Contents

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GUIDELINES FOR POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTORS

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- Each article should be accompanied by an abstract of no more than 200 words together with three to five keywords. The abstract should be submitted on a separate sheet to the main text.

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EDITORIAL

With this issue Critical Commentary enters its fourth year of publication. Now under the aegis of our new Graduate School, Critical Commentary continues to present examples of the wide-ranging and lively research being conducted by the undergraduate and postgraduate students of Newman University College.

In the first article Stephanie O'Connor looks at one of the main debates that have flourished throughout Christian history: Can Jesus Christ be both truly human and truly divine? The author analyses two different Christologies before exploring some of the issues raised for modern-day Christianity.

Luke Blackham's study investigates young people's and professionals' reflections on their experience of counselling and youth work interventions. Through the use of interviews and focus groups it was found that factors of environment and power play a large part in these reflections. The author gives some suggestions for improving counselling and youth work services.

Media literacy and media education form the background for the collaborative article by Anthony Avery, Julian McDougall, and Amy Pritchard. The authors explore media literacy with regard to the DfES' Every Child Matters (2003) and show that there is still much work remaining to be done with the dissemination of ideas of media literacy.

The context of Jemma Kelly's article is a series of studies conducted since 1976. Here the author reports the findings of a small-scale study of classroom interactions in a primary school. A key theme that emerged concerned the role of the classroom assistant as a significant and often first point of 'emotional support' for young children, which also emphasised an increasing differentiation between teacher and classroom assistant.

Over the centuries sugar has come to be a major factor in the appetites of most consumers in Britain. Michelle Watson employs two novels by the Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-winning American writer Toni Morrison to illustrate the effects that the consumers' desire for sweetness had on those who were made to produce and manufacture the raw product by methods and values that are anything but 'sweet'.

Professor Yahya Al-Nakeeb
Interim Editor
Newman University College
March 2011

From Jesus to God and back again

Stephanie O'Connor

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the debate that has raged throughout Christian history; can Jesus Christ be both truly human and truly divine? The two Christologies that deal with this issue: a low, ascending Christology and a high, descending Christology, will be analysed and a conclusion reached, with reference to the work of a range of theologians in order to shed light on the complexity of such a debate. The article will trace the history of Christology, as well as attempt to deal with some of the issues it raises for the modern day Christian.

The focus in this article will be on two contrasting, yet arguably interdependent Christologies, and the extent to which they are valid and relevant for Christians today. Questions regarding the work and person of Jesus have created major interest and research for the last two millennia and it is these questions which will be analysed in this article. 'Jesus-the-Christ', a title offered by Dupuis (1994, p.36) emphasises the importance of both schools of thought regarding Christology; 'Jesus' highlighting his tangible human history, without compromising anything of his complete divinity - 'Christ'. These differences will be clarified and discussed throughout this article. The historical Jesus, that is, the life, teaching and death of the Jew, Jesus of Nazareth, is becoming ever more significant in contemporary society, yet there is still tension between this focus on Jesus and the traditional view which ultimately focuses on Christ's dual nature; human and divine. The significance of such research for the lives of both theologians and Christian believers is great, as it has the potential to alter our perception of who Christ was and what his significance is. This thinking moves us

away from a purely dogmatic approach which characterised Christian thought since the era of the Great Councils and opens us to the reality of Christ as a man, facing the hardships still recognisable to us in the 21st Century.

A Christological approach that has developed more recently, particularly within Roman Catholic circles (Loewe, 1996, p.2), has been labelled by scholars as a 'low, ascending' approach, also known as 'Christology from below.' Such an approach aims to examine Jesus as the human face of God (Robinson, 1979), and in doing so gain greater knowledge of God; thus ascending from the human to the divine. In terms of assessing its adequacy as a theory we will also be examining the approach that preceded it, a 'high, descending' approach, also known as 'Christology from above', most clearly evidenced in modern times by Karl Barth. This approach started with studying the divine nature of God, and working downwards, towards humanity and God's creation. A 'high' Christology is so named because it starts off with the presupposition that Christ is fundamentally a divine figure who was literally God incarnate (Bouyer, 1983, p.20). Gunton (1983, p.34) cites Ritschl (1972) who disputes any theological discussion that has predetermined concepts in advance of the dialogue; an immediate problem with a 'high' Christology. Bouyer (1983, p.20) writes that today there is a general acceptance of a scientific view of the world, rendering certain theological claims meaningless. A 'low' Christology, however, starts off with the indisputable fact that Jesus was a man. Only then does it become more acceptable to believe that God is revealed through Christ and that Jesus plays a fundamental role in our salvation (Baillie, 1961, pg.63). Haight (2007, p.33) notes that the use of the word 'from' in these Christological descriptions indicates a starting point from which the rest of the theory will develop.

Christology from above has, until recently, been normative among orthodox Christian thinkers, so it is important to ask why such a radical shift in thinking has come about and why it was felt necessary to replace such a traditional line of thought.

To critically analyse Christology from above, we must discuss the point from which this idea originated. It takes its starting point from the prologue found in John's Gospel (John 1:1). Here, Jesus' deity and the declaration of the incarnation are made explicit, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God' (John 1:1). This then gave rise to questions, such as the possibility of Jesus being both human and divine, and the implications this had for Christianity.

In the fifth century, two major differences presented themselves between the schools of Antioch and Alexandria. The Alexandrians emphasised the divinity of Christ, whereas the Antiochenes stressed Jesus' perfect humanity (Lane, 1975, p.15). At the Council of Chalcedon in 451CE, the gathered bishops and theologians sought to combine the valid insights of both schools of thought. Thus the dogma of the 'hypostatic union' was formed – the union of true humanity and true divinity in the one person, Jesus (Loewe, 1996, p.6.). It is important to note that at the time of these councils there was no aim for either a 'high' or 'low' Christology as these distinctions were not in existence. They purely attempted to clarify a fundamental belief and develop a theological model which aimed to explain how Christ was both human and divine.

This presents an issue for those who attempt to develop a Christology around their philosophical presuppositions, as Lane (1975, p.16) points out that one of the basic tasks of Christology is to present good reasons for believing Jesus to be truly God and truly man. Here we can take a brief look at Origen, a third century theologian, whose work illuminates such issues. Origen stressed the full divinity of Christ, but concerned himself more with Christ's unity with God rather than the incarnation (Gunton, 1983, p.35). However, when speaking of the incarnation he did not attempt an explanation as to how Christ could be both human and divine, but wrote that it is beyond our capacity to understand (Gunton, 1983, p.35). This understanding can still be seen, thirteen centuries later, in the work of the Australian theologian Gerald O'Collins who writes that to produce an unquestionable Christology is impossible because 'Jesus will never find a theologian worthy of him'(O'Collins, 1995, p.16). Origen believed that in some way, Jesus' soul clung to God in indissoluble union (Gunton, 1983 pg.36). This thinking enabled Jesus to maintain his full humanity without sacrificing anything of his divinity. The biggest problem here is that Origen has already decided what is theologically possible and what is not, and his arguments are heavily influenced by a priori philosophical and theological considerations (Gunton, 1983, p37); theological considerations that have been derived by logic rather than facts surrounding Jesus' human history, which Gunton believes may present potential weaknesses in Origen's argument. However, it is questionable whether empirical evidence is enough to base on any Christological assumption, and indeed whether it is even possible to obtain such empirical verification. Bouyer (1983, pg.22) argues that in Christianity there has

always been an explicit faith in Jesus as the Saviour of humankind. Christians who insist on rejecting a 'high' Christology are in fact, rejecting the fundamental belief on which Christianity is based. Grillmeier, as cited in Gunton, notes that in his work Origen often uses Christ's manhood as a starting point, so there is an unmistakable element of Christology from below (Gunton, 1983, p38). Thus we can argue that far from being mutually exclusive, a 'high' and 'low' Christology actually rely on certain aspects of the other.

Christology from below often aims to start off by examining Jesus as a historical figure, but seeks to conclude with a 'high' Christology, essentially affirming his divinity. Gunton (1983, p.10) notes that if by using this alternative route it is possible to achieve orthodox, or even Chalcedonian doctrines, then it would be a great gain to the Christian community. Loewe, (1996, p.3) comments that there are two different types of statement that can be made about Jesus; either that Jesus was a first century Jew, who lived in Palestine and was crucified on a cross; or that Jesus was the Christ: the former being a historical statement, the latter a statement of faith.

This is where a 'low' Christology diverges from the routes that a 'high' Christology takes. It aims to begin theological inquiry within the realms of humanity, focusing on Jesus of Nazareth as opposed to Jesus the Christ.

Haight (2007, p.36) highlights the importance of 'historical consciousness' and how it comes to bear on theology and one's understanding of Jesus Christ. He writes that it is this consciousness that provides the framework within which Christians must think today (*ibid*.). Lane (1975, p.15) believes that the influence of history has given rise to questions about traditional Christology; issues particularly concerning Christology from above, which failed to take seriously the humanity of Christ as the starting point for knowing his divinity. Haight (*ibid*.) embraces the challenge of historical criticism, advocating that for theology to be intelligible to the world, it must be correlated with, and inculturated into a historically conscious society. In emphasising this historical importance Haight acknowledges the value of a Christology that is significant and pertinent in today's world; a world in which immanence replaces transcendence as the normative religious worldview, and so making a new method for Christology necessary; one which recovers the historical record of Jesus' life and uses modern day language

to place it into a context fit for the contemporary world. As this awareness has developed, linked with the increase in research about Jesus, a 'low' Christology has taken shape which argues that in order to understand Jesus as the Christ, one must understand Jesus of Nazareth. However, it is possible that historical evidence could prove to be a threat to some fundamental Christian beliefs, potentially undermining Jesus divinity; as Borg (1994, p.183) highlights, the historical Jesus is quite different from the Jesus of the Gospels. Many scholars argue that the historical validity of the Gospels is questionable, and O'Collins (1995, p.2) states, 'To transcribe adequately the story of Jesus is an impossible dream'. However, Haight (2007, p.38) believes that even with vague knowledge gained through the Gospels it is still enough to depict the person of Jesus. He argues that Christology is always ascending, because its starting point is always grounded in humanity; yet there is an ongoing search for the transcendent. This falls in line with Karl Rahner's transcendental anthropology. Rahner's basic thesis is that God reveals Godself to every person in the very experience of that person's own, finite, yet consciously open-ended transcendence; evidenced in loving, hoping and questioning (Kärkkäinen, 2003, p.141); therefore, Rahner labels his Christology, 'transcendental'.

For Rahner, at the core of Christology is the role of Jesus in his mediation of the 'new and unsurpassable closeness of God to humanity' (Rahner, 1978, p.279). Barth (1960, p.47), a contemporary theologian, opposes this thinking; for him, God is totally 'Other'. There is no contact point between humankind and God apart from that which God has created, that is, the person of Jesus Christ. Rahner aimed to reach the conclusions of traditional Christology, in line with the teachings of the Council of Chalcedon but initially starts with a Christology from below (Gunton, 1983, p.10).

In dealing with the problem of two seemingly incompatible realities; human and divine, residing as one, Rahner (1961) argues that it is due to our misunderstanding of what it is to be human (Gunton, 1983, p.11). He believes that in order to discover anything about God, we have to accept that humanity is open to the divine. In doing this people may find it less difficult to understand how Jesus was able to maintain his complete humanity without having to sacrifice anything of his divine nature. Jesus becomes a unique instance of humanity that was completely open to God (Wong, 1984, pp.131-132). O'Collins (1985, p.230) writes that as humans were made in the divine image and

likeness (Gen 1: 26-7) so humanity remains 'restlessly open to God'. Parallels can be drawn here with Antiochene thinking, that Jesus is proof of what we are all called to through the grace inherent in all human beings; God's good creation. For this reason, Rahner also emphasised the need for closer unity between fundamental and dogmatic reflection on Christology. To this end he advocated, within the globalised framework of today, a dialogue with other religions (Rahner, 1978, p.294).

Haight (2007, p.103) writes that many different theological positions on the status of Jesus Christ, relative to other religions and religious mediations compete for common acceptance. He goes on to discuss the need for pluralism, however, by this he does not refer to sheer multiplicity; rather unity amid difference, or differences within a common field of shared faith, beliefs and commitment.

Rahner (1978, pp.11-13), put forward the idea that many negative views shared by many human beings, for example, that humanity is fallen and seriously corrupted, potentially prevents the belief that God could ever share in our existence. In adopting his new anthropological philosophy, Rahner felt that Jesus was the prime example of a human who was open to God; something that is inherent in all human beings. Openness to God, or what he called 'the supernatural existential' is innate within all of humanity.

However, a potential problem with this thinking is that it takes away the unique place of Jesus, reducing him to a mere perfect example, which may prove inadequate when dealing with Jesus' divinity. Gunton (1983, pp.14-16) emphasises this concern with Rahner's method, particularly over 'Degree Christology'. Where perfect humanity, which Rahner feels we are all capable of, is deemed tantamount to divinity, Jesus may be seen as only different to the rest of humanity in degree. As a result of this reductionism, Jesus is possibly seen only as the supreme degree of what we are already. However, perhaps it is not so much that we are potentially perfect but that we are, by God's grace, perfectible.

Ultimately, Gunton does not believe that Rahner's Christology from below succeeds on its own at arriving at Christ's divinity (Hunsicker, 2009). Rahner comes to a point in his anthropology where he must account for Christ's divinity without resorting to Docetism: the belief that Jesus' physical body and suffering was merely an illusion,

or adoptionism: the idea that God adopted Jesus as his son, after his birth. At this point, he refers back to the traditional concept of the 'hypostatic union': the union of the human and divine nature of God, and thus a Christology 'from above'. Therefore, Rahner's Christology would seem to amount to a double movement; both from above and below.

Barth opposes Rahner's thinking, believing that liberalism blurs the boundary between God and humanity:

> 'To speak about God meant to speak about humanity, no doubt in elevated tone... Without doubt human beings were magnified at the expense of God – the God who is sovereign Other standing over against humanity...This God who is the free partner in a history which he himself inaugurated and in a dialogue ruled by him – this divine God was in danger of being reduced to a pious notion...' (Barth, 1979, p.48).

Barth condemned liberal theology for focusing too much on humanity and replacing the traditional starting point of theology 'from above' with an approach 'from below' (Kärkkäinen, 2003, p.111).

Whilst explaining how Jesus would have been 'open to God', Rahner does not provide adequate justification as to how Jesus and God can be one and the same. He instead appears to be focusing on the criticisms faced by a 'high' Christology thus concentrating on Jesus' humanity without sufficiently explaining his divinity. It can be argued that the idea of self-transcendence does not help us fathom how through the human Jesus, God's salvation becomes a reality on earth. Haight (2007, p.45) argues that to assess a Christology's adequacy, it must fulfil its most fundamental criterion: it must explain why or how Jesus Christ is the saviour. Emphasising Jesus' humanity may in fact obscure any notions of his significance as a divine saviour – the very heart of Christology. Even though a low Christology addresses many problems faced by a high Christology, it also runs into its own difficulties, where essential aspects of Christology are lost. Lane (1975, p.17) argues that a fundamentally 'low' Christology is not a viable alternative to that of a 'high' Christology as it is presented with too many problems. However, in using this new point of departure; the historical figure of Christ, and then moving to speak of his religious significance; moving 'up' so to speak, we adopt elements of both approaches to reach a conclusion that is in line with traditional doctrine and teaching,

but which can also claim validity in a modern world of historical context. The mystery of Christ would become more accessible to the critical eye of a modern audience but would also potentially reinstate the Jesus Christ of the Gospels from which we can begin to understand the truth behind his human life and his divinity and oneness with God. The intention of Rahner's transcendental anthropology was not to create a new Christology, only to lessen the difficulties inherent in classical traditions.

