UNIVERSITY OF DERBY

TEACHING ADULTS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES:

A ROGERIAN APPROACH

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This thesis uses an evaluation of a course based on a Rogerian approach to education to challenge the efficacy of the normative/behaviourist approach, which has been used to train adults labelled as having learning difficulties. Unlike behaviourist approaches, Rogers' work seeks to empower students to become self-directed learners and claims to teach them how to become their own behaviour change agents.

The research questions focused firstly on whether it was possible to use genuiness, acceptance and empathic understanding to build the 'climate of trust' that Rogers claimed facilitates student learning (Rogers, 1983:18) and secondly on the learning that took place in such a 'climate.'

Primary data were gathered using participant-observation, written records and tape recordings throughout the two-year action-research programme. The evaluation took place post hoc.

The evidence demonstrates that the adoption of Rogerian principles to develop the skills of communication, decision-making and self-evaluation generated a 'climate of trust' in which student learning and 'trust' became mutually reinforcing.

Evidence from the second year, in the form of case studies, showed how different each individual student was, how their talents and needs varied and how they developed increased self-esteem and self-confidence.

However, the Rogerian approach was not implemented without problems. His beliefs about genuineness, acceptance and empathic understanding do not recognise that the source of genuineness is the tutor's subjective values, whilst empathy requires an imaginative leap to grasp the students' subjective meaning. The tutor may well have to face dilemmas where her personal values are in conflict with her empathic understanding of her students' perspectives. Conflicts also arose between the needs of individual students and the needs of the group as a whole.

Furthermore, Rogers' work largely ignores the pedagogic skills required of the tutor. In advocating breaking down the 'us and them' divide between tutor and taught, he ignores the problem of establishing a structure of legitimate authority. This was resolved by establishing a form of democratic decision making as a radical alternative to the praise/blame culture of the traditional classroom.

Rogers' ideas may be utilised by tutors in ways that help students labelled as having learning difficulties drop the 'defensive strategies' (Goffman, 1968:44) and 'facades' (Rogers, 1983:24) associated with stigma and 'spoiled identity.' The importance of 'critical events' (Woods, 1993:3) as turning points for learning following the building of trust, is highlighted.

Several incidents highlighted the problems that arise for tutors who lack background knowledge of students' involvement with other professionals. This has led to unresolved issues and hence to a recommendation for more research into the potential for greater team-work.

The Rogerian approach is not a formula. It engenders a climate of mutual respect where trust can grow. It is recommended to tutors working with adults labelled as having learning difficulties as it empowers them to direct their own learning and to become their own behaviour change agents.

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INTRODUCTION

People who have been labelled as having learning difficulties have long been treated either as small children or trainable chimpanzees.

This thesis argues that there is another way. It sets out to test the efficacy of using an approach to teaching learning-disabled students that draws on the humanistic work of Carl R Rogers.

The twelve adults involved enrolled on a two year course (1998 and 1999) in a local Further Education College.

The research questions were:-

1. Using a Rogerian approach, is it possible to generate a 'climate of trust' with a group of adults labelled as having learning difficulties?

2. Does such a 'climate' facilitate their learning?

Chapter 1 affords a challenge to the way the social exclusion of those labelled as having learning difficulties has been legitimised by psychometric tests that purported to measure a person's capacity to learn. Such tests located their abilities along a continuum that rests on the hypothetical construct of 'intelligence.' Those whose IQ scores fell below 70 were viewed as a social or medical 'problem' and could be 'treated' in socially excluded institutions.

Once there, inmates lost all claims to a 'normal' lifestyle and 'normal' life-opportunities and could be legally confined, drugged into docility, bullied, treated like children, trained like chimps, sterilised, denied their own clothes and privacy and otherwise mentally, emotionally and physically abused.

The discovery of such deprivations and abuses in the 1950/60s in Europe (for Scandinavia see Nirje, 1980 and for Britain see O'Brien, 1980) and North America (see

Wolfensberger, 1972) contributed to a growing movement towards decarceration and a shift towards care in the community. Enlightened and radical reformers of the time argued for the principle of normalisation, that is, that people beginning to live in the community should be given normalising experiences and opportunities and encouraged to adapt their behaviour to fit societal norms.

Others, who favoured behaviourist psychology, used training techniques such as rewards and praise or the withdrawal of praise and possibly punishment to regulate behaviour.

My argument takes the view that those labelled as having learning difficulties continued to be socially excluded. Special schools exacerbated the problems by separating labelled children from their peers at an early age thus depriving them of the normal experiences common to the rest.

Most large institutions have now been closed and most children are now educated in mainstream schools. However, I argue that these advances have not changed the culture of either the general population or of professionals who continue to have both legal and professionals means to sanction and control and 'treat' the 'problem' constituted by these labelled people on the assumption of risk to self or others.

The evidence is that little has changed in practice. Labelled people continue to be socially excluded.

In Chapter 2, I examine the consequences of such social exclusion and argue that the continuing evidence of abuse, deprivation and control has profound effects on the self-identities and self-esteem of adults labelled as having learning difficulties. I deduce from the evidence that labelling and exclusion leave such people with seriously restricted life opportunities and with expectations of failure.

I take up Goffman's (1968) concept of stigma. People labelled as having learning difficulties are not treated with respect or regard and seek to cover their differentness with defensive strategies. Their subjective response is conceptualised by Goffman (1868) as 'spoiled identity.'

Of key importance to this thesis is the notion that if labelled students are treated with respect and warm regard, as Rogerian approaches advocate, they will drop their defences and move towards fulfilling their potential as learners.

These ideas lead into Chapter 3, where I introduce Rogers' approach to education. Rogers considered that traditional education was failing to assist students to 'learn how to learn' (Rogers, 1983:1). He maintained that teachers using traditional teaching styles taught students to obey rather than to make choices and to be self-directing. Such teachers maintained the role of expert and kept distance between themselves and their students. In establishments using traditional teaching methods, teachers reached burn-out and students became apathetic and bored (Rogers, 1983:25). Rogers thought students would learn with enthusiasm in a 'climate in which they found themselves respected' (Rogers, 183:2). He advocated the establishment of a 'climate of trust, ' of genuineness, acceptance and empathic understanding.

In critically reviewing Rogers' work I identify problems which stem from the overlap of these three core elements of the 'climate.' They may occasionally be mutually exclusive. Further, Rogers was not a teacher and thus never worked to establish his 'climate' within the classroom, where the teacher is not only learning-manager, but also disciplinarian. Nevertheless, having personally experienced the Rogerian 'climate of trust' in an M.Ed. course and having over twenty-five years teaching experience, I was convinced it could be adapted for classroom use. I set out to test my conviction in practice with a group of adults labelled as having learning difficulties.

The project involved a two-stage process. I collected data whilst the course was delivered as an action-research programme, intending this to be a pilot study for a later project. When the course could not be repeated, the rich data was used as a resource for a *post hoc* evaluation for this thesis.

Embedded in the research questions is the epistemological assumption that reality is socially constructed and that personal and cultural beliefs and practices are subject to change. The evolutionary process of data collection using tape recordings and field notes was therefore justifiable. The development of the course depended on evaluations of progress at the time. In tune with recommended practice in action-research, I trained my

assistant to act as a 'critical other.' By the end of the course all the sessions had been tape-recorded and I also had extensive field notes written after each session.

For the *post hoc* evaluation these rich data was subjected to a thematic analysis. The emergent categories were: communication, decision-making, self-evaluation and risk-taking. Eye-contact charts measured progress in communication. Attendance figures monitored the success of the course. The other analytical device was the use of 'critical incidents' to mark significant moments of change and development in students' social interaction and self-identity.

The description of the institutional context and the baseline levels of confidence and self-direction of the students set the scene for the presentation and discussion of data in Chapters 5 and 6. They illustrate well the stigma and spoiled identities conceptualised by Goffman (1968). An analysis of the students' development in communication and decision '-making is thickly illustrated by data from transcripts and field notes to convey the way in which the 'climate of trust' developed to the point that students' behaviour began to mirror mine. There is growing evidence as the course progressed that they too treated each other and me with genuineness, acceptance and empathic understanding. Importantly, from a pedagogic viewpoint, I show how the democratic process adopted for decision-making established the group as a legitimate authority, displacing the role of the tutor as authoritarian disciplinarian.

Evidence in Chapter 7, which contains case studies of all participating students, indicates how each individual student developed trust in me and in one another. In the context of acceptance, genuineness and empathic understanding they learnt to participate in and accept the democratic decisions of the group. Sometimes group decisions and sometimes my 'genuineness' involved challenges to students' assumptions and expectations. The concept of critical incidents is used as an analytical device to highlight the significance of specific 'moments' of tension and risk which had enormous consequences for personal development and self-esteem.

My role as tutor, although essentially participative, was important for both the construction of a safe environment and for providing learning opportunities that necessitated risk taking. Two kinds of risk were involved. Both students and staff risked

revealing themselves as capable of making mistakes and risked learning about boiling water and hotplates as well as road crossing in the community. The evidence shows that risk-taking was very important both for building trust and for learning.

The *post hoc* evaluation also revealed dilemmas in maintaining the principles Rogers advocated. There were particular occasions when the self-direction of individuals was in tension with the social pressures of an otherwise mutually supportive group. However, Rogers did not provide a tick-list for those wishing to establish his 'climate of trust, ' but left it to the individual to decide the best way forward.

During the second year of the course, when students were working on their individually chosen learning projects, absenteeism dropped from 21% to 6%. This is construed as overwhelming evidence that the students not only found the Rogerian 'climate of trust' to be a supportive learning environment, they became mutually supportive of each other as learners.

An important finding centred round the dangers of lack of confidential information about students. As a result I recommend the inclusion of teachers in the cross-professional teams that prepare care plans.

On reflecting on the research in Chapter 8, I claim that the action-research project as a method of data collection was particularly apt for this study. In evaluating the data *post hoc* I found that, on the positive side, the *post hoc* reflection and analysis allowed for a depth of study that could not have been possible whilst teaching full-time in the classroom. It was also possible to stand back from it and take a more critical view of my role as both tutor and participant-observer, yet, although data collected were rich, there were gaps. I might have asked students more frequently for their perspectives on events. Data on whether they agreed with group decisions and how they decided whether their educational products were good are singularly lacking. Reviews with my assistant would have benefited from more structure and an agreed agenda.

Finally, I conclude that behaving with genuineness, acceptance and empathic understanding towards students made it possible to establish the Rogerian 'climate of trust' with a group of adults labelled as having learning difficulties. They demonstrated

significant progress in communication skills. They also learnt to take on the responsibilities to each other that derive from democratic decision-making. Surprisingly they came to behave towards each other and towards me, in ways that indicated they too were adopting genuineness, acceptance and empathic understanding in the group. By widening the curriculum to allow for some controlled risk-taking they extended their skills beyond the classroom into the community. Challenges to their behaviours gave rise to potentially hazardous 'critical incidents'.

However, within the 'climate of trust', these became turning points where they dropped the 'masks and facades' of 'spoiled identity' and moved towards what Rogers saw as their 'true selves'.

Within the Rogerian 'climate', students changed their behaviour in self-satisfying ways and learnt with enthusiasm.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION

1.1 Overview

This chapter is about the social exclusion of adults labelled as having moderate to severe learning difficulties.

In the first part of the chapter I shall show how tests to measure intelligence and models of disablement have excluded adults with learning difficulties from the mainstream of society by labelling them outside the 'norm.'

Then I show how the same labelled people have been further socially excluded by proponents of the normalisation principle, which drives services for their care in the community.

Finally in this chapter I show how special education in segregated schools has excluded those labelled as having learning difficulties even further.

It is important to explain this, because in the following chapter I shall contend that this high level of social exclusion has a demeaning and stigmastising effect on the identity of those subjected to it. Most Importantly, I shall also argue that the criteria that have been used to justify exclusion have no validity.

1.2 Exclusion by Labelling

For much of this century the lives of people with disabilities have been dominated by the medical profession (Christensen, 1996:64). Their identities have been defined in terms of sickness and difference. They are 'the deaf,' 'the spastic,' 'the mentally retarded,' and so on. In Britain at the start of the 21st century, youth and beauty, athletic power and intellectual excellence are valued and the medical language of disability has become the social language of insult. However, people said to have disabilities have contested their identities as medical problems (Oliver, 1986:16).

People labelled as having learning difficulties are 'rarely viewed or treated as normal people' (Gartner and Lipsky, 1987:369). Thus, it is important to understand just how some people have become labelled as having learning difficulties.

The formal classification and labelling of people according to their 'capacity to learn' has been a growth industry for more than a century. People differ in how clever they are. Some people can learn a wide range of skills with apparent ease, whilst others find it difficult to learn even simple skills. Those who find academic learning easy are commonly said to be intelligent.

Measures of 'intelligence' have provided a legitimate tool for distributing the population across a bell-shaped curve for most of the 20th century. This statistical device ensured an average score of 100 with most of the population falling between scores of 80 and 120. People who have learning difficulties of a general nature and with IQs of below 80 on the bell curve are said to have 'delayed or arrested development of intellectual capacities' (Hulme and MacKenzie, 1992:1)

The identification of people labelled as having learning difficulties has a chequered history and the definition has changed over time. It remains problematic and has never fulfilled its early promise as a predictive measure of innate potential. In spite of numerous attempts to define what constitutes learning disabilities (United States) or learning difficulties (United Kingdom), apart from an IQ score below 80 (for more see below), there is still no agreed definition of the term. The US term 'learning disability' and the UK term 'learning difficulty' are interchangeable because they both refer only to an IQ score.

In the next section I shall argue that this definition is based on a highly questionable concept. Being labelled as having learning difficulties places a person into a category, almost a sub-culture, from which it was and still is hard to escape and which has a profound effect on experience and life-style.

1.2.1 The Intelligence Debate: Historical Background

Intelligence is a concept which must be understood in relation to theories associated with it. The meanings attached to the term have varied over time and remain debateable.

In 1869 Galton combined his cousin Charles Darwin's ideas about natural selection with the work of the Belgian statistician Quetelet (1849) to argue that genius is a normally distributed and heritable characteristic of humans. Galton designed tests to measure auditory and visual sensory discrimination abilities as well as reaction times to stimulii. Galton assumed that individuals with high intelligence would have keener discriminative capacities than those with low intelligence (Galton, 1883). Building on this work, in 1890, J M Cattell (1963) published a paper in which he described measures of 10 psychological functions, including measures of tactile and weight discrimination, of reaction times and of pain thresholds. He was the first to use the phrase 'mental tests.' Galton wrote a commentary on this paper in which he noted that it would be useful to relate scores from the psychological measures to ratings of intellectual performance.

Binet was convinced that intelligence must be measured by focusing on complex mental processes though his early attempts at such measurements floundered. Binet was appointed scientific advisor to a commission set up to study the needs of retarded children. He needed an easily administered test which would assess which children would benefit from special educational opportunities. In 1905, he and Simon, (Binet and Simon, 1905) published the first test of intelligence.

The 1911 revisions to the test allowed for the calculation of a mental age. Intellectual tasks were ranked in order of difficulty and differentiated between by a consideration of the age at which an 'average' child could successfully complete each task. A 'mental age' for a child could then be arrived at by reference to the characteristic age level of those tasks the testee could complete successfully. Stern (1912) showed how, by dividing a person's mental age by her chronological age and multiplying the answer by 100, an intelligence quotient, or IQ, could be found.

It was assumed, (but never empirically researched) that Binet's tests could successfully be used to determine IQ in 'retarded' adults.

By the end of the 1940s intelligence testing had 'become commonplace' in the US (Brody, 2000:28). Research on intelligence was used to support eugenic arguments which influenced notions about who should be allowed to reproduce and for the

development of programmes designed to restrict the propagation of 'defective strains' (Brigham, 1923).

In Britain, in the 1950s, there was controversy about the use of intelligence tests to select pupils for either secondary modern or the more 'elitist' grammar schools (see Carroll, 1985).

Virtually 'all of the pioneers' (Brody, 2000:28) in the study of intelligence recognised the nature/nurture debate. That is, that intelligence derives from a mixture of opportunities to acquire knowledge and from innate abilities. Thus intelligence tests may be viewed in some measure as assessment of social privilege. However, the extent to which individuals develop intellectual abilities may reflect innate endowments and nearly 'all of the pioneers' believed intelligence to be a heritable trait' (Brody, 2000:24).

1.2.2 The Intelligence Debate: Contemporary Research

It is arguable that the way in which human intelligence is defined and measured reflects a society's views and values. One way of understanding the relationship between social values and beliefs and IQ measures of intelligence is through theory-based models of which I describe five contemporary ones below.

1.2.3 The Neural Efficiency Model

Many theorists believe that the seat of intelligence is the brain (Davidson and Downing, 2000:34) and that neurophysical bases of mental ability must be discovered for intelligent behaviour to be understood. In this model lies the premise that intelligent people must have brains which operate more accurately and more quickly than the brains of less intelligent people. Advances in technology now permit direct measurements of brain activity to be made. According to Hendrickson (1982) individuals with low IQs will show a fair amount of variability in their electrical brain activity because they have errors in the transmission of information through the cortex of their brains. High IQ people, in contrast, have relatively error-free transmission and show little variability in brain activity.

The neural efficiency model appeals because it sounds reasonable to study the brain when investigating intelligence which is assumed to be an activity of the brain.

However, the model relies on the assumption that IQ is a valid, stable intelligence measuring device and Gardner (1993) and Sternberg (1985) have challenged this. Further research is needed to clarify the relationship between the brain's efficiency and the individual's intelligent behaviour.

1.2.4 Hierarchical Models

The notion underlying this model is that the structure of intelligence can be discovered by analysing the interrelationship of scores on mental ability tests. If performance on one type of problem if highly related to performance on another, the abilities measured by the two tests are viewed as being interrelated. A set of interrelated abilities is referred to as a factor.

Spearman (1927) found a single important factor to be related to performance on all types of mental ability tests. He labelled this the 'general' or 'g' factor. Thurstone (1938) found no evidence of a general factor in intelligence and instead revealed seven independent factors - verbal comprehension, word fluency, number facility, space, perceptual speed, induction and memory.

Because many findings fit neither Spearman's nor Thurstone's models of intelligence, a hierarchical model has been proposed. Proponents of this model place one or more general factors at the top of the hierarchy and others at lower levels. However, it is still not absolutely 'clear what 'g' represents (Davidson and Downing, 2000:39), nor how the different levels relate to each other.

1.2.5 Contextual Models

Contextual models are based on the assumption that intelligence often has different meanings in different contexts, so that what is considered to be intelligent in one culture is sometimes thought to be idiotic in another (Das, 1994).

Little is yet known about how we think, learn and remember. Research done at University College, London, (Channel Four, 'The Difference,' 3.12.2000.) suggests that some part of our brains may become bigger depending on how we use them. The message seems to be 'Use it to increase it.' However, there is limited space within the human skull for brain expansion. If a person learns many languages and thereby enlarges

her brain area dealing with linguistic ability, this may mean that other areas of her brain must shrink to accommodate this. If well-used parts of human brains expand and lesser used areas shrink, Spearman's 'g' becomes less feasible.

Intelligence tests have been criticized for containing items that reflect the cultural bias of middle-class western society (Aiken, 1996:250). After unsuccessful attempts to develop culture-free tests, devisers turned their attention to tests which were non-verbal and more likely to be 'culture-fair.' However, cultural differences exist in areas other than language and Anastasi (1988) concluded that tests utilising non-verbal content were probably no more culturally fair than verbal reasoning tests.

People within diverse societies do not always value the same attributes. For example, in rural Africa, intelligence is not usually measured in academic excellence (Tunga, 1979), nor by quickness (Wober, 1972). Intelligence may be associated with gradualness and patience, emphasizing co-operation, sociability and a sense of honour (Wober, 1972). Some societies may place less emphasis on finding complete solutions than western society does; in some societies rote learning and practical skills may be better valued than scholarly skills (Gill and Keats, 1980).

For some groups, some skills seem to be inherent. For instance Aboriginal Australian children have visual memories superior to those of white Australian children, but do not usually achieve as highly at school as their white peers, perhaps because their teachers rely heavily on auditory teaching styles rather than visual ones which might suit them better ('The Difference' Channel Four, 3.12.2000).

Another factor which has a bearing on test scores is the way in which the test is taken. Children of lower socioeconomic status are more likely to hurry and answer at random than their peers (Anastasi and Cordova, 1953).

After a century of research into racial differences in intelligence, little is known about those differences (Brody, 1992:280) other than that they persist over the life span. Although the difference in IQ scores between black and white subjects is statistically significant, it is impossible to predict IQ on the basis of skin colour (Aiken, 1996:268).

Proponents of the contextual approach must show caution in interpreting theories of intelligence from other cultures. External factors need to be taken into account before intelligence can be fully understood.

A similar lack of certainty shrouds gender differences in intelligence (Brody, 1992:323) and changes in intelligence over the life span (Brody, 1992:234).

1.2.6 Multiple Intelligences Model.

Intensive research in the 1980s on learning disabilities such as dyslexia led to the conclusion that 'a single-ability view of intelligence is no longer a useful construct (Stanovich, 1986).

Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences focuses less on mental processes and more on domains of intelligence. According to Mutiple Intelligences (MI) theory (Gardner, 1998) there are at least eight important types of intelligence which are more or less independent of each other - linguistic, mathematical-logical, spatial, musical, kinesthetic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and naturalist. Each intelligence is defined as 'the ability to solve problems, or to create products that are valued within one or more cultural settings' (Gardner, 1993). Intelligences evolve through interactions between a person's biological disposition and those opportunities his/her environment provides.

MI theory is not based on test scores but on data collected from observations of brain damage. Gardner observed that damage to one area affected one intelligence but not others. He acknowledged that a general or 'g' factor was revealed in his findings but that the narrow scope of measures severely limited g's predictive value.

1.2.7 The Bioecological Model

Ceci (1996) proposed that intelligence is a function of interaction between innate ability, environment and motivation. Although Ceci, like Gardner, believed there are multiple intelligences, he also considered that a person can be strong in some and weak in others. Ceci's theory is known as the bioecological model of intelligence.

Interaction with a person's environment determines whether an innate potential will be fully developed. Timing may be crucial as some neural pathways fail to connect if they are not stimulated during sensitive moments of development.

According to the bioecological model, a person has two types of environmental resource. One type, called proximal processes, involves interactions between the developing child and people and objects in his/her environment. Positive interactions lead to more complex forms of intelligent behaviour. The second type, called distal resources, consist of dimensions of environment that influence the quality of proximal processes. Ceci et al (1977) list books, safe neighbourhoods and secure attachments as examples of distal resources.

In addition to the two types of resource necessary for intellectual development, individuals must be motivated to capitalize on their innate abilities. Motivation to strive hard in some areas and less in others leads, according to Ceci and Liker (1986) to uneven intellectual performance across domains.

1.2.8. Summary

There is, as yet, no consensus about what intelligence is. There are different, but not mutually exclusive models of intelligence which account for individual differences in expertise and levels of success. It is however not clear how any of the models could be fully tested nor how any could be proved wrong.

Whatever innate abilities are present at birth, it seems likely that external sources influence their development. Interaction between the child, his/her parents/carers and the environment as well as the right stimulus at the right time seem indicated as being important. Both these notions have important implications for the way all children are treated, both those thought of as intelligent and those thought of as having learning difficulties.

IQ measures what has been learnt, not the potential to learn. Despite this, IQ tests and assumptions about intelligence have been used to delineate some people as having learning difficulties.

1.3 Education and Learning Disability

The UK 1971 Education Act distinguished between the mildly educationally sub-normal (IQs 75-50) and the severely educationally sub-normal (IQs below 50). As a result

various schools were redefined according to the recommendations of the Warnock Report (1978) as 'special' and suitable specifically for children with 'mild' or 'moderate' or 'severe' learning difficulties (Hulme and Mackenzie, 1992:4).

It has been Skinner's 'behavioural, deterministic view which has tended to inform the teaching of students labelled as having learning difficulties over the years (Sebba et al, 1993:88). Behaviour modification is an approach which takes as its starting point the Skinnerian notion that in any situation a person has available a number of possible responses and will 'emit that behaviour that is reinforced or rewarded' (McLeod, 1993). Sebba et al (1993:9) found that such behavioural techniques have had 'a powerful and lasting influence on the education of pupils with learning difficulties' and this matches my own experience in special school education.

A considerable volume of research (eg Kiernan and Woodford, 1975), showed the effectiveness of behaviour modification techniques in teaching new skills and to a lesser extent in reducing behaviour problems. Farrell, McBrien and Foxen (1992), identified three suppositions behind behavioural methodology. Firstly behaviourists argued that learning was a process whereby learners acquired new behaviours, secondly that effective teachers needed to set clear educational objectives for their students and thirdly that teaching was solely a matter of selecting the right teaching techniques.

If the desired effect was not achieved, the assumption was that the teacher needed to examine the way in which s/he had applied the technique, rather than examining the validity of the technique itself. The claim was that 'behaviourism told teachers all they needed to know about teaching and learning' (Sebba et al, 1993:29).

However, during the 1980s teachers in special schools began to sense that 'the acquisition of new skills did not represent the sole aim of education' (Sebba et al, 1993:29). Student interactions and group activities were being devalued and individual needs set aside. Behavioral techniques gave students new skills, but failed to provide understanding. A different approach to teaching was called for.

In his work on the topic approach to learning, integrated schemes of work and groupwork in special schools, Rose showed that such learning-disabled pupils can be

involved in collaborative endeavours and that groupwork is effective in promoting learning (Rose, 1991). However, for those students 'who have been used to having things done for them, or in some instances to them' (Sebba et al, 1993:39), help will be needed to assist them to move from being passive recipients to becoming self-directed, self-confident active participants.

Helping students with learning difficulties to become better cognitive processors of information is clearly an important educational goal since several studies have suggested that the cognitive processes used by students with learning disabilities do not appear to exhaust - or even tap - their intellectual capacity (Bos and Anders, 1990, Swanson, 1991).

Bursack (1989) examined the social differences between eight US elementary school students labelled as having learning difficulties, eight other low-achieving children who had not been through a formal referral-assessment process and eight higher achievers all in the same year group. The children subjectively rated each other as friends and as leaders and the study involved no measures of direct observation. Bursack found that the group labelled as having learning difficulties were less accepted, had fewer friends and were perceived as exhibiting more negative behaviours and less prosocial behaviours than other children rated. Bursack did not say what he meant by 'less accepted.' I presumed it to mean 'less often mentioned as friends and leaders' by peers.

Bursack's study used a very small sample, but he noted in his 'Discussion' that his findings replicated those of 'many previous studies' including that of Hallahan, Kauffman and Lloyd, 1985).

Having friends and being liked by peers is 'at least as important ... as academic achievement' (Vaughn and La Greca, 1993:251). However, students labelled as having learning difficulties are often described as experiencing problems in perceiving how others feel, with low self-esteem, with communication skills and in making friends (Lerner, 1989). Social skills need to be taught to labelled students since they do not 'learn them in mainstream classroom settings' (Gresham and Reschly, 1986). Teachers do not teach social skills to learning-disabled students who need them, not only because the constraints of delivering the national curriculum leave little time for this, but also

because 'they do not have sufficient knowledge of social skills to provide appropriate interventions' (Vaughn and La Greca, 1993:261).

Social skills intervention programmes with learning-disabled students have been developed. Fox (1989) paired adolescent learning-disabled students and non-labelled peers they did not know well in order for them to discover things they had in common. Pairs interacted in teacher-directed activities for forty minutes per week. Partners then discussed and recorded their discoveries. Fox found that partners who participated in the mutual interest groups later recorded higher subjective ratings of their partners than did those in a control group. Fox does not say that the higher ratings were due to enhanced social skills. It is possible that the such ratings were influenced only by the fact that they had worked together.

A contextualist perspective for increasing social skills and peer acceptance of elementary school students with learning difficulties was developed by Vaughn et al (1991). Proponents of this intervention model view social skills as an aspect of social competence that needs to be considered in the context of family, school and other environmental factors. Significant others at home, in school and in the community were included.

Learning-disabled students who were not mentioned as being actively liked by their peers were targeted and paired with popular students who served as their trainers. Partners worked together outside the classroom for three half-hours per week. They learnt a strategy which involved defining the problem, devising and evaluating possible procedures to solve it, followed by trying some out to see what worked. Significant others could anonymously suggest problems to be worked on.

Afterwards participating students labelled as having learning difficulties received higher ratings of social skills in subjective answers in questionnaires both from their teachers and their peers. Most of those teachers and peers had not worked closely with the learning-disabled students involved in the study so the criticism that higher ratings may have come about because of acquaintanceship and mutual endeavour do not apply here. It is likely that improved social skills did enhance acceptance and liking. (For other interventions see Vaughn and La Greca, 1993:263-266).

These studies are important in view of recent moves to integrate students labelled as having learning difficulties into mainstream classes on the assumption that the needs of learning-disabled students 'are not different from the needs of their non-labelled peers' (Wang, Reynolds and Walberg, 1986).

The term 'learning difficulties' is a supposed disorder 'without a comprehensive theory' (Weller, 1987:45). The ambiguity of the definition and identification criteria for learning disability prompted Senf to call it a 'sociological sponge' (Senf, 1987:87). Algozzine argues that the category has outlived its usefulness because the operational criteria do not produce a unique set of people' (Algozzine, 1985:72).

Although there is no agreement on how the term should be defined, five models of learning disability have been developed. These are known as the medical, behavioural, developmental, social and self-construct models.

1.3.1 The Medical Model

The American Association on Mental Deficiency definition held the view that since some defect or pathological handicapping condition existed within the physical body of the individual, it required attention from medical professionals. 'The dominance of medical science' in the field of learning difficulty has been the 'main instrument for excluding people .. from society' (Ryan and Thomas, 1991:15).

Proponents of the medical model of disability seek to 'cure' or 'rehabilitate' disabled people and thus return them to the 'normal' condition of being able-bodied. This approach renders disabled people dependent and the notion 'governs all interactions between helpers and those helped' (Finkelstein, 1980).
According to Barton (1986), it is the medical profession which has configured the perceptions of disablement in the minds of non-disabled people and he argues that its influence has been felt both in societal need to control deviant people and in the management of disabled people within institutions and the community.

The notion that the behaviour of learning-disabled people should conform to the norms of society led to the normalisation principle which will be discussed later (see below).

The notion of 'normality' is a highly complex and contentious concept. The normal/abnormal dichotomy is central to the medicalisation of learning disability and has been used as 'justification of oppression, discrimination and maginalization of disabled people' (Swain and French, 1998:23).

Diagnoses are not 'neutral terms for the transmission of knowledge, ... but are actively involved in the very production of the phenomena they represent' (Lackmund, 1998:780).

Since the medical model of learning disability assumes an extremely wide range of common causes, it is not surprising that it does not delineate a discrete group of people. It also imposes a presumption of 'inferiority on disabled persons' (Hahn, 1987:89).

Medical criteria may, in many cases, be used to identify root causes for learning disability, but they can provide neither a definition, nor a cure.

1.3.2 The Behavioural Model

Bijou (1966) proposed a behavioural model of learning disability, which focused on the relationship between a person's behaviour and what preceded or followed it. For instance, he thought that in a parent/carer child relationship in which there was little interaction, the child's verbal behaviours would be infrequently reinforced and the child would stop trying to communicate. This would result in delayed or inadequate communication skills.

In his definition Bijou sites responsibility for inadequate skills on those who interact (or fail to interact) with the child, rather on the child him/herself. The behavioural model of learning difficulty holds no assumptions about whether or not disability exists but focuses on external environmental factors.

Whilst environment and upbringing are significant factors in the lives of learning disabled people, Bijou's definition is not wholly adequate because bio-medical anomalies, present at birth, are not influenced by external environmental factors.

1.3.3 The Developmental Model

A person whose mental age is half his/her chronological age (IQ 50) 'may be considered to be mentally handicapped or developmentally retarded' (Eden, 1976:11).

The notion of being 'developmentally retarded' or 'developmentally delayed,' upon which this model is based, suggests that given enough time the labelled person will catch up. This is not necessarily so. An adult with the 'developmental' age of ten does not look like, behave like or have the potential of a normal functioning ten year old. As well as being confusing, the labelling of an adult as having the 'developmental' age of ten may also have serious negative implications for the way he/she is treated.

Since in modern western society no ten year old could be expected to cope with adult life alone, an adult with a developmental age of ten may be presumed not to be able to do so either. This is not a reliable conclusion. During World War Two 'a developmental age of eight was found adequate for the Army and ten for the Navy' (Scheerenberger, 1983:214). There is something radically wrong with a definition of learning disability and the ability to cope with adult life that holds good in peacetime but not during times of war.

1.3.4 The Social Model

The social model, like the behavioural model, emphasises factors outside the individual. According to this model, behaviour is viewed as acceptable only when it conforms to societal norms. People who do not conform are labelled as deviant (see Sarason and Doris, 1969 for more information). However, some instances of non-conformity to the norm are allowed, even admired, as in the cases of supermodels, the very rich or the highly intelligent. Norms vary over time and within groups. Within modern western society academic achievement is valued and the label 'learning disabled' segregates out those who display little academic success. Thus, according to the social model, mental disability is 'an achieved social status' rather than an inherent condition (Mercer, 1973:39).

The social model is an explanation of how learning disabled people come to be seen as deviant, but it does not define learning disability. Neither does it explain why some

people who behave in ways which do not conform to the norm (such as some pop-stars) are idolised whilst others are labelled deviant.

1.3.5 The Self-Construct Model

The model of the self in Kelly's theory is that of a person acting like a scientist, constantly making and testing hypotheses and developing theories to explain observations. Whilst scientists try to explain what happens in laboratory material, people strive to explain what happens in their everyday lives. Kelly (1955) argued that people do not react to objective reality but to the world as they understand it. Through experience individuals create personal theories about what the world is like. They then use these theories as guides for their actions and responses. If experience matches anticipation, the theory will be proved. If not, 'anticipations are modified after reflective thought' (Dalton and Dunnett, 1992:7). These individual theories are known as personal constructs.

According to Kelly, people express personal theories in a bi-polar manner, that is, with two opposite ends. We may think of ourselves as either passive or active, either mean or generous, or either fat or thin. Hjelle and Ziegler (1981) point out that some observers assert that people are self-determining and capable of change whilst others think behaviour is pre-determined and that the best people can hope for is to understand how we came to be the way we are.

In Western culture many people see their lives as 'governed by the behaviour towards them' of significant others (Dalton and Dunnett, 1992:30). People 'born with a handicap ... may construe it as a central aspect of their personality' (Dalton and Dunnett, 1992:32/33). Much depends on how they are responded to by significant others. If the focus is on the disability, 'the chance of the child's personality evolving round the fact of being handicapped are high' (Dalton and Dunnett, op cit). In Kelly's (1955) view, models of learning difficulties other than his self-construct model try to 'cram a whole live struggling client into a non-sociological category.'

To be human is to 'share capacities for conferring meaning in our bodily experiences and social interaction' (Segal, March 13, 2001:14). The exact way in which our individual

'pasts contribute to the success, frustration or failures of our actions and out attempts to make sense of our lives' remains unknown (Segal, op cit).

The self-construct model indicates how people, including those labelled as having learning difficulties 'become' themselves in an ongoing process of change.

1.3.6 Overview of Models

In each of the first four above-mentioned models of learning disability non-disabled people are encouraged to view the labelled minority as very different from and inferior to themselves.

Proponents of the medical model of learning disability see it as pathological and 'include it as a psychiatric category' (Davis and Cunningham, 1985:246). The developmental model is confused and holds serious negative implications for those to whom it is applied. The notion within the social model that learning disabled people are given a demeaning social status is self-evident. The view held by proponents of the behavioural and self-construct models that how a person is treated reflects on his/her future performance demonstrates the importance of nurture whilst underrating nature.

The self-construct model can be applied to everyone, learning disabled and non-learning disabled alike. It is the only model which allows scope both for the person as individual and the person as social being. It is the only model which concentrates on the 'self' of the learning-disabled person and is concerned with an ongoing process of 'becoming'. This is the model which I consider most reasonable and which best fits my own experience of adults labelled as having learning difficulties.

1.3.7 Summary

So far I have shown how notions of intelligence as a general concept of cognitive ability led to the construction of tests to measure it. Definitions of learning disablement were then defined arbitrarily. These inadequate definitions have been used as labels for some groups of people. The theoretical models - medical, behavioural, developmental, social and self-construct reflect the range of beliefs and practices in the field of learning difficulty at the beginning of the 21st century.

In the following section I shall describe attempts to 'normalise' the lives of people labelled as having learning difficulties within care in the community.

1.4 The Normalisation Principle

Enquiries into conditions in UK institutions for learning disabled people together with pressure from civil rights movements in the 1960s and 1970s led largely to decarceration, the process whereby 'inmates of custodial institutions are returned to the community' (Giddens, 1991:154). Medication affected beliefs about the medical model of learning disability whilst the civil rights movements affected beliefs about the social model. The return to the community in turn led to new designs for services for learning disabled people (Brown and Smith, 1992:50). These services were to be based on what were considered to be 'normal' valued living conditions (Towell, 1988).

The principle of normalisation is built upon modern western society's norms, or what powerful elements within that society consider to be 'average', or 'normal.' It is 'normal' to have an IQ of between 80 and 120, so those with IQs below 80 are not considered 'normal.' What is not 'normal' is regarded as deviant. What is considered deviant can 'shift from time to time and place to place' and 'normal behaviour in one cultural setting may be labelled 'deviant' in another' (Giddens, 1991:153).

During the 1960s and early 1970s labelling theories were dominant in the study of deviance or non-conformity to the rules of a given society. Only 'modest amounts of individuality and deviance are accommodated' (Ritzer, 1996:2430). Deviance may be viewed not only as a set of characteristics of individuals or groups but as 'a process of interaction between deviants and non-deviants' (Giddens, 1991:129). People who impose labels on others thus 'express the power structure of society' (Giddens, op cit).

Social norms, learnt through socialisation in family, in school and in the wider community, are accompanied by sanctions which protect against non-conformity. A sanction is 'a reaction from others.. which aims to ensure that a given norm is complied with' (Giddens, 1991:120). Attempts to encourage labelled people to fit as far as possible the 'norms' of society led to the normalisation principle.

The concept of 'normalisation' has been in use for over forty years and dominates debates about the best way of providing services for learning-disabled people in Scandinavia (Bank-Mikkelsen, 1980), North America (McCarver and Cavalier, 1983), Britain (Tyne, 1989) and Australasia (Annison and Young, 1980). Since it was first used in Denmark in the 1950s the term normalisation has been defined in a number of ways yet remains more of an umbrella than a single concept.

First used in Denmark, the term underwent changes as it spread firstly to the US (Wolfensberger, 1972) and later to the UK (O'Brien, 1980, 1985 and 1987).

1.4.1 The Scandinavian Concept

Early definitions of the normalisation principle were statements about the rights of learning-disabled people. They reflected the prevalent liberal and progressive trends of many western societies to respond to demands for equal rights for disadvantaged groups.

In 1959 the Danish Mental Retardation Act defined the aim of its services as the creation of:- 'an existence for the mentally retarded as close to normal living conditions as possible' (Bank-Mikkelsen, 1980:56).

Nirje, defined this existence as having the 'normal' expectations of childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age, the rhythm of the day and the week so that weekends were different from weekdays, the right to marry and fair wages for work done, self-determination and general living conditions which were at least as good as those available to ordinary citizens (Nirje, 1980:44).

The Scandinavian aims were described as 'a relatively simple pragmatic alternative to institutional care,' (Alaszewski and Manthorpe, 1998:22).

1.4.2 The North American Concept

Whilst the Scandinavian concept of normalisation was being developed changes were occurring in North America. The number of patients in psychiatric hospitals declined from the mid 1950s (Brown, 1985). The persuasive powers of civil rights activists and the discovery of neuroleptic drugs led to the Federal Courts acknowledgment of the rights of psychiatric patients to treatment in 'the least restrictive alternative' (Castellani,

1987). J F Kennedy called for 'the full benefits of our society' to be bestowed on 'those who suffer from mental disabilitites' (cited in Scheerenberger, 1983:248).

Wolfensberger proposed and then developed a new version of the normalisation principle, which he initially defined as a 'culturally normative means' of establishing 'personal behaviors which are as culturally normative as possible' (Wolfensberger, 1972:28).

The US definition of normalisation later underwent further changes. Wolfensberger saw social policies towards 'those who are of little value to others' as being 'genocidal destruction' (Wolfensberger, 1984:141) and re-defined normalisation in terms of socially valued roles. People labelled as having learning difficulties were to be 'taught to walk with a normal gait,' use 'normal behaviour patterns' and 'dress like others of his (sic) age' (Wolfensberger, 1972:33). He saw this as the only way in which to bring about an improvement in the status of the learning-disabled.

These developments were progressive, even enlightened, for their times. However, they focused on making those labelled as being learning-disabled acceptable to 'normals,' rather than on educating 'normals' into understanding and accepting people labelled as having learning difficulties.

Wolfensberger's priciple of normalisation became 'a vantage point for judging service quality' (The Campaign for Mental Handicaped People, 1984:1) and sought to reverse the basic social processes which resulted in deviance. Unfortunately, in the US individual choice became secondary to the collective status of learning disabled people as a whole. This approach contrasted markedly with the original Scandinavian definition which had emphasised individual civil rights. Perrin and Nirje viewed the US 'authoritarian approach' as 'an unwarranted abuse of power' (Perrin and Nirje, 1985:71).

1.4.3 The Concept in the UK

In the UK in the 1980s Wolfensberger's formulation of the principle of normalisation replaced previous Scandinavian notions after it was advocated by the Campaign for People with Mental Handicaps, (1984), the King's Fund Centre (1980) and the Independent Development Council for People with Mental Handicap (1986). In its White

Paper, 'Better Services for the Mentally Handicapped' (Department of Health and Social Security, 1971), the British government stated its commitment to community care for learning-disabled people after years of neglect.

The King's Fund's 'Ordinary Life movement' began. The message was that labelled people, could and should live in the community just like everyone else. They were to have ordinary houses in ordinary streets and ordinary jobs in ordinary workplaces, (King's Fund Centre, 1980). The 'Ordinary Life' movement said nothing about interaction between labelled and non-labelled people or the reversal of day-to-day social exclusion. Being 'in' the community is not the same as being 'of' the community.

The UK interpretation of the normalisation principle was provided by O'Brien (O'Brien, 1980, 1985, 1987). He saw normalisation as 'a principle for designing and delivering the services a person needs' in order to 'increase social acceptance for handicapped people' (O'Brien (adapted by Tyne), 1981:27). O'Brien's views were enlightened at the time. However social acceptance may lead to more tolerance but it does not automatically lead to more interaction. It was the service deliverer who was to decide what 'a person needs.'

The pre-1990 literature on services for people with learning difficulties is based mainly on identifying objectives of community care in the light of normalisation principles (see Towell, 1988). There is extensive literature on staff training, (see Ward, 1987 and Tyne, 1989) and also on user-assessment (O'Brien, 1987 and Jenkins 1998). It is clear that the social model of learning disability predominated in that people labelled as having learning difficulties were seen as in need of services from professionals to help them conform to societal norms.

Some researchers recognised oppression in the lives of learning-disabled people and sought to give them a voice (see Brechin and Walmsley, 1989 and Brown and Smith, 1992, for instance).

Proponents of the normalisation principle in its most positive sense worked for opportunities for marginalised people equal to those of 'normal' people. In theory, they were against control and paternalism and applauded the notion that adults labelled as having learning difficulties should have jobs, live in ordinary houses in ordinary streets,

build long-term relationships, choose whether or not to have children, take part in dangerous sports and have all the rights and freedoms enjoyed by their non-labelled peers.

However, practice has not generally mirrored these positive aspects. According to Gathercole (1988:32), although much lip service is paid to giving learning –disabled clients control over their lives, 'very little actually seems to happen'. Sharing control is likely to involve risk for carer and client. Without risk-taking little progress seems likely.

1.5 Normalisation and Models of Learning Disability

1.5.1 Medical and Developmental Models

Both medical and developmental models of learning disablement locate 'the problem' within the individual, as do proponents of the normalisation principle. Proponents of all three models seek to change the person labelled as having learning difficulties in ways which will render him/her more acceptable to 'normal' people. In spite of O'Brien's statement that 'Normalisation.. is not something that is done to a person' (O'Brien, 1981:27), he offered no guidance to carers/workers should a client not want to have his/her behaviour 'normalised.'

1.5.2 The Social Model

Although the social model of learning disability emphasises the influence of factors outside the individual, its proponents stress that remedial work should be directed at achieving behaviour which conforms to societal norms. The social model of learning disability and the normalisation principle have much in common in the sense that both seek to modify the behaviour of people labelled as having learning difficulties rather than focus on the intolerance of 'normals.'

1.5.3 The Behavioural Model

The behavioural model of learning disability includes the notion that the way in which people are treated has important ramifications for their behaviour. O'Brien turns this

notion about when he advocates that those labelled as having learning difficulties should 'help others to see them as developing citizens' (O'Brien, 1987).

The labelling of some people as having learning difficulties essentially creates deviance 'because the individual adjusts his or her behaviour to that ascribed to them by the label' (Whitehead, 1992:49). Other people react to the individual on the basis of the label, which 'exacerbates the deviant behaviour' (Whitehead, op cit). A vicious circle, or a self-fulfilling prophecy in relation to social behaviour is created.

Deviancy theory (see Lemert, 1967, Cohen, 1971) was broadened to include any group outside the 'norm' and professional and institutional approaches to people previously described as medical or social problems were challenged. The problem was re-located in professional or institutional processes rather than those once labelled as deviant.

1.5.4 Normalisation: A Summary

The normalisation principle, which drives services for those labelled as having learning difficulties, is concerned with 'the supression of any attempt to transgress society's norms and practices' (Bernauer and Mahon, 1994:152) and 'constitutes disability within a logic of deficit' (Rizvi and Christensen, 1996:6).

In spite of this, its implementation provided some real benefits for those labelled as having learning difficulties in that injustices were highlighted and professional consciousness raised. However, it failed to question the power base of those professionals, to put service users in the driving seat and to address the issue of social exclusion.

Proponents of the normalisation principle place emphasis on changing those who have been labelled as having learning difficulties, through 'modification of behaviour, appearance and attitudes' rather than on 'focusing on the paramount need to change society's attitudes towards disability' (Dalley, 1992:110). Workers adhering to the normalisation principle 'support the status quo' (Dalley, op cit).

Practices which undermine the rights of people labelled as having learning difficulties 'to participate fully in defining their own social and educational future can no longer be justified' (Rizvi and Chistensen, op cit).

1.6 Exclusion by Special Education

In sociological terms the growth of formal education is associated with the acquisition of technical and social skills necessary both for the workplace and adult life (Barnes et al 1999:103). One of the ways in which those labelled as having learning difficulties have been socially excluded has been by being refused entry to mainstream schooling. Special and mainstream schoolchildren have been denied opportunities to get to know each other. Difference has been highlighted and similarities ignored.

There are several possible sociological explanations for the development of special education and schooling. One perspective suggests that disabled children need support which cannot be supplied in the mainstream sector, and that the system emerged as a largely philanthropic response to this perceived need (Warnock, 1978).

An alternative view comes from Tomlinson (1982), who argued that the rise of special education was the outcome of professional vested interests, with teachers in the mainstream sector concerned with excluding children they considered particularly demanding and disruptive. Subsequent trends were shaped, according to Barnes et al (1999:104) by power struggles between doctors, educational psychologists and special school teachers, whilst Ford et al maintain that the maintenance of the special school system, particularly that which is concerned with problem behaviour is little more than a 'pernicious system of social control' (Ford et al, 1982:82).

Proponents of this latter view argue that the special education system is a key element in the social oppression of disabled people and one of the main channels for ensuring that 'disabled school leavers are socially immature and isolated' (British Council of Organisations of Disabled People, 1986:6). This isolation results in 'passive acceptance of social discrimination and lack of skills in facing tasks of adulthood' (BCODP, op cit).

Whatever the reasons for the rise of special education, what has been at issue in the post-1945 years has been its quality and how far the mainstream sector would be affected by the its abolition. In a radical break with previous practice the 1944 Education Act stated that, as far as possible, disabled children should be educated in mainstream schools. However, in practice, since the Act also required Local Education Authorities to deliver education according to 'age, aptitude and ability,' it encouraged them to make separate provision for children with selected impairments (Tomlinson, 1982:76).

Since World War Two the numbers of children educated in segregated provision has risen. Children attending special schools in England numbered 38,499 in 1945, rising to 58,034 in 1955. Apart from a slight decline in the early 1980s, the expansion in the number of special school pupils continued steadily into the 1990s. Across the whole of the UK there were 114,000 children in special schools in the early 1990s (CSIE, 1997). Far from being educated within mainstream schools as the 1944 Education Act had advocated, more and more children were being excluded by segregation into special education.

1.6.1 A Change in the System

In the last two decades or so, special education has come under mounting scrutiny from a variety of sources, including disabled people's organisations, parents' groups, educationalists and sociologists (Barnes et al, 1999:104).

Illich accuses the British educational system of the 1970s of failing disabled children by not providing them with the same educational opportunities as non-disabled children and, through segregated provision, helping to reproduce their isolation and exclusion from mainstream society (Illich, 1997).

In response to growing criticism, the British government set up a committee chaired by Lady Mary Warnock to consider the matter. The Warnock Report (Warnock, 1978) stated that those previously labelled as 'educationally subnormal' should be defined as having 'special needs.' This was a radical shift in values and beliefs and intended to locate the cause of the problem within the nature of schooling rather than within the nature of the student.

The Report also argued for special provision within the mainstream, either full-time in special units within 'ordinary' schools, or in classes in which children labelled as having 'special needs' would join their peers on either a part or a full time basis. Temporarily leaving one's special school to visit a mainstream class became known as 'integration,' which assumed 'the existence of two separate systems, special education and general education' (Lipsky and Gartner, 1989:150).

It is unfortunate that reformers who pressed for integration confused 'presence and locality' with 'opportunity and interaction' (Kauffman, 1993:14). The integration of labelled students into mainstream classes was seen as an instance of professionals being motivated by 'care, concern and compassion....for the less fortunate' rather than as being 'social justice linked to autonomy and empowerment' (Christensen and Rizvi, 1995:3).

By concentrating expensive resources such as specialist teachers and equipment in one place, separate provision has been justified on the grounds of administrative and economic efficiency and effectiveness (Barton, 1995). Advocates of these policies ignore the problems of segregation, the effects of labelling and social exclusion.

Barnes et al accuse local education authorities and schools of finding 'ways to frustrate the integration of labelled children,' by identifying circumstances which allowed for exceptions (Barnes et al, 1999:106). Such thinking prevailed into the 1990s with education being specifically omitted from the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act.

The 1993 and 1996 Education Acts promoted the merits of an inclusive policy within education. The main benefits that inclusive education was expected to bring included, fostering friendships between disabled and non-disabled children thus removing ignorance and stereotypes, allowing children with special educational needs to experience the benefits of a broader curriculum, promoting access to more teachers and offering greater opportunities to develop self-esteem and confidence (Barton, 1995:31).

This inclusive policy marks a huge step towards inclusion since a number of studies found that placement in segregated special education settings diminished rather than enhanced students' educational success (see Gartner and Lipsky, 1987 for details). In the

main, most children are now educated in mainstream schools, although 'inclusive' may not always mean the same as 'interactive.'

However, education in mainstream classes will fail to be socially inclusive 'without a basic transformation of those classrooms' (Christensen, 1996:76) into places of collaboration and interaction. Mere re-location of former special school pupils onto a mainstream campus will not ensure genuine inclusiveness.

1.6.2 Beyond Special Education

Within the field of education in recent years, 'competitiveness, standards and excellence' have been the watchwords (Apple and Beane, 1999:xiv). Administrators' roles have been defined less in terms of curricula and teaching and more in terms of school image and test results (ibid.). More emphasis than before is given to 'gifted children' and 'fast track' classes, while 'students who are seen as less academically able are therefore less attractive' (op cit).

As part of school/college tradition, there is a 'hidden curriculum' by which students learn significant lessons about justice, power and self-worth (Apple, 1993). In a system where schools gain from work which places them high in the league tables, pupils whose performance has an adverse effect on results, are likely to be seen as 'less attractive.'

