

**Recognising desire: a psychosocial approach to understanding education policy
implementation and effect**

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Abstract

It is argued that in order to understand the ways in which teachers experience their work - including the idiosyncratic ways in which they respond to and implement mandated education policy - it is necessary to take account both of sociological and of psychological issues. The paper draws on original research with practising and beginning teachers, and on theories of social and psychic induction, to illustrate the potential benefits of this bipartisan approach for both teachers and researchers. Recognising the significance of (but somewhat arbitrary distinction between) structure and agency in teachers' practical and ideological positionings, it is suggested that teachers' responses to local and central policy changes are governed by a mix of pragmatism, social determinism and often hidden desires. It is the often underacknowledged strength of desire that may tip teachers into accepting and implementing policies with which they are not ideologically comfortable.

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Introduction: sociological and psychoanalytical perspectives on educational enquiry

In this paper I want to suggest that in order to arrive at more complex and therefore more helpful understandings of the learning and experiences of teachers, and specifically their role as local mediators of centrally mandated policies, we need to combine approaches and perspectives that may be perceived as strictly sociological with approaches and perspectives that may be perceived as more strictly psychological. In particular, we need to set beside our sociological understandings of the workings of society, including the manner in which public policy affects or comes into conflict with individual behaviours, understandings drawn from the field of *psycho-analysis* if we are to gain a fuller understandings of the relationships between individual agency and social structure and of the ways in which the social world is experienced and acted upon by individuals.

Such an approach, which, after Hogget and others (e.g. Hoggett 2004, Layton 2002), I will refer to as a psychosocial approach to understanding and researching about education and schooling, not only moves us forward in our understandings of education as a set of socio-psychological customs and practices, but, in so doing, suggests new theories of education and schooling that are likely to have relevance to a number of abiding pedagogical and curricular concerns. This is not to argue for some kind of ‘third-way’ synthesis between sociological and psycho-analytical perspectives in understanding social phenomena, but rather to suggest the advantage of adopting complementary vantage points from which to view the ‘messy complexity’ (Goodson and Walker 1991 p. xii) of social life (including, centrally to this paper, *classroom*

life) and the ways in which (Thomas 1995:5), ‘a personal life can be penetrated by the social and the practical’. As Hoggett (2004:84), writing about psychoanalysis and politics, puts this in aptly autobiographical terms:

‘I’ve spent most of my adult life trying to find out how things fit together - private and public, psychoanalysis and politics, care and justice. They don’t. That is not to say that their curvature, at many points, doesn’t coordinate perfectly but, if these are pieces of a jigsaw then the puzzle can’t be solved.’

Hoggett’s notion of ‘coming together by not-fittingness’ (2004: 75) is particularly helpful here, suggesting, in relation to policy research, the benefits of greater collaboration across the disciplines of sociology/social studies and psychology/psycho-analysis which neither necessitates an unacceptable compromise nor promises to provide definitive and easy answers to perceived conundrums. If such approaches to the study of human beings in culture and society are not entirely new, they are, nevertheless, relatively uncommon in relation to other disciplinary approaches, and are particularly and surprisingly uncommon in research related to understanding teachers’ experiences of classroom life. (For notable exceptions, see, however, the studies of *student* teachers undertaken by Britzman 1989, 1991; Britzman & Pitt 1996; Boler 1999; and Mitchell and Weber 1996.)

The empirical base

In promoting my argument, I shall draw for illustration on the two research studies that prompted it in the first place. The first of these was an ongoing study - an

Autobiography Project - involving student teachers on a one-year PGCE (postgraduate certificate of education) course at a British university (Moore and Atkinson 1998; Moore 2004). This study, which was subsequently developed at another British university into a study of reflective practice in student teachers (Moore and Ash 2002), involved recordings and notes from conversations with eighty student teachers - mostly training to become secondary-school English teachers - over a period of eight years, based on important issues and experiences identified by the students themselves in the process of keeping teaching-practice journals. The emphasis in these conversations was on encouraging the student teachers to talk about and understand their current experiences in the context of previous experiences they had had at school, at home or in other arenas of their social lives. The second study, the *Teacher Identities Project*, (Halpin *et al* 2000; Moore *et al* 2002), on which I shall draw rather more heavily, comprised recorded and analysed semi-structured interviews with seventy practising schoolteachers and eight school principals across six secondary schools and three primary schools in the Greater London (UK) area. The aim of this study was to learn more about the ways in which teachers experienced and organised their working lives in the context of rapid and substantial educational policy developments driven by central government, and what cultural, practical and (in the event) psychic resources they drew upon in making those responses. We were particularly interested in this study to learn more about how teachers responded to policies that they did not particularly approve of, and how initially 'unpopular' policies came, nevertheless, to be put into practice at school and classroom level.