Here we have two distinct approaches to Christology, with two very separate starting points. Yet both attempt to reach a similar conclusion – the unity of Christ's divinity and humanity. Although each approach has a relatively coherent, and clear structure, it is sometimes forgotten that the issue that is being dealt with is one of tradition and revelation – matters far more subtle than merely the availability of historical evidence of Christ and what interpretations can be assumed from this evidence. A 'high' Christology, whilst concentrating on the divinity of Christ, often underplays the vital importance and significance of Jesus' humanity. However, this problem becomes reversed with a fundamentally 'low' Christology, as concentrating on the man of Jesus can become reductionist and may not adequately account for his divinity. In light of extensive reading on these two approaches, it would appear that neither is without weakness and fault, thus affecting their validity within a modern society. However, what can be seen is that the weakness of one is the strength of the other. The conclusion that must be drawn seems to be that the most effective way of progressing thinking in this particular area of theology, is an attempt to interlink the two theories; a 'high' Christology and a 'low' Christology, taking the strengths from each, in order to develop an adequate Christology that not only provides a valid theory at ease with theology today, but also overcomes the issues faced by both a 'high' and a 'low' approach. Dupuis (1994, p.35) claims that Christology needs to combine both, and it needs to be shown that in Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God has become man, and his human story is that of God. Christologies from above and below complement each other, as we can see due to the continuing enrichment the Church has found from the schools of both Alexandria and Antioch (O'Collins, 1995, p.17). Gunton, (1983, p.13) reasons that we can find in the development of Christology a double movement which corresponds to both human and divine content; Christology is both from above and below. However, it cannot be assumed that this can be done with any ease. The challenge that theologians face today, is finding a way of uniting these two schools of thought, to produce a Christology that is coherent, valid and relevant to the Christian tradition (Helminiak, 1986, p.46).

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The Reflections of Young People and Professionals on Counselling and Youth Work Interventions: Project Results

Luke Blackham

ABSTRACT

Aims: This study explored young people's and professionals' reflections on counselling interventions with the view to consider how to improve both counselling and youth work approaches when helping young people.

Methods: A small scale qualitative research project was undertaken in two separate youth organisations with young people and professionals who had experience of both counselling and youth work interventions. Data was gathered through interviews and a focus group and then analysed using grounded theory.

Findings: The study revealed that the factors of environment and power within both professions played a large role in the reflections of both young people and professionals.

Implications for practice: Some suggestions for improving counselling and youth work services are discussed. These include making both professions aware of how differently they approach young people and how counselling may improve young people's experiences of counselling by taking a more pro-active approach.

KEYWORDS

Counselling, environment, power, youth work, young people.

Aims

The aim of this research was to discover young people's and professionals' perceptions of the usefulness of counselling and youth work interventions. I believe that this was important due to the commonalities the professions have and the impact their differences

have when working with young people. Authors such as Jon Ord and Sarah Banks have remarked on how counselling differs significantly to youth work. Banks (2007:149) points out that counselling is focused on the individual and does not take into account the society around the client; whereas youth workers fight for change in society and empower young people to take control of their lives, through informal education. Ord (2007) takes the perspective that the youth workers relationship is mutual with the young person and that the young person expects a response, whereas a counsellor attempts to remain a separate entity. The youth worker's personality is also evident in their work with young people. The reason for this is because youth workers often rely on themselves as a resource and may draw from personal experience (Young, 2006). Ord (2007) furthermore takes into consideration the environment in which both these professions take place. Whilst counselling is focused primarily on the individual and is for the most part (with the exception of group therapy and couples) one to one work, youth work can take place, anywhere from youth centres to mountain ranges. This will be looked upon in more depth later.

Some similarities include the youth worker's role in helping young people develop a positive self-concept through dialogue (Young, 2006). Young (2006) also demonstrates the importance of empathy within the youth work relationship; empathy is also vital in the counselling process and is particularly reinforced by the person-centred approach (Mearns and Thorne, 2004). Both also work in a phenomenological manner which aims to work with the process the young people bring. Although there are various counselling models, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Transactional Analysis (TA), Psychodynamic etc., the one that bears the most resemblance to youth work is person-centred and is therefore the model that is focused on.

Situating the work within the Research Paradigms, including the Methodology and Methods used

The original title for my research topic was "Young people's and professionals' reflections on counselling and youth work interventions." What I aimed to discover was how both young people and professionals viewed counselling and youth work skills and how they believed these approaches benefited young people. This was done by interviewing young people who had experience of counselling and youth work

and professionals who were qualified in both fields. Once this was done I used a mini focus group of youth and community students to relay my findings and to further analyse the results with their input. This was also done to gauge how well the results could be interpreted and what else may need to be done to further the research. In addition to this, the group was used to gain different perspectives on the analysis of the results (Maykut and Morehouse, 2001: 103).

My research was primarily phenomenological, as I shall subsequently explore, it also drew on the concerns of the critical paradigm, being broadly participative in its approach (Chambers, 2007). Phenomenology is based on human experience and it is these experiences which I wished to analyse and decipher to answer my research question. As Denscombe (2005) states even if something is seen as mundane and trivial in everyday life such as one colleague ignoring another one, a phenomenological perspective would see the relevance and importance of such an experience. This way of working also puts emphasis on seeing through the eyes of others. For me it was an excellent way of conducting research and relevant to me as a counsellor and youth worker because the way in which I work and a skill I use often is the ability to be empathic. Empathy is seen as a core skill in person-centred counselling (Mearns and Thorne, 2004) where the worker does not seek to simply sympathise with a person but to step into their shoes and see what they see. This is also how a phenomenologist works and how I worked when interviewing young people and professionals. By working this way I was able to transcribe what was said as closely as possible to the original sources.

However, although I would locate my research within the phenomenological paradigm I realise that it was not without its critiques. It could be argued it is not a scientifically reliable way of researching. It is descriptive rather than analytical and because of this is liable to severe scrutiny by those who do not share an enthusiasm for a phenomenological view point. Due to it being more suited for small scale research it is the victim of generalizations and because of the attention it pays to small details what may be seen as trivial is also liable to be ignored in the greater scheme of things i.e. at social policy, international relations and economical progress (Denscombe, 2005). What I will contest though is that my research was small scale and the question I asked required in-depth answers. It is not a national piece of research and is limited to a local area which means the concept of phenomenology fits well.

Banks (2007) explores the issues involved in participatory research - that young people must be engaged voluntarily (Batsleer, 2008) and that the process must begin with them and where they are. In order to comply with the values of the youth work process I informed my participants of the nature of the research and allowed them to decide whether or not to engage. Once the process was explained I allowed them to speak in the interviews with little input on my part as the researcher. I also remained true to what they said in the interviews and did not in any way shape what they had said into something else.

Young (2006) talks about the Art of Youth Work and how the approach the worker uses defines youth work. This can also be said when youth workers are acting also as a researcher and therefore through the "Art" of youth work we are able to engage with young people as a youth worker with the added motive of further empowering young people through the mediums of academia and research to help make a difference to their lives. Through this way of working the participants were able to voice their views on how counselling and youth work skills help in the lives of young people and they were empowered by being given an opportunity to speak and be heard on a wider scale. Empowerment is a term often discussed in youth work and it is what we strive to achieve when working with young people. It is a term so widely used that many have written upon its importance. Jeffs and Smith (2005), Batsleer (2008) and Banks (2007) all draw on this term and see it as a cornerstone of the youth work profession. I would infer that it is just as important that I empowered young people as much as possible when conducting research.

This comes back to the age old discussions of are we agents of social control or educators? I would like to believe we are educators and therefore gave young people the chance to have an active voice in my research and keep my own integrity intact. This means that rather than other professionals or me telling young people about how counselling and youth work operates and how the interventions help, the young people told the professionals using their own experiences. Barthes (1972) described reality as a social construct and whoever has power in a community will inevitably have the dominant discourse. In saying that I believe there is a chance here for those on the receiving end of the theories (the clients) to share their views on how these approaches may help.

In conducting research this way there will be perhaps a challenge to the ruling idea of how these approaches help young people and how professionals personally view their roles.

Qualitative data is the umbrella term for a variety of styles of social research (Denscombe, 2005: 267) and was the methodology I situated myself in. This methodology is predominantly concerned with society and the way in which people understand what is happening to and around them. The advantages of using a qualitative manner of research as Denscombe (2005: 280 – 281) states are; the data and analysis are grounded as they are not just theories conjured up and are researched from the source. The importance of the focus group was that it enabled me to gain a broader view of people's thoughts and feelings on my topic. Denscombe (2005) writes that focus groups may help people who may be reluctant to speak on a one to one basis and be more encouraged to divulge their opinions in a debate. A focus group also enabled me as a researcher to have less of an impact on the group. Unlike in interviews where it was one to one work, when I have gave the group the questions there was less need for me to mediate and I stepped back and simply observed the group with little interaction. Also with me being out of the group I hoped that my 'self' and therefore my bias in the regarding the question would be less able to impact.

My main resource in the study was the one to one interview method (Tisdal et al, 2009). In the interviews I had to be fully aware of my 'self' and any bias that I had. The type of interview technique I implemented was the semi-structured. This is because I had my own list of the areas that I wished to cover but was flexible on the order they appeared and let the interviewee give their own thoughts on the matter as in depth as they wished. I was concerned that I would be unable to cover all questions during the interview. Had this taken place, the data I collected would have been incomplete which would have led to a flaw in my analysis. I considered the ethical complications surrounding the interviews leading me to ask factual questions rather than discussing the emotional issues that had led the participant to seek help. I used the same interview technique with the professionals involved, asking only factual questions, in order to limit the variables in my interview to ensure accurate results.

Ethics

In my research I followed the professional codes of practice and ethics in research and I included; informed consent, protection from harm, openness and confidentiality. The National Youth Association (NYA) list a set of values which underline Youth and Community Work. I used this list as a guide when conducting this piece of research to ensure the safety of those I worked with.

1. Respect for human rights – e.g. justice, freedom;

2. Respect for the individual and rights to self determination;

3. Respect for the different cultures and religions in society;

4. A commitment to empowerment and participatory democracy;

5. Collaborative working relationships and collective action; and

6. An acknowledgment that all relationships and activities with young people and adults are based on their consent, (NYA, 1997c: 6 – 7).

I took take great to deliver informed consent during the course of my research. Israel and Hay (2006:61) state that informed consent is obtained when the participant understands what the research is about and voluntarily agrees to participate in the research. For this reason I explained the nature of the research to all participants and gave them the option to discontinue anytime they wished. As the interviews were being recorded I gave the young person an alias so that they remained anonymous. Israel and Hay (2006) observe the terms of negotiating confidentiality and the complexities of it. To avoid such complexities I did not negotiate the terms of confidentiality in order to avoid straying from my ethical obligations as a youth worker. The Gillick principles were also incorporated to enable me to discern whether or not my participants understood what they were engaging with. I was aware of the limitations of the Gillick principles (Wheeler, 2006) due to anyone being able to claim that they understand the research, however due to it being based on voluntary participation I was not able to gain any other consent and therefore had to adhere to these principles.

During my interviews I also discovered that my ontological self was present throughout. This was especially true when interviewing young people. Half of the young people interviewed did not know that I was also a counsellor and I feel that therefore they may have tailored their answers to what they believed I wished to hear. This was unavoidable as ontology is the nature of 'being' (Heidegger, 2000) and that is the nature of research, meaning there is no possible way for the researcher not to be present in some form due to the research being a product of that person.

The young participants knew me prior to the research, as I selected them knowing they had been involved in work with counsellors and youth workers, and were of sound mind to answer my questions. What I hoped to do as both a researcher and a youth worker was to empower young people and enable them to participate in the research. However, as they are only exposed to one part of the research and unable to see it holistically develop, are they truly empowered?

Personal Viewpoint

In fitting with the concerns of the critical paradigm (Cohen, Manion and Morrison: 2007) I believe it is important to note of why I included a personal viewpoint. This is because the young people I interviewed knew me prior to conducting the research. I believe it is important to reiterate that as Heidegger (2000) points out ontologically I could not be separate from this research and to remain congruent with this ideology I feel it is important to explain my own views of this research.

When I first began the research, I was aware that my bias leaned towards the youth work profession. As a counsellor and a youth worker I felt more inclined to believe that youth work provided more support for young people than counselling. I also aligned myself with the teachings of Marx and Freire, which influenced my perceptions of counselling – Marx, because he believed that society should be equal and everyone had a part to play in that (Singer, 1980); Freire for his thoughts on how education should be taught (Freire, 1996). Both these ideas were grounded in granting autonomy and all people engaging in a mutual dialogue. For myself there was also this notion of counselling being part of a capitalist process. This means that counsellors are to "fix" people and enable them to get back to production instead of enabling them to challenge the situation they are in. Sociologically this idea would imply a functionalist

view point. Functionalism views society as having various parts and for society to function accordingly all entities must work together in harmony to produce stability (Giddens, 2008).

Therefore, the way in which a counsellor works (enabling the client to solve their own issues) may be as disabling as it is enabling due to the client being asked to resolve their own issues. The counsellor does not take into consideration the external context in which the client exists and is consequently unable to empower the client to challenge this.

It was my belief that the youth work process granted more autonomy for young people and I could empower young people more as a youth worker than a counsellor. However, as the research progressed my feelings changed and I began to believe the two professions could work in harmony as they both have similar objectives and much to offer young people.

Youth workers adopt the three core conditions of the person centred approach of Empathy, Congruence and Unconditional Positive Regard (Ord, 2007) and counselling aims to provide help and support for young people as youth work does (Bryant-Jefferies, 2004). For a counsellor the idea of the therapeutic process is that the client will reach their goal in their own time and the pace should not be set by the therapist (Merry, 2006). Merry (2006) also goes on to discuss the concept of self actualisation, the fully functioning person and how person-centred therapy works in a phenomenological way in order to help the client reach the stage of self-actualization. This goes back to Banks' (2007) point that the counselling session does not always take into account the society around a client.

How the project was managed

With hindsight I feel that there were gaps in the project. For example the questions were somewhat vague. Denscombe (2005) states that questions should be concise and to the point, although this is more needed for questionnaires I believe that I should have taken this into account whilst writing the questions. For example, 'what impact does context have on your professions?' was very unclear and due to this I myself had more impact on the session than I thought was needed.

Originally, I had planned to use unstructured interviews, but after consideration of what was needed I decided the best approach would be semi-structured which would allow

me to have a set of themes to explore but enable the interviewee time for their own thoughts (Denscombe, 2005).

Results and analysis

Although many different questions were raised from the results of the project, two key themes remained throughout. These were;

1. Power

2. Environment

Many young people stated that the key differences between youth work and counselling were that they felt more empowered by youth workers and more relaxed in the environment of youth groups.

> "I don't respond well to authority and even at a young age even if you tell me to do something doesn't mean I will do it. Youth of today don't react well to authority figures as much as a youth worker is an authority figure, they are not perceived to be and it think that is very powerful." (Young person discussing power in youth groups)

Jeffs and Smith (2005) see empowerment as a key element in youth work. With empowerment comes dialogue and through dialogue young people are able the express their concerns and work through them with a youth worker. The idea of empowerment through dialogue is not a new concept; it has also been examined by Freire (1996) and in ancient Greece by the philosopher Socrates. What appears to go hand in hand with the empowerment is environment.

> "The counselling environment's forced, a youth work environment is relaxed you don't have to talk, the support is there if you need it and that is reiterated." (Young person commenting on environment of youth groups)

It is true that you do not have to talk in a counselling session and silence is even seen as important as the client is often working hard thinking through what it is they wish to say (Merry, 2006 p: 98). However, when working with young people who have been sent to counselling rather than choosing to go, this silence can be very oppressive

and even damaging to the therapeutic relationship. Bryant-Jefferies (2004) observes how it is important that when working with young people the counsellor must take into consideration how strange it must feel being in counselling with an adult they do not know. Using a case study Bryant-Jefferies (2004) demonstrates how the counsellor encourages dialogue with the young person in order to make her feel comfortable. From the analysis of the interviews I had conducted there was not much encouragement for dialogue from the young people's perspective and maybe this is something that may need to be addressed for counsellors working specifically with young people.

When discussing environment it is important to note that what appears to be key to the young person feeling comfortable is the atmosphere of the group itself. What many of the young people discussed in the interviews conducted was the effect that the group had on them. Batsleer (2008) commented on the increasing problems of individualisation in society and the positive outcomes that group work can bring such as raising confidence and self esteem.

> "The confidence comes from the group to do that because when I first came here I only knew two people. Now I have confidence to speak to people I don't even know." (Young person discussing confidence obtained from group work)

Looking at the above and from the evidence obtained from the interviews one can see clearly the benefits of the youth work relationship and the environment that youth groups provide. The question remains however, why is this the case? Youth workers after all work in a very similar capacity to counsellors. One of the professionals interviewed explained this correlation excellently. Using the metaphor of a Formula One race he saw the youth workers as in the race with the young people and the counsellors in the pit area waiting to help on a one to one. What this suggests is that young people do need help when dealing with the issues they face in society and they need youth workers to be with them in that process. Counselling however, provides time for reflection away from the distractions of everyday life.