Apple and Beane claim that the media regularly provides information about failing schools and calls for a return to 'traditional' subjects and methods of teaching. They argue that educators are under pressure to teach what and how conservative groups have decided is appropriate. Some institutions narrow the range of knowledge to that which is endorsed by the dominant culture and silence voices which might be raised in opposition.

1.6.3 Summary and Conclusion

Social policies directed at people labelled as having learning difficulties operate from a deficit model. Labelled people are seen as having (or being) the problem, which professionals will manage. Learning-disabled people have been excluded by the questionable criteria used to label them, by services in the community driven by the normalisation principle and by special education. People who are limited in some way by their impairments are further handicapped by their ascribed, demeaning social identity.

In the next chapter I shall examine the effects of social exclusion on the self-identity and self-esteem of people labelled as having learning difficulties and suggest a way forward.

2.0 SELF AND IDENTITY

2.1 Overview

In the last chapter I argued that tests to measure intelligence(s), models of disablement, proponents of the normalisation principle and segregated education excluded many people labelled as having learning difficulties from mainstream society.

In this chapter I shall examine what effects such exclusion has had on the identity and self-esteem of learning-disabled people and suggest a way forward.

2.2 Defining the Concepts

2.2.1 The Growth of the Concept of Identity

For William James the theory of the 'self' was eclectic (Cravens, 1978:2). James considered the 'self' to be the sum total of all he (sic) could call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses and yacht and bank account' (James, 1890/1950. Vol 1:291).

Cooley, who studied his children, 'moved beyond James' (Mead, 1930:699). Cooley worked with notions of reflexivity, both interpersonal (the looking glass self) and intra-personal (thought as a conversation with an imaginary playmate). Cooley considered that 'self' has three elements - the imagination of our appearance to the other person, the imagination of that person's judgement on our appearance and some sort of 'self'-feeling such as pride or mortification. Mead considered Cooley's 'looking-glass theory' inadequate as it 'hardly suggested the imagined judgement' (Mead, 1922/1964:184). Mead thought that 'the stuff that goes to make up the 'me' whom the 'I' addresses and whom he (sic) observes, is the experience which is induced by the action of the 'I.' If the 'I' speaks, the 'me' hears' (Mead, op cit)

In his later work, Mead added that 'thinking is simply the reasoning of the individual, the carrying on of a conversation between what I have termed the 'I' and the 'me' (Mead,

1934:335). In this Mead agrees with Plato that all thought is a conversation with the 'self' and therefore reflexive. Plato's Socrates said, 'when the mind is thinking it is simply talking to itself, asking questions and answering them,' (Plato, 368.BC/1961:895).

Piaget placed great emphasis on a person's ability actively to make sense of his/her world. He considered that people do not passively collect information, but select from what they see, hear and feel in the world around them and interpret this information exclusively in terms of their own position and level of understanding. People are to a large extent taught how to behave in that world by 'agents of socialisation,' mainly the family (Giddens, 1991:76). Other socialising agencies are school, the media, work, voluntary organisations and religious institutions.

Piaget stresses the importance of peer relationships for youngsters over the age of five years. He sees peer relationships as being more democratic than those between a child and its parents and of importance throughout life (Giddens, 1991:78). However, being socialised when young, does not rob a person of individuality and free will. Interactions with others, values held and behaviour engaged in help develop a sense of identity.

Despite the earlier use, it was Descartes who 'first claimed reflexivity as the founding principle of philosophy' (Wiley, 1994:76). Descartes' 'cogito ergo sum' suggests that self-awareness implies the existence of the 'self' (Gasche, 1986:13). The etymology of the term 'reflexivity' gives a common denominator for the many ways in which the term is used. The commonality 'is a flex which designates a looping, back-bending, circling or recursing' (Wiley, 1994:74). So, reflexivity is a series of instances of Socrates' mind 'talking to itself' or of Mead's 'I' conversing with his 'me.'

More recently Giddens called the notion of 'identity,' a 'sameness, which could be used to refer to generic human nature' (Giddens, 1991:87). Giddens also considered that identities 'individuate, allowing the recognition of individuals or groups of people and that they (identities) can be imposed from without by social processes' (Giddens, op cit)

2.2.2 Identity and Gender

Institutions frequently bestow identities/labels upon individuals - such as monk, wife, pensioner, voter, pupil or person labelled as having learning difficulties' (Wiley, 1994:1).

Foucault (1980) and Derrida (1978) showed how such long-term identities can change or fade out over time. Thus, whilst a wife may become a widow or a divorcee, or a person will stop being a pupil when the course of study comes to an end, a person with the label/long-term identity of 'learning disabled' is unlikely ever to be free of it.

Echoing Foucault and Derrida, Connell (1990) argues for the existence of a set of continually changing processes which maintain power relations between men and woman. Walby adds that there has been movement since the mid-1850s from a situation of 'private patriarchy' in which women were directly controlled by their husbands and fathers, to a modern form of 'public patriarchy' which works not by the exclusion of women from public life, but by the segregation of women within public life...'women are paid less, have more part-time work and less powerful jobs than men,' (Walby, 1990) although 'women are still largely responsible for domestic labour and child-rearing' (Wetherell, 1996). Whilst there have been changes 'which facilitate women's entry to the public sphere there are not so many which improve the position of women within it' (Walby, 1990:171).

Hence, a woman labelled as having learning difficulties is oppressed both by her label and by her gender.

2.2.3 Identity and Self

There is no clear distinction in the literature between 'self' and 'identity (although writers often use 'self' to refer to inner personal thoughts and feelings, whereas 'identity' usually refers to how a person is perceived by others.

However, it is not suggested here that 'self' has an a priori existence or is a psychological or biological entity. Rather, 'it is the way one sees oneself in relation to others (Mead, 1934:148). The sense of 'self' is developed not in isolation, but 'through language and interaction' (Taylor, 1989:30). A sense of 'self' has a past and also an anticipated future. If there has been a lack of social interaction through exclusion, a person 'can lack a sense of the past and personal history' (Cassell, 1991). This loss can generate 'apathy, anxiety, suffering and despair' (Cassell, op cit). Loss of past identity may be experienced as 'a loss of self-identity as a distinct individual' (Sacks, 1985). If a person loses that sense of

being a distinct individual and accepts instead an identity as a member of a group labelled as having learning difficulties, self-esteem is likely to suffer.

2.2.4 Identity, Self-concept and Self-esteem

The way a person thinks of herself is her self-concept. This is her idea of 'What is me.' This idea is self-constructed in ways that make sense of experience. 'Patterns of behaviour and actions will ensue' that are consistent with a person's self-concept (McLeod, 1993:104). A person who views herself as an achiever will expect to do well in most situations (Andrews, 1991). A person who has been socially excluded and labelled as having learning difficulties is likely to expect to fail to learn and to be unacceptable to others.

Patterns of behaviour are reacted to by others. The person perceives these responses cognitively and also responds emotionally to them (McLeod, 1993:104). These inner experiences are assimilated into the self-concept. If the self-concept is affirming and gives a sense of pride, then the person is said to have high self-esteem. A person with low self-esteem expects little success in life.

Coopersmith (1967) identified four ways in which success can boost self-esteem: the ability to influence others, being valued and accepted by others, adhering to moral standards and success in reaching personal goals.

The literature usually characterises people with high self-esteem as 'independent, self-directed and able to accept both positive and negative feedback' (Mruk, 1999:82). People with low self-esteem are usually found to be anxious, depressed, ineffective and sensitive to criticism' (Bednar et al, 1989:156).

Some people with low self-esteem live out their feelings of insecurity by bragging (overcompensating), putting others down (displacing), throwing themselves into their work (sublimating) or even becoming aggressive (discharging). This was termed 'defensive self-esteem' by O'Brien and Epstein, (1988).

2.2.5 A 'Normal' Identity

In Chapter Two I argued that social policies for delivering Care in the Community led to the formulation of the normalisation principle. Proponents of this principle were exhorted to make the lives of adults labelled as having learning difficulties as 'normal/ordinary' as possible and to encourage them to behave in socially acceptable ways.

Indeed, Hacking argued that one of the 'most powerful ideas in modern cosmology, originally developed by nineteenth century statisticians such as Galton, is 'normality' (Hacking, 1990:37). The concept of 'normality' involves two notions simultaneously. That which is typical or the usual state of affairs is described as 'normal.' However, that which is 'normal' is also seen as the way things ought to be. The propagation of the average (or above average) thus becomes 'a moral imperative' (Jenkins, 1998:1). From this point of view people labelled as having learning difficulties are neither 'normal' nor 'as they ought to be.'

Jenkins sees another distinction between natural/normal and unnatural/abnormal (or deviant). He writes that being typical/normal has become part of human nature. Thus, inability to learn as quickly as others may be interpreted as an indication of an unnatural and inferior humanity and a person with intellectual disability may be thus classified as 'an unnatural monstrosity' (Jenkins, 1998:19). However, to be labelled by others does not pre-determine the labelled person's identity. If identities are self-constructed from experience, then one possible reaction is to despise the labeller, another is to disregard the labeller's opinion whilst a third is to accept the label as appropriate. Individuals react in individual ways.

Goffman suggests that the notion of a 'normal human being' may have its origins in a medical approach or as a rationale for equal treatment by the state, but it is also very much a normative system of grading people (Goffman, 1968:15). By judging people against this categorisation, 'society' confers a 'social identity' (Goffman, 1968:15).

For people labelled as having learning difficulties this 'social identity' is conferred by those in the medical profession, who make the diagnosis based on their specialist

knowledge and expertise, by teachers who observe failure to learn and by social workers who provide assessments.

Mendez, Coddou and Maturana argue that society empowers medical professionals 'to make definitions of normality and abnormality, ...and as a consequence, (those professionals) have the right to be heard and obeyed in these domains' (Mendez, Coddou and Maturana, 1988:145). However, carers and policy makers 'need to value the expertise of people with learning difficulties and offer support and understanding' (Gillman et al, 2000:409), since the existence of their label 'is often used as a justification for treating a person in a way that would not be acceptable to others without that label' (Sutcliffe and Simons, 1993:23).

Such a diagnosis 'plays a significant role in the shaping of individual identities and the quality of life for people with learning difficulties..... and constructs for them careers as patients or cases' (Gillman et al, 2000:389). Whilst the diagnosis which leads to the acquisition of the learning difficulty label 'can open doors to resources, it can also lead to disrespectful and dehumanising treatment and severe restriction of opportunities' (Gillman et al, op cit).

Gillman et al provide evidence, based on data from semi-structured interviews and three focus groups, that making a diagnosis of learning difficulties 'may bring forth in professionals, deeply rooted discriminatory and oppressive assumptions about a person's worth' (Gillman et al, 2000:389). Such assumptions may lead to labelled people 'being excluded from organ transplant or dialysis' (Gillman et al, op cit) and to ailments for which 'able-bodied' people would receive treatment being 'accepted as part of the syndrome in a person with learning difficulties' (Gillman et al, op cit)

This dominant discourse of normality is central to the normalisation theory and its reconceptualisation as social role valorisation (Wolfensberger, 1984:23). The clear focus of normalisation is services. Issues outside the narrow world of service provision - poverty, isolation, social exclusion - are neglected. Interventions, practices and values of proponents of the normalisation principle 'promote the normality/abnormality ideology' (Swain and French, 1998:23).

However, since identities may change over time and can be bestowed by institutions or changed by power relations, it is questionable whether a 'normal' identity can be said to exist.

2.2.6 A 'Spoiled' Identity

As an analytical tool, Goffman's (1968) concept of 'spoiled identity' has been of particular analytical value in the fieldwork. Its use lies in the way it brings together both the concept of labelling and the defensive strategies of response that may be adopted by people so labelled.

Goffman considered that when we see a stranger we 'anticipate his (sic) category and attributes and his social identity' (Goffman, 1968). We make assumptions about what the stranger ought to be; we give him/her a 'virtual social identity' (Goffman, op cit). 'Society' establishes the means of categorising persons by examining those 'attributes felt to be ordinary and natural for members of each of the categories' (Goffman, 1968:2). Those categories and attributes the stranger later proves to possess will be called his/her 'actual social identity' (Goffman, op cit). Any failing or handicap constitutes a discrepancy between virtual and actual social identities.

Goffman uses the term 'stigma' to refer to an attitude that is deeply discrediting. 'Stigma' is broadly defined to include, 'abominations of the body, blemishes of individual character, race, religion, and (in Britain) social class' (Goffman, 1968:14). In each case 'undesired differentness' from 'the normals' or from 'a normal identity' provides the basis for the stigma.

In everyday interaction 'specific stigma terms such as 'cripple, bastard and moron' are used to demean' (Goffman, 1968:15). A stigmatised person, Goffman postulated, has a 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1968:44). Goffman did not infer that people 'have' spoiled identities in the same way that they may 'have' measles or blue eyes. The 'spoiled identity' has been ascribed to them by others who consider themselves to be normal.

Once 'normals' have ascribed a 'spoiled identity' to a person, they treat that person differently than they otherwise would. They fail to 'accord him (sic) respect and regard'

(Goffman, 1968:9). This results in the stigmatised person's 'life-choices' becoming 'severely restricted' (Goffman, 1968:5).

The 'differentness' between 'normals' and those with a stigma is regarded as contagious so that people closely associated with those who are 'different' typically acquire a 'courtesy stigma' (Goffman, 1968:44).

Goffman distinguishes between those with a visible stigma (such as people with Down's syndrome) from those whose differentness is not immediately apparent (such as people with no known cause for their presumed low IQ). For those with a visible stigma, whom Goffman calls 'the discredited', the dilemma is how to manage the tension involved in social encounters and recover their status and identity (Goffman, 1968:57). Responses range from plastic surgery to heroic feats although it is also possible to exploit the stigma for 'secondary gain' so that it becomes an excuse for not being able to do certain things. (By 'heroic feats' Goffman means becoming extremely good at something, such as football or guitar playing or being known for frequently sacrificing one's own interests for those of others).

Conversely, the issue confronting the 'discreditable' (those without a visible stigma) is how to control information about their 'differentness.' 'To tell or not to tell' is the question and in each case, to whom, how, when and where (Goffman op cit).

Goffman wrote of three strategies which those with an ascribed 'spoiled identity' use in social situations and these are passing, covering and withdrawal.

'Passing' is the management of undisclosed discrediting information about self (Goffman, 1968:58). An instance of this might be, 'The school I attended was a special school.'

'Covering' is a dilemma of the 'discredited' whose stigma is known, but who makes every effort to ensure it does not overwhelm social encounters. An instance of this might be, 'I have Down's syndrome but I'm very polite.'

'Withdrawal' entails removal from social activities with 'normal' altogether. A person labelled as having learning difficulties might exhibit 'withdrawal' by refusing to attend any clubs or events other than those organised by Mencap.
Since people labelled as having learning difficulties have been stigmatised, it is likely that they seek to manage their ascribed 'spoiled identity(ies)' (Goffman, 1968:44) by the use of the defensive strategies aforementioned.

'Normals' demand that the stigmatised adjust to their predicament in a 'normals'-approved way in order to 'increase social acceptance' (O'Brien (adapted by Tyne, 1981:11). Those ascribed a 'spoiled identity' should, 'normals' consider, try to make the best of things and cultivate a cheerful, outgoing manner, they should not go too far in 'normalisation' lest these efforts embarrass 'normals' or be construed as an attempt to deny differentness and they should avoid self-pity or resentment (Goffman, 1968:139-40).

2.2.7 Summary

Of key importance for this thesis is the contention that the politics of identity is a struggle over the qualities ascribed socially and institutionally to individuals or to groups of people. The ongoing debate about identity centres around whether these qualities are the essence of human nature or whether 'they are assigned merely by discourse' (Wiley, 1994:1).

The answer might turn out to be 'a little of both.' Each of us is the 'main character in his (sic) own drama' (MacIntyre, 1984:213) which is shaped not only by our own character, but also by 'the perception of others of that character' and by our own perception of the 'other's perception of' ourselves (Isaacs, 1996:36). For learning-disabled people, the reflected perceptions of others are unlikely to be affirming and uplifting. This is important since people can 'suffer real damage' if those around them 'mirror back to them, a demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves' (Taylor, 1992a:25). The social identity of a learning-disabled adult is, unfortunately, largely defined by 'the prejudice which expresses itself in discrimination and oppression' (Hunt, 1966:155).

2.2.8 Identity and Education

In modern societies education is the social context in which 'the politics of self and others unfolds' (Isaacs, 1996:37). Our 'selves' are created 'in a social context' (Seymour, 1989:22/3) and in modern societies 'education is one social context, if not the social context, wherein the ... politics of the self unfolds' (Isaacs, 1996:37). Within that social context, teaching is a social practice and what teachers teach and what students learn depends upon 'the particular society into which they are born' (Langford, 1978:84/5). Thus, values in education are socially constructed and those responsible for education must see themselves as bearing responsibility for the values which prevail (Isaacs, 1996:40).

The politics of discrimination need to be countered 'at the level of educational provision....in every institution and in each community' (Isaacs, 1996:41). Those who see disability as a social construction need to reject traditional assumptions that the misfortunes of people with disabilities reflect non-human causes and reflect certain biological givens. They must not exaggerate the 'normal.' Those who see each person as a distinct individual, need to 'construct a new practice of special education, which places the person at the centre' (Isaacs, op cit).

Educational provision for learning-disabled people needs to go beyond 'the limited welfarist model' to one which 'recognises the multiple voices of people with disabilities' (Rizvi and Christensen, 1996:4). Educationalists must acknowledge that learning-disabled people are entitled to respect and to education which enables them to reach their full potential.

However, if we as a society are to move 'beyond a culture of selective 'normality' to a politics of difference,' (Isaacs, 1996:43) what is needed is a society which celebrates diversity. Such a society would respect each individual and seek to alter 'existing power relationships in which learning-disabled people are so dependent on others' (Isaacs, op cit). All in such a society would need to change as 'transformation of the identity of one group (learning-disabled people) will not occur if the identity of the other group ('normals') remains intact' (Fraser, 1995:90).

2.2.9 Discovering a Valued Identity

The debate about identity centres around whether the qualities attributed socially and institutionally to individuals or groups of people are 'the essence of human nature,' or whether there is no such thing as 'self' and that 'the assigned qualities are merely discourse' (Wiley, 1994:1).

Members of the Black Power movement, which began in the US in the 60s, resisted social injustice. Many black women, recognising how the education system failed them, became teachers to 'wage battle against the racism which made their struggles necessary' (Bryan et al, 1989:83). People labelled as having learning difficulties will continue to be oppressed 'whilst their interests are still defined by advocates' (Rizvi and Christensen, 1996:4). Thus, the people who must fight prejudice, and oppression against the learning-disabled are those labelled people themselves (or their advocates), since oppression is appropriately addressed 'through recognition and valorization of the oppressed group' (Fraser, 1995:71).

If labelled people could experience themselves as capable of making decisions about their education and successfully evaluating their own behaviour, then their self-esteem might be enhanced, their self-concept raised and a more valued identity discovered. Choosing their own learning goals 'empowers students to transform themselves and the world around them' (Quicke, 1999:4). Given the low expectations of achievement many labelled people have been taught to expect, this constitutes a considerable challenge.

2.3 Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the concept of identity and contrasted 'normal' and 'spoiled' identities. Further I have argued that the politics of discrimination must be challenged 'at the level of educational provision' (Isaacs, 1996:41).

The challenge for educationalists is to articulate 'the qualities which enable people to act responsibly, autonomously and with respect for others' (Pring, 1987:18). There would need to be a capacity to reflect, to make judgements, to develop awareness of values. It would involve Mead's 'I' and 'Me' way of thinking. It would be imperative to think of

oneself as a whole person, about how to improve one's own life and about one's self-development (Quicke, 1999:20).

If this is the case then it is conceivable that those humanistic techniques advocated by Rogers, (Rogers, 1983) best challenge the effects of discrimination, social exclusion and behaviourist training on identity, which 'frustrate moves towards self-realisation' (Isaacs, 1996:33).

In the next chapter I shall give more details of Rogers' approach to education.

3.0 ROGERS' APPROACH TO EDUCATION

3.1 Overview

In Chapters 1 and 2 I have shown how notions of intelligence(s) together with proponents of the normalisation principle and segregated education excluded learning-disabled people from mainstream society. I then examined the effects such exclusion have had on the identity and self-esteem of those people and suggested that the humanistic techniques of Carl R Rogers may best challenge the effects of that discrimination.

This chapter is about the approach of Carl R Rogers to education. It is important to this thesis because it is this approach which I tested out in the programme which is the basis of this research. I begin with Rogers' view of education and examine the ideas he initially developed in a context of counselling.

3.2 Rogers' Humanistic Approach to Education

An American survey conducted in 1982 revealed Rogers as the most influential figure in 20th century psychotherapy, surpassing even Freud (Kirschenbaum and Henderson, 1990a:xiii). In contrast to Freud, who portrayed people as essentially 'savage beasts' needing to be domesticated by civilization (Freud, 1962), Rogers saw people as progressing naturally towards the fulfilment of their innate potential if psychological conditions were favourable.

In this thesis I focus not on Rogers' approach to counselling but on his approach to education and his advocacy of the best climate in which to learn, which grew out of it.

The creation of a positive, happy climate for learning is something that some teachers seem to be able to do with apparent ease (Hall and Hall, 1988:1). This could be the basis for the saying 'Good teachers are born not made.' Whether this is true or not, schools and colleges can no longer 'keep up the pretence' that 'relationships do not affect

performance' (Hall and Hall, op cit). Creating relationships is at the heart of Rogerian approach to education.

Rogers, a humanistic psychologist advocated humanistic education, 'which is a difficult area to define' (Hall and Hall, 1988:15). Humanistic approaches to education grew out of the writings of Rousseau, Pestalotsi, Dewey, Steiner, Rogers and Maslow as a reaction against 'the mechanistic theories of behaviourism and psycho-analysis' (Hall and Hall, op cit).

Rogers places people on the 'freedom' side in self-construct theory, believing that a person 'creates his/her own meaning in life' (Rogers, 1951). Behaviourists, in contrast, maintain that behaviour is completely determined by a person's conditioning history. For Rogers a person is 'free to become himself' (sic), (Rogers, 1983:294) although he acknowledges that action is determined by 'what precedes it' (Rogers, op cit). This Rogerian relationship between freedom and determinism can be seen as a fresh perspective.

Thus, proponents of humanistic education see students as having choice rather than as being driven by behaviouristic rewards and punishments or by the effects of their past. Humanistic education is student-centred, is concerned with the whole person and his/her full development. A fully developed person is 'self-actualised' (Maslow, 1954) or 'fully functioning' (Rogers, 1961).

Rogers, writing in California in 1982 believed that the prevailing education system, 'an institution most resistant to change' (Rogers, 1983:1), was 'failing to meet the real needs of society' (Rogers, 1983:1) in that it did not assist students, including those labelled as having learning difficulties, 'to learn how to learn' (Rogers, 1983:1). Rogers saw educational establishments as being 'locked into a traditional and conventional approach' which involved, 'a prescribed curriculum, similar assignments and standard tests by which all students are externally evaluated' (Rogers, 1983:21).

In 'Freedom to Learn for the 80s,' an update of an earlier work, Rogers argued for a move away from emphasis on teaching and instead highlighted learning. Rogers claimed that teachers using traditional teaching styles taught students to obey rather than to 'make

choices' and to be self-directing. Rogers believed that in the right 'climate,' when learners found themselves respected, they could make responsible self-directed choices and 'build their confidence and self-esteem' (Rogers, 1983:3). Rogers' 'right climate' was one in which 'attitudes and feelings could be expressed... (and)... where the student could choose from a wide range of options, where the teacher served as facilitator of learning' (ibid).

He argued that the world was 'filled with controversy - political, social, international, as well as personal.' In such a world, people were involved in 'making judgements, choices, decisions that would affect their own lives, their families, their society' (Rogers, 1983:2).

Rogers considered that a learner needs to 'prepare for life in this difficult world...and to face new problems' in order to 'make responsible decisions and abide by the consequences.' He saw traditional teaching methods as 'failing to meet 'these needs.' A teaching style which encouraged students to 'learn how to learn' (Rogers, 1983:2) was relevant.

Rogers saw teachers and students in schools and colleges rather like actors upon a stage, playing out roles and hiding behind facades. He thought many a teacher had been conditioned to think of herself as the never-failing 'expert, the information giver,' whilst secretly knowing that she had good days and bad days and liked some students better than others. To maintain this role as expert, she 'fastened on her mask and kept a proper distance between herself ...and the students' (Rogers, 1983:23). A student too had a facade to maintain. To be thought well of s/he had to 'look only at the instructor' and not 'show up her ignorance' (Rogers, 1983:24).

In this educational atmosphere, Rogers considered that 'students became passive, apathetic and bored' whilst teachers eventually reached 'burn-out' (Rogers, 1983:25).

Why is teaching such a difficult task? Rogers turned to Heidegger for an explanation. Heidegger thought that teaching was more difficult than learning because it called for the teacher to 'let nothing else be learned but learning' (Heidegger, 1954:75, quoted in Rogers, 1983:18). In other words, learning has more to do with facilitation than with instruction or training. In Heidegger's view the teacher should not seek to instil facts into

her students, but rather encourage them to discover their own best method of learning; masks and professional facades had no part to play. This was a view with which Rogers wholeheartedly agreed.

Heidegger intimated that the 'secret' of 'let(ting) them learn' had all to do with the genuineness of the relationship between the teacher and her students, another notion with which Rogers agreed. Rogers said that building that 'let-them-learn' relationship was a matter of establishing:-

> 'a genuinely human climate, in which learners found themselves respected, could make responsible choices,...(feel) competent and.... (feel) confident' (Rogers, 1983:2).

3.3 Rogers' 'climate of trust'

Rogers wrote about a helping relationship which he considered encouraged people to become themselves at their optimum best. He said it had been his experience that people 'have a basically positive direction' and tend to 'move towards...self-actualisation and....maturity' (Rogers, 1961:26/27), towards their 'true self(ves)' (Rogers, 1983:266). Rogers saw this movement as being supported by an 'interpersonal relationship' which 'encouraged personal growth and behaviour change' (Rogers, 1951:35). This relationship could only flourish within a 'genuine human climate,' which had the three basic characteristics of genuineness, acceptance and empathic understanding.

3.3.1 Genuineness

Rogers argued that a child has a strong need to be loved and valued. If available love is unconditional the child is free to move towards his/her potential. Where the love is conditional upon good behaviour and liable to be withdrawn, the child learns to define him/herself in accordance with those conditions of worth. For instance, the child may have been praised for being 'useful' but rejected for being 'affectionate.' Gaps, distortions and incongruences form in the self-concept as a result (McLeod, 1993:68). Rogers considered that for such people, the search for 'their real selves' (Rogers, 1983:34) might be long and painful and helped along by 'realness or genuineness' in others (Rogers, op

cit). Until incongruences in the self-concept has been resolved, the 'person was always in process, always becoming' (McLeod, 1993:69).

Rogers said that being 'congruent' or 'genuine' meant for him that he needed to be aware of his own feelings and to be willing to express them even when 'they did not seem conducive to a good relationship' (Rogers, 1961:33). It was no good 'presenting an outward facade of one attitude whilst holding another at a deeper level' (Rogers, 1961:33). Being genuine involved not 'putting on an act, not being two-faced and not using a polite facade or professional front' (Rogers, 1961:61), but being available as a real person, with the full range of human feelings which could be communicated 'where appropriate' (Rogers, 1983:122). Rogers, unfortunately, gives no instances of feelings being communicated appropriately or otherwise so there is room for confusion here.

3.3.2 Acceptance

Rogers described acceptance as 'a warm regard' for a person as a being of 'unconditional self-worth no matter what his (sic) condition, behaviour or feelings' (Rogers, 1961:34). This meant separating feelings about the worth of a person from feelings about the worth of what s/he had done or said. One person showing another acceptance would continue to view him/her as a valuable human being whatever views on life s/he held.

Within the field of education, showing acceptance meant valuing the student, prizing her as a learner, welcoming her opinions even when those clash with one's own, in spite of apathy, inability to learn quickly or disruptive behaviour. In fact, as Rogers put it, the accepting tutor accepts and 'prizes the learner as an imperfect human being' (Rogers, 1983:124).

3.3.3 Empathic Understanding

Understanding empathically means trying to see the world as another sees it. It means striving to perceive what the other perceives, how she perceives it, whilst at the same time remaining totally oneself and 'fully communicating something of this understanding' to the other (Rogers, 1961:62). The empathic listener feels a continued desire to understand and makes responses which are free from 'moral or diagnostic evaluations which are always threatening' (Rogers, 1961:34).

Empathy or empathic understanding involves a 'sensitive awareness' (Rogers, 1983:125) as well as a struggle to understand. It involves maintaining 'a receptive attitude' (Rogers, 1951:35) and checking back with the speaker 'for verification that what was heard was what was meant' (Rogers, 1951:123). Whether or not empathic understanding has been reached may be revealed in the speaker's response. If that response is something like, 'Well.. I don't know. Not really,' then empathic understanding has not been reached. If the response is something like, 'Yes, exactly that', then a positive result may tentatively be assumed.

Empathic understanding is a slippery concept, since speaker and listener may not have a shared understanding of vocabulary nor an equal command of language. It is extremely difficult for one human to understand the world as another sees it. However, the fact that empathic understanding may be unattainable does not stop a listener striving for it.

Kurtz and Grummon (1972) found it difficult to differentiate accurately between empathy, genuineness and acceptance since they seemed to be so interwoven and not clearly defined. Rogers considered that empathy could be reached by 'active concentration' (Rogers, 1951:32), which encouraged free expression and made use of silence, which latter Rogers saw as 'a most useful device' (Rogers, 1951:165). Silence for Rogers was not an embarrassing hole in the conversation, but 'simple waiting without interruption (Rogers, 1951:165). Free expression on the part of the speaker could be brought about by:

> 'a friendly, interested, receptive attitude' (Rogers, 1942:35), which demanded 'the utmost in self-restraint, rather than the utmost in action' (Rogers, 1951:195)
>
> 'refraining from giving interpretations of the speaker's behaviour which are based not on the speaker's expressed feeling but on the listener's judgement of the situation' (Roger, 1942:205)
>
> 'recognising feelings expressed and recognising the subject content' (Rogers, 1951:123)

'manifesting warmth in voice, facial expression and gesture,' (Rogers, 1951:348)

'keeping the locus of control in the speaker' (Rogers, 1951:150)

"accurately paraphrasing what has been heard", (Rogers, 1951:351)

'using the speaker's ways of self expression rather than academic terms (Rogers, 1951:205) and

'checking back for verification that what was heard was what was meant' (Rogers, 1951:123).

In the field of education, empathic understanding of a student involves endeavouring to see the difficulties learning presents through his/her eyes and then suggesting ways forward which match the student's way of learning.

3.3.4 Achieving the 'climate of trust'

Rogers maintained that the three characteristics of a helping relationship (genuineness, acceptance and empathy), were not methods or techniques which could be turned on and off. He thought anyone trying to 'use a method' was 'doomed to be unsuccessful unless the method were genuinely in line with his (sic) own attitudes' (Rogers, 1951:19). Rogers believed that when a facilitator achieved the 'climate,' then 'personal development would invariably occur' (Rogers, 1961:34).

If such a 'genuinely human climate' could be established, how long would it need to last for beneficial change to occur? Rogers was quite clear on this point. He said:-

> 'We know that individuals who live in such a relationship even for a relatively limited number of hours show profound and significant changes that do not occur in matched control groups' (Rogers, 1961:36).

What changes might there be? Rogers wrote that a person living in such a 'genuinely human climate':-

'changes his (sic) perception of himself (sic) and becomes more like the person he (sic) wishes to be. He (sic) values himself (sic) more highly...and is more self-confident and self-directing' (Rogers, 1961:36).

Rogers recommended the establishment of this 'genuine human climate' with 'all troubled, unhappy and maladjusted individual's' and 'in all human relationships' (Rogers, 1961:37). He called such a person 'self actualising' or 'fully functioning,' (Rogers, 1983:276). Such a person was his/her 'true self' (Rogers, 1983:266).

In his book 'Freedom to Learn for the 80s' (Rogers, 1983), Rogers advocates that teachers/tutors should establish his 'climate,' which was originally to be implemented in the one-to-one counselling situation, with their classes to enable students to become self-directing learners.

3.4 Rogers' Case of Success

Rogers initially based his evidence for the efficacy of 'the climate' in encouraging students to learn on small scale studies in psychotherapy in the early 1960s (see Rogers, 1983:128). When clients perceived their therapists as 'rating high in genuineness, prizing and empathic understanding, self-learning and therapeutic change were facilitated' (Rogers, op cit). Later studies focused on teachers. Schmuck (1963) showed that when teachers are empathically understanding, their students tend to like each other better. Aspy (1965) found that in three classes where the teacher's facilitative attitudes were highest' the pupils showed a significantly greater gain in the reading achievement than in those classes with a lesser degree of these qualities.'

To add to this, Rogers quotes evidence from teachers (Rogers, (1983:45-93 and from students (see Rogers, 1983:129-131).

Barbara J Shiel (Rogers, 1983:45) kept a diary of the educational progress of thirty-six 'socially maladjusted under-achievers' and their attempts to communicate and become self-directed. Gay Swenson (Rogers, 1983:57) documented individual creativity and student choice in her French lessons and Dr H Levitan (Rogers, 1983:73) described an experiment in facilitating the learning of neurophysiology. Each teacher based his/her

work on the Rogerian 'climate' and reported increased levels of enthusiasm and learning in students.

Students learning with the Rogerian 'climate' reported more enjoyment, less boredom, increased readiness to listen, a new conception of what learning is, great personal involvement, more self-understanding and more responsibility for learning.

Although Rogers had a basically confident view of students and their drive to become more self-actualising, he did not consider such a view would appear suddenly in the teacher/tutor. Rather it would 'come about through taking risks, through acting on tentative hypotheses' (Rogers, 1983:127). Rogers thought that it was only by taking such risks 'that the teacher can discover, for herself, whether or not they are effective, whether or not they are for her' (Rogers, 1983:128).

The question must be asked: - if 'the climate' is so successful in encouraging students to learn how to learn why has it been ignored by policy makers in favour of teacher-led learning and whole-class teaching? Rogers admitted that 'humanistic, innovative educational organizations have a poor record in regard to permanence' (Rogers, 1983:227). Reasons for their demise were cited by Rogers as:- changing local and governmental policies, racial tensions within communities, Vatican influence, retirement of convinced facilitative leaders and failure to recruit replacements, school re-organization and philosophical disagreement.

Rogers saw the biggest threat to democratic/humanistic education as coming from 'conventional organizations' (1983:245). He blamed (US) governmental policies and a lack of facilitators (1983:227). Modern pressures of life encourage quick-fix answers and managers/employers look for cost-effectiveness. The establishment of the Rogerian 'climate' is likely to be a slow time-consuming process.

Rogers considered that the only legitimate task a teacher or tutor had was to 'permit them (the students) to learn' (Rogers, 1983:18). For Rogers, 'permit(ting) them to learn' was the facilitation of learning and not the traditional instruction which centred on the giving of facts' (Rogers, 1983:18). The traditional teacher is 'authoritative' and has 'a role based

on a curriculum.' This role is 'relatively narrowly defined and the orientation to pupils is characterised by universalism, a concern with product and a high degree of control of student action' (Hammersley, 1977a:38).

The secret of 'let(ting) them learn,' Rogers considered, was the establishment of a 'genuinely human climate' (Rogers, 1983:2). Further, Rogers thought that all learning should be 'experiential, (that) it should involve the student on a personal level (and) be self initiated' (Rogers, 1983:20). Rogers saw the move as coming about 'through taking risks,' (Rogers, 1983:127) and as such was likely to be a slow process.

3.4.1 Support for Rogers' Approach

Friere, largely agreeing with Rogers, identified education as being about liberating potentiality in an individual rather than perpetuating forms of oppression; he wrote:-

> 'Authentic education is not carried on by A for B or by A about B, but rather by A with B, mediated by the world' (Friere, 1972:66).

McGee, et al, (1987) in their work on 'Gentle Teaching' and Nind and Hewett (1988), in their attempts to break down 'us and them' barriers between teachers and learners used empathy to help achieve their educational aims.

Also agreeing with Rogers, Hughes and Carpenter, (1991:219-220) in their chapter on 'Annual Reviews: An Active Partnership,' added that the 'ownership of the curriculum must be shared' (between tutor and students) if young people labelled as having learning difficulties were to prove themselves capable of 'effective decision making in relation to their own life goals.'

In the same way that the medical profession 'is having to come to terms with patients who are seeking a form of health care in which information and responsibility for courses of treatment are more openly shared' (Sebba, et al, 1993:84), so teachers and tutors may need to reformulate relationships they have with learners.

3.4.2 Current Educational Practice

Nearly two decades after he wrote them, Rogers' words are still relevant in Britain, since 'similar assignments and standard tests... externally evaluated' (Rogers, 1983:21) are part of the National Curriculum. It seems likely therefore, that with the introduction of the Literacy and the Numeracy hours, there is now, less encouragement or opportunity for teachers to be 'creative and stimulating' (Rogers, 1983:12) than at any time previously. Less opportunity for creative and stimulating teachers (Rogers, 1983:12) may also mean less encouragement and opportunity than previously for students to 'learn how to learn' (Rogers, 1983:1).

However, advocates of humanistic approaches continue to argue their case. The Royal Society of Arts in its Education for Capability Programme emphasized the importance of working co-operatively and there have been calls for a curriculum that will permit students to take responsibility for and evaluate their own learning (Ruddock, 1991:26). The Rogerian educational climate allows for these ideas.

Competent learners need to 'resolve conflicts' instead of 'using defence mechanisms' (Quicke, 1999:22), to be 'self-regulated' (op cit :35) or self-evaluating and to 'participate in collaborative social action' (:68). Quicke advocated 'turn-taking' and 'talk between equals' (1999:69). Turn-taking can only be learnt in a group in which 'individuals feel they can take risks and try things out' (Edwards and Westgate, 1987:70) and 'are encouraged or provoked by the group' (Greenhalgh, 1994:192). Group activities should 'promote a willingness to listen to others, the freedom to take risks, tolerance of all contributions and opportunities to evaluate shared experiences' (Cowie and Ruddock, 1995:5). Rogers too advocates talk between equals, willingness to listen to others and freedom to take risks in order to learn.

'Civil rights to educational opportunity can only be converted into intellectual rights by ... schooling based on respect for persons' (MacDonald, 1991:2): Rogers advocated respect for the individual in a climate in which 'attitudes and feelings were accepted' (1983:124).

'Over recent years, the concept of the learning society has enjoyed great popularity' (Riddell, et al 1999:448). In fact the late Donald Dewar thought that 'learning had never

been more important to our society than it is today' (Scottish Office Green Paper, 1998:2).

According to the Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults there are a million learning-disabled people in the UK (Lawton, 1998:21) and for too long they have existed on the margins of society and therefore on the margins of learning. 'Learning enables people to play a full part in their community' (DfEE, 1998:7). Hence, if learning-disabled people are to become active members of the community they will need to be competent learners.

People labelled as having learning difficulties are themselves arguing for 'a community within which they can be fully-functioning people' (Bourlet, 1990). Presently such people live in 'a society which imposes its conditions upon them' (Sebba et al 1993:79) and are 'challenging the low expectations that others have of them' (Lawton, 1998:20). Learning-disabled people will need to have high expectations of themselves and their potential to become fully-functioning. Such notions are central to the Rogerian approach to education.

Ideas advocated by Rogers remain apparent in the concept of democratic learning communities. In such communities, the curriculum is collaboratively planned by tutors and students together and 'individuals are treated with respect and trust is built' (Brodhagen 1999:99). In democratic learning communities, tutor-student relationships are of a 'mutually intimate and trusting nature' and tutors recognise that both they and the students 'are always in a state of becoming' (Quicke, 1999:163).

Rogers' approach to education, *per se*, might not feature very large in current educational policy, but his influence is still felt. Rogers had faith in every individual to 'resolve his/her own problems, to evaluate ideas and to be supportive of others' (Rogers, 1983). Such notions 'drive the democratic way of life' (Beane, 1990).

It seems likely, given the above, that humanistic education, in which students 'learn how to learn' (Rogers, 1983:18), remains in strong contention with methods that reduce education to technical training.

3.5 Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter I have described Rogers' humanistic approach to education and how his 'climate of trust', of genuineness, acceptance and empathetic understanding might be achieved. This was followed by Rogers' case for success and by critiques of his approach to education. Finally I examined current educational practice.

Between 1998 and 1999 I ran a course for adults labelled as having learning difficulties. My aim was to establish a learning community based on the ideas of Carl R Rogers. The course was run as an action-research project. This research is a *post hoc* evaluation of data collected at the time.

The methodology I chose for the project will be described in the following chapter.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Overview and Research Questions

In previous chapters I have shown how notions of intelligence and tests to measure it have led to some people being labelled as having learning difficulties and excluded from mainstream society. I then showed how proponents of the normalisation principle and special education policies socially excluded them even further.

Thereafter I discussed the continuing relevance of the Rogerian arguement that the prevailing education system is 'failing to meet the needs of society' (Rogers, 1983:1) and that it teaches students to obey rather than to be self-directing. I described Roger's classroom 'climate of trust' (Rogers, 1983:3), which he saw as essential to encourage students to learn and to become themselves at their optimum best.

Between 1998 and 1999 I ran a college course for adults labelled as having learning difficulties. This project is the subject of this research.

The research questions were:

> Using a Rogerian approach, is it possible to generate a 'climate of trust' with a group of adults labelled as having learning difficulties?
>
> Does such a 'climate' facilitate their learning?

The research work was undertaken in two distinct stages:-

(1) A two-year long action research style project, during which I collected the data using field notes as a participant observer and tape-recordings of all baseroom sessions. The learning programme was undertaken using the humanistic approach advocated by Rogers (Rogers, 1983). This part was undertaken before I registered for a PhD.

(2) a *post hoc* selection, interpretation, evaluation and analysis of those data, under supervision, as a doctoral-level project for this thesis.

I originally planned to run the course once, evaluate it and then run it again with any initial problems ironed out. However, after the first course, the local education authority decided not to run any more discrete groups for adults labelled as having learning difficulties. I was disappointed, but the data I had collected on the first run was rich, extensive and valuable. It had been collected over two years and students and staff had collaborated in checking and verifying the detailed information recorded on tape and in the field notes. I had discussed my perspective and performance with a 'critical other' and the data was collected from all participating students rather than from a selected few. Although I could not repeat the course, I had the opportunity to reflect upon it in a systematic way, under supervision, for a PhD.

The second phase of the project was a *post hoc* evaluation of the extent to which it was possible, using congruence, acceptance and empathic understanding, to generate and maintain Rogers' humanistic climate of trust with the group of adults labelled as having learning difficulties. An interrelated issue was how effective that environment was for student learning.

In this chapter I shall discuss the methodological issues that were raised before, during and following the investigation and give details of the methodology. Before I get to the evaluation, I must explain the first phase, the action-research style programme in detail so that I can discuss and evaluate the data, as a collection, in terms of its validity and reliability as a source of evidence for later evaluation.

4.2 Action Research

Action research is a form of research carried out by practitioners into their own practices. It is a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social (including educational) situations in order to improve:-

(a) their own social or educational practices,

(b) their understanding of those practices, and

(c) the situations in which the practices are carried out" (Kemmis, 1993:177).

Community-based research starts with a problem to be solved. Its purpose is to describe and interpret events that enable people to formulate acceptable solutions to their problems. It is oriented towards the 'democratic, equitable, liberating and life-enhancing' (Stringer, 1999:187).

It does not have a set of research techniques not used in any other kind of enquiry. Techniques used "more closely resemble those employed by interpretive researchers (ethnographers, case study researchers, historians, etc) than empirical-analytic researchers (correlational analysis, comparative experiments, etc) (Kemmis, 1993:184). This may be because the 'objects' of action research are practices, that is, not mere behaviours in isolation, but behaviours within discourse and background.

'Action research' is a term first used by Kurt Lewin in about 1944. He later documented the effects of group decisions in facilitating behaviour change and stressed the value of involving all participants in every phase of the action research process.

Participants in action research join in rigorous inquiry, collect data and reflect on that information. They then transform their understanding of the nature of the problem under investigation. This new set of understandings informs action, which is then evaluated and so the spiral process starts anew. It is this cyclical or spiral nature that sets it apart from other strategies.

However, it is not a neat, orderly activity in which participants proceed from one step to the next in a measured pattern. It can involve much repetition, revision, rethinking and sometimes major change in direction before a desired research destination is reached.

In the 1980s the focus of action research within education was the activities of teachers in their classrooms, but it was not enough for teachers to learn about practice by hearing about it from others. Whitehead (1983) argued that it was necessary that teachers should develop their own theories of education through their own practices, to examine what they felt needed improving and to work systematically to find ways of carrying out the improvement. Action research was to be the means for them to do this.

Action research is presently enjoying a resurgence in popularity (see Atweh, Weeks and Kemmis, (1998), Brown and Dowling (1998), Greenwood and Levin (1998) and Wallace (1998). It is seen as 'democratic,' as providing 'freedom from oppression' and as 'enabling the expression of people's full human potential' (Stringer, 1999:10), but there is, as yet, no consensus about what actually constitutes action research and what is beyond its scope.

Action research is a 'strategy for social research rather than a specific method" (Denscombe, 1999:58) in which 'research and action are integrated' (Somekh, 1995:34). Since the research and the practice it informs are integrated, the researcher is often the practitioner too as is the case in my research described here.

Action research demands that practitioners should not merely take part in the research but become partners with the subjects in that research. Grundy and Kemmis (1988:7), argued for 'equal partners'. This may not always be possible; in schools and colleges teachers and tutors are constrained by the need to reach learning targets and teachers and taught do not conventionally enjoy equal power and status. Further, as in this study, students may, initially, not have had those life experiences, (high self-esteem, confidence, be good at making choices, be used to assuming control), that would enable them to become equal partners.

Although action research has gained increased support in the professional community, it has yet to be accepted by many academic researchers as a 'legitimate form of enquiry' (Stringer, 1999:190) since the knowledge generated is subjective rather than objective. However its proponents nonetheless are required to define and observe the phenomena under investigation in a systematic and reflexive way.

Scientific knowledge, however, is now recognised to be 'much less stable, objective and generalisable' (Stringer, 1999:191) than previously assumed and less secure as a basis for predicting human action. Also there is an increasing acceptance of the fundamental difference between the physical and social worlds, the latter being 'continually changing' (Stringer, 1999:191). Action research may prove to be the most 'scientific' method of researching into such an ever-changing universe.

4.2.1 Action Research and this Study

When running the course, I knew that action research involved planning, implementing, reflecting and then making further plans in the light of that reflection and that participant observation involved cooperation and partnership between researcher and researched. However, I had not then reviewed the literature and my understanding of exactly what was involved in action-research was, to say the least, sketchy. I understood the cyclical nature of action-research, but nothing more. The reviews that I carried out, either alone or in conjunction with Sally, my assistant, were *ad hoc* affairs, hastily done. The data however, was rich, extensive and collected daily. I kept tape recordings of all the baseroom sessions and fieldnotes of every activity. The *post-hoc* review will highlight what worked well, where there were problems/dilemmas how my adoption of a Rogerian approach opened up the possibility of radical innovations in pedagogic as well as social practices.

4.2.2 Reflexivity

The most salient underlining feature of action research is reflection (see Webb, 1990), but what actually constitutes reflection is unclear since there is a 'diversity of meanings and intentions' found in the literature on reflection (Adler,1991).

From my literature search for this evaluation, I discovered that the concept of reflexivity refers to the ways in which 'our portrayal of social realities simultaneously describe and constitute those realities' (Garfinkel, 1967). In other words, a researcher's descriptions of social realities cannot be separated from what she describes and the language she uses to describe it. Therefore, how she constructs social reality is open to contest and to change. A 'reflexive' researcher is encouraged to consider the way a text is only one version of a 'story' which 'presents an objective, out-there-reality' (Silverman, 1997:146).

The idea that qualitative research should be conducted as a reflexive practice is not new (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Debates about reflexivity gained impetus from feminist ideas about how a reader should understand the relative positions of researcher and researched (Maynard and Purvis, 1994). In qualitative research traditions there is a 'long standing approval of and emphasis on reflexivity' (Mason, 1996:165).

I did not at the time of running the course and implementing my action-research reviews, understand what concentration deep reflection needs.

4.3 Quantitative or Qualitative?

A research project is the collection of reliable data from which the researcher amasses evidence to answer a question or investigate a situation. The way in which evidence is amassed falls broadly into two categories, one referred to as quantitative research which is 'concerned with measurement' (Seaman, 1987:169) and associated with surveys, experiments, and statistics and the other, qualitative research in which the researcher plans to 'observe, discover, describe, compare and analyse the characteristic attributes, themes and underlying dimensions of a particular unit (Seaman, 1987:169).

Attempts to differentiate qualitative from quantitative research in epistemological terms (ways of knowing and understanding) have been problematic since the former is not represented by a unified set of techniques or philosophies (Bryman, 1988a).

'There are different ways of knowing, different unknowns to be known and different people have different propensities for knowing' (Shultz and Meleis, 1988:221). If this can be agreed upon then perhaps appropriate 'criteria for knowing, (based on what we already know), can be developed for knowing what we want to know' (Shultz and Meleis, op cit).

Because qualitative research is 'not yet considered to be mainstream science' (May, 1994:12), its proponents are constantly challenged about how they know what they purport to know. Quantitative research methods rely for knowledge on replicability of procedures and verifiability of findings. However, the thinking processes whereby quantitative researchers arrive at such 'knowledge' are often ignored and only external processes are considered to be important.

Qualitative analysts have often to make use of intuition and creativity which critics point out are neither predictable nor replicable. May argues that implementation and explication of research methods alone 'never explain the process of abstract knowing'

(May, 1994:13) regardless of whether those methods be in the quantitative or the qualitative tradition.

The question needs to be asked:- when does 'knowing' occur? In the positivist paradigm, work is usually linear and proceeds from previously established knowledge. The research serves to verify or refute knowledge thought to be provisional. The important intellectual work is finished before the data is collected (May, op cit). 'Knowing' can only be verified by retracing the researcher/scientists intellectual journey through the research from beginning to end.

In the qualitative paradigm, research often begins with a muddled, undifferentiated view and moves by way of thick description and often personal experience/expertise towards clearer understanding. How the qualitative scientist comes to this latter view is the process as well as the substance of the research. Biases, assumptions, reflections and interpretations are often acknowledged in qualitative but not in quantitative research.

'Entrenched views of the nature of knowledge are changing' (May, 1994:15). This change is most visible in physics (see Bohm, 1987). Quantum theorists imply that the universe is an indivisible whole in which perceptions and actions are inseparable. This scientific revolution in views on objectivity and subjectivity have been apparent for some time (see Lincoln and Guba, 1985, Minnich, 1990).

Creativity in scientific thought has been underscored. Instead of science being viewed as an accumulation of knowledge from which the scientist is distanced, increasingly the work of science is seen as the creation of cognitive maps 'that shape and are shaped by the scientist's perceptions and actions' (Bohm, 1987). Scientists began to describe how they observed their own thinking and began taking a 'more creative, less reactive stance towards their own thought' (Singe, 1990) and to acknowledge the increasing importance of intuition and creativity.

Quantitative and qualitative research traditions may have much more in common than had hitherto been considered. Quantitative scientists may in future be pressed more closely about how they 'know what they know' and identical questions about validity may eventually be put to researchers in both traditions.

Qualitative research is associated with phenomenology (see for example Schutz, 1976), ethnomethodology (see for example Garfinkel, 1967), symbolic interactionism (see for example Blumer, 1969) and more recently with postmodernism (see Dickens and Fontana, 1994) and feminist approaches.

Researchers in quantitative traditions have access to 'research blueprints' which are well-used, tested and tried methods of doing their research. Qualitative researchers have less widespread public recognition and approval of their paradigms. Perhaps it is because there are no clear-cut conventions for conducting and analysing qualitative research that such researchers have to think carefully about what they are doing as they progress.