Given the ethical implications of reporting on interview-based research (in addition to issues concerning reliability and validity), it is important to say a word or two about

the manner in which the two studies were conducted and in particular about the relationship between the researchers, the research and the 'researched'.

The first thing that needs to be said is that from the outset, though it was understood that the researchers would take responsibility for analysing the data, making connections across the sample and reporting and sharing findings, both studies were presented and (if our respondent feedback is to be believed) experienced as essentially collaborative in nature. While one aim of the studies was to contribute more generally to understandings of professional experience and the local reception and implementation of public policy, it was also intended that participation in the study would have the potential to contribute more directly to the professional development and understandings of those involved. That this was in no small measure achieved was evidenced by respondents frequently indicating at the end of their interviews, often after the tape-recorder had been switched off, that they felt they had articulated - or, in some cases, even thought - things for the first time, and by positive comments received when transcripts were returned to respondents for checking and validation and during group interviews (held at the end of each study) in which participants discussed what they felt they had learned from taking part in the research. It was interesting in this regard that a number of participants - including one of those ('Graeme') quoted in this paper - were very keen that their experiences and feelings should be shared with a wider audience so that (to quote Graeme) they 'did not feel isolated'. Comments such as 'Wow... That was interesting. I'd like to hear that [played back]' and 'I don't think I've ever spoken about a lot of that before' provided an interesting reflection of the suggestion put forward by several of the student teachers in the *Autobiography Project* that a major aid to *reflection on*

practice was having an interested professional to ‘act as a sounding board’ or to ‘bounce ideas off’.

Common ground

The teams carrying out each of the studies I have referred to were primarily ‘sociological’ in orientation. However, in both cases there were researchers with strong interests in bringing psychoanalytical approaches and perspectives to our understandings of teachers’ experiences and practice. It was clear from the start of each study that, far from resulting in tensions or directional disagreements among the research teams, these diverse perspectives were both complementary and productive, shedding particularly useful light when it came to analysing the personal, ‘in-head’ debates carried out by practitioners as they sought to position themselves (Coldron and Smith 1999) in relation to mandated policy change.

This complementarity initially came as something of a surprise to us; for though we were aware of some theoretical and analytical synergies between the two disciplines, and in particular of developments in the relatively small, relatively recent but ever expanding field of the sociology of the *emotions* (e.g. Bendelow and Williams 1998; Barbalet 2002), we had anticipated a far greater difference than proved to be the case in the areas of *focus and emphasis* in the collection and analysis of our data. In particular, we had been concerned, as a group, that although both disciplines were interested in issues of structure and agency, the sociology of education had traditionally prioritised the ‘external’ structure, whereas the traditional emphasis in psycho-analysis, notwithstanding Lacan’s (1977, 1979) notions of the structured unconscious or Freud’s occasional references to the impact of specific socio-

economic conditions on the individual psyche, had been on 'internal' agency. In relation to the sociology of *education*, for example, traditional themes had been the roles and functions of education (including its role in the socialisation of the young); issues of achievement and underachievement (often, in connection with class, gender, race and ethnicity); school processes and structures; and (more recently) policy and policy effects - all firmly rooted in explanatory paradigms concerned with developing critical understandings of the social and economic circumstances within which education takes place, and its relationships with the wider social systems. Psychoanalysis, by contrast, even when used metaphorically or derivatively, had tended to concern itself with wider issues of the development, expression and repression of *desire* in the individual psyche, rarely - given its more immediate concern with familial and sexual relationships - venturing into the specific circumstances of schools and classrooms. (The most notable exception to this is probably the work of Anna Freud [1979]. See also, however, Britzman and Pitt 1996; Gallop, 1995.)