Although there is merit in this thought, counselling also works in process and offers individual and group therapy (Kirschenbaum and Henderson, 2005). Group therapy however, is more focused on the group helping the individual rather than it being a collective effort. This is because the individual has certain issues they wish to bring to the group and hence will focus on these.

Whereas the idea of youth work group work is to predominantly work with whatever comes out of the session and with the process at the time, it is also a means of making change in the wider society and not just in the individual (Ord, 2007).

Professional Counsellors/Youth Workers Perspectives

The concepts of power and environment were not only the speculations of young people; the professionals interviewed also commented greatly on these two concepts. As previously mentioned the professionals interviewed had both a counselling and a youth work qualification along with working experience in both fields. One professional discussed how the boundaries differ in a youth work environment to that of a counselling. "The environment is important and the time obviously is designated, and the structure is different." (Counsellor, discussing the importance of time boundaries in a session)

There was also a distinct mention of how the professional views the power in youth work and Counselling.

> "In the counselling session the power is shared more advertently. The power dynamics can be different, because in a youth work setting, you are seen as the leader and you are the leader. As much the young peoples' needs are at the centre you are looked upon as the leader." (Counsellor, discussing power in youth work and counselling relationships)

This is very much removed from the young people's views in Birmingham who saw the dynamics very differently. The question to be raised here is how exactly is the power shared in a counselling session? If counsellors are expected to remain objective and be congruent with a client then that must mean that the power is with the client for the most part of the session. Mearns and Thorne (2004) state that there should be a balance within counselling sessions and this would seem to agree with what the above quotation states. Jeffs and Smith (2005) would challenge this statement as would Batsleer (2008) because a fundamental principle of youth work is to empower young people and enable them to reach a level of autonomy. Youth workers do this by engaging with young people using a variety of methods such as issue based work, centre based work and detached youth work.

"Counselling has helped me with coming to terms with my body and myself. It's basically helped me with a serious issue, without saying too much that is. It's just basically helped me to tell people my problems and not bottle it up inside like I used to." (Young person, describing how counselling had helped her)

The overview from the interviews with young people appears to bear other questions that interlink with the concepts of power and environment. With counsellors there is a clear distinction between young person and counsellor, in fact the language used by counsellors is 'client' which already labels a young person. Labelling can be very powerful and can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy which can be damaging to a young person (Giddens, 2008). Illich (2005) discusses the impact of professional status, he believed in an age where professionalism is more and more common the power that is given to these professionals is needless as there was apparently little result of the work which they do. There was also this notion of the expert knows best and society is led by this notion. What is also interesting from an educational perspective is what Freire (1996) also examined as the student to teacher relationship. This was the student simply listened as the teacher narrated. Freire believed that for true learning to occur the student and the teacher should engage in dialogue on a mutual level in order to promote positive learning and outcomes for both. This can also be seen a core principle of Youth Work, although we are social educators we can still learn from our work with young people (Young, 2006).

So is mutual dialogue included in the counselling process? Is it needed? Counsellors in theory are to remain impartial, give little of themselves (do not self-disclose) and yet be congruent, (Mearns and Thorne, 2004). To be congruent means to be real, authentic, genuine and transparent, the counsellor acknowledges inner feelings in the session (Bryant-Jefferies, 2004). However, how congruent can one be if they do not reveal who they are?

Youth workers, although they work in a person-centred way, reveal much more of who they are when working with young people. They also use empathy and unconditional positive regard when working with young people. Batsleer (2008) describes the importance of 'being-there' with young people and how this simple act of humanity can do wonders for the healing of people. Except there is also an emphasis on being a role model for young people (Young, 2006) and due to this a youth worker is able to use

examples for their own life to help support young people on the issues that they face. The idea of role modelling is also powerful because young people can see a youth worker demonstrate their values rather than just discussing them. This demonstration is something a counsellor is unable to do - firstly due to their ethics and secondly owing to the environment of the counselling process a counsellor is unable to demonstrate their values in society.

Although some of the young people interviewed did not enjoy counselling, this may have been due to being told to go rather than choosing to go. Youth workers are ideally placed for enabling young people to prepare for counselling by engaging young people in dialogue and creating trust and it is this dialogue that is vital in helping young people (Jeffs and Smith, 2005).

This matter of counselling under duress is nothing new and has been explored by Cormack (2009). Her research was of a similar nature to my own but was more focused on the trust that young people have with their counsellors. In educational settings, counsellors were used as weapons by teachers. I myself have seen this first hand, I have worked as a counsellor in schools and have felt that the young people there were sent to me rather than wanting to see me. Cormack (2009) also noted that the boundaries of counselling may be a problem for young people and the profession should seek to accommodate this when working with young people. Furthermore Cormack suggested that counsellors should engage with young people in their environment prior to them entering the counselling room.

The safe space

With the assumption that counselling needs to be in a safe space and that space is a room separate from everything else, is this true in the case of young people? Many young people are quite happy to discuss issues in youth group settings. From my own practice as both a youth worker and a counsellor I have known young people to be able to discuss their issues in a one to one room and in a centre full of young people. So whose needs are being met here? Is it the counsellors or the young person's?

When discussing what the environment should be, counselling literature appears to be describing the environment as dynamic and fluid and that any environment a person is in will effect their personal growth negatively or positively (Merry, 2006). It suggests that the counselling room gives time for reflection beyond the reach and constraints of society. Young people however, seem to be of a different opinion and that counselling could be taken anywhere they choose (within reason). When discussing what this safe space is with a colleague recently she said it was about the set up of the room, the need for it be out the way of distractions and in addition said that she worked at one place that had much better decor than another and this was also more beneficial. On reflection of this conversation I thought surely a colourful room or a poster is not what generates a positive therapeutic relationship but rather the essence of the phenomenological humanistic approach with the use of the core conditions.

What appears to have happened over the years is that the safe space is now more of a convention than a way of practicing and this convention has taken over moving counselling forward into the new generation and enabling better practice of counsellors. This convention has carried with it also tendency of the counsellor being separate from society and they appear to be keeping themselves safe within that room.

It relates to what Foucault (1971) described when he discussed his theory of organisations and how the layout of the organisation effected its functioning and in turn this created power imbalance. For example in large offices the higher in status you are the more likely you will have your own room (Giddens, 2008). The same can be said of the counselling environment, a client will go to a counsellor and enter their room, their space, a space chosen by the therapist. This can then cause the power dynamic to shift to the counsellor on a sub-conscious level. For young people this may remind them of being in school and been sent to the headmaster's office.

Cormack (2009) noted in her research that many of the young people she interviewed would rather have counselling outside of the traditional counselling room, i.e. going for a walk or having coffee somewhere and making the counselling more active and fun. Cormack (2009) also suggested that age maybe a factor here. I would concur with this notion as from my own research the young people interviewed gave the impression that when talking to a trusted professional they would like to manage the environment and have it interchangeable.

Being able to be a part of managing the environment would then enable a mutual dialogue to happen and is what Freire (1996) suggests is needed if people are to move forward in a balanced relationship. To allow young people to have a say in what the counselling environment is would perhaps enable greater client-counsellor relationships and provide sound outcomes for the young people in question.

Illich (2005) raises concerns about how professionals are viewed and see clients as the 'market' and current political debates, are now fuelled with 'do we need more social workers or doctors or teachers?' Once it has been decided what is needed the services are more strongly advertised to the public and the public then see the *value* of the service and the *need* for it.

From all of the above a common thread that has appeared is that although the philosophies of counselling and youth work are similar, there are great differences in the literature and the approach to helping young people.

Conclusion

Although this research has focused on the concepts of power dynamics and environment in Youth Work and Counselling settings there have been various other issues that have risen alongside these. These issues include age, voluntary participation, and young people's perceptions of counsellors and youth workers and understanding of how the professions work.

It was not possible to discuss in this report the nature of empowerment. When discussing the results from the project with a focus group the main question was how do people empower? A Counsellor's (particularly in the Person-centred approach) perception is that to empower a client the therapist must not behave like the expert and be non-directive during therapy (Merry, 2006). When the group discussed a Youth Workers way to empower the discussion turned to values and voluntary participation with the notion of fostering democracy for young people (Jeffs and Smith, 2005) which appeared to be more direct than that of counsellors.

From the analysis, there is a need for both professions to think about why power and environment play an important role in how young people engage with the work done and how they can work together to improve services for young people. It is

clear that both youth work and counselling have a lot to offer young people and the benefits of these services are extremely valuable for young people's development. If anything this research shows that there is still a lot more to learn about young peoples and professionals perceptions of the usefulness of and counselling and youth work interventions.

Implications for practice

Although this research will not dramatically reshape the way in which counsellors and youth workers conduct their way of working, it has raised some questions to consider.

1. Is there a need for youth workers to understand counselling more?

2. There is an assumption that counselling needs to be in a safe space. Is that space safe for the young person or the counsellor? Is the safe space provided by the counsellor also seen as safe by young people?

3. Can youth workers act as a bridge to a young person engaging in counselling?

4. Can the counselling process be flexible when working with young people and take a different approach if need be?

In response, I believe there is a need for youth workers to have at least a basic understanding of how the counselling process works. (McKee and Irvine, 1994) demonstrated in their study what perceptions youth work professionals had of counselling and the training they had undertook to understand counselling. This study discovered that although youth workers had a little counselling training, they only had little knowledge of the field and insufficient training to give counselling to young people. There was also confusion as to when counselling was taking place and the counselling offered was reactive rather than proactive. If youth workers had more knowledge of counselling they would not need to counsel young people but would be able to bridge the gap between the young people and the counselling process. To add to this youth workers are informal educators (Jeffs and Smith, 2005) and as part of their work with young people they should be able to inform young people about counselling. What has also arisen here is the link to the different boundaries of the two professions, what is important is both for youth workers and counsellors to know when counselling is taking place and when youth work is happening.

Are youth workers able to act as a bridge to a young person attending counselling? From the research I believe that this is possible, what is needed for this to be possible is sufficient training for youth workers to understand counselling practice. This is already taking place to an extent with counselling modules being taught in youth work courses. What needs to be done, however, is further development training for those workers already practicing in the field.

Finally, is there a need for counsellors to consider a different approach when working with young people? From the evidence gained from this study I can conclude that there appears to be a need to approach young people differently when counselling them. Silence is not always an effective tool as demonstrated by the young people in this study as they felt they could not speak for various reasons such as being judged or feeling they had nothing to say and feeling uncomfortable in the room. Geldard and Geldard (2010) speak about the counselling process needing to be flexible and proactive. Being proactive means that the counsellor should be more spontaneous, reactive, creative and opportunistic when counselling young people (Geldard and Geldard, 2010: 91).

This is another cross over between counselling and youth work and again shows the similarities that the two professions share. Being proactive within the counselling process enables the counsellor to develop the relationship with the young person further to engaging in an active manner rather than the more passive approach taken in the person-centred method. Due to this proactive approach and the way in which young people are continually assessing their relationships it is therefore imperative the counsellor attends to the development of the counsellor-client relationship in order to maintain a positive and beneficial therapeutic alliance (Geldard and Geldard, 2010). The same can be said of youth workers and how they develop and maintain their relationships Ord (2007).

Ord also takes into consideration how although the counselling process and youth work process use similar tools when working with young people such as UPR and empathy, he notes the counsellor attempts to keep him/herself out of the light by not answering a question about themselves, whilst the youth worker will remain 'present' and will answer. This goes back to the matter of self-disclosure and its appropriateness.

Reflecting back on my own practice I once self-disclosed to a client with surprising results. When I told her I had similar worries she announced she felt elated by that because she no longer felt alone with the issues she faced. The very fact that she had learned others have similar or the same problems enabled her to cope with her issue easier. The counselling practitioners however, feel that self-disclosure should be kept to a minimum as the consensus is that the client would not like to hear about a counsellor when they have come to discuss themselves (Mearns and Thorne, 2004: 98). This could however, be seen as holding back and such withholding can be very powerful and with young people may give the impression that the counsellor is all knowing as they do not have problems to disclose and therefore they are damaged and in need of the counsellors help which in many ways can take away the human element of humanistic counselling. Geldard and Geldard (2010) discuss self disclosure with young people and note that appropriate self-disclosure within the counselling session enables the young person to feel comfortable as the balance of power is no longer as precarious because by simply self-closing the counsellor is inviting the young person to converse with him or her as an equal.

Where youth workers seem to have limited knowledge of the counselling process, counsellors do not appear to have a great deal of knowledge of the youth work process and therefore may find it useful to learn the basics, particularly when working within a youth organisation. This could enable counsellors to further develop their rapport with young people by learning how to engage with them actively.

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Every Child Matters and Media Literacy - Perceptions and Connections

Anthony Avery, Julian McDougall and Amy Pritchard

ABSTRACT

This article brings together research from three authors working in the fields of media literacy and media education as an event in an ongoing discourse which is itself a site of conflict over definition and agenda. With research by the UK media regulator Ofcom suggesting links between media literacy and child protection, this article will explore current discourses of media literacy and report findings from a small scale qualitative project (Pritchard, 2010) into the perceptions of primary school professionals on the relationship between media literacy (as they understand it) and broader elements of child protection and education with particular regard to *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003). The findings, as we report, show that the idea of, and need for, media literacy has thus far been poorly disseminated to the practitioners on whom the agenda would be reliant for it to have impact and that where our participants were able to make a 'connect', it was articulated within the domain of a discourse of 'effects' as a (confused) protectionist response.

KEYWORDS

Every Child Matters, Media Literacy, Discourse, Child Protection.

Introduction

In September 2003 a green paper was published by the government entitled 'Every Child Matters' (DfES, 2003)- in part a response to the abuse and death of Victoria Climbié, to build on and strengthen previous child protection services (Roche and Tucker, 2007). Key objectives were to increase support to families and carers; ensure necessary intervention before children reach a crisis point; address underlying problems and to ensure training and adequate reward for those who work with children. The policies were designed to protect and maximise children's potential, aiming to

reduce the number of children who 'experience educational failure, engage in offending or anti-social behaviour, suffer from ill health, or become teenage parents.' (DfES, 2003: 5). The paper identified five outcomes - universally significant to every child and young person regardless of their background, ability or circumstance. These are to *be healthy*, *stay safe*, enjoy and achieve, make positive contributions and achieve economic well-being.

Literacy

In recent decades, literacy has become a collocated suffix in new ideas such as: media literacy, multimedia literacy, multiliteracies, critical literacy, visual literacy, multimodal literacy, cine-literacy, information literacy, digital literacy, emotional literacy and spiritual literacy. This list is by no means exhaustive. As Tyner states:

> The need to set one literacy apart from another can only be explained by a need to use the concepts for other reasons, that is, to strengthen the professional status of its constituencies, or to take issue with the approaches used by proponents (Tyner, 1999: 104).

Media literacy is an expansive and unstable construct that has only recently begun to render its theoretical foundations. It is important to state that there is currently no clear and commonly agreed definition of media literacy. As Buckingham suggests:

Many educational conceptions of literacy tend to define it in terms of a set of skills or competencies. The definition of media literacy adopted by the UK media regulator Ofcom (2004) – itself an adapted version of an earlier US definition (Aufderheide, 1997) – provides a fairly clear and succinct example of this approach: 'media literacy is the ability to access, understand and create communications in a variety of contexts' (Buckingham, 2007: 148).

Writing in the first edition of the Media Education Research Journal, Tzu-Bin Lin (2010) offered an analysis of these media literacy discourses as being framed by notions of cultural protection; moral panic (Cohen, 1972) and anti-consumerism. Whilst tracing *local differences* in the ways in which media education is charged with *delivering* such literacy across the world, Lin concludes that, despite the more research-based approaches circulating in academic media and literacy communities, it remains the

case that the majority of international discourses of implementation relate media literacy to citizenship, democracy and freedom primarily through the assumption that'…a media literate citizen can critically and independently evaluate media content and, furthermore, maintain a healthy democractic society. The assumption of media education is that media has a negative effect on society' (Lin, 2010: 37).

In the UK, employability, self-promotion, active citizenship and the financial benefits of being a 'savvy' consumer are all claimed to be advantages to being media literate in the twenty-first century. Writing elsewhere, for Media teachers in the UK, we have discussed the ways in which literacy is signified, at the same time 'as an aspect of integration into society, as a critical tool that leads to freedom, and as an element of social control' (McDougall and Potamitis, 2010: 37). It is perhaps surprising, then, that a search of the ECM website yields no specific references to media literacy.