A researcher, however, cannot be neutral, cannot become detached from the knowledge and evidence she is generating. Mason thought the researcher should 'seek to understand her role in that process' by 'posing difficult questions to herself in the research process as part of the activity of reflexivity' (Mason, 1996:5).

Within the field of education, previously accepted and perhaps no longer questioned ways of behaving in the classroom need constant review and if necessary, challenge. Questions need to be asked about what are the aims of education and what are the best ways of achieving them.

4.3.1 Quantitative Research

Traditionally, researchers in social sciences have taken 'the natural sciences and their exactness as a model, paying particular attention to developing quantitative and standardised methods' (Flick, 1998:2). Such methods were used to isolate causes and effects and to measure and quantify phenomena in order to formulate general laws. Observed phenomena were classified on their frequency and distribution and those conditions under which the phenomena were observed were strictly controlled. Studies were designed in such a way that the researcher/observer's influence was minimised in order to guarantee the objectivity of the project.

Within sociology the social survey is the main method of data collection (Bryman, 1988a:11). The survey generates quantifiable data on large numbers of people who are known to be representative of a wider population so that theories about them can be

tested. Usually in a social survey there are two groups to which subjects have been randomly allocated: an experimental and a control group. Thereafter the experimental group is exposed to some stimulus, (the independent variable) and the control group is not; any observed difference between the two groups is then thought to be due to the independent variable alone. This capacity of the survey for generating quantifiable data is seen as 'capturing many of the ingredients of a science' (Bryman, 1988a:11).

Quantitative researchers view individuals as discrete objects making responses to surveys. Their answers are then aggregated to form overall measures for the sample. Such an approach was referred to by Coleman as an 'aggregate psychology' (Colemen, 1958:30) since it supports a view of society as being 'only an aggregation of disparate individuals' (Blumer, 1948:546).

Quantitative research produces vast quantities of data, but Flick, (1998:3-4) found that when 'standards and procedures were examined and analysed' to clarify to which research questions they were thought to be appropriate, matches were found 'to a lesser and lesser extent.' When they were examined for objectivity 'the results proved rather negative.' The standardised surveys had been aimed at documenting and analysing the frequency and distribution of social phenomena in the population, but the low degree of their applicability and connectability meant that their use was suspect in political and everyday contexts. The investigations and findings of social science often 'remain(ed) too far removed from everyday questions and problems.'

Another quantitative method of data collection is 'structured observation' in which the researcher records observation in accordance with a pre-determined schedule and quantifies the resulting data. This method pre-supposes that relevant behaviour has already been identified. The research is designed to measure its frequency, its persistence over time and what precedes or follows it.

My research involved a small number of people and was not concerned with making comparisons or with statistics. I needed methods that were suited to researching the behaviour of individual people in context whereby processes by which they changed that behaviour could be understood.

Quantitative research has higher reliability but less validity than qualitative. Qualitative research has higher validity in that it has more depth, but less reliability in that it is difficult to replicate. Replication provides a means of checking the extent to which findings are applicable to their contexts and also as a means of checking the biases of the investigator. This need to replicate (or be able to replicate) is a characteristic of the natural sciences. In 1975 Heisenberg saw such replicability as 'essential for success' (Heisenberg, 1975:55). In fact replications are 'comparatively rare in the social sciences' since they are often regarded as an 'unimaginative, low-status activity among researchers' (Bryman, 1988a:38).

4.3.2 Qualitative Research

Because of its alleged inability to conform to the canons of scientific methods, the collection of qualitative data has not always been seen as possessing the validity and reliability of the quantitative approach. However, because the mere counting of a person as a statistic - though scientific - says very little about that person, proponents of qualitative research argue that, by providing in-depth and meaningful data, in context, it is a more 'appropriate method for studying people' (Bryman, 1989:3).

In spite of being considered 'non-scientific' because of its lack of objectivity and its lack of 'technical language and complex statistical procedures' (Stringer, 1999:17), qualitative research methods have been employed by social scientists for many years (Bryman, 1989:45). Qualitative research then is not a new approach; Whyte (1943) used participant observation (the best known method of data collection in qualitative research) in his study of street corner boys and there was a wave of interest in its possibilities in the 1960s and 1970s when interest was shown in the self-reflection promoted by Kuhn (1970).

Despite much debate, the 'distinction between quantitative and qualitative methods is not entirely clear cut' (Mason, 1996:6) and at least one researcher, Bryman, considers that many of the differences between the two traditions 'are more in the minds of the philosophers and researchers rather than in their practices' (Bryman, 1988a:170). Bryman's case is that choice of method is a matter of selecting the most appropriate techniques for gathering the required data.

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative methods highlight the researcher's communication and interaction with her subjects as an explicit part of knowledge production, instead of excluding it as far as possible. Her subjectivities and those of the people she studies are part of the research process. Her reflections on actions and observations in the field, her impressions, dilemmas and feelings, as documented at the time, become data in their own right.

'The powerful use of professional theories, such as behaviourism and normalisation,' have contributed to the 'objectification of people labelled as having learning difficulties (Gillman, et al, 1997:675), who have become 'cases' or 'problems.' In order to avoid this, a researcher, working with such a subject group, would need, constantly, to be reflexive and question her assumptions and beliefs in the light of the evidence in her data.

Quantitative methodology based on surveys, could produce data about the frequency of learning disability in the population or within lower or upper classes and changes in frequency over time and area, but such data would tell nothing about what it is like to live with the label 'learning disability' or what might help such labelled people to become more confident and self-directing. Hence, quantitative methodology alone would not help me with my research question. I did however use 'structured observation' in the making of the eye-contact charts (see Appendix 4 for example) because they gave me objective information about how my plans for better communication were working out.

According to Matza (1969) people do things that have meaning for them and create their own social realities. Those realities should be probed by methods which both probe 'human nature' and 'the meaning of human nature' (Matza, 1969:8). Echoing this idea Polsky, (1969) wrote that 'successful field research depends on the investigator's trained abilities to look at people, listen to them, think and feel with them (and) talk with them rather than at them' (Polsky, 1969:120). Interactional skills I had acquired on the Human Relations course at Nottingham University had equipped me with the 'trained abilities' appropriate for the task.

Research methods, mainly from the qualitative tradition offered the appropriate means of collecting data for my project.

4.4 Participant Observation

The best known method of qualitative research data collection is participant observation in which the researcher seeks to study her subject group in depth and over a considerable period of time. This approach may also be described as 'ethnography' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, Wolcott, 1975:112).

The term participant observation refers to methods of generating data which involve the researcher immersing herself 'in a research setting and systematically observing dimensions of that setting, interactions, relationships, action, events and so on, within it' (Mason, 1996:60).

A participant observer is involved in doing two things. She must have a role that engages her in activities appropriate to the situation as well as observing activities, people and physical aspects as required for the research. My role was that of tutor/facilitator of learning.

If an observer tried to remember and catalogue all the activities and all the interactions she would experience 'overload.' Overload refers to a system's inability to process inputs from the environment because there are too many inputs for the system to cope with. However, the participant observer seeks to become aware off things s/he usually takes for granted to avoid overload. Spradley considered that some of the 'unnecessary trivia' often became 'some of the most important data' (Spradley, 1980:56).

Part of what is taken for granted is that a person 'can understand his (sic) fellow-man (sic) and his (sic) actions and that he (sic) can communicate with others because he (sic) assumes they understand his (sic) actions' (Shutz, 1973:16). This assumption of mutual understanding may be ill-founded.

As observer I may ask another, 'Does your frown mean you are angry, or perplexed, or have a headache?' Or I may ask, 'Are you laughing at a joke, at me, or because you are happy or for some other reason I cannot fathom?' Responses may or may not be truthful or complete. The subject may not know why s/he laughs. At best, 'the Other appears as a partial self' (Shutz, 1973:19).

The observant researcher herself assumes the role of observer. The observer is, in Mead's (1934) terms acting out the 'I' rather than the 'me.'

Thus, an observer can never know another completely. Neither can she know that her interpretations of what she has observed match the meaning placed on observed phenomena by the subject. Notwithstanding the above, an observer who interacts with others has more opportunity to know them than an observer who merely looks, listens and records.

Participant observation is not a new approach, having been used by Whyte in 1943. One of its strengths is that it is not really a single method but embraces different ways of data collection. It might involve unstructured interviews, the examination of photographs and documents, or the construction of life histories, which is very popular in the field of learning disability (see Williams and Shultz, 1983 and Atkinson and Williams, 1990 for more details). Case studies have been included in the project here described.

Group discussion is another qualitative research method of finding data. Griffin (1985a and 1985b) used this method to research the transition from school to work for a number of young women. Group discussion is particularly suited to learning disability research and to participant observational methods of data collection. It involves 'watching people in their own territory and interacting with them in their own language, on their own terms' (Kirk and Miller, 1986:9) and 'capturing data from the inside' (Miles and Huberman, 1994:6). Group discussions featured frequently in our work in the baseroom.

4.4.1 Four Roles within Participant Observation

Participant observers have the choice of four main research roles:- total participant, observer participant, total observer and participant observer.

In a total participant role, the researcher conceals her true purpose and becomes a member of the group to be researched. In his analysis of life in a hospital for people with mental illness ('Asylums,' Goffman, 1961) Goffman used this approach. He worked there for a year teaching athletics with only a few staff being aware that he was actually doing research.

In the observer participant role, the researcher might use interview techniques on a number of visits. Lonsdale used this in her study of the experiences of physically impaired women (Lonsdale, 1990). I did not collect data on isolated visits but during the whole of the course, so this model was not useful.

A researcher who is a total observer has little or no social interaction with her subjects and this role is rarely used for qualitative research, where the task is to understand the meanings participants give to their situation.

Where a researcher is a participant observer, both researcher and researched are aware of the field work relationship. Miller and Gwynne's work about life in a home for elderly physically impaired people ('A Life Apart,' Miller and Gwynne, 1972), is an example of the use of this kind of research. This is the model I adopted, although on occasions, as tutor, my role was prescribed for me.

At all times, I was a tutor. There were some tasks that only I as tutor could fulfil, such as being responsible for the register and matters of health and safety, as well as speaking to parents/workers or other educationalists on the office telephone in the next room. These tasks took on average about six minutes per day, spaced out in one or two minute lengths. During these moments, I could not be a participant observer since they necessitated my moving away from that circle of inward facing chairs or the work-tables where most of what happened during the sessions took place. I therefore moved between the two roles of participant-observer and non-observing tutor as circumstances demanded.

All sessions were taped because I wanted a complete verbatim record of everything that was said. The tape-recorder was switched on as the students came through the outer door and off again as they left. It recorded what happened when I was not there, so I could check later on what had taken place in my absence. When I was away from the students, I asked Sally and the group to play simple games, which were fun and which also encouraged group members to get to know each other. (For examples of these games see Appendix 5).

Often I could decide when to carry out my administrative tasks, so did not need to miss the same part of a session every day. When I returned to the circle, firstly Sally and then, from the beginning of the second term the students, would bring me up to date about what had happened whilst I was away from the group. Thus, from the tapes, from Sally and from the students I had three ways of learning what had ensued during my absence.

4.5 Researching Learning-disabled Students

Participant observation methods of data collection have been used with people labelled as having learning difficulties previously; Edgerton et al used this method in 1984. In order to overcome the likelihood of responses being made to please the researcher, he validated his data by checking what was said in interviews against observed behaviours.

Previous research on interactive groups of adults labelled as having learning difficulties is hard to find. Walmsley reported on interviewing groups of people labelled as having learning difficulties (Walmsley, 1990), but this was a study of a group of individuals together at the same time rather than a collection of people working as a group who thought of themselves as a group.

Research with people with learning disabilities has mainly concentrated on individuals. Flynn (1986) suggested guidelines for interviewing learning-disabled adults as consumers, whilst Siegelman et al (1989) researched into question and answer techniques. Crocker (1990) conducted a pilot study on assessing 'Client Participation in Mental Handicap Services.'

All of these researchers used interview techniques to gather data on people's views and opinions. Some researchers working with people who have been labelled as having learning disabilities have however reported difficulties between themselves and their subjects. Learning-disabled people are said to 'experience difficulty in making choices' (Siegelman et al, 1989:4), to be 'poor at turn-taking and at listening' (Bender, 1992:107) and to 'lack confidence and assertiveness' (Vaughn and La Greca, 1993:69). Crocker (1990) reported difficulties between interviewer and interviewee in establishing rapport. For these reasons learning-disabled subjects may be thought of as not making good subjects for research.

Researchers have attempted to overcome some of these difficulties. For instance, Siegelman et al (1989), trying to find a solution to the problem of some interviewees finding open-ended questions unanswerable, tried offering a choice of two answers as possible responses. The question might have been, 'Which do you prefer, tea or coffee?' However, they noted a tendency always to choose the second option, thus invalidating this method of questioning.

Goode thought that some of these difficulties might be because 'Institutionalised people become so accustomed to conforming to the system and to telling members of staff what the person thinks they want to hear that they therefore have difficulty in expressing their own feelings and opinions' (Goode, 1984:157).

Shanley and Rose noted that people with learning disabilities interviewed about their work experience were often reluctant to respond to questions asking them to say things they disliked about their work and about their Day Centres (Shanley and Rose, 1993:259). Shanley and Rose seem to be making the assumption that non-learning disabled people would be quite open about making such criticisms and I question this. Criticism of valued work experience, which is not something offered to every adult with the label learning difficulties, might have resulted in the end of the placement. Alternatively the work experience might have been going so well that there were no criticisms to voice, or perhaps they had so little other like experience to compare it with that the task of saying what they disliked about it was too difficult. The people interviewed about their attendance at the Day Centre might have feared the consequences of their criticisms getting back to the people in charge there. Since the interviewer was not someone they knew well, on what basis were interviewer assurances of confidentiality to be judged.

Difficulties above mentioned concerning achieving rapport and questions about the validity of answers given might indicate that question and answer techniques of data collection between adults labelled as having learning difficulties and researchers who are strangers to them are not the most appropriate or reliable way forward.

Atkinson (1997) wanted to find whether oral history techniques would work with older people labelled as having learning disabilities. The use of recall and reminiscence

techniques with older people generally have been well documented (see Gibson, 1989), but accounts of similar approaches with older people labelled as having learning difficulties are rare, although one example is Potts and Fido (1991). Atkinson's own research in this area involved one-off interviews and in her own words was 'far from perfect' although it convinced her that 'people with learning disabilities do have stories to tell' (Atkinson, 1997:24). A project she did with Williams (Atkinson and Williams, 1990) was an anthology of poetry, prose and paintings by people labelled as having learning disabilities. This led her to believe that in-depth work with small numbers of people might generate more material than single interviews could.

Brost and Johnson (1982:77) adopted a 'getting-to-know-you' approach which seems to offer more reliable data than using interview techniques. They invested time in personal contact within the context of a relationship thus allowing a fuller picture to emerge. This method might help get over the difficulties in establishing rapport and might also improve interaction and enable trust to develop. It was unclear how long a 'getting-to-know-you' time the researchers recommended as being the minimum.

Much research however has been conducted upon individuals labelled as having learning difficulties to prove or disprove some theory, or has focused on telling their stories rather than on attempting to alleviate what has been seen as their problems (Whyte et al, 1989; McTaggart, 1991; Turnbull and Turnbull, 1991). According to Oliver this has often 'alienated the research subjects rather than contributed in any way to their quality of life' (Oliver, 1992:38). Further, researchers have usually set the agenda, decided what needs to be researched, what the problems are and what the answers are likely to be. This may have added further to subjects' lack of enthusiasm about the results (see McTaggart, 1991, Turnbull and Turnbull, 1991).

The organization 'People First' has been instrumental in challenging the status of people labelled as having learning disabilities as merely 'subjects' or 'informers.' Recently, those labelled as having learning difficulties have begun to develop as contributors to the design and execution of studies as part of a wider movement towards emancipatory research in disability studies (see Oliver, 1992; Zarb, 1992). Such studies argue that learning disabled people themselves should assume control of all aspects of the research

process and there is a growing literature concerning this notion (see Cocks and Cockram, 1995).

However, 'assuming' and 'controlling' are usually actions taken about people with the label learning difficulties, not actions taken by them. It is likely to be difficult for anyone to assume control after long experience of being controlled by others. 'Assuming control' is likely to prove to be a skill which, like many others, needs practice, such as was provided on the course.

In this study, learning-disabled people were not merely 'subjects' and were more than 'informers.' All the data were validated by them. I observed and interpreted their behaviour, interactions and their learning, whilst they either agreed with my interpretation or worked with me to change it in what they saw as a more accurate direction (see page 100).

Barnes maintained that if researchers were to empathise with those they researched, their life histories had to be 'as near as possible to those of the people they studied' (Barnes, 1992:117). That is, women should do research with women and people with impairments should research into disability. However, Barnes did admit that having an impairment did not automatically 'give someone an affinity with disabled people nor an inclination to do disability research' (Barnes, 1992:121).

A person labelled as having learning difficulties, although keen to do such research, might have neither the academic nor the interactive communication skills to carry it out.

A partnership between those labelled as having learning difficulties and those not so labelled is likely to prove a positive way forward. How the students who are the focus of this research and I worked as partners, both in the research and in the education process, is detailed in the chapter which follows.

4.5.1 The Sample

Initially ten students enrolled and at the end of the second week I explained the research I wanted to do and why. I asked their permission to go ahead. I began this by saying something about Rogers and that I wanted students to work with me to establish his

'climate of trust' which I explained briefly. I added that if the 'climate' were established I wanted to investigate whether it encouraged them to become more confident and self-directing. I initiated a discussion about how a person behaves and feels when s/he is confident and about who chose what students should wear and what they should eat, etc. We discussed whether or not we were self-directing already and recorded our findings (see Appendix 4 for an example.)

I explained that I needed to tape record all our baseroom sessions to investigate whether changes in confidence and self-direction took place between the beginning and the end of the course. Since this student group were likely to be especially vulnerable, they were asked to discuss the proposed research with someone they trusted and then, if permission were to be given, both student and advisor were to sign the consent form and return it. Initially seven students gave their permission and were joined by an eighth in the second term.

4.5.2 Working with an Assistant

I was provided with an assistant, Sally, who had worked for many years with students labelled as having learning difficulties, but who had no knowledge of Rogers' approach to education. I would have preferred someone who had Rogerian counselling skills, but no one with such experience was available. Previously when working as a tutor's assistant, Sally's duties had consisted of putting out equipment, photocopying, answering the telephone, attending to the personal care of the students and working with individuals as instructed by the tutor. I asked Sally to continue to do this during the first few weeks of the course.

However, I wanted Sally to be more than servant/helper to the group; I also wanted her to be my co-worker and 'critical other' (Woods, 1993:12). 'Critical other(s)' are not the driving forces in an event, but play significant roles as part of a team (Woods, 1993:143). They have specialist skills, provide role models and support learning transactions (Woods, op cit). A 'critical other' would be able to draw attention to points missed or ignored, challenge interpretations of events and give an alternative perspective on behaviour.

Sally, however, did not want to be a 'critical other' as she had never worked that way before. She said she preferred to remain supportive yet keep in the background.

I discussed with Sally daily what I was working to achieve, that is, to change students' behaviour by changing my own from that of traditional tutor to facilitator of learning. I asked her to observe how I worked to establish the Rogerian 'climate of trust' (Roger, op cit), but to remain silent when she did not know what to do and to leave the action to me.

Until she became more familiar and comfortable with the new way of working, Sally confined herself to drawing my attention to the fact when she thought individuals had not understood me. She also encouraged individuals she thought were not paying attention to take a more active part in what was happening in the group. When she felt confident to do so, (from about the middle of the first term), she would make the kind of comments she observed me making. For instance, she would suggest students spoke directly to each other rather than 'go through the chair.' She would remind individuals to look at the person they were speaking to, or decline invitations to act as servant to the group. When appropriate she would invite individuals to focus on group activities rather than day-dream.

After about the middle of the second term, when she had become used to my way of working, Sally's help became vital, both during sessions and at our discussion meetings, giving me an alternative view on proceedings.

With Sally's assistance, the students' progress was regularly evaluated. However, this process was less systematic and well-informed by the literature than it would have been had I been able to adopt my original plan and make a second run of the course the focus of this research. As has been said before, I was obliged by circumstances beyond my control to use the rich data collected from the first course run and make a *post hoc* evaluation of it. Nevertheless the plan-implement-reflect-re-plan nature of action research was at the heart of my work with the group.

I had planned to set aside some quiet time at the end of each session in which Sally and I could discuss course/group matters undisturbed and at length, but this proved impossible. Sally worked full-time and had a busy home and social life and no time outside the

working day could be found for appraising the day's events. Therefore, we shared thoughts and feelings about students and their behaviour in snatched moments during coffee breaks and more extensively over lunch.

Being genuine, (not presenting one attitude whilst holding another at a deeper level), being accepting (demonstrating the unconditional worth of the person) and empathic understanding (seeing the world as the other sees it) [see pages 49-52 for fuller discussion of these terms] were not mere techniques that I switched on for the purposes of running the group. In the group I strove not to put on a polite facade or professional front, but to be aware of my feelings and to express them. I separated my reactions to each student's behaviour from my warm regard for him/her as a human being. I attempted to perceive what the students were perceiving in the manner they were perceiving it.

Such attributes became part of my everyday way of dealing with people and that included how I was with Sally. Initially, Sally was over-polite, somewhat remote and treated me as if I were a superior whom she wished to placate, much in the same way that the students did (see page 113 for further details). By the end of the second term, Sally had dropped that 'facade' and was treating me like an equal, who could be challenged and disagreed with. However, Sally did not carry responsibility for what happened in the group and all final decisions were mine.

Sally and I looked for instances in which one of us had failed to be congruent, accepting or empathic. Discussing what we each remembered of the day's events, highlighting different experiences and the most productive way forward took up most of every coffee break and every lunchtime.

4.5.3 Staff/Student Relationships

Hammersley (1993a) argued in favour of tutor research considering that the tutor was in a favourable position to test theoretical ideas in ways mere observers could not do. However, he suggested the relationship between teacher-researcher and students could be counter-productive if it became too familiar, although he did not define what he meant by 'too familiar.' Elliott, (1991:21) however saw curriculum as being based on 'an interactive process,... mediated by student/teacher interactions' and Apple and Beane,

(1999:121) advocated an education based on 'caring' and 'democratic social principles.' Rogers saw relationships as 'positively valued' and considered 'a close, real, fully communicative relationship with another person' as highly valued (1983:266). Such interactive, democratic relationships are unlikely to be forged by following Hammersley's (op cit) advice not to become 'too familiar.'

Adopting a Rogerian approach meant that my work involved a close relationship between my students and myself. It was of necessity, warm and friendly, interactive and based on the Rogerian 'climate of trust' (Rogers, 1983:1). (The 'climate' has been described more fully on pages 49-52).

4.5.4 The Fieldwork

As outlined above, the overall aim of the course was to establish Rogers' 'climate of trust' (Rogers, 1983:1) using genuineness, acceptance and empathic understanding in order to help students become self-evaluating, self-directing and their 'true selves' (Rogers, 1983:266) in Rogerian terms.

My role was that of tutor as action-researcher. Although the course was tutor-led, my data collection involved collaborating with students in verifying data as it was collected.

Each morning I read out to them my field notes about the previous day's events to see if my recollections matched theirs. Where discrepancies arose, we discussed the matter, listening in turn to everybody's point of view and all available recollections. Students were asked what they had thought at the time about what had happened and what they had thought since. When two opposing views of an event were discovered all group members were asked to decide which was nearer the truth. We continued in this way until consensus was reached.

Edgerton et al urged researchers to spend considerable time with their learning-disabled subjects 'to enable their perspective to be fully recorded' (Edgerton et al, 1984:89). The students attended the course on two full days each week over a period of two years.

Polsky wrote that good field research rested on researcher ability to 'listen to people and feel with them' (Polsky, 1969:120). Polsky's listen(ing) and feel(ing)' are part of empathy

which Rogers includes in his 'climate of trust' (Rogers, 1983:1). My expectation was that the establishment of Rogers' 'climate of trust' (Rogers, op cit), (see Chapter Five for details) would circumvent previously reported problems with establishing rapport and communication. Data collection was carried out using four distinct techniques. These were tape-recordings of all sessions, field notes, eye-contact charts and records of students' own work. These are discussed next.

4.6 Data Collection

4.6.1 Tape Recordings of Sessions

Because I wanted a complete record of all student-student and student-tutor interactions in the baseroom, cassette-tape recordings were made of the whole of every session as a resource to evaluate later.

Initially the presence of the machine seemed to encourage some group members to be silent and others to speak at great length. (For instance, the tapes show that one student (Nigel) spoke for 44% of the available time during the first two weeks and I can remember that he often positioned himself next to the tape-recorder and turned towards it when he spoke. Others, Peter, Lily and Aggie initially said very little and often opened their mouths, eyed the machine, then closed their mouths again. However, the tapes indicate that conversation was distributed more equally between the students after the third or fourth week.

By the end of the third week the recorder had became an accepted piece of equipment. That the machine became mostly ignored is evidenced by the fact that it was fallen against by two different students in the fourth and sixth weeks. Also, in the first two weeks group members had often asked for the machine to be stopped temporarily so that they could hear themselves. They said this was fun, but it may have become boring because requests for re-plays were not made after the third week. Because I did not have two tape-recorders/players, moments when students were listening to themselves on tape were not recorded.

Some parts of the tapes in the first four sessions were difficult to transcribe because some voices were near to the off-centre microphone and others further away. I overcame this

problem at the beginning of the third week by sticking the microphone to the carpet in the middle of the circle of chairs on which group members sat. By playing certain parts of the tapes of the first four sessions more than once and referring to my field notes for contextual information, I was eventually able to understand most of what had been recorded, though seven words and three phrases were undecipherable. In the remaining tapes everything was audible except five single words and three phrases.

4.6.2 Field Notes

As well as taped recordings of everything that was said during sessions, I also wanted to record my thoughts and feelings about those sessions and to have a record of what happened during breaks or when we were off-campus. At the end of every session (or within three hours of it to make sure that I wrote of what was still fresh in my mind) I made field notes about what had happened that day and of the results of the lunchtime discussion between Sally and myself. I chose not to write my notes during groupwork as I thought that would be far too intrusive. Also, if I were to take time out to write, I could not at the same time, be a participant observer.

I acknowledge the 'profoundly personal nature' (Clifford, 1985) of my field notes. I chose, like any observer would have done, what to pay attention to and what to ignore, although I was not conscious of this at the time. Also, I could not write about everything; in any case, the 'critical task in qualitative research' (Wolcott, 1990:35) is not to accumulate all data, just that which is relevant to the research. How I selected 'themes' is dealt with in 4.7.2 below.

Each morning, as I have said previously, I read out to the group my field notes from the previous session to see if their recollections fitted with mine. When they did not agree, we discussed them until we reached consensus. For instance, if I remembered a statement as having been made by one student who attributed it to another, we would re-run the appropriate tape to check for accuracy. Occasionally we were obliged to accept a majority decision, but usually, by reminiscing, discussing and consulting documented evidence in our personal files, we could arrive at a decision with which we were all in agreement.

Sometimes feedback was given unsolicited from people outside the group and these comments were seen as part of the data.

4.6.3 Eye-contact Charts

'Eye contact....conveys information about attentiveness and interest' (Nelson-Jones, 1983:35). I wanted all group members to get to know each other, so I was interested in whether students showed this interest by offering eye-contact. It was not, of course, possible to monitor all students at the same time, so I arranged for Sally to monitor each student in turn. I asked her to make eye-contact charts (see Appendix 4 for an example) so that I would have a written record of her findings. Eye-contact charts were simple records of where a person's gaze was directed.

When the person under scrutiny altered his/her gaze, Sally would draw a line from that person's name on the chart to the name of the person looked at. Each recording was made over a ten minute period. I explained to students what I proposed to do and why and all gave their permission for the procedure to proceed. During the first two weeks individuals who were the focus of Sally's attention were very conscious of being watched and showed great interest in her findings. By the end of the first month, students stopped commenting on what Sally was doing and resulting recordings showed more natural behaviour.

Perhaps I had singled out someone whom I thought seldom looked at others or who gave eye-contact only to me. From time to time, when I was not expecting it, Sally had instructions to make me her focus, so that I could check later that I gave all students equal attention.

4.6.4 Students' Own Work

Almost daily during the first year, but much less often in the second when students took charge of the curriculum, group members (including Sally and myself) would record on paper, in writing, drawings or paintings, what had occurred in sessions. These papers were kept together in individual personal files of work which were taken home at the end of the course by their owners. Some items from these, photocopied with owner's permission are included in the Appendix.

4.7 Evaluating the Data

Phase One of the research is an action-research style project undertaken using the humanistic approach advocated by Rogers (1983).

Phase Two of the research is a *post hoc* selection, interpretation, evaluation and analysis of data collected on the course and under supervision, a doctoral-level project for this thesis. The evaluation was:-

1. How feasible it is to adopt Rogers' humanistic approach to generating a 'climate of trust' with a group of adults labelled as having learning difficulties in an institutionalised FE setting?

2. The extent to which strategies designed to generate and sustain such a social environment complement and facilitate effective learning of the kinds of group and individual skills and competencies that Rogers advocated.

4.7.1 Evaluation - a Definition

'The attempt to establish and maintain ... claims about some phenomena to clients or stakeholders' (Fournier and Smith, 1993:316) is at the heart of evaluation and 'some vision of purpose is ... what guides all evaluative practice' (Greene, 1994:539). However, there is not one evaluative purpose, but many. Traditional evaluation agendas account for the results of policies and seek to determine how effective they are. Other evaluations help researchers gain insight into public problems and how they might be addressed or help researchers understand how organizations work and might be changed (Chelimsky, 1997). In education, a wide range of activities from self-evaluation through to group collaborative research can be evaluated (Ebbutt, 1985: Kelly, 1985).

Action-research is 'a way of generating knowledge about a social system while, at the same time, trying to change it' (Elden and Chisholm, 1993:121). The evaluation of action-research is 'intended to be directly responsive to the needs and agenda set by the action programme' (Shaw, 1999:139).

In this study, the social system about which I wished to generate knowledge was the education of adults labelled as having learning difficulties.

The evaluation, unlike the data collection year and the sequential pattern of reviews built into the action-research project, had all the benefit of all the literature searches undertaken for the PhD. The secondary evaluation was more thorough, informed by relevant literature, worked upon under supervision and given the time and concentration necessary for in-depth exploration.

Secondary sources of data are generally viewed as those which do not bear a direct physical relationship to the event being studied (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000:161). A secondary source would be one in which the person describing the events was not actually present, but who obtained descriptions from another person or source. However, researchers working with both primary and secondary sources may be careless or indifferent (Scott, 1990:24). A primary source is not necessarily an accurate one nor a secondary source inaccurate. Documents (and researchers) must always be assessed on their own merit.

I collected the data myself, yet it may be thought of as secondary data since I evaluated it *post hoc*. However, I was more than an eye witness to events being not only observer but participant. I collected the comprehensive data, transcribed the tapes and selected the material for analysis. I cannot claim that the data was typical of its kind. It was collected in situ. The context, including the characters of the participants and my own perspectives have shaped the narrative.

When writing my field notes after every session I bore in mind that events recorded needed to evoke time and place at later readings and took pains to ensure that my meaning would still be clear months later. Clarity of meaning could also be enhanced by listening to the tapes.

Being both observer/collector of data and evaluator of that data gave me the advantage that reading field notes and transcribing tapes evoked the time, place and ethos of their collection. I would not have had this advantage had I been using someone else's data. The disadvantages have been apparent as I worked on the analysis. My closeness to the

data, my personal commitment to Rogers' approach to education and my anxiety to demonstrate the success of the method, has made it difficult, at times, to reflect analytically on the process.

It may be argued that insider evaluation is more valid than evaluation carried out by outsiders, on the grounds that practitioners have access to their own intentions, motives and feelings, that they know the setting at first hand and that they are in a better position to gain access. However, both Hammersley (1993a) and Shaw (1999:118) posit that position neither guarantees nor prevents valid knowledge. It is more important for the researcher to be conscious of the way his/her values and beliefs are influencing the selection and interpretation of data.

4.7.2 Data Analysis

The *post hoc* evaluation began with my PhD.

Reflecting on the course, it made sense to consider the two years as distinct stages in the students' development. Much of the first year had involved processes of establishing the group and getting members to work together, whereas in the second year individuals became more self-directing and developed their own learning programmes.

Taking the first year's data, I began by reading all my field notes and started to transcribe everything that was on the tapes. This latter task proved an exceedingly lengthy business, which I gave up after a week of solid work. Searching for a systematic alternative, I listened to all the tapes and re-read the field notes. I then spent seven and a half hours listening again to taped material with the purpose of discovering themes which both arose directly from the data and which were related to the establishment of the Rogerian 'climate of trust' (Rogers, 1983:1).

I wanted to be sure that I was not 'plucking the themes out of thin air.' I rejected administrative details, the telling of anecdotes and the playing of games because they seemed broadly unimportant to the thesis. Instead, in order to focus on the individual's development in the group, I searched for evidence of the group interacting. I then transcribed the first half hour of tape which demonstrated group interactions from every

week of the first year. Opting for the first half hour of interaction enhanced validity by reducing researcher bias.

Four categories of interaction emerged from these transcripts. These were:-

1. communication (verbal interactions between all group members. I wanted to maximise communication in order build trust),

2. decision-making (interactions relating to discussion and resolving of issues left to student decision-making by majority verdict. Rogers consider decision-making necessary for the making of responsible choices (Rogers, 1983:2),

3. self-evaluation (Rogers believed educational products should be 'evaluated by the learner' (Rogers, 1983:20) and

4. risk (Two kinds of risks were involved - risks to reveal ourselves to each other as humans instead of wearing 'masks' (Rogers, 1961:61) and risks to facilitate further learning.

On these transcripts firstly student/student and student/staff communications were highlighted in red, then making decisions were highlighted in blue, self evaluations of work and behaviour were marked in yellow and finally details of risk-taking in green. Not every theme was reflected in every transcript. (see Appendix 6 for example)

These four themes which overlapped in practice, were drawn out of the data and I was not objectively aware of them whilst teaching, when my focus was on specific skills.

The flow-charts which follow after the next section were organised under the thematic structure.

I also used eye-charts (see 4.6.3 and Appendix 3) to monitor whether or not students were attending to speakers. Information from the Attendance Registers was used to monitor whether students came to sessions more or less often when they were choosing their own targets. To show progress made in their table work, I included some examples in Appendix 5.

Having dealt with group processes, I turned my attention to individual students and focused particularly on data from year 2. Taking each student in turn, I built case studies from the data. I included details of how the student learnt within the 'climate of trust', concentrating on 'critical incidents' (Woods, 1993:1), which proved to be important developmental turning points. Ways in which individuals managed their 'spoiled identities' (Goffman, 1968:44) were analysed by focusing on how they dropped their defensive strategies in favour of 'becoming more like the (people they) wished to be (Rogers, 1961:36).

4.7.3 Communication

Rogers considered that students should be respected enough to 'receive the individual attention of others' (1951:349). I gave each speaker my sole attention, because I wanted them to 'behave towards each other as I behaved towards them' (1951:348). He further considered that a tutor should not 'put on a professional front' but 'risk letting students know her as a person' (1983:24). 'A circle of chairs is the desired seating arrangement' for good communication (1951:393). This was provided.

Problem 1: Students were not interacting during group sessions.

Target 1: Students should get to know one another.

Plan 1: Staff modelled good communicative behaviour and re-directed communication where appropriate.

Outcome: Students interacted with each other.

Problem 2: Not all students participated/interacted.

Target 2: All students should participate/interact.

Plan 2: Staff made good use of silence, refrained from interrupting and ensured each student had equal opportunities for participation.

Outcome: All students participated.

Problem 3: Students lacked adequate vocabulary for describing their feelings.

Target 3: Students should enlarge their 'feelings' vocabulary.

Plan 3: I introduced and gave plenty of opportunity for role-play and discussion of feelings.

Outcome: Students minimally improved their 'feelings' vocabulary.

Problem 4: There were 'us and them' barriers.

Target 4: To remove 'us and them' barriers.

Plan 4: I decided we would all use first names.

I devised 'naming' games.

Staff worked alongside students at the tables.

Staff used students' toilets.

Staff modelled student/staff 'chat.'

Staff did not sit together during breaks/out in the community, but left space for students to sit next to them.

Staff did not walk together to bus stops or in town, but, when appropriate, accompanied students.

Outcome: 'Us and them' barriers were greatly reduced.

Having reviewed all the above and found it produced successful outcomes, I turned my attention to decision-making.

4.7.4 Making Democratic Decisions.

Rogers considered that 'students should make choices and take decisions that affect their lives' (1983:2). To assist students to achieve this, Rogers advocated that tutors should 'share power with the group' (1983:306; 190).

Problem 1: Students were used neither to making important decisions in their lives nor to accepting responsibility for the outcomes. We needed a legitimating framework for class rules.

Target 1: Students should learn to make decision and accept the consequences of their actions.

Plan 1: I ensured all students were able to make a choice. I checked that students understood what they were voting for. I made sure students registered their own opinion rather than copying that of another. I ensured equal opportunity to speak/influence others.

Outcome: Students regularly made decisions as individuals by the end of the first term.

Problem 2: Students could not make democratic decisions.

Target 2: Students should decide democratically.

Plan 2: I organised students into making group rules. I stopped the manipulation of individuals by powerful others within the group.

Outcome: Students were making democratic decisions by the end of the first year.

Problem 3: Group and individual interests clashed.

Target 3: To ensure that group and individual interest were in harmony.

Outcome: I could think of no plan to solve this problem and it remained throughout.

4.7.5 Self Evaluation

Rogers considered that students should be able to 'evaluate opinions and to think' (1983:2) and that 'all learning should be evaluated by the learner' (1983:20).

Problem 1: Students always looked to me to evaluate their work.

Target 1: Students should evaluate their own work and behaviour.

Plan 1: I commented upon my own mistakes and said they were learning opportunities.

Staff accepted students' mistakes.

Staff/students explored the outcomes of mistakes and suggested alternative ways of doing/behaving.

Staff refused to evaluate student products.

Outcome: In spite of the above, students still did not evaluate their own work.

Additional Plans:

Staff modelled self-evaluation aloud.

Outcomes: Students evaluated each others' pen and paper.

Students evaluated their own pen and paper work.

Students evaluated their own behaviour.

Problem 2: Students did not evaluate their interactive behaviour.

Target 2: Students should comment on how well they had worked as a group.

Plan 2: Staff evaluated group interactions.

Outcome: Twice students evaluated group interactions but that was all. This may have been too difficult for most students.

Problem 3: I set the learning targets.

Target 3: Students should individually set their own learning goals.

Plan 3: I discussed individual target setting with the group.

Outcome: This was greeted with great enthusiasm and very successful.

4.7.6 Risk Taking

Rogers decried 'frightened attitudes in tutors' and thought they should do everything possible to 'let them (the students) learn' (1983:2). The following targets are not only ones I set for the students, but also targets I set for myself as each involved some risk that I needed to take in order to 'let them learn'.

Problem 1: Students were used to having their hot drinks made for them.

Target 1: Students should make their own hot drinks.

Plan 1: I taught them to prepare their own drinks before I poured out the boiling water.

I taught them to use the hot water heater and to wash up their own mugs.

I taught safe use of the kettle.

Outcome: All students could make their own hot drinks by the end of the seventh week.

The knowledge that there had been a good outcome from my initial risk-taking encouraged me to continue with my risk-taking plans.

Problem 2: Students were used to having their meals cooked for them and wanted to learn simple cooking skills to move further towards independence.

Target 2: Students would cook a simple meal.

Plan 2: I demonstrated the cookers and we discussed safety.

Outcomes: Students cooked a very simple meal.

Students cooked a meal involving more complex skills.

After the above successes I was ready to take students off-campus to enhance their learning.

Problem 3: Students could not use public transport independently.

Target 3: Students should learn to go to town and return to college on the bus.

Plan 3: I led a discussion about road safety.

Outcome: We walked about town in a 'crocodile' heavily supervised, but this attracted negative attention.

New plans: We walked in small groups.

Students learnt which was the 'right' bus into town.

Students learnt the 'right' bus back to college.

They learnt which were the 'right' stops to board the bus and to alight.

Outcomes: I learnt to become more comfortable with having some of the group temporarily out of my sight.

Students learnt to manage time unsupervised in a relatively safe environment.

I was not prepared to allow individuals to journey into town and back alone, so I cannot be sure they fully achieved this target.

4.7.7 The Action-research Programme

The curricum/learning programme was intrinsic to the humanistic approach advocated by Rogers - in a 'climate of trust' (Rogers, 1983:2). I interpreted this in terms of the Rogerian advocacy of genuiness, acceptance and empathic understanding in my relationship with students. (See page 49-52 for definition of terms.)

The first term's curricular objectives were combined with the development of the Rogerian humanistic environment. The learning targets during the first year of the course were skill-oriented but arose directly from two overarching aims to establish that 'climate

of trust' and to enable the students to develop more independence skills. The more independent students became, the more their self-esteem was likely to be boosted. The more positive they became about themselves, the more they would be likely to view themselves as being capable of becoming independent learners.

The flow-chart which follows presents the way the action-research programme developed, organised under the thematic structure.

CHART SHOWING WHICH TARGETS WERE WORKED ON AT WHICH TIMES.

Term 1 Term 2 Term 3 Term 4 Term 5 Term 6

Learning names

Making hot drinks

Learning to cook

Learning to use public transport

Breaking down 'us and them' barriers

Initial getting-to-know-you

.....Use of role-play to assist learning.....

Making group rules

Making democratic decisions

I plan the curriculum.....Students set own goals.....

Working on self-evaluation

My endeavours to establish the Rogerian humanistic learning environment were paramount in the first two terms, but work on sustaining the 'climate of trust' lasted throughout the course.

In the second year the course was more individual. The students were given opportunities to develop personal choice. I selected from the tapes all sections concerned with individual student-learning, changes in self-esteem and indications as to whether the student moved towards his/her 'true self' in Rogerian terms (Rogers, 1983:266). These second selections from the tapes were then organised into individual student case studies.

A case study is 'a specific instance that is designed to illustrate a more general principle' (Nisbet and Watt, 1984:72). It is 'the study of an instance in action' (Adelman, et al, 1980) and provides a unique example of real people in real situations. Case studies can 'penetrate situations in ways that are not always susceptible to numerical analysis' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000:181). Case studies can establish cause and effect and one of their strengths is that they 'observe effects in real context, recognizing that context is a powerful dominant of both cause and effect' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, op cit)

The case study approach is particularly valuable when the researcher has little or no control over events (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995:322) as was the case during the second year of the course described herein.

Nisbet and Watt (1984) see the strengths of case study as being easily understood as they are often written in everyday language, they speak for themselves, they catch features and provide insights surveys may lose, they are strong on reality, they can be undertaken by a single researcher and can embrace unanticipated events. Nisbet and Watt (1984) list the weaknesses of case study as not being generizable and perhaps being biased and subjective in spite of reflexivity. In this small scale study only situational claims can be made and suggestions that the work may be biased and subjective can be balanced by the fact that I used all pertinent material from the tapes to construct the case studies. Having said that, what constituted 'pertinent' may have been biased and subjective.

Rogers' work gave me no help in analysing the case studies. Instead, I turned to Goffman's ideas on 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1968:44), described in Chapter Two. I looked for evidence of how individual students managed their ascribed 'spoiled identities' (Goffman, op cit) and whether or not living within Rogers' 'climate of trust' helped them to give up some of the 'masks and defences' (Rogers, 1983:24) with which they managed those identities.

Having made my second selections, I transcribed all the relevant parts of the tapes for use in the case studies. From time to time I had to re-listen to check on the context of an event, or on what a fellow student later commented on an individual's behaviour, etc. The resultant case studies can be found in Chapter Six.

4.8 Confidentiality and Ethical Issues

The name of the college and its location have not been mentioned; pseudonyms have been used for all participants except myself. Written and graphic material included has been used so as to preserve anonymity.

During the course, plans were drawn up, action taken, evaluation made and different plans formulated in line with what I then understood as an action-research programme. Some events happened spontaneously and needed to be dealt with as they arose.

The course content was agreed between myself and my line manager before the course was advertised. It had therefore been open to suggestion from others. Permission for the research to be conducted was obtained from all participating members. Their agreement about what was to be included/excluded in the data was negotiated.

I accepted responsibility for maintaining confidentiality. At the beginning of the course all group members (including Sally and myself) agreed that we would not discuss what happened in sessions with anyone but group members, except in very general terms such as which places we had visited or which activities we had engaged in. Any student, once having agreed to take part in the research, had the right to withdraw from it at any time. Students were reminded of this at the beginning of each half-term throughout the course.

No one withdrew, although two students declined to be part of the research from the beginning and their activities are not reported herein.

These four points matched Winter's requirements for ethics (Winter, 1996:17).

It will be remembered however, that the evaluation of the course, using field notes, tape-recordings, eye-contact charts and items of students work made during it, was done *post hoc*. The selection of material was made by reference to the key issues emerging from tapes and field notes. The issues coalesce around the interpersonal relationships that illustrate the way the 'climate of trust' was built and sustained and the way this facilitated learning. Those issues are analysed through the thematic structure outlined above and in the individual case studies.

The purpose and nature of the research was explained to students before their permission for it to take place was obtained. The research would not have continued unless a sufficient number of the students continued to give their permission. Two students who declined were not included in the research in any way although they continued to be group members. All other students gave their permission and none then withdrew it. The course itself would have continued even if no students had given permission although the research would not.

4.9 Establishing Confidence in the Data

4.9.1 Validity

Hammersley (1993a) offers a clear outline of the advantages and disadvantages of being both teacher and researcher. He recognises the value to the teacher/researcher of her experience of the setting being studied although he highlights the difficulty of standing outside the role to identify wider issues of concern. He claims that whilst a tutor may have access to her own thoughts and feeling she may not see the phenomena (in this case my work with the students) in that wider context.

Since qualitative methods of data collection differ from quantitative ones, it is hardly surprising that the two should need differing means of validation. 'Traditional criteria' for evaluating the rigour of experimental research are 'inappropriate in a naturalistic enquiry'

(Stringer, 1999:176). Community based action-research 'differs significantly from the objective, generizable experimental and survey research that is still the prevailing approach to inquiry in the human and behavioural sciences' (Stringer, 1999:167).

The community-based action-research style study here reported was derived from interpretive research processes suggested by Denzin (1997). Denzin's (1997) interpretive research processes are based on the assumption that knowledge inherent in people's everyday taken-for-granted lives has as much validity and utility as knowledge linked to the concepts and theories of academic disciplines. The intent is to concede the limitations of expert knowledge and to acknowledge the competence, experience, understanding and wisdom of ordinary people.

As a proponent of community-based action research, I sought to 'give voice' to people labelled as having learning disabilities, who have previously been silent research subjects. The ultimate purpose of the research herein described was to make the experience of such subjects directly available to policy makers, educationalists and other workers in the learning disability field so that more appropriate ways of working with/empowering learning disabled people can be formulated.

The following interpretive assumptions are implicit in community-based approaches to inquiry:-

> 'studies limited in context inquiring into a specific issue,
> research which seeks to empower its active participants,
> detailed, richly described accounts of therapeutic action,
> outcomes of direct benefit to research partners,
> stakeholder perspectives placed alongside academic literature and
> making the experience of ordinary people available to managers, policy makers and workers in the field'. (see Stringer, 1999:167/168).

This research matched all the above assumptions. It must however be borne in mind that the 'ordinary people' in this case carried the label learning difficulties. How accurately I, whose life experience has been very different from theirs, understood them is open to question. For instance, one student, James, had little or no speech and my ability to

understand his meaning was limited. When I was conscious of being unsure whether I had understood students, I asked for clarification. There may have been many times when I assumed I understood correctly and in fact did not, but such could be said about any interaction with another.

Credible research is carried out rigorously in ways that minimise the possibility that the investigation was superficial, biased or insubstantial. Traditional criteria for evaluating the rigour of experimental research - objectivity, reliability, validity and generizability - 'are inappropriate in naturalistic inquiry' (Stringer, 1999:176).

Qualitative researchers Lincoln and Guba (1985), suggested replacing the four quantitative characteristics of validity, which are internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity with four others, namely, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. In addition to findings being validated by knowledge arising from the taken-for-granted lives of the research subjects, I shall validate my work under these headings.

4.9.2 Credibility

To be credible, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the study be carried out over a long period of engagement, that evidence of persistent observation should be provided and that data should be collected by more than one method. They also suggest that peer debriefing and negative case analysis are useful.

In my study, the 'period of engagement' lasted over two years and my subjects were observed for more than 600 hours. Data was collected from taped recordings, from field notes, from structured observations and from evidence from students' personal files. There was more than one observer, both individual students and the group as a whole became the focus of attention.

Daily I was debriefed by my assistant. Although not familiar with Rogers' work at the beginning of the course, Sally became able, after two to three terms, of noting instances of my failure to be empathic, genuine or unconditionally accepting. In the early months Sally would give me such feedback in private, usually in our lunchtime discussions, but

later, when she had gained confidence, she would draw my attention to such failures in group sessions. She would say things like:-

'I don't think you quite understood what he meant.'
'I think that comment was rather harsh.'
'Do you mean that? It wasn't what you said last week.'

Sally challenged me when she thought I had 'read' a situation wrongly or when she disagreed with what I thought of as 'evidence.' (In this, as mentioned previously, she acted as a 'critical other' (Woods, 1993:12) in spite of her assertion that she did not wish to undertake this role.) This was helpful in obliging me to examine my actions, my thinking and assumptions. Sally did not carry responsibility for what happened in the group and all final decisions were mine.

Data was 'tested with members of the stakeholder group from whom the data was originally collected' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:314) by whole-group reviewing of field notes as has been stated previously (see page 77).

Thus the study shows how Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for credibility were addressed.

4.9.3 Transferability

It is difficult to deal with tranferability in qualitative research 'since the hypotheses being developed during the process of the research will be rooted in the context and time of the study' (McHardy, 1996:12). Hence, it is impossible to say that what my students learnt in this study would match the performance of others in similar settings. However, since there is no agreed definition of 'learning difficulties' my sample may have been as representative of those labelled as learning disabled as any, so findings for any other group of labelled adults would be likely to be similar.

My study is largely dependent on what Lincoln and Guba (1985:316) describe as 'thick description'. Whilst my study was small scale in that there were only eight participant students, it was extensive in that data was selected from over 600 hours of recordings and over 20,000 words of field notes. Short selections from transcripts and notes were

included here so as not to swamp the reader, but enough are cited to provide adequate context for understanding and replication.

4.9.4 Dependability

Lincoln and Guba (1985:317) argue that in a study dependability and confirmability are mutually supportive and that it ought not to be necessary to demonstrate each independently. However, they refer to an 'audit trail' as a systematic check on the breadth of the information amassed to enhance dependability. The 'audit trail' clearly describes the 'processes of collecting and anlysing data' and 'provides the means by which the reader may refer to the raw data' (Stringer, 1999:177). These processes are herein described on pages 75-79.

4.9.5 Confirmability

Whilst Lincoln and Guba (1985:317) refer to the 'audit trail' as being the main test of the estabishment of dependability and confirmability, they also refer to the 'reflexive journal,' as an important source of data collection for this study. My 'reflexive journal' was my field notes.

Thus all Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for validity were met.

4.9.6 Objectivity and subjectivity

In social enquiry, such as this study, all findings depend on the researcher's interpretations of events and their significance. The 'usual distinction between ontology (the nature of reality) and epistemology (how a person comes to know that reality) collapses' (Guba, 1999:xii).

Foucault (1970) considered that there can be no objective truth because of the relationship between the ways in which knowledge is produced and the way power is exercised. He suggested that people are subject to oppression not only because of systems of control and authority, but also because of the assumption/practice/usual ways of doing things which are 'normally' accepted.

In an institution, for instance, professionals define the discourse within which the establishment operates. This discourse enables some people to be labelled tutors/workers

or professionals/experts and others students/clients/inmates. Foucault demonstrated how oppressive systems of control are maintained by the unconscious acceptance of routine practices, or of unquestioned 'But we have always done it that way' thinking. Action researchers, during moments of reflexivity, seek to challenge routine practices.

Derrida (1976) suggested that two ways in which the power of people in authority could be minimised were to find new ways of writing reports and to find activities which produce knowledge which are participatory, democratic and enable client groups/students to be included in the development of their own programmes.