Charting the psycho-social journey: the socio-economic order

The overlaps and (to refer back to Hoggett) coordinations between the disciplines were apparent in many aspects of our collective understandings of the data, not least in exploring the kinds of macro-micro policy dynamics elaborated elsewhere by, for example, Ball *et al* (1992), Fulcher (1998) and Codd (1999), and in exploring the concept of policy as *discourse* within which and at whose margins the individual voices of practitioners struggle to assert themselves (Ball 1993). The overlap which was to prove particularly striking and useful, however, and which offered us the

strongest guidance when it came to data analysis, was a common interest in the life-journeys undertaken by individual human beings from a pre-social, pre-symbolic state of being into a pre-existing socio-symbolic and socialis-*ing* world: a journey which starts in infancy but continues, if (very often) with less obviously consequential effects, throughout a human life. The sociological perspectives of Bourdieu and the psychoanalytical perspectives of Freud and Lacan were of particular interest and use to us here.

For Bourdieu, the pre-existing social world into which the individual subject is born is described chiefly in terms of ‘fields’ (Bourdieu 1971, 1977, 1990; Moore 2000), these being the social ‘spaces’, structures, systems and organisations, infused with power relations, in which we live out our lives: social spaces which are characterised by having ‘[their] dominant and [their] dominated, [their] struggle for usurpation or exclusion, [their] mechanisms of reproduction’ (Wacquant 1989, p.41). From the moment we are born, Bourdieu suggests, we *internalise* these structures, systems and organisations in the processes of socialisation; however, we make our internalisations differently according to the socio-economic position we initially occupy *in* the various fields. If I am born into a relatively well-off home, my internalisation is likely to be very different from that of someone born into a relatively poor home, and my expectations of success - and of the degree of control and influence I may have *over* the structures, systems and organisations - are also likely to be different. Bourdieu’s term ‘habitus’ describes these internalisations: it is the habitus - the internalised, inner ‘disposition’, so deeply embedded (like Freudian repression) as to make us unaware of its existence - that effectively decides for us who we think we are, where we think

we belong, and what might be reasonable expectations and ambitions for ourselves in the social order.

In terms of understanding the implementation and effects of educational policy at the local level (that is to say, in its impact on and mediation by classroom teachers and school principals), analyses such as that of Bourdieu's, which 'locate' the individual practitioner within relations of power and perceived social positionings, have much to offer. They may, for example, help practitioners and students of educational policy to understand how and why mandated policy is received, experienced and worked upon by practitioners often in quite different ways from one another - and indeed why, by and large, resistance to unpopular policy is less widespread and effective than might be expected given the large numbers of teachers involved and their potential political leverage. It was of interest in our own studies to note the very high incidence of respondents telling us (to quote two respondents typical of many): *'It's not my place to oppose policy just because I don't like it: I can certainly try and work around it, and I do - but there's not much point arguing against it'* (Ken: Head of high-school Humanities Department, *Teacher Identities Project*); *'There's no point opposing these things "out there": we can't change anything, even if we wanted to; it's just a waste of time and effort'* (Mary, newly-qualified elementary-school teacher, *Teacher Identities Project*). It was equally interesting that very few teachers or student teachers openly criticised such matters as the selection of curriculum content (from, for example, the point of view of cultural bias), tending to express far greater concern about the amount of work they were being asked to do or the number of curricular items and skills they were expected to cover in an unreasonably short space of time, and how personal ambitions, too, were often linked quite markedly to perceived

positions and possibilities within the social order. (For a fuller account, see Moore 2005.)

It is not just (pre-)dispositions, of course, that account for these responses. As Billig *et al* (1988:44) and Hewitson (2004) have pointed out, teachers are constantly having to make pragmatic choices and (re-)positionings in the light of purely practical circumstances (to do with resources, the legal *requirement* to follow mandated policy, home and family circumstances, the nature of one's students, and a simple understanding of the prevailing socio-economic situation within which our work is located). These same practical considerations will be present in - and again contribute to explanations of - teachers' compliance with mandated policy change even where (as is often the case if our research is typical) there may be deeply-felt *ideological* tensions and clashes (i.e. between the individual teacher's or school's pedagogical or curricular convictions and those embedded implicitly or explicitly in imposed policy). As Billig *et al* argue, teachers' positionings and ways of experiencing and responding to professional life are seldom internally consistent discursively, for:

'Teachers do not have the luxury of being able to formulate and adhere to some theory or position on education, with only another theorists' arguments to question its validity. They have to accomplish the practical task of teaching, which requires getting the job done through whatever conceptions and methods work best, under practical constraints that include physical resources, numbers of pupils, nature of pupils, time constraints, set syllabuses and so on.'