Connections

Each of the five main ambitions of the ECM initiative - be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, achieve economic well-being - have strong connections with the aims of media literacy as conceptualised by OFCOM. *Be healthy* has perhaps the most immediate applicability when one considers the moral panics over 'toxic childhood' (Palmer, 2006) and 'screen addiction'. Palmer's thesis is largely supported by evidence in the form of parental anxiety rather than any empirically gathered data in either the positivist or discursive domains, whilst the apparent lessons to be learned from South Korea in the area of 'screen addiction' has formed the content of two high profile BBC documentaries in the last year but, again, with no research-based evidence. The ongoing protectionist agenda in relation to media representations of sex, drug use, violence and body image (see the work of Papadopoulos, 2010) would seem to fall under the purview of *stay safe*, as protection from exposure to these kinds of media *messages* would be the first port of call when understood within this discourse.

At the core of both ECM and media literacy are two main strands: preparation for adult life and protecting children from harm. These two strands are not entirely harmonious. For example, *Enjoying and achieving* can be seen to be at odds with *Staying safe* if the

outcome is that adults curtail young peoples' creative development by blocking online access (McDougall and Trotman, 2011).

The uneasy relationship between policy and academic research is well represented by Buckingham who describes children as 'the focus of adult fears, desires and fantasies' (2000: 3). However in recent years, moral panics in response to child protection have escalated and subsequently a duality of concern pervades; whilst on the one hand children are seen as being under greater threat, on the other there is growing concern over children themselves becoming, in turn, a more significant threat to society (Avery, 2010).

The Digital Divide

Digital inclusion (or e-inclusion) and the digital divide have become well-used terms in recent years. Digital inclusion, it is argued (by the New Labour Government's *Digital Britain* project and by OFCOM), has the benefits of enhancing customer choice, cutting the cost of public service delivery and reducing social exclusion of marginalised groups.The term *digital divide* currently has a number of meanings. A simple definition of the term is 'the troubling gap between those who use computers and the Internet and those who do not' (Mehra et al, 2004: 782). However a set of further connotations of the term *digital divide* in the area of literacy research include:

- The, often generational, gap between those in a society able to use digital technologies and those who are unable.

- The gap between home and school use of digital technologies.

- Individuals or communities (often in rural areas) that have limited or no access to a technology (usually broadband) in comparison to the majority of the nearby population.

The most relevant definition of the term for this paper is the first of the three. Buckingham (2007) explains how young people's highly developed experience of new media and new technology is building a gap between generations and that this is becoming a problem for parents - putting them at a disadvantage and a loss as children are becoming experts in the technology which helps them access new cultures,

new opportunities and forms of communication - often escaping parental control. The media, according to Buckingham is at once perceived as a threat and at the same time a *force of liberation* for today's children and young people becoming a new electronic generation that are more open, democratic and socially aware than their elder peers - for instance teachers and parents. Other commentators of note in this discussion, but with very different starting points and methodological strategies, are Wesch (2008), whose 'digital ethnography of Youtube' offers an account of a more connected and participatory – and (small p) political - generation that the adult culture recognise; Gauntlett (2011) who returns to pre-internet conceptions of 'making as connecting' to argue that participatory crafts of various kinds are resurgent in the digital media sphere and Prensky (2010), who hypothesises that traditional text and writing have a limited lifespan and that teachers ought now to consider programming to be the most essential literacy competence within a broader notion of 'digital wisdom' – the ability to work with machines.

Curriculum

Cary Bazalgette's main concern over the last 25 years has been to set up the principle for the entitlement of media education for everyone from the Early Years Foundation Stage through lifelong learning. Bazalgette's own research, along with that of Jackie Marsh (Bazalgette, 2010) shows that in many cases children start school with two or three years experience of media literacy. Prensky's idea (2010) of digital *natives* describes youth who are, in his terms, native speakers of the new digital language of the media, as opposed to *digital immigrants* who were not born into this *digital age*.

Bazalgette and Prensky both view children and young people as a generation evolving with and partly through new technologies - referred to by others as 'Generation Y' (Tapscott, 2008) - and are interested, from very different perspectives, in the effect on children going into an educational system which may not be prepared for this new digital age. And so these discourses – of a 'digital divide'; 'immigrants/natives' or a 'toxic childhood' (with exposure to electronic and social media as a poison in comparison to the notion of a 'purer' childhood in the pre-digital age) – with their lesser or greater inflections of celebration and concern - can be viewed as an (assumed to be) temporal

movement – even a paradigm shift – obligating policy makers to provide a response of sorts. The Byron Report, commissioned by Gordon Brown, posits that there is a 'big difference between what concerned parents understand and what their technologically savvy children know' (Byron, 2008: 1).

The Byron Review

Byron's report was based on new research and a review of previous work in the field and arrived at the view that that there is an urgent need to move from a discussion about media 'causing harm', to a discussion focusing on what children and young people 'bring to technology' and to use our understanding of how children develop to manage the digital world to make it safer (Byron 2008: 2).

The objectives for Byron's initial review included gathering evidence on the risks to children's safety and well-being online; assessing the effectiveness and sufficiency of existing measures; helping carers of children to understand, manage and be aware of the risks of children accessing potentially dangerous sites; allowing children to get the best from technology without fear and making recommendations for improvement and further action. Despite the disturbing cover imagery – made up of children's pictures of various forms of online danger - the outcomes were more balanced, noting that technology offers society *extraordinary* opportunities, allowing global exploration which may also contain risks - often similar to those in the physical world. Whilst the report was careful to avoid falling into the more extreme toxic variants of the protectionist discourse, Byron did observe that an outcome of the 'generational digital divide' is that parents do not feel able to manage new risks their children are facing in the same way as do in the *real-world*. The report reflected upon (but did not seek to find justification for) rising concern over the impact that new media has on society and the effects of excessive use of technology on family and peer interaction. However, Byron points out that what's 'beneficial' to one child can be 'harmful' to another and that, with regard to cyberbullying, clearly bullying is a damaging experience for any child; whether this is cyberbullying or physical bullying- but that due to the anonymity of cyberbullying, there is a perception that it is more damaging.

Byron states that internet safety can only built through children's 'resilience', making children more confident and teaching them new skills with which to address inappropriate material (Byron, 2008: 5) and that 'media literacy' is key to such resilience – a need for parents to be 'media literate' in order to understand the digital media affordances presented to them and their children. This relates to the ECM *stay safe* outcome which is concerned with ensuring children's safety - however there is little discussion in either ECM or in The Byron Report regarding the inter-relationship of dangers in the real world and the online / virtual spaces which children inhabit. Byron concludes by recommending that internet service providers should work with schools to expand the services and training for parents to achieve basic media literacy. Following these recommendations, in December 2009 it was announced that ministers had recommended that e-safety become an essential part of the national curriculum from September 2011, under the title of *Click Clever, Click Safe*, to be regulated by the UK Council for Child Internet Safety. From September 2011, computers provided by the government's Home Access Scheme were to include a panic button providing additional help. In March 2010 Byron published an update and review of progress, referencing *'Zip it, Block it, Flag It'* and the UKCCIS as indicators of her recommendations being implemented. However, the change of Government two months later and subsequent spending review have made the future of these interventions unclear, to say the least, but the purpose of this article is to analyse discourses around children and digital media, regardless of the realities of implication in the future and as such it should be noted that we are reporting on research conducted during the tenure of Gordon Brown.

Fieldwork

For an undergraduate dissertation (Pritchard, 2010), a sample of teaching professionals selected from different primary schools across the West Midlands provided responses to both qualitative and quantitative methods, beginning with anonymous questionnaires - which have the advantage (Cohen and Manion, 1994: 283) of providing arguably more reliable data, as the participants are aware their names will not be linked to their opinions – and followed up with interviews. What follows is a summary of the more discursive and attitudinal responses from the interviews with five professionals, in analytical dialogue with the discursive themes we have fore grounded as our context

for this article. Teacher (A) has been teaching primary school children for 10 years, Teacher (B) has been teaching primary school children for 32 years, Teaching Assistant (A) has been working with children for 8 years, Teaching Assistant (B) has been working with children for 1 year and Teaching Assistant (C) has been working with children for 10 years.

How do you feel teaching has changed over the years due to new technology?

A common theme of an improvement being made emerged here with Teacher (B) stating that technology 'enables better resourcing for lessons, up-to-date information, new strategies for teaching/learning'. Both TAs replied in similar ways, saying that new technology has improved children's education generally and their homework more specifically. TA(A) commented 'this development has enabled children to research by themselves using ICT' as all the classrooms in their school are linked to the internet. Teacher (B) also comments on the new teaching and learning strategies this presents to a teacher. Teacher (A) commented that technology is offering a more 'hands on and practical' approach to teaching.

Do you feel there is a 'new generation' in today's society? If so what effect do you feel this has?

This was a broad question designed to elicit a range of responses. All participants accepted the temporal hypothesis without question but there was a more mixed response to the 'effect' this has; Teacher (A) responded that children tend to have more knowledge of the internet then their parents as children have 'always known it' in their lifetime and that parents need to be more educated on the internet. Teacher (A) had used an exclamation mark when responding on the questionnaire about children knowing more than parents – a paralinguistic marker of a strong feeling about the issue. Teacher (B) was concerned over whether children are ready for this change. TA(A) responded that children in today's society have a 'lack of respect' for adults and there is an inferred cause (technology) and effect relationship here in so much as we can elicit from the structural framing and sequencing of the interview – of course, the dynamics of all research prevent us from assuming an objective 'reality' here. TA(B) commented on how, due to technology always changing, children are enjoying new challenges and the social side of computer use. TA(C) comments on how children, from as young as

nursery age, all have computers at home –assuming this automatically means that they already have well developed computer and 'mouse skills'.

Were you familiar with the term media literacy before this research? What is your idea of media literacy as of now?

Only one of the five participants knew about media literacy. Teacher (B) said that media literacy was the information, views, opinions, research released through newspapers, internet, emails, and computer software. After reading the Ofcom definition, teacher (A) responded that using technology can have an impact on a child's learning, regardless of ability. TA(A)'s idea of media literacy was an 'up-to-date version of what was once pen and paper'. TA(C)'s response related back to the Ofcom definition, suggesting that media literacy was 'a way of communicating via computers and understanding the technologies out there'.

Have you ever considered the link between ECM and the media?

These questions received a mixed response. Teacher (B) responded by saying 'naturally – as a teacher it is important that we are aware of anything that impacts on Every Child Matters'. Teacher (A) responded differently, commenting on the impact media has on the individual child's access to the curriculum, noting that not all children have the same ability and therefore use of the media may benefit an individual but not another. Both teachers agreed with the link being made, however the TAs were less sure. TA(B) said they had never thought of the link between ECM and media literacy before. However, after thinking about it they said they had now realised how closely they were actually linked. TA(C) also initially said they could not see a link between the two. However, later (after thinking about what ECM and Media Literacy offered) they felt children are able to 'enjoy and achieve' (one of the ECM outcomes) 'whilst accessing the internet both with regards to research and personal use'.

Do you feel Every Child Matters should cover the effects and prevention of harm from the media and the internet?

All responded 'Yes', Teacher (B) adding 'I'm sure it will be revised to include it', TA(B) said 'it should be included' and TA(C) said the stay safe outcome could be interpreted as covering the effects and prevention from harm from the media.

Do you think safety online is an issue teachers should address? If not who do you think is best to address these issues?

Both teachers agreed that this should be addressed in schools with parents backing it up. The TAs also agreed that this should be taught in school alongside family and carers, TA(C) added that more vigilance is needed in the home environment.

Do you think the safety of children is becoming a 'moral panic' with the use of new technology?

Teacher (A) responded that it was only becoming a moral panic if 'children and parents are not educated correct'. Teacher (B) said 'not really – I think the issue is put into the spotlight by incidents and this is good as is always a new generation of parents and children'. TA(A)'s view was that adults should talk more to children about internet dangers, rather than leaving children unsupervised with little background knowledge on internet safety. TA(B) commented on how they need to be aware of the dangers media and new technologies bring, informing children how to be responsible as they are introduced to computers at 'such a young age'.

New technology brings many benefits and opportunities into children's lives, education, play etc. Do you feel we should promote and make the skills of media literacy more prominent to maximise the potential benefits?

Three out of five responded 'Yes', including both teachers. TA(A)'s response was negative about the effects media has on literacy quoting that 'young people are already aware of many internet sites and chatting and interaction, using text English and not proper English [through the media] affects their ability to read and write'. TA(C)'s response was that 'media and media literacy is already becoming prevalent in today's society'.

A different view on Literacy through the media – have you considered the way literacy skills are gained through new technologies? For example basic literacy skills reading and writing – online newspapers – blogs – websites – chat rooms (example, MSN) promoting literacy through game play - skills you usually learn through paper-based texts in schools?

TA(A) had already argued that new technologies and the media are having a negative effect on children's ability to read and write and this is referred to when answering this question again, indicating that they believe no literacy skills are gained. TA(B) agreed with the idea that children gain literacy skills through the media, saying that it 'can greatly help children with literacy, even if children do not realise that they are learning'. TA (C) talks about how in their school new technology is used alongside traditional methods in the development of literacy skills, mentioning how this is particularly important when working with children with special needs in relation to catering for a range of learning styles.

Every Child Matters is a powerful document in education - do you feel media literacy relates to Every Child Matters? If so, how important do you feel media literacy is in relation to keeping children safe as an aspect of Every Child Matters?

Teacher (B) said that media literacy highlights issues of safety and if it was an aspect of ECM, this would spread a message 'throughout the community' on how being media literate can keep children safe. TA(B) said that new technology and the media is 'a doorway into children's lives and as such could let in unwelcome visitors'. TA(C) commented 'the stay safe outcome links with media literacy so that children can be safe whilst accessing the internet, which makes the Every Child Matters document important to media literacy.'

Discourses

Four main discourses have emerged from this investigation which we can relate back to the literature and policy we have reviewed and used as a framework for the research. Of course, some of the questions posed were leading and this should be taken into account when interpreting the degree to which the responses were neutral and representative. That said, the emerging discourses we can 'map' are as follows - media literacy as protection, children as technology experts, the idea of a moral panic, and ECM outcomes paralleling the media literacy agenda in more or less explicit terms.

As a relatively new concept most of the participants were unfamiliar with the idea of media literacy, often associating it with what they already knew and felt comfortable with. However, the discourse of media literacy as a form of *protection* is, on the evidence of

this small investigation, strongly exercised among primary school teachers and teaching assistants. The idea of media literacy as a potential antidote for such protection is where many teachers and TA's felt media literacy related to the ECM outcomes of *staying safe*. Elsewhere, we have suggested that it is 'important not to assume that young people are all 'digital natives', because everyone assumes they are. A real social problem is emerging where young people who are not media-savvy feel too embarrassed to admit it, so they suffer in silence' (McDougall and Potamitis, 2010: 7-9). But the *digital divide* is perceived by the participants in this study as generational. There was not scope in this study to map this against its economic variant, so we cannot assume that our participants have considered and rejected such a demarcation. But it does seem to be that all children, from teachers and teaching assistants' perspectives, are *digital natives*.

Conclusions

ECM does not explicitly deal with media or their 'effects'. But where a link is made by educational professionals, this is where we can find it. ECM is primarily concerned with children as individuals. Byron (2008) asserts that the same media content or online experience can have a different effect depending upon the individual child, material 'can be useful to a child at a certain point in their life and development but can be equally damaging to another child'. Paul Boateng writes, in his introduction to the ECM green paper that, 'we have to do more both to protect children and ensure each child fulfils their potential. Security and opportunity must go hand in hand' (DfES, 2003: 3). The media literacy agenda has been vexed by this duality of liberation and protection from the outset. Equally, both ECM and media literacy mobilise a discourse of the individual (the 'every') but in their interpretation by practitioners we can find an unwitting but nevertheless undermining recourse to generalisations about 'digital natives'. Lin describes this as a 'hybrid discourse' in which digitally literate citizens are drawn in the political imagination as at once protected from and civically engaged through digital media with the effect that such conceptions 'strategically adopt the negative effect as rationale for promoting media education while adding the flavour of the active 'civic engagement' rhetoric'. (2010: 40). For (media) literacy to be adequately and intellectually 'reframed', educators and policy-makers must find a way through these discursive contradictions of risk and affordance.

