the child needs to feel secure in the learning group both with respect to the teacher and his peers. More than this they need to feel engaged with the writing task in a meaningful way which may not necessarily be conscious. They also need to feel secure that the teacher is aware of their particular needs and confident that they can explore and express their own ideas in their stories without fear of shame or failure in the eyes of the other children or the teacher.

Winnicott also stresses the importance of what he calls 'holding' where the caregiver keeps the child in mind even when not in direct communication. Hunt in her work on personal development through creative writing considers that even with adults, the teacher must,

> *" be aware of the importance of creating in the classroom a 'holding environment' to use Winnicott's term, within which participants can feel safe enough to engage more closely with their inner worlds" (p33)*

This concept of 'holding' is one to which I will refer to in the discussion of my pupil profiles.

b) Task as affect attunement

Stern (1985) talks about the infant's ability to regulate the amount of stimulus received by the mother by head turning or gaze aversion. In this way the baby is not overwhelmed by the mother's attentions. It is possible to consider an educational task as providing the means by which the intensity of intimacy can be moderated between a teacher/therapist and a child. This can be particularly helpful in working with primary age children where face to face talk based counselling may easily feel overwhelming. By communicating feelings through the metaphor of a story the child has the possibility to express anxieties without making themselves too vulnerable.

c) Containment of anxiety in order for thinking to take place

Bion (1993) puts forward a theory of thinking, which states that anxiety needs to be contained if thinking is to take place. He considers thinking to be an apparatus that developed to cope with the primary development of thoughts. His theory differs from other theories of thought which consider that thoughts are a product of thinking. Rather he says, *"thinking is a development forced on the psyche by the pressure of thoughts and not the other way round." (p110).* He classifies 'thoughts' according to the nature of their developmental history as,

> *"pre-conceptions, conceptions or thoughts and finally concepts; concepts are named and therefore fixed conceptions or thoughts. The conception is initiated by the conjunction of a pre-conception with a realisation."(p111)*

When a preconception is met with a negative realisation e.g. a toddler wants a toy that is just out of reach, there is a frustration. The ability to think, he suggests, develops as a means to

> *"bridge the gulf of frustration between the moment when a want is felt and the moment when action appropriate to satisfying the want culminates in its satisfaction." (p112)*

Bion discusses how an incapacity for tolerating frustration can obstruct the development of thoughts and a capacity to think even though *'a capacity to think would diminish the sense of frustration intrinsic to appreciation between a wish and its fulfilment.' (ibid. p113)* In such cases of negative realisation the tendency then is to evade the frustration by splitting off the unbearable into another object which results in projection.

The above is analogous to Freud's consideration that the thinking process engages when the reality principle is dominant. The idea, which Bion uniquely puts forward, is that the containment of this frustration by a significant other is what gives the subject the space to develop thinking. An example might be where a toddler is hungry and crying because she wants her tea. The toddler projects her anxieties into her mother who if she is responsive identifies with the toddler and takes on this anxiety herself. Such a mother may cajole the child in a coaxing voice by saying, for instance, to the child that she knows the child is hungry but not to worry because tea is going to be ready very soon. She will then get the tea ready as quickly as possible while at the same time talking in a soothing voice to the child. Through this holding of the anxiety of the mother and her empathic verbalised reflection the infant, Bion says,

> *"is receiving its frightened personality back again but in a form that it can tolerate- the fears are manageable by the infant personality" (ibid. p115)*

Thus the mother gives the child's experience of anxiety both meaning and also language. The child internalises this meaning and language which can then be used for his/her own thinking. By thinking about the child's anxiety the mother gives it meaning and the unbearable (unthinkable) is made bearable (thinkable). (Bruner (1986) would describe this process as scaffolding)

However in the case of a mother who is not able to respond to the projection of anxiety by holding the anxiety and empathic reflection, Bion says that what is returned to the child is a 'nameless dread'. He states that *"the consequences for the development of a capacity for thinking are serious." (p115)*

Bion's ideas on the relationship between containment and thinking are very pertinent to educational work with children who are emotionally insecure. As mentioned in the summary, research has shown that a significant number of children with learning difficulties have emotional difficulties. In the pupil profiles and their discussion I will consider how we can attempt to contain the anxieties of these children in the classroom in order for them to feel secure enough within themselves to be able to begin to think and learn.

d) Sharing of story metaphor as a means to facilitate attachment

The theory of attachment developed by the psychodynamic analyst Bowlby has become an integral part of the psychodynamic perspective today. Bowlby considered secure attachment to a significant other to be essential for the healthy emotional development of the child. He described in detail three different forms of attachment behaviour- one secure, and two insecure. Barrett and Trevitt (1991*)* applied his ideas to the school environment and describe how the teacher as well as the therapist can become an attachment figure for the schoolchild.

Schore in his lecture to the Bowlby Conference March 2000 talks about how the sharing of unconscious symbols and metaphors can provide an interface where the unconscious of the therapist directly meets the unconscious of the client. In this way, attachment is facilitated in a similar manner to the way the 'reverie' of the mother, described by Winnicott (1971), facilitates attachment between herself and the infant.

In writing in the context of the relationship between the therapist and client, Schore considers that for an attachment relationship to be created it is necessary for the therapist's unconscious to meet directly that of the client's. He says,

> *"a state of resonance exists when the therapist is empathetically attuned to the patient's inner state, one that may be unconscious to the patient, and this resonance then interactively amplifies, in both intensity and duration, the affective state in both members of the dyad." (p24)*

Cattanach describes a particular story told by two adopted twin girls about two princesses who lived in an apple crumble land made by devils. Everyone who lives in this land is made into apple crumble and the princesses eat it all but it is too much and they are then very sick. The story seems to symbolise their anxieties about adapting to a new family and Cattanach describes how the story, when read by the adoptive mother *"stirred the beginnings of attachment between mother and children". (p12).* I will refer to this facilitation of attachment through story writing when discussing my case studies.

e) ***Psychodynamic terms***:

Before finishing this section on the therapeutic use of story, I would like to explain some particular psychodynamic terms that I will refer to in analysing my case studies.

Splitting: The concept of 'splitting' was developed by Klein and refers to the process whereby the individual elevates one situation or person and denigrates a corresponding other.

Projection: This relates to the process whereby an individual sees another person as having an aspect of themselves that they do not want to own.

Projective Identification: This term, first used by Klein, has been interpreted in different ways. In this paper I will use it to describe the process whereby an individual projects a quality of themselves that they do not want to own, or a quality with which

they are familiar, onto another and this 'other' then begins to internalise this projection and behave accordingly.

iv. STORY MAKING AS A NARRATIVE OF IDENTITY

a) Narrative therapy

Australian family therapists, Epston and White have recently developed a new therapeutic approach which they call narrative therapy which they apply particularly to their work with families. For them narrative is not constrained to literary texts but is used continually in the stories we construct for ourselves about our lives. This is in line with Brooks (1984), who considers that our lives themselves are *'ceaselessly entwined'* with narrative and that we live

> *"immersed in narrative, recounting and reassessing the meaning of our past actions, anticipating the outcome of our future projects, situating ourselves at the intersection of several stories not yet completed. (p3)*

Epston and White consider these internal stories as the "receiving context" (p2) for the events experienced in our lives. Apart from giving us a map for making sense of experiences they also point out how events that cannot be put on this map tend to be ignored. It is through the process of restorying, therefore, that we construct and reconstruct our lives.

They consider the narrative process of 'externalising the problem' as something separate from the person enables a more careful examination of the interaction between person and problem. Working in a family therapy situation they take the presenting 'problem' which is often seen as being attached to the child or the family and externalise it into a character which provides some distance between self and problem. They say,

> *"This practice also tends to create a lighter atmosphere wherein children are invited to be inventive in dealing with their problem, instead of being so*

immobilised by blame, guilt or shame that their parents are required to carry the full burden of problem-solving"

(p3 www.narrativeapproaches.com/narrative_therapy.htm)

An example of this way of working might be to characterise a child's sulkiness as Mr Grumpy who can then be discussed in various narrative scenarios. This is a different approach from talking about the problem of the child themself as being sulky . In this way, rigid negative descriptions of the child are avoided and instead they are invited to 'bring their own resources to bear' by offering alternative narratives in which this character can play a part. However, their way of working with the imaginary in children differs in an essential respect from the conventional in that it is the therapist who initiates the construction of the characters in the narrative.

v. A PSYCHOSYNTHESIS APPROACH TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF THROUGH SUBPERSONALITY WORK

The Psychosynthesis Theory of Subpersonalities not only also uses the technique of externalizing a problem as described in Narrative Therapy but does, in my opinion, provide a more comprehensive account of this process can then affect the sense if self. While Assagioli who founded Psychosynthesis had great hopes for his ideas being applied not only to adult psychotherapy but also to the world of education (it was for this reason that the centre in London was called the Psychosynthesis and Education Trust), in fact very little work has been done in the education field to date. However, as my training was in psychosynthesis, this is the main therapeutic model I have in mind when working with children. I would like in this section, therefore, to show how I think it is possible to adapt this model, and particularly the Theory of Subpersonalities, to therapeutic story writing with children. In order to do this it is first necessary to give an outline of the Psychosynthesis model of the psyche.

a) Outline of the Psychosynthesis Model of the Psyche

Psychosynthesis was developed by Assagioli who trained as a Freudian analyst (he was the first psychoanalyst to practise in Italy in 1910) and built on the psychodynamic tradition.

Assagioli's map of the psyche is often represented by what is called the Egg Diagram as in Figure (1). The main body of the 'egg' is divided into three sections: The Lower Unconscious, The Middle Unconscious, The Higher Unconscious. The middle Unconscious contains the Field of Consciousness in the centre of which is the Personal Self or 'I'. This personal Self has the opportunity of connecting with the Higher self.