In this study the contents of the 'report,' (that here means the field notes recording each days events), were agreed between students, Sally and myself, (although the staff/students power differential here is acknowledged), decision-making was democratic and, eventually, students set their own learning goals.

To minimise subjectivity in the researcher, Huyssens (1986) suggested that all groups have the right to 'speak in their own voices' and to have those voices accepted as legitimate. Much of the two following chapters comprises faithfully reproduced quotes from the tapes and the commentary is not made out of context.

To maximise objectivity in Action Research projects, West, (1989) urged researchers to give up their search for certainty and move their energies instead into defining social and communical conditions by which people can communicate more effectively and co-operate in decision-making. Such a move will only be truly acceptable when research findings resulting from qualitative data are held as equally 'scientific' and therefore as equally 'certain' as those from quantitative projects.

4.10 Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter I have described how I chose a methodology for the project. As previously stated, the research work was undertaken in two distinct stages:-

(1) A pre-registration, two-year long action research style project, during which I collected the data using field notes as a participant observer and tape-recordings

of all baseroom sessions. The learning programme was undertaken using the humanistic approach advocated by Rogers (Rogers, 1983).

(2) A *post hoc* selection, interpretation, evaluation and anaysis of those data and under supervision, as a doctoral-level project for this thesis.

The research questions were:-

Using a Rogerian approach, is it possible to generate a 'climate of trust' with a group of adults labelled as having learning difficulties?

Does such a 'climate' facilitate their learning?

In Chapter Five I evaluate the evidence for trust and learning.

5.0 COMMUNICATION AND DECISION-MAKING

5.1 Overview: The First Two Terms

This thesis is a *post hoc* evaluation of an action research project undertaken with eight adult students labelled as having learning difficulties. The data were collected between 1998 and 1999. The aim of the course was to follow a Rogerian approach to working with the group. Rogers claimed that principles of congruence (genuineness), acceptance and empathic understanding, (for fuller explanation of these terms see pages 49-52), would create a 'genuinely human climate of trust' (Rogers, 1983:2). In such a climate, the tutor's role was to 'permit the student(s) to learn' (Rogers, 1983:18). He argued that students would change their individual perceptions of themselves and of their life events and become more confident and self-directing. The evaluation addressed the questions:

> Using a Rogerian approach, is it possible to generate a 'climate of trust' with a group of adults labelled as having learning difficulties?
>
> Does such a 'climate' facilitate their learning?

Rogers accepted that tutors would use teaching strategies that were student-centred, but he left the details of those strategies to the individual tutor. He considered that belief in each student could be 'flexibly implemented' and that 'special teaching methods' were 'secondary to the fundamental philosophy of belief in the potentiality of each student' (Rogers, 1983:70).

5.1.1 The Institutional Context

In this chapter I begin with a description of the plans I had for the course and the institutional context in which it was based. I introduce the students as I know them at the beginning of the course, including my initial understanding of the context to which they were already confident and self-directing. I then review the original data under the themes of Communication and Decision making. I show how the Rogerian approach facilitated trust and learning as students developed social skills in interaction.

Most importantly, I show how, by developing a democratic process of decision making, the Rogerian approach was enhanced and complemented by a radical shift from traditional pedagogic practice.

Traditional teaching styles, which make use of one-to-one work, much repetition, strict class control and rows of desks facing the tutor, were much in evidence in college groups of adults labelled as having learning difficulties that I had seen. The syllabus, always devised by the tutor, centred around basic education and self-care skills. Little appeared to be expected in the way of progress and achievement. Often I saw the same students attending the same classes year after year. Traditional teaching styles appeared to be failing to encourage learning-disabled students to learn much at all.

From my experience of teaching adults with learning difficulties and from my experiences on the MEd course in Human Relations, I had come to the view that a different teaching style, aimed at encouraging students to become more confident and self-directing, to enhance their perceptions of themselves as learners and to increase their general self-worth was called for.

I planned to follow Rogers' approach to education and build up trust by treating the students 'as essentially competent human beings,' to try to 'understand them as they perceived themselves from the inside' and to encourage them to become 'more independent and to solve some of their problems' (Rogers, 1983:25). I planned to stop 'being a teacher and evaluator' and instead to be 'a facilitator of learning' (Rogers, 1983:26). By 'facilitator' I meant a person who helps students to set their own individual learning goals and to take personal responsibility for achieving them.

I further planned to facilitate their learning by the use of role-play, peer mentoring 'a resource heavily used for gains for all concerned,' (Rogers, 1983:154), group discussions and by making the consequences of certain actions plain and then letting individuals or the group as a whole choose the way forward. Mistakes were to be accepted, not as regrettable errors, but as learning opportunities. I also planned to model behaviour and tasks as this 'can raise students' learning efficacy because it implicitly conveys that they are capable of learning and will do so if they perform the same sequence of actions' (Schunk, 1985b:209).

Claxton (1990:159), agreeing with Rogers, considered that an important part of the teacher's role is to create a climate within which students feel free to learn. This means removing, as far as possible, unnecessary risks to self-esteem with which learning is often surrounded. The task is to create an atmosphere in which learners can be more interested in stretching themselves than in protecting themselves from losing face if they fail (Claxton, op cit).

Trust (or distrust) is 'a particular level of the subjective probability with which an agent assesses that another agent or group of agents will perform a particular action' (White, 1996). In other words, trust is built in a safe and stable environment in which people are predictable.

Trust (and distrust) in institutions and people is learned (White, 1996:52). Colleges 'may even be instrumental in shaping students into basically trusting or distrustful people' (White, op cit).

Despite the pervasive nature of trust in human life, 'there have been relatively few discussions of it in either classical or contemporary philosophical texts' (White, 1996). What seems to be common to different phenomena falling under the concept of trust is that it is a matter of believing and that there is risk involved as well as a continuum of commitment (White, 1996:81). Trust relationships can be easily destroyed and are not easily repaired (White, op cit).

I planned to build trust in the group by breaking down 'us and them' barriers, by encouraging interpersonal communication and 'first name relationships' (Rogers, 1983:37), by revealing myself as a person rather than 'hiding behind a professional front' (Rogers, 1983:23) and by being non-judgemental (Rogers, 1983:54). I planned that eventually I would demonstrate my trust in the students as learners by accepting individual or group decisions concerning the curriculum. I would be able to evaluate how trust was developing by the way students developed confidence in me and in one another.

The two problems - how to build the Rogerian 'climate of trust' and to what extent this 'trust' facilitated students' learning were seen as interrelated. The raw data collected over the course is presented in action-research format.

After describing the accommodation and introducing the students, I show how learning in communication and decision-making was interrelated with the development of a climate of trust. The *post hoc* evaluation appears as a commentary on these events and is summarised in the conclusion.

5.2 Accommodation

The room provided was off a corridor used exclusively by students with the label learning difficulties, a fact well known within college. On three occasions I overheard other-course students refer to our corridor as 'the duppy department,' their voices clearly indicating that they held it (and also presumably the people who used it) in low esteem. The term 'learning difficulties' whilst not defining a discrete group, is a value judgement, a socially created category, a label, which has a:-

> 'dramatic effect on those who use it as well as on those to whom it is applied' (Bogdan and Taylor, 1989:76).

I requested a room in some other part of college, which would have drawn less attention to student differences and more attention to student similarities, but such was not available. Our room had one carpeted area for sitting to talk, another with tables and upright chairs for pen and paper work (see Appendix 2), storage space, a kitchen area and a cushioned floor area for relaxation (see Appendix 3). An inner door led to an office and a staff room. These were used by all workers in the education team.

I planned that most of the work of the group would take place in 'a circle' which Rogers saw as 'the desirable seating arrangement' (1951:393). My 'circle' consisted of a group of inwardly facing soft chairs which gave me, as tutor, 'the same type of place as any member of the class' (Rogers, 1951:393). I chose easy chairs rather than hard, upright ones both for comfort, (since we would be sitting in them most of our time in college) and to signal that this was to be a different kind of teaching/learning experience from the

traditional one (in which students might sit on hard chairs facing a tutor, who was seated more comfortably than they, behind the largest desk in the room.)

Some chairs had straight backs whilst others reclined. Since I had back trouble and needed support, I chose to have both kinds of chair in the circle so that I could move from one supporting seat to another and thus not be tied to any one chair in particular. To have sat always in one place, whilst students moved, might have given me higher status and it was my aim to be rid of all 'us and them' barriers. At the start of each day, I put out chairs for all group members and if there were spares because of absence, these were pushed away to reflect unity.

Close to the baseroom were four sets of toilet/washrooms, one for female students, one for female staff, one for male students and the last for male staff. Separate facilities for staff and students seemed unnecessarily divisive and not congruent with Rogers' 'climate' (1983:2), so I planned for Sally and I to use the student facilities.

In what follows I show how, in the first two terms, the students developed trust in one another and in Sally and me as they learnt to communicate, make decisions and accept consequences. Each section is dealt with sequentially, but, in practice, there was much overlap and interdependence.

5.3 The Students

The seven students who initially applied for the course and gave their permission for this research to take place were, Aggie, Nigel, Lily, Peter and Steve, who were strangers to me and Michael and James, whom I had known at the school where I had been teacher/counsellor. They were joined by Lettie in the second term. All the names are fictitious for reasons of confidentiality.

The course was designated as being for those labelled as having learning difficulties, for whom it was free on production of a current Invalidity Benefit book. No information about previous education, medical history, medication or personal circumstances was asked for or volunteered.

Aggie was a tall, single woman in her fifties who lived alone supported by Social Services. She often talked about her relatives but saw them infrequently; she was very fond of little children. Aggie wrote very quickly and although I could not decipher what she had written she could always read it without apparent difficulty. Aggie was proud of her cooking skills.

Nigel was a single man in his early thirties, who lived in a town centre flat with his older brother who used a wheelchair. He was an able man, popular with other male group members, who spoke without hesitation and could read and write a little. He was a keen supporter of the local football club.

Lily was a single, somewhat overweight woman in her mid-fifties. She lived in the same group home as Peter and although she could use public transport independently, always chose to travel to and from college in his taxi. Lily could not read, write or add coins. She was very friendly and well known by many tutors in the college.

Michael was a single man in his mid-twenties and lived at home with his parents. He was fond of clothes and knew which fashions were up to date. He was a Star-wars fan and collected Star-wars toys and T-shirts, which he often wore to college. Michael liked popular music and had an extensive music library.

James was in his mid-twenties and lived at home with his family. He was very overweight, but could run after a football much faster than I could. James, a single man, had practically no speech; when asked what he liked he would mime raising a pint of beer to his mouth. (I was concerned that James would be able to take little part in group proceedings and therefore get little benefit from the course). I explained this to him. However, bearing in mind that Rogers' saw his 'genuinely human climate' (Rogers, 1983:2) as being helpful 'in all human relationships' (Rogers, 1961:37) and since James was keen to continue, I accepted him as I did all other students who applied).

Peter was a single man in his forties who lived in the same group home as Lily. He was of medium height, thin and slightly stooped. Peter frequently appeared anxious and although he had very short hair, often made jerky movements of the head which a person

might make if his hair were in his eyes. His favourite composer was Beethoven and Peter frequently hummed snatches of his symphonies.

Steve lived at home with his parents and was single; he got on particularly well with women. He was of a practical nature and brought in things he had made in woodwork classes to show us. Steve lived near Michael with whom he often travelled to college.

Lettie joined us in the second term. She presented as a bubbly, youthful, energetic and able woman in her mid twenties. An only child, Lettie lived in a group home with two people who had much less ability than herself. She pronounced herself desperate to live independently and find a fulfilling relationship.

My first task was to explain this research to the students (see page 77). I also needed to have a working knowledge of how far they were already confident and self-directing.

In the main students said that they chose what to eat and which clothes to put on, although the clothes themselves were chosen by themselves with others. No one had ever been given carte blanche in the matter of clothes shopping. Steve said he had never had a holiday away from home. Michael, James and Nigel said they went on annual holidays with their families to destinations chosen by their parents. Peter, Lily and Aggie usually did not chose the resort for their holiday, but chose the hotel from a list of two or three.

Lily, Peter, Aggie and Nigel chose their own hairstyles, but Steve, Michael and James reported having theirs chosen by their fathers. Aggie and Lily did their own ironing under supervision, but all the men said they had their ironing done for them. All students mentioned bathing themselves independently, but Steve had his neck and fingernails checked afterwards by his father. Lettie was not with us in the first term and her initial self-direction was not recorded.

5.4 Communication

My first overall aim was for the students to maximise their communication skills and hence be able to interact with each other. This was essential for building up trust within

which further learning would take place. James who had little or no intelligible speech presented particular difficulties.

The strategy was to build trust by conveying 'to each speaker that 'his (sic) contribution was worth listening to and that as a person he (sic) was respected enough to receive the undivided attention of another' (Rogers, 1951:349). My approach was to model the behaviour I wanted and reinforce it by direct instruction.

It was important for students to give other group members their attention, in order to get to know one another and learn to act co-operatively. However, since Rogers thought that the 'act of attending carefully to another is difficult' (Rogers, 1951:349) my expectation was that these students would take some considerable time to achieve it. Most 'listeners' are apparently paying attention to a speaker whilst actually 'thinking what they will say when the speaker stops' (Rogers, op cit). Encouraging students to become good listeners as a means to becoming good communicators required a planned programme.

Over the first three weeks I identified seven overlapping problems:-

the students expected Sally and me to be traditional teachers,
one student had no intellible speech,
they communicated through me rather than directly with each other,
they were not motivated to join in group discussions,
they tended to lose interest and fidget,
they presented the group with problems for which they could suggest no solution
and they found it difficult to express emotion.

Using an action-research approach, I devised strategies which, by following Rogers' principles, were designed to overcome these problems by establishing relationships of trust.

I fully expected that all group members would need time to become comfortable with these strategies and did 'not expect things to run smoothly.' Initial difficulties had been Rogers' own experience of his student-centred approach in the classroom (Rogers, 1951:393).

5.4.1 Strategies

In order to break down their expectations of Sally and myself as traditional teachers and to encourage 'direct personal encounter(s)' (Rogers, 1983:121), I adopted the use of first names for everyone.

I worked with James (whose speech I could not understand) by offering him alternative ways of communicating. When there was a choice between two names I would say, 'Touch this hand if he is Nigel, or this if he is Steve.' I encouraged him to touch a person with whom he agreed or choose a symbol from a list to indicate his response. Sometimes we used mime or drew pictures.

I invented naming games to build trust and to help them learn (see Appendix Five for an example.)

I modelled appropriate interpersonal communication, looking directly at the speaker, not fidgetting whilst listening, nodding where appropriate, reflecting feelings, seeking clarification of ambiguities, paraphrasing and attending through interruptions, (for fuller details see Rogers, 1951:349-363). I wanted students to follow my attending behaviour so that they 'would gradually begin to behave towards each other in much the same way as the leader behaves towards them' (Rogers, 1951:348).

I checked their responses by monitoring their gaze by the use of eye-contact charts (see Appendix 4 for example) and reinforced the objective by direct teaching. I refused to allow communication to go through me 'as the chair' and encouraged students to speak to each other directly.

I encouraged participation in discussions by initiating 'grouprounds' where students took turns in the circle to speak. In the first six weeks I asked confident speakers to be first to respond. I maintained 'a friendly and receptive attitude' (Rogers, 1942:35) whilst waiting for students who needed a long thinking time. I did not interrupt without good reason. I encouraged listeners to look at speakers and to remember what they each said. I used role play to help students find solutions to their problems. Group members would play out the scenario which led to the problem then act alternative outcomes from which students would choose which they thought most appropriate.

I initiated discussions about emotions, their names, what body language often accompanies each feeling and what emotions we each felt.

Different students reacted differently to these strategies.

No student used our first names in the first three sessions. Nigel, followed by Lily, Steve and Peter called me Rosemary in the two following sessions, but Steve was reluctant to do so. He said calling me by my first name 'wouldn't be right,' as 'you have to be polite to tutors.' However, when he found other group members using first names, he did too. All students, (except Aggie) were regularly using Sally's name by the end of the third week and mine by the end of the fourth. Aggie never called anyone anything but 'duck.'

Michael was very keen for others to learn his name, but less interested in learning theirs. He was last to learn them all. By half-term everyone, (except Aggie,) was regularly calling everyone by name. When Lettie joined us in the second term she was getting names right at the end of her first full session.

By the end of the first year, all students looked directly at the speaker without undue fidgetting, nodding where appropriate. Sometimes individuals asked for further information or clarification and most continued to attend to the speaker through interruption. No instances of checking back to make sure they had understood or been understood or reflecting feeling are recorded on the tapes.

Whilst Rogers disapproved of role playing in the sense of 'putting on an act, being two-faced, or using a professional front' (Rogers, 1961:61), he approved of role playing in the sense of acting out a scenario as a teaching/learning strategy or an aid to communication (Rogers, 1951:453).

I found role-play a useful tool for helping students find solutions to their problems. On one occasion Steve made himself late because he had not known how to terminate a conversation with a friend when his bus-stop was reached. Three alternatives were role-played. In one version Steve rudely told the friend to shut up and let him go. In another, he politely said he must leave but would like to hear the rest of the story later. In the third, he burst into tears. Steve chose the second version for future use.

My strategies to encourage students to enlarge their 'feelings' vocabularies were the least successful. By the end of the course students could differentiate between 'happy' meaning joyous and 'happy' meaning contented and between 'sad' meaning fed-up and 'sad' meaning depressed. Talking about anger and excitement seemed to present few problems, but confusion, envy, resentment, enthusiasm and frustration remained problematic.

5.4.2 Review of Progress

At the end of the first term Sally and I reviewed what progress group members were making in communication.

Students had become more relaxed about participating and had learnt to take turns. Students were using first names freely but student/staff informal conversation were still somewhat stilted. Clearly barriers to communication still existed.

5.4.3 Further Strategies

If we were to communicate in ways that would build trust, table-work could not be a silent occupation. Sally and I began to work alongside students on the same tasks, sharing the equipment, being workers and learners like them. I arranged with her to chat to all present about what was happening around us and what we were doing and thinking. I asked to 'borrow the blue please.' Sally asked if anyone wanted the pencil-sharpener.

To encourage student/Rosemary interaction, from the fifth week I commented in a casual way when Lily and I had both used the same bright green or when Steve and I had both drawn a house. I would complain, perfectly honestly, that I am no good at drawing and ask advice as to how I could improve my picture. I chatted to Aggie about my lunch then asked what she had eaten and whether she had enjoyed it. I mentioned what I had seen on television or enjoyed at the weekend and invited contributions from named students. I tried not to be intrusive or interrogatory, but casual. Companionable silences were left (Rogers, 1942:165) from time to time. On reflection, I thought that teaching strategies had here led to trust rather than trust leading to learning, but I was not conscious of this at the time.

Almost as soon as I started this strategy students followed suit...firstly Nigel, Steve and Michael and then others. Then students began to comment on what they could see in their neighbour's work. For the first month when students did this, my work was studiously ignored. Sally was very artistic, (unlike me) and her work never failed to draw positive attention right from the start.

By our first Christmas holiday all students were including my work in their comments. I pointed out to students that this showed me to be a learner like them. This strategy seemed to build trust and early in December came a critical incident that confirmed my supposition.

Woods describes critical events as 'highly charged moments... that have enormous consequences for personal change and development' (Woods, 1993:1). As a result of critical events, some learners are 'radically changed' Woods, 1993:2). The learning that takes place is 'real learning' (Woods, 1993:4), which is aimed at 'encouraging students to learn how to learn' (Best, 1991:275). Learning how to learn is, in Rogers' view, the aim of education (Rogers, 1983:18).

Whilst chatting to Lily about a problem I had, Lily stared at me for at least fifteen seconds as if I were doing something wrong. I asked her if tutors were not supposed to chat about personal things. She replied, 'No. Yes. I like it. I like you Rosemary'.

This was a turning point in my efforts to establish communication between myself and the students. Here, for the first time a student was speaking to me person to person rather than student to tutor.

Although I had planned for students to speak to me on a personal level, I was quite taken aback that Lily had volunteered the information that she liked me so soon. During my mainstream-teaching years an occasional secondary-age pupil would say something similar on the day s/he left school, or a junior school child would say it after a few months of being in my class, but I was totally unused to it happening a fortnight into an Further Education course. I also realised that I liked it and that I liked Lily. Whether or not I liked her because she had said she liked me first I cannot fathom. (During the

length of the course Lily and I were to share many moments of deeply personal interactions and I became very fond of her - see 'Lily' for further details.)

Rogers had advocated that a tutor should be genuine and 'not use a polite or professional front' (1961:61). He wrote that he meant the dropping of 'the front' to encompass not only the letting go of the view of oneself as 'expert, the information giver, the evaluator of products' (1983:23) but also in the sense that a tutor should 'fully interact with students' and let them 'know her as a person' which he thought would be 'very risky' (1983:24). According to Woods all innovative teaching involves 'risk-taking and potentially rule-breaking' (Woods, 1996:28).

At the time, I considered that I was on the threshold of that 'very risky' situation. In the past I had usually kept the professional and private areas of my life separate. I had revealed my innermost thoughts to only a few friends and relatives. I knew that I had to take a decision to continue to move forward or to draw back. Drawing back would be safe, but it would mean failing to build Rogers' 'climate of trust' and I would not discover whether it could be helpful. If I continued to move forward, I would enter the unknown, both privately and professionally. If I made the wrong move I would perhaps find it impossible to retract and opt for the other.

Rogers provided no prescriptive answers. However perhaps, as Tripp (1993:142) notes, the art of teaching 'lies in the teacher's professional judgement in circumstances where there is no "right answer." Egan saw the art of teaching as lying in 'imaginative engagement in student learning' (Egan, 1994:203) which sounds like Rogers' empathic understanding or 'sensitive awareness of the way the process of learning seems to the student' (Rogers, 1983:125).

I told Lily that I liked her too. I had mentioned previously that my son had been ill and Lily asked if he were better. This led to a conversation about Lily's relationship with her mother.

At this point Lily and I were joined by Sally and Aggie and I told them the gist of our conversation. Then all four of us talked about why Lily did not see her Mum often and how it felt to miss people.

From then on Sally and I began to be included regularly in subsequent student chat of a personal nature, firstly with just the women and two weeks later by Steve and then the other men too. By the end of the first term staff/student verbal interactions were common-place. I found this to be odd at first because it was not something I was used to in the teaching situation. When I became accustomed to it I found it to be one of the most rewarding aspects of the course.

5.4.4 Going Out

Looking back, the relationships we were building had moved from a situation where I was trying to build trust through genuineness, acceptance and empathic understanding to one where students were demonstrating these qualities in interaction with me. However, the trust we were building up in the baseroom was less evident when we went on trips. Students walked about and sat together in cafes in pairs or small groups and never with staff.

I saw the problem as continuing evidence of 'us and them' barriers. As a strategy to mitigate this problem, I arranged with Sally that she and I would not walk or sit in cafes together off-campus. We told students they were welcome, but not obliged, to join one of us. By our second half-term someone was sitting or walking next to one of us about fifty per cent of the time. (If no one did, we sometimes moved together.)

James was the first to sit next to Sally, whom he seemed to admire. Lily often sat next to me on public transport. None of the men ever sat next to either of us on buses, but in twos or threes they joined my table or Sally's in cafes from March in our first year.

Walking to bus stops, standing in queues and sipping drinks proved to be those activities most conducive to staff/student conversation. Much student disclosure of personal history took place off-campus in one-to-one situations. This was evidence that trust existed. Student disclosure was important. The more I could get to know individual students the more I could expect to empathise with them. The more they knew of me the more they could assess my likely reactions to their disclosures.

During the first ten weeks most conversations were of the general nature and none, except some with Lily, (see 'Lily' pages 192 - 196) were deeply personal, but towards the

end of the first term, students began to mention more personal matters.... a carer had been off-hand,....there had been a disappointment over a forgotten birthday present....someone had caused an upset at the day centre and feelings had been hurt. Student/staff conversations became more relaxed, more spontaneous and less formal. Trust was being built on a mutual basis.

In this growing 'climate of trust,' where my reactions had become predictable and they were not afraid of disclosure, students had:-

learnt to address one another and staff directly and by name,
learnt to listen to each other's point of view,
learnt to take more or less equal time to speak in turn,
become quite skilled, more confident telephone users,
explored role-play as a means of finding answers to their problems,
learnt something of non-verbal behaviour and learnt to express some of their deepest feelings.

In these outcomes, trust and learning went hand in hand. As students learnt to be more interactive with each other and with staff, trust in each other was built. As trust was built, students learnt more skills.

Drawing on Rogers' advocacy of genuineness, acceptance and empathic understanding, I had seen the students begin to relate to me, to Sally and to each other using similar strategies.

Both they and I had accepted my role as non-directive participant, shown modelling to be an effective teaching strategy that aided the development of trust, encouraged interaction between group members, opened up discussion into personal problems and issues by disclosing aspects of my own personal life and demonstrated that role-play helped students to find solutions to their own problems. I had found that students responded to this by being genuine, accepting and empathic.

In the following section I shall relate how students learnt to make group decisions in a safe, predictable 'climate' that facilitated their learning.

5.5 Legitimising Authority through Democracy

Rogers thought that one of the things that made it difficult for educators to facilitate their students' learning was the tutor's 'reluctance.....to share power with the group for which they (were) responsible' (Rogers,1983:306), because 'it seems too risky' (Rogers, op cit). In this section I shall explain how I came to share power with group members, until a time was reached when they were making all the decisions about what they wanted to learn.

Rogers considered that 'it is essential gradually to change the locus of decision making' (Rogers, 1983:164). Furthermore, I needed to 'tailor procedures to the skills and styles' of the student group (Gastil, 1993:53).

A tutor using traditional didactic teaching methods sets targets for her learners and instructs them in what they shall learn and how they will learn it. The theory assumes that by bestowing or withholding praise on the part of the teacher/tutor, students complete work she evaluates and reach standards she has set. Such a teaching model involves little or no power-sharing. The tutor who wants her students to become self-confident and self-directing 'must face up to the fearful aspects of sharing .... control' (Rogers, 1983:190).

Being obliged to take responsibility for learning and to live with the consequences might seem threatening to any student. It might seem overwhelmingly so to students labelled as having learning difficulties. 'Taking responsibility for' and 'living with consequences' of their actions are not notions usually associated with such students. However, the fact that learning disabled people have not been obliged to undertake this responsibility does not mean that they are incapable of it. It might even prove to be the case that such students would welcome the opportunity to demonstrate their capacity to do so.

At least one special school student considered that the 'whole school system' she had experienced had been 'about control' (Aspis, 1991:210). I was concerned about my ability to share control with students, particularly when those students carried the label learning difficulties. If I found I could not share control, on Rogers' analysis, then

students would not be in an environment where they could make their own decisions and I would not have achieved the objective to 'let them learn' (Heidegger, 1968:75).

Like Shiel, who worked to establish Rogers' 'climate' (see Rogers, 1983:54), I was 'not trying out a scheme totally devised by someone else.' It was Rogers' underlying approach to education that was important. Techniques, or special teaching methods, are secondary' (Rogers, 1983:70) as long as they generate or maintain trust.

I intended to base my judgements about whether strategies were working on evidence students presented as to whether trust was being built. I intended to be flexible in the situation. I would move gradually to sharing control with students, taking calculated risks, when I thought they and I were ready.

I had two obvious options and one radical one. I could keep major decisions and devolve smaller ones, mirroring the traditional tutor role Rogers and I were opposed to, or permit free choice at every stage, risking a situation I could not control. A third option was to devise a method whereby the group decided as a whole.

The first option would move only minimally towards my aim of teaching students to be self-directing whilst allowing me to control the teaching/learning situation. I thought this might be a useful strategy until I could trust students more.

If I adopted the second option, students might want to behave in risky or anti-social ways. They may have wanted to arrive late and leave early or to have days off at will. This hardly seemed conducive to the building of a 'climate of trust.'

Students choosing their own curriculum might wish to learn subjects I could not teach. If this happened I could only direct them to other tutors. Thus, student numbers on this course would be depleted and it might not continue. If all students chose different subjects it might prove impossible to teach them all simultaneously.

Reviewing the evidence *post hoc*, I realised I had a problem of authority. Defining 'legitimate authority in today's schools has become of primary concern (Knight,

2001:251). Democratic education 'will not develop without strong democratic leadership,...which is persuasive and negotiable' (Knight, op cit).

Democratic authority is distinguished from its two 'opponents,' which are guardianship and anarchy (Dahl, 1989). While authoritarianism and or guardianship is preferred in schools....'student interests are neglected in a desparate tug of war between the authoritarian and anarchistic' (Knight, 2001:252). In the classroom climate being built here, 'democracy rights preceded the responsibilities' (Knight, 2001 op cit).

A strategy that offered the benefits of shared decision-making whilst establishing a form of legitimate authority in the group, was to use a democratic form of decision-making.

Democracy 'describes an ideal, not a method of achieving it,' (Lummis, 1992:9-10). A group is taken to be democratic if it has 'equally distributed decision-making power....if members do not manipulate each other but have equal and adequate opportunities to speak....are willing to listen and have a decision making 'procedure like consensus or majority rule' (Gastil, 1993:18).

Democratic education *per se* is not a Rogerian notion, but is a compatible approach with regard to trust. If students were to make decisions as a group of equal people they would need to trust each other to make choices which would be of mutual benefit.

My eventual aim was to devolve all responsibility for their education to students as individuals (except for marking registers, being accountable for health and safety measures and reporting group progress to my line manager). To make it democratic, in the sense that everyone could participate as equals, I needed to

(1) ensure that all students had equal opportunities to speak,
(2) teach them to vote by a show of hands and
(3) combine both to make group rules that would have the legitimate authority bestowed by collective decision-making.

I solved (1) by going round the group and ensuring each student had approximately the same amount of time in which to speak.

5.5.1 Learning to Vote

By offering students two options from which to choose by a show of hands, I set up the simplest possible way for them to grasp the principle. Most students exhibited no difficulty with this, but I noticed that Lily and Peter often watched a neighbour and put up a hand when s/he did. They may have been genuinely stating a preference, but it happened so often. It was more likely they lacked confidence and trust in other group members. After discussing this with Sally, I gave students feedback on current behaviour and re-inforcement of personal choice.

Peter and Lily continued to keep an eye on others and sometimes put up a hand only to lower it again if they found themselves in the minority. Each time this happened, keeping my voice even and friendly (Rogers, 1942:35) I built up confidence and trust be repeating the 'It's fine to vote how you want' message.

By the first half term Lily was much less hesitant and by Christmas was sometimes voting first. Peter remained hesitant throughout the course, sometimes changed his mind and was never first to vote. This suggests that different students were responding in different ways to my attempts to build trust in the group.

5.5.2 Multiple Options

Choosing between multiple options was done on the flipchart. Since some students could read/write and others could not, each option was both written and depicted in diagrams, sketches or symbols.

Sally was usually in charge of the flipchart in the early months (individual students took over the task later) and said what each word/picture represented as she penned it. I then asked students in random order (to indicate acceptance of all) to vote by putting a tick or other mark next to his/her choice on the chart. To make sure that individuals were actually ticking the option of their choice, I asked each to say what s/he was voting for as the mark was made. I chose this method of voting when there were multiple choices so that students did not have to remember a lengthy verbal choice-list (doing so, I quickly discovered confused Lily and to a certain extent Steve too), and enabled James to demonstrate his choice without speech.

Since this was unfamiliar to most students, I modelled one way of voting by raising a hand and asking all those who came to college to do the same. I explained again for those who did not follow, then asked all those who had blue eyes to put up a hand and following it by checking brown and grey eyes. Checking back for understanding is part of Rogers' empathic understanding (Rogers, 1942:123) and adapted well as a means of monitoring learning.

In the first few weeks I counted hands myself; after that students took turns, some with support. This was an instance of peer mentoring. Everyone, including myself and Sally, was encouraged to vote every time to ensure that all shared responsibility for voting outcomes.

Thus, I gave the students feedback by (a) correcting them and (b) 'managing' turn-taking.

I noticed that Michael and James often voted in line with Sally or myself; they might have been registering personal preferences, but it was feasible that they were choosing what they thought would please us. To stop this possibility of 'mirror voting' I arranged that students would vote together (as before), but that Sally and I would vote last. Secret voting would have ensured confidentiality, but it would have been time-consuming to organise and I decided against it.

By the beginning of our third month, students had learnt to vote democratically, by accepting majority decisions.

This left dissenters unrepresented, but everyone, except perhaps James would always have the opportunity to persuade others over to his/her way of thinking before voting took place. Since James had little or no intelligible speech and could write only his name, his ability to win others over to his viewpoint was strictly limited. Therefore, throughout the course I encouraged him to vote first because this may have helped him to influence others. I had observed that this student group learned slowly and this method of democratic decision-making offered the advantage of being relatively speedy. Its main disadvantage was that, in its use, some students might be easily swayed into voting with dominant group members rather than voting according to their own wishes. Its major

advantage was that the authority of a rule made by majority decision, could be seen as impersonal and legitimate.

Waiting until consensus was reached would have ensured that everyone agreed with the decision, but it was likely to have proved excessively time-consuming and would not have been helpful to James. If one or two group members had held out in opposition, I would have asked other group members to suggest a way forward, but this never happened.

I chose to accept majority decisions because of the time factor involved. The real test of group trust came with the next stage.

5.5.3 Making Group Rules: The Problem

Students could now vote democratically and make group decisions. I wanted them to make use of the skill in their lives and to learn that decision-making has consequences. I was trying to get students to work together in the baseroom and outside in a safe environment. I had problems of punctuality and attendance, as well as anti-social behaviours. If we were to establish a legitimate structure of authority without a division between 'us' and 'them,' students had to make the rules.

Students were asked first to make some rules and secondly to devise sanctions for rule breakers. In reviewing what happened next, I shall show how effective group decision-making was for building a rule structure, but how this could have adverse effects on individual self-direction.

The focus of our first attempt at rule-making was eating and drinking in class. Some students ate and/or drank whilst working in the group (a fact that annoyed me but did not seem to bother anyone else). I initiated what became a lengthy discussion and then asked students a leading question.

> Me - Do you want chewing gum banned from the group?
>
> Me - Seven votes for that. Now who wants a rule that says we can eat and drink when we're working, whenever we want?

Steve raised his hand. Later I realised that I may have been manipulating the group by asking for 'Yes' votes before 'No' votes. Thereafter I alternated the two each time we voted.

Me - One vote for that. Which idea won Lily?

Lily - Don't know.

Sally - Were there more votes for chewing gum or for not chewing?

Lily - Not chewing.

Me - Do we all accept then that chewing gum is banned in here?

There was agreement from all students, including Steve. I went on to propose that all eating and the drinking (except water since Lily often had a dry throat) should also be banned and this was voted on and became another rule.

After break, I set out to test the effect of the rule and what should be done about rule-breaking. I took my unfinished coffee back to the circle. Aggie, Michael, Peter and Nigel stared at length as I drank but no one said anything.

Me - We've just made a group rule that no one should drink whilst we're working. I'm breaking the rule aren't I?

Lily - Yes. You shouldn't be. Can only have water.

Me - If we have group rules, we have to decide what to do when the rules are broken. What will you do if I drink this? (There was a lengthy silence.)

Me - What do you think Aggie?

Aggie - You should be made to bring us all a drink.

Me - But if I did that we'd all be breaking the rule. What else can you think of? What do you say Nigel?

Here I was giving feedback by asking open questions.

Nigel - I think you'll have to go away.

Me - Where to?

Peter - Over there. (Nodding at other side of room)

There was a general chorus of assent. I moved to where Peter had indicated.

Me - How long would I have to stay here if I broke a group rule?

Steve - Not long. Ten minutes say.

In voting to accept this, students opted for 'time-out,' which is a behaviourist disciplinary technique. Rogers considered that the discipline necessary to reach the student's goal is 'self-discipline ... which replaces external discipline' (Rogers, 1983:189). However, this is not an example of self-discipline but of peer pressure. It suggests that self-discipline alone may not work in group situations unless the participants are already well socialised into conformity.

Students had not decided the sanction for rule-breaking on an individual basis. They were working co-operatively and although Rogers mentions this as a way of developing learning, he does not say how it is to be managed or what difficulties might arise from it.

However, Rogers offered no specific prescription for reaching group decisions. He considered there to be no single way of creating 'the conditions which would lead to self-direction' and that there were a 'number of methods ... congenial to this approach' (Rogers, 1983:160).

The test of the approach lay in its effect on the 'climate of trust,' an issue I shall return to later. Over the next four weeks we added the following rules:-

Always be on time.

Always come to class on college days unless you are ill.

People who break rules have to 'sit out' for ten minutes.

When we were planning trips into town, I pushed for and achieved the addition of:-

Keep together when we are out and do not get lost.

This was a reward/punishment framework, but its legitimacy lay in the process by which it was constructed and policed by the group as a whole. Individuals in the group accepted the collective decision.

By late November, students were regularly dealing, with minimum support, with situations in which a group member violated a group rule. On one occasion when Steve came very late he made no move to join the group but, as was the custom, sat outside it and waited to be noticed. When asked why he was late he said his Dad had insisted he get his hair cut on the way to college. Steve knew it would make him late but did not dare to disobey. Students seemed to understand Steve's dilemma and allowed him to enter the circle straightaway. This is an indication that students were not implementing sanctions without regard to circumstances. In this instance they demonstrated their empathic understanding of Steve's dilemma.

In early December, Steve voiced his approval of group rule-making. He added that group members kept the rules because they had made them. Nigel, Peter and Aggie agreed. This was evidence that these students had learnt something of democracy. There was opportunity at this point to discuss justice, guilt and laws, but the fire alarm bell rang and the moment was lost.

5.5.4 Democratic Voting and a Worrying Result

In December a situation arose which gave rise to a new dilemma. Michael said he was having a college day off to go for a meal with his day centre keyworker. One group rule said students must 'Always come on college days unless you are ill.' There was no suggestion that he might get into trouble had he refused the meal, like Steve might have done if he had disobeyed his father over the haircut. Michael was advised by his peers to change the date for his meal out and we presumed he had done so since he did not raise the issue again.

On the day in question he was absent. Group members became angry when both Nigel and Steve reported that Michael had told them at day centre on the previous day that he intended to go for the meal although he understood the group would be cross.

In the past students had been very forgiving of each other, demonstrating empathic understanding and being more supportive than punishing. On this occasion their genuine feeling about Michael's duplicity, spilled over into anger. When I asked what they wanted to do if our assumptions about Michael turned out to be true, I fully expected

they would vote to tell him off and little else. However, they voted unanimously to exclude him from our Christmas meal.

Their decision left me with a dilemma inherent in Rogers' approach. How do self-directing individuals work together as a group? Michael was being self-directing, something I was encouraging him to be; the group had taken a democratic decision as I had taught them to do. The interests of one student had clashed with the interests of the group as a whole. Rogers' work gave me no help as to what I should do. Both Sally and I said we thought their decision harsh and talked about the conflict of interests we saw, but the group were not to be moved from their decision.

I had planned that at the following session, if Michael said he had gone out for a meal with his keyworker, I would encourage a calm discussion of Michael's right to chose as an individual and how this had clashed with the group rule. However, by the time students arrived outside the baseroom door, Michael had been told in the corridor about their anger and their decision to ban him from their Christmas meal. He began to sob.

His personal safety was not at risk and I would have intervened to protect him had it been. However, since he had broken a group rule, students had reason to be angry with him. I asked him if he knew why they were annoyed. He said it was because he had gone for a meal on a college day although he knew he should not.

> Michael - Yes, but I like going out for my dinner. I thought they would let me off. People always let me off!

Michael sobbed off and on for half an hour. He said he was upset because he had not managed to have two meals out instead of one and he did not like it when people were cross with him. I empathised both with Michael's anguish and the group's anger. I faced a dilemma that I could not resolve.

When working with a small group Rogers considered that the leader should be willing to accept 'decisions that have been arrived at by the group' including 'accepting hostile feelings' (Rogers, 1951:355), to trust the group members to 'move in a constructive direction' (Rogers, 1983:26) and to do nothing to interfere with their decision. Here

Rogers had been referring to members of an encounter group (a group of approximately ten people who meet to explore the 'here and now' situation, usually without an agreed agenda) and he may or may not have meant his remarks to apply to any small group. When she met inter-group conflict Shiel, a teacher who wrote of her attempt to build Rogers' 'climate of trust,' 'put her trust in the capacity of the group to deal with the problem' (Rogers, 1983:54). Without any clear idea how I should intervene, I was minded to do likewise.

This was the first time I had really cared about voting outcome. I was finding out that accepting majority decisions which were not in line with my own thinking was hard; I had, from the beginning, been expecting other group members to accept majority decisions about which they may have had serious misgivings without understanding conflicts they might have had.

Group members, (mainly Aggie and to some extent Nigel and Steve) discussed Michael's behaviour in adverse terms in front of him well into the second half of the morning. Michael left for the Christmas holidays still uphappy but no longer crying. I thought it possible that he would not return after the Christmas holiday, expecting group members to be still angry. I planned that if this happened I would intitiate a discussion of student reactions to his behaviour.

On the first day of the holiday, I rang Michael's home to see if he was still upset, but was told he was cheerful and had not mentioned conflict within the group. I left my home telephone number in case he wanted to talk, but he did not ring.

Michael returned after the holiday and apologised for having 'gone off' when he should have been in college. His apology was accepted graciously and his return welcomed as if nothing very important had happened. I had to change my perception of the students. They had been self-directing in their decision-making. Accepting democratic decisions I did not always approve of was something I had to accept if students were to see themselves as self-directing. Michael had accepted responsibility for what he had done and had the confidence to turn up and face his peers to apologise. The respect I felt for them all deepened.

Over the next two terms I increasingly left decision making to the group, adding educational objectives to the decision-making agenda. The kinds of questions they resolved were:- What shall we do today? Should we do this now or later? Should we do this before that? Should we see more slides or stop now? Which of three locations should we visit? Some were open questions, some were options based on timing, some were yes/no questions and others involved choosing from multiple-choice options.

At the end of the first year, Sally and I discussed whether or not students had learnt to make democratic decisions. Every student voted every time. Majority decisions were always accepted. Each student was listened to and asked for further explanation if his/her point was unclear. Voting did not take place until every group member had had an opportunity to state his/her view. We decided they had.

In the second year, Sally and I stopped voting and student suggestions were voted on to decide each day's programme.

Students began taking into consideration the weather forecast. After we had one visit to a park rained off and were planning its replacement Steve suggested we try again on a sunny day. The following week when students proposed a lengthy visit to town immediately before lunch, Nigel warned that the party might not make it back before the canteen shut, so they re-arranged the departure time so that group members would not go hungry. Lily, who had developed knee trouble, asked if trips were likely to involve much walking and she would go slower, or somewhere else with Sally, if they did. After Peter had forgotten his bus pass twice and had to stay behind with Sally, he became better at remembering it.

Lettie, whose past behaviour had sometimes been disruptive, became more considerate of others' needs. Twice whilst walking, she tucked Lily's arm through her own 'to help her along.' Once in the group when Lettie was uncharacteristically quiet I asked if she were feeling well. She was well, but holding back 'to give others a go.'

Michael no longer trailed after Nigel, who stopped talking about improbable things he had done (see page 207). (Aggie and Steve were no longer with us.)

The overall programme showed that students opted for much less writing/drawing than they had done previously; what little they did was often accompanied by pop-music (suggested by Lettie) or by Beethoven's symphonies (suggested by Peter). Individual students brought in their own cassette tapes and two machines were used, one to play music and the other to record events. There were no tapes available in the baseroom other than those I sometimes used for relaxations, which were mainly birdsong or whale noises. When students failed to bring tapes no music was played. When more than one tape was brought, a vote was taken to see which would be played. Taped records show that at this time, students worked to music about 30% of the time.

Breaks were lengthened by ten minutes but lunchtimes kept the same. James invented a variation on an old game. We were playing the 'I want ...(name) to sit next to me... game' in which one person is 'on' (see Appendix 5). Suddenly, when it was not his turn, he giggled loudly, added another chair and beckoned Sally to sit next to him. I thought he had made a mistake, but by gestures and more laughter he indicated that two people were to be 'on' at once. This turned an old-hat game into an exciting, fast-moving new one.

Yoga exercises, which had been running regularly from the beginning of the course were dropped. Nearly all the students said they preferred to sit still instead of exercising. Only Steve and one other students who did not want to be part of this research voted to keep yoga sessions. However, relaxations were frequently chosen.

Free time in secure venues, without staff supervision, was popular. Students formed friendship groups to enjoy the location together. In the art gallery and the museum students looked at exhibits or ignored them and sat together talking. In shopping areas they examined what was for sale, but only Michael and sometimes Nigel had cash to spend. Michael purchased second-hand long-playing records from charity shops and Nigel bought inexpensive jewellery for his girlfriend.

There was a low-level risk that students would be unable to find agreed meeting points or be there on time, but they did. Should any student be unaccounted for, Sally would have stayed with the main party whilst I searched for the missing student. By this time, I was confident that students would not wander away as no one had ever done so before. Also

freetime was always taken in a secure place, within a single building or in an enclosed shopping arcade.

Lily could not tell the time, but, at my suggestion, stayed with someone who could, preferably someone who wanted to go to those places Lily wished to visit. James, who, as far as I could judge, could neither tell the time nor ask for directions, was often alone but never late or missing. How he achieved this I could not fathom; he obviously had resources of which I knew nothing. James, Lily and Peter requested road crossing training, had some initial success and were still working on this when the course ended. Lily's wish to be able to find her way unaided across town (she was tailed by Sally for safety) was not fulfilled.

Attendance during the last two terms rose from sixty-nine to ninety-three per cent; I took this as a measure of student satisfaction with what was happening on the course during this time. The evidence pointed to a climate in which I was learning to trust the students and the students trusted me. Above all, they were trusting one another. Rogers' genuineness, acceptance and empathic understanding was evident across the group.

5.6 Summary and Conclusion

Students had:-

taken self-initiated action,
cooperated effectively with each other,
learned to vote,
accepted responsibility for the outcomes of their choices,
coped with conflicts between individuals and the group and proved themselves capable of intelligent choice.

Setting up a system which legitimised the authority of the group over the teacher, nonetheless raised issues of learning priorities. They had reduced time spent on traditional writing and drawing tasks and reduced time on exercise. These had been areas of work I had chosen for them but were apparently not activities important to the group as a whole or to individual students at that time. However, as I shall explain on page 152

and 153, objectives which included literacy and numeracy as well as independence skills were chosen on an individual basis. Exercise however, remained neglected, but not more so than in any other classroom based course in college. Some exercise was gained during lunchtimes as the men played football and the women strolled around the college campus. In this, students took more exercise than some mainstream students who remained in the same place chatting to friends.

5.7 *Post hoc* Evaluation

Reflecting on the data after the event, I realised that in using my powerful influence to get what I wanted, I was manipulating the students. However, the rules were in their interests as well as in mine. I was feeling worried about my ability to cope with the group in town, particularly from a safety point of view and having this rule helped me feel more confident. I do not think that any of the rules would have been made if I had not wanted them. Students never suggested any. Even so, the process provided the means for constructing a rule structure which was legitimised by the students' own authority.

Rogers thought manipulation hardly 'helpful, nourishing, supportive' or encouraging of 'personal growth and behaviour change' (Rogers, 1942:35) so, by manipulating the group I was acting counter to the spirit of Rogers' 'climate of trust' (Rogers, 1983:2) which I was working to establish. However, I had strong, ethical reasons for acting as I did. My intention was to lead rather than to manipulate.

I was not the only person in the group to be manipulative. Tapes show that in the first term Nigel, glacing briefly at men either side of him, said:-

> Nigel - Well, we three think we should vote for the top one don't we? And I expect the rest will agree, so that's that sorted!

Nigel was an able man whom others followed. I thought that others might go along with his view without giving the matter serious thought. Following the lead of a powerful other is not self-direction and I wanted students to make their own choices. I said:-

> Me - Nigel, Peter and Michael can speak for themselves. You don't know what they think. You don't know that the rest of us will agree. We have to ask every group member to speak for him or herself.

Here I was giving Nigel feedback by challenging his assumption that he knew what others were thinking.

People influence each other by size, gender, position in the community and profession. Mann, wrote of the 'manipulative socialising role of education' (1981:265). He saw the powerful tutor as delivering norms and behaviours acceptable to the political system to the less-powerful students.

In this sense, it could be said that the entire course was manipulative. I set it up entirely without student input and although I planned for students to become self-directing, which sounds to be an aim with little to do with manipulation, I led them towards this by my plans and strategies. In this sense, I agree with Mann's view that teaching has a manipulative and socialising role (Mann, op cit) when teachers deliver an externally imposed curriculum.

This constrasts with Rogers. In his view, teaching, 'is a vastly over-rated function' (Rogers, 1983:119), as he had no wish 'to make anyone know something' (Rogers, op cit). I think that here Rogers has muddled 'teaching' with 'instructing' or 'training.' Clearly Rogers wants students to learn since he considered the only educated person to be one who had 'learned how to learn' (Rogers, 1983:120). The learning facilitator in the Rogerian approach to education is one who helps the student with his/her chosen learning, rather than one who imposes a curriculum.

In the early part of the first term we were voting on simple organizational matters about which I had little strong opinion and I had no difficulty in accepting majority voting. If any voting outcomes had led to dangerous, illegal or abusive results I would have used my authority as tutor to stop them, as I, as well as my employers, think it important that these things should not be allowed. Since Rogers considered that it is 'the personality and style of the facilitator' which 'determines the method' used (Rogers, 1983:160) in establishing 'the climate' I would not, in this, be acting counter to Rogers' approach.

Students never did vote for dangerous, illegal or abusive outcomes, but the decision taken concerning Michael and his Christmas meal (see below) raised questions about the relationship between the interests of the individual and the interests of the group. At the time, I felt the group had made the right decision. Reflecting on the incident later, it demonstrated one instance of conflicts and contradictions in Rogerian thought.

5.7.1 Dilemmas and Conflicts

I did not, on the whole, find it difficult to be genuine, or accepting or to understand empathically once I had learnt to trust the students as learners. However, trying to do all three simultaneously proved problematic.

Sometimes two or more of the elements of the 'climate of trust' clashed and appeared to be mutually exclusive. I found this confusing. For example, when I thought Nigel was fantasising (see page 207), keeping quiet was accepting him as a person, but not being genuine and expressing my feelings. When Michael defied a group rule and went out for his Christmas meal (see page 202), I could not empathise with his feelings whilst simultaneously empthasing with those of other group members.

Following Rogers, I had to build the 'climate of trust' with the students, not impose it upon them. Learning to trust was not a one-way process. I needed to learn to trust them as much as they needed to learn to trust me and each other. The process was tentative and slow. Although in the final year individual students decided upon their own learning, arriving at the point where they could do this was a group process, which included me as much as it did them.

Learning and the facilitating of learning does not take place in a vacuum. My previous teaching experience with adults labelled as having learning difficulties had led me to believe that they needed substantial input and organisation. In school and college classrooms I had observed labelled students being closely supervised, by at least two staff and sometimes more. The curriculum was always delivered at an easy pace in small easily assimilated sections. The Rogerian approach advocated handing over the curriculum to the students. Some structure was needed to organise the work in order to give students learning opportunities. Clearly the handover could not successfully be achieved without preparation or all at once.

Rogers, who did not work with labelled students, made no allowances for this. I was obliged to work out how best to hand over control of their learning to students myself. Rogers' offered no reassuring guidelines or markers of success on the way. However, Rogers acknowledged that tutors working towards student-directed learning are likely to feel 'both excited and apprehensive,' as well as 'discouraged and unsure at times' (Rogers, 1983:164).

Rogers' approach also meant relinquishing the authority of the traditional teacher and I found this potentially very worrying.

This student group, although adult, was not, in the main, used to unsupervised activity or to using their own initiative. Serious accidents may have occurred with cookers and kettles and trips into town may have had disastrous outcomes without careful preparation and leadership. Clearly an alternative form of legitimate authority was needed.