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Teacher–Pupil Interactions in the Primary Classroom: A Case Study

Jemma Kelly

ABSTRACT

This paper reports the findings of small-scale study of classroom interactions in a local primary school. Set in the context of earlier large-scale studies conducted by Bennett (1976) Galton et al (1980) and the Cambridge Primary Review (2006), this study formed part of an Education Studies Dissertation that sought to disclose the nature of teacher-pupil interactions in a Year 3 classroom. Qualitative data was gathered using semi-structured interviews and observations to reveal 'critical events' (Wragg 1994) that, in turn, illustrate specific aspects of these teacher-pupil interactions. The analysis was then undertaken using a constant comparative method to identify key themes as they emerged from the data. In particular, the role of the classroom assistant as a significant and often first point of emotional support for young children has a strong presence in the data that, in turn, underscores an increasing differentiation between teacher and assistant. Further findings point to the emergence of *naughty boys* as a category of teacher labelling that also shape the character and behaviours of teacher-pupil interactions. The study then offers a contribution to the discourse of classroom interaction and pedagogic roles.

KEYWORDS

Classroom interactions, Teacher-pupil relationships, emotional support.

Introduction

This paper explores teacher-pupil interactions in a primary phase classroom. My interest in this research problem surfaced during an earlier work placement, at university, when I became conscious that the various interactions that occur within a primary classroom play a significant role in the learning and development of pupils on many different levels. The topic of teacher-pupil interaction in primary schools is not a new one, as a number of large-scale studies have previously been conducted in this field in the UK (Bennett, 1976; Galton, 1980; Pollard and Bourne, 1994; Moyles, 2003). A particular touchstone for this

work has been the Plowden Report of 1967 and, at the time of this study, the findings of the largest independent review of Primary Education in the UK, the Cambridge Primary Review, were also due to be reported. From this point of departure the paper considers the recent research history surrounding classroom interaction. Research questions and design are then discussed with a presentation of the data collected from interviews and observations. The paper then aims to interpret and explore the interactions which occur in a primary phase classroom.

Plowden, child-centred education and its successors

Developed after the 1930 investigation into the *nature* of primary education conducted by the Hadow committee, the Plowden Report was one of the first significant studies of primary education in the UK to touch upon interactions within the primary classroom. The purpose of the Plowden Report was to review primary education in England, looking at a multitude of aspects *within* primary education. The report aimed to 'consider the whole subject of primary education and the transition to secondary education' (The Plowden Report, 1967). The findings of the report stressed that 'at the heart of the educational process lies the child' (The Plowden Report, 1967, p4). Within the content of the Plowden Report, one of the most important aspects was that the report very firmly supported the idea of a child-centred approach to education. Hamm (2003, p76) highlights the central idea of child-centred education as starting from the child, stating 'The two starting points, the subject on the one hand and the child on the other hand, lead to two broadly contrasting approaches to education generally, which in the politics of education have been referred to as the 'traditional' and the 'progressive' approaches'.

Part six of the report is most relevant to this study in that it deals with teacher-pupil interactions in the classroom. The report stressed the high demands and pressures that teachers were under, stating that 'teachers are more important in education than any form of curricular organisation or school building' (The Plowden Report, 1967, p311). The ideas drawn out of the report suggest that where a child is materially, intellectually or emotionally deprived, a teacher's role must be to strive to be a 'substitute for parent'. The findings of the report stress the importance of a teacher's ability to be able to diagnose the needs and potentialities of a pupil, in relation to a child's development and learning. However, it is also important to acknowledge that during the time of The Plowden Report there were far fewer classroom assistants working within schools. Therefore classroom interactions with an adult were nearly always with the class teacher.

Whilst Plowden identified the key role played by the teacher in child-centred education, later research by Bennett (1976) challenged many of the conventional assumptions of 'progressive' classroom teaching, particularly in subjects such as maths and English, where it was argued that traditional methods were more effective in relation to a child's educational progress. In his research Bennett (1976) analysed different approaches to teaching in relation to their effect on children's progress. Bennett (1976, p43) suggests that informal methods 'motivated children and encouraged creativity; teaching spelling and punctuation more effectively'. The significance of the relationship between a child's personality type, the style of teaching they received and their individual educational progress were also underscored in the report. However, the main findings of Bennett's (1976) work was that progressive teaching is likely to be least effective when teaching the brightest, most anxious pupils. In relation to teacher interactions it was found that the *type two* pupil, described as 'very introverted and neurotic with a high degree of classroom anxiety… tend to be both unsociable and non-conforming' (Bennett, 1976 p132) and engaged in more interactions with their teacher in both the formal and informal classroom than any other *type* of pupil. Bennett (1976, p140) goes on to claim that 'the least progress was made by groups whose characteristics included neuroticism and introversion', both characteristics are evident in the description of the *type two* pupil, suggesting that the children who made the least progress received the most interactions with the teacher. In response to the findings of Bennett's research and the Plowden Report, the Observational Research and Classroom Learning Evaluation, ORACLE project, undertaken by Galton et al (1980) was the first large-scale observational study of primary school classrooms undertaken in England. Forming part of a larger research programme, the study presented an overall analysis of pupil and teacher activity and identified patterns of teacher and pupil behaviour. The research involved the extensive observation of primary phase pupils over a three-year period for the purpose studying the relative *effectiveness* of different teaching approaches across the main subject areas of primary school teaching.

A key aspect of the ORACLE project was the categorization and analysis of classroom interactions which took place during observations. A description of these categories included;

Category 1: Target's (pupil's) role

Category 2: The identity of the interacting adult

Category 3: The nature of the adult's interaction

Category 4: The communication setting in which the interaction occurred

(Galton et al, 1980. p15)

The purpose of this record and categorization was to illustrate various kinds of contact between the teacher and the pupil. The analysis of the data revealed one particular aspect which stood out: the quality of teacher-pupil interaction. The study concluded in relation to quality of teacher-pupil interaction, that the majority of interactions that occurred within the classroom were related to the pupils' task; generally it was found that the teacher interacted with the pupils uniformly across the class. In relation to the nature of this interaction Galton et al (1980) drew on the Plowden prescript that teacher-pupil interactions 'emphasized discovery learning, the teacher having a guiding, probing, questioning role…individuals and groups engaged on this querying, discovery process. Such was their image of the ideal-type primary teacher' (Galton et al, 1980 p85).

Despite the significant findings of the ORACLE project, 1990 marked a return to a claim to traditional educational values with the publication of the so-called Three Wise Men Report, officially entitled 'Curriculum organisation and classroom practice in primary schools: a discussion paper' (Alexander *et al*, 1992). The 'Three Wise Men' report may be seen as a continuation of the ideas of Bennett (1976) on standards and classroom practice, the report states 'debate about standards and classroom practice is all too often conducted in terms of a simplistic dichotomy between *'traditional'* and *'progressive'*, or *'formal' and 'informal'*. The move to a more mature and balanced discussion of the issues is long overdue…' (Alexander et al, 1992 p1). The report was developed in response to a request made by the secretary of state in 1991, for a 'review of available evidence about the delivery of education in primary schools and to make recommendations about curriculum organisation, teaching methods and classroom practice appropriate for the successful implementation of the National Curriculum...' (Alexander et al 1992, p5). Whilst the authors of the report aimed to create discussion rather than solutions to the question of how primary education should be delivered, Alexander et al (1992 p18) state that 'learning is essentially a social

and interactive process' and one in which the role of *teaching* has greater emphasis over that of the teacher as *facilitator*. Furthermore, the report authors argue that such insights are critical to the raising of standards in primary classrooms. However, in the analysis of evidence on individual teaching Alexander et al (1992 p27) states 'The interaction between teacher and pupil is likely to be as superficial as it is brief and infrequent. Pupils deprived of the attention from either the teacher or other pupils which will maintain their motivation and challenge their thinking, work only intermittently'.

Drawing on the data from this research, it was claimed that teachers who structured their day largely in terms of individual teaching achieved low gains of pupil understanding, causing a damaging effect of fleeting and superficial teacher-pupil interactions. The conclusion of the report stressed that teachers need the skills and judgement to be able to select and apply a *multitude* of organisational strategies within the classroom in order to appropriately and effectively teach and interact with pupils. Similarly, Pollard and Bourne (1994) stress the vital importance of teachers maintaining a good relationship with their pupils, in order to 'achieve classroom order, sustain a positive atmosphere of learning and provide mutual fulfilment' (Pollard and Bourne, 1994 p2). Moreover, Pollard and Bourne (1994) suggest that a teacher's behaviour can vary according to a child's background. It was found in their study that 'with the perception that pupils who did not come from non-manual backgrounds being less likely to be above-average ability, teachers devoted more time to the supervision of these pupils' work' (Pollard and Bourne, 1994 p102). This suggests a major dilemma in relation to pupils who are above-average ability, receiving less time to work with the teacher and gaining help, and spending more time working independently.

Some researchers have found no social class effect in regards to teacher expectations (Murphy, 1974; Nash, 1973). However, other researchers have found that social class is a significant source of teacher expectation (Dusek and Joseph, 1983). The reinforcement of sex-stereotypes within the classroom is an issue which has been described as part of the 'hidden curriculum' (Serbin, 1983). Pollard and Bourne (1994, p102) suggest that teachers may be completely unaware of their own behaviours that encourage and sustain stereotyping and that, subsequently, this may have an effect upon the academic progress and behavioural development of girls and boys. The findings of Pollard and Bourne (1994) suggest that girls seem to attain higher than boys. However, 'boys were given more supervision, particularly in the form of extra feedback. Girls, however, received more praise from teachers' (Pollard and Bourne, 1994 p103). This has further implications with regards

to classroom interaction in relation to gender and the effectiveness of the teachers contact and interaction with a pupil. Furthermore, the Rampton Report (1981, cited in Pollard and Bourne, 1994 p104) proposed that 'the performance of ethnic minority children might be affected by the low teacher expectations due to negative stereotypes about the abilities of such groups'.

Based on her work using 'Reflective Dialogues' [designed to help teachers make sense of their own teaching], Moyles (2003) suggests that effective teaching interactions are 'characterised by sustained interchange between teacher and learners involving the sharing of ideas rather than the traditional initiation-response-feedback sequence of teacher questioning'. The findings of Moyle's (2003, p.xii) study suggest that 'an important factor in promoting a more productive dialogue between teachers and pupils is the extent to which the relationship between parties is one of mutual trust and respect'. This finding may have serious implications with regards to the progress and achievement of children as a result of the relationships formed between teachers and pupils and the effectiveness of the interactions that occur between the two.

At the time of writing, the Cambridge Primary Review (2006) warns of a 'prescribed pedagogy combined with high stakes testing and the national curriculum amounts to a 'state theory of learning', cautioning that 'pre-packaged, government approved lessons are not good for a democracy, nor for children's education'. The review criticises the national strategies for literacy and numeracy that 'embraced the concept of interactive whole-class teaching with the 'horseshoe' classroom layout that enables all the children to see each other and the teacher… the focus was more on the order and discipline inherent in the arrangement than on what really matters – the quality of the talk that teachers are able to model and promote' (Cambridge Primary Review, 2006 p29) The Review then goes on to stress the importance of teacher-pupil interactions 'as the aspect of pedagogy which most repays investment by teachers and those who support them' (Cambridge Primary Review, 2006, p29).

Methodology

A decision was made early in the design of the research to adopt a case study approach following an initial pilot study. As a research strategy the case study is often used in studies that focus on understanding individual, group, organisational, social, political, and related phenomena (Yin, 2003 p1). Case studies are commonly used in studies that pose questions of *how or why*. Yin (2003 p2) states in relation to the use of case studies 'the distinctive need

for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena… the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life processes'. This idea focuses on the desire to understand the *how* and *why* questions of social phenomena which occur in their real-life, natural setting. Cohen et al (2000, p181) support this idea stating that 'Case studies can penetrate situations in ways that are not always susceptible to numerical analysis'. Cohen et al (2000, p181) further this idea suggesting '… indeed one of the strengths [of a case study] is that they observe effects in real contexts, recognizing that context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects.' The relevance of using a case study in this research is that it allowed the researcher the possibility to study the events which occur within the classroom setting, over a period of three weeks. Studying the behaviours of the same characters within this particular setting allowed the researcher the chance to explore how and why certain behaviours do occur within the classroom and possibly the meaning behind particular behaviours observed through the use of semi-structured interviews.

Following the initial access negotiations, a Year 3 class was agreed upon as the principal informants of the research: a Year 3 class teacher ('Angela'), a Year 3 classroom assistant ('Karen') and 22 Year 3 pupils (7-8 years of age). Informed consent was obtained from all participants in the study prior to any research being undertaken. Semi-structured interviews lasting between 15-20 minutes were conducted with the class teacher and classroom assistant, and 10 minute interviews were conducted with a representative sample of the pupils. Interviews were recorded on a digital Dictaphone and then manually transcribed. Participants were then each allocated their own pseudonym. Observations of the Year 3 class were also conducted during the Spring Term of 2009.

Interviews were designed as 'grand tour questions' (Spradley, 1979, cited in Stringer 1999, p68), global in nature and allowing the participant to describe their situation in their own terms. The interview consisted of no prepared questions, but an interview schedule - this worked well when interviewing the Year 3 children, allowing a free flow of conversation around the topic of classroom interactions and their relationship with their teacher in the use of questions such as; "How does your teacher help you in class?"

Interviews were then followed by participant observations in the Year 3 class for a set period of two hours every week during the Spring term. Lacy (1976 p65, cited in Bell, 2005 p145)

describes participant observation as 'the transfer of the whole person into an imaginative and emotional experience in which the fieldworker learned to live in and understand the new world'. Following the recommendations of Lacy, I attended the primary school several months before the research began; this allowed teachers and pupils to become familiar with the presence of the researcher as an active member of the class during the same time periods as the research was conducted. Bell (2005 p156) states 'most studies of this kind are largely unstructured. That is, the researchers do not start with preconceived ideas about precisely what it is they want to observe'. As part of this process I mixed with the teachers and pupils involved with the study, participating in the school life of the Year 3 class, recording what was happening, whilst taking a role in the situation, and then reflecting on this situation. The observations were recorded in the form of field notes. Significant moments were then recorded as 'critical events' (Wragg, 1994 p67) in which specific behaviours served to illustrate aspects of the teacher-pupil interactions. Following the recording of these events the teacher was asked to comment on them.

Data analysis was conducted using a 'constant comparative method' (Mertler 2006, p70). This allows the researcher the opportunity to identify emerging themes throughout the data collection. The selection of 'Critical incidents' allowed the researcher to guide the interview around a discussion or elaboration of particular observations. The data collection and analysis then followed the process outlined by Bogdan and Biklen (1998, cited in Mertler, 2006 p70):

1. Begin the collection of data

2. Examine data for key issues

3. Continue to collect data in order to provide incidents of the key issues identified

4. Begin writing about the categories being explored, attempting to describe and explain them.

5. Continue to work with the data and the emerging themes and identify the basic social processes and relationships formed between the participant/participants involved.

6. Engage in summarizing, coding and writing as the analysis focuses on the most meaningful categories.

Analysis

The introductory episodes of the teacher's interview focused on the relationships established between the teacher and the Year 3 pupils. Angela provided a brief description of these relationships and continued by offering her own perception of responsibilities as the class teacher.

JK: *How would you describe the relationships you have formed with the pupils in Year 3?*
Angela: *I think I have formed good relationships in Year 3; all the children are friendly towards... When issues arise in the classroom environment I do my best to resolve them I work with the staff and parents to ensure that the children are safe and happy. I try to be as positive as possible to encourage the children.*

Angela's initial response emphasises the importance teacher-pupil inter-relationships in her role as teacher. Angela describes her relationships with the Year 3 pupils as 'good', she also highlights that she works with other members of staff and parents to 'ensure that the children are safe and happy'.