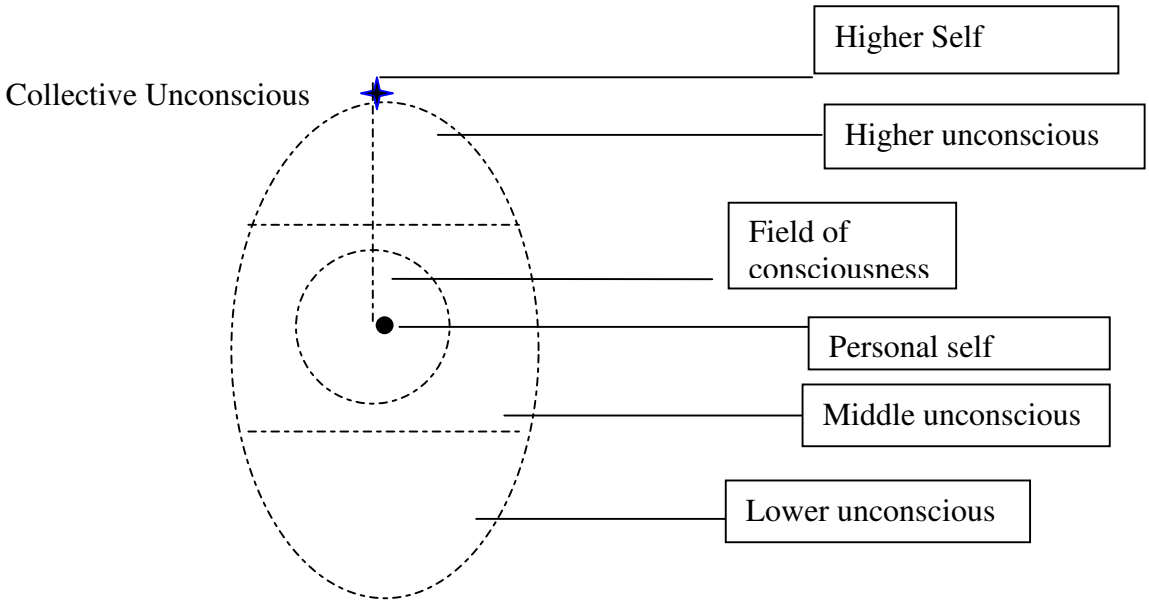

Figure (1): The Psychosynthesis 'Egg' Diagram

Whitmore who worked with Assagioli before his death and set up the training centre in this country defines these elements of the map in the following way: -

1. *The lower unconscious corresponds to what Freudian psychology calls the unconscious: the fundamental drives and complexes charged with intense emotion…*
2. *The middle unconscious is formed of psychological elements similar to our waking consciousness, containing the memories, thoughts and feelings of which our everyday life is interwoven. This awareness is accessible to us by tuning in or remembering, and contains recent or near present experiences. It points not to what we have been or could be, but to the evolutionary state we have actually reached.*
3. *The higher unconscious, or superconscious, is the 'home' of our higher aspirations and intuitions, latent psychic functions and spiritual energies. This includes artistic, philosophical, scientific or ethical revelations and urges to humanitarian action. Assagioli attributes to this realm the source of the higher feelings (such as compassion, joy), of genius and of states of contemplation, illumination and ecstasy. Most of*

us have had, at some time, a moment of superconscious experience when wee felt most fully who we essentially are.

4. *The field of consciousness contains those elements of our personality of which we are directly aware. This includes the incessant flow of sensations, images, thoughts, feelings, desires and impulses, which we may immediately and consciously observe, analyse and judge.*
5. *The personal self or 'I' is the centre of our consciousness, a point of pure self-awareness and will …. This centre is distinct from the changing contents of our consciousness.*
6. *The transpersonal (or Higher) Self is the point of pure, essential being, which is unaffected by conscious experience. It is not an experience but the One who experiences, the Experiencer. The personal self is considered to be a reflection of the Self and its projection in the field of the personality. The self is the point of synthesis of our whole being, of individuality and universality, or our connection with the larger whole of human existence.*
7. *The collective unconscious can be defined as the accumulated psychic environment that surrounds us. The boundary that separates us from it is permeable. It is analogous to the membrane delineating a cell which permits a constant and active interchange with the whole body to which the cell belongs. Such processes of 'psychological osmosis' are occurring all the time between human beings and their environment.*

(1991 p114)

The three sections of the map also have a time correspondence. The lower unconscious is associated with events in the past. The middle is to do with the present and the higher unconscious is to do with our potential, which is to be realised in the future. (It is interesting to think of the different type of children's story, which may be associated with the lower, middle and higher unconscious. I have attached some examples in the appendix.)

So how can this psychosynthesis model, which may on first examination seem of a somewhat erudite nature, assist in the attempt to improve children's emotional literacy

and sense of self through the use of narrative? In order to understand this it is necessary to move on to the psychosynthesis concept of subpersonalities.

b) Theory of Subpersonalities

It is the concept of subpersonalities which can be diagrammatically superimposed on the egg diagram as in *figure (2)* that provides a framework for developing a sense of self and is, I will attempt to show, applicable to therapeutic work with children through story writing.

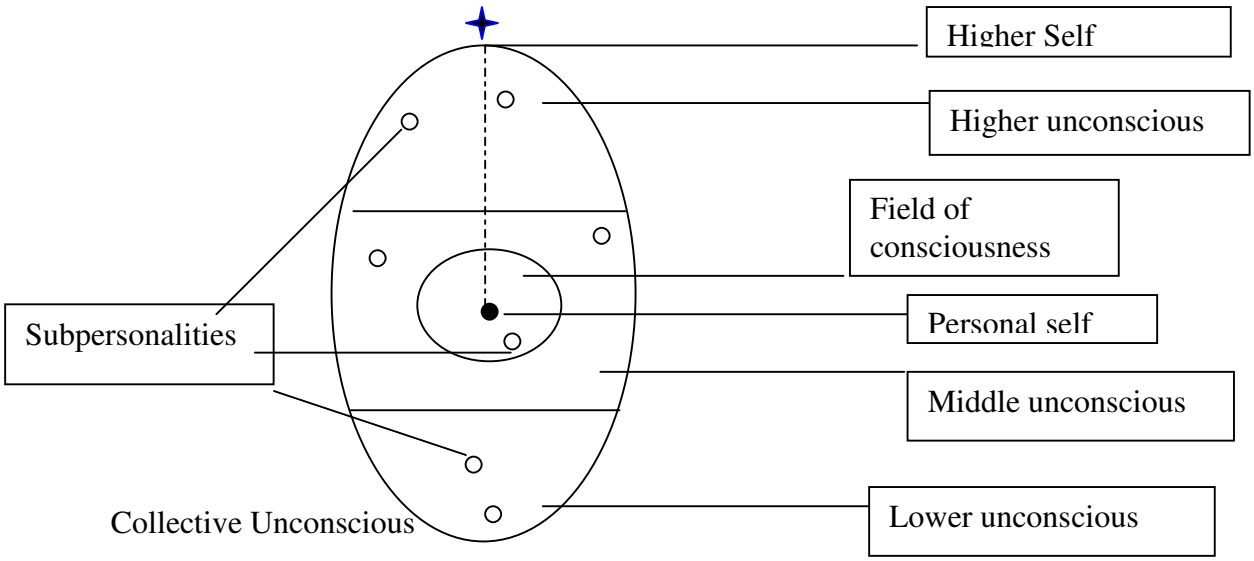

Figure (2): Psychosynthesis model of subpersonalities

As can be seen in fig. (2) the personal self and the higher Self have the possibility of connection and it is when this alignment occurs that Assagioli considers there is a sense of being truly oneself. So what is it that stops this happening?

To continue with the diagrammatic representation, around the personal self are dotted a number of subpersonalities. These are the different aspects of our personality and can be found in all areas of the egg, i.e. the lower unconscious, the middle unconscious, including the field of consciousness and the higher unconscious. A subpersonality in the lower unconscious would be one established through past conditioning such as the frustrated infant, in the middle unconscious it would be a subpersonality which has been more recently established in current everyday life, while a subpersonality from the higher unconscious is likely to relate to spiritual or idealised aspects of our identity. The notion of subpersonalities is very similar to the

externalized aspects of the personality as described by Epston and White. The question is – how do these relate to the idea of a developing self? It is here that I believe the psychosynthesis model offers some real insight.

According to this model whenever we identify with a particular subpersonality our personal self becomes attached to the set of attributes associated with that personality. Each subpersonality can be seen as having its own particular set of attributes including a belief system, emotional state, set of body postures and even tone of voice. Different situations or people we meet in our daily lives trigger a particular subpersonality and we become identified with that particular subpersonality. This identification is often unconscious and largely beyond our control. What psychosynthesis provides is a technique whereby we can make this identification conscious and allow the self to choose whether to identify with a particular subpersonality at a particular time. When the personal self is able disidentify, i.e. step out of role, from all subpersonalities it connects with the higher self and in this place the self is able to engage free will. It is rather like the freedom of the conductor of an orchestra being able to bring in each instrument at will. This is generally a stage only possible to reach in adulthood, if at all, although in working with children it is possible to consider disidentifying from a particular subpersonality at a particular time. In working within the psychosynthesis model the teacher/therapist is encouraged to hold a bipolar view of the child i.e. that on one level they are identifying with a particular subpersonality yet at the same time there exists a connection between their personal self and the higher self (see fig 2). This implies that the child has within them a wisdom which may be brought into play through this work with subpersonalities.

Like Ricoeur with his concept of the narrative intelligence which seeks 'concord over discord', Assagioli believed that within the psyche there is an instinctual drive towards self-understanding which arises from a natural search for meaning and purpose- so often the qualities lacking in children with EBDs as Bettelheim reports. Psychosynthesis links the strengthening the self to a corresponding strengthening of will and motivation.

There are four steps outlined for this work on subpersonalities which can lead to a strengthening of the self. They are recognition, identification, integration and disidentification. Whitmore (ibid p80) gives a clear illustration of these processes in adult therapy. I will attempt to show how it may be possible to adapt this theory to the context of story writing with children.

c) *Working with subpersonalities in the context of children's storywriting*

1. ***Recognition*** In order to disidentify from subpersonalities it is necessary first to recognise what they are. We need to be able to see the particular set of attributes of that subpersonality. This is what narrative therapy does by humourously naming particular personality traits. In children's writing this is done by the creation of the main characters.

2. ***Identification*** Having recognised a particular subpersonality it is necessary to be able to identify with it. This may be achieved by encouraging the child to get 'inside the skin' of a particular character. How would that character feel in a particular situation? How would they react to a particular event? What do they need to make them happy?

3. ***Integration*** This is the process whereby a subpersonality is integrated with other subpersonalities especially those with whom they may be in conflict. This may be explored by the quality of interaction between the characters. It is interesting how children, particularly in my experience children with EBDs will want to kill off their main characters to get them out of sticky situations rather than enter into new allegiances with other characters.

4. ***Disidentification*** This is the place where the individual is free to let go of the subpersonality. In psychosynthesis it is considered that this is only possible by going through the above processes of recognition, identification and integration. Without doing this to disidentify would be to repress or suppress the energy of that particular aspect of ourselves. With reference to children's story writing this would really be the ability to complete a story – often the

most difficult part of story writing for children. It is easy for children to end by making it all a dream or to suddenly find themselves home but to complete the story in a way where the conflict or dilemma has been resolved is not so easy. I see the exploration of different endings to a particular story and talking about resolution of the main dilemma posed by the plot as a way in which disidentification from the characters may be facilitated.

As well as having a considerable overlap with narrative therapy as mentioned above, subpersonality theory has echoes of the concepts developed by Mead and Goffman (see paper 2). It is psychosynthesis, however, that seems to me to provide a model which actually explains how by getting to know these various aspects of ourselves, particularly the emotional states associated with them, that this in turn leads to a stronger sense of self.