However, if that authority were to be 'self-discipline' which 'replaces external discipline' and 'is the learner's own responsibility' (Rogers, 1983:189), then nothing that I imposed would be suitable. Once I had taught the group how to make democratic rules, the problem was solved. They collectively decided upon what was acceptable and what was not. Decisions may or may not have suited individuals, but at least all students had the chance to speak for or against a proposal and to have his/her vote counted. The same happens in any democratic vote.

By encouraging James, who had little speech to vote first (see page 123) and by making sure that confident speakers did not manipulate others (see page 121), I endeavoured to keep peer pressure at a minimum. Thus, 'decision-making power' was in the hands of those 'who would be affected by the decision' (Rogers, 1983:189).

This shifted the legitimate framework for decision making from me (the tutor) onto the students, thereby strengthening the commonality of purpose and further reducing the 'us and them' culture of the traditional classroom.

In the next chapter I shall describe how the students learned to evaluate their own work.

6.0 LEARNING AND EVALUATING SKILLS AND TAKING RISKS

6.1 Overview

In the 'traditional mode' (of teaching) 'trust is at a minimum' (Rogers, 1983:186). Most notable is 'the teacher's distrust of the student' who 'cannot be expected to work satisfactorily without the teacher's constant supervision' and who 'distrusts the teacher's motives' (Rogers, op cit). My work with the students was aimed at building trust both between student and staff and student and student.

Rogers learnt to trust his students, little by little, as essentially competent human beings (Rogers, 1983:25) and to trust himself with them. Their learning was self-initiated and self-evaluated (Rogers, 1983:20). As a result the students managed 'incredible things' (Rogers, 1983:26).

In Chapter 5, I have shown how mutual trust developed through communication and by a radical approach to democratic decision making, a departure from orthodox pedagogic practice, which places the teacher in an authoritarian position.

In this chapter I shall explain how I encouraged students to become self-evaluating. I shall give details of how it worked in practice and evaluate the benefits and difficulties of adopting Rogerian principles to achieve this aim.

Then I shall explain how I took risks in order to facilitate their learning (Rogers, 1983:18).

6.2 Self-evaluation

Rogers approved of the notion that students should 'be able to evaluate opinions and be able to think.' He considered that 'people who cannot think are ripe for dictatorship' (Rogers, 1983:2). In a traditional teaching style, the teacher evaluates the classroom work of the students whilst work completed for external examinations is evaluated by unseen experts. Rogers thought that all learning should be experiential and 'evaluated by

the learner' (Rogers, 1983:20), since it was 'only she who knew whether it was meeting her need' and 'was what she wanted to know' (Rogers, op cit).

Self-evaluation encourages a learner to think (about what she produces) and to choose rather than to obey. Rogers thought that it encouraged the student to display 'responsible freedom' (Rogers, 1983:26) in the matter of his/her own education. It also encouraged students to have less need of those coping strategies (being docile, avoiding work, faking involvement, pleasing the tutor) mentioned by Pollard (1997) (see below).

It was clear from the beginning of the course that students expected me to evaluate their table work and were very motivated not to make mistakes. In the first two months as they drew, wrote and coloured, all students (except James, who showed me his work every five minutes) constantly asked questions such as:-

Is this all right?
Is this what you meant?
Shall I colour this green?

Such questions suggested that what they were producing would not be 'all right.' There was much looking at each other's work; I thought that this constituted a coping strategy which Pollard defined as 'a strategy which people adopt in response to their circumstances, as a means of sustaining their sense of self' (Pollard, 1997:21).

The circumstances of the classroom leave students to guess what teachers want. I considered it likely that students 'sustain(ed) their sense of self' in the baseroom by trying to be the kind of students Rogers noted as 'looking only at the instructor' in order to 'pass the course' (Rogers, 1983:24). Since all students at one time or another voiced (or in the case of James, demonstrated) questions of the 'Is this all right?' variety, I thought they were all trying to 'please the teacher' (Pollard, op cit) rather than to produce results which would have pleased themselves. Furthermore, whilst I thought of mistakes as learning opportunities, students generally saw them as negative, sometimes shaming.

Some of the students, particularly Peter and to a lesser extent, Lily and Steve, became upset if they thought they had made a mistake. Each time Peter made a mistake he would say:-

> Peter - I've stuffed up haven't I? I've stuffed up again!

He was so keen not to make mistakes that he was extremely reluctant to try anything new. When Lily made mistakes she would often put her face close below mine and looking up, as a child might to an adult, enquire:-

> Lily - Is it wrong? I can't do it can I? Silly Lily.

Steve usually linked his mistake-making to his label.

> Steve - Can't get this right. Well, what can you expect? Never be no good at nothing, my Dad says. It's 'cos I've got learning difficulties.

Students' behaviour indicated a desire for constant reassurance as well as approval. In the circle, Lily daily asked something like:

> Shall I sit here or over there?
> Have I got the right colours?
> Will I be able to do it?

6.3 The Plan

The plan required turning student desire for praise and their habit of looking to me to judge the worth of their work into self-evaluation and self-direction. I wanted students to 'prize themselves' and for their 'desire to learn... (to be).. nourished and enhanced' (Rogers, 1983:3). I wanted their learning to be 'self-initiated learning, evaluated by the learner' (Rogers, 1983:20). I wanted them to learn to see mistake-making as a valuable step towards improvement.

My strategies for achieving this objective were:-

commenting upon my own mistakes in a genuine way,
accepting student mistakes as learning opportunities,
exploring outcomes of mistakes and suggesting solutions to problems,
refusal on the part of Sally and myself to evaluate their work and invitations to students to state their own opinions and
leaving the 'locus of control' (Rogers, 1951:150) or the 'locus of evaluation' (Rogers, 1983:20) with students, coupled with the use of 'warm regard.

I needed a way of demonstrating that making mistakes, then learning from them, was acceptable, even desirable. So, I arranged that whenever Sally or I made a mistake we would remark upon it aloud, talk through how the mistake had come about and what we were going to do to put matters right. When improvement had been made, we commented aloud on that too, remarking that had we not made that mistake in the first place, we would not have learnt how to do better. I did not want either of us to appear as 'the expert' (Rogers, 1983:23), but as a learner, like the students, capable of re-planning and self-direction. The following is two examples of how I did this.

Sally - When Peggy was talking at lunchtime I didn't really listen....I was so concerned about what happened on the bus. However, I've just met her in the corridor and I explained why I was so off-hand and I'm very glad I did. She had been thinking I'm a bit stuck up, but she says she knows I'm not now. I made a mistake in the first place, but I put it right and now we're closer than we were before. That's good isn't it?

On another occasion I said:-

Me - Oh dear! This hasn't come out very well. What a mess. Now let me see...what should I do to make it better? I think I'll have to start again. (Getting new sheet of paper). I'll put the big building over here to the side and then I shall have room to put the bus-stop over here ....and the cafe on this other side. Then I shall have space to put the group in as well. This is coming out much better than my first try would have if I'd done it properly.

Lily looked over my shoulder and said:-

Lily - Hmm. Better. Nice now.

Michael, when I asked him, said he thought I should have done it 'right' in the first place, but Nigel said he thought it was OK to make mistakes if it made things better in the long run. He may have said that because he thought it was what I wanted to hear, but, judging by the fact that he did not give me eye-contact at this time and seemed perfectly relaxed, I do not think that was the case.

Me - Don't you ever make mistakes then Michael?

Michael was silent and went red.

Me - I reckon it's all right for me to make mistakes if I put them right afterwards if I can.

Michael, Steve, Lettie and Aggie said they agreed.

Initially when some students made mistakes (particularly Lily, Peter and Steve), they looked at me as if expecting censure, but I continued to 'manifest warmth in voice, facial expression and gesture' (Rogers, 1951:348) and Lily and Steve became more confident and stopped this by the end of the second term. Peter was still doing it by the end of the course, but much less often.

When students made mistakes, individually or collectively, I did not intervene unless not to do so would have led to dangerous outcomes, such as their being scalded after careless use of boiling water or getting a shock from using electric appliances with wet hands.

I was only just on time returning to the baseroom after lunch one day and saw Steve and Michael in heated conversation with a student from another group. I indicated my wristwatch to them as a friendly hint that time was passing, but when they did not take the hint, I took no further action and they had, as previously decided by the group, to sit out of the circle for a while because they had arrived back late from lunch. They were late three times more during the following six weeks and had to sit out each time. Both men said they disliked this, said they had decided to pay more attention to time keeping

in the future and neither was late again throughout the rest of the course. I felt it safe to assume that Steve and Michael had changed their perception of the importance within this group of time-keeping and had adapted their behaviour accordingly. However, this was a response to peer pressure and punishment, not self-discipline and trust.

In the following month, when students and staff together had planned a lengthy country walk, Lettie decided to wear her high-heeled shoes. Sally wondered aloud whether there might be consequences, namely blisters, resulting from wearing such shoes but left the decision to Lettie who insisted on wearing them. Her feet became very sore. Lettie said that in future she would wear her 'glam' shoes to college and bring her trainers for walking in the country. She had learnt that actions sometimes have consequences.

After each 'mistake' I initiated a discussion that explored the consequences of actions and asked if people would do anything differently next time. The accent of the discussion was not on apportioning blame, but on acceptance of and learning from mistakes.

Sometimes student views on what should be improved and how this should be achieved did not tally with my own, but I never interfered with their decisions unless not to do so would have led to students putting themselves or others in danger of actual harm.

Once when Lettie thought she had 'made a mess' of her watercolour picture, she thought it was because she had used too small a brush. I suggested it might be because her paint was too watery, but Lettie found a larger brush and tried again with the same watery colours. She was not pleased with the result.

Lettie - Is it really because the paint's too wet?
Me - You could experiment with making it drier to see if it helps.

I meant this to be merely a suggestion and Lettie may, or may not, have taken it as advice. Lettie was more pleased with her third attempt.

Lettie - Look I can do it now. It's good this painting stuff!

Here Lettie had twice directed her own behaviour and had learned experientially what action produced a result which pleased her more.

Towards the end of the course, when we were walking across campus to the college library, students who had visited the building before decided to go ahead before Sally and I were ready. Lily, who had hurt her leg and was at that time a slow-walker, wanted to accompany them. Seven minutes later, Sally and I found her sitting weeping under a tree. Other, faster, students had not waited for her and she had become 'lost.' She said:-

> Lily - I'll wait for you next time.
> Me - Wouldn't it be better if you learnt the way to the library and then you could go whenever you wanted?
> Lily - No. I'll wait for you. Better.

Lily's decision was not the one I would have preferred, but I said nothing. She had pleased herself instead of pleasing me and thus had chosen to be self-directing.

At the beginning of our second year, I proposed another trip into town and asked students where they would like to go. Initially there were few suggestions. Students said that when they went out parents/carers usually took them in cars and they were unused to paying visits to town-centre locations so knew few of them. Sally and I each described a place we had been to in town, listed it on the flipchart and Aggie and Nigel each added another and told the group briefly about their suggested destination. Students voted to visit a local history museum by placing ticks next to the location of their choice. They decided, again by voting on the flipchart, when they would go without considering possible opening hours. I knew that on arrival they would discover that the museum was closed for the day, but decided to say nothing. This was hardly 'genuine' of me, but would allow students to learn 'experientially' which was the kind of learning advocated by Rogers (1983:19). Clearly I could not at this time both be genuine and encourage experiential learning and I had to make a choice. The visit was made, the museum was closed and we all returned to college.

Once there, I asked if students wanted to try again. They did and we re-planned our visit.

Me - When shall we go?

Lettie - When it's open.

Me - And when will that be?

Students realised that we did not know. There had been a board giving opening times outside the museum, but no one had noted them and I had purposely not reminded them to do so. Back at college I asked how students thought we should proceed. Nigel said he thought we ought to return and copy the times down and Lettie, who said she would be passing the museum that evening offered to do that. Lettie could read and write sufficiently to carry out this task, did so efficiently and we later enjoyed a visit to the history museum.

Five weeks later, when we were considering a visit to an Art Gallery, Aggie spontaneously brought a printed copy of its times of opening, which she had picked up from her library. She had been self-directive in terms of Rogers' definition of the word. Other students spontaneously praised her.

In our second September, Lettie ordered a meal in a cafe that she could not pay for. I paid the shortfall in her bill, but asked how she would avoid the situation in future. With help Lettie listed her options. She might have brought more money in the first place, but she could not have more once she had spent her allowance, which in this instance she had done. She could have asked to borrow, but then she may not have been able to pay back. She thought that what she needed was to know how much she had before she entered the cafe, so that she would know whether or not she could pay for her meal before she ordered it. Lettie opted for asking Sally to help her count her money before each trip out. Lettie always carried out her plan and did not get into similar difficulties thereafter.

At the beginning of the course, Lily had been particularly eager to please me and asked my views on what she should/should not do constantly. One day she asked me in which chair she should sit, which colours she should use and whether she would be able to complete the task.

> Me - Wherever you sit will be fine Lily and you can choose any colours you like because there aren't any 'right' ones. I expect you will be able to do it because you were OK with it last week.

Each time Lily sought reassurance, my replies reassured her only temporarily. On one occasion, when she had drawn perky faces on her vegetables, I spontaneously said I thought they were wonderful. Here I was not sticking to my plan to leave the 'locus of control' (Rogers, 1951:150) and the responsibility to evaluate her own work (Rogers, 1983:20) with the student, but I was being 'genuine' (Rogers, 1961:33) in the sense that in calling her vegetable-faces wonderful, I was spontaneously expressing a truly felt delight. Lily beamed and other students crowded round for a look, adding words of approval. Although it was a rewarding moment, in that everyone was being positive and smiling, it did not help me to implement my plan to teach Lily to self-evaluate.

This was another instance of an underlying contradiction in Rogers' approach. When putting one notion (leaving the locus of control with the learner) clashes with another (being genuine), Rogers gives no guidance on which should be sacrificed in favour of the other.

Aggie, in common with the men in the group, did not seek reassurance as much as praise.

> Aggie - Look Rosemary...this is me cooking my dinner. What do you think?

I replied,

> Me - I didn't know you could cook your own dinner. What do you think of yourself for being able to do that?

My manner showed 'warm regard' (Rogers, 1961:34) and I 'manifeste(d) warmth in (my) voice and gesture' (Rogers, 1951:348). I did not evaluate her work, but invited her own opinion of it. Was it the best she had ever done, I asked? Had the drawing gone well? Was she good at cooking? Such questions usually elicited positive student responses - smiles, nods and approving comments. My refusal to evaluate students' work shifted the 'locus of control' (Rogers, 1951:150) for evaluation onto them.

As a teacher using traditional teaching methods, I had in the past responded to other students' needs for praise by saying things like, 'Yes, that's good,' or 'Yes, its coming along, but I think it needs a bit more here,' or 'It's good, but it's too short in my opinion.'

Now that we were refusing to evaluate student products, Sally and I felt we needed alternatives to these utterances. I thought that, 'Don't ask me....evaluate it yourself,' sounded too abrupt and as if I could not bother myself to make a more positive response. However, responses like the ones above did not fit with my aim to show 'warm regard' for the students.

Sally and I discussed what we might say instead of the above and thought we needed responses which were positive but not evaluative and the following are examples of what we came up with:-

> "It looks as if it's summer in your picture. Is it?"
> "This looks different from the one you did last week. Do you want to find the other one so that you can compare them?"
> "Ah, you finished it. Do you want to read it out to us?"

The students were having difficulty adapting to the new 'climate' in which I would not evaluate their products. When I declined to praise, Lily sometimes fidgetted, Peter and Steve now and then exchanged wide-eyed looks and James pulled up his socks almost to tearing point, whilst making a rumbling noise in his throat. I thought it reasonable to assume the students were demonstrating unease at the new situation they found themselves in.

In the sixth week, students were still looking to Sally and me for praise and evaluation. I began to doubt Rogers' wisdom. Perhaps self-evaluation was fine for non-disabled learners, but unsuitable for my group, who were labelled as having learning difficulties. My determination to continue with self-evaluation wavered. If my students really could not self-evaluate it would be non-productive to continue to plan for it.

However, Rogers' approach to education was humanistic and idealistic rather than structured by rules and based on 'an essential trust in the capacity of others to think for

themselves, to learn for themselves' (Rogers, 1983:188). Rogers deemed his 'climate' (Rogers, 1983:2) suitable 'in all human relationships' (Rogers, 1961:37), so I was minded to continue for another month. I thought that after only six weeks into a two-year course it was too soon to give up. If student need for tutor-evaluation remained unchanged after that I would have to reconsider.

Sally and I discussed how we might help students become more self-evaluative. In the research which Rogers quotes (Rogers, 1983:45-93), the students seemed to know how to self-evaluate. If they had been specifically taught this skill it is not noted. Sally and I decided that perhaps our students might try to be self-evaluating if they knew how to do it. Thus I decided to add another strategy to my overall plan - that of modelling aloud how we evaluated our own work. Sally and I practised alone together first and then we 'talked ourselves through' work as we did it in the baseroom alongside students. When evaluating a picture I had drawn I said:-

> Me - I'm enjoying this.... I like this beautiful blue. It makes my picture bright and I like that..... I reckon I've drawn the face better today than I usually do.... this corner needs more work though....perhaps if I don't press on the crayon so much, my sky will look lighter....

Sally evaluated aloud too. On one occasion she said:-

> Sally - I've worked hard today and that's good. I had to because I don't find this easy...what I've done's not bad though .....I think it's better than what I did last week. I'll just get my file out and compare them.

We decided to vary what we said as much and as often as possible, sometimes using one or two words, sometimes a lot more, sometimes little words, sometimes longer ones so as to model as many different ways of self-evaluating as we could think of, in order that an individual student might discover a way s/he could use. I kept the locus of control in myself when evaluating my work. I judged its worth against what I had achieved in the past, but did not compare it with that of any other group member, ask for the opinion of another or mention how I thought any significant other in my life might value it. I could

have compared my pictures unfavourably with Sally's artistic results, but I deliberately refrained from this.

In the initial stages of implementing my plan, I wanted students to copy simple self-evaluation and so we modelled only that, but as it worked out, peer evaluation arose, spontaneously, before self-evaluation did.

Twice in the seventh week, when students sought my evaluation and it was not forthcoming, Nigel commented on how good Steve's and Michael's work was. I held my breathe hoping he was going to evaluate his own work next. He did not do so, but his action moved students towards self-evaluation. Immediately after Nigel praised Steve's work, Steve said:-

> Steve - Ooh, do you think so? Ta! This was followed after a few seconds by:-
> Steve - Yours is good an' all. Good car. and Michael added:-
> Michael - Yeah, mine's good as well isn't it? I've worked hard. I always work hard I do.

This suggests that students were adopting ways of relating to one another that I had modelled.

Michael's opinion that he always worked hard was not one with which I agreed. I considered whether or not I should say so. Rogers thought that a tutor should 'have awareness of all her feelings' and 'be able to communicate them if appropriate' (Rogers, 1983:121). Since Rogers did not say which circumstances he considered to be appropriate, his work gave me no help at this moment.

Having used traditional teaching styles for many years, I was finding it difficult as I listened to Michael's words to stop being evaluative. Rogers' work had warned me that 'traditional education and person-centred education (as he styled his approach) may be thought of as two poles of a continuum' (Rogers, 1983:185). I found that moving from one towards the other was not easy.

Reflecting on the problem, I decided that if Rogers was to be followed in self-evaluation, it was Michael's own opinion that mattered not mine. Perhaps he genuinely thought he worked hard; perhaps he did. Only he knew how much effort he put into his endeavours.

This was the first time Michael had been self-evaluating and I did not want him to interpret any comment I made as criticism and as a result stop saying what he thought about his work. Also, if I did not give Rogers' approach a chance, I would not know whether or not it would prove helpful. I decided to remain silent and to continue to implement my original plan.

6.3.1 Students become Self-evaluating

By the end of the first term all students, except James, were making comments (similar to mine) about their own work, but their's were generally shorter and fewer.

> Aggie - Better. Writing's straighter. Didn't know I could do it. That bit's good.
> Steve - Hmmm. S'okay. His head's a bit big though. Came out well on the whole though didn't it?
> Michael - Good. I always do good work. (I maintained my silence.)
> Lily - Lovely yellow. Like the sun. I like yellow.
> Nigel - I've enjoyed doing that. It came out well. I think I'm doing a bit better now.
> Peter - Yeah.

Peter seldom volunteered comments on his work. The above was one of the few. It might have been interpreted in a number of ways, but judging by the nod and the slight smile which accompanied it, I thought it safe to assume that his comment had been more positive than negative in nature. I thought that his 'Yeah' to Nigel's comment meant that he too thought his work was improving, but just as I was going to ask if that was right, a distraught visitor came into the room, the moment was lost and afterwards I forgot to re-open the subject with Peter.

James would show his work to others with a smile or quietly put it in his file. Once, in the third term, he tore his picture up. Was James demonstrating his own silent method of self-evaluation? I could only speculate that he was. Students became interested in each

other's pictures and it became the custom to comment on them. Whether comments were positive or negative, I would follow each by asking what the picture's creator thought of it; I did this to highlight that, whilst the comments of others were perhaps useful to the artist it was his/her own view of the work that mattered most.

In the main self-comments were positive and smiles and nods suggested students valued what they had produced. Positive comments ranged from, 'Brilliant,' to 'Hmm, I like that' and negative ones from, 'Not as good as last Tuesday,' to 'Rubbish!' About a quarter of student comments were negative or slightly negative. By the end of the first term, about one eighth of the comments were followed by replanning and this rose to just over a quarter by the end of the course. Students would say something like, 'I'd use green for that if I did it again,' or 'Next time I'll get a bigger bit of paper.' 'Yuk...all wishy-washy. I'll go over it again, darker.' 'Potatoes aren't done. Gotta put em back on the stove.'

Clearly, students were using criteria for evaluating their work, but it was unclear which. Re-visiting the data, I regretted I had not asked them how they decided what was good and what needed improvement.

Students had clearly learnt that self-evaluation was appropriate. Sally and I agreed not to make any comments about our own work for two consecutive sessions to see if students would continue to make their own evaluations without our input. Our silence seemed not to make any difference.

Students' comments continued to show that individuals were learning by their self-evaluations to improve their work in ways that each thought appropriate. I usually agreed with them. In the main, they showed approval of their progress. Sally and I no longer reacted to student evaluations, but continued with our own work. This demonstrated acceptance of them as learners and evaluators. By the end of the second term students were evaluating their work regularly and confidently and had stopped waiting for evaluation from me.

6.3.2 Student Evaluations of Their Behaviour

In the second term students spontaneously began evaluating their behaviour and that of their peers. This was not something I had planned or expected. It was further evidence of

the growth of mutual trust in an environment where they could assess the consequences of their actions and have realistic expectations that their behaviour would be accepted and understood.

As mentioned above, Lettie, who joined us in the second term had stopped asking me what I thought of her work by her third week in the group. When we were working at the tables, Lettie, who was usually very chatty, made the most comments. At times she gave what might have been called a running commentary. Now and then, if her pencil broke for instance, or if the draft from the fan blew her paper onto the floor, she would use mild expletives.

The first time Lettie swore, some students seemed shocked by this. My reflections on this were that I had not expected and did not like it. It posed a problem for me concerning the Rogerian approach to education and the maintenance of the 'climate.' I had no trouble in separating my negative thoughts about Lettie's swearing from my positive ones about Lettie herself, so I could be accepting. I was however, having a problem with being genuine. Lettie was an adult in an FE college, not a child in a school in which a teacher might reasonably have been expected to comment adversely on her behaviour. Lettie was being self-directing which is what I wanted her to be.

I pondered whether under the circumstances it was appropriate for me to comment on her swearing. Rogers had advised me to reflect my feelings 'when appropriate.' Was it appropriate now? Rogers' approach was unspecific and did not help me make such a decision. I just could not make up my mind what to do. I had deliberately renounced the traditional authority of the teacher in favour of democratic decision-making by the group.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw James, Lily, Steve and Michael look quickly at me and maintain their gaze. I assumed they expected me to do something - to remonstrate with Lettie perhaps. I failed to resolve the issue about what I should do and did nothing. Lily and Aggie took action whilst I dithered.

> Aggie - Disgusting. Using language!
> Lily - Musn't do that must she Rosemary?

Students were criticising Lettie's language. It is unclear whether they were also criticising Lettie herself.

> Me - It seems that today there are problems with Lettie's language. I also think you want me to deal with it for you. Is that right?
> Steve - Yeah. Don't like it. You should tell her.
> Me - Perhaps you can tell Lettie yourselves what you think.

Here, I was opting out of making a direct comment to Lettie myself. This was not because I dare not tell Lettie that I disliked her swearing, but because of my confusion. On reflection, I wish I had said something like:-

> Me - Lettie, I like you a lot, but I don't like your language today.

In this way, I would have been able to accept Lettie herself whilst rejecting her language and also, I would have been genuine in that I would have expressing the attitude I felt rather than 'presenting an outward facade of an attitude, whilst actually holding another attitude at a deeper or unconscious level' (Rogers, 1961:33).

However, I failed to say anything. There was a substantial pause. Steve went red, James pulled up his socks, Michael cleared his throat, Peter lowered his gaze to his shoes and Lily decided to fetch a drink of water. I did not think that students would take up the challenge of communicating their dislike of her swearing directly to Lettie, but at length, Aggie did so.

> Aggie - Don't swear duck. Not right. Don't like it.
> Lettie - Doesn't mean anything, but I suppose it's not very nice.

After this exchange Lettie swore much less and after each time she did so, she covered her mouth with her hand and apologised.

Lettie's behaviour proved unacceptable to her peers on another occasion. Soon after she arrived she began following Steve about. Later she began holding his hand. Steve always went very red and complained that he did not like it, but did not pull away from her. A

fortnight later, in the crowded canteen, Lettie pushed Steve down over a table and gave him a long kiss. He ran off. Later in the circle, the following conversation took place.

Aggie - Disgusting. Horrible. All over him you were.
Lettie - Well, I want Steve.
Aggie - Well, he don't want you. Said, didn't he?
Lettie - He does. He does, don't you Steve?
Steve - Just want to be friends. Nothing else.
Aggie - Told you. Should be ashamed. Leave him be.

No one else said anything, but James, Peter and Lily nodded. Thereafter, Lettie stayed away from Steve as far as I could tell, although I often saw her looking at him with what I thought was longing.

A further example of a behaviour change that occurred within the group, was that of Nigel. In the first year of the course Nigel told group members of a rich uncle, claimed a relationship with a well-known pop-star, talked about his employment and often mentioned his forthcoming wedding. I thought he was embroidering the truth to say the least. By the end of the course, he complained that his life was boring at times, informed us that he was not getting married and that he really wanted employment (see 'Nigel' for fuller details). If he changed from mainly lying to mainly telling the truth, it may be reasonable to assume that, consciously or unconsciously, he evaluated his behaviour and opted for changing it.

Students had moved on from evaluating just their work to evaluating their own and each other's behaviour.

6.3.3 Student Evaluation of Discussions and Group Activity

Towards the end of the third term I introduced another element into their evaluations. So far students had only evaluated their tablework and had made no comments on how hard they had worked during group discussions or on whether such discussions had been fruitful. I wanted them to see what they did in the circle as work also and to evaluate that too. Sally and I decided that we would model self-evaluation of group skills and interactions during the following session.

Me - That was a good discussion, but I'm feeling tired to day and I didn't take as big a part in it as I usually do.

Sally - No, I noticed that. I think we really got somewhere in the group today. We made the big decision at last!

Me - What about you Nigel? Did you work hard in the group this morning? Did we all work hard as a group?

Nigel said he thought that both he and the group had worked hard. It was a response that might have been expected. In the following session he volunteered another opinion of group interaction.

Nigel - We haven't done much today yet. Maybe it'll be better after dinner.

There was no response at this time from anyone else. Evaluating the outcomes of group decisions and interactions may have been more difficult for students to do than working in an individual way. The tapes recorded only two occasions on which it happened spontaneously. Once was when the men and I had walked for twenty minutes in a storm,

Steve said:- Bloomin awful! Wasn't very clever us voting for this was it? We'll have to think more about the weather next time won't we?

On another occasion very late in the second year, we were visited, by arrangement, by three young women students on a college caring course, who said they wanted to interview the group and to get to know them better. The women discussed the format of the meeting with their tutor, and with this group in advance. They said they wanted group members to talk about themselves and I instigated a group discussion in which individuals planned and practiced once what they would say. Nigel and Michael separately talked about their last holiday and Lily and Aggie talked about their home lives. Lettie talked about what she did at weekends, James brought in a football and demonstrated his skill with it, whilst Steve produced some handwork he had made on another course and said how he had constructed it. Peter, often so quiet, after a somewhat nervous beginning, warmed to his subject, which was the contents of his file and the events recorded there. His delivery was unhurried and relaxed and he was spontaneously voted afterwards as the star of the show.

When the young women visited they seemed shy and awkward, mainly perhaps, because they had little planned other than the refreshments. In comparison members of this group seemed confident, excited and well-prepared. Afterwards students in this group said they had all thoroughly enjoyed it, especially Peter. At the following session, Nigel compared one group's performance with that of the other.

> Nigel - They couldn't think of nothing to say. We did better than they did didn't we?

His opinion was supported by the evidence.

6.4 Reviewing the Evidence

The evidence above suggested that by the end of the first year, students had become much more comfortable with accepting mistakes and viewed them as learning opportunities.

There was increased evidence that interaction between staff and students indicated a 'climate of trust.' The evidence for the increased trust was to be found in higher student self-esteem, greater self-confidence and the self-direction they displayed. These changes were those expected by Rogers (1961:36).

Trust developed further when I left the 'locus of control' for their own learning with the students. This demonstrated to them that I had confidence in them as decision-makers. Trust was also built when I commented on my own mistakes. This showed me as a learner like them who used mistakes as learning opportunities. More trust was also built when students themselves dealt adequately with Lettie's swearing than would have been the case had I intervened myself.

Self-evaluation not only built self-confidence but also increased their pleasure in learning. This is evidenced by Lettie's approving comment on her painting and Nigel's comment that he was enjoying what he was doing. These comments were representative of many.

Students were learning to trust themselves as learners. I was also learning to trust them to learn. Further, I was learning to trust myself to be a facilitator rather than a teacher. Difficulties experienced when encouraging decision making had knocked my confidence in the Rogerian approach to 'letting them learn' (Rogers, 1983:18). By the end of the first year, my confidence was renewed when I saw that students had learnt to self-evaluate. I felt ready to take the big step of handing over responsibility for learning to individual students. I was also aware that this was a high risk strategy.

In our final discussion of the year, I told Sally of my decision. She was not keen on the idea. Both of us were concerned about how sessions could be managed if all students wanted to learn something different at the same time - there were nine of them (including the two who did not want to be part of this research) since Aggie was no longer a group member, but with only two staff to cope, this might prove hectic. (We did not know at that time that Steve would not be joining us). Sally, who had only previously worked in classes where all students did the same thing at the same time, thought we would be over-stretching ourselves. I had worked with mixed-ability groups within the same class and knew that it could be managed with careful planning.

It was possible that students would not want to learn anything at all, or would choose high-level learning goals which would be beyond their abilities. Their individual requests for assistance might be beyond staff abilities to cope. However, the advantages were that they had already demonstrated considerable insight into their own learning, could evaluate their own products and had accepted mistakes as learning opportunities.

If working in the way I proposed proved impossible, we could always revert to traditional teaching and learning methods. Sally said she would reserve further judgement until she saw the plan in operation. I decided to tell the students what I was planning and invite their comments.

In the next section I shall give details of what students opted to learn when they were choosing their own learning goals and how far the Rogerian approach worked to develop and maintain the kind of trust that facilitated their learning.

6.4.1 Self-directed Individual Learning Goals

On the first day of the new academic year, that is, in our fourth term together, I told the students what I proposed. I explained that each individual could choose what s/he wanted to learn and we would do our best to deliver that. There were, of course, constraints. We could not teach anybody the Russian language, for instance, because neither of us spoke it. We could not help anyone make a film because we had no suitable equipment. There was one computer, but no more than two students working together on the same project could use it at any one time. If they all chose different subjects to study there might be a lot of waiting about for help if they all got stuck with their work at the same moment. I asked what they thought of the plan.

There was instant excitement from some students.

> Michael - I want the computer.
> Lily - I want to count. I could count when I was little. Can I do it again?
> Nigel - I want to be able to write to The Spice Girls. I like them.
> Lettie - (with much giggling) I want to learn how to talk to men.... you know, something else instead of asking them if they want sex.

I asked Michael what he wanted to do on the computer and he said he wanted to write a story. He could write his own name and address, but little other than that. Writing a story would be an uphill climb, but it was building on skills he already had and was something that could be worked on in the baseroom.

When asked, Lily said she wanted to count the money in her purse. She never knew how much was there so she did not know whether she could buy anything with it. I planned to collect copper coins over the next few days.
I thought I could help Nigel with his letter and that the whole group could help Lettie work towards her goal by role-playing situations.

Peter and James had so far said nothing. I asked what things they liked to do. Would they be interested in learning anything to do with hobbies for instance? Peter, I knew was interested in classical music, because he often hummed snatches from symphonies. Was there anything to do with music he wanted to learn? I cannot know if he would have

chosen this area of study if I had not mentioned it. He said he would like to learn more about Beethoven's life. Sally and Peter easily found books about the composer in the college library.

James remained unenthusiastic. There did not seem to be anything he wanted to learn, even after we had all exhausted all suggestions. I was not prepared to impose a goal upon him as that would have been contrary to Rogers' guideline on 'self-initiated learning' (Rogers, 1983:125). However, Rogers' offered no direction should James fail to find something he wanted to learn. I left James out of my planning, hoping something would occur to him later. If it had not I do not know what I would have done. After two weeks of merely watching others, James demonstrated that he would like to learn to write his signature by showing me that he could not do it. Later, when he wanted to learn to peel an orange, he brought in a peeler and shook his hands over the fruit. Other goals were demonstrated by mime and pointing at pictures in a catalogue.

Individual students were put in charge of saying when their learning goal had been achieved. I did not always agree with their decisions, but I kept quiet. For me to have interfered would have been directive and that was not something I wanted. All students, including James, seemed to put a lot of energy into their learning and appeared very interested in the learning of others. There was much walking about the baseroom to see how others were getting on. Congratulations featured regularly in conversations in the circle. As a student reached one learning goal, another was chosen. Some students therefore attained more goals than others; some studied in more depth than their peers.

Below is a list of student's individual learning goals over the last year of the course.

Michael: to write a story on the computer;
to learn to write his signature;
to write his name and address and
to read well enough to find the times and channels for his favourite television programmes.

Lily: to count pennies up to 10p;
to read and write her own name;

to count mixed copper coins to 15p and
to read a short story to a child.

Peter: to learn something about Beethoven's life;
to learn something about Haydn's life;
to learn to cross roads and
to count money to 50p.

Nigel: to be able to write a letter to The Spice Girls;
to add money up to £1.00 and
to give change for £1.00.

Lettie: to learn how to speak to men without offering sex;
to learn to budget her money;
to learn more about cooking simple meals and
to find out where to learn hairdressing skills.

James: to write his signature;
to peel oranges;
to make a cup of coffee and to make his own bed.

Aggie and Steve: Aggie and Steve both left the course at or before the end of the first year, so were not involved in setting their own learning goals.

All learning goals could be managed within the college campus and, in spite of my fears to the contrary, were within the learning ability of the students and the teaching ability of the staff. Michael ran off lots of copies of the story he (with help from other group members) wrote on the computer and posted them to relatives. Lily announced herself as 'thrilled' to have 'read' to the child (see 'Lily' for further details) and Nigel was delighted with the reply he got to his letter to The Spice Girls. Peter made a scrapbook of information he found out about composers and showed it to the young women visitors. Lettie talked enthusiastically about her learning at her subsequent Level Two meeting. It was not possible to say what James thought of his success because of our mutual difficulties in communication.

In each case, the evidence demonstrates the extent to which making choices and working towards their own learning goals boosted individual student self-esteem.

6.5 *Post hoc* Review of Evaluation

Rogers considered that 'the discipline necessary to reach the student's goals is self-discipline,' which 'replaces external discipline' (Rogers, 1983:189). In arriving at this view Rogers does not seem to have taken into account peer pressure, nor the need for structure and organisation. One of the most important developments was the spontaneous peer evaluation of both work and behaviour.

Students came to trust other group members to help them with their learning and to trust me both as confidante (see Chapter Seven) and as learning facilitator. Over time I came to trust the students, individually and collectively, to make responsible choices in the matter of their learning, although during the first year I was directive at times.

Student learning on the course far outstripped anything I had expected of them. They learnt with enthusiasm, excitement and pleasure. Within the 'climate of trust,' they not only learnt successfully but also learnt those things which were of importance to them. Their self-esteem was boosted.

However, in order to develop student learning further, I needed to take the students into activities that involved risk. This required leadership and a re-establishment of my authority as tutor.

In the next section I shall explore the implications of this for student learning and Rogers' approach to it.

6.6 Risk Taking - the Problem

Rogers thought that students 'should make choices...and take decisions that would affect their lives' (Rogers, 1983:2). He decried 'frightened attitudes in tutors (Rogers, op cit) and thought students should have 'those experiences...that would fit them for life in this difficult world ... as effective, confident citizens' (Rogers, op cit).

I think it probable that Rogers would agree with Stratford and Tse that taking risks to learn is 'an essential aspect of life and development' (Stratford and Tse, 1989:44).

Rogers realised that using a person-centred approach to learning, trusting students and risking power-sharing 'is most threatening' to the tutor,' since 'who knows whether students can be trusted' (Rogers, 1983:190). Person-centred learning is 'threatening to the student,' since 'students have been directed for so many years that they long for the continuance of the security of being told what to do' (Rogers, op cit). It is much easier to 'conform and complain than to take responsibility, make mistakes and live with the consequences' (Rogers, op cit).

However, Rogers gives little or no instruction or advice as to how 'frightened attitudes' in tutors (Rogers, 1983:2) and the threat in power-sharing should be allayed or how students might prepare for self-directed learning.

He considered that there is no way of knowing whether students or a process can be trusted and that 'one can only take the risk and the risk is frightening' (Rogers, op cit).

In taking the risk, I found I had to take on more responsibility than previous learning necessitated. The position I was in required me to make evaluations about students' abilities and assess their readiness to cope with the challenges I presented to them.

Whilst being 'the evaluator of products' is something Rogers decried in a teacher/facilitator (Rogers, 1983:23), he did not include the evaluation of risk in his condemnation. He makes no mention of risk assessment or any necessary precautionary measures to be taken. Rogers afforded me no help in deciding how to deal with the risks learning involves and I had to turn for help to other writers.

Risk-taking is the tutor's responsibility. This leaves the tutor with the task of assessing an acceptable level of risk. Stratford and Tse claimed that professionals working with students labelled as having learning difficulties need to allow them to take risks to learn, whilst recognising that 'exposing people with mental retardation (sic) to risk should be a gradual process' (Stratford and Tse, 1989:46).

In the college which was the site for this study, I frequently observed many young people with the label learning difficulties whom I had known when they were schoolchildren. There were special staff on duty at break and lunchtimes to take care of students with disabilities. I saw youngsters whom I knew to be generally able having their dinner trays carried for them and being shepherded into discrete groups for activities controlled by staff. I saw a wheelchair-using student being transported on an electronic lift controlled by staff although I had seen him using the lift independently previously. College administrative staff seemed prepared to take few risks to encourage independence in their learning-disabled students.

There is now an urgent need to learn new skills. However, staff who initiate or support learning that involves risk are held legally and morally accountable for the outcomes. They are personally at risk both from legal action and feelings of guilt and sorrow. Hood et al (1992:159) see this dilemma as a contest between safety as an absolute goal, versus safety as part of a trade-off. The advantage of this approach is that safety and other goals can be balanced and planned decision-making accented. I agree with Alaszewski and Manthorpe who consider that 'anticipation...in which a person seeks to identify all possible hazards and so take action to prevent accidents occurring... is very much the common-sense strategy' (Alaszewski and Manthorpe, 1998:9).

The problem for the tutor 'essentially rests on decisions about risk' (Alaszewski and Manthorpe, 1998:1). Risk management is 'the business of reducing the likelihood of negative events occurring, coupled with attempts to minimise the danger or to maximise positive factors' (Alaszewski and Manthorpe, op cit).

In sum, the overarching aim of risk-taking is to learn how to cope with hazards. Coping increases the students' control of his/her environment and hence aids independent living. The problem for the tutor is to judge the acceptable level of risk to achieve this end.

6.6.1 Risk Assessment

When considering risk-taking in the group, I would have preferred that individual levels of supervision should depend on a student's individual capability and needs, but there were never more than the two of us, Sally and myself, to supervise all nine students, who had varying abilities, life-experiences and strengths. Thus, all students needed to be

catered for at any one time and this meant that individual levels of need could seldom be attended to out of the baseroom.

Since all off-campus activities were done with the group as a whole or sometimes in two smaller groups, risk assessment for any excursion for the whole group needed to take into account the needs and abilities of the least able and most at risk student, who was James. He was totally unused to being anywhere alone and would have had great difficulty asking for help should he have met with danger. This necessarily, but regrettably, usually meant that those students who were used to using the community independently (Lettie, Nigel and to some extent Aggie), could not do so. These students were not as challenged to learn as they would have been if I had been able to work with them on a one-to-one basis

I failed to find a way of assessing risk. Access to health, educational, psychiatric and social records and better liaison with other agencies may have helped, but such were not available to me. This being so, I decided to keep the risk of physical danger to an absolute minimum.

I chose three areas of students' lives where coping with risks would aid their skills in independent living and in Rogers' terms increase self-direction.

In the following section I shall explain how and why students learnt:-

(i) to prepare and make their own hot drinks and to wash up aferwards,
(ii) to prepare and cook a simple meal including meat, vegetables and pudding and
(iii) to travel on local buses.

Strategies for achieving these objectives evolved as the situations arose.

6.7 Objective 1: Making Hot Drinks

On days when this group did not meet, the baseroom where we worked was also used by other students who needed help with toileting and/or feeding. These groups were

traditionally kept together at breaks to enable carers to give this help easily and the accommodation facilitated segregation from the main body of students. All students labelled as having learning disabilities, regardless of whether they needed personal help or of how able they were, were accommodated here. At the beginning of this course it was assumed, without discussion, that my group would follow this pattern of segregation and dependency.

Sally and I initially adopted this assumption and made the break-time drinks so that the students would not have to risk handling the electric plugs or the kettle of boiling water. We washed and dried up afterwards not trusting the students to clean the mugs properly or dry them without dropping any. After a few weeks, I began to question whether this level of help and protection were really necessary and whether or not it would be possible to teach the students to do it for themselves. I had observed that they could learn other things such as each other's names, simple games, and how to vote and I considered it likely that they would also learn to make their own hot drinks and to wash up afterwards. The plan was firstly to find out how much individual students already knew about using the water heater, making hot drinks and washing up afterwards and secondly to teach these skills where appropriate.

In the circle I led a discussion about whether or not students washed up at home. They said they all did. Lily said she often washed up all the cups and saucers at her group home 'because the men are lazy.' I said:-

> Me - Good, that means Sally and I won't have to do it for everybody in future. We can all do our own as from now. How about that?

When I asked them, students all agreed with this new practice. However, it became clear that doing the washing up meant different things to different students. Nigel, Aggie, Steve (and later Lettie) were competent. Peter did not look at what he was doing and left residue in the mugs, whilst James left soap bubbles in them. Lily washed cups well, but then left them, still soapy on the draining board and walked away. Steve and Michael knew how to dry dishes and put them away but not how to wash them. James rolled his sleeves up in a business like way in front of the sink, but used cold water only. No one knew how to get hot water from the oversink cylindrical heater.

No one had ever used a hot water heater before. I explained how to work the baseroom heater, which delivered almost boiling water. I demonstrated how to fill the washing up bowl a quarter full with cold water before adding hot, how to test frequently for temperature and how to turn off the hot water when hand-heat in the bowl was reached, modelling the procedure. I did this three times before any not-yet-competent students filled the bowl themselves. I led a discussion about what might happen to fingers caught in the very hot downstream, but there were never any scalding accidents. Individual students practiced until, after three sessions, all could do this.

Only Nigel, Aggie and Steve added washing-up liquid. When it was Michael's turn to prepare the water he added half a container full and it took him five minutes aferwards to flush the suds down the sink. On another occasion, when turning off the boiler Michael twisted the control the wrong way very tightly and a plumber had to be called to repair it!

More students were competent at drying up and putting away than they were at washing mugs. James left suds in his mug the first time, but when I pointed this out to him, always checked and removed them thereafter. Peter's drying up was haphazard. He would look anywhere but at his mug and as a result, some bits of it were well polished and other left wet or soapy. He said Lily always did it for him at home. Sally or I gently re-directed his gaze when he was mug-drying seven times, after which he dried up well. Only one mug was broken as students learnt to dry up.

The next step towards making their own drinks was to put into a mug the appropriate tea-bag or coffee, sugar and milk. I demonstrated which ingredients were necessary for each drink. Much coffee and sugar was scattered over the table, but only one bottle of milk spilt. Lily had trouble deciding whether she wanted tea or coffee. She said she wanted me to make the decision. Since I wanted Lily to be self-directing I refused to do this. I said I was sure she could be trusted to decide on her own.

Whilst everyone else was drinking, Lily, still without a drink, stared at me. I liked all the students; I liked Lily very much. I had a dilemma. I empathised with her thirst and found it difficult to see her licking her lips as others sipped and not jump up and make her a drink. To have indulged my wish to see her thirst quenched would have been demonstrating genuineness since that was my wish at the time. However, I was also

genuine in my other and greater wish to help Lily become self-directive and that took priority as I considered it more important for her. Sally and I kept to our plan.

Lily did not make herself a drink that session and complained of thirst until lunchtime. At the following and all subsequent breaktimes Lily prepared her mug. Lily had said previously that she disliked coffee and always drank tea at home, but for three sessions after the 'dry' day she put coffee in her mug like Sally and I did. We made no comment on this and thereafter Lily sometimes had coffee and sometimes tea. I think it reasonable to assume that by leaving Lily to learn from the consequences of her behaviour, we helped her to take more responsibility and to be self-directing. All students, including Lily, were placing tea, coffee, milk and sugar as they wanted into their drinking mugs appropriately within three weeks. Sally or I always filled them up with boiling water.

The students had taken on the responsibility for preparing their own drinks and washing their mugs within a short period. Sally and I were pleased with the above successes. We discussed the next move. Should we encourage students to learn to fill the kettle, insert and withdraw the plug, turn the switch on and off and, most challenging of all perhaps, lift and pour from a kettle full of boiling water? If they could learn that, they could then make their own hot drinks independently. However, this involved some escalation of risk.

Dealing with electricity and a heavy kettle involved a much bigger risk than washing mugs. A student might be electrocuted or, more probably, be badly scalded. However, these outcomes might equally result from not learning the safe use of an electric kettle. The students had shown themselves to be capable of learning so far and I was minded to continue and teach them to use the kettle safely.

As preparation, I again modelled the appropriate techniques. I showed slides and photographs dealing with safety in the kitchen and led a discussion about them. Then we used role play as a means of drawing out the consequences of misuse. I organised the students into acting out scenes in which disasters happened as a result of dangerous use of kettles, flexes, electricity and boiling water. Then I organised further acting out, this time of the safe use of the above.

Individually and under my strict supervision, each student practised switching on the current, inserting and withdrawing the plug, filling the kettle to a safe level and pouring cold water into mugs to get the feel of how heavy a full kettle was. Once they could do this, all students practiced pouring boiling water from a half-filled kettle and then a fully filled one. All students, except Peter and James, learnt to do this on their first or second attempt. James' arm wobbled and as a result he spilt water when he handled the full kettle. He became confident in minutes with a half full one and always used the latter thereafter.

Peter, remained very nervous. I constantly needed to re-direct his gaze onto the task in hand. The evidence from his behaviour suggested to me that he needed to learn in easy stages to give him confidence. Firstly he learnt just to touch the kettle handle, then I asked him to put his hand on mine as I poured. After two sessions of doing that, Peter learnt to pour when I suggested I put my hand on top of his. In his fourth session he poured alone using cold water and in the next session to pour boiling water from a half full kettle. Peter finally learnt to pour boiling water from a full kettle after seven sessions.

By the end of the seventh week everyone (except Peter and also Lettie, who could already do this and cook simple meals when she joined us the following term) had learnt to make her/his own hot drinks safely and successfully. The first four objectives had been achieved and I had become more confident in taking risks.

6.8 Objective 2: Preparing and Cooking Food

The next objective arose out of a student's request. In the eighth week I had been conducting a discussion in the circle about our favourite television programmes and both Aggie and Lily said their favourites were cookery demonstrations. I had then gone on to encourage students to discuss their cooking skills, or rather lack of them. Aggie said she wanted to learn to cook mince and vegetables and pudding - in fact a full meal. I was surprised to hear this because she frequently told me how she cooked her own dinner. It turned out that 'cooking' for Aggie, involved warming up a pre-cooked ready-meal supervised by staff. It became clear that what all students meant by 'cooking' was helping staff or parents to cook. For Peter this 'helping' involved nothing more than watching

others, whilst for Steve it meant peeling potatoes. Lily helped her staff by handing cooking utensils as requested and 'stirring things' from time to time. Michael 'cooked' by sitting next to his Mother and refilling her wine-glass as it emptied. James, by roaring loudly and nodding his head, seemed to be insisting that he could cook, but in practice later demonstrated few skills.

There were no adequate facilities for cooking in the baseroom and fulfilling Aggie's request would mean 'borrowing' the college's domestic science room and this I managed to negotiate. This room had enough cookers and cooking equipment for each student to have his/her own.

However, in the Domestic Science (DS) room, students would be dealing with sharp knives, gas and electric burners and ovens, saucepans of boiling water and hot grill-pans. This involved several new risks. Sally and I discussed the situation and agreed we would find it difficult adequately to supervise all students at once. They had successfully learnt to handle a kettle of boiling water and I thought it conceivable they could learn to cope with kitchen dangers. With trepidation I decided to continue with this objective.

As preparation and before going to the kitchen, I showed the group a video about safety in the kitchen and organised students into acting-out 'danger' situations with gas and electricity, followed by safe-handling ones, just as they had when they learnt to handle the electric kettle. When we arrived in the DS room, because students were going to use burners as well as ovens, and gas cookers as well as electric ones, I spent half an hour demonstrating how much time electric hob-rings take to cool. I also showed students how to ignite the burners, after which all students practised on both types of cooker.

All the cookers had built-in illustrations indicating which knobs turned on which burners, so literacy was less of a problem. However, Lily, Steve, James and particularly Peter, had great difficulty relating the two-dimensional diagrams to the three-dimensional hob-burners. Peter took six minutes to work out which knob should be turned to light the gas under his saucepan even thought I talked him through it twice. I re-directed his gaze seven times in the process. The others managed it in three minutes.

To add to the above safety instruction, it was good that there was a First Aid Kit in the kitchen and both Sally and I were qualified First Aiders. I had covered all safety aspects I thought necessary and considered students were ready to begin cooking.

We had the use of the DS room for three hours in the morning on every second session of the week for two terms. As an introductory quick meal, I planned that the students would bake potatoes and eat them with bought coleslaw. I chose this because it involved using the oven, but not the hob and would provide practice in basic skills that could be built on later. For the initial session and for the five that followed it, I organised the students to work in pairs, each reminding the other to use the oven glove and not to let their flesh touch the hot enamel.

Sally closely supervised two couples and I spread my attention over the others. I focussed on safety, repeating aloud techniques for safe handling of equipment and food. Even so, Peter reached into the oven for his potato without wearing a glove before I could stop him, but the oven heat warned him of danger before he touched the hot vegetable or the cooker-shelf and he withdrew his hand quickly. He caught my eye and reached for the oven-glove. I reiterated the importance of safety. All other students baked their potatoes without mishap.

6.9 Reflexive Evaluation

Students had learnt to use cooking equipment without accidents both in the baseroom and in the college DS room. I considered that both students and I were ready for the next risk. Peter had proved to be a student who needed constant supervision as well as constant reassurance, so I planned that in future cooking sessions I would supervise him more closely.

At the following session, I decided we would cook baked potato and baked beans, which menu meant that we added the skill of warming something up in a pan on the hob. Next I chose baked potatoes and beans with fried beefburger which involved two activities students had done before and introduced a third.