JK: *And as a classroom assistant, what function do you think a teacher-pupil relationship serves?*
Karen: *many functions really, you're obviously in charge of learning, so you're a person they can talk to as well and a lot of them regard you as extended family really, so you take on that role, especially in Year 3. So... really in communication, talking to the pupils and that sort of thing.*

In this section of the interview Karen implies that the function of the teacher-pupil relationship is to provide someone that pupils can talk to and relates the role of the teacher as one of a family nature. This idea of the teacher positively communicating with the pupils is also shared with child one;

JK: *Ok... what do you like about being in Year 3?*
Megan: *I like that you... you always can... put your hand up, and you can say stuff, because at (previous school she attended), you always had to, had to shout out at miss cos' she... she was always not listening to people when they put their hand up .*

Megan's response to the question "what do you like about being in Year 3?" focuses on the idea that she feels positive about the ability to communicate and be heard by the teacher. Listening to pupils is very important, for example Williams (2005, p2) suggests that 'Teachers need to apply a range of interpersonal and communication skills in the classroom to develop the learning opportunities of their pupils'. Williams (2005, p2) goes on to suggest that 'How we effectively listen to children will influence how we teach children to listen to others. Active listening lays the foundation for the development of effective communication skills based on respect and mutual cooperation. It involves a range of interpersonal skills that express your attention, empathy, and respect'. Williams (2005) makes a positive link in relation to listening to children suggesting that it enhances their self-esteem, develops their emotional vocabulary and their understanding of how to manage their feelings. Whilst this idea focuses on the personal benefits of pupils from the teaching listening to them and communicating with them, other research also addresses how listening to pupils can also benefit the teachers' professional knowledge.

Silcock (1999, p125) suggests that 'paying closer attention to pupils' voices can reap other sorts of rewards'. She also discusses the research conducted by Davie (1996, cited in Silcock, 1999 p125) which provides evidence of Head teachers acquiring professionally relevant knowledge when obliged to listen to the voices of the children in their charge. Silcock (1999 p125) suggests that in such circumstances 'pupils and teachers become more in tune with each other and teachers are more likely to facilitate the cultural transformation which education entails'.

JK: *So what function do you feel that your role as a teacher plays in the life of your pupils?*
Angela: *I believe that being the children's teacher is important because we're able to help them develop educationally and personally. The different activities that are provided in the school environment can make a big impact on the children's lives.*
JK: *Can you think of an example?*
Angela: *Such as a class assembly, this can give children confidence and the opportunity to show their talents, some children who haven't taken a lead role before may realise they have hidden talents which will make them more confident, as well... I think that, that ensuring that the children are happy with their friends, like in their friendship groups is another important part of the role, if the children aren't getting along well with other children in class or in the play ground this can impact upon their learning in general. I hope that I, as a teacher, provide*

the children with lots of opportunities for them to learn new skills and discover different parts of their personalities and feel...proud of what they have achieved.

Further into the interview Angela discussed her role as a teacher, describing it as a facilitator for the educational and personal development of her pupils. She continues by expressing that the activities provided by the school environment make a significant impact on the lives of the pupils. Through the experience and attendance of school' pupils develop a knowledge and understanding of a wide range of subjects and also develop their ability to perceive, reason and solve.

Behaviour

JK: *Do you feel that there are any particular children or group of children that are more likely to ask for help if they are struggling with their work?*
Angela: *Yes there are two groups of children who often ask for help... the children who are quite, sort of needy for help, who want the teacher's reassurance or attention, and the children who are confident enough to ask for help when, well when they need it. One of the lower ability boys in the class asks for help even before he starts his work, he does this because... he is unsure about his ability to do the work and also because he lacks concentration, I think it's because he doesn't always know what the task requires, he is a LA child he often had support in class and so I think he's became quite reliant on adult assistance.*
JK: *And how do you deal with this?*
Angela: *He has his own individual education plan where one of his targets is to try and start his work without support, and... Also to try and work for 10 minutes independently without asking for help. I try to encourage him by asking him to repeat back the task to me and then I reward him with a marble, if he's successful.*
JK: *And how does he respond to this?*
Angela: *When he's motivated he works well and feels... I think he feels proud if he has worked well independently. I went on an outstanding teacher's course not so long ago and they gave a really good idea to help those children who always ask for help, like him. They said to give those children some help tokens so then the children are only allowed to ask for help so many times. Say if they had 5 tokens they could only ask 5 times. This was said to work well because the children would think twice before asking for help...*

In this section of the interview Angela discusses approaches to reinforcing positive behaviour that are reminiscent of operant behaviourism (Skinner and Ferster, 1957). In this extract a young boy who is often 'needy' for help and 'reliant on adult assistance' is encouraged to work independently without any help and, as a result of performing such behaviour is rewarded with a marble, which works as positive reinforcement.

JK: *If a pupil was misbehaving like, what type of response would you have and what type of reaction do you normally get?*

Karen: *Depends on the child, and it's exactly the same throughout most classrooms really, you follow the golden zone rules, you give them warnings and... of course it's usually a look first, so they respond to that and if they carry on it's a warning and then it depends on the behaviour but we go down the golden zone really, and by misbehaving they may miss their play time because they're obviously not doing much work, and then they may be moved as well so they be made to move by you or on their own if they're distracting the whole class... so it just depends.*

When asked about the type of response a child would receive from her if misbehaving, Karen described another method of behaviour modification that was in practice within the classroom. The golden zone is a behaviour chart which is displayed in the classroom: if a child misbehaves they are moved out of the golden zone into a lower section of the chart and miss part of their play time. This will act as a punishment of their behaviour and according to Skinner's theory will decrease the likelihood of the behaviour reoccurring.

Time

JK: *And does the National Curriculum affect you as a teacher?*

Angela: *Yes, definitely, the curriculum is very important... It dictates everything we need to teach, there's some great topics and resources involved, the only thing is that there's so much to squeeze in the time you have and you sometimes have to move on before the children are ready.*

JK: *Do you feel that this has any negative impact on the curriculum as a result?*

Angela: *Yes in a way, because of the emphasis on Numeracy and, and Literature we don't fit in as much Art, DT and PE as I would like. I try to improve the children's active and creative opportunities by involving them in cross curricular activities, such as in the myths and legends literacy unit where the children will use things such as paint and collage to create their own mythical creature.*

Across the research findings it was evident that the interactions which occur between teacher-pupil are significantly affected by the time available to the teacher. It was evident that the curriculum places time constraints on both the teacher and pupils. Within this interview extract the teacher emphasised how she frequently has to move on from teaching a particular aspect when children aren't ready to do so and that planning for teaching is also very time consuming. This issue of lack of time was also evident in the interview conducted with the classroom assistant;

JK: *How would you describe the purpose of the relationships that you've formed?*

Karen: *Purpose... I suppose it's being a second mum, a lot of times you get called mum but... as a classroom assistant it's a lot more hands on than, or closer than the teachers role because you get to talk to them... this sounds bizarre but a lot more... any problems you get to discuss with them as well, through art work, they tend to come out a lot more through that... I think it's a lot closer than the teacher's role in some ways, because Angela doesn't get to spend a lot of time with them, you know on a one-to-one basis.*

JK: *Yes and how would you describe Angela's relationship with them?*

Karen: *... I'm just trying to think... well, a lot of them do tend to call her mum or dad ... so there is a closeness there... I suppose if she had more time, you know to spend with them, one-to-one with them, you know during guided reading it tends to be... it depends on the subject matter really as well, I mean they are very close to her as well, but I always think a classroom assistant is like, like being an extra mum in the classroom. They tend to, you know, I have more time to talk to you, than Angela cus' she's rushing around doing the lesson.*

JK: *And you know with Angela's job is there anything that you think takes up a lot of her time?*

Karen: *planning.*

Time constraints can have a significant effect on the interactions which occur between teacher-pupil. Gardner (2007, p108) reviewed the responsibilities of leading professionals and found that 'teachers expressed a sense of primary responsibility to pupils, but also suggested that various types of time constraints and demands can make it especially challenging to tend to the needs of their pupils'. This has significant implications for the type of relationship established between the teacher and her pupils. Throughout the interview with the classroom assistant the illustration of her relationship with the pupils was much

more maternal than that of the class teachers. This observation contrasts with the findings of the Plowden report (1967) which suggested that where a child is materially, intellectually or emotionally deprived, a teacher's role must be to strive to be a substitute for parent. The findings of the report stress the importance of a teacher's ability to be able to diagnose the needs and potentialities of a pupil, in relation to a child's development and learning. From the recording of classroom critical incidents, the following offers a pivotal example of role shift between the teacher and classroom assistant in this regard.

Critical incident and diary entry

In one of today's activities the children were required to use scissors and cut out pictures they had previously drawn that were to be put on display in the classroom within the next few days. The scissors used by the children were small, fairly blunt, child-friendly scissors. However, although they were told to be careful whilst using the scissors one of the children cut herself.

The cut was small and wasn't bleeding, however the child immediately ran to the classroom assistant rather than the class teacher who was positioned approximately within the same distance as the classroom assistant. The child didn't cry, however did seem in pain and seemed to be comforted by the paper towel and a hug from the classroom assistant (Researcher field notes).

During this observation it became evident that when this child hurt herself she turned to the classroom assistant, rather than the classroom teacher for emotional support. Once this child was comforted by the classroom assistant, after what may have been, however mildly, a traumatic experience for this young girl she appeared emotionally reassured. The significance of this finding is that she chose to turn to the classroom assistant for comforting rather than the teacher. In relation to this study this may illustrate that the interactions which occur between teacher-pupil are more of a formal nature rather than of a maternal nature as suggested by the Plowden report (1967). This may also relate to the work of Petrie et al (2006) on social pedagogy. The concept of *social pedagogy* focuses on holistic education and care, it emphasises the social contribution in *bringing up* children and promotes the idea that raising children is not only the responsibility of the parents, but also of society (Petrie et al, 2006, p19). Social pedagogy involves working with 'the whole human person: head, hands and heart' (Petrie et al, 2006, p20). The idea that the child in this observation

went directly to the classroom assistant for emotional support may suggest that a form of social pedagogy may be emerging in this classroom context.

From the pupil perspective: 'naughty boys'

JK: *Ok, and you know earlier on you said Miss Carr was a good teacher, what makes a good teacher to you?*
Matt: *Because... she's always... she's nice to some and she's not nice to some, but... I like it when she's not shouting and everything.*
JK: *And who is she not nice to?*
Matt: *... some of like... like the people who are naughty, like she shouts to us, at them, and... Sometimes she moves them down to the red and last year, Jay had to go down to the blue.*
JK: *what's blue and red?*
Matt: *Yes, if you're naughty, very naughty you go down to the red, then again purple, then again blue, an then again yellow and you go and see Mr Shore...*
JK: *Oh, so it's different levels...*
Matt: *... or Mrs Jordan*
JK: *Ok, so is there anyone who's always at the low level of the chart?*
Matt: *... mostly it's Jay but he's been good today, and... Jake, he's getting better at being good, and listening, but sometimes he's silly on the carpet.*
JK: *And who's Miss Carr nice to?*
Matt: *... all the good people usually. Like me, Sara, Louise, Millie, like mostly the good girls...*

Throughout this research a consistent theme was that both the male pupil and classroom assistant interviewed, whilst talking about *naughty* children, or children who misbehave referred to the male gender.   This is demonstrated above in child two's interview and also below in the classroom assistant's interview;

JK: *And the relationship with the well behaved children is that different from the ones who misbehave?*
Karen: *... maybe there's more understanding on their part... if they are higher ability then they naturally have more understanding... I notice sometimes the lower ability they don't always understand what they're doing. I know one pupil we have in the class just **he** can't sit still so **he** tends to be everywhere and **he**, and it can make **him** to be, I don't know the sort of class clown, so, **he** wants that attention... so you tend to you know you tend to*

bring **him** *back down because it tends to be in front of the class really, so it depends on understanding, really.*

JK: *Would you use any sort of technique with the children?*

Karen: *This class is quite well behaved to be honest... we only have some issues and then like I said it tends to be a look and then you point out, and then if they're working with a group you tend to say well we can't carry on working if you're going to keep distracting everyone, and... if* **he's** *carried on working you could use positive comments and praise that he's actually carried on... yes so that's what I would do really.*

Grossman (2004) offers an explanation for why boys may be viewed as more disobedient than girls. Grossman (2004, p207) suggests that 'the aggressive behaviour which boys are more likely to project, which is usually, physical-pushing, shoving, hitting and so on - is more obvious to teachers than girls relational aggression - ostracizing others from the group, telling stories about them, saying nasty things about them, and so on'. In the view of Grossman (2004) it appears that both boys and girls may be equally disobedient however the different types of behaviour they project cause different reactions from the teacher. Grossman (2004, p207) suggests that this is because 'boys misbehave more visibly than girls and in a more disruptive way; therefore, a lot of boys are frequently criticised for their behaviour'.

From both the observations and interviews it appears that a lot of teacher and assistant attention within the classroom is focused upon the *naughty* children, which from the research interviews indicates that the boys may predominantly be viewed as the *naughty* children, therefore receiving the most interactions with the teacher.

Conclusion

From the fieldwork data a number of themes have emerged. For Angela and Karen the role of the teacher was describe in two different contexts; Angela discussed her role as consisting of a number of responsibilities, whereas Karen described the role of the teacher as 'extended family'. Both descriptions touch upon the idea of 'looking after' children. Angela commented that her responsibility was to keep the children 'safe and happy' and Karen suggested that it was to provide a relationship in the nature of an 'extended family'. These two descriptions both relate to the concept of social pedagogy discussed by Petrie

et al (2006) and the concept of society being responsible for the 'bringing up' of children in partnership with parents. Both Angela and Megan commented on the positive attributes of their day-to-day classroom encounters involving creative learning, with words such as 'fun' and 'enjoy' used to describe this style of learning.

Another salient feature of study was the emergence of operant behaviourism as a means to control and shape the behaviour of the pupils. Within this particular class it appeared that boys were perceived as more 'naughty' than the girls with a consequential increase in the allocation of the teacher's attention to boys and an attendant increase in the interactions with the teacher. Finally the discussion of time available for classroom interactions within the study focused on the negative impact of the prescribed curriculum and aspects of planning and 'high stakes' testing. Both Angela and Karen suggested that the National Curriculum puts pressure and time constraints on the teacher which consequently has an effect on the amount of time Angela can spend interacting and working with her pupils. This perhaps brings us to the most significant finding within the study which highlighted the role of the classroom assistant. Although the focus of this study was on the interactions between teacher and pupil it was inevitable to also consider the role of the classroom assistant. In relation to this study, the role of the classroom assistant appears to be as an emotional educator, interacting with the pupils in ways that, due to role responsibilities and time constraints, often fail to occur between teacher and pupil.

The purpose of this study was to explore the interactions between a teacher and pupils within a classroom setting and to consider how and why particular forms of interaction occur. Throughout this research the classroom interactions that occurred between teacher and pupil emerged as a significant dimension of the learning process of the pupils within this class. This study explored the function, the types, and the effects of many of the interactions which occurred between teacher and pupil throughout this study. Many of the findings chime with the literature from the field where teachers express a sense of primary responsibility to pupils, but also suggest that various types of time constraints and demands can make it especially challenging to tend to the needs of their pupils (Gardner, 2007, p108). This challenge directly relates to the quantity and quality of interactions that occur between teachers and pupils within a classroom setting and was an issue which came to dominate the study. Interactions that occur during the task of 'social talk' may be some of the most quality interactions that occur within the classroom, and may explain

why the classroom assistant in this study adopted a more personal role and relationship with the children. Both the classroom assistant and teacher commented that the National Curriculum and lesson planning puts pressure and time constraints on the teacher and consequently effects her availability for quality interactions within the class.

It was perhaps inevitable in this study that a review of the role of the classroom assistant would emerge whilst looking at classroom interactions. Through the analysis of the interviews, both the teacher and classroom assistant suggested that the assistant has more time to interact with the children and as potently summarised by the class teacher: "she often notices things I might have missed." Whilst this research then raises awareness of the different types of interactions that occur with a classroom setting, it also raises important questions relating to the role of a classroom assistant.

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Sugar: A Postcolonial Discourse of Power and Consumption in Toni Morrison's novels 'Tar Baby' and 'The Bluest Eye'

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ABSTRACT

The meteoric speed with which sugar came to dominate the lives and appetites of the British consumer alongside the effect of production upon an indigenous people driven into slavery, called into question whether these effects are still operating within society today. In order to examine this I have used the novels of Toni Morrison: Tar Baby and The Bluest Eye, to support the argument that the discourses of sugar operate as a form of sweet ideology. That is, the desire for sweetness can be used to mask the purporting of values that are anything but sweet.

Tar Baby explores the dangers of consuming an ideology that educates the authenticity out of the character Jadine. By adopting the white educational values she can no longer accept her blackness, her outward sign of heritage, and seeks to assimilate herself within the lifestyle of the white family who have become her benefactors.