(Billig *et al* 1988: 46)

We might safely assume that when teachers embody in their practice educational aims and purposes with which they may be less than happy, their preparedness to do so may result as much from an understanding of legal requirements or a respect for democratic processes as from an internalised view of their own relative powerlessness within the system.

Recognising desire: psychoanalytical perspectives on educational enquiry

Bourdieu's conceptualisations of field and habitus, and research that explores the impact of the contingent on professionals' practice, clearly have the potential to help us to understand individual responses to social structures and events and to throw light on why and how different people experience and respond to the 'same' systems and public policies in different ways (that is to say, a recognition and understanding of the *idiosyncratic*). What such accounts tend to emphasise, however, are the collective and individual responses and experiences themselves rather than where those responses and experiences 'come from'. That is to say, they tend to sustain the locus of the investigation *within* considerations of the readily observable mechanisms and structures of the socio-economic order rather than on what individual actors may have brought *to* that order and therefore on some of the less easily observed constraints on individuals' experiences and responses to social events (including those embedded in the linguistic structures through which experience is shared and mediated.) This is true even of Bourdieu's account of the *habitus*, which prioritises the processes and mechanisms by which 'habitual' positions and dispositions are

sustained by and within social ‘fields’ over the actions, perceptions and experiences of the social actors within it.

What is missing from these accounts is precisely the element of *desire* that is so fundamental to *psychoanalytical* understandings of human experience and interaction and that dominates the extensive writings of professional psychoanalysts such as Freud and Lacan. Of particular interest to the teams undertaking the *Autobiography* and *Teacher Identities* projects were

- Lacan’s (1977, 1979) emphasis on the power and effects of *language* in the infant’s journey into and within the social/symbolic order (where connections with the discursive approaches of sociologists such as Ball [1993] were most obvious), and
- Freud’s (1991) emphasis on the repression of desires, linked in turn to concepts of repetition and transference, that are recognised (unconsciously) by the individual as unacceptable in the social world.

It is important to clarify that ‘repetition’ - described by Freud (1968:454) as ‘new editions of old conflicts’ - is here understood as the ways in which social sites (such as classrooms and school staffrooms) provide opportunities and invitations for people to ‘play out’ or ‘re-enact’ previously unresolved social/emotional conflicts, including the assumption of specific ‘roles’ (that of child, parent, jilted lover, and so forth) that they have previously assumed in other situations. The related concept of ‘transference’ (Freud 1991) describes the more particular process whereby one individual is addressed, perceived and responded to as if they were another (absent) person implicated in some previously unresolved conflict (e.g. a parent, a child, a

jilting lover). To use Freud's own account, in which he applies the concept to the relationship between the analyst and the analysand, transference involves 'new editions of impulses and phantasies which are aroused and made conscious during the progress of the analysis [but which have the] peculiarity ... that they replace some earlier person by the person of the physician' (quoted in Klein 1975:48).

Anna Freud has famously argued that emotionally charged school classrooms, infused with relations of power and reflections of familial roles, are *particularly* apt to become sites of repetition and transference (the 'physician', for example, being paralleled by the headteacher, a particular colleague, a particular child and so on). Her suggestion is that if teachers are genuinely to seek to become effective in what they do, or to develop fuller understandings of how they react to things and whether those reactions can become less obstructive, they have a responsibility *to acknowledge and to try to understand such psychic operations*. To quote Britzman and Pitt's helpful summary of this position:

'The classroom invites transferential relations because, for teachers, it is such a familiar place, one that seems to welcome re-enactments of childhood memories. Indeed, recent writing about pedagogy suggests that transference shapes how teachers respond and listen to students, and how students respond and listen to teachers.... [T]eachers' encounters with students may return them involuntarily and still unconsciously to scenes from their individual biographies. ... Such an exploration requires that teachers consider how they understand students through their own subjective conflicts. ... The heart of the matter ... is the ethical obligation teachers have to learn about their own conflicts and to control the re-

enactment of old conflicts that appear in the guise of new pedagogical encounters.'