What perhaps Psychosynthesis does not do is distinguish sufficiently between the subpersonalities of the child and those of the adult. In a recent television interview given by the children's author, Philip Pullman, on his Northern Lights trilogy I was struck by Philip Pullman's talk about 'daemons', which he considers to be aspects of ourselves. He thought that whereas adults tend to have a particular daemon which can be considered as an alter ego, children have several daemons which are not yet 'set'. Fanciful as this may sound, it is one way of reflecting on how children when they get to adolescence do become 'set' in their personalities i.e. have a narrower set of subpersonalities to choose from whereas younger children can seem to be open to a wider range of possibilities given the right environment.

vi. SUMMARY OF THEORETICAL THERAPEUTIC MODELS TO BE REFERRED TO IN CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Having completed my critical literature review here is a summary of the main models which I will use to inform the discussion of my pupil profiles: -

- Psychodynamic principles: *metaphor as a vehicle for the unconscious, , projective identification, holding, attachment, containment*

- Narrative therapy: *externalising the problem, reauthoring our lives*

- Psychosynthesis theory: *subpersonality model showing emotional literacy leading to an enhanced sense of self*

C. Methodology

i. METHOD USED AS THE TEACHER/THERAPIST

a) My background and perspective

I refer here to myself as a teacher/therapist because in my work with children who have learning difficulties due to emotional factors I find it is often necessary to concurrently use both my skills as a teacher and as a therapist. I will therefore discuss my background and perspective in these two skill areas together.

I began my teaching career working in a psychodynamic therapeutic community for boys with EBDs where I also ran art and movement therapy classes. Later, I worked as a classteacher for 10 years in an inner city primary school. I then trained as a therapist/counsellor at the Psychosynthesis and Education Trust. Psychosynthesis is a predominantly person-centred therapeutic approach which includes a large element of gestalt therapy. For a number of years I worked part-time as a teacher and also ran a therapy practice for adult clients before deciding to focus my work on children. I currently work as a SENCO in a large junior school where I teach support literacy groups as well as providing educational counselling for some individual children who are on the SEN register for EBDs. I have supervision for this educational counselling work with an educational therapist at the Caspari Foundation, Islington. The work of the Caspari Institute originated at

the Tavistock and is psychodynamically based. In addressing issues around behaviour in the classroom, however, I will often use a positive behaviour approach. I have also trained in brief solution-focused therapy which I find particularly useful in my contact with parents. My therapeutic approach, therefore, is integrative. I consider this a strength when working in the school environment where the context for therapeutic insight can range from advising a teacher on how to respond to the behaviour of a child in a class group of 35, meeting with anxious parents or co-ordinating the multiagency support network, through to my own individual work with a child in a weekly session.

b) Model used for exploring sense of Self through story writing

Figure 3 is a diagrammatic representation of the working model I have developed to show how the process of storywriting can affect the self-concept. The left-hand column shows the relationship between the self and the search for meaning and purpose. This can be facilitated through story writing by allowing the child to explore themes that are personally meaningful for them. This in turn can lead to an increased motivation to write. The process of story writing also gives them control over the outcome of the imagined events and how the characters react. The right-hand column details the process whereby storywriting allows the child to explore different roles or subpersonalities and how they interact in different situations. In this way emotional literacy may be developed.

c) Specific Teaching Techniques to develop Emotional Literacy

Here are some of the educational techniques I employed in working with these children to develop emotional literacy: -

- Story openings - e.g. She was really upset that day but felt she could not share her secret with anybody

- Grammar in writing -e.g. Introducing adjectival sub-clauses to develop character descriptions

- Discussing characters in individual stories in the group

- Creating a group story which I write, setting up dilemmas for the children to resolve – based on information I have about the children

d) Teaching points to develop academic self-image-

Some of the educational techniques I employed in working with these children to develop emotional literacy are a follows: -

- Model risk-taking by writing myself at same time as the children and sharing work with group

- Children sharing work with partner or group

- Encouraging the production of well-presented finished work through making stories into books etc.

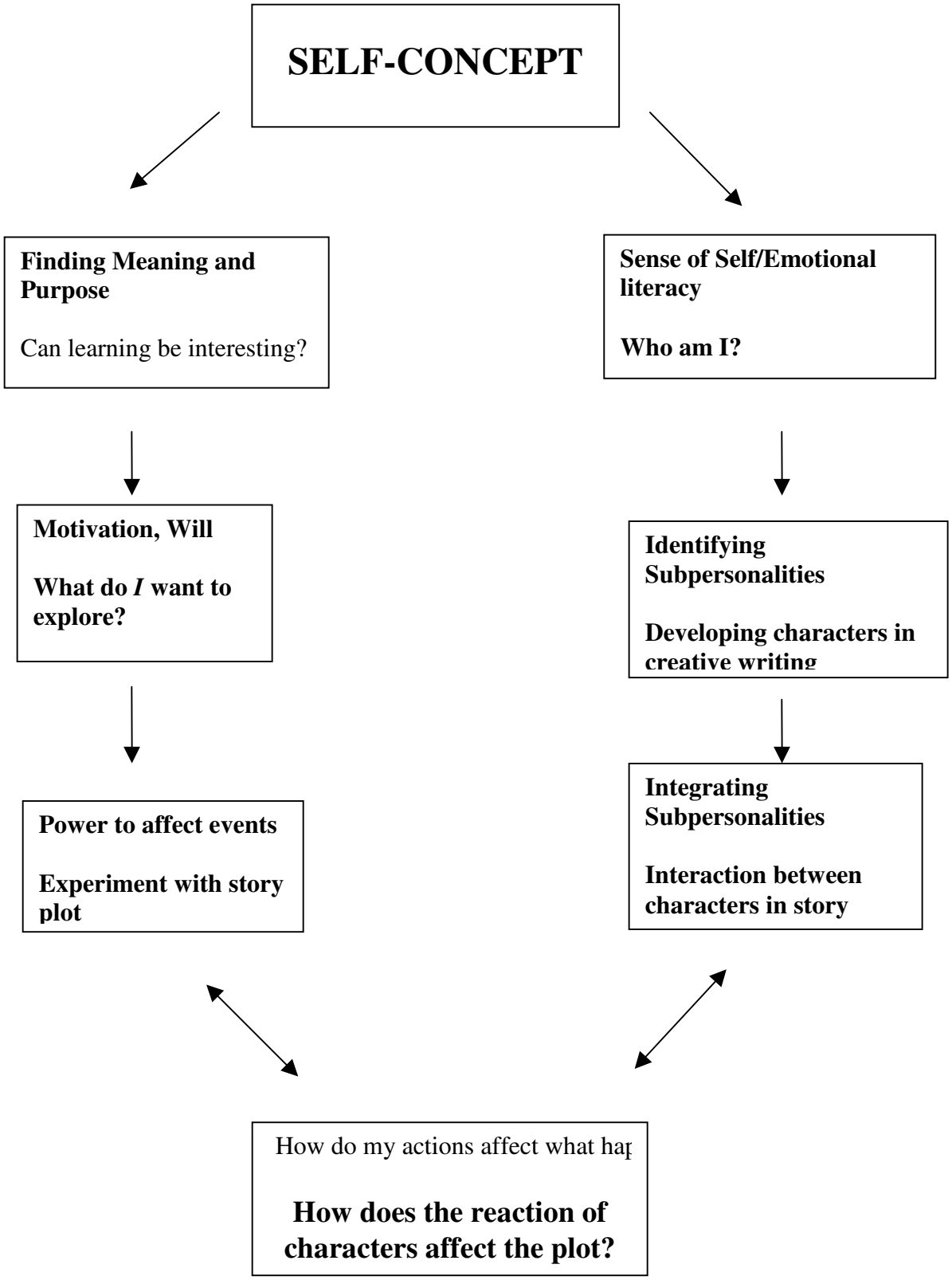

Figure 3: Model showing how storywriting may be related to the self-concept

ii. METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH STUDY

a) Research questions

Question 1 : To what extent and in which ways can storywriting be used to develop emotional literacy, i.e. the ability to recognize, understand and appropriately express emotions, in children whose learning has been impeded by emotional and behavioural difficulties?

Question 2: To what extent and in which ways can storywriting enhance the self-esteem in children whose learning has been impeded by emotional and behavioural difficulties?

Question 3: To what extent and in which ways can storywriting be used to develop english literacy skills in children whose learning has been impeded by emotional and behavioural difficulties?

Question 4: To what extent and in which ways is it possible to integrate therapeutic provision into the mainstream literacy curriculum?

b) Sample

The three pupil profiles were carried out in a three-form entry junior school where I am a SENCO. All of the children were on the special needs register for both EBDs and literacy difficulties. The work with Anya and Andrew was carried out within the Y6 literacy hour time. The work with John was carried out in the context of a 1:1 educational counselling session.

Further details of each child are included in the pupil profiles. The names of the three children studied have been changed for reasons of confidentiality.

While I work with many children in a similar way, I chose these three children for the study because they were the ones, of the children I currently work with, who seemed to me most emotionally disturbed. By looking at these limit cases it may be possible

to examine more clearly the effectiveness of working in this way and the implications for its potential use as a universal tool in working with other children with similar needs in different settings.

c) Method used by the researcher

My research is mainly naturalistic in that I am observing what happens in the normal learning environment for the children. The methods used by myself as researcher were observation, field notes and research journal. I was responsible for the teaching of the group or individual and the work was set within the teacher/pupil relationship. An important part of the work described is the setting up of the 'potential space' or the transitional space between the child and myself as the teacher where the therapeutic educational work can take place. This did not just happen but needed to be thought about and varied for each child. I will refer to this in the individual pupil profiles. In all cases my role as the audience/reader of the stories and my subjective response to them was an intrinsic part of the process.