The Bluest Eye sees Morrison examine the effects of American ideology that equates sweetness with white icons of beauty. The conflict centres on the assimilation of white ideals as pivotal to securing happiness, beauty and love. The consumption of these dominant ideologies causes the central character Pecola, to descend into madness.

KEYWORDS

sugar, power, beauty, education, ideology

Sugar; a brief introduction

'What at first seems an innocuous, pure substance – the ubiquitous refined white sugar – quickly comes to embody a complex social relation and penetrating capitalist metaphor. In a way, sugar comes to represent the ultimate commodity: commonplace enough to seem totally banal yet integral to so many aspects of people's lives to be totally vital' (Richardson, 2009: 2). History alludes to several discourses of sugar: sugar as medicine, sugar as a signifier of wealth and power, sugar and consumption, sugar and slavery, sugar and construction of identity, sugar and desirability.

The seventeenth century saw the use of sugar, a rare luxury ingredient, as an agent of power, distinction and social validation, wielded by the rich as an outward expression of their enviable wealth. Its uses had not varied much since its introduction three centuries earlier; there was still 'the blending of sugar with other rare and precious spices in the preparation of food, and the combination of sugar with crushed pearls or fine gold in the manufacture of medical "remedies"' (Mintz, 1985: 154).

The late seventeenth and early eighteenth century ushered in a greater availability of sugar to British households. The emerging uses of sugar as a sweetener for tea, an additive with which to make jam, preserve fruit, make sweets, desserts and cakes; perpetuated by its sweet nature and versatility, the desire for more sugar and during the mid eighteenth century, greater and greater quantities of sugar came to be consumed in the domestic market.

It could be argued that as the sugar industry benefited directly from the slave trade they were therefore by implication among one of the numerous industries responsible for validating and profiting from the exploitation of groups of people. Men, women and children were dehumanised in pursuit of higher and higher yields that brought wealth to the British Empire and cultivated a desire for a product that once ingested, piqued appetites that could not be satiated by more sugar.

As a product sugar is invaluable in its ability to embody not only its physical property of sweetness but also its metaphorical properties as a universal ideology of desirability. The discourse of sugar as a way to read literary texts written by female authors can reveal what may be latent expressions of the symbolic, complex and subtle ways sugar acts as a metaphor for power and consumption. This is a powerful discourse considering all foodstuffs incorporating sugar, whether artificial or not, are seen as far more desirable than those without, 'no society rejects sweetness as unpleasant. Sweet tastes have a privileged position in contrast to the more variable attitudes towards

sour, salty, and bitter tastes' (Mintz, 1985: 17). Sugar and its discursive practices in society can in some ways explain or represent the feminine experience seen in the literature of Toni Morrison whose novels deal with power and consumption.

That woman should become what sugar represents, sweet, desirable, or exotic, is only one aspect of the metaphor. Woman, more importantly the female body, can also be seen to represent the site of contention; enslaved by the mass consumption of sweet desires and ideology that form a constructed identity of all encompassing sweetness. There arises then the need to purge, abstain and resist fervently the lure of the dominant ideology which becomes almost impossible, in the same way that, 'if we choose not to eat sugar, it takes both vigilance and effort, for modern societies are overflowing with it' (Mintz, 1985: 74). The effort of resisting the ideologies of the dominant culture and the refusal to acknowledge them as universally accepted, can lead women to think of themselves as morally reprehensible non-conformists, callously rejected by a society they long to be a part of. A power struggle ensues, this loss of autonomy leads to inner conflict which then projects itself outward to be made manifest as madness, rejection of authentic self, or self denial.

Consumption and power

Toni Morrison's novel *Tar Baby* (1981), is a text that examines relationships through a discourse of consumption and power. There are two levels of power operating in the narrative. Firstly, there is the relationship between Jadine and her aunt and uncle, Ondine and Sydney, who work for Valerian and Margaret Street. Secondly, there is the employer-employee relationship between Valerian, and his black servants, Ondine and Sydney.

Jadine becomes the ward of Ondine and Sydney and Valerian their employer becomes Jadine's benefactor. Valerian acquired his wealth through inheriting the family business the 'Street Brothers Candy Company'. Valerian went on to make the business extremely successful and in preparation for his retirement he 'bought an island in the Caribbean for almost nothing; built a house on a hill away from the mosquitoes and vacationed there' (Morrison, 1981: 50). Valerian's wealth founded on sugar, affords Jadine the opportunities that her aunt and uncle were unable to provide and in essence Valerian becomes her 'Sugar Daddy', allowing her to live a sweet life, devoid of the servitude her aunt and uncle endure.

Jadine's transformation is expressed in a way that draws its parallels from the processes applied to raw sugar cane. Sent away from her aunt and uncle she is refined through education at the finest schools, and by extensive travel, through her subsequent work as a model.

The refining or whitening process is explicit throughout the novel. Firstly, Jadine may bear a family resemblance but she no longer relates to her aunt and uncle on a familial or social level, Jadine identifies instead with Valerian and Margaret Street and they become her adopted family and she their surrogate child. She has become cultured by the standards of the dominant ideology, and is then rid of impurities and the racial taint of blackness that would run counter to the culture of refined whiteness. A blackness that is considered backward, uneducated and archaic especially compared with whiteness, when expressed as the pursuit of social advancement; and when filtered through the lens of consumption, 'refined sugar thus became a symbol of the modern and industrial' (Mintz, 1985: 193). In the Street household while her aunt and uncle sleep 'down below, where the moon couldn't get to, in the servant's quarters' (Morrison, 1981: 58), she sleeps a few doors down from Margaret. She is confident therefore of her position in their home to speak inclusively '"What about Christmas? That's a topic we need to talk about. We haven't even begun to plan. Any guests?"' (Morrison, 1981: 63).

Morrison determines that the effect on the minds and lives of black women whose education is based on powerful white ideologies leaves them irreparably impaired for they have been 'rid of the funkiness. The dreadful funkiness of passion, the funkiness of nature' (Morrison, 1990: 64). This education leaves Jadine feeling the need to transcend her genetic racial make-up, or *funkiness*, viewing it as inconvenient and transitional. When the weather on the island causes Jadine's hair to distort from the original way she styled it she complains to Margaret, '"it's doing a good job of souffleing my hair...I should have had it cut like yours Margaret." She pressed her hair down with both palms, but as soon as she removed them her hair sprang back into a rain cloud' (Morrison, 1981: 62).

Margaret laughs off Jadine's complaint and compliments her '"It's very becoming, Jade. It makes you look like what was her name in Black Orpheus? Eurydice."' (Morrison, 1981: 62). Jadine is uncomfortable with references to her blackness, she does not

appreciate Margaret's comments and 'the way Margaret stirred her into blackening up or universalling out, always alluding to or ferreting out what she believed were racial characteristics' (Morrison, 1981: 62), has Jadine on the defensive. The refinement she receives through education does not quell the antithesis between her inherent black identity and the ideology with which she has been indoctrinated. There is a disparity in how she operates in this duality created through education and the lifestyle it afforded her. Margaret comparing her to a black actress elicits resistance in Jadine 'it kept her alert about things she did not wish to be alert about' (Morrison, 1981: 62). The veneer of educated white ideals that Jadine uses to conceal her black identity is thin and easily exposed.

Part of Jadine's education took place in the Sorbonne and this influence is apparent in the way Jadine upholds the European ideology of beauty, art and form, regarding any artistic expression of black artists to be substantially inferior to the point of the ridiculous. In *The Bluest Eye* we see a type of Jadine in Geraldine who conforms to the dominant ideology of hegemony, 'they go to land-grant colleges, normal schools, and learn how to do the white man's work with refinement.' (Morrison, 1990: 64). Jadine can be seen to be representative of the type of educated black women who 'do not have lovely black necks that stretch as though against an invisible collar' (Morrison, 1990: 64), they are stunted bearing the weight of an ideology that forces their blackness to be subordinate to the powerful white system of education. Her comment, 'Picasso is better than an Itumba mask' (Morrison, 1981: 72) supports this powerful white ideology filtered through education that causes her to despise the things that are attributed to black culture so much so that 'little matches of embarrassment burned even now in her face as she thought of all those black art shows mounted two or three times a year in the states' (Morrison, 1981: 72).

When the black man, Son, is discovered hiding in Margaret's wardrobe and brought before Valerian, Ondine and Sydney expect Valerian to exercise his power and discipline the intruder. Ondine and Sydney see a clear distinction between themselves as civilised, working black people, in contrast to the savage black man, who epitomises all that is black and dangerous for every member of the household regardless of racial background, 'if that nigger wants to steal something or kill somebody you think he's going to skip us, just 'cause we don't own it?' (Morrison, 1981: 98).

When it becomes clear that Valerian has no intentions of evicting Son from the house, thoughts turn to making preparation for the Christmas meal. Margaret is convinced that Michael will attend and in her excitement starts planning the menu without notifying Ondine of her plans. This quickly becomes a contentious issue and the principal motivation behind the power struggle that occurs between Ondine and Margaret. Ondine sees herself as the 'mistress' of the house as she organises and cooks all the meals that are eaten and is furious that Margaret wants to resume temporary control of the domestic space. Margaret's idea of a Christmas dinner is cloaked in nostalgia 'It was to be a really old fashioned Christmas, and that required the woman of the house to be bustling in the kitchen with an apron roasting turkey and baking apple pies' (Morrison, 1981: 166). This romanticised vision of Christmas is Margaret's attempt to redeem her past mistakes 'her desire for apple pie becomes symbolic of her attempt to be a good mother and create a facade of a happy family' (Parker, 1998: 623).

However, Christmas is a big disappointment. The invited guests do not arrive and in particular Michael's absence contributes to the demise in Margaret's mood. Margaret's power is quenched by the situation, in the kitchen 'the uses of things eluded her completely, the ollieballen recipe slipped out of reach entirely' (Morrison, 1981: 195-196) and she is unable to finish what she started. Ondine, 'deeply unhappy about being thrown out of her kitchen in the first place and then pushed back in' (Morrison, 1981: 196), grudgingly resumes her control, proud of herself for having had 'the foresight to bake a ham and a coconut cake' (Morrison, 1981: 196) and pacified because she 'would not be required to eat Margaret's menu' (Morrison, 1981: 196). Her refusal to consume Margaret's food is a refusal to submit to her authority and serves as an outward sign of rebellion that fosters within her a sense of powerfulness.

The Christmas dinner is fraught with tension and while the household are all seated together, Ondine and Sydney discover the reason for the absence of Gideon and Therese, the outdoor servants. Valerian had discovered the two servants with the apples for the pie in their possession that he had specifically requested from the consulate. Valerian had fired them on the spot and had not told Ondine or Sydney. The revelation of their dismissal causes Ondine and Sydney to unite in rebuking Valerian for his actions; in effect they rise up and revolt against their master. '"You what?" Ondine almost shouted' (Morrison, 1981: 202), Sydney tries to deflect attention away from the

improper way Ondine addresses Valerian, '"Mr Street, you could have mentioned it"' (Morrison, 1981: 203). Valerian tries to put them in their place when he directs his comment to Margaret '"I am discussing a domestic problem with my help"' (Morrison, 1981: 203).

The presence of the apples which 'came at great expense and inconvenience from the consulate' (Morrison, 1981: 206) and their subsequent transformation into the dish ollieballen, place Valerian in a position of power, not dissimilar to that of kings when they were the only ones able to afford displays of sugar because of the quantities, 'to be able to provide one's guests with attractive food, which also embodied in display the host's wealth, power, and status, must have been a special pleasure for the sovereign. By eating these strange symbols of his power, his guests validated that power' (Mintz, 1985: 90).

Likewise the consumption of the Christmas dinner and in particular the apple dessert, is a validation of Valerian's authority and power circumvented somewhat by the absence of the invited guests, for whom this power would be demonstrated. Valerian attempts to assert his authority but finds himself berated, his power called into question. Seated at the head of the table he 'looked at the four black people; all but one he knew extremely well, all but one, and even that one was in his debt' (Morrison, 1981: 205).

The forced gaiety of the meal disintegrates and Son reflects on the actions of Valerian in dismissing Gideon and Therese,

> 'although he had been able to dismiss with a flutter of the fingers the people whose sugar and cocoa had allowed him to grow old in regal comfort; although he had taken the sugar and cocoa and paid for it as though it had no value, as though the cutting of the cane and picking of beans was child's play and had no value; but he turned it into candy, the invention of which really was child's play, and sold it to other children and made a fortune in order to move near, but not in the midst of, the jungle where the sugar came from and build a palace with more of their labour' (Morrison, 1981: 203-204).

For Son, 'Valerian epitomizes the equation of sugar with exploitative, white male power' (Parker, 1998: 623) and Son clearly recognises that Valerian's wealth was extracted from the labour of exploited slaves. The sweetness they cultivated, whets an appetite

that sustains a perpetual cycle of consumption, which only benefits those able to profit, with no consideration given to the uses of the product or to the individual in the pursuit of social power. The apple dispute forces Valerian to justify his social position, defending his inherent rights to control his own household and by implication those outside of it through employment and dismissal. Son argues that the apples came at a great expense and inconvenience not to Valerian but to Gideon and Therese who rowed eighteen miles to deliver them 'so your wife can play American mama and fool around in the kitchen' (Morrison, 1981: 206). Here again 'the apple pie functions as an evocative symbol of American ideological values' (Parker, 1998: 622), exploitation and oppression concealed by a sweet facade. The discord at dinner acts as a trigger which ultimately reveals Valerian's true colours: his sweet facade has concealed his contempt for Ondine and Sydney 'I am being questioned by these people, as if, as if I could be called into question!' (Morrison, 1981: 207).

Valerian in trying to re-establish his power as master and employer confronts Ondine, 'all of a sudden I'm beholden to a cook for the welfare of two people she hated anyway?' (Morrison, 1981: 207-208), but is ill prepared for the battle that ensues. Ondine retaliates against Valerian's disregard for her, and turning her attentions once again to Margaret, fights for the power she believes she deserves as the epitome of femininity, within the domestic space;

> '"she wants to meddle in my kitchen, fooling around with pies. And my help gets fired!"
>
> "Your kitchen? Your help?" Valerian was astonished.
>
> "Yes my kitchen and yes my help. If not mine, whose?"
>
> "You are losing your mind!" Valerian shouted.

Ondine was fuming now. "The first time in her life she tries to boil water and I get slapped in the face. Keep that bitch out of my kitchen. She's not fit to enter it. She's no cook and she's no mother"' (Morrison, 1981: 208).

The accusation Ondine brings against Margaret calls into question the role of mother as nurturing life giver through emotional and physical sustenance and the power thus afforded the woman who can deliver nourishment through food. Ondine sees herself

as superior in her ability to provide not only for Michael when he lived at home, but to the extended household. Her ability to provide nourishing well-cooked food, not only manifests itself through the pleasure she receives from feeding others, but secures her position of power dominating the kitchen, the space that causes the most contention in the novel. For Margaret, 'motherhood is associated in western culture with social and political powerlessness' (Sceats, 2004: 19) and her failure to nurture regardless of her inherent position as mistress through marriage to Valerian, is the one thing that prohibits her access to the domestic space that she believes will redeem her, as a result Ondine is unwilling to defer to Margaret.

The power struggle is won by Ondine as she hurls accusations of Margaret's abuse of Michael to those seated as guests at the table, but it is a hollow victory as Ondine's and Sydney's jobs hang in the balance. Reconciliation of sorts occurs, when Margaret approaches Ondine in the kitchen, the former battleground. The two women talk and Margaret leaves Ondine to decide whether she will forgive her and move on in their relationship. Sydney also seems to gain the upper hand as Valerian is dependent on him, due to his ailing health. Sydney is able to carry out his duties in the knowledge that neither Margaret nor Valerian is in a position to dismiss them as the balance of power has at long last shifted in their favour.

Sugar and consumption

Morrison exhibits in her work 'recognition that whiteness was normalised and permeated every aspect of the metropolitan culture in which black people found themselves' (Spencer, 2006: 21). This normalisation is a powerful one especially when mediated through a discourse of sweetened American ideology that purports 'whiteness' to equal sweetness as exemplified poignantly in *The Bluest Eye*. Here Morrison (1990) uses sugar to represent the American ideology that success and status are directly proportional to the colour of skin and level of physical beauty. The woman who can not measure up 'is placed in a situation of tutelage very often involving buying a better version of herself' (Wykes and Gunter, 2008: 208).