Peter had, with constant prompting at first, but with less and less each session, made no further ill-advised moves. When in doubt he would ask for assistance. Once when his vegetables were boiling furiously he said:-

> Peter - Got to turn it down haven't I? Is it this knob?

At the next session he said:-

> Peter - My beefburgers are burning. Where's the oven glove? Got to use it haven't I?

Peter was learning about consequences. By building on existing knowledge, students added to their cooking skills and reinforced ones they already had. At the same time, risks associated with touching hot burners, inserting hands and arms into ovens, straining vegetables of their boiling water and handling hot casserole dishes and saucepans were avoided.

After the first six sessions and after consultation with Sally, who gave me detailed feedback on the progress of those students she supervised, I considered that students had sufficient skills to work individually with a cooker each. Supervision remained close and Sally and I constantly reminded students of safety measures, but neither of us ever did any of the actual work for the students. Students did their own washing and drying up, putting away and cleaning cookers.

What to cook was now decided upon by voting. Frequently students wanted to cook expensive items, such as a whole turkey or an iced and decorated Christmas cake. I could have said that was too expensive, but instead, I took the group to the college library so they could assess the consequences of their decision for themselves. I helped them to price the necessary ingredients and to explore the cooking skills necessary for the recipe from magazines, local newspapers and books housed there. When they discovered that a turkey and a Christmas cake would be so expensive, they voted to cook a chicken leg and ice-cream with chocolate sauce instead. Once a menu had been agreed I asked for a volunteer with writing skills to copy out the ingredients list we had jointly created on the

flipchart and when this was done, it was photocopied by Sally with a student helper and everyone took a copy home.

Students seldom forgot their cooking ingredients, but on the rare occasions on which they did, those with extra provisions shared with those who had none. This was not something I organised but something which happened spontaneously. This helped build peer group trust.

Carers would often send vegetables already peeled and chopped, tins already opened and their contents decanted into plastic boxes, or salad already washed and trimmed. I initiated a discussion in the group as to whether or not these actions were helping students learn. The gist of the conversation was that such actions were loving but did not help them learn. Students voted thereafter to tell staff and parents that in future they needed to bring unprepared vegetables to cookery sessions.

Staff at Lily and Peter's home continued to send in prepared ingredients although both students said they had given the message twice. At my instigation and with help, students composed a letter home saying that preparation was not wanted and thereafter, Peter and Lily's staff sent in unprepared ingredients 80% of the time.

I asked Peter why he did not prepare his own ingredients for his own cooking and he said it was because he 'got into a tizwas' when he had to do things like that. Thinking that this level of staff assistance was not teaching Peter to become confident and self-directing, I rang his staff to ask if they would be prepared gradually to fade out the amount of assistance they gave, but was told this was not advisable. Why it was not advisable was, they said, a matter of confidentiality. This was an instance of inter-professional conflict.

James' family continued to prepare his vegetables and open tins 40% of the time. I asked him if I should send a letter home asking again for this not to happen and he said 'Yes.' Three weeks after the letter was posted, James' family were still sending in his vegetables prepared. On discovering ready-to-cook vegetables in the third week James threw them in the bin. I cannot know for sure, but it may have been the case that James' family were not as ready to encourage him to take risks with sharp implements as I was. (Case, 2000:272) reported that parents of disabled offspring said that protectiveness was one of

their most common reactions to their youngster's disability). After this incident James' family no longer prepared his vegetables. I could not understand James' explanation, so do not know why this was. I asked him for permission to ring his mother for an explanation but he did not give it, so I did not ring.

James was our star. He had learnt elsewhere how to break an egg into a bowl using only one hand and whenever a recipe called for eggs, he broke his with a flourish, a shout and a large smile. Other students were very admiring. When I asked how he had learnt to do this James touched the television screen and I understood this to indicate that he had learnt the technique from watching the cookery programmes he said he liked.

At the end of the third term, students chose to cook a meal all parts of which they had done before - minced beef and onions, tinned peas, mashed potatoes and an instant commercially-prepared pudding. Students never attempted desserts more adventurous than this and often had just a piece of fruit or a bought fruit-pie and custard. This was because preparing, cooking, eating and washing up after a one-course meal was more time-consuming for this group than I had expected and did not leave enough minutes to prepare a more elaborate pudding.

When students were ready to cook their special meal, I thought they could do it without my re-demonstrating the skills involved, but I renewed safety warnings for my own piece of mind. There were a lot of separate tasks to complete, peeling, cutting, mashing, tin-opening, frying, seasoning, whipping, spooning out and serving up and mostly they had to be done in the appropriate order if the meal were to be ready on time.

Sally and I, after consultation, decided on a different role from the one we began with. We decided not to tell hesitating students what the next step might be. We chose rather to ask 'What's next?' We considered that this showed our trust in their abilities to be self-directing. There was much watching of peers, but no mishaps other than over or under-seasoned food or undercooked or limp vegetables. Students later said that the cooking of this meal was one of the highlights of the course and they were very pleased with what they had achieved. The last cooking objective had been reached.

6.10 Objective 3: Bus Travel

I next considered taking the group into town because I knew that being able to use public transport as independently as possible was important to students. They had told me how their leisure opportunities were severely curtailed by their not being able/allowed to travel unsupervised. For instance, simply meeting a friend in town for coffee was seldom possible because it involved waiting for four people (two students and two parents or carers) all to be free and willing at the same time. Being able to use buses independently would be one important step towards being able to visit town on their own, although road-crossing and moving safely about town might remain hurdles to be overcome for many students.

The plan was to find out what self-transporting skills students already had and to build on those, both individually and collectively. I asked students to relate their experiences of bus travel. Nigel said he often went into town with his father, who sometimes put him on the bus to return home alone, having asked the driver to tell his son where he must alight. Aggie walked to college and was sometimes taken into town in her support worker's car, but seldom went on the bus.

Lettie frequently travelled alone so did not need to learn this. I asked her what she would like to learn instead, but she said she would come anyway 'to lend a hand with the others.' This was a relief to me as if I had needed to leave Sally behind in college to work alone with Lettie, I would not have felt confident to take all the other students into town by myself and the learning that took place off-campus might not have occurred. Lettie's help was accepted gratefully and she proved herself particularly good at pointing out landmarks to other students to help them learn when the bus was nearing the stop at which we were to get off.

All other students told me they were always escorted either by a parent (occasionally a grandparent or sibling) or a support worker. Lily said she had not travelled the two miles from her home into town since her last birthday, six months previously, because no one had been available to take her.

Taking the group into town involved the danger of crossing a main road to reach the bus-stop and the risk of losing a student in crowded places. I had observed student behaviour on the college campus over many hours during the previous seven months. I had never observed them in a more diverse and less easily controlled arena. The activity involved new skills and potentially serious risks including road accidents and getting lost. Sally and I discussed the dangers as well as the advantages of the venture. She balanced my pessimism with her optimistic expectations. On balance, I considered that with careful preparation, the trip could be managed safely and successfully.

Before we went into town, to highlight the dangers, I led a discussion on the high risk of traffic accidents and of getting lost. Again, I used role play to help them learn the consequences of mistakes. In case a student did become separated from the party, I gave each student coins to make a telephone call and a card giving the number of my mobile phone. At my request, students practiced ringing me from the baseroom office phone, giving details of where in town they were pretending to be. On the reverse of the card I had written the name, address and telephone number of the college and the name and extension number of my line manager, who would assist if necessary. Because of his speech problem, I gave James a different letter explaining how I could be contacted and asking for the assistance of anyone on whom he should call for help; he was instructed by me to target police officers, traffic wardens or shop-keepers and show them this letter if he became lost.

On the first excursion Sally and I kept the group closely marshalled. This was both to ensure road safety and to calm my fears that someone might be hurt or lost when I did not have strict control of the group. I decided we should walk to the bus and later, in the town, in a 'crocodile.'

When the party approached the bus stop outside the museum we were to visit, I stood up, beckoned all the student to follow me and left Sally, as I had requested, to bring the rear to make sure everyone alighted. As a party, we moved from one room to the next, looking at the exhibits. In each room Lily found a chair and sat down until the party moved on. All other students, Sally and I talked about things we could see.

At the bus stop afterwards, I decided the party would cross the road on the pelican crossing. I pressed the button and marshalled students across. At the other end of our journey, I counted students off the bus and saw them back to the baseroom under strict supervision.

After lunch Sally and I discussed the successes and failures of the visit. Students had told me that they had really enjoyed the trip out and wanted to go again. I had been relieved that there had been no accidents and had really enjoyed the company of the students, but had been too tense to take much notice of museum exhibits. At our discussion meeting the following day, Sally said she thought that walking in a 'crocodile' made students look like schoolchildren and drew negative attention to the group. She had seen shoppers stop and stare and heard one woman mutter, 'Shouldn't be allowed.' Quite what it was that 'shouldn't be allowed' was not clear, but it had not been a positive comment. This incident reflects Case's finding that disabled people 'attract attention in public places, mainly in the form of stares.' (Case, 2000:281). A safe way in which the group could move round town, though different from the 'crocodile' formation was needed.

On our next town visit I decided we would go to a supermarket and to a weekly market to compare prices of ingredients for a meal the students were going to cook to celebrate the end of our first year together. Following discussion with Sally, I decided to split the group into two, one supervised by Sally and the other by myself to save time. I disclosed to the students that I was feeling nervous about their safety.

Steve said, 'It'll be all right. We're not daft you know. I'll make sure James don't wander off!' Steve was empathising with me! Who was tutor-in-charge here and who the in-need-of-care-student? Here Steve was demonstrating that he saw himself as a more competent person than I had given him credit for. Had I been treating students as if they were 'daft?' Perhaps I had underestimated students' capabilities and needed to re-think my strategies. I discussed the matter again with Sally who thought my behaviour in town was too tense. She considered I could afford to be more relaxed about their general safety because students had demonstrated their awareness of danger. No student had stepped off the pavement until it was safe to cross. No one had wandered off. Indeed all students seemed to keep a watchful eye on staff and to be keen not to get lost. So closely did James follow behind me that he had twice trodden on my heels. Lily usually linked arms

with Sally who was herself closely shadowed by Peter. I agreed with Sally that I could trust them to take better care of themselves than I had thought them capable of.

Before we set off I asked Sally to find clipboards and pens for each student and using her considerable artistic talents, to design, photocopy and distribute, an illustrated list of ingredients on which students would, with help if necessary, record their findings. This she did.

I decided that on the way to the bus-stop as well as when we were in town, Sally should lead the way, whilst I brought up the rear. This gave me an overall view of the party. Students walked in the middle in friendship groups. Sally would be responsible for four named students whilst I observed the rest. I further planned that when we crossed roads, Sally and her group would go first whilst I, with my, group, would cross separately a few seconds afterwards. I allowed a space of between ten and fifteen yards to grow between Sally and myself so that we did not appear to be one large group, but separate mini-groups of friends or individuals as can be seen in any high street. This plan appeared to result in less attention from other town users and students reported that they enjoyed it better.

Once in town, I sent Sally and her group to check out prices in the weekly market, whilst I and the other group noted down costs in the nearby supermarket before we met up again to return to college. Sally and I compared notes about what students had done whilst the two groups had been apart. There had been no mishaps other than the partial collapse of a display when Lily had removed a tin for a better look.

After this excursion, which had involved half of the students being out of my gaze for a while, had been successfully and safely completed, I felt much more relaxed about being off-campus with the group. Students had recorded the prices of goods and once back in college, I asked them to decide in which market they would purchase each item. They decided to get their vegetables in the weekly market because they were cheaper there, but to get the packaged goods at the supermarket where there was greater choice.

I thought that taking them into town had been very risky, but all students (except Michael) had shown themselves to be keen not to get lost. Michael was interested in

recordings of pop music and twice wandered off to look at stalls which sold them. I planned that in future Michael, who liked Sally, should be closely supervised by her, whilst I took two of Sally's group into mine. This was to ensure that Sally did not have more than her fair share of duties.

6.11 Learning the 'right' Bus-stop

The problem was that students did not recognise when the 'right' bus-stop had been reached and I decided that learning this was the next step.

As preparation for this, I decided that when we neared the stop at which we were to get off, Sally and I would not tell students to stand up ready to alight, but would walk to the front of the bus, smile at but not speak to students and hope they would follow our example. This they all always did. Once off the bus, Sally and I would silently count students and be ready to 'rescue' any who were still on the bus, but this strategy was not needed. In this way, we did not draw unwarranted attention to students. I planned further trips into town and felt even more relaxed about off-campus excursions.

I planned that the group would always get off the bus at the same stop in town because I wanted students to learn to alight at this place independently and did not want to confuse them with a series of different stops. To encourage this learning, I decided that Sally, Lettie and I would point out landmarks along the journey to this stop. I said things like:-

> Me - When I see the big library there, I know it's time to ring the bell to get off.

After that, students took it in turn to decide when 'our stop' was near as per a rota I had constructed. All students, except Peter, did this successfully on either their first or second attempt. Peter needed constant prompts to 'Look!' He finally managed this task in our last term together.

On our seventh trip into town Nigel, Steve, James and Michael spontaneously climbed to the upper deck on the bus, which I was not expecting as they had never done so before. I had suddenly lost control of the situation and considered sending Sally up to supervise them, but chose not to. Each student had shown that he could get off the bus at the 'right'

stop and if students needed any assistance I was sure one of them would come downstairs and say so, but none did. All came downstairs to alight appropriately.

Here, students were again showing more awareness and capability than I had given them credit for. Not only had they (or at least one of them) recognised the 'right' bus-stop, they had also been watching for it.

6.12 Recognising the 'right' Bus

Once students had learnt to alight in town at the 'right' stop, I wanted them to learn to recognise the 'right' bus. All buses from outside the college went into town so students did not need to learn which was the 'right' one on the outward journey. However, when we returned to college from town we had a choice of three differently numbered buses. Nigel, Michael, Steve, Aggie (and later Lettie) could 'read' the numbers and demonstrated no difficulty in remembering which three were the important ones.

Back in the baseroom, I organised Lily, Peter and James into drawing the 'right' numbers largely on card, colouring them and hanging them on the wall. I made a game out of 'reading' each card and this was played by these three student and Sally each morning whilst I was marking the register. Lily and Peter, at my instigation, then role-played asking passers-by if the appropriately numbered bus was due. For James, because of his speech difficulty, I wrote out a card, which was a request for someone to help him find the 'right' bus and arranged with him that he would keep this card in his wallet, having drawn a bus on it so that he could distinguish it from others he carried.

On subsequent trips I organised students into taking it in turns to be 'in charge' for the day and marshall the group onto the appropriate bus. By our second Easter all students, except Peter, could do this successfully and Peter managed it before the end of the course.

As a final test of whether students had learnt to travel independently on local buses, I might have asked them to make the journey into town and back individually and alone. However, if any of them had failed to return, s/he may have been approached by

unfriendly strangers before the student could telephone me or before I could reach the student. This was too big a risk and I did not take it.

6.13 Hidden Risk Taking

Throughout the course I was taking risks I did not know about at the time. I discovered, too late for the information to be of any practical use, that Aggie was taking 'lots' of medication. I never discovered what drugs she took or for which purposes. I think it safe to consider it likely that other students in the group were also on medication, but I was never given any information about drugs or treatments for any of the students. It is further likely that Peter had some unrevealed psychological problem of which I was told nothing, either before or during the course. Before Lettie joined the group I was told that she had behaviour problems and sought attention. Staff accompanying her would give no further details, saying only that she would probably not exhibit any of those problems in the group, an assumption at best naive, at worst, deceptive and potentially dangerous to all concerned.

Since I knew nothing about these risks, I could not plan for their assessment nor develop strategies to cope should a potentially dangerous situation arise.

6.14 Summary and Conclusion

Below is a list of the learning objectives for which I took risks and the outcome of each.

1 To teach students to use the hot water boiler safely.
This was achieved after three sessions.

2 To teach students to wash, dry and put away their drinking mugs.
This was achieved by the end of the third week.

3 To teach students to fill their mugs appropriately.
This was achieved by the end of the third week too.

4 To teach students to use the electric kettle safely and to pour from it.

All students achieved this within seven sessions.

5 To teach students to cook a simple meal.
This was achieved by the end of the first year.

6 To teach students to travel into town and back by bus.
Students, closely supervised, achieved this at the first attempt.

7 To teach students to know when they had reached the 'right' bus-stop.
All students, except Peter, achieved this at the first or second attempt. Peter achieved it by the end of our last term together.

8 To teach students to recognise the 'right' bus.
All students, except Peter, could do this by our second Easter. Peter learnt it by the end of the course.

Risk-taking involved:-

i) realistic risk assessment,

ii) detailed step-by-step preparation of students through role-play, modelling, instruction, reinforcement and practice,

iii) careful monitoring and supervision and

iv) review of progress and assessment of the next step.

6.15 Evaluation

Rogers offered no help in the process of risk taking in order to 'let them learn' (Rogers, 1983:18). Risk-taking was entirely my responsibility as tutor and given the learning objectives I had for the students, I had to find ways of exercising that responsibility without his help.

In order to keep risks to an absolute minimum I adopted an authoritarian, evaluative and directive role, whilst still being genuine, accepting and empathically understanding. I devolved some decisions democratically (for instance - to cook a meal and to decide on the menu), but I decided unilaterally to teach students to make hot drinks, handle boiling water, use cookers and to travel on buses to maximise their independent living skills. This was a change of role I needed to make in order to act responsibly.

Rogers however, did not work with those labelled as having learning difficulties. In recommending risk taking, he appears to have assumed pre-existing levels of maturity and skill in his groups. Such levels did not exist with this student group and I had to adapt the Rogerian approach to education to suit their needs.

I reverted to facilitation rather than teaching and to a democratic rather than an authoritarian style when students had learnt to cope with the hazards their learning involved.

I had been very nervous of taking even the smallest risk, but each time I did so (albeit with careful preparation) and the risk-taking had a good outcome, I grew in confidence about taking another and learnt to trust the students more. They also grew in confidence and in trust.

They trusted themselves to deal safely with electric and gas cookers, electric kettles and water heaters and boiling water. They trusted themselves (albeit under supervision) to cook a simple meal and to travel on buses.

They deepened levels of trust in each other when they shared ingredients and helped one another with learning.

They trusted me to help them cope with hazards, to support them to increase their control of their environment and hence to aid their independence. They trusted me to facilitate their learning.

Risk-taking enabled me to see students as capable learners and to trust them to make responsible decisions about what they wanted to learn.

Charts showing when main themes in risk-taking for learning were worked on during the course and the specific risks involved in each theme will be found as Appendices 7 and 8.

In the next chapter, I shall give a case study of each student, showing what learning took place within the climate of trust.

7.0 IDENTITY AND SELF-DEVELOPMENT: CASE STUDIES

7.1 Overview

In Chapters 5 and 6, I have presented evidence from the course under four themes – communication, decision making, self-evaluation and risk taking. I have shown how trust developed as the 'us and them' barriers were broken.

Rogers considered that we are all 'engaged in a struggle to discover our identity' which involves 'our appearance,... our values ...our stance in relation to others... and our whole philosophy of life (Rogers, 1983:33).

Rogers approached the question of identity only from a subjective perspective. He used evidence from work by Shiel (Rogers, 1983:45-56), a teacher working with elementary school youngsters. She judged the children's moves towards their 'true selves' by their behaviour. They 'developed values' and 'attitudes .. on their own and lived up to them' (Rogers, 1983:52).

For Rogers, one pathway to self-identity was 'group experience, facilitated by a person' (Rogers, 1983:37), who built trust with them by means of acceptance, congruence and empathic understanding. In a 'first name relationship' friendships could flourish and progress be made in self-development or 'in discovering who they are underneath the usual facade' (Roger, op cit).

In Rogers' estimation 'no one is ever completely successful in finding all her real (and ever-changing) self' but moves 'towards a greater awareness of what they are inwardly experiencing' (Rogers, 1983:39).

Rogers considered that by establishing a 'climate of trust,' tutors facilitated students' learning to decide their own values, to move away from facades and pretences and no longer feel the need to meet the expectations of others.

In this chapter I shall give case studies of each student and examine if, within the Rogerian 'climate of trust' people did 'drop the usual facade' and discover 'who they are underneath.' (Rogers, op cit).

7.2 Aggie

Aggie was a tall, single woman in her fifties, who told me that she lived alone supported by Social Services. She could read well enough to find the times of her favourite television programmes. She wrote long and often illegible pieces in her personal file.

Aggie refused to use anyone's name, calling everyone 'duck' instead. I knew she had learnt names because she always gazed appropriately at any named student. She was cool in manner to women students and avoided all contact with men. Aggie refused to join in the games we played. She said she liked being on her own, but it may also have been a 'withdrawal' strategy to manage her 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1968:44). It was clear that there was little trust between us.

Aggie suggested in October of the first year that we cook a meal together. We each contributed £1.50p to the cost, but cancelled the cooking because of a power cut. I refunded students' money. Aggie insisted that she had given me not £1.50p, but £2.50p. She threatened that unless I gave her the higher amount she would make trouble for me with Social Services.

Her attempt to defraud me could have been an instance of that aggression which O'Brien and Epstein (1988) saw as part of 'defensive self-esteem' and thus an indication of low self-regard. Aggie's trust in me was obviously very low. Breaking it down was not going to be easy. I continued to work with her, building trust and respect.

A critical incident that marked a turning point occurred in January. Waiting at the bus-stop, Aggie became disturbed when I refused her permission to go home early. I did not know whether she would be safe alone in the extra time. She repeatedly shouted, 'Bully! Bossy boots! Bitch!'

We were in a public place, bystanders were becoming interested and I was embarrassed and worried. I asked if I were right in thinking she was feeling very cross. She said I was and she was going to thump me. I felt frightened; Aggie is a well-built woman. At this point I could have become angry myself, or called for assistance from Sally. Instead, I asked if people had been very angry with her in the past.

Aggie stared past me and said, 'Bloody bitches.' I noticed the plural - a consequence of what Rogers called 'active concentration' (Rogers, 1951:32). Not one bitch but some of them. I do not find 'active concentration' easy at the best of times. Right then, I was finding it really difficult because of my fright and the public situation.

Drawing on my experiences of Rogerian counselling, I suggested that it was not I who merited her anger but perhaps someone from her past. I asked who the 'bloody bitches' had been. Aggie said they had been nurses in the local mental hospital. They had hit her and put her in a cupboard when she had been 'a little one,' because she would not do what they wanted.

They had been 'bullies...bossy boots...real bitches!' Those were the words she had used about me. Perhaps something in the present situation had reminded her. I asked her if she thought I was as bad as they. She grinned, became calmer and said I was not.

I continued to work at building trust with Aggie. I frequently chose to sit near her, to smile at her whenever our eyes met and I accepted her decision to opt out of games. As a consequence, by the following April, sufficient trust had been built between us for her to choose a seat next to me on a half-empty bus. She was fond of children and pointed out some girls playing. She asked if I had heard about 'wicked men' who abducted children. In her opinion they deserved 'horse-whipping'.

Aggie had mentioned only men as abductors although women and children do so too. When Michael had broken a group rule, Aggie suggested a harsh punishment. When Peter was upset, Aggie called him a 'babbie.' It was reasonable to suppose that Aggie had some personal agenda about men. Aggie added that what the female nurses had done 'was not as bad as what the men did.' Fearing what might be coming, but following my training in Rogerian counselling, I asked if she wanted to tell me about that. She said she never told anyone that. She added that she hated all men.

I said that what the male nurses had done was wrong and not her fault. However, not all men were the same and that she had come through it. Aggie said, 'Yes, I'm a survivor aren't I?'

The evidence suggests that Aggie's deepening levels of trust in me led to her discovering a new, more positive identity underneath the 'usual facade' (Goffman, 1968:44). It appeared to be a change which raised her self-esteem. It was a 'critical incident' (Woods, 1993:1) for her, since afterwards came a change in her behaviour. This may be illustrated by what happened on her birthday.

To celebrate it Aggie brought in refreshments. There was no pressure on her to do this as it was not the usual custom. When I asked if these were to be shared with everyone, including the men, she looked at each man in turn. Finally she said, 'Yes duck. Them an' all!' Aggie had relaxed her aggressive attitude towards the men in the group and begun to trust them. Aggie was building trust with all group members it seemed.

Nine months into the course, we went for a country walk, during which Aggie broke her leg in a way which nearly severed her foot. I accompanied her to the hospital, where the doctor asked me if she were taking any medication. I replied that as far as I knew she was not since this is what Aggie had always told me. Social Services later told medical staff that she was 'on lots.' Had my incorrect information been acted upon, there might have been a tragedy. Why Aggie misled me about her medication is impossible to know. Other members of the group were often quite open about their medication. Lettie told us in detail about hers when she needed a day off to attend a clinic. In spite of the new-found and ever-deepening level of trust between Aggie and me, trust was not absolute.

Thus Aggie dropped some of her 'usual facades' within the Rogerian 'climate' and moved some way towards discovering who she was 'underneath.'

When Aggie left hospital her staff rang me to say they had moved her to a new flat and she would no longer attend the course because of 'mobility difficulties.' They would not reveal her new address for reasons of confidentiality. I cannot know whether Aggie wanted us to have her new address. None of us ever heard from her again.

The incident not only illustrates how a student's learning experiences and friendships could be disrupted, but also illustrates the problems of inter-professional co-operation. What happened outside the group inevitably affected what happened in it.

7.3 James

James, who had Down's syndrome, was in his mid-twenties, lived at home with his family and had been a pupil at that special school where I had been teacher-counsellor. His mother told me that he seldom went out in his leisure time, except once a week to the pub with his family. He spent most evenings watching television or kicking a football in the garden. James' family could understand what he said up to a point and he would verbalise freely with them. Sally, I and other group members could not understand his speech. Had I not known James I might not have accepted him as a student.

James, Sally and I were the only group members who could use Makaton, a simple signing system. When it became clear he was the only user he refused to continue. This indicated a lack of trust in staff and other group members alike. During the first few weeks of the course James verbalised fairly frequently, but after I repeatedly failed to understand he did so less and less.

On reflection, what I should have done and what I would do differently if a similar situation arose, was to teach Makaton to all group members. With just five minutes instruction and practice twice daily, group members could have been communicating with James and he with them, fairly successfully by the end of the first term. By failing to teach Makaton, I 'disabled' James from full participation in the course and inhibited the build up of trust.

At the beginning of the course, James seldom smiled and seemed disinterested in learning to be independent. He seemed interested only in playing football on his own and in the relationship between himself and his mother. 'Mum' was one of the words he could say clearly. It is hardly surprising that he had not built trust with those with whom it was so difficult to communicate.

When we reached 'impasse,' I mentally went over past conversations to try to discover what might have caused his difficulty. I explained again using simpler words. I worked out probable answers and offered these. In these ways I attempted to understand, but without confirmation from him, I could never be certain that I had.

On one occasion, we were listing possible menus and James wanted to add an item, but we could not understand. By mime and suggestion we worked out it involved chicken but got no further. James exhibited frustration and trust was again inhibited.

James slept during some group discussions. When asked why, he indicated he was tired. However, he never slept when working at the tables, or in the minibus. He may have been taking medication which made him sleepy or he may have been using sleep as a withdrawal strategy for managing his 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1968:44).

I never saw James 'talking' to anyone on-campus. After three months on the course, James was still spending lengthy periods alone, building up his football-skills. Other group members began to join him until, after our first Christmas, students played regularly. In this way James and they built trust.

James invented his own ways of airing his opinion. He would prod a person with whom he agreed, then touch his own chest, nodding and grunting. My failure to teach Makaton to group members had at least encouraged James to be innovative.

In the third term, James' identity in the group was challenged in a 'critical incident.' I introduced the topic of safety in the kitchen. During the discussion of chip-pan fires, James appeared not to be listening. I asked why and he said, 'Mum.' I decided he meant his mother cooked his chips. I asked what would happen when his mother was no longer there.

By offering alternatives and by empathic understanding (Rogers, 1961:62) I came to realise that James thought his mother and he would continue as they were forever.

I considered that honesty would build more trust than colluding with his misapprehension so introduced an exploration of ageing and death. Nigel pointed out that one day James' mother would die. James appeared horrified. After tea-break, group members said that James had spat in Nigel's coffee. I had no way of knowing if the spitting and the revelation about human mortality were linked, but I think they were. Later he patted Nigel and repeated the word 'sorry.' There followed spontaneously a discussion, started by Lily, about how hard it is to lose loved-ones.

I expected the spitting incident to cause a rift between James and others. Instead, the whole-hearted apology seemed to rebuild trust between James and group members. since he went to lunch with Steve's arm round his neck and accompanied by Lily and all the other men. This may have been because, as White (1996:55) found, when judging whom to trust or distrust, a person often takes into account 'a willingness to admit and forgive fault.' Thereafter James was much more frequently seen in the company of male group members.

James' dependency on others was significantly reduced when he learnt to cross roads. I offered to teach him this when he was having difficulty choosing a learning goal in our second year. He showed his pleasure in his learning by miming his road-crossing skills to students in the circle. They told him he was 'great!' This marked a new point in his rising self-esteem.

His greatest step towards self-directed learning came when, in the fourth term, James 'discovered' some drums in the baseroom. He began coming back early from lunch to play them. Michael found a guitar and the two gave concerts to the group.

After his discovery of the drums and his road-crossing success he seemed to both Sally and myself to be more relaxed with his peers. He smiled more. The tapes show that he stayed awake throughout the last term. If James had used sleep as a withdrawal strategy for managing his 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1968:44), he had faded it out.

An incident towards the end of the course marked the extent to which he had developed his own judgement. Previously when we cooked James' vegetables came already prepared by his mother. At first he seemed pleased by this, but later, having seen that other group members prepared their own, he appeared to change his mind and eventually cooked only those he had prepared himself.

By the end of the course, James sometimes chose to sit next to me in cafes, though more often with Sally of whom he was very fond. It seemed that trust had been built between staff and James. He had come to see himself as someone who could learn to do some things independently. He became more self-directing in cafes and when cooking. Though the evidence is not conclusive, I thought it safe to assume that he had improved his level

of self-esteem and become more confident. James built trust in himself, in staff and in other group members.

Because of communication difficulties it was impossible to know whether James dropped his 'usual facades' and moved towards discovering who he was 'underneath.' However, towards the end of the course, James stayed awake more, smiled more frequently, socialised more and showed pleasure in his new-found independence skills. I can only trust that these are indications that he did.

7.4 Lettie

Lettie, a bubbly twenty-five year old without visible stigma, was not one of the original members of the group but was brought in by her keyworker, Beattie, at the beginning of the second term. Aware that a new member might have difficulties fitting into an already well-established group, I instigated a group round in which we each introduced ourselves. Then Lettie told us at length about herself.

Beattie told me that Lettie carried the labels learning difficulties and challenging behaviour. This latter consisted of talking obsessively about her illnesses and of 'running off' from staff supervision. Lettie was to have a worker with her in the group. This sounded too intrusive and I proposed that the worker stay in the canteen, although she accompanied us on off-campus trips. The worker avoided talking about Lettie's out-of-college life.

Lettie wanted to know if the group could help her to 'get rid of that lot' (meaning Beattie and her 'minder') and achieve an independent life-style. Beattie said that to achieve that she had to stop 'running off' and talking about her illnesses. It seemed a tall order for the group to help her with all that.

In spite of Lettie's stated aim that she wanted to be rid of the minder, she often acted in ways that ensured that the minder stayed. She almost daily put items on her lunch-tray that she could not pay for, shouted loudly at the minder in the canteen and frequently hid so that the minder thought she had run away. It seemed that Lettie did not trust herself to act reasonably if left unsupervised.

A student who talked obsessively and ran away might disrupt group proceedings and I suggested a week's 'probation,' which everyone accepted. During this week Lettie neither mentioned her illnesses nor ran away. In a vote at the end of the first week, the group decided to invite her to join us.

In the following week, Lettie asked if she could kiss Steve. He went red and said 'No!' Then Lettie said she had cystitis, a rash and other ailments which she described in detail. I stopped her. This was not 'leaving the locus of control' (Rogers, 1951:150) with Lettie,

but I was being genuine. I thought that if I did not stop her, her needs would swamp those of others. She ran out of the room.

This evidence suggests that Lettie could talk about her illnesses or not at will. I suspected that talking of her ailments was a strategy for 'covering' her 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1968:44). Rogers had not worked with people labelled as having learning difficulties or challenging behaviour. However, since he had recommended his 'climate of trust' 'for all troubled, maladjusted individuals' (Rogers, 1961:37) I was minded not to give up too soon.

A few minutes later, Lettie's worker came to announce that Lettie 'was ready to return.' Group members voted to allow her back if she did not mention her illnesses, did not run out of the room and did not embarrass Steve. I did not think that Lettie would accept these terms, but she did. It seemed that trust was beginning to develop between Lettie and other group members.

The turning point came when, in the following session, Sally spontaneously interrupted Lettie's talk about her illnesses with a large 'stage' yawn. After that, when Lettie talked of her illnesses, (which was on average two or three times per session during the first month and three or four times per week in the following two months), we would all yawn and chuckle at the same time. After the second time, Lettie too joined in the amusement. As Dainow and Bailey say, 'when the tension is high in a group,' laughter can provide an opportunity for members to 'let off steam' (Dainow and Bailey, 1990:167).

The introduction of the yawns and the laughter was a 'critical event' (Woods, 1993:1) for Lettie. From this time she talked about her illnesses less and less until by the end of her first two terms she had stopped altogether. It seemed reasonable to suppose that Lettie had abandoned one of her strategies for managing her 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1968:44). The fact that the group helped her achieve her goal of giving up talking about her illnesses built trust between them and Lettie.

On rare occasions when she was not getting her own way Lettie would still threaten to run off. When she had been with us for four months, I asked her if she could do without her campus worker. I told her that if she ran I would not run after her and the group

might not have her back. In exchange for not running away, Lettie would be realising her stated aim to rid herself of her minder, at least whilst in college. I left the locus of control with Lettie, but my action made it clear that I trusted her to manage without the minder. My trust in her may have triggered trust in herself as she chose to go ahead with the plan and try to manage on her own.

There were three times before the end of the first year upon which Lettie threatened to run. On each occasion I reminded her how well she had been doing and reiterated the group's decision not to have her back if she went. Each time she chose to stay. Thus Lettie had given up the second 'challenging behaviour.'

The next 'critical incident' (Woods, 1993:1) happened outside the group. Lettie told me that in her group home she had given up talking about her illnesses and running away. Beattie had been so pleased that she had unilaterally decided that Lettie would spend each evening until 9pm unsupervised. Lettie told me that this was good news, but I noticed that her voice lacked enthusiasm. Lettie was absent the following session and on her return told me she had run away from home and her privilege had been withdrawn.

I recalled Lettie's apparent lack of enthusiasm for the lengthy period unsupervised, so I asked how she had felt about her time alone. She said it was 'nice' but 'scarey.' She had been unable to cope and had run away. I asked if shorter lengths of time would be better. Her face brightened. She and I role-played ways of saying this to Beattie, who agreed to reinstate her priviledge in shorter bursts. This time it all went well.

Had I not been trained to notice the mismatch between the glowing words she used to describe her unsupervised time and the lack-lustre voice in which she spoke them, I would not have been able to help her arrive at a more satisfactory and supportive arrangement with her keyworker. This helped build considerable trust between us.

Lettie had major problems in her relationships with men. When she had been with us for five months, she accused Steve in the group of having touched her sexually without her permission. After an in-depth investigation, she admitted that Steve had not so much touched her as allowed his hand to be guided where she wanted it to go. Alarmed at

what was happening he had moved to sit with Nigel. Frustrated and angry Lettie had decided to 'get him into trouble.'

The group voted, with minimal staff input, to exclude Lettie for three weeks. I worried that she would not return at the end of it, and rang her to say so. I was pleased when Lettie returned on time.

Later Lettie and I discussed the incident more woman-to-woman than tutor to student. From our discussion, I deduced that she was desparate for sexual encounters but had no knowledge of how to begin or sustain a relationship. I suggested she asked the group for help, which she did.

Within the circle we suggested places in which she might find a sexual partner and role-played ways of behaving with one rather than offering sex straight away, which had been her usual opening gambit. In December we were looking at slides, one of which depicted rape. Lettie said that she had been raped, which suggests a huge trust had been built up within the group.

She described how it had happened and asked if it had been her fault. I said no but that she had been naive to leave the cinema with two strangers and we role-played other ways of dealing with the situation. Towards the end of the course Lettie and Nigel formed a relationship which ended when she found someone she preferred.

By this stage, Lettie had stopped talking about her illnesses, stopped running away from workers and found a different way of behaving with men other than offering them sex on first meeting. Lettie was building trust in herself.

Further evidence of the trust had built up with Lettie came at the end of the course when she invited me to her Level Two meeting. Neither she nor I knew the significance of the title, but at the meeting were Lettie's parents, Beattie and other social workers and people who worked in her group home.

Beattie said Lettie's behaviour since their last meeting had shown 'outstanding improvement' and the only thing in her life that had changed significantly had been her

attendance at our group. Another social worker said he was impressed by the work of the group and I told the meeting something about Rogers and my establishment of his 'climate of trust' (Rogers, 1983:3).

People then talked about Lettie, but not to her. I suggested she tell everyone how she had changed and what she wanted for her future. She said she did not talk about her illnesses any more and had proved that she could cope alone in college and with time alone. She now knew that she did not have to go to bed with men and could have fun with them in other ways. She said she had learnt to behave more like a grown up.

I believed that since Lettie's criteria for 'readiness' had been fulfilled she would enjoy further moves towards independence. Beattie said there were still many 'things' that needed work but that if Lettie continued 'in the way she had been going' it might be considered in a year or two. These confidential 'things' would be discussed privately with Lettie later. Had I been told earlier what they were perhaps they could have been worked on in the group and some progress made. This suggests that better inter-professional co-operation could have helped in Lettie's progress.

Lettie burst into tears and the meeting was closed. I have not seen her since so do not know if she has achieved the 'ordinary life' (Towell, 1988) she craved.

Sadly, although Lettie had built up trust in staff and students on the course and trust in herself, she was not yet trusted by her family and social workers.

7.5 Lily

Lily, a women in her fifties, who lived in the same group home as Peter, had been a college student 'for a long time,' often repeating a course year after year.

She had a ready smile, but was frequently in tears, often smiling and crying simultaneously. When asked the cause of her tears, she usually said she did not know.

At the beginning of the course Lily exhibited anxiety which led me to believe she had low self-esteem. I thought it safe to assume that by smiling through her tears she was attempting to manage her 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1968:44) by avoiding self pity. Clearly her attempts at cheerfulness were at odds with her true feelings.

Much of what Lily said about her past centred on loss. At the end of our first month Lily, in tears, announced she was going to move house. She had not seen her new home and said she was very worried about moving there.

Then Lily seemed to bring a third person into the conversation. She said,

'Don't be a silly Lily. Come on, give us a smile.

At this stage, we had not yet established a relationship of trust. When I asked who the other person was she did not know. I asked if she were talking to herself, but she said that was silly.

I thought at the time that Lily was re-running a 'tape' in her head and repeating comforting words from it. I assumed she was thereby bringing past reassurance into present anxiety. She may have been mentally ill and hearing voices, but I think the previous explanation more likely.

I built further trust with Lily by accepting her tears and fears and by not trying to 'jolly' her out of them.

In the following week Lily visited her new home and liked it.

In our third week, when we were talking about 'People who help me,' Lily said she liked her worker, Pat, because 'she doesn't hit me.' I asked if anyone hit her. She said she had been sent away as a child, perhaps because she was 'Silly.' A nurse there had hit her because Lily could not do what was wanted. Lily's voice rose in pitch as she described further appalling experiences. She repeatedly referred to herself as 'Silly Lily' and I thought it had become part of her identity.

The following week (and on two occasions later in the course), Lily wept because, although she had tried to make conversation with other women students in the canteen, they had ignored her.

Lily told us she wanted to learn to read, although she could not make the appropriate sounds for letters of the alphabet. She told me that she had once been 'clever at school.' Then she had been hit on the head with a bat after which they 'couldn't make Silly Lily clever again.' Without any records, either educational or health, I could not verify what had happened.

After experiencing frequent upsets, without obvious improvement, after two months, I asked Lily's keyworker how they dealt with her weeping at home. It was either ignored or she was told to cheer up and smile. Here the workers were exhorting Lily to 'adopt a cheerful manner and avoid self-pity' (Goffman, 1968:139). They were thereby encouraging her to live out her 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1968:44). Adopting a cheerful manner was, it seemed, in conflict with Lily's true feelings. Adopting Rogers' principles of genuineness and empathic understanding, I encouraged her to express these feelings. I said I was sorry for her pain and made no attempt to stop her tears. This approach led to a 'critical incident' (Woods, 1993:1) which supplied the breakthrough.

In our fourth term whilst discussing happiness, I asked Lily if she were happy. She replied, 'Yes, thank you.' Her words were positive, but her eyes held tears. I reflected back to her that she was giving conflicting messages. She said she wanted to be happy, but she could not be. She said God had made her 'right' in the first place, but then he had 'taken it all away forever' and now she was 'all wrong.'

We had a group round to see if everyone was happy all the time. Lily heard that no one was and that everyone had difficulties, but all were happy some of the time. We told her we did not think her 'silly.' Lily referred to herself as 'Silly Lily,' less frequently thereafter. This incident seemed to build trust between Lily and other group members.

The next critical incident illustrates the leap she made towards self-directed behaviour. At the beginning of the course Lily often sited the 'locus of control' (Rogers, 1951:150) in her staff. They had not given her her bus pass or they had not told her to wear her coat.

When we cooked Lily ate everything her staff sent and was often observed retching. I could have told her to leave the food, but following Rogers' approach, I took the view that whilst I treated Lily as a child she would not learn to be self-directing. However, I was concerned that she would make herself ill so I reminded all students that the food was theirs to do with whatever they liked. Lily kept on eating.

In March of the second year, Lily again cooked too much. Half way through it she gave me a please-can-I-leave-this look. Following Rogers approach again, I turned away. Lily looked at the food for three more minutes, then scraped what was left into the bin. Lily had become self-directing. It helped her build trust in herself.

Evidence that this was not just an isolated incident soon followed. Later that month Lily declined to play a group game because her leg hurt. Her staff might have suggested this, but when she saw the game involved little moving about, she joined in. She announced later that the men could do more of the washing up at home.

Here Lily was building further trust in herself and working to reject the 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1968:44) she had been assigned. She was moving towards her 'true self,' in Rogerian terms, by deciding her own values (Rogers, 1983:266).

Learning in a 'climate of trust'

When Lily tried something new, however unchallenging the task seemed to be, she always looked at me and said, 'I can't do it, can I?' Initially, I usually said I thought we might be able to do it together. After the first term, I changed this to, 'Well, you've often done things successfully before. How about trying this?'

Here I was not pressurising Lily to learn, but understanding her reluctance to try and fail. She often seemed genuinely surprised as well as pleased when she got things right. Success built trust between us.

In the second year, Lily achieved two learning goals. The first was to work towards managing her own money. This was a high-level aim, and I suggested we begin by learning coins up to 5p and move onto 10p when that had been achieved. Lily often used avoidance strategies such as feeling sick or needing the toilet, defences against the hurt failure would bring. However, by working for ten minutes, twice daily, both targets were reached within five weeks. Working together successfully built more trust.

Then I asked Lily if she wanted to continue learning about coins or if she wanted to choose a different learning goal. Here I left the 'locus of control' (Rogers, 1951:150) with Lily. She chose to read a story to a child who was due to visit her in two months. However, Lily could not read small words like 'cat' or 'bed.' I told her that I doubted we could do it in time although she might achieve her goal in the long-term. Lily said she was disappointed. She had looked forward to having the child sit on her knee whilst the story was read.

On reflection, I wondered if the child sitting on her knee and the sharing of the story were the important things. I found some Nursery Rhymes and Lily chose one. I taught her to memorise it and point out relevant items in the accompanying illustration. Lily had to work hard to achieve this. After the child's visit she said it had been a lovely experience. She added that she then knew she could learn things. She pronounced herself delighted. Further trust had been built.

At the beginning of the course Lily had been anxious and had referred to herself as 'Silly Lily.' She had retreated from the risk of further injury by avoiding learning. This evidence suggests that she had very low self-esteem and little trust in either herself as a learner or others as teachers.

By the end of the course Lily had stopped calling herself silly and had stopped crying. By trusting herself to learn she discovered that she could, although her educational progress was modest. She became more self-directed and independent. It seems safe to

assume that her self-esteem had been considerably boosted by her experiences within the climate of trust. Through trust in herself and in me, she had discovered a new identity as a learner.

7.6 Michael

Michael was an articulate man in his late-twenties. He had Down's syndrome, liked pop-music, could read simple words and lived with his parents. At the beginning of the course, he boasted about how much more money he had than others. He usually wore a suit, shirt and tie, chosen, he said, by his parents. He would invite positive comments on his appearance and his possessions.

Michael pronounced himself 'fond of the ladies.' He particularly liked Sally and at the beginning of the course would refer to her as his 'girlfriend' although Sally discouraged this. He sat next to her whenever possible and agreed with her whatever her views until Sally told him she found it irritating.

Michael often told us that he thought he was sweet. He defined being sweet as smiling and dressing nicely and having good manners. He said he 'got let off lots of things' because of this sweetness. Aggie said that 'babbies' were sweet, not 'grown men! Although no one disagreed with her, Michael did not seemed disturbed by the group's reaction. He seemed only interested in himself and certainly not in building trust between himself and other group members.

Michael's definition of himself as sweet did not match his behaviour. He was to a large extent unconscious of the needs of others. When we held celebrations he contributed nothing. Once when Lily was in tears, he went to sleep. He promised us birthday cake but none arrived.

At the end of the first term Michael angered group members by going out for a meal and missing a session. The group decided he should not be allowed to accompany them for their Christmas meal out. Michael was very upset. Later, he apologised to the group and said it would not happen again. This seemed to build trust between him and other group members.

This incident proved a 'critical event' (Woods, 1993:1) for Michael and for me too (see page 127). Michael had to face the disapproval of the group. Afterwards he became less self-centred and more conscious of the needs of others.

When Nigel wanted help to stop speaking so much, Michael offered to nudge him each time he noticed this happening and this plan seemed to work well. When Aggie had her accident, Michael rolled up his jacket to make her a pillow. When James forgot his cookery ingredients Michael shared his own with him. When Lily became upset he patted her hand. When Sally was absent he suggested a get-well card. On his birthday he brought chocolates to share. Michael never mentioned being sweet again.

From about the beginning of the third term, Michael stopped wearing his formal attire and began to wear T-shirts, casual jumpers, jeans and trainers, much like other group members. It is probable that he had built up trust and wanted to identify with them.

A critical event for Michael occurred just before his birthday in our second year. He arrived in tears. A young man Michael had known previously, also labelled as having learning difficulties had died. I instigated discussions of both death and the learning difficulty label. No one in the group, except Nigel who refused to discuss the matter, thought they were so labelled.

Michael continued to sob and I wondered why. The dead man had not been a friend and Michael had not seen him since childhood. I listened carefully. Michael interspersed comments about the dead man with comments about his birthday. Perhaps there was some connection. I discovered that the young man and Michael had been the same age. When I asked him if he were worried that he too would die soon, he said that he was, very worried.

In the group we discussed ageing, dying, longevity and associated emotions and Michael eventually said he felt better. Our discussion of feelings seemed to build further trust between Michael and others.

Records show that after this event Michael seldom mentioned his appearance and responded more to others. Twice he commented positively on the appearance of others and when Lily had a tickly cough, he fetched her a drink of water. Eye-contact charts show that he spent more time looking at others and less fidgetting.

In the second term as part of our work on relationships I showed slides. Michael continued to vote for this, but sat on the back row, red in the face. After the third session he began sitting on the front row, but without his glasses. I asked why. He said he had taken off his glasses because he did not want to see 'women's bits.' I asked how it made him feel to see them. He said it made him feel 'uncomfortable.' I had expected him to say 'embarrassed.'

I checked back with him for verification (Rogers, 1942:123) that he had indeed meant 'uncomfortable.' He insisted that was the right word. He clutched his jumper on his lap. I wondered if he had an erection and that was making him 'uncomfortable.' I described what having an erection is and suggested to the group that some men might have such a physical reaction to the slides and asked for comments. Nigel and Steve said they did. Michael said he had thought he was the only one to whom such things happened. Now he knew that it was a natural occurrence he was not so bothered by it.

My use of the Rogerian counselling skill 'active concentration' had meant I had noticed Michael's problem. From that date Michael took a much more active part in sex education sessions and wore his glasses.

At the end of our two years together, some young women students from a 'Caring' course came to meet the group. Michael made no overdue efforts to impress them, but made himself inobtrusively helpful. He told them, without boastfulness, how he had created stories on the computer, learnt more about handling his own money and about literacy.

By the end of the course Michael was very different from how he had been when we first met. He dropped the 'usual facades' of inviting positive attention and of calling himself 'sweet.' He did not boast any longer. He showed more interest in others and less in how others were perceiving him.

During the penultimate term Michael and his family had begun negotiations with Social Services for him to move into supported independent living. When I met him again after the end of the course he told me, 'I've got a place of my own. I'm a man now!

This evidence suggests that living within the 'climate of trust, Michael had learnt to trust and had let go of some of the facades and pretences with which he had sought to manage his 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1968:44).

7.7 Nigel

Nigel was one of the most able students in the group and popular with the men. He was keen to appear clever. He said he had 'G.C.Es for everything except Science,' but could write only simple words. He told us that after leaving school he had studied Information Technology until he 'knew everything the tutor knew.' However, he could not load a disc into our computer and did not know what the mouse was for. Nigel always had lots of money which he said came from his 'job in a fish and chip shop' although he thought that cod and chips there cost 50p.

Nigel used defensive strategies that suggested he was 'denying difference.' This is one of Goffman's indicators of 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1968:139).

In the first term, students were asked to bring in benefit books to prove their status for the free course. After much chivvying Nigel brought in firstly his brother's book, and then his own book wrapped in brown paper.

Nigel had a season ticket for the local football team's matches. He attracted a lot of admiration from other group members with whom he played football at lunchtime, He was the only one who knew the rules and always cast himself as manager, referee and star player rolled into one. This behaviour has parallels with an 'heroic feat' mentioned by Goffman (1968:44) as part of his 'spoiled identity.' The games might also have built up friendships and trust within the team.

Nigel often mentioned his cousin Mandy and in our first December he started calling her his girlfriend. When we were talking about relationships, Nigel told us Mandy wanted him to 'learn how to love her - the sex part.' Our ensuing work on relationships showed that there were some large gaps in his sexual knowledge.

In September of the second year he told us Mandy had accepted his proposal and that they had had sex many times. The following week he pointed out the very expensive wedding dress he was going to buy for her. The wedding arrangements sounded very exciting (if grandiose) and he received much attention because of it over the ensuing

weeks. It seemed to me that he did not trust himself or others sufficiently to be natural with them and sought to invent an interesting persona to impress.

Nigel may have been mentally ill, but with no access to his medical or educational history, I adhered to Rogers' approach to education to 'express my feelings' (Rogers, 1961:33), so I told him that I valued him just the way he was.

I encouraged improvement in Nigel's level of self-esteem by drawing group attention to ways in which he had been friendly to others or contributed to group acivities. By asking him frequently what he thought of his work, I gave him opportunities for reflection and for self-praise to maximise both his self-esteem and confidence in himself as a learner.

Like other group members Nigel began to set his own learning goals from the beginning of the second year. He learnt to write a letter, to add coins and to give change to £1.00 and to help other students with their learning. It is very probable that these activities built trust between himself and others and further raised his self-esteem. I built trust with Nigel by frequently reminding him that I liked him the way he was and by admiring the way he helped others.

Records show that from three months into his personal learning programme, Nigel began to mention his forthcoming wedding less and less. I noticed that he and Lettie often ate lunch alone together, when previously Nigel had always eaten with male group members. Three times in January I noticed the pair holding hands at the bus-stop as I went home.

In the middle of February, Nigel told us the wedding was off. He did not appear to be at all upset or to know what his fiancee thought about it. Instead of being 'the star' in lunchtime football games, Nigel walked about the campus with Lettie, who trusted and admired him enough to become his girl-friend. In the following week, Lettie and Nigel announced that they were 'an item.'