As the study looks at the individual child's engagement with story writing within the context of the teacher/pupil relationship, the study is mainly qualitative. There is, however, some quantitative assessment of the individual child's levels of english literacy, where possible, as measured by the national curriculum levels.

d) Research design background

In all three cases I met their classteacher on a regular basis as well as recording an interview with them as part of my initial assessment of the child. As the SENCO I co-ordinated the in-school support network provided by Learning Support Assistants (in the areas of speech and language and keyboard skills) and other support teachers working with these children. I met with parents on a termly basis and kept records of these meetings.

e) Data

i) The children's stories

ii) Lesson plans with evaluations which included individual children's responses to the tasks set

iii) Research journal which provided a detailed account of interactions of the children both with each other and myself. The journal also contained recordings of my reactions and reflections on the children's behaviour and on their stories as well as notes from supervision sessions.

iv) Parent interviews

v)Special educational needs records

f) Form of analysis

The form of analysis was to construct a profile of each of the three children observed and within the profile to create a synthesis of the children's experiences with particular reference to their storywriting. One or two stories for each child were chosen. Given the limit on the length of this report it was not possible to look at all their stories and therefore a selection had to be made. This selection was based on choosing stories in which the metaphor reflected critical events in their lives. These stories are reported in the pupil profiles together with my interpretations. These interpretations guided my actions at times but were not given to the child. Also included in the pupil profiles are my reactions to the children which are informed by own personal psychological perspective.

g) Problem of bias

The difficulty of this research, in terms of bias, is that I am both the teacher and the observer. There is the possibility of bias, therefore, in how I represent both the children's reactions and my own reactions and interpretations. To mitigate this bias in relation to representing the children's reactions there are their recorded stories. While I initiated this storywriting process the content is truly the children's own work. My interpretations of their stories were not given to either the children or their parents. While these interpretations may have guided my actions to some extent, I would suggest that the effect of these interpretations on the children's behaviour and work was less dramatic than if these interpretations had been communicated. With respect to the bias around the representation of my own reactions, regular supervision both

from my academic and educational therapy supervisor supported my attempt to reflect with integrity on the cases.

D. THREE PUPIL PROFILES

i. 1st pupil profile : Anya

This case study shows how story writing allowed an elective mute to express her feelings of being rendered unable to speak following domestic violence. This led to a quantum leap of development in both the quantity and quality of her writing as well as a confidence to begin to speak out.

Anya was a tall attractive Yr6 girl with long ginger hair who lived with her mother and sister. In class this 10 yr. old was very withdrawn and was in effect an elective mute. Her teacher said she would not speak to her even to say yes or no and mostly would just sit and not attempt her work at all. This had also been the case with her previous teacher. The most response she would give would be a shrug of the shoulders. At times she would become completely stubborn and have temper tantrums. According to the previous SENCO she had been referred to a child psychotherapist at CAMHS but after a long wait for an appointment had only attended 2 or 3 times because she refused to speak in these sessions. (I found this most report difficult to understand as this was obviously her presenting problem!)

Her mother had left her partner after extremely traumatic and violent domestic events which Anya had witnessed. The mother then had moved back with the girls to be close to her mother in the north of England. This had not worked out but had proved quite unsettling with further disturbing domestic events occurring and the family had returned back south with Anya returning to our school. Her mother said Anya was prone to long hysterical screaming bouts at home which caused friction with the neighbours. The mother was very concerned about Anya and was close to tears when she told me about these events at the parents meeting half way through the term.

When she joined my literacy support group of 6 children at the beginning of Y6, Anya was on stage 3 of the special needs register for emotional, speech & language and literacy difficulties.

In the first session when the group met Anya arrived without her guidelines that were needed for the writing task. When I asked her to go back to class to get them she said nothing and did not get up. I repeated in a gentle but firm manner that she needed to go and get these for the work we were doing. A similar non-response was given. When I asked if she was concerned about disturbing the teacher and whether she would like someone to go with her tears came to her eyes. By now the other 5 members of the group had been sitting around the table for a few minutes waiting to begin the task. At this point I asked her if she was feeling unwell. Again no reply but more tears were welling up. Not being aware of her psychological history in this first week of the academic year, I thought that something particular had upset her or perhaps she was unwell and I said I would take her to the medical room. Leaving the other members of the group for a moment, I handed her over to the office staff who took her to the medical room and I returned to the group to teach the literacy lesson. About 10 minutes later the secretary came to tell me that Anya was having a huge tantrum in the medical room kicking the wall and sobbing hysterically. It was at this point that I realised how deep-rooted a psychological problem she had.

By the second week following discussions with the previous SENCO and classteacher, I had more of an idea of Anya's difficulties. In this session she arrived but would not sit down at the table with the rest of the group. When I approached her to quietly ask if she was alright, she physically withdrew and hunched up her shoulders. She had tears in her eyes and looked frightened. I told her that it was OK for her to stand there and that we would just get on with the lesson. I noticed the other members of the group, particularly the boys most of whom were used to being pretty disruptive themselves at times, looking at me somewhat amazed. I said to them that we would just get on with the lesson and that it was OK for Anya to stand there. They responded in what felt to me as a very supportive manner and immediately focused on the task, without any comment on Anya's behaviour. I felt their ability to recognise that Anya's behaviour was not 'normal', especially as they had observed the incident over the guidelines the previous week, meant that they could allow me to give her a

different set of boundaries to the rest of the group. Anya stood up throughout the lesson, did none of the task and did not say anything –nor did she disturb us.

The next week she came in and sat down in the place nearest to me and although she had the appropriate writing equipment, again did not begin the task or speak. I focused on the main work with the group though occasionally would repeat the instructions to her and say that she could do some work when she was ready. She did not write anything during this lesson. On speaking with her classteacher after the lesson she confirmed that she was not doing any writing in class either.

During this first half-term there were a number of incidents in the classroom when Anya had had tantrums which caused a disturbance to the whole class. The classteacher found these very difficult to deal with. On two occasions she was unable to pacify Anya or to get her to leave the classroom and resorted to taking the rest of the class (34 children) out of the classroom into the playground so that I could come into the classroom to deal with G. On these occasions I was able to deflect the tantrum which consisted of screaming, sobbing and kicking tables by asking her very matter-of-factly to help me with some practical task such as folding up some drapes. It seemed I was beginning to be someone she could feel secure with.

Although Anya did not do any writing and remained silent during the first 3 or 4 sessions, I noticed that she listened intently to any story I read. The literacy project we were engaged in at this time was based on the Y6 literacy curriculum aspect of understanding parody through work on fairy tales. I had been reading some modern day parodies of fairy tales. Several weeks into the term, I asked the children to think of a well-known fairy tale and to write their own version of it. To my amazement Anya picked up her pen and began to write her story "We've Been Eaten" based on the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears.

Figure 4 shows the cover picture for *We've Been Eaten.* On the first page it said,

This book is dedicated to all the gingerbread men I have ever eaten.

And it began

Hello I am Ginger bread 1. We were just asleep on the table after eating dinner. We could not go to bed. We were too tired even to walk upstairs. Suddenly a girl jumped in through our window which made me wake up but I lay still just in case. She fell asleep in baby bread's bed, woke up and tried out my bed and ginger bread 2's bed. Then she sat on baby bread's chair and broke it. After that she rejected my chair and Ginger bread two's chair.

Then she started nibbling baby breads toes and up and up and up. So now baby bread was eaten. Then she ate gingerbread two- and now she is eating me. She is eating my little toes and now is up to my knees. Being eaten, as you know, is very painful. You just wish they would hurry up and eat you all up. I'm afraid I can not speak anymore because I'm very nearly eaten. (165 words)

For homework the children were asked to do a cover and an inside picture for their stories. Anya brought in the pictures shown in figures 4&5 above. This was the first lesson in which Anya spoke to me and said very quietly that she had done them on the art package of her computer at home. Nothing else was said and when we went around the table sharing our stories with each other she did not want to share hers or to have it read out.

a) My Interpretation of "We've Been Eaten"

In interpreting this story it seems to me that the girl intruder represents the domestic trauma and violence that Anya had experienced in the past. There are three gingerbreads representing Anya, her mother and sister all of whom shared her experience of the domestic trauma. They were too tired to move out of danger (go upstairs). She watched while the other two were consumed by the violent events and then was consumed by the trauma herself. She is able to say that this is so painful that *"You just wish they would hurry up and eat you all up"*. The telling line is the final one where Anya speaks clearly in the metaphor about how the experienced trauma has caused her mutism: *"I'm afraid I cannot speak anymore because I'm very nearly eaten."*

At no time during or after the writing of her story did I share any of my interpretation of the story. Any comments were only made within the metaphor. The usefulness of my interpretation and any insight it contains into the unconscious significance of the story was that I gave her story a respect that acknowledged the significance for Anya of this writing. It showed me the depth of the wounding that she had experienced – a wounding that had felt like obliteration – and because of this strengthened my desire to provide a safe and nurturing environment where she could continue to develop self-confidence and expression through her creative writing. My interpretation could have been wide of the mark but it facilitated a closer attachment between us.

b) Anya's second story

In the second half-term the support group story-writing work took the theme of Egypt which was the topic for that half-term. Anya was now engaged in all the literacy tasks given to the group and was also beginning to work better in the main class. Although she continued not to speak in the group even when a question was directed to her she would occasionally say a quiet 'yes' or 'no' to a question that I would ask her about her work.

I asked the children to write a time travel story where they find a time machine that can take them back to Ancient Egypt. They had some topic books on Ancient Egypt to give them ideas. She integrated the grammar work we had been doing on direct speech into her story called Jenny in Egypt . This second story, which is given in full in the appendix, was 925 words long compared to the 165 of "We've Been Eaten". While written only about 6 weeks after the first story, it showed a marked improvement in handwriting fluency as shown in figures 6&7 and a considerable leap in maturity of expression. It really seemed as if a blockage to her expression had been removed. In this story too there was a working through of unconscious issues as shown in this short extract:-

> *"How am I going to get back? (home) I got here by travelling through time. I went in the mummy case and I was here (in Ancient Egypt) so if I go back in the mummy case I will be back to the modern world. But how will I get back*

unless I die…Everyone was talking and joking and nobody noticed that there was a poisonous snake on the loose. It came straight towards me and bit me.

There were whizzing colours and I was back in the mummy's coffin. I opened the lid and I was back in modern times in the hotel room. Whenever I told anyone my story they didn't believe me but I know it really happened because I've still got the necklace that the Egyptian girl gave me"

Again in this second story the theme of death is present. While there is an echo of the previous trauma where nobody else notices the danger, this time the main character chooses to die to the self locked back in time (Ancient Egypt). In this story the conscious inviting of death through the snake bite results in being reborn in the present, reunited with her mother, the archaeologist in the story.

Anya was happy for me to read out her second story to the group. She had taken her first draft home and word processed most of the text adding her own computer generated art images. An LSA who was a present in the group and who had previously worked with Anya was particularly amazed to find that Anya had written such an impressive story. Although she had quickly overtaken the other members of the group in terms of her literacy skills, we decided to keep her in this weekly group for the rest of the year in order to foster her newly found self-confidence. She became gradually more verbal over the next two terms and would occasionally by the third term put up her hand to answer a question speaking in a whisper. However, she was still unable to take a turn in shared reading. Throughout the year I cultivated her interest in IT especially in relation to the IT art packages. In the summer term I was teaching the use of the IT programme Dazzle to the whole of Y6 as part of the ICT curriculum. Anya was in the first IT group I taught and produced some excellent work. I decided to train several children as 'teachers' of Dazzle to help the other children. I asked Anya if she would be one of these. She looked really shocked when I asked her- she would have to communicate with them! But she also flushed with pride. She agreed to give it a go. When her name was mentioned as one of the 'teachers' the other children also looked surprised. She managed this task quite well, quietly teaching a couple of the other girls that she felt more secure with in the room where I worked.