This ideology, replace and espouse values that are designed to restrict and reshape the values of the black woman, not unlike 'the colonialist bourgeoisie, when it realizes that it is impossible for it to maintain its domination over the colonial countries, decides

to carry out a rear-guard action with regard to culture, values, techniques and so on' (Fanon, 2001: 34).

Pauline Breedlove is awakened to the existence of beauty through other black women in the town of Ohio and the cinematic, dominant western ideology of beauty as projected from the movie screen. She is educated through her visits to the cinema and 'along with the idea of romantic love, she was introduced to another – physical beauty' (Morrison, 1990: 95). Portrayed through the leading ladies, icons of the silver screen – Jean Harlow, Betty Grable, Hedy Lamarr and Shirley Temple, the references for success and beauty are extremely narrow for;

> 'each representation is placed in conjunction with others to form a feminine syntagm, composite, compliant woman, who when meeting the cultural ideal is then placed in the romantic gendered narrative of love, family, financial security and perhaps even fame' (Wykes and Gunter, 2008: 208).

In contrast black women are cast outside of the narrative, as they are not represented by the leading lady. They are by inference left to play the supporting role in life, deemed therefore ugly and of a lower status than the images they do not and culturally cannot reflect.

While trying to emulate Jean Harlow by wearing her hair in the same way, and visually ingesting the ideology permeating from the screen, the sugary escapism breaks into Pauline's reality in a painful way when she loses a tooth eating candy. This lost tooth 'points to the destructive nature of the diseased system of values which has conditioned her into a sense of worthlessness' (Parker, 1998: 626). This incident cements Pauline's conviction that she should not bother to try to be beautiful 'I let my hair go back, plaited it up' (Morrison, 1990: 96). Pauline's rejection of the dominant cultures attempts to undermine her natural bent, by refusing to straighten her hair, embracing her blackness and allowing her hair to be natural, could be seen as a form of negritude, for 'however important the mental effects of colonialism the body of the colonised is always one of the prime targets of control – and therefore one of the prime locations of resistance' (Childs and Williams, 1997: 52). However, it is not negritude that causes Pauline to plait her hair: it is resignation not resistance. Pauline is unable to view herself positively; she has been so immersed in the culture of beauty she does not have the necessary tools

to empower her resistance. She gives up, resigned to being unable to live with the dominant culture's requirements of acceptance, love and beauty. She has not gained any power moreover she is rendered utterly powerless.

This powerlessness and bodily control is not exclusive to the black female body however. There can be seen a reversal or as Fanon describes it 'rear-guard action' for the white woman is now enslaved and held up as binary to the black woman. Her body too, is objectified, property to be judged and denied the dignity of being allowed to develop, but caged like a wild animal and fed a diet of propriety, thinness and perpetual youth. She must represent the properties of sugar – sweetness, desire, success but refrain from partaking of the substance. This archetypal white woman is then packaged, modified, manufactured and fed to the black woman to absorb the ideology constructed that promotes these values, to now be necessary, further enacting control of a body freed from the tyranny of physical enslavement but sold a diet of refined intellectual slavery.

> 'The legacy of slavery has added an additional element to effacements of black women's humanity. For in slavery her body is not only treated as an animal body but is property, to be "taken" and used at will. Such a body is denied even the dignity accorded a wild animal; its status approaches that of mere matter, a thing-hood' (Bordo, 2003: 11).

Such an attitude is revealed while Pauline is in hospital waiting to give birth to Sammy her first child. Her examination is brief and impersonal;

> 'A little old doctor come to examine me. He had all sorts of stuff. He gloved his hand and put some kind of jelly on it and rammed it up between my legs. When he left off, some more doctors come. One old one and some young ones. The old one was learning the young ones about babies. Showing them how to do. When he got to me he said now these women you don't have any trouble with. 'They deliver right away and with no pain. Just like horses.' (Morrison, 1990: 97).

Rejected by other black women at her poor attempts to make herself more attractive Pauline gives up on herself and her chance to transcend her surroundings and her ethnicity. She withdraws from the other women and resolves to turn her attention away

from those things that confirm her access barred from the beauty she so desperately yearned for. She concentrates on proving her worth to others by working in the church, clothing herself instead with piety and self-righteousness and taking pride in her superiority. Pauline plunges into the work of the church as wholeheartedly as she had devoured candy and images from the silver screen.

Pauline may have given up on her chance of personal beauty but the education she received in the cinema permeates her thoughts. She found herself unwilling to love and care for her family, incapable of reinforcing within Pecola a positive black self-image, unable 'after her education in the movies, to look at a face and not assign it some category in the scale of absolute beauty, and the scale was one she absorbed in full from the silver screen' (Morrison, 1990: 95).

Her job as maid to the Fisher family, highlights her change of focus from a beauty she can physically embody to a beauty she can handle, manage and through hard work elicit praise for when Pecola accidently knocks the hot berry pie to the floor, Pauline's reaction is startling in the anger and fury she directs at her daughter, 'over her shoulder she spit out words to us like rotten pieces of apple' (Morrison, 1990: 85). Pauline's success is at stake here and

> 'Morrison connects simple, natural foods such as raw fruits with life-giving idyllic values. Conversely, she links sweets, especially commercially prepared candy and pies, with competitive- success dreams; by comparing the alluring facades of sugar and outward success, she knows that neither is truly nourishing to human life' (House, 1984: 182).

That certainly is the case as the pie incident proves. The pie may not have been strictly 'commercially' made but Pauline is employed to carry out cooking duties. Furthermore her love of the Fisher family proves to be the undoing of her own. Where Pecola should have been Pauline's priority and the apple of her eye, she has been supplanted by Pauline's love for the Fisher child. Pauline has rejected her natural child represented by the rotten apple, and instead replaced her with the manufactured sugar enhanced pie, the Fisher child. She rejects genuine, natural home grown sweetness for manufactured constructed adulterated sweetness.

When reality intrudes on the fantasy life that Pauline has constructed for herself the two cannot coexist. She comforts and soothes the white child with honeyed words, at the expense of her own daughter whom she expels from the house. 'Pauline keeps this order, this beauty, for herself, a private world, and never introduced it into her storefront, or to her children' (Morrison, 1990: 100). She stays on to prepare another pie to repair the breach caused by the intrusion of Pecola and also to reclaim or repair her sense of femininity. The pie is 'a particularly potent symbol for black women because of its associations with stereotypes of femininity' (Parker, 1998: 614). Pauline reserves her femininity for the Fisher family where she feels it is more valued. As a result of her unfulfilled desire for physical beauty she neglects Pecola who is even more desperate than her mother to achieve the ultimate symbol of beauty and perfection, the dominant ideology, explicit in her desire for blue eyes.

When Pecola is taken to the MacTeer household she is so indoctrinated by American ideology that her predilection for all things white is represented in the drinking of all of the household milk. When Pecola proves not to be a threat to the dynamics of the household, Claudia and Frieda give her gifts of food. Claudia and Frieda recognise the customary American protocol of welcome with milk and cookies. 'Frieda brought her four graham crackers on a saucer and some milk in a blue-and-white Shirley Temple cup' (Morrison, 1990: 12). In being made welcome Pecola is dismissive when presented with food but 'she was a long time with the milk, and gazed fondly at the silhouette of Shirley Temple's dimpled face' (Morrison, 1990: 12-13). Pecola then proceeds to elucidate the virtues of Shirley Temple finding an ally in Frieda.

Claudia finds herself excluded from this communion by her hatred of Shirley Temple and all things white, which is founded on a hatred of a doll given for a Christmas present. It carried with it the expectation that 'all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured' (Morrison, 1990: 14). She is also excluded by age as she is younger than her sister and Pecola, yet she sees with clarity and works hard to subvert, the pervading message that whiteness is sweetness that Pecola in particular has proverbially swallowed hook, line and sinker. Claudia's hatred initially manifests itself in her aversion of white dolls which is transferred to a hatred for white girls, as she tries to

'discover what eluded me: the secret of the magic they weaved on others. What made people look at them and say, "Awwwww," but not for me? The eye slide of black women as they approached them on the street, and the possessive gentleness of their touch as they handle them' (Morrison, 1990: 15).

Pecola is positioned in the narrative as a binary opposite to Claudia. After Pecola's first introduction to the milk and the Shirley Temple cup we find that she has consumed all the milk in the household. Parker asserts that Pecola's

'sense of worthlessness is metaphorically represented as emptiness, as thirst, and she attempts to find meaning in her life, to fill herself, by imbibing white cultural values. The danger in this is first intimated when her love of the cup induces her to greedily drink most of the milk' (Parker, 1998: 616).

Pecola does not drink all the milk in one sitting, or out of greed, that is purely an assumption made by Mrs MacTeer; 'we knew she was fond of the Shirley Temple cup and took every opportunity to drink milk out of it just to handle and see sweet Shirley's face' (Morrison, 1990: 16). She takes her time savouring each encounter with Shirley Temple, each time the act of drinking the milk takes the form of communion, rendering the experience one of worship. Pecola's actions identify her inner compulsion, the need or desire to drink in the beauty of whiteness captured in the image of Shirley Temple, in an attempt to be transformed inwardly in the hope it will be reflected outwardly. This is why Pecola consumes all the milk. It is a physical, symbolic representation of the ideology that Pecola is willing to drink in. The drinking of the milk legitimizes Pecola's handling of the beauty and purity that Shirley Temple represents, that which she cannot attain; it demonstrates an unquenchable thirst or ravenous hunger. Pecola is hungry for whiteness and beauty and is not satiated by the ingestion of the milk, the handling of the cup or the homage she pays to the image.

House views the inclusion of milk as an exception to the way Morrison links success to sugar, 'perhaps because of its colour, Morrison links it, along with sugar, to the unhealthy success dream which she credits Caucasian society with propagating' (House, 1984: 182). The colour link between milk and sugar could be significant, as 'the idea that the finest sucrose would also be the whitest is probably a symbolically potent aspect of sugar's early European history' (Mintz, 1985: 22), and sugar and milk are two

substances that contravene African American diets. Firstly high sugar intake leads to a disproportionately higher incident of diabetes among African Americans,

> 'over 2.2 million African Americans have diabetes; there are 4 times as many African Americans diagnosed with diabetes today as there were in 1968; for every 6 white Americans who have diabetes, 10 African Americans have the disease; among African Americans 20 years and over, the prevalence of diabetes is 8.2 percent compared with 4.8 percent among non-Hispanic whites.' (Diabetes monitor.com).

Secondly studies have shown the African American population to be amongst the higher percentages of people who are commonly lactose intolerant and the inclusion of milk in their diets is not beneficial or advantageous.

> 'Most adults whose ancestors lived in very hot or very cold climates that couldn't support dairy herding or in places where deadly diseases of cattle were present before 1900, such as in Africa and many parts of Asia, do not have the ability to digest milk after infancy' (Lang, 2005).

Therefore akin to both substances being destructive in the diets of African Americans, so is the consumption of white American values and ideologies. This can be seen as a complete submission to dominant white dietary theory; the overriding of biological needs for those imposed American ideological 'milk and cookies' family values.

The Mary Jane sweets are seen as a means of assimilating the whiteness that eludes Pecola who eats them, that they are rejected by Claudia and Frieda for precisely the same reason that makes them desirable to Pecola is significant. If the sister's sense of *blackness* is to remain intact then they must abstain from the construction of whiteness equals sweetness and therefore ultimate desirability. That they are outsiders due to the colour of their skin is a fact they are not ignorant of. Pecola, like her mother Pauline, has aspirations to be accepted on terms of beauty and therefore become elevated from their current position of ugly worthless black women, as they are perceived by the society in which they live.

In her quest for these blue eyes the ingestion of the sweets, as with the milk, that internalising of the American dream, brings with it only momentary satisfaction, a temporal state of fleeting beauty and belonging. Pecola's perception of beauty is one dimensional and her mother, frustrated by her futile foray into a world barred to her, refuses to guide

her. Rather she turns her attention to the family she works for maintaining their American dream, their beauty and possessions as if they were her own.

Neither Frieda nor Claudia can adequately help Pecola. They are themselves negotiating their experience of black beauty amidst the messages that tell them that they are inferior to those whose complexions are either whiter or lighter than theirs. 'The effects of white colonialism are not just on the outer material shell of the colonised but also on their insides through the psychological damage caused by this inescapable whiteness' (Spencer, 2006: 21). Their negation creates in them hostility to those who are favoured purely on the basis of skin colour.

Their hostility is directed towards a new girl in their class, Maureen Peal, 'a high-yellow dream child with long brown hair' (Morrison, 1990: 47). Her appearance causes the other girls to defer to her and the boys to admire her. Maureen Peal epitomises the lure of the Mary Jane sweets for Pecola, because she comes from an upwardly mobile family whose complexion is no barrier to their ability to function in the market place; she consumes the offerings of Hollywood with delight, and 'she even bought and liked white milk' (Morrison, 1990: 48).

Maureen approaches Claudia to initiate friendship and reluctantly Claudia acquiesces. Frieda joins them and when Pecola is taunted after school by a group of boys she is rescued by Maureen, Frieda and Claudia. Maureen encourages Pecola's friendship with the promise of ice cream, an amalgamation of the potent discourses of whiteness and sweetness. After discussing the stars of the silver screen these icons of white, blue-eyed blonde haired women of the silver screen who function as a sign of idealised feminine beauty to be aspired to regardless of racial backgrounds, Pecola finds the sweet fix is again temporary as an argument brings to the fore Maureen's allegiance to American ideologies.

When the purchase of the Mary Jane sweets causes Pecola to question her existence her right to be seen she concludes that the shopkeeper must have the correct view of her. She confirms his reaction towards her as valid and consequently pours scorn on herself alongside the dandelions that before entering the shop she had deemed flowers and not weeds. The eating of the sweets for Pecola bring with it temporary comfort, a respite from the ugliness that pervades her waking life.

'Each pale yellow wrapper has a picture on it. A picture of little Mary Jane, for whom the candy is named. Smiling white face. Blond hair in gentle disarray, blue eyes looking at her out of a world of clean comfort. The eyes are petulant, mischievous. To Pecola they are simply pretty. She eats the candy, and its sweetness is good. To eat the candy is somehow to eat the eyes, eat Mary Jane. Love Mary Jane. Be Mary Jane' (Morrison, 1990: 38).

Pecola's conviction that she was 'relentlessly and aggressively ugly' (Morrison, 1990: 28), led her to take ownership of this ugliness, 'she hid behind hers. Concealed, veiled, eclipsed – peeping out from behind the shroud very seldom, and then only to yearn for the return of her mask' (Morrison, 1990: 29). The rape suffered at the hands of her father, the subsequent pregnancy and death of the child all culminate in her demise. Her visit to Soaphead Church while pregnant and then the vain hope instilled in her by the death of the dog only serve to uphold the notion of American ideology. Pecola is seen by Claudia and Frieda after the baby dies roaming the streets talking to herself. In the end, Morrison is explicit in her narrative that the pursuit of American ideologies, the supplanting of blackness for whiteness can bring with it no gain but the descent into madness. Feeding on the images leaves only an insatiable appetite for more and a continual self loathing.

The discourse of sugar is at its core a discourse of consumption of a product which elicits desire and can only be fuelled by more consumption. This cyclical process with its humble beginnings in the seventeenth century grew rapidly, so that 'by the mid-nineteenth century the British were eating more sugar than ever before, and were as sugar hungry as ever' (Mintz, 1985: 161), a desire that continues to show no sign of abating.

Power resides within a society dominated by sugar and consumption, espousing values that cause those hungry for the sweet life to be forever in the pursuit of the even sweeter life. Although slavery has been abolished the vestiges of slavery exist through the inherent discourse that insists on controlling women's consumption and methods by which they are able to demonstrate their power. This is mediated through the dominant discourse constantly feeding women images that seek to extol the virtues of homogenisation, and ideologies of western beauty and education. Which by their allusion to freedom, serve as snares that women must free themselves from.

In her novels, Morrison exploits to dramatic effect the results of consuming American ideologies at the expense of inherent cultural and racial values not based on outward conformity. To consume the ideologies to, by definition, reject your authenticity leaves you not only with an inner gnawing for the sweet ideals that were proffered but unable to transcend the new surroundings you have been elevated into.

Sugar's advancement from exotic to mainstream, from luxury to necessity is both subtle yet brutal and as a discourse of power and consumption, 'sugar focuses the dynamic reality of post-colonial strategies as no other single product has ever done' (Ashcroft, 2001: 79).

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