The acquisition of a flesh and blood girlfriend was probably a 'critical event' (Woods, 1993:1) in Nigel's life in that it seemed to mark the beginning of his move away from what I thought of as fantasy, towards a more realistic life-style. Nigel stopped trying to

be the 'star of the show' and became more relaxed in the group. Twice he acknowledged that he had been mistaken without trying to cover the mistake, bluster or seem particularly concerned. This was a marked change in his behaviour and showed he had built sufficient trust in himself and in the group to allow himself to be wrong occasionally. The relationship broke up when Lettie found another boyfriend three months later.

I noticed other changes in Nigel's behaviour as he learnt to trust the group. Instead of reporting some wildly interesting activity for a rainy weekend in March, he complained of boredom. When I planned to visit France, Nigel expressed his envy. When Michael announced a family celebration in an expensive restaurant, Nigel said he wished he could take Lettie somewhere nice. Had Nigel been fantasising, he seemed to have left this strategy behind.

On first acquaintance with Nigel, I thought he exhibited high self-esteem. He acted confidently and appeared as competent as other college students, neither of which behaviours typify low self-esteem (Mruk, 1999:90). Nigel did not appear to be anxious, depressed or cautious, which, are further indications of low self-esteem. However, he did show himself to be vulnerable and insecure when he initially refused to bring in his benefit book.

It is necessary to think of two types of low self-esteem to understand Nigel's actions. The second type is described by Coopersmith (1967) as 'discrepant' self-esteem and by O'Brien and Epstein, (1988) as 'highly defensive.' Those exhibiting this second type of low self-esteem are, as the evidence suggests Nigel was at the beginning of the course, insecure and boastful, whilst at the same time seemingly outgoing, confident and competent. Nigel had, by the end of the course, left behind his 'discrepant self-esteem' and was truly outgoing and confident.

By the end of the two years within the 'climate of trust,' Nigel had left behind the 'usual facade' of his grandiose tales and discovered a new identity as a 'boy-friend.

7.8 Peter

Peter, in his forties, was very thin. He usually walked about with his head down and avoided physical contact. If another student sat next to him he moved away.

When he first joined the group Peter seldom spoke except short replies to direct questions. When spoken to he would 'jump' and raise his hands to his face as if warding off a blow. Many of Peter's early illustrations were black and white drawings or coloured with drab greens, greys and purple. He seldom finished anything, but by the end of the course his pictures were being about 90% completed and more brightly coloured (see Appendix 10).

Peter's trust in himself and in others was very low.

Although he spoke little, his short responses were often succinct. He alone could accurately sum up twenty minutes of interaction in just a few words.

Peter's build up of trust showed first in evidence from the eye-contact charts. In the first week they showed that Peter constantly stared at either his own or Lily's shoes (he shared a group home with Lily). A month later charts showed that he was giving other group members (but not me) eye contact briefly and was giving appropriate eye-contact with everyone, including myself, the following June.

Peter and Nigel were the first students to learn every group member's name. I do not know how Peter learnt this so quickly. On the evidence of the eye-contact charts, it was certainly was not because he linked a person's name with his/her face.

Peter had a way of sitting that looked rather like a child in the foetal position. A reasonable interpretation of this behaviour was that he was trying to manage his 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, op cit) by attempting to become invisible.

I tried to understand how it felt to be Peter. On one occasion I mirrored his body-language. I felt anxious, isolated and miserable. I guessed Peter felt like that, but I did

not ask him for verification. I did not want confirmation that he felt so awful. If he did, I could do nothing to bring him relief from it.

The evidence suggests that at the beginning of the course Peter managed his 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1968:44) by 'withdrawal,' though in Peter's case it was not merely withdrawal from 'normals' but withdrawal from everyone.

Peter never learnt to relax fully although the evidence shows considerable progress. Relaxation sessions were generally so successful that some students went to sleep. During the first term Peter opted not to join in. By the end of the first term he would sit erect and tense on a chair whilst others sprawled full length. By the end of the course he would lie in a hunched position on a large floor cushion, but seldom closed his eyes.

I could see nothing wrong with Peter's reasoning. The problem was more readily located in his level of anxiety.

One activity we had, involved a series of ten cards, which when placed in the right order told a simple tale. Each card held clues (the bicycle is present in this one but not in that, the girl has long hair on card A but short on Card B indicating when she went to the hairdresser, etc). This was the activity that was most problematic for most of the students. Peter was the only group member who never had difficulty putting the cards in the right order or in explaining his reasons for sequencing the cards as he did.

Peter's staff always delivered him to the baseroom door. His cooking ingredients were always measured out, wrapped and placed in a bag. It was clear that Peter had not packed it himself as often he did not know what was in it. His keyworker told me that they tried to make his life as trouble-free and as unchallenging as possible. I asked why and whether Peter was taking medication for his anxiety, but this information 'was confidential.' I was left in ignorance of Peter's educational and medical background and the dangers this led to.

Peter regularly voted to cook. In the first term when he peeled potatoes he stroked them with the peeler whilst looking out of the window. Whilst I showed him how to do it, he looked anywhere except at the potato. When I re-directed his gaze he got on better, but

recordings show that my re-directions were at the rate of four or five per minute. Peter obviously found concentration difficult. He may have been heavily drugged and perhaps mentally ill.

In the second term, he watched but took no action as the water boiled over the side of his pan. I showed him how to control the heat. Peter was concerned that he had 'stuffed up again' and seemed to expect me to be angry. I told him that everybody made mistakes. They were opportunities to learn. He gave me a look that I interpreted as being one of disbelief. Peter's response to his failed attempts at learning indicated that he had met with harsh criticism in the past.

Peter went to great lengths to shield himself from what he saw as the 'agony' of making mistakes. It was a strategy that worked well for him but it stopped him learning.

At the end of the second term, when making a salad, he saved the outside of the lettuce and threw away the heart. He saved the whiskers of his spring onions and threw away the pieces everyone else ate. Surely Peter had eaten salad before and knew what it ought to look like. I remarked that he had saved the rubbish. He replied that he considered himself to be 'rubbish.'

His remarks about his being 'rubbish' led me to believe that he was depressed and anxious, both indicators of low self-image. He may also have been psychotic. Bednar, et al, 1989, agrees that providing people with positive feedback about themselves and their behaviour is a way of building self-esteem. By providing the following positive feedback I was being genuine (Rogers, 1983:1).

I reminded him of his expertise in the sequence games and of his ability to sum up a discussion in a couple of sentences. I said I did not think he was 'rubbish.' I asked if there was a lot of 'rubbish' in his life. He said it was all rubbish.

I did not ask him what he meant by 'all.' It seems safe to assume that he meant his entire existence, his identity. Peter had no visible stigma if his self-effacing body language were discounted. Peter did not look for social encounters of any kind. He certainly did not 'adopt a cheerful, outgoing manner,' or 'try to make the best of things,' or 'deny

differentness' or display 'self pity or resentment' (Goffman, 1968:45). Thus he managed his 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, op cit) by withdrawal. He displayed all of Newman and Newman's (1987) indications of low self esteem - vulnerability, insecurity, anxiety and depression - as well as 'retreating from the possibility of further injury' (Mruk, 1999:89).

On the evidence Peter had more potential than he gave himself credit for. He could think clearly and logically and on the evidence could have learnt many skills. It was, however, as if he had locked the door on learning. I continued to show him unconditional acceptance (Rogers, 1961:62) and to say that my liking for him did not depend upon his learning new things.

In our third term, Peter volunteered the information (this in itself was a change in his behaviour) that he enjoyed the free lunchtime concerts we sometimes attended. At about this time, he added yellow and blue to his illustrations. Sometimes, whilst working, he hummed snatches from the concerts.

As a learning goal, he chose crossing roads. Here, far from 'retreating from the possibility of further injury,' one of Mruk's (1999:89) indications of low self-esteem, Peter was asking to be taught. During work on this goal, a 'critical event' (Woods, 1993:1) occurred.

He and I began road-crossing training on a one-to-one basis. Peter's body language showed how nervous he was. Progress was very slow, but by the middle of the fifth term, I was happy for him to cross minor on-campus roads unsupervised. I thought it probable that our work had built trust. Two days later, I saw him shadowing Lettie across the road. In a joking voice I shouted to him to look for traffic for himself.

The consequence was totally unpredictable and a critical event that changed relationships. Peter fled back across the road, his pelvis pushed forward, his feet lifted high, as if the devil were behind him. He shrieked, 'You've messed up again boy. You'll have to be made to listen!'

Who was it who seemed to be threatening punishment? Was he hearing voices and was mentally ill, or was he 'running a tape' in his head as he remembered past experiences?

(See 'Lily' for a similar occurrence). I favoured the latter view, but it could have been either or both.

He raced away from me and bumped into a small tree, still shrieking. I raced after him. Totally forgetting that he hated physical contact, I put my arms around him and held him tightly; it was a spontaneous, perhaps instinctive reaction.

I apologised for teasing him and tried to calm him. He was deeply concerned that he had 'messed up again!' I said that he had not 'messed up' but that I had. I should have known not to joke with him about making mistakes and I was sorry. I asked who it was who had told him to pay more attention. He said it had been 'the monks,' his teachers at boarding school who had caned on the backs of his legs to 'teach him not to make mistakes.'

Had he been acting out moving his body to escape a beating? I did not ask since it did not seem important. I continued to hold him and he did not push me away. After a while, Peter lifted his head and I moved away from him. I felt embarrassed to realise I had been hugging one of my students in public, but did not regret it.

I said I was sorry he had been hit and that it should not have happened. I reiterated that in this group, mistakes were acceptable, as learning opportunities. I had made the mistake of teasing him. Peter asked what other mistakes I had made. I told him of some, both professional and personal, at length. It seemed of great import to him to know that professionals make mistakes and some are capable of saying so.

After this 'critical incident' (Woods, 1993:1), Peter accepted physical and emotional contact with me. It was a turning point in our trust relationship. Thereafter he became somewhat more relaxed, both physically and in manner.
Tape recordings thereafter show that Peter became more active in group discussions. His responses to what others said showed he listened to them carefully.

Clearly Peter's level of self-esteem had improved considerably. Obviously he now felt safer to enter interactive situations. He could approach others and allow them to approach him. Withdrawal, the strategy with which he managed his 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1968:44), was no longer so necessary.

Peter changed his behaviour both within the group and outside it. A fortnight later he knocked over his tea in a cafe. I waited for him to panic. Instead, he asked for a cloth and was rewarded with a replacement drink. Peter had made a mistake, accepted it calmly, then taken appropriate action - a 'critical incident' (Woods, 1993:1). Another followed. The following month we entertained three young women students from a caring course. As part of introducing himself to the visitors, Peter showed his personal file.

On reflection, although I did not think of it at the time, this was an amazing change in the way Peter managed his 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1968:44). Usually such a private, silent person, here Peter was volunteering personal information to strangers. Here is evidence that he was now less anxious and no longer putting himself down.

Peter talked about what he thought he had learnt, what he had achieved. His talk was fluent, unrushed, interesting. To end it, he told of how he no longer panicked so much. Now he could learn things.

Peter had clearly changed his opinion of himself and his capabilities and his self-esteem was boosted. It seemed that his most obvious strategy for managing his 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, op cit) had been left behind.

During the course Peter did not become closer to other group members, but I built some level of trust with him by accepting his need to be largely left alone, but also by supporting him in reaching modest learning objectives.

On our last day together, Peter, who had once avoided all physical contact, held out his hand and said 'Thanks.'

By the end of the course, Peter had built up sufficient trust in himself to drop his 'usual facade' as a tense non-learner as he described, to strangers, the work he had done on the course. He had found a new identity as a competent student who could interact in some measure with others.

7.9 Steve

Steve was a man approaching thirty, whose looks and friendly, relaxed manner made him attractive to young women. Steve was always considerate of others. He was a polite man and reluctant to use my first name when invited to do so. Even if he were feeling unwell he would say, 'Can't complain can you?.'

Steve had a 'cheerful, outgoing manner' and always sought to 'make the best of things' which Goffman saw as attributes of a stigmatised person adjusting to his predicament (Goffman, 1968:45). It seems he did not trust us to accept him as he really was.

His reluctance to use my first name can be seen as an attempt 'not to go too far towards normalisation' and his refusal to complain about his lot in life an attempt not 'to embarrass 'normals' (Goffman, op cit).

Alternatively, these actions could also be seen as usual attempts made by the 'good' student not to upset the tutor if he wishes to be thought well off (Rogers, 1983:24). I was never sure which notion was the correct one.

Steve, who used public transport independently, was not a good time-keeper. For three sessions in a row in our fourth month he arrived late and was asked by the group to be more punctual. The following session he was late again. Steve said he could not get off the bus because a friend had not finished talking when the college bus-stop was reached and 'you couldn't be rude.' He had made himself late rather than trust himself to end the conversation satisfactorily.

I led some role play which involved the whole group. The aim was to arrive at more assertive behaviour. Afterwards Steve's timekeeping improved and he had begun to trust group members as learning partners.

Steve's reluctance to interrupt his friend whom, he said, did not carry the label learning difficulties, might have been a further attempt not to 'embarrass normals.' Steve's failure to get off the bus and the ensuing role-play may have been a 'critical event' (Woods, 1991:1) for him as it marked the beginning of more assertive behaviour generally.

Lettie, who wanted him as her boyfriend, initially dragged him, red-faced, about college. However, when she asked him to have sex with her, he said firmly that he wanted to be left alone.

In our first November we talked about work and incomes. Steve said he worked for his Dad on building sites, but although Dad got paid, Steve never got money for his work. Steve said Dad had told him that he had learning difficulties and could not have a job. Dad got a pension for him and that was 'all he was good for.' Steve's father's remarks about his worth were highly likely to have had a deeply negative effect on Steve's self-esteem.

Sally said that the pension was Steve's not his Dad's. Group members who collected their own pensions told how they achieved this and how they worked out their budgets.

Steve showed interest in having his own money, but seemed fearful of asking his Dad for it. Dad 'lost his rag' sometimes and 'shouted something awful.' He also locked Steve in on his own sometimes. Steve said he hated that and that his father knew it. Such personal revelations were indicators that Steve was developing trust in the group.

This was a 'critical incident' (Woods, 1993:1) for Steve. It had been previously unknown for him to criticise anyone. His feelings must have been strong for him to use the word 'hate.' Here Steve might be said to be allowing his 'resident alien role' (Goffman's title for the playing out of a stigmatised identity, Goffman, 1968:46) to fall away. At this moment the evidence suggests that Steve was changing the way in which he managed his 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1968:44).

Herein, for me, was a dilemma. I wanted Steve to have information about ways in which he could gain more independence, self-confidence and a positive identity, but the price of financial independence might be severely disrupted family harmony. Rogers saw the internal locus of judgement (Rogers, 1983:54) as highly important. Following this notion, I said he would have to give serious consideration to the matter and made sure I gave no hint of what course of action I preferred.

Three months later Steve told us his father said he could have his own money. Dad, he said, had been amassing 'Steve's pension' in a saving book and would hand it over to him. In spite of this, by the end of the first year, there appeared to have been no change in the amount of disposable income Steve had.

To celebrate the completion of our first year we planned a cinema visit and surprisingly Steve said that finding necessary cash would not be a problem. The outing took place, but Steve neither arrived nor sent explanation for his absence.

As a group we never saw him again. Students who met Steve at a day centre reported him as saying that his Dad had arranged for him to go somewhere else on session days. It was doubtful if this had been at Steve's request as he had always maintained that he enjoyed being a group member. Whether or not the sudden departure had anything to do with discussions about income I could not be certain, but I thought it most probable.

By the end of his time with us Steve had enough trust in his ability to be self-assertive that he asked his father to let him manage his own money. Thus, the evidence suggests that in only a short time within the climate of trust, Steve's level of self-esteem had risen.

7.10 Trust and Learning – Summary

All students developed trust in one another as well as in Sally and me. They were a diverse group of people who learnt different things with differing levels of success at different speeds.

All the students, except Lettie, also learnt to trust themselves, as competent learners or as acceptable people as they learnt to trust others. Lettie learnt to trust the group (including staff) to help her manage her 'challenging behaviour' before she learnt to trust herself (to spend evenings unsupervised for instance.)

The group's trust in Michael to attend every session unless he were ill may have been misplaced. The mutuality of this developing trust was the learning environment, the 'climate.' Michael's decision to take a day out for his Christmas meal, challenged the development of this trust at the end of the first term. However, subsequent events suggested it was already sufficiently well-established for everyone to re-establish their relationship after the holiday. For Michael this event constituted a 'critical incident' and I return to it below.

'Critical incidents' or 'highly charged moments that have enormous consequences for personal change' (Woods, 1993:1) feature frequently in the case studies after the building of trust and the taking of risks. They were important because each was a turning point in dropping the defensive strategies students used to manage their spoiled identities.

My refusal to let Aggie go home early (see page 185) led her firstly to threaten to hit me and later to disclose some of her previous bad treatment by nurses. Later she disclosed further ill-treatment after she remarked on the children playing at the bus stop. Discussion following her disclosure led to her reassessing herself as 'a survivor' and later to softening her attitude to the men in the group.

For James, the class discussion that led to his discovering his own and his mother's mortality seemed to be a critical incident. I cannot know this for certain because of difficulties with communication, but his aggressive reaction suggested that it was. The trust already built in the group helped to resolve the tension. Afterwards he walked about

with Steve's arm round his neck, accompanied by Lily and all the other men. This marked a change in James from being a loner to being more sociable.

Critical events for Lettie centred round ways in which the group reacted to her discussions of her behaviour. Talk of her illnesses was greeted with yawns and laughter and her threats to run away were paid little attention to other than to say the choice was hers. Even so, what could have turned into hostile and upsetting behaviour worked because the positive ways in which the group accepted Lettie mitigated any bad effects of this. Lettie chose to fade out both behaviours over time.

In the 'climate of trust' Lily risked disclosing to the group that God had made her 'right' in the first place but that now she was all 'wrong'. Group members then revealed that no one was happy all the time. This could only have occurred in a 'climate of trust' and proved to be a 'critical incident' for Lily. She heard that we did not think she was 'Silly' Lily and she stopped referring to herself in this derogatory manner. Another critical event for Lily arose out of my refusal to accept responsibility for her behaviour. She had frequently made herself retch eating the enormous amounts of food her staff sent in for her to cook. Lily finally opted for eating what she wanted and binning the rest. Perhaps her most important critical events came when she 'read' the story and when she learnt something about money. She then had to reassess herself as a learner and dropped the defensive strategy of portraying herself as incapable of learning to defend herself from the pain of failure.

Michael's first critical event involved the group's angry reaction to his having taken a day off to go out to a meal at the end of the first term. However, the evidence suggested that he had already built up enough trust to return, apologise and be quickly re-accepted into the group. Afterwards he became more conscious of the needs of others. Another critical incident involved the death of a friend and led to a discussion about ageing, longevity after which he seemed more positive. Thereafter Michael no longer referred to himself as 'sweet' and stopped wearing his formal attire in favour of T-shirts, jeans and trainers. It is probable that his experiences in the group had built up trust with other students and he wanted to identify with them. It may also have been an indication of his more relaxed attitude to life.

Nigel's important critical event involved the acquisition of a flesh and blood girlfriend. Although this was a short-lived relationship, it seemed to help him move away from fantasy towards a more realistic outlook. Six weeks after I first noted the relationship Nigel trusted the group sufficiently to announce that he and Lottie were 'an item'. Other group members might have reacted with ridicule instead of the pleased acceptance they displayed.

Peter's critical incident followed his road-crossing training and my teasing. The trust that had previously been built between us led to my disclosing how I often make mistakes, both personally and professionally. This action seemed to dispel tension and enable him to accept that it was all right for him to make mistakes too.

Steve's failure to get off the bus thus making himself late for a session constituted a critical incident. He trusted group members both to empathise with his dilemma and to help him resolve his tension by role-playing alternative scenarios. Choosing one in which he was assertive marked the beginning of his less submissive behaviour. He later asked his father for control over his own money, which may have led to his 'going somewhere else' on session days and our never seeing him again. As Woods warned, critical events do not always have positive outcomes (Woods, 1993:34).

Some of the critical incidents had similar origins. The incident in which Aggie threatened to hit me at the bus-stop was provoked because she expected me to behave as an authority figure and I challenged this expectation. James had his assumption that his mother would live forever challenged in the group. Lottie's expectation that her challenging behaviour would win her the group's attention was challenged by the yawns. Michael's expectation that the group would 'forgive' him was challenged by the vote. It is possible that Peter's expectations that he was acting properly when he followed Lettie across the road were challenged by my comments.

It is apparent that many of the 'critical incidents' related to risk-taking (Lily risked learning, Michael risked an apology, Peter risked making a mistake) which in turn led to positive reassessment of self in ways that encouraged the dropping of facades and defensive strategies.

In these instances, the 'climate' was certainly not a safe, cosy environment in which challenges could not be made, but an environment of trust in which people in crisis could be supported so that learning was facilitated. Within the 'climate of trust', Rogers argued, tutors are to be genuine and express what they are feeling at all times (Rogers, 1961:33). Here, being genuine involved my challenging students' assumptions and expectations. These challenges, although moments of tension and risk, could be resolved without harm because all members of the group were contributing to a safe social environment of genuineness, acceptance and empathic understanding. The challenges had 'enormous consequences for personal change and development' as Woods (1993:1) predicted.

Trust then, arose after demonstrations of acceptance, genuineness or empathic understanding, initially on my part but increasingly on the part of students.

Within this climate students learnt to trust others to be supportive of their learning and to trust me to facilitate it. Most important of all within the climate students learnt to trust themselves to learn.

The final chapter, which follows, is a *post hoc* evaluation of the efficacy of Rogers' 'climate of trust' in working with adults labelled as having learning difficulties. I shall also debate whether behaviourism or trust is a more efficacious approach to education with adults labelled as having learning difficulties and relate it to the problem of social exclusion.

8.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

8.1 Research Context

Adults with learning difficulties have traditionally found themselves socially excluded by a label that implies a pathological disorder needing intervention from medical and other professionals. Behaviourist approaches have sought to instill rational behaviours using rewards and punishments.

This thesis has set out to explore how far a Rogerian approach might provide a legitimate challenge to such behaviourist training.

The research questions were:-

> Using a Rogerian approach, is it possible to generate a 'climate of trust' with a group of adults labelled as having learning difficulties?
>
> Does such a 'climate' facilitate their learning?

Labelled adults have been ascribed a demeaning and stigmatising label as a result of tests to measure intelligence and to differentiate by ability. However, there is no agreement either about what exactly intelligence is or about what constitutes a learning difficulty (see Chapter One).

Other factors which have reinforced social exclusion have been traditional/behaviourist approaches to training, interventions by proponents of the normalisation principle and divisive educational provision policies that advocated segregated special education.

People whose identities are defined in terms of difference have 'rarely been treated as normal' (Gartner and Lipsky, 1987:36), although normality itself is a slippery concept.

It has been Skinner's 'behavioural' view which has underpinned developments in the teaching and community care of those labelled as having learning difficulties' (Sebba

et.al.1993:88). Behaviour change involves control by an authority figure who uses praise and blame to control learning processes. Behaviourist techniques as used by professionals are carefully planned and usually only too successful. Proponents of behavioural techniques may provide students with new skills. The problem is that their use does not provide understanding.

Behavioural techniques cannot be expected to help a student learn to make her/his decisions or to take charge of his/her own life. Such techniques were shown by Kiernan and Woodford (1975) to be only moderately successful in reducing behaviour problems. Rose (1991) showed that group work with learning-disabled students is more effective (than behavioural techniques) in promoting learning.

Attempts to encourage learning-disabled people to fit societal norms led to the principle of normalisation. This, in its day, was a step forward in the treatment of labelled people. The consequence of this approach is that individual choice becomes secondary to the collective status of learning-disabled people as a whole.

The consequence of the pathologising of adults labelled as having learning difficulties has meant that they suffer 'stigma' (Goffman, 1968:44 see page 40). Stigmatised adults are ascribed 'spoiled identities' (Goffman, 1968:44).

Rogers said that one result of living within his 'climate of trust' would be that defensive strategies stigmatised adults adopt to manage their 'spoiled identities' (Goffman, op cit) would either lessen in frequency or intensity or be dropped altogether.

8.2 The 'climate of trust'

The first research question focuses on the possibility of generating a 'climate of trust'. In this section, I will discuss and review the evidence for the establishment of such a climate and evaluate the part Rogers' approach played in generating the baseroom climate.

The Rogerian 'climate of trust' is a learning environment which tutors can establish, in which people are treated, and learn to treat others, with genuineness, acceptance and empathic understanding (see pages 49-52 for details).

The importance of interpersonal trust for society has been a persistent theme in writings throughout history (see Hartmann, 1932). Rotter (1980) argued that the survival of a society depends on whether it can successfully foster trust among its members. Yet despite the apparent importance of trust, 'it has received little empirical attention' (Rotenberg, 1995:713). Although the capacity for trust is 'widely assumed to be the hallmark of social adjustment' there has been 'surprisingly little research relating trust to personal difficulties' (Hardin, 1993:14).

Rogers does not define what he means by trust. Gurtman (1992:989) defines it as 'an individual's characteristic belief that the sincerity, benevolence or truthfulness of others can generally be relied on.' Trust is the 'foundation of intimate personal relationships and of social life' and takes place in spite of 'uncertainty and the risk that involves' (White, 1996:54). Trust relationships 'can be easily destroyed and are not easily repaired' (White, op cit).

Rogers does not provide a tick-list for tutors wishing to establish the 'climate of trust', but leaves it to the individual to decide the best way forward. Rogers refers to this responsibility for self as 'inner autonomy' (Rogers, 1983:278).

Rogers offers a radical, humanistic challenge to behaviourism and to normalisation. He states that if tutors build a learning environment which he calls a 'climate of trust' involving genuineness, acceptance and empathic understanding, students living within that 'climate' will learn. However, Rogers drew on the approach he developed for one-to-one counselling and advocated its use in the classroom. Where students work without commitment to a common purpose, there arise situations involving conflict which Rogers never addressed may well arise.

After a chance meeting with a colleague, the opportunity arose for me to test Rogers' approach with a group of adult students in a tertiary college. I devised a two-year teaching programme of personal development, during which I planned to build the

Rogerian 'climate' and teach students to become good communicators, democratic decision-makers and evaluators of their own learning products and behaviour. All the students carried the label learning difficulties and the eight of them featured in this study gave their permission for the research to take place.

During the course I was both tutor and participant observer within an action-research style teaching programme. This gave me the advantage of having insider understanding, which Apple (2000:xiii) calls 'official knowledge.' The disadvantage of being an insider is the possibility that a researcher might fail to question her assumptions and biases. My assistant Sally was not a teacher/tutor and, once trust between us was established, was an excellent critical friend. She frequently questioned what I did, why and how I arrived at conclusions. Her challenges helped me be more reflexive.

I collected rich data by means of field notes and tape records of all baseroom sessions. for which I had an assistant who served in the capacity of critical friend. The data were collected over a period of 600 hours and the progress of the eight students studied in considerable detail. Although, since this is an action-research programme I engaged in periodic reviews of students' progress, for this project, I re-evaluated all the data *post hoc*.

Following Rogers, I saw my first task as breaking down 'us' and 'them' barriers and establishing communication.

Students were initially reluctant to see me as a non-directive leader (see page 114) or to call me by my first name (see page 113). Lerner (1989) noted difficulties in student/student and student/staff communication (see Chapter Five). I also initially noted such difficulties. Students did not give each other eye-contact and looked solely at staff. They interrupted, they did not listen to or even seem interested in one another and had difficulties expressing their feelings. My first problem was to teach them to communicate.

Communication skills need to be taught to some students labelled as having learning difficulties as they do not automatically learn them 'in mainstream classroom settings' (Gresham and Reschly, 1986:54). If as Vaughn and La Greca (1993:261) say, 'teachers

do not have sufficient knowledge of communication and social skills to provide appropriate interventions,' then I recommend that such skills become part of initial teacher-training and time set aside in school for them to be taught.

Bender (1992:107) found people labelled as having learning difficulties to be poor at turn-taking and at listening. At the beginning of the course, this was my finding too. I needed to go round the group eliciting responses from students in turn. They listened carefully to me and to Sally but not to each other. Their past educational experiences had not taught them to be inter-active. Within a 'climate of trust' I modelled good listening skills and by the end of the course all students were behaving similarly.

By the end of the course, students interacted with each other appropriately and friendships were formed. Some progress was made in the expression of feelings but this remained problematic. Herein lies opportunity for further research.

Crocker (1990:78) found difficulties in establishing rapport, as indeed initially did I. Trust needed to be built between student and student and students and staff. Once trust was built rapport was no longer problematic.

Students were unused to doing things for themselves. Steve had the cleanliness of his ears checked by his father and all male students had their hairstyles chosen for them. Few students knew how to make their own tea or coffee and no one knew how to use the cookers. For those who have been used to 'having things done for them, help will be needed to move from being passive recipients to becoming self-directed, active participants' (Sebba, et al, 1993:39). It was by teaching the skills within the 'climate of trust' and then refusing to do these tasks for them that I helped students move towards being self-directed active participants in the group.

After only a short time within the 'climate of trust' Steve found himself sufficiently assertive to challenge his Dad for control over his money. (Whether this ultimately turned out to have been in Steve's better interests is however open to question). All students boosted their self-esteem on the course.

Goffman argued that adults who suffer stigma are ascribed 'spoiled identities,' which they manage by 'defensive strategies' (Goffman, 1968:44). Lily avoided learning by demanding a drink of water, or by leaving the room, Peter tried to be invisible and Aggie avoided contact with others. Michael reminded us frequently that he was 'sweet,' whilst Steve was 'always cheerful.' Lettie talked incessantly about her illnesses and often ran away from her staff and from the challenges life threw at her.

The difference between 'normals' and those with a stigma is regarded as contagious. Goffman (1968:44) considered that those who associate with stigmatised people themselves suffer a 'courtesy stigma.' Certainly all those who worked in the college corridor, known as 'the duppy department,' where classes for students labelled as having learning difficulties took place were treated differently from other college users. When I chatted to learning-disabled students in public, I received open-eyed stares from other students. When I sat alone in the canteen I was generally avoided unless there were no other empty places. More than once Lily became upset because other students would not talk to her (see page 198).

By the end of the course students had dropped all these defences. Instead, Lily found she could learn, Peter chatted to strangers, Aggie became friendly with women students and tolerated the men, Michael gave up being 'sweet' and Steve discovered how to be assertive.

Although Rogers describes his 'climate' at length, he leaves a void as to how it is to be worked towards in practice. He does not mention specific difficulties which might be encountered nor how to deal with them should they arise. Nor does he help in deciding which criteria, genuineness, acceptance or empathic understanding was the most important or what to do when clashes occurred. On these occasions I was left confused, not knowing how to proceed.

For instance, whilst demonstrating genuineness (Rogers, 1961:33) by expressing a negative feeling or attitude, I could not also 'manifest warmth in voice and gesture' (Rogers, 1951:348). I could not demonstrate 'the utmost in self-restraint rather than the utmost in action' (Rogers, 1942:195) when seeing students who had never been in town

unsupervised before across busy roads. I was responsible for their personal safety and accountable to others should accidents occur.

I was never sure exactly what empathy is, nor if I had understood empathically. It is possible that on those occasions when I thought I had, I had merely been good at guessing or ultra sensitive to the plight of the other. This is however, probably what Rogers himself understood empathy to be as he describes it as 'a sensitive awareness' (Rogers, 1983:125).

Rogers thought that a 'genuine' tutor would have all her feelings available to her and be able to communicate these feelings 'if appropriate' (Rogers, 1983:121). Unfortunately, he does not say what he means by 'appropriate.' His use of the word suggests that he does not consider such communication would always be right. There is a temptation to think that he means that a tutor should communicate positive feelings and hide negative ones, but I do not believe this to be the case. Hiding feelings would hardly be genuine. Also, when I used Rogerian counselling skills with clients in the counselling situation, I often found my communication of negative feelings most helpful to the client in her quest to solve her problem. In deciding when it would be 'appropriate' to communicate feelings, I could think of no better plan than to be intuitive and guess.

When the group disliked Lettie's swearing (see page 151), I faced a dilemma. I could accept Lettie as a valued person whilst at the same time not accepting her language. If I said I did not like it, that would have been evaluative which I was trying not to be. Conversely, saying I did not like it would have demonstrated genuineness. I felt I could empathise both with the group's feeling of dislike at the swearing and with Lettie's wish to swear. It is hardly to be wondered at that I was reduced to silence.

Even so, the evidence that mutual trust was being developed and sustained became evermore compelling. Students were increasingly willing to discuss personal issues. Steve told us about his Dad managing his pension (see page 216), Lily told us how she had once been able to read (see page 198) and Lettie revealed to the group that she had been raped (see page 195).

The evidence shows the Rogerian approach to learning to be effective in encouraging students to be their own behaviour change agents. Within the Rogerian 'climate of trust,' Lettie stopped running away from her staff and stopped talking about her illnesses. Peter and Steve became more assertive. Nigel stopped boasting, Aggie softened her attitude towards men and James, Lily and Michael became more independent. Thus, the Rogerian approach provides a 'powerful alternative to behaviourist traditions' (Thorne, 1992:4).

Within the 'climate,' trust was also developed between me and Sally. At first she was over-polite, remote and treated me like a superior whom she wished to placate. By the end of the second term, Sally had dropped that 'facade' and started treating me like an equal who could be challenged and disagreed with.

Students reflected 'the climate' to each other and to me. This was something I had not expected. When Steve's Dad told him to have a haircut, students empathised with his dilemma (see page 127). When Lettie swore (see page 151), students accepted Lettie but not her swearing. When I took the group into town, Steve understood my concerns for their safety and was genuine in his response (see page 175). The trust that was built was not merely the trust grateful students might have in an effective teacher. Building trust, or building the 'climate' became a joint student/staff venture and that is not something usual in the traditional classroom.

8.2.1 Critical Events

What Woods called critical events are analogous with what Rogers called 'stepping stones to self-actualization' (Rogers, 1983:52), or movements towards their true selves. The 'critical events' (Woods, 1993) (see page 115 for details), described in the case studies, (see Chapter Seven), illustrate the reactions of individuals to specific challenges they faced in the group. These were challenges to what they had previously taken for granted. For instance, James had assumed his mother would always be there for him, Steve had accepted that his Dad should be in charge of the pension book. Michael thought that being 'sweet' would always get him out of social difficulties. Aggie expected me to behave like an authority figure.

For Aggie, Peter and Lily, 'critical events' challenged their view of their buried pasts and for Lettie and perhaps Nigel they challenged their obsessive behaviour. Each 'critical

event' helped students learn more about themselves. As they observed that they were 'survivors' of these events, (Aggie actually voiced this, see page 186), their behaviours changed. James was involved in the spitting incident (see page 189) after which he apologised. This built trust between him and the group. Steve began to challenge whether or not his Dad should have contol over his money and Aggie changed her view of some professionals.

8.2.2 Cross Professional Teamwork

The trust that was building in the group may have been at the expense of, or in conflict with, the trust students had already built with significant others in their lives - their parents, carers or other professionals. I cannot know what happened at home the day James found out about the mortality of his mother or why we lost touch with both Aggie and Steve. I can only guess at the reactions of Peter and Lily's staff when asked not to send in prepared vegetables. Students were also likely to have faced other dilemmas of which I knew nothing between being self-directing and conforming to democratically made decisions in the group. Rogers provided no guidelines for dealing with such dilemmas.

At no time did I have access to any records - educational, health, psychiatric or social. There were times on the course when such a lack of information was dangerous. For instance, I told hospital staff that I thought Aggie took no medication when in fact she took 'lots' (see page 187). At the bus-stop, when she threatened to hit me, some knowledge of her mental condition would have helped me decide on a sensible course of action. Had I not relied successfully on the Rogerian notion of 'active listening' I might have been attacked (see page 186).

Peter obviously had emotional difficulties of such a strong nature that his home-staff considered it advisable to let him live in a totally stress-free environment. Learning involves risk because failure involves stress. At any time on the course, stress could have resulted in Peter's losing control, which might have proved dangerous for all present. I should have been informed of this possibility.

When Aggie left hospital we lost touch with her. She may or may not have wanted this. Sally, I and other students, would at least have liked the opportunity to say 'Goodbye.'

Multidisciplinary teamwork that includes teachers would have allowed all these problems to be discussed. Team members share the same geographical boundaries and client group. In multidisciplinary teams assumptions can be constantly challenged and skills and knowledge shared.

In every profession, confidentiality is an issue. However, in the light of these experiences, I recommend that when adults labelled as having learning difficulties attend college, education staff should become part of that person's multidisciplinarian team. Professional members of multidisciplinarian teams need to build a 'climate of trust' for the benefit of the adults with whom they work.

Overall, the evidence points to a learning environment in which mutual trust and respect was both generated and maintained. This does not mean that Rogers' approach was unproblematic. In the next section, I shall show how the climate facilitated learning whilst again highlighting significant gaps in Rogers' thinking.

The second question was 'Did the 'climate of trust' facilitate student learning?'

8.3 Facilitating Student Learning

In this section, I review the evidence that addresses the effectiveness of student learning and the role of the teacher.

Rogers considered that a traditional approach to teaching and learning involving 'a prescribed curriculum, similar assignments for all students, standardised tests and teacher-evaluated products' made 'significant learning improbable if not impossible' (Rogers, 1983:21). He considered 'significant learning to have a quality of personal involvement, to be self-initiated (and) evaluated by the learner' (Rogers, 1983:20). He referred to abandoning the traditional approach and adopting one that led to 'significant learning' as 'permitting them to learn' (Rogers, 1983:18), or 'promoting' or 'facilitating learning' (Rogers, 1983:2).

However, learning-disabled students are used neither to initiating their own learning nor to evaluating their own learning outcomes. Those who have been 'taught' using behaviourist techniques may never have experienced 'personal involvement' (Rogers, 1983:20) in their learning.

If I were to follow the Rogerian approach to 'trust,' I could not begin to facilitate student learning until I had broken down their expectations of me as an authoritative teacher. I could not begin until there was a level of communication between students and between students and staff. They could not decide what they wanted to learn until they had learnt to make decisions.

Authoritarian teaching, which promotes 'us and them' barriers, does not fit well within a 'climate of trust' where mutual respect is required. All teacher/facilitators are free to decide what will or will not work well with any particular group of students, since Rogers' 'climate' is not a set of rules, but an approach to the facilitation of learning based on communication, collaboration and interaction. To have pursued a behaviourist pattern of tutor controlled praise/blame as a way of managing behaviour would have run counter to the Rogerian 'climate of trust' I wished to build and maintain.

According to Tharp (1993:272) there are seven means of facilitating learning. These are:-

Modelling - offering behaviour for imitation,
Instructing - requesting specific action,
Questioning - requesting verbal response,
Cognitive structuring - explaining,
Task structuring - sequencing or structuring tasks to aid learning,
Feedback - providing information on performance,
Contingency management - reinforcement or punishment of behaviour.

Whilst five of these may be readily accommodated in a Rogerian approach, feedback and contingency management may not.

I used modelling when teaching safe use of the kettle and throughout the course students imitated my modelling of genuineness, acceptance and empathic understanding. The

strategy worked so well, that students became empathic with each other. They understood that Steve needed to obey his Dad in the matter of the haircut rather than arrive at the session on time (see page 127) and Steve empathised with me when he understood my worries about student safety in town (see page 175).

I instructed students in the use of the cookers (see page 168) and in road-crossing training (see page 174). Questioning was a daily part of action in the circle. I often structured tasks by breaking down large 'chunks' of learning into smaller sections to make learning tasks easier and more rewarding (see Lily's learning for instance, page 200). Students frequently requested and received explanations (for instance, why yellow and blue make green (Lily) or how to find a hairdressing course (Lettie).

However, working with the Rogerian 'climate of trust,' it was important to handle 'feedback' and 'contingency management' differently than in a traditional teaching style.

8.3.1 Feedback

Feedback is as important a part of the Rogerian approach to teaching as it is for a traditional style, but it must not be at the expense of self-development and self-esteem.

Rogers valued self-direction and thought all students should take personal responsibility for their own learning and decision-making (Rogers, 1983:269). However, problems arose when students made democratic decisions, and the self-direction of one student clashed with the decisions made by the group as a whole, as when Michael decided to take a day off against group rules and pressure to conform to them.

Rogers does not say how long a tutor should struggle to establish the 'climate' if success seems far off. Examples of his 'climate' in operation quoted by Rogers (1983:46-95) were with mainstream children or university students. Teachers/tutors thinking of establishing the 'climate' with less-able students are thus left without guidance.

During the early months, when students were learning to use boiling water for instance, I gave individuals direct feedback to allow self-correction. Later, I modelled giving feedback by evaluating my own products aloud.

When the students were learning to evaluate their own work, I refused to comment on it at all. This was the antipathy of genuineness, but it was a strategy that worked to encourage them to make their own evaluations.

One consequence of my giving myself feedback was that students began to give themselves feedback. They decided what was good and what needed more work or alteration. I do not know what criteria they used in coming to these conclusions. As a result of giving themselves feedback and by being self-evaluatory, some students may have been left with unrealistic beliefs about their work. However, by giving themselves (and each other) feedback, students raised their self-esteem and became self-evaluating.

When Lettie swore (see page 151), fellow group members gave feedback, not staff. When Aggie brought in details of the Art Gallery opening times, students spontaneously praised her (see page 144).

During the second year, when I was facilitating student learning, conflicts between genuineness, acceptance and empathic understanding did not appear to me to be so important, although they still existed. For instance, I knowingly allowed students to get back from a trip out so late that the canteen was closed and they missed lunch. This was hardly being genuine and may have been seen as punishing, but it did help them learn that actions (or lack of them) have consequences. Trust was well established within the group by this time and I considered that genuineness could temporarily be dispensed with. Trust did not seem to suffer setback by this move.

Indeed, students showed themselves capable of learning from the feedback that comes from the consequences of mistakes. They worked out what to do next time when we had tried to attend a town centre venue which was closed. They worked out what needed to be done to avoid returning from a visit to find the canteen closed.

There was, by that time, a high level of trust within the group, between students, between students and staff and between Sally and myself. Student learning was observable. Whatever conflicts and disparities there were within the 'climate' were much less important than the trust that had been built.

Giving and receiving feedback, was an important and necessary step on the way towards that student self-evaluation (Rogers, 1983:20), which Rogers saw as encouraging learner self-confidence and self-respect (Rogers, 1983:3). Becoming self-evaluating was very important for student learning.

8.3.2 Contingency Management

In advocating his 'climate of trust' Rogers leaves the tutor without a leadership role in controlling behaviour. Lack of leadership and control might have led to anarchy and chaos. Students may have decided to learn nothing, to come in very late and leave early, to block the learning of another or to damage themselves or others.

Many students expect and some may even prefer an authoritative and judgemental teacher, since, as Ruddock suggests, 'kicking the dependence' (of a student on a teacher feeding the knowledge to be absorbed) 'is not easy' (Ruddock, 1991:37). Rogers understood this. For Rogers, the student who wishes to be thought well of 'attends class regularly, looks only at the instructor and writes diligently in his notebook' (Rogers, 1983:24). S/he does this because s/he wants to pass the course. For students as well as for tutors it is 'a risk to be a whole human being in the classroom' (Rogers, op cit).

The traditional model of the teacher as a provider of wisdom and controller of learning is 'one which persists and finds favour with many who call for a 'back to basics' approach to education' (Watson, 1999:166). Learning in a classroom without apparent leadership or authority may prove most threatening not only to some students, but also to teachers and parents.

Yet, 'demands on teachers in the current educational climate call for greater flexibility of teaching styles and place more demands upon learners to share responsibility for their own learning' (Watson, 1999:167). Indeed, the Code of Practice (1994) which followed the 1993 Education Act, advocated that learners should be directly involved in their own learning. Paragraph 2:37, page 15, states that educational establishments should 'involve pupils in decision-making processes and in implementing their individual education plans.' The Rogerian approach to education provides for both of these contingencies.

Mac An Ghaill (1992) believes that moves towards greater collaboration between teacher and learner may have the effect of empowering both groups. There is a growing awareness 'both in the research literature and in classroom practice' of the 'essentially social, interactive nature of most learning' (Watson, 1999:165). This suggests that collaborative ways of learning may be the most effective. If this is so, then teachers need to accept that 'collaboration and successful interaction in its own right is a valid teaching aim' (Sebba, Byers and Rose, 1993:69).

In promoting collaborative working practices, tutors need to 'focus on strategies which enable learners to become skilled decision-makers' (Watson, op cit). Group work in which learners co-operate is unlikely to succeed 'unless students are taught the skills of interaction' (Sebba, et al, 1996:167), since 'they do not occur automatically as soon as learners are put into groups' (Hardman and Beverton, 1993:148). Within the 'climate of trust' students learnt to attend to and interact with each other. Tilstone (1991:83), agreeing with Rogers, describes the skills of interaction as 'essential components of learning to learn.'

An alternative structure of authority in the group, in tune with the Rogerian approach was required. Contingency management, or the application of the principles of reinforcement and punishment to behaviour, was done in the group, but not by me.

Faced with behaviour problems, I initiated a democratic procedure which shifted responsibility onto the students. Initially they made rules about attendance and punctuality and established sanctions including 'time-out', an established behaviourist strategy for controlling behaviour.

Later they made very important decisions concerning the curriculum and their own learning goals. They also took responsibility for putting pressure on individual students to conform to group rules. (see their reaction to Michael's day out (page 127) and Lettie's swearing (page 151)).

Using democratic procedures, students made group rules, which enabled me to opt out of the contingency management role from the beginning. When Michael became upset at our first Christmas, it was because he had broken a group rule and the group (not me)

was annoyed with and punished him (see page 128). The group laughed or yawned at Lettie's obsession with talking about her illnesses (see page 193) instead of reinforcing it with solicitous attention.

Rogers thought that one of the things that made it difficult for teachers to facilitate learning was their 'reluctance to share power' with their students (Rogers, 1983:306). Being 'reluctant to share power' indicates a marked lack of 'trust' in students to be responsible for their own learning. The imposition by the government of the National Curriculum in schools in England and Wales similarly indicates a lack of 'trust' in teachers to teach wisely.

It has been argued (Quicke, 1999:35) that the main problem with traditonal subject-based education is its over emphasis on content and lack of scope for the active involvement of students in the learning process. When students in this study took centre-stage in their own learning, they made responsible choices and learnt with enthusiasm. Since they decided what to learn and when their goals had been reached, then their active involvement met their individual needs. The 'valuing of the individual... is a reflection of the values of a democratic society' (Quicke, 1999:149).

Instead of moving towards more democratic power-sharing with teachers, the government seems to be moving in the opposite direction. If students are to have democratic rights to decided upon their own education and learning, then teachers must also exercise meaningful control over their own work. Democratic values in education might then become 'a source of coherence for life in our schools' (Apple and Beane, 1999:21).

Thus, democratic decisions provided a radical alternative to the traditional praise/blame approach to contingency management. It was the group as a whole, not staff, who decided which behaviours were acceptable and which were not. Placing the onus for this on student shoulders enabled me to opt out of the traditional tutor role of disciplinarian. Students working co-operatively decided on 'the rules' and sanctions against students who transgressed them. Although this could be seen as a direct challenge to Rogers' approach it worked well within the trust relationship that had been built within the group. Had I kept the authoritarian role for myself, 'us and them' barriers might never have been

broken down and the trust which facilitated learning may have been considerably undermined or not built at all. Had we not had rules there would have been no legitimising framework for maintaining social control and social cohesion. This is a significant gap in Rogers' thinking.

Within the learning environment of 'trust,' students developed their own group standards of behaviour, influenced by peer pressure. Students told Lettie they did not like her swearing and she decided to stop it. Steve became more assertive. Lettie decided to leave behind what her social worker had described as her 'challenging behaviour'.

Thus, only five of Tharp's (1993) facilitative strategies were used traditionally during the course. By displacing authoritative decisions about behaviour onto the group it became possible to change behaviours without perpetuating the 'us and them' divide of the traditional classroom.

Working democratically strengthened peer control and built rather than destroyed trust. It also moved authority for rule making and sanctions for rule breaking away from me onto students. This in turn enhanced the sense of mutual trust, helping to break down the 'us' and 'them' divide of the traditional teacher/taught relationship. Within this mutuality of trust came special moments of learning.

8.3.3 Self-direction

The self-directed choices students made in the second year, when they were in charge of the curriculum (see page 131), were responsible choices. No one opted to learn anything illegal, frivolous or damaging to another. Learning goals chosen were of immediate use to students in their everyday lives and realistically achievable.

The evidence suggests that self-esteem was boosted. At the beginning of the course Lily was often in tears and referred to herself as 'Silly Lily.' Peter seemed too lacking in confidence to learn anything. Nigel exhibited insecurity and boastfulness, both symptoms of highly defensive 'discrepant self esteem' (O'Brien and Epstein, 1988).

After living within the Rogerian 'climate of trust' for the two years of the course, Lily stopped crying and calling herself names, Peter became self-confident enough to give a

talk to strangers, whilst Nigel dropped his boastfulness and seemed to become more secure. (For fuller details see individual case histories.)

Students became more independent. Peter learnt to cross roads and all students worked towards further skills in self-transportation so that they could enjoy being in the community more independently. Lily decided to make men in her household take their share in the chores. All students learnt to set their own learning targets and decide when they had been reached.

Ceci and Liker (1986) considered that people with low IQs are capable of exhibiting complex patterns of reasoning (as did Peter when he so ably sequenced the cards in the game, see page 205). It would seem that high IQ is not a necessary condition for the attainment of intellectual skills in all real-world situations. Either that is true or Peter had been wrongly labelled as having learning difficulties.

Sternberg (1985:45) defined intelligence as 'purposeful shaping of the real-world environment relevant to one's life.' At the beginning of the course students did not 'purposeful(ly) shape' many aspects of their lives. James left most decisions in his life to his mother. Lily and Peter had so successfully cushioned themselves against the pain of failure to learn that their education was in limbo. Steve and Lettie had their potential learning experiences controlled by powerful others in their lives.

By the end of the course all students were taking important decisions about what they wanted to learn. They evaluated their own learning products. Thus they shaped 'the real-world environment relevant to their lives' (Sternberg 1985:45).

If Ceci and Liker (1986) and Sternberg (op cit) are right, then there is something seriously lacking in our present day knowledge of both intelligence and of learning disability. Both subjects merit further research.

The initially slow progress of students on the course seemed to have as much to do with fear of failure as with lack of intellectual prowess. Within the 'climate of trust' much of that fear of making mistakes was dispelled. When this happened students learnt effectively and relatively quickly. Educationalists must acknowledge that labelled people

are entitled to respect and to education which enables them to reach their full potential. Choosing their own learning goals 'empowers students to transform themselves and the world around them' (Quicke, 1999:4)

However, those pressing for learning-disabled students to be educated in mainstream settings often confuse 'presence and locality' with 'opportunity and interaction' (Kauffman, 1993:14). Education for all in mainstream classes 'will fail to be socially inclusive' without 'a basic transformation of those classrooms into places of collaboration and interaction' (Christensen, 1996:76). Such a transformation took place in the classroom herein described.

Individual case studies show that within the 'climate' students learnt effectively. Their learning had 'personal involvement,' was 'self-initiated' and 'evaluated by the learners' (Rogers, 1983:20). Thus, within the 'climate' students' learning was facilitated. They were 'permitted to learn' (Rogers, 1983:18).

Summary

There is considerable evidence that students found the 'climate of trust' an environment in which they learnt effectively. However, Rogers' provides little or no guidance on pedagogy. Following Thorp's (1993) analysis, it is apparent that Rogers' approach to pedagogy conflicts with the orthodox strategies on two counts: feedback, where he advocates self-evaluation and contingency management, where he is notably silent, relying on self-discipline rather than rule structures.

Whilst the evidence suggests that feedback can be shifted on to students as self-evaluation by means of modelling appropirate behaviour, contingency management requires an even more radical shift. Procedures which allow students to participate democratically in rule making and in establishing sanctions can fill this gap, even when the students are labelled as having learning difficulties.