At the end of term we were doing an achievement assembly and I asked her if she could speak in the assembly about the IT work. She looked even more worried this time! I said she could practise with me on her own first to see how it went. She spoke in a big confident voice. I was amazed. When repeating her speech in the hall in a loud, clear confident voice one of the boys next to me turned and said, "We didn't think she could speak". It was quite a moving end to the year of work with Anya.

c) Emotional learning from storywriting

Anya's loss of learning can be viewed as attributable to her loss of feeling about the traumatic events she had witnessed. In my interpretation these had truly been too awful for her to speak about. In fact, for her, the experience had felt like being eaten – an extremely painful process which resulted in her feeling as though she no longer existed. If you do not exist you certainly cannot speak. Her rage could only be given wordless expression through kicking, screaming and sobbing in a hysterical manner as evidenced in the tantrums at school and home. By mirroring the traumatic events in the metaphor of her story and describing the feeling of being devoured, Anya was able to place her 'self' in a new position i.e. that of the narrator/author. By taking up this stance, it is possible that a new centre of self was created which could survive the traumatic events - in fact could survive to 'tell the tale'. From this strengthened sense of self she was able to further explore the theme of death/obliteration. In her second story the main character was able to use her thinking to overcome the death situations and in fact use her cognitive functioning to return to the mother in the present. As she became able to articulate her feelings in her stories, Anya began to find her actual voice albeit tentatively at first. By cultivating her interest in using the computer to illustrate her stories it was possible, it would seem, to enhance her self image as someone who had something to teach others. This in turn developed her confidence as a speaker.

For Anya to be able to engage with learning it seemed that it was necessary for her to feel that her anxieties could be accepted and also that she could have some control over her personal boundaries. By allowing her to firstly stay standing in the corner and later to just sit at the table without doing any work gave her the message that she

could be allowed to exist with her anxieties. That I was able to 'hold' and understand her anxieties and to protect her from comments or intrusion from the rest of the group enabled her to dare to bring herself into the group through her stories. My role of attachment figure for Anya was strengthened by my also being the first audience/reader of her stories. I was affected by the significance of these stories and my respect for them was communicated to Anya. This may also have helped her to value her work and increase her self-esteem.

d) Academic learning

Anya's motivation for writing increased dramatically over this time as clearly shown by the increase in the number of words written in these first two stories- written only a term apart. The first was 165 words long and the second 925 words. There was also a dramatic improvement in her handwriting as shown in these following two examples.

Figure 6: Example of handwriting from We've Been Eaten

Figure 7: Example of handwriting from Jenny in Egypt, written six weeks later

The cultivation of Anya's interest in IT in order to improve her self-esteem also led to her quickly acquiring new IT skills. Through the teaching of these to other children, her speech and language skills improved to the point where she was able to speak aloud in an assembly for the first time at the school.

ii. 2nd Pupil Profile : Andrew

This case study looks at the context of the literacy group to illustrate how an awareness of projective identification can change negative behavioural patterns in the classroom. The stories chosen show how this negative attention-seeking behaviour in the group mirrors the child's experience in his family.

Andrew is a 10 yr. old 'laddish' red-haired english Y6 boy who loves football. He often calls out inappropriately in class and is often involved in 'incidents' at break

times. There have been concerns about both his behaviour and his literacy since Y3 when he was put on the SENIMS register. His Y4 report states, *"He must learn to settle down to work quickly and not distract his peers…"*. In Y5 his classteacher reported she had,

> *"concerns about his behaviour. He will often distract other children and is often involved with playground incidents."*

He lives with both his parents and has an older and a younger sister. His mother said that he liked to '*wind up'* both his sisters though he also looked up to the older sister and fought with the younger one a lot.

He joined my Y6 special needs literacy support group of 12 children.

a) Academic scores

His end of Y5 QCA test results were: -
Reading 3b
Writing 2a
Spelling – level 2

Given that level 2 is the expected norm in Y2 and level 4 the norm in Y6, these show his results to be well below average particularly for writing and spelling.

His Y6 (Oct '00) CAT (cognitive ability test) scores showed that while he was below average on Verbal reasoning (SAS 86), he was average in the areas of Quantitative (SAS 105) and Non-verbal reasoning (SAS 98).

This would suggest that Andrew is a boy of average intelligence who does not have global difficulties but a specific difficulty in relationship to verbal reasoning coupled with a history of behaviour difficulties.

b) Andrew's behaviour within my Y6 literacy support group

While over half of the 12 members of my special needs literacy group had some degree of EBDs Andrew was the member of the group whose behaviour I found the most challenging throughout the first term. He would enter the classroom in a

boisterous manner and clown about particularly when seated anywhere near a particular friend. They initially sat next to each other but after several warnings about their behaviour I then insisted that they separated. Interestingly after this separation, the friend who had previously been statemented for academic and EBDs, focused well on his work and it was Andrew who continued with his distracting behaviour. Although able to read silently, whenever I asked the group to read a poem or a piece of text quietly he would begin by reading it aloud. Whenever a question or thought came into his head, he would call it out without putting up his hand. He seemed unable to hold a thought in his head without verbalising it. He would often call out when I was talking to the group and rock back on his chair. He would occasionally flick or throw things such as rubbers or pencil sharpeners. When I asked the group a question he would put up his hand in an over-enthusiastic manner and complain if he was not chosen. If I spoke to an individual child about their work he would inevitably create some distraction. He would often only write a couple of lines compared to a page of writing from the other children, often tearing up one or two initial attempts saying they were not good enough. I would give a warning about disruptive behaviour and then ask him to stay behind for 5 or10 minutes at lunchtime. When the bell went he would meekly remain behind and do whatever was asked of him. In these 10 minutes he would often write 3 times the amount that he had done in the lesson.

I discussed Andrew with my educational therapy supervisor. I confessed that he was the child in the group I found it hard to really like. By this time, the second half-term, the rest of the group was really starting to come together. I said I felt that I was getting into a negative reinforcement pattern with Andrew and disliking him for taking up so much of my attention. My supervisor asked me what I found an interesting question to reflect on –

"Is he trying to get your attention or is he trying to stop the other children getting any attention?"

From talking and thinking about Andrew in a more reflexive manner instead of reacting to his behaviour I realised that I had probably been caught in a projective identification relationship with Andrew. I was continuing to bolster his sense of identity through my engagement with his negative behaviour- a process, I imagined,

with which he was familiar. I decided to meet with his mother and try to set up a positive behaviour programme in conjunction with home. (A positive behaviour programme is one where positive behaviour is given attention rather than negative behaviour.)

c) Meeting with mother

This meeting with mother confirmed my hypothesis that my response to Andrew was a form of projective identification. When I said I felt concerned that most of my interaction with Andrew was around his negative behaviour, she said it was exactly the same at home. She said he didn't seem to learn and just continued to do things that his parents would moan at him about- and this was just about all the time. This is what had particularly struck me in the group. On one occasion after I rebuked him for flicking something he immediately did it again. At home, she said, they found him boisterous and *"unable to express himself when questioned directly, even when not in trouble."* She also mentioned that he had become upset with tears in his eyes when filling in a form I had sent home which asked parents to ask their children how they thought they were doing at school.

She said she felt in despair about what to do about his behaviour –just as I had confessed to my supervisor. I suggested that we start a positive behaviour programme to try and change this negative pattern of behaviour. We agreed that I would give him a 'Well Done' certificate every time I thought he had had a good lesson (initially for not calling out) and that parents could decide on a treat that Andrew would get from them when he had got 10 of these. I would not report the 'bad' lessons but only focus on when he had had a 'good' one. His mother agreed to this. The change in Andrew's behaviour was dramatic. He really made an effort with not calling out and when he forgot a look from me would remind him. I was somewhat concerned, however, on asking Andrew a couple of days later if a treat had been agreed when he replied,

"Well my Dad said if I don't get 10 of them I won't be able to go to football training."

Andrew loved the football training sessions that he regularly attended. I was amazed how my efforts to set up a positive behaviour programme with the mother had been undermined by the father. However, when I checked a week later I was reassured to find that an increase in pocket-money had also been negotiated.

d) Response to the positive behaviour programme

I arranged for Andrew to sit at the front of the class close to where I would normally be standing and although he occasionally tried to change this I felt he was happy to be told to sit here. Andrew responded positively to the behaviour programme and worked really hard on not calling out at inappropriate times. Straightaway he began to focus more on his work. When he asked to start again with a piece of work I would remind him that his work did not have to be perfect. I began to feel a lot more sympathetic towards him and began to realise how much of his behaviour had been a front to obscure his poor academic self-image particularly around literacy.

e) Andrew's first story

Previous to this time Andrew had not completed any of the storywriting tasks. He would generally tear up his 1st, 2nd and even 3rd draft, which resulted in him never getting past the first half page of writing. It was shortly after setting up the behaviour programme, however, that he wrote his first completed story. The group had been given the beginning "S/He was really upset and felt she/he couldn't share her/his secret with anybody. This is his story: -

"She was really upset and felt she couldn't share her secret with anybody that her dad was hitting her. She was so upset she would cry herself to sleep at night. She lived in Manchester. She was 12 years old and she had light brown hair. She has two guinea pigs, Gerly and Gus, and one golden labrador called Brandy. It all started when she was out spending her Christmas money and her Dad, out of the blue, hit her. She does not know why, but he did. It was a couple of days later when she found herself telling her best friend. They met up after school and they both agreed that

they would tell her Mum and then tell the police. It was the 19th of May. We were having lunch when the doorbell rang. My Dad opened the door. "Detective Constable Bradley. May I come in please." The police arrested him… He was sentenced to 3 years in gaol. When he had served his time, he came out of prison. Her Mum ordered a divorce paper and she never saw her Dad again."

f) Interpretation of Andrew's first story

The girl in the story seemed to corresponds to Andrew's sister not just because of the context of the story but because the weekend before, when asked to do a character sketch of a member of his family, he had described his sister's looks and pets in the identical manner as in the story. She lives in Manchester – the football team that Andrew ardently supports. This story certainly confirmed my sense that Andrew experienced his father as punitive and his mother as supportive. I noticed that Andrew was completely focused on this work and for the first time he wrote about something with real emotional content. The story ending was obviously a fantasy and perhaps the beginning was too. I was aware, however, that there may have been events that informed this story. I did not feel this story writing necessarily linked with reality though it did mean I was alert to any other evidence that might suggest heavy handedness at home. What the story did seem to illustrate was Andrew's victim subpersonality and its need for protection by a set of clear rules and guidelines as represented by the law in the story.

Through reading this story I found myself becoming more open to Andrew and his difficulty in feeling safe and contained in the world. I became more aware of his vulnerability and felt I was beginning to 'hold' him as I had been able to do with other members of the group. His next story reinforced for me how fragile was his sense of self.

g) Andrew's second story

This story followed literacy work we had done on parody in the context of fairy tales.

The Beautiful Swan

Once upon a time a long time ago, there lived a swan. Her eggs were just hatching. The baby swan was so ugly that whenever it looked into a mirror it would smash. Hang on a second. Stop the story. I just wanted to say that swan is a bit like my sister. That is all- carry on. Thank you. The second swan would just put a crack in the mirror. But the last swan was the most beautiful swan in the world. Wherever he went there would be a crowd of animals around him hoping he would give them one of his gold feathers.

He decided *to live in another pond. He didn't know it but he was getting more and more ugly. He got so ugly that no-one went near him. So he decided to go back to his old pond. He said he was their brother but they said that our brother is the most beautiful swan in the world and you are the most ugly swan in the world. And he lived very unhappily ever after.*

h) Interpretation of Andrew's second story

The theme of this second story is one of ambivalence towards the self. The brother swan begins as the 'golden boy' which can be seen as representing the narcissistic omnipotence of the young child who has had his core empathic response needs met indicating that there was the formation of a core sense of self. Later an excess of negative attention (cf Stern's gaze affect attunement) creates a need to separate - particularly from the sisters. This leads to an alienation from a sense of goodness. He is unconscious of this until he realises that not even his sisters want to be round him. Such a state of affairs leads to unhappiness.

This story reinforced my sense that Andrew is very much a boy who is not fulfilling his potential and is not happy. It also shows quite clearly how important is his relationship with his two sisters, the theme of which appears to be one of competition for attention. This is certainly mirrored in his attention-seeking behaviour within the literacy group.

i) Emotional learning from story

Through my reflection on how I was colluding with Andrew's negative behaviour I was able, with his mother's support, to turn around the negative behaviour pattern. I was then able to begin to 'hold' Andrew positively in my mind. By seating him close to myself and focusing on his positive behaviour, Andrew seemed to feel secure enough to begin to risk working independently. His first story made me alert to difficulties he might be experiencing at home, while the second clearly reflected his poor self-image. Both these stories, for which I was the main audience, helped to encourage the attachment relationship between Andrew and myself. The stories provided a context for discussion of feelings as well as being a means of mediating affect. To have attempted to talk directly to Andrew about his feelings would, I felt, have been far too difficult for him as his mother had indicated. As the main audience/reader of his stories I was touched by the huge vulnerability expressed in them. I was also able to appreciate how his previous behaviour had quite likely been both an unconscious repetition of behaviour patterns at home as well as a way of drawing attention away from his very real literacy difficulties. That Andrew felt more emotionally secure in the group and with myself was reflected in his changed behaviour patterns. He fidgeted a lot less, no longer called out when I was speaking and began asking for help at appropriate times.

j) Educational learning from story

Andrew's motivation to engage with writing dramatically increased. While this can be seen to be largely a consequence of setting up a positive behaviour programme it was consolidated through the storywriting work. It was as if the behaviour programme provided boundaries within which he could feel secure enough to explore feelings. When writing both these stories he became completely focused. Both stories had a clear beginning, middle and end- unlike his previous unfinished work. His confidence as a writer also gradually improved. While he did not want anyone else apart from myself to read the first story he was happy to read out the second one to the group. Although he was not quite confident enough to stand up and read out his own story in assembly, he was able to read out a story written by another child in the group. Through the shift in our relationship, which had come partly out of my reading of his stories, he was able to begin to ask for and accept help with his literacy difficulties

such as the use of a dictionary which his previous behaviour had been an attempt to avoid. He took particular pride in the presentation of his second story which he chose to word process which led to a development of his IT skills. Andrew continued to focus on his work and complete tasks in the group throughout the academic year.

iii. 3rd Pupil Profile: John

This case study comes from 1:1 educational counselling work done with a Y5 boy. It illustrates how story allowed him to express his infantile subpersonality and his ambivalent feelings about his mother.

John is a dark-haired, likeable Y5 boy whose parents are of Greek Cypriot origin. There have been concerns about his slow learning progress and an inability to focus in school since Y1 when he was put on the SENIMS register. He is currently on stage 3 and under consideration for a statement for both learning and emotional difficulties. He has received both small group and individual teacher support over the last two years but has failed to progress, with teachers reporting that even in these situations he has a range of strategies for avoiding work. He appears to have a small group of close friends with whom he enjoys playing in the play ground but whom he will often draw into distracting behaviour in the classroom. His literacy and numeracy are significantly below those of his peers.

As the SENCO, I knew that John had experienced a troubled homelife with his father leaving the marital home when he was 6 yr. old. His mother subsequently experienced depression and developed a drinking problem. These home difficulties were highlighted when John, aged 9, revealed to an LSA working with him in a 1:1 session that his step-father had tried to strangle him during a domestic argument. At this point social services became involved and decided that, as mother was not willing to separate from the violent boyfriend, John and his older brother were at risk living with her. John was removed from the maternal home and over several months lived at the homes of several members of his extended family. His father initiated a court case to gain residency custody of John and his older brother which was successful. The arrangement was that mother should have them all weekend and one evening in the

week. In fact, mother then got a job which involved working on Saturday which reduced her time with them.

John appeared ever more distracted from his school work at this time and it was at this point, as the SENCO, that I tried to ensure John received some therapeutic support. As in previous similar cases where I felt the child was in need of emotional support, I found there was nothing available from local authority provision. The family therapist at Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) who had met the parents said there was a 18 month waiting list for play therapy and Primary Pupil Referral Unit did not have any counselling spaces to offer. Consequently it was agreed with my headteacher that I would provide some emotional support by giving John a weekly 1 hour educational counselling session.

In the first 3 or 4 sessions John repeated over and over the events of the domestic fight which had resulted in him being removed from the maternal home. He had been obviously traumatised by the event and was desperately unhappy about being taken away from his mother. However, he showed no emotion when speaking about how he had been strangled and in his description of witnessing how his mother and brother had also been attacked. He appeared to need to keep repeating the story over and over, often in exactly the same way that he had done the week before. He split his parents into the 'good' mother and the 'bad' father and talked continuously of running away to his mother. The fact his mother had chosen to stay with the violent boyfriend which prevented her having custody and the fact she took a job on Saturdays which meant they were not able to stay for the weekend seemed too unbearable for John to remember or mention. His preoccupation was with how he felt imprisoned by his father and that everything would be all right if everyone would let him go back to his mother. Throughout these talks he continued to use adult phrases particularly ones that could be attributed to his mother such as *"I think it's disgusting that my 70 yr. old gran who's got arthritis has to look after us at the weekend"*, "*My dad's a slob…I mean, how's he going to cope cooking for us"* and *"I think B (step dad) should be given a second chance. I know he hurt me but even murderers get given a second chance sometimes, don't they?"*. He never became emotionally upset or blamed his mother in any way for what had happened.

John presented in many ways as younger than his age -he was giggly and distractible in class and in the play ground liked playfighting. He was unable to tell the time apart from time on the hour and was confused about the structure of his week and even his school day. This contrasted sharply with his conversation when speaking about the events at home. In this context, as mentioned above, he would use adult expressions and mimicked a lot of things that he had obviously heard said by the adults around him, particularly his mother. I mentioned at my supervision how he never seemed to sound like a child. We discussed how he appears to be disassociated from the vulnerability of childhood.

This adult front was balanced by his regressive behaviour with his mother. His father reported that with his mother he would *'behave like a two year old'* and insist that his mother cut up his food and feed him. His father also came to ask my advice about what he should do about the baby bottle that John kept hidden under a blanket at home and sucked on when he was feeling upset.

As the aim of educational counselling is to use the educational context to develop emotional literacy I invited John to write down his account of what had happened. He did this in the same emotionless manner in which he had told it. We then did some work on making up stories with puppets. The trauma story was told, again in an expressionless manner. I felt the hurt and vulnerable part of John had still not surfaced in our sessions so far. I decided to try a different way in.

I asked John to close his eyes and imagine a garden. I then asked him to draw the garden and asked him what sort of adventure could happen there. He said Tommy Rugrat could have an adventure there. (Tommy Rugrat is a cartoon character of a toddler who wears nothing but a nappy). After a couple of minutes he asked if he could do a picture of Tommy Rugrat. Having drawn the picture I asked him how old he was and what he liked doing. "He's two years old and he likes escaping". I put the picture in his file. The next week I got the picture out and he immediately said, "It's embarrassing" and asked if he could cross it out and do another one. The second picture was in fact identical to the first but done in a slightly thicker pen. This one appeared to be acceptable. I then gave John and myself a writing book and said we were both going to write a story about Tommy Rugrat. John looked at me expectantly

and asked if I was going to tell him what to write but I said that he had to make up his own story and I would make one up too. Then we would read them to each other. I said we would spend 10 minutes writing. After 10 minutes John said he had not finished and was completely engrossed in writing for a full 25 minutes. Here is his story.

a) Tommy the Rugrat's Adventure

One day Tommy had an adventure in the garden. He got out of his crib and went to the dog's home. He thought he was in a car. His Mum came and said,

"Don't go in the dog's home. It is dirty in there. How did you get out of your playpen"

"Wa, wa, wa, wa, wa, wa, wa!" (read as if crying)

"OK. Do you need a diaper change?"

So she did that but it was OK so she said,

"Are you hungry?"

So she fed him. So she got him a chocolate and some momos.

He did not want that.

So she gave him two milks in two different cups (a bottle and a trainer cup).

He did not want that.

So she tried apple juice in the two cups.

He did not want that.

So she tried him with chocolate milk.

He did not want that either.

So she gave him some cookies.

He did not want that.

She gave him some toys to play with.

He did not want that.

So she put him in the cot and then she put him outside and he stopped crying.

b) Interpretation of story

For the first time John showed his infantile subpersonality. The relief at being able to bring this into the session through the metaphor of the two year old Tommy Rugrat was evident in his complete focus on writing. For John to focus for this length of time on a writing task was exceptional in itself. In the beginning of the story John leaves the security of his crib in the garden only to find himself going into a dog's home. This seems to represent for the various temporary homes and eventually father's new home which John's mother in reality has constantly criticised although she did not keep him safe in her home (the first crib). Mother asks how he got out of his crib. Perhaps in reality this is a question John might want to ask his mother i.e. how comes she wasn't there to keep him safe? As soon as mother is present Tommy begins to wail as does John regress when he sees his mother. John's belief that his mother cannot satisfy his needs is strongly made as everything Tommy's mother tries to give is no good- even the two cups one a bottle and the other a trainer mug. (Klein might have liked this illustration of her theory of the 'good breast' and 'bad breast'! -cf *Envy and Gratitude* 1957*).* It seems that neither can satisfy him now, no matter what is put in them. In the end the only thing that works is for him to be put in back in the crib and also back outside. It is clear that John needs to feel he can be held as that hurt young child but knows that there also needs to be some sort of separation from his mother.

c) Emotional learning from storywriting

The story of Tommy Rugrat allowed John to say what it was like to lose the security of his early childhood and his present ambivalence toward what his mother had to offer. For John to speak directly of how his mother had been unable to keep him safe in reality and how when he was in distress and wanting to go back to her she was not able to make it better for him was just too painful for him. By working in the story metaphor, however, the deep pain of not having his infantile needs met by his mother could be explored.