8.4 Reflecting on the Research

Qualitative research methodology offered an appropriate manner of addressing the research questions. Participant observation as a method of data collection was

particularly apt for this study, since the 'climate of trust' was a learning environment built by staff and students working together. A learning society 'would combine excellence with equity' so that participants would 'be able to engage in action to improve the quality of life for the whole community and to ensure social integration' (ESRC, 1994:2). A learning society is more of an aspiration than a reality. In such a learning environment an outsider-researcher would have intruded, which would have undermined trust. Thus, it is difficult to see how any other means of data collection other than by a participant observer would have served.

Vaughn and La Greca (1993:69) found adults labelled as having learning difficulties less than perfect research subjects as they lacked confidence in answering questions. Participant observation worked well with these research subjects since within the 'climate' students built confidence and trust in themselves and in me.

The data was rich, being collected by tape-recordings and field notes over two years. However, although I was unaware of it at the time, it became apparent during the *post hoc* evaluation, that there were gaps in it.

I might usefully have asked students individually and privately whether they agreed with group decisions. I could have gained more insight into students' thought processes by asking them how they decided when they had learnt enough about one topic before moving on to the next. I wish I had asked self-evaluating learners how they decided whether or not their educational products were good. Informal interviews with individual students might have provided answers to these questions. This is something I would do differently if I were to run the course again.

A greater range of perspectives on events would have emerged had I also interviewed significant others in students' lives. James' mother might have told me what happened after he discovered she would not live forever. She may have given me help in communicating with him. Had communication channels been opened with Lettie's social worker, I could have forewarned her of Lettie's expectations and her high hopes may then have been deflated more gently. I would have benefited from a greater openness from other professionals. My lack of understanding and awareness of students' problems

could have led to tragedies - particularly Peter's reaction to criticism and my ignorance of Aggie's medication.

There had been plenty of time during the course for me to talk privately to students' significant others. However, had I done so, students would not have known what confidences had been exchanged or what criticisms voiced. Such actions would have undermined the 'climate of trust' we were building. I chose not to do this on the course and I would not do it again in future.

Valuable time was lost because, at the outset, Sally knew nothing of Rogerian philosophy. If I planned another course run, I would make a greater effort to secure an assistant who had been trained in Rogerian counselling skills and knew something of his 'climate of trust.' Failing that, I would ask that my assistant be employed for an extra hour per week so that I could train her as the course progressed.

I would also use my assistant differently. The group would be split into two smaller ones between which students rotated. In the early stages, when students were learning each other's names, this would have been likely to speed progress. A trained assistant would have helped make me more aware of when trust was/was not being built.

Sally and I had, of necessity, to make reviews hurried affairs over lunch or at breaktimes. Such snatched moments lacked structure. If I were re-running the course, I would ensure that structured reviews were built into the staff timetable and agreed agendas worked out beforehand.

I found the work of the first year, without a trained assistant, exhausting. Perhaps as a result of this, I was not fully aware at the time of pedagogic issues. Some initiatives came from almost instinctive responses to classroom problems. It was only in the *post hoc* evaluation, I recognised the importance of the displacement of legitimate authority onto students both as a group (by democracy) and as individuals (by self-evaluation). Firstly, it was vital to the building of the 'climate of trust,' since it dissolved the 'us and them' divide from the pedagogic relationship. Secondly, the displacement was a very important change from the traditional behaviourist praise/blame approach to teaching and learning.

Defining legitimate authority 'has become of primary concern' in education (Knight, 2001:249). Such authority is distinguished from what Dahl sees as 'its 'opponents,' guardianship and anarchy (Dahl, 1989). Guardianship 'stifles growth through constraint and control,' whilst anarchy 'inhibits growth through the removal of persuasive leadership' (Knight, 2001:257). While 'authoritarianism is a preferred mode of authority in many schools, ... student interests are neglected in a desperate tug of war between the authoritarian and anarchistic' (Knight, 2001:252). Democratic authority on the other hand 'is persuasive and negotiable' and 'is more desirable that either of its opponents because only under democracy is everyone encouraged to reach his or her potential' (Knight, op cit).

In authoritarian educational establishments teachers punish transgressors and students are powerless. Within democratic education students themselves decide upon the treatment of students who violate group rules. This encourages students to be self-reliant and solve their own problems, such as Lettie's swearing (see page 151) and Michael's meal out (see page 128).

The UK includes human rights in its constitution. In an authoritarian classroom, 'rights are subordinate to responsibilities,' which can 'contribute unnecessarily to classroom disruption and inequitable treatment of students' (Hyman and Snook, 2000:491). In a democracy, 'rights precede responsibilities' and in such an environment 'students learn to be responsible' (Hyman and Snook, op cit).

Students on the course did learn something of responsibility. They learnt to check Art Gallery opening times before arranging a visit (see page 144) and to ensure they arrived back in college before the canteen closed (see page 130). Those who have so much done for them have few opportunities to learn to be responsible for their actions.

Apart from Rogers' work, there is no body of knowledge on how an optional learning 'climate' may be established (Knight, 2001:257). Instead, emphasis has been placed on 'concepts of individual differences' (Knight, op cit). Organizing education for all on the basis of difference has 'challenged those striving for social inclusion and democratic education' (Knight, op cit).

The ways in which we treat difference are problematic. For example, we deal with difference by treating certain groups of students differently (eg educational programmes for students with little command of English) or the same (identical admission criteria for all university applicants regardless of ethnic background). Both approaches achieve the same thing - they affirm difference. It appears that to acknowledge difference in any way creates a dilemma. The more educational responses emphasise what learners have in common the more they tend to overlook what separates them. The more they highlight differences, the more they overlook commonalities.

The idea of inclusive education, a notion which does not highlight difference, is 'gaining ground in many parts of the world' (Ainscow, 1997:3) and was given further impetus by the UNESCO World Conference in Special Needs Education held in Salamanca, Spain in 1994. Essentially, the term 'inclusive education' refers to 'the extent to which a college (or other establishment) welcomes all learners.'

Inclusion has been emphasised in both the Green Paper 'Excellence for all children' (DfEE, 1997) and in the follow-up report 'Meeting Special Educational Needs: a programme of action' (DfEE, 1998a). Since then, the Government and David Blunkett in particular, have tended to elide educational inclusion with the notion of social inclusion (Blunkett, 1999a, 1999b, 2000). Social inclusion involves far more than where learners labelled as having learning difficulties receive their education.

Rather social cohesion 'is about building a cohesive society, by ensuring that no social groups become alienated from the mainstream' (Dyson, 2001:24). This is in contrast to the principle of normalisation in which alienation from the mainstream is accepted and a valued collective identity sought at the expense of individual preferences. For Rogers, whilst 'self' is very important (learning should be self-initiated and self-evaluated (1983:20), a 'participatory mode' of work with peers and facilitators (1983:3) is equally valued. He emphasises not just 'self' but also 'self with others.' Carpenter (1997:19) agrees with Rogers, stressing that 'the needs of individual learners can be addressed within group experiences.' In the group, Lettie voiced a wish to learn how to stop talking about her illnesses. She achieved this aim only with the aid of group members. Steve lacked assertiveness; role play with his peers helped him be more assertive. Aggie could not have learnt that not all professionals are the same until she met one who was

different. The individual needs of 'self' were thus assimilated into the democratic needs of the social group.

Social cohesion 'means equipping marginalised groups,' such as adults labelled as having learning difficulties, 'with the capacity to become active citizens' (Dyson, op cit). Whilst educational inclusion focuses on presence and participation, social inclusion focuses more on educational outcomes and 'the re-engagement of marginalised groups with learning' (Dyson, op cit).

The social inclusion agenda offers a resolution to the dilemma of difference. If true social inclusion can be achieved, alienation, marginalization and stigmatisation could be eliminated. However, social inclusion, like the Rogerian 'climate' is perhaps more of an ideal to be strived for than an objective reality.

Even within a truly inclusive learning society, it is likely that individual needs will conflict with those of the class as a whole. In the group herein described I used a democratic approach to issues that could have led to conflict. Using this approach, students learnt to choose, to make decisions, both individually and as a group as to what they wanted to learn. At present neither educational nor social inclusion includes the notion that learners should choose for themselves what they want to learn. Power over such choices 'continues to reside in the hands of professionals' (Riddell and Wilson, 1999:460).

Whilst all the students on the course carried the blanket label 'learning difficulties,' they showed themselves to be a diverse group of people, each with a distinct identity and a full range of human emotions, who could make new friends and learn new things.

Aggie and Lily liked children but no one else mentioned them. James was the only one who liked beer and Steve the only student who excelled in woodwork and outdoor activities. Lettie alone wore make-up. Lily always wore trousers whilst Lettie and Aggie wore skirts. Michael alone liked to browse in second-hand shops. Museums excited Nigel, Michael and Lettie, but bored Lily and Peter. Literacy ability ranged from being able to read and write well enough to pen her self report (Lettie) to not being able to sound the letters of the alphabet (Lily). Peter could accurately sum up a lengthy

conversation in a few words whilst others had difficulty remembering what had been said only minutes before. In fact, I found that they had few talents or interests in common. In this, I agreed with Senf and Algozzine that the term 'learning difficulties"is a sociological sponge' (Senf, 1987:87), which 'does not produce a unique set of people' (Algozzine, 1985:72).

Within the Rogerian 'climate of trust' students found motivation to learn. (For a summary of research literature on student motivation see Wigfield, et al, 1998). Students achieve more if they are 'encouraged to feel they can achieve and have a sense of ownership over their learning' (Knight, 2001:258). The evidence indicates that students on the course did have these feelings. Lily was delighted with her learning (see page 200) and, in the second year, all students chose their own learning goals.

In an authoritarian learning climate, 'students with "deficits" find themselves routinely humiliated and isolated' (Knight, 2001:261). Attempts to avoid such unnecessary pain 'can explain continual lateness and absenteeism far more convincingly than attributed deficits' (Valencia, 1997). During the second year within the 'climate,' attendence registers show that absenteeism became practically zero. This is evidence that students found the Rogerian 'climate of trust' to be a supportive learning environment.

Democratic education within a 'climate of trust':-

encourages students to risk learning,
provides relief from blaming and shaming,
enables students to share legitimate authority,
involves learning which is meaningful to the student,
provides a sense that learning can be achieved,
provides an environment in which students are accepted, valued and equally encouraged,
enables problems and mistakes to become learning opportunities,
enables students to experience excitement in learning and encourages them to learn in order to please themselves.

8.5 Opportunities for Further Research

Ways in which labelled and non-labelled adults might highlight their similarities instead of their differences.

How the National Curriculum might successfully be delivered within the Rogerian 'climate.'

The effects of the Rogerian 'climate' in the staffroom/whole establishment.

The link between intelligence and the ability of learning disabled people to 'transform the world around them' (Quicke, 1999:4).
Whether living within the 'climate' affects school drop-out rates, punctuality and absenteeism.

8.6 Conclusion

The strengths of the Rogerian 'climate of trust' were:-

a mutuality of trust was built between student and student and between student and staff,
defences with which students managed their 'spoiled identities' (Goffman, 1968:44) were abandoned,
students boosted their self-confidence and self-esteem and learnt well and with enthusiasm.

The weaknesses of the Rogerian 'climate of trust' were:-

genuineness and empathic understanding sometimes proved mutually exclusive,
it was difficult to know when empathy had been achieved,
conflicts arose between the needs of individuals and the needs of the group, which required some form of authoritative resolution and Rogers' work largely ignores the pedagogic skills required of a tutor.

The most effective approach to resolving these weaknesses was found through the adoption of a form of democratic decision-making. The group as a whole voted for rules and for sanctions for rule-breakers. This allowed for authority and leadership within the group at the same time as it facilitated the disolving of the 'us' and 'them' divide. Further, as students became self-evaluating, (both as individuals and as a group), I was able to opt out of the traditional teacher role of judge of students' educational products.

In England and Wales, teachers must deliver the National Curriculum and push students to high achievement in standard attainment tests. There are school or college rules to keep and whole-establishment policies to implement. Some teachers see their students only for scattered short periods within the school or college week. However, attempts to build trust can be done at all times, with all students, even if they are seen only occasionally and for single lessons.

To trust learners, to grant freedom with responsibility (even if within the constraints of the National curriculum) - these things are not easy to achieve. Establishing the Rogerian 'climate' is a challenge both to staff and students. It involved a change in thinking and a difficult commitment to a democratic ideal.

However, the 'climate' also involved students in becoming reliably self-directing and self-evaluating learners. It involved them in choosing and bearing the consequences of their choices. In such a 'climate' students learnt with enthusiasm and excitement. These are attributes few teachers would not like to see in their classrooms.

The creation 'of a positive, happy climate for learning' is something that some teachers 'seem to be able to do with apparent ease' (Hall and Hall, 1988:1). Others may wish to learn. Teachers working towards democracy in their classrooms will need support and may have to work collaboratively. In fact, they must do what they expect their students to do.

Although it could be argued that Rogers' ideas need further development if teachers are to use them effectively in schools, they provide an excellent step in the right direction towards the ideal of democracy in education.

However, Rogers considered that 'in true teaching there is no place for the authoritarian (tutor)... or the prescription for successful learning' (Rogers, 1983:16). If teachers want to adopt 'a humanistic, democratic approach to education,' they must find individual methods of creating the 'climate of trust' which is 'not implemented in only one way' (Rogers, 1983:4).

8.7 Recommendations

The major weaknesses in humanistic approaches to education have revolved around issues of authority and leadership in an egalitarian community. These weaknesses may be overcome by displacing authority into a democratic procedure that establishes equal rights to meaningful participation in decision-making. Such a learning environment is socially inclusive.

Students were initially poor at communication and remained poor at expressing their feelings. There was little or no interaction between labelled and non-labelled college students. I recommend that social skills be taught in all classrooms.

The non-availability of access to confidential information about students proved dangerous. I recommend the inclusion of teachers in the multidisciplinary teams that work together for the benefit of individuals labelled as having learning difficulties.

The evidence supports the view that the Rogerian 'climate of trust' was built and that within it students:-

made responsible, self-directed choices (Rogers, 1983:3),

built their confidence and self-esteem (Rogers, op cit),

attended class more often (Rogers, 1983:197),

were capable of problem solving (Rogers, op cit),

dropped the 'masks and facades' of 'spoiled identity' and moved towards what Rogers saw as their 'true selves'.

In addition, they developed socially responsible standards of behaviour within a democratic framework.

It is possible to establish the Rogerian 'climate of trust'.

Within it students learnt with enthusiasm and changed their own behaviours in self-satisfying ways.

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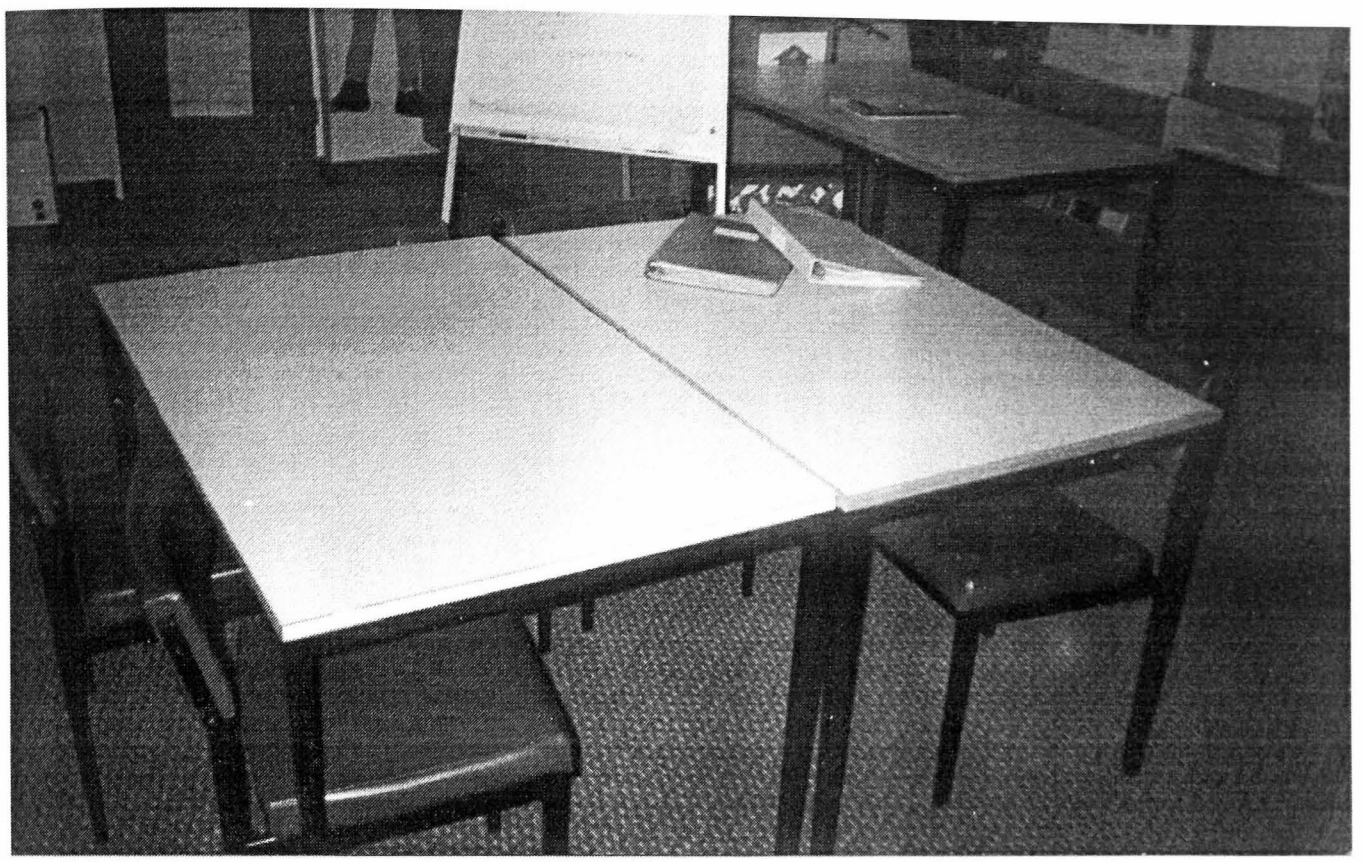
APPENDICES

Appendix 1

The Learning Environment

Tables for Paper Work



Circle of Chairs for Discussion

Appendix 2

Themed Charts

APPENDIX 2: Themed Charts

FIRST YEAR

Month	Hot Drinks	Cooking	Off-campus
September	Washing up.		
October	Making drinks.		
November		Safety talk. Simple meals (in pairs).	
December			
January		Simple meals (individually).	
February			
March		Simple meals and simple desserts.	
April			Discussion of road safety and keeping together in town.
May		More cooking skills.	Make security cards.
June		More cooking skills.	Visit to Museum. Supermarket visit to compare prices.
July		Special full meal.	

SECOND YEAR

Month	Hot Drinks	Cooking	Off-campus
September			Walk in two groups.
October			
November			Work on recognising the "right" stop.
December			
January			Choosing the "right" bus.
February			
March			
April			
May			Individual work on crossing roads and finding one's way about town unaided.
June			
July			

Chart Showing Specific Risks Involved in Each Theme

Washing up

Risk of scalding from water heater
Making drinks
Risk of electric shock from using kettle
Risk of scalding from use of boiling water

Cooking

Risk of cuts from serrated edges of opened tins
Risk of cuts from sharp knives
Risk of scalding from saucepans of boiling water
Risk of burns from cooker burners
Risk of burns from ovens
Risk of scalding from the straining of cooked vegetables
Risk of unsafe use of gas and electricity
Added risks involved in moving from working in pairs to working individually

Risks in working off-campus (first journey)

Risk of a student leaving the 'crocodile' unnoticed
Risk of a student being harmed whilst road-crossing
Risk of losing a student who failed to board the bus
Risk of losing a student who failed to alight
Risk of losing a student within the Museum
Risk of a student inadvertently damaging Museum property
Risk of student behaviour off campus being very different from on-campus and my not being able to cope with it adequately

Subsequent journeys into town

Risk of something untoward happening with Sally's group whilst they were out of my sight and control and Sally not dealing with the incident as I would have wished
Risk of something untoward happening when the men climbed to the top deck of the bus and were thus out of my sight

Work on recognising the 'right' bus stop and choosing the 'right' bus

No risk as students were never unsupervised

Individual work on crossing roads

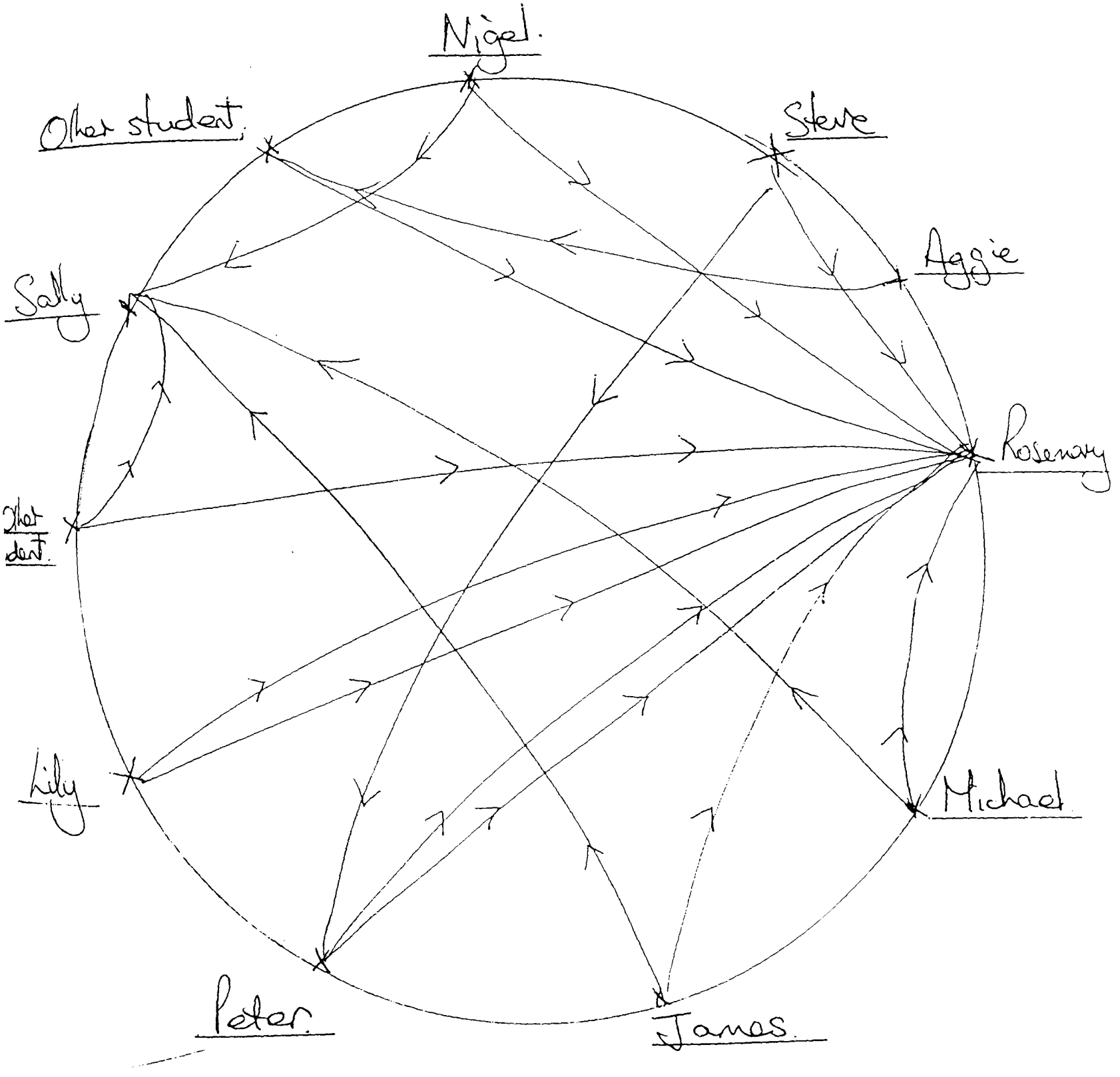
Risk of a student, although closely supervised, making a sudden movement which might have resulted in an accident

Appendix 3

Eye Contact Chart

Eye-contact chart (example)

Date. September ? 199?



Sally watched each student in turn twice and recorded here at whom s/he was looking. Arrows on lines show her findings.)

Appendix 4

Examples of Games

APPENDIX 4: Examples of Games

Game 1

'Chair on the left'

Ensure that all players know left from right. Players sit in a circle of chairs, with one more than the number of players. One person who has the spare chair on his/her left says,

'I would like ...(name of another player...to sit in this chair.'

If the player is not accurately named the person on the right of the original player takes over the game. If the player is correctly named, s/he moves to the spare chair.

The player who has the new spare chair on his/her left repeats the sentence and the game moves on.

Game 2

'Change chairs'

Players sit in a circle of chairs. There should be one less than the number of players. The person without the chair in 'on' and stands in the middle of the circle. S/he says something like,

'Change chairs, those people who ate breakfast this morning,' or
'Change chairs, those wearing trainers,' or
'Everybody change chairs.'

Whilst people move, the person 'on' tries to claim a chair, thus leaving a new player to stand in the centre and continue the game.

Appendix 5

Examples of Students' Work Showing Progress.

Name

my brother

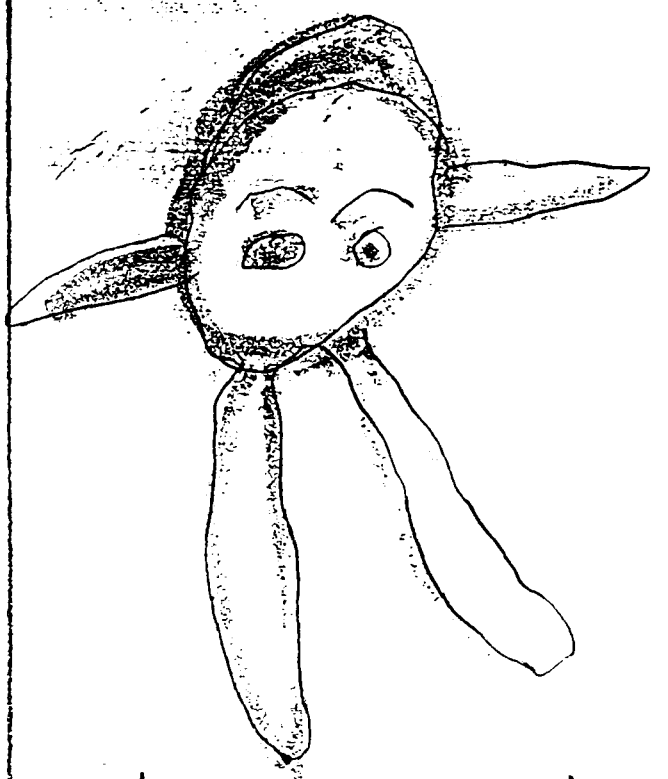
is person choses
my holidays.

First Term | Year | 4th Course

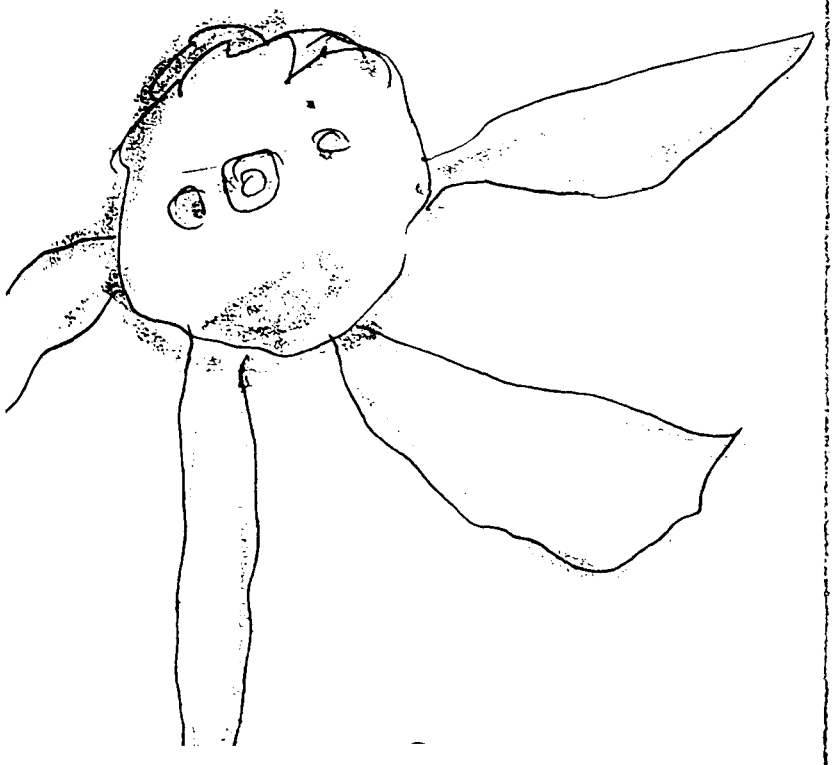
Date 2-11-1998

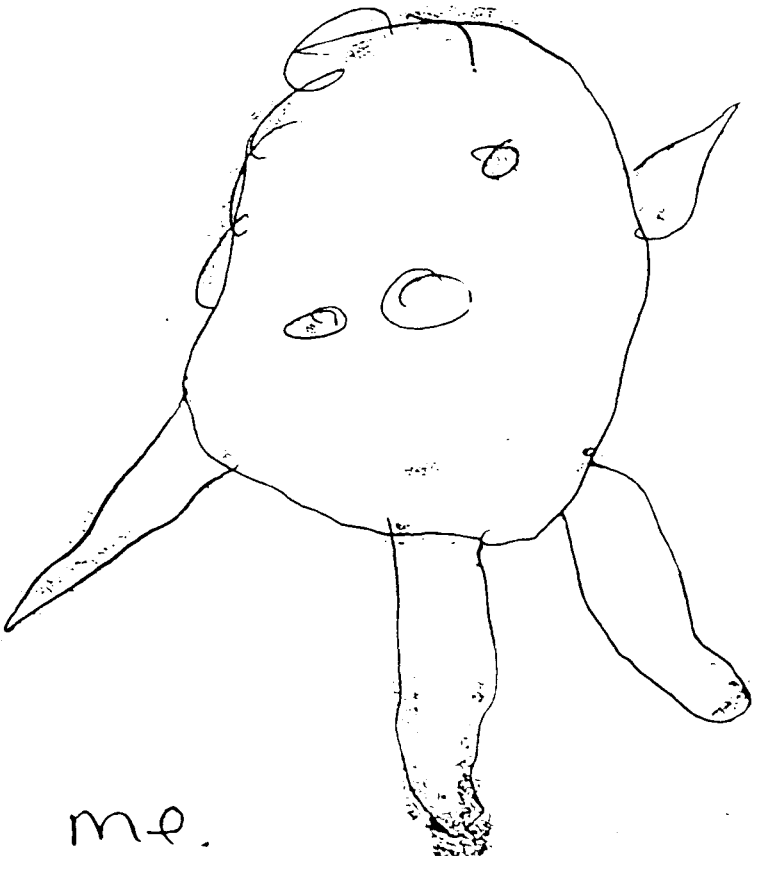
Term1. First year of course.

me.



This person decides
how I shall have my hair



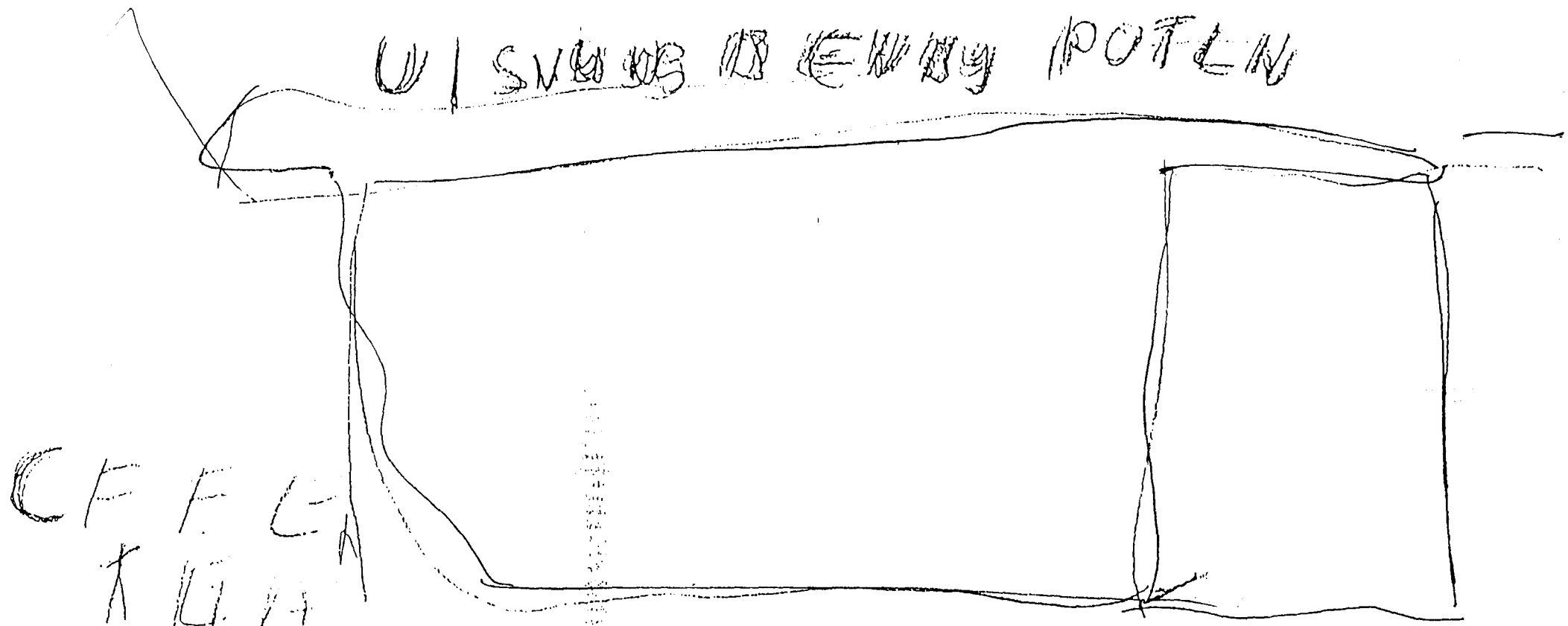


me.

Can I see you again?

Lettie's work on social interaction. 2nd Year. 2nd Term.

Visiting "Pottery" 16° October (First year)



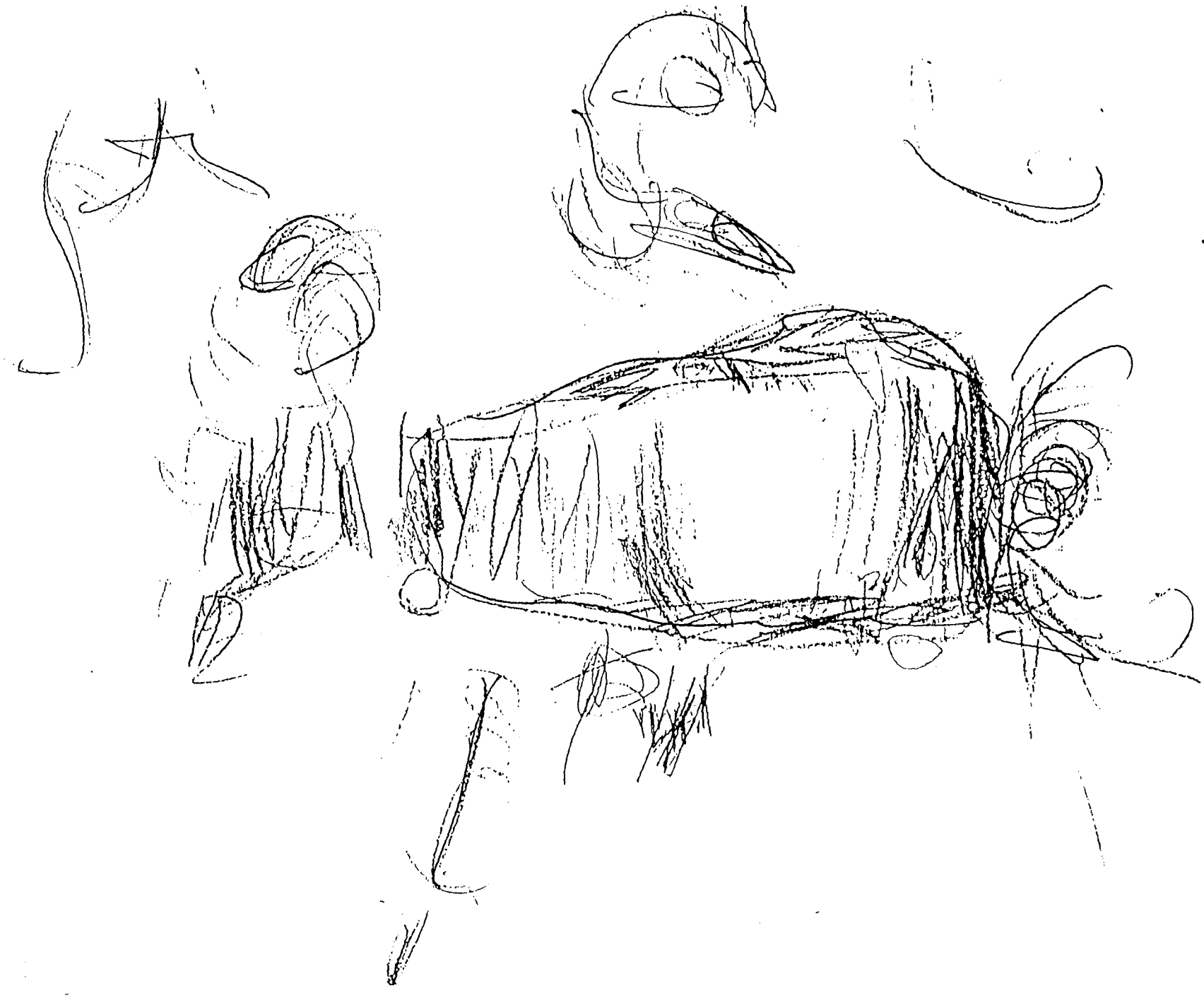
Thursday

Peter

January. 1st Yr

1st year. 2nd Term.

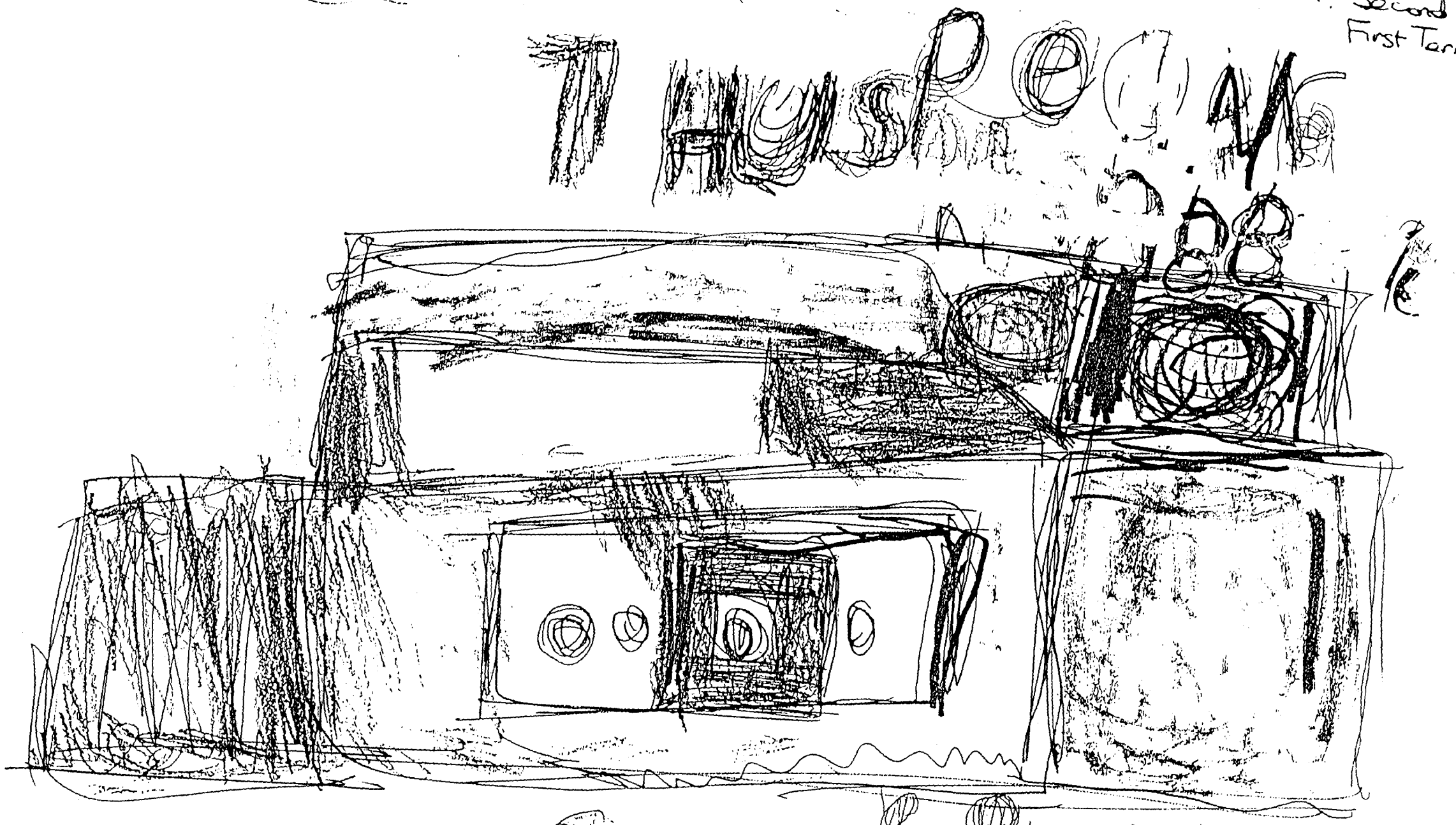
Figure a day out. in



Peter.

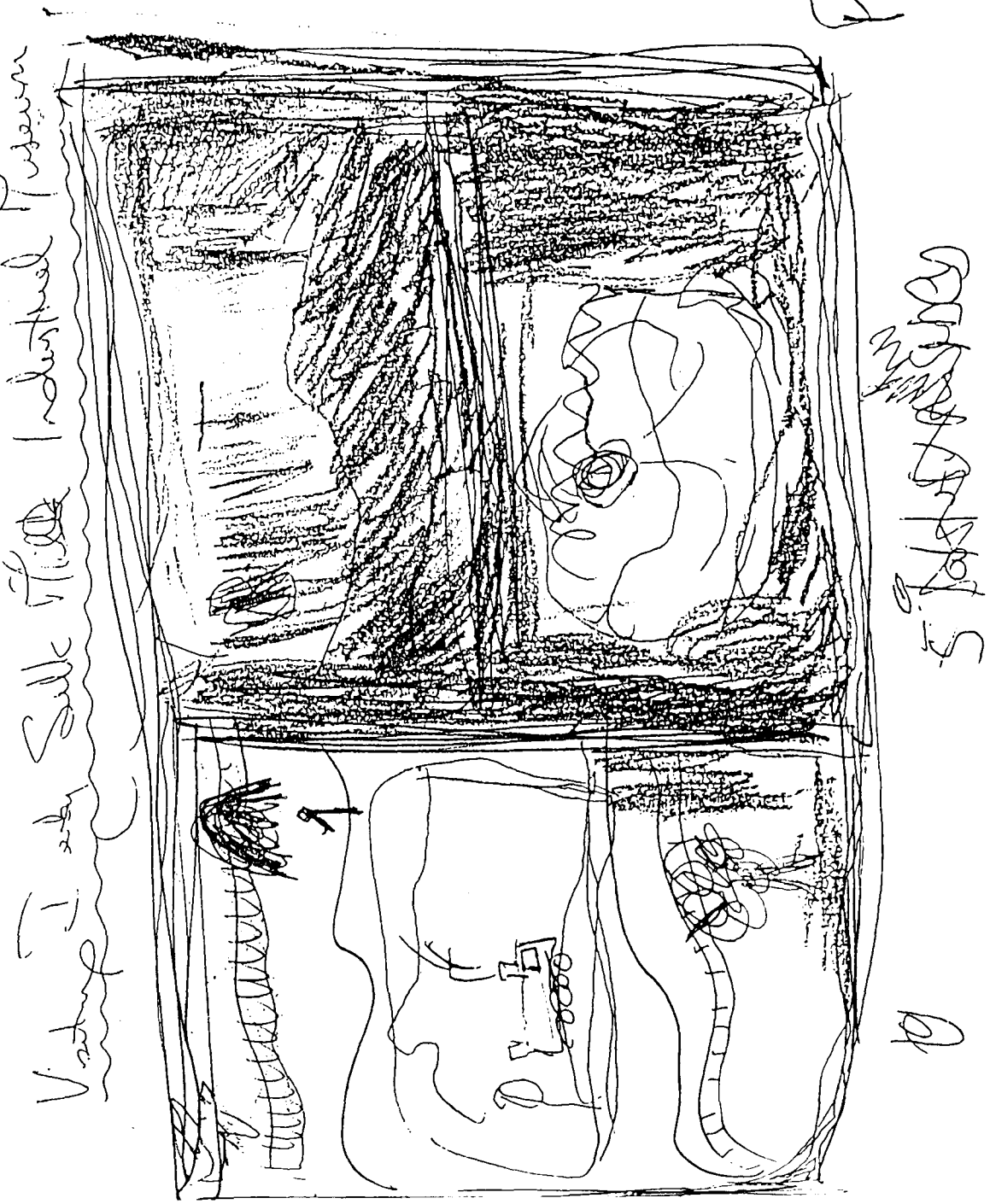
Part 1 Focus at the Crafts Market Place.

October. Second Year.
First Term.

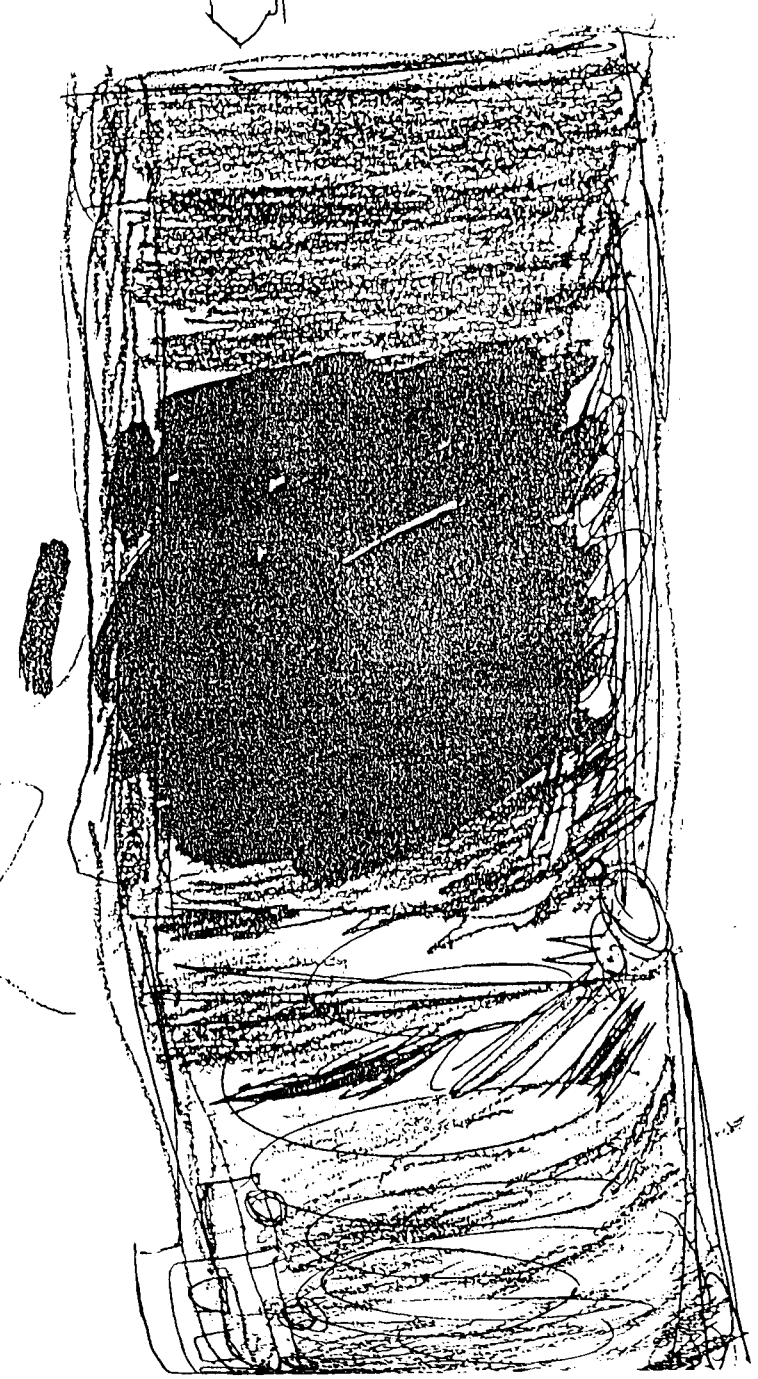


Peter

Peter Jones



Victoria and Albert Museum



Tower of London.

Appendix 6

Example of a Highlighted Transcript Showing Themes Worked On.

The following extract is taken from the transcript of work during a week towards the end of the first term. Students have learnt to make group rules by accepting majority decisions and I am setting out to test the effect of the rule that drinking (except water) should be banned in the group. I want them to decide what should be done about rule breaking. After break I took my unfinished coffee back to the circle.

Me We've just made a group rule that no one should drink whilst we're working. I am breaking the rule aren't I?

Lily Yes. You shouldn't be. Can only have water.

Me If we have group rules, we have to decide what to do when the rules are broken. What will you do if I drink this? (There was a lengthy silence)

Me What do you think Aggie?

Aggie You should be made to bring us all a drink.

Me But if I did that we'd all be breaking the rule. What else can you think of? What do you say Nigel?

Nigel I think you'll have to go away.

Me Where to?

Peter Over there. (Nodding at other side of the room)

Steve Yeah. That sounds good.

(There was a chorus of assent. James nodded violently. I moved to where Peter indicated)

Me How long would I have to stay here if I broke a group rule?

Steve Not long. Ten minutes say.

Aggie I think you should stay there all morning. Don't like people as can't keep the rules.

Sally Oh Aggie. That sounds a bit strong. All morning?

Aggie Well why not? We all know the rules. We made 'em.

Me What do the rest of you think? Is 'all morning' the right amount of time to stay out?

Steve Much too long. If you're going to stay out all morning, might as well not have come.

Me What do you think Peter?

Peter Too long. Half an hour at the most.

Me Well, we've had ten minutes suggested and half an hour and all morning. Any more views? What about you James?

(James got up and went to pat Steve's arm. I contrued this as agreeing with Steve's view.)

Me Any different things to suggest? Or different terms?

(There was fifteen seconds of silence)

Me It seems you think that people who break rules should have to sit out over here for some time. We've had suggestions of ten minutes, half an hour and all morning. Are you ready to vote on which you think is the right amount of time?

(Another chorus of agreement. There followed sounds of Sally getting out the flipchart. tuning to a clean page, opening a marker and writing with it in the page.)

Me Right. Sally has made three boxes. This one says 'Ten minutes', this one 'Half an hour' and this one 'All morning'. (This information is repeated.) Ready? Who is going to be the first to vote today?

Peter Not me.

Nigel I will then.

(There is noise of a chair scraping and marks bring made on the flipchart. Michael votes last)

Michael There, all done. Mine is the nicest tick.

Sally Oh Michael. You would say that. Everybody seems to have tried hard. Who's going to help me count the ticks?

Lily Me.

(With much assistance Lily recods a vote of six ticks for 'Ten minutes', two for 'Half and hour' and one for 'All morning'.)

Me Right Lily, which idea won? Which got most votes?

Lily Don't know.

Me Well which box has the most ticks? Let's count them again together.

(We do this and then I demonstrate counting up to six on my fingers. There may have been no response from Lily as I repeat the counting.)

Me Which is more Lily? Six, or two or one?

Lily Six is biggest. Six votes won. That one got six votes.

Sally That one says 'Ten minutes'. We decided on ten minutes.