This story provided a change in the feeling tone of our sessions. I felt John was more present and subsequent sessions showed a marked increase in John's ability to speak of his feelings. The words he used began to sound like his. He began to tell me how

he blamed his father for leaving his mother when he was six and that he believed this was the beginning of his mother's difficulties. In one session he spoke about how he had been so angry with his father the night before, that he kicked the wardrobe so hard he made a hole in it. We were able to talk about his feelings towards his father and how he thought he did not care about him. I began to bring in some reality challenges for him such as pointing out that if his father did not care he would not bother coming to school and going to the family therapist to discuss how best to help John. I also gently pointed out that he would be seeing more of his mother if she had not taken a job working on Saturdays. I arranged to meet with John's mother and father alternately on a monthly basis. In this way I showed John that I respected both his mother and father's concern for his well-being and hoped to challenge the good/bad split created by John in relation to his mother and father. I felt it was also important that I showed that the support system set up for him which included the school, social services and his parents could hold him rather than cause further fragmentation in his life. I did this by setting up a joint agency meeting to which both parents and all the different professionals who were involved with John were invited.

d) Educational learning from storywriting

In writing this story John worked with complete focus for 25 mins and constructed a story with a clear beginning, middle and end. It gave a clear assessment of what he is able to do when motivated which is generally not the case in the classroom. It also provided clear pointers to his zone of proximal development in terms of literacy skills i.e. punctuation, complex sentences, certain spelling patterns and use of direct speech.

E. Discussion of pupil profiles

Question 1: To what extent and in which ways can storywriting be used to develop emotional literacy, i.e. the ability to recognize, understand and appropriately express emotions, in children whose learning has been impeded by emotional and behavioural difficulties?

Emotional literacy is about the ability to think about affect. It is the ability to identify

and reflect on emotional experience in order that this can inform later behaviour. This was something that none of the three pupils in the study were able to do well. Attempts to talk directly about emotional issues had failed with all three children. Anya had refused to speak even to a child psychotherapist, Andrew's mother reported that he was unable to speak about his feelings and John mimicked things said by those around him. All three, however, were able to write stories, given a supportive context, which it would seem conveyed powerfully, through the metaphor, their inner emotional anxieties. In this way the writing task acted as an affect attunement device, to use Stern's terminology, where the child was able to communicate their emotional state without being overwhelmed. Their role as narrator meant they were in control of what was shared.

When introducing the story themes, I attempted to model stories in which the characters experienced similar difficulties to the ones I imagined they had experienced. As they wrote their stories I would mirror back the feelings of the characters with statements such as "*that must have been very sad for them"* or "*that must have made them feel very lonely*". Through this modelling and mirroring I was able to extend the language and meaning associated with what were possibly the raw experiences expressed in their stories. In the metaphors of their stories we were able to discuss how their characters might feel given the dilemmas they faced. This was done both individually and, in the case of Anya and Andrew, sometimes in the group.

All three pupil profiles point to the power of the imagination to structure unconscious emotional issues into coherent stories with a beginning middle and end. What is striking about these children's stories is that despite poor skills in literacy they are able to write stories, given the right context, which seems to convey so directly and powerfully their inner vulnerability and conflict.
In this way it would appear that unconscious material was brought into consciousness albeit in metaphoric form. That the metaphor used related intimately to each child's emotional state is, I think, shown quite clearly in each pupil profile. The events described in the metaphor of the stories mirrored real life events which had had a profound emotional impact for each of them. In the case of Anya the pain of being eaten mirrored the domestic trauma she had experienced. In the case of Andrew the isolation of the swan mirrored his isolation in the family. For John the inability of

Tommy Rugrat's mother to comfort him mirrored the failure of his actual mother to care for him. For these children it would seem that these actual experiences were far too painful for them to verbalise directly. It is possible that the exploration of these unconscious feelings through story metaphor led to the later changes in behaviour described in the profiles. In the case of Anya this change in behaviour was her newly-found confidence to speak, for Andrew it was his increased pride in the presentation of his work and in John's case it was that he could begin to speak with his own voice rather than mimic those around him. These changes in behaviour reinforce Bettelheim's view that expression through storywriting can release unconscious pressures.

It would seem that by projecting their own painful feelings onto their characters, they could begin to label and reflect on emotional experiences. In this way their emotional literacy was developed. While I instinctively made my own interpretations of the stories, at no time did I attempt to communicate these to either the children or their parents. Any comments were confined to the metaphor. It might be argued that because of this the children were not developing emotional literacy in the sense that their reflections were not consciously about themselves but about their characters. I would suggest that while such a direct interpretation approach might be appropriate with adolescents and adults (and this is central in adult psychoanalysis) it is not necessarily appropriate with junior age children and particularly not with children in a group situation. To give direct interpretations and encourage the conscious analysis of the metaphors could also have implications for confidentiality as discussed in my last paper.

Also through this work with storywriting and the exploration of the characters emotions, it would appear that the children could extend their understanding of interpersonal processes in much the same way that Winnicott describes younger children exploring these areas through early role play. It seems to me then that story writing is an age appropriate way to explore emotional literacy with junior children and an approach that, if confined to the metaphor, could be safely extended to enhance the emotional literacy development of all children.

Question 2: To what extent and in which ways can storywriting enhance the self-

esteem in children whose learning has been impeded by emotional and behavioural difficulties?

As discussed in the psychosynthesis model, the acceptance of previously unconscious subpersonalities may lead in turn to an improved sense of self. The main characters in each story seemed to represent an important unconscious subpersonality for each particular child. Thus it would appear that by taking the role of narrator the child was able to step out of that subpersonality by projecting it onto their character and thus view it more objectively. Anya, for example, could describe the horror of feeling what it was like to be eaten rather than be obliterated by the experience. In psychosynthesis terms it could be said that they were able to disidentify from the subpersonality and view it from the place of the personal self. It is suggested that the improvement in the interpersonal skills
outlined under question 1, indicates that the children appeared to experience a stronger sense of self through this work.

In the first two cases I also acted as the mediator between the child and the peer group in that I initially protected them from over-exposure yet encouraged them when I felt they were strong enough to share their storywriting work with others. Because of the natural appeal of stories to
children, the other children in the group always provided an engaged audience. As self-image is affected by how we consider we are viewed by others, this sharing of their stories with peers was a crucial part of building their self-esteem. The sensitivity required for teachers to know when it is helpful to protect children form over-exposure to peers and when to encourage children to share their work again has implications for teacher training.

In writing stories which reflect their own underlying emotional issues, the children who otherwise had difficulty engaging with writing tasks showed an increased engagement and motivation to write. This increased engagement led to an improvement in general literacy skills as well as, in the cases of Anya and Andrew, a motivation to use IT skills in order to improve the presentation of their work. Both Anya and Andrew were pleased with their finished books and it would seem that the well presented and completed work enhanced their view of themselves as writers and

hence their academic self-esteem.

It would also seem that by encouraging children to write stories which engage core aspects of themselves, by facilitating the sharing of these stories with others and by producing completed well-presented work, both the children's academic and personal self-image would appear to be enhanced. I would suggest that such a psychologically minded approach to storywriting could be transferred to literacy work with all children given that the teacher has the appropriate psychological awareness and training.

Question 3: To what extent and in which ways can storywriting be used to develop english literacy skills in children whose learning has been impeded by emotional and behavioural difficulties?

All three pupils made progress in their literacy skills through story writing. In Anya's case there was a remarkable and sudden improvement in both her sentence construction and her handwriting as shown in the examples. In Andrew's case he began to be able to tolerate his work not being perfect and began to take a pride in his finished work. He also became receptive to being helped to develop his literacy skills. In all three pupils there was considerable progress in the quantity of writing produced and the ability to concentrate on the tasks. This was particularly marked in John's case. Bettelheim suggests that it is the unconscious element of fairy tales that engages children so powerfully. I would also suggest that by giving storywriting themes which encourage the expression of the unconscious many children, not just those with EBDs, may respond with an increased motivation to express themselves and in the process develop their literacy skills.

Question 4: To what extent and in which ways is it possible to integrate therapeutic provision into the mainstream literacy curriculum?

In order to address this question there are several main issues which I think it is necessary to address. They are: -

a) Setting up of a 'safe' space where therapeutic storywriting can take place.

b) Cultivating a containing therapeutic relationship between the teacher/therapist and child

c) Supervision for the teacher/therapist

d) Partnership with parents

e) Professional training requirements

a) Setting up of a 'safe' space where therapeutic storywriting can take place.

In all three cases the setting up of the physical space for the individual child was important. For Anya who was part of a group of six, it was important that she be allowed in the room without sitting with the group, knowing that she was still accepted as part of the group. She then sat close to myself for two weeks without doing any of the set tasks. That the normal boundaries of a literacy group could be relaxed for her individual needs, seemed to give Anya a sense that her anxious self could be accepted in the group. Andrew, however, needed tighter and more formal boundaries in order to feel 'held' by myself in the group situation of twelve children. By investing my time in setting up a positive behaviour programme with his mother, giving him certificates and seating him at the front of the group, he was able to feel secure enough to begin to focus on his work. In working with John who had been put on the At Risk register and who was completely preoccupied with recent home events, I was aware that he would need an individual space where he could speak directly about his anxieties. I took care to make sure these sessions were regular and if there was any unavoidable change to their timing that I informed him in advance.

There was a different physical setting, then, for each of the three pupils discussed. What they had in common, however, was that I responded to their needs for a secure physical environment on an individual basis. This I believe is essential in working with any child with emotional disturbance.

The question, of course, arises as to what informs the individual teacher's decision-making when setting up the physical space. This will depend on careful assessment of each individual child. There are the normal room and curriculum timetable constraints found in any school but many of these children have SEN funding allocated to them which gives some scope for setting up special groupings when appropriate.

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b) Cultivating a containing therapeutic relationship between the teacher/therapist

and child

In all three cases it seemed that the children were unable to learn because of a preoccupation with inner anxieties. The setting up of an appropriate physical space allowed the possibility of providing emotional containment. In all three cases I began to reflect on the child¹s inner anxiety and to be concerned about their emotional wellbeing. Crucially, I took the role of receiver/reader of their stories where I could validate the experiences expressed in the metaphor. In all three cases I felt my reading of the stories gave me an insight into their emotional vulnerability. Through the process of reflecting on and interpreting the stories, I noticed an increased tendency on my part to think about their situations. In Bion's terms, I began to hold their anxiety in order for them to begin to think about feelings which had previously been too unbearable to think about. By mirroring with my comments the anxieties expressed in the stories, I helped to give their experiences extended language and meaning. This in turn supported further development of their thinking processes as reflected in their increased output of writing and ability to focus for longer periods of time in all three cases.

My interpretation of the children's stories led to a reflection on and engagement with the stories. This took the form, not of a logical standard analysis, but more of an intuitive response, albeit informed by my particular therapeutic training. In this sense it became a meeting of two unconsciousnesses, similar to the manner discussed by Schore and where he says attachment can most effectively take place.

c) ***Supervision for the teacher/therapist***

For a teacher to be able to work with children with emotional difficulties it is essential she receives some supervision in order that her own anxieties, that may be triggered by working with these children, may be contained. This is an invaluable support for clear thinking and reflection on what can be emotionally demanding work. For myself, in the cases detailed, this was provided through supervision sessions given by an educational therapist experienced in this way of working. This was particularly relevant in my work with Andrew. In this case the space to discuss and reflect on the feelings he brought up in me was pivotal to my being able to see how I was colluding with his projection. I was then able to step outside of this reaction and

think more clearly about what it was that he really needed. Such supervision is, I believe, an essential component of any therapeutic work.

d) Partnership with parents

With all three pupils my communication with their parents was an important factor. Apart from allowing the child to see that the school and home were working together in their best interests, thus avoiding institutional splitting, these meetings were also an opportunity to inform and check my
interpretations of the children's stories. As mentioned above, I did not communicate these interpretations with the parents nor did I show the children¹s stories to them. The children were always, however, given the opportunity to take their finished stories home and share them with the
parent. Some of their stories they chose to share with the parents and others not.

In the case of Andrew, it was necessary to set up a positive behaviour programme in conjunction with home before he could feel sufficiently contained to begin to engage with the writing in sessions. While my reflection on the storywriting work draws heavily on a a psychodynamic
model, my work here with Andrew shows the benefit of making use of other therapeutic models as the situation demands- in this case a behaviourist one.

e) Professional training requirements

Currently, in most primary schools, support for children with EBDs is provided by people who are not teachers. Most commonly it is untrained, low paid Learning Support Assistants who have a time allocation to work with children who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) which relates to their EBDs. In cases where professional support is available in school it will usually be in the form of a counsellor who has most likely completed a training for working with adults (see last project) , or the school nurse who may have done a brief introduction to counselling course. Neither of these professionals, however, is a trained teacher and so will find it difficult to integrate the therapeutic work into the educational curriculum. It is necessary, I would suggest, for the adult to be both a trained teacher and to have undertaken some additional therapeutic training which relates specifically to working with primary age children. There are a few teachers, like myself, who have also

completed an independent therapy training. I would suggest, however, that if such an educational counselling approach were to become integrated into junior schools, it would be necessary to provide professional development supported by mainstream educational authorities.

F. Conclusion

This study points to the power of storywriting as a therapeutic tool in working with children whose learning has been impeded due to emotional and behavioural difficulties. It shows how story metaphor can become a vehicle for the expression of feelings pertinent to the individual child and which may have been previously unconscious. It would seem that through the structuring of the story images out of what Ricoeur calls the 'unconscious pool' of images into a narrative, there is the possibility that the child may be able to work through internal conflicts. This 'narrative intelligence' can be considered as one of the two main modes of thought and an equally valid way of making sense of the world as the logico-scientific mode of thought.

By projecting feelings onto story characters the child may be able to begin to identify and name emotions in the safety of the imaginary. By taking the role of narrator they are in a position to explore how the characters will react in different situations. By supporting children in this process through modelling and mirroring the stories, the teacher may be able to extend the child's language and meaning associated with the emotional dilemmas of the story. In this way the child's emotional literacy can be developed. The benefit of keeping any interpretation by the teacher within the metaphor is that the child's personal vulnerability is not exposed, neurotic transference is not encouraged and confidentiality does not become a big issue.

By giving children, who have emotional difficulties and are also reluctant writers, the opportunity to write stories with a personally relevant emotional content they may become more engaged with the writing process. They may become motivated to complete the stories and in the process develop their academic literacy skills as observed in the cases studied. This may also lead to the development of IT skills in

order to improve the presentation of their work. The completion of stories which are well presented can enhance these children's academic self-esteem.

A child with EBDs needs to feel secure in the setting where therapeutic storywriting takes place. This can mean giving consideration to the physical space and ensuring that sessions are as regular as possible. If the work is taking place in a group it may be necessary for the teacher to mediate between the child and its peers in order to ensure they do not feel overly exposed.

Probably the most important aspect of developing storywriting as a therapeutic tool is that the child can feel secure in their relationship with the teacher. This can be described as an attachment relationship and can be seen as providing containment for the child's anxieties. Through this containment, the child is able to think about feelings that were previously unbearable, albeit in the metaphor. The process of reflecting on and interpreting the child's story metaphors, on the part of the teacher, may further strengthen the attachment relationship.

Communication with parents through regular meetings may give insights into the causes of the children's emotional difficulties and thus inform the teacher/therapist's future responses to the child. The involvement of parents may also be necessary to help set behaviour targets. The use of a positive behaviour programme can also help a child feel contained and in this way support the therapeutic process.

One of the main implications of the work described in this study, is for teacher's training and professional development. Few teachers have any training in psychological models either for children or adults. However, in order for a teacher to have the psychological awareness and insight necessary to undertake such work, some training in therapeutic work is essential. There also needs to be provision for regular supervision.

With the current policy of inclusion, mainstream schools are being expected to deal with children who have considerable emotional difficulties and whose behaviour can be both disturbed and disturbing. Such children often also have learning difficulties in the area of literacy. Given the availability of appropriately trained teachers,

therapeutic storywriting may be a useful way to integrate support for such children into the mainstream curriculum.

Implications for further research

There are a number of themes that have been touched upon in this paper which might be interesting to explore in further research. The first is how children's storywriting may be affected by using the starting point of guided imagery. This was mentioned in the third pupil profile where it seemed to act as a trigger for storywriting with a particularly relevant emotional content in the metaphor for the child. The second theme is the role of the wider school network, including outside agencies, in providing a coherent and containing system which can support children with emotional difficulties. The third theme, which I would find interesting to explore, is the subjective response of classteachers to these children with EBDs and how that might change with the input of some therapeutic training which encourages a more psychologically-minded reflection on the children's emotional states and behaviour.

G. Appendix

Anya's second story

JENNY IN EGYPT

Hi I'm Jenny I'm just going to Egypt for my holiday this summer. My mum's an archaeologist. She's going for a digging session. I've always wanted to go abroad. I've never been anywhere but England. I'm going to Tell el Amarna, that's a place in Egypt. I want to be an archaeologist like my mum when I grow up so I can go to Egypt all the time. My mum's going to be looking for Egyptian mummies.

"Hi Mum, how long is it 'till we're going to Egypt"
"Just 3 more days now" she replied
"3 more days that's ages mum"
"Well it gives us time to do some packing"
"OK mum"

At last on the plane but its just a pity that I forgot to take my travel sickness pills.
"Are we there yet mum?"
"Be patient we are not going to be in Egypt with in seconds. It takes time."
The thing I have to work with that I'm not very good at is my patience. Even I had to admit that. It seemed to take 100 years to get there.

"OK you stay in the hotel while I go to my digging session."
"But mum please can I come too please."
"Only if you stop nagging me for the rest of the day."
"OK"

It was amazing at the digging session all the people all digging in the ground. But then my mum found something. The crowds of archaeologists gathered round her.

"what is it Mum Mum what is it."
"I told you to stop nagging me. You promised."
"Sorry mum."
"It looks like an Egyptian mummy" an archaeologist said.
"Wow" I said.
"Lets dig it up" the archaeologist said again.

It was really beautiful with wonderful decoration. It must have taken hours to decorate.

"OK Jenny this is Abbey. She is one of the other archaeologists daughters" my mum said.
Hi! She said
Hi! I said
"We're going to take the mummy to the hotel" Abbey's mum said.
"OK" me and Abbey said together.
"Is it OK if we leave you two here while we go back to the digging session"
"OK" Abbey said.

The minute our mums left Abbey quickly dared me to go in the coffin.
My answer was no.
"Chicken" she said

"Stop it" I demanded
2Only if….no you would never do that" she said.
"What?" I shouted getting angrier
"Only if you do it" she said
"OK I give up what is it?"
"Go in the coffin" she said.
"OP" help me to move the mummy" I said

We moved the mummy away and I slowly got in. I saw flashing colours. Red, blue, yellow, green, purple, orange and lots more. It was like travelling through time. But how?

Eventually it stopped and I opened the door. Where was I? How did I get here\? Why was I here? How will I get home? A cold chill crept down my back. I was petrified.

I looked at my clothes. I was wearing a black heavy wig, a long white dress and lots of jewellery. It was then I realised I was in Ancient Egypt.(I remembered a history project in year 3)

I found myself entering what seemed to be an Egyptian palace. I looked for a TV. How could anyone live without a TV but anyway I needed to get back to 1999. I'm about 3000 years in the past on my own with lots of strange people who think I'm their queen. Then a young girl gave me a gold necklace and said "for my queen".

How am I going to get back? I got here by travelling through time. I went in the mummy case and I was here so if I go back in the mummy case I will be back to the modern world. But how will I get back unless I die.

How did other Egyptians die? I knew you could die of snakebites or food poisoning. That's it . I'll have a feast. I was thinking but how do I know that the food will be poison. I was getting hungry anyway and if the food didn't poison me then at least I wouldn't be hungry anymore. I said to everyone in my loudest voice "There will be a feast on tonight" I didn't know who to invite so I just invited everyone.

Everyone was wearing their best clothes I liked the women's clothes but the men's clothes were really ugly. They were wearing skirt type things but everyone was wearing heavy wigs and jewellery. I was wearing the necklace that the young girl gave me . It was a beautiful gold necklace. I don't know how anyone could afford it. There were lots of plates with food on. There were all types of foods. There was fruits, vegetables, bread and lots more.

I started eating. I had some grapes, some fish, some duck, and I don't think I'll be having that again but anyway I had 3 times as much as I normally have. I was very full after a while. Everyone was talking and joking and nobody noticed that there was a poisonous snake on the loose. It came straight towards me and bit me.

There were whizzing colours and I was back in the mummy's coffin. I opened the lid and I was back in modern times in the hotel room. Whenever I told anyone my story they didn't believe me but I know it really happened because I've still got the necklace that the Egyptian girl gave me…(925 words)

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