(Britzman and Pitt 1996: 117, 118)

This notion of adopting familiar roles and positions or re-enacting unresolved tensions from the past - or from the 'outside' of teaching (i.e. roles *currently* adopted in relation to tensions that are currently problematic and unresolved in the teacher's ongoing social and perhaps family life) - and of actively but unconsciously seeking out 'new sites for old conflicts' proved particularly helpful to many of the student teachers taking part in our *Autobiography Project* (Moore 2004). Through participation in this reflexive project (reported in Moore and Atkinson 1998), several of these student teachers came to understand some of their less constructive responses to classroom and staffroom conflicts in terms of adopting the perspective and persona of (in particular) a son, daughter, sibling or partner - an understanding which did not magically remove any unwelcome emotions arising from the conflict but helped the students to 'move on' from the conflict through bringing to it an alternative perspective. The *Autobiography Project* and subsequent *Reflective Practice Project* also shed light for the research teams on how the element of desire operates in relation to professional practice and experience, and why it is important to include it in our considerations and understandings of classroom experience, whether we are a teacher, a researcher or indeed a policy-maker. To quote one of the respondents in the student-teacher studies, raising an issue which was subsequently to prove very helpful in making sense of the testimonies of more experienced teachers in the *Teacher Identities Project*:

'With teaching, it's not just how you see yourself, it's about how you see how other people see you: how you see yourself being seen. ... What you inevitably end up doing is looking at the pupils and judging yourself through them. The children are in your head all the time'

(Mizzi: student teacher)

For many student teachers, this anxiety about how one was being 'seen' was more specifically tied down to a desire to be liked and respected in the classroom:

'I wanted to be liked by the children. ... At the start, I was intimidated by them and my aim then was to fight back: if I get them to like me, they won't intimidate me, they'll like me.'

Carrie: student teacher

'Part of what I realised was that I'd had this feeling of kind of being watched all the time - as if there was some expectation of classroom performance that I was constantly not living up to. It helped talking about this too, and realising I wasn't the only one experiencing things this way. Another bit, related to that, was that I actually wanted the kids to be 'more personal' to me, if that makes any sense. I think I needed to be liked and respected, and strange as it seems now I'd never actually understood that myself - how my need was contributing to the overall problem.'

Marlene: student teacher

While some student teachers had initially responded to this desire through an effort to combine 'being nice' with 'being effective', others claimed to have

adopted a protective ‘persona’ strategy, almost giving up on the project of being liked ‘for themselves’ and presenting instead a public front for their students to respond to. While such a strategy went some way to resolving ‘the popularity issue’ (as Marlene called it) by effectively removing it, it was not without considerable personal cost to the practitioner. As another student teacher, Celia, put it:

‘It’s a bit of a persona in a way and not really wanting that persona to be too far away from who I [really] am, because then it feels like you are having a role all day long and I think that’s very hard work, having to actually pretend to be someone different.’

Celia: student teacher, *Reflective Practice Project*

This desire - sometimes articulated, sometimes not - often unarticulated to be liked/loved/approved of by our fellow human beings, and the related insecurity that we may not merit or receive such liking/love/approval, was not just a feature of the responses of the student teachers we spoke to; it also contributed repeatedly and in no small measure to the responses to policy directives that we heard about during our interviews with *practising* teachers, to which I shall turn next.

Bill: not rocking the boat

In order to give a flavour of how the psycho-social approach to our research worked in practice, I want to focus in some detail on two of the respondents in our teacher identities study, Bill and Graeme - both mature teachers with several years’ experience currently working at the same inner-city comprehensive school. Bill and Graeme had both told us that they had experienced great changes in education over

the past twenty-five years and both had expressed some ambivalence towards recent government policy and recent organisational decisions taken by their school, some of which had clearly been, at least in part, prompted *by* government policy. I have chosen Bill as an example of one of many teachers who had adopted what we came to see as a consciously pragmatic orientation to such central and local policy developments (Moore *et al* 2002a, 2002b), underpinned, however, by a psychic (and largely unacknowledged or trivialised) need to secure and maintain personal approval (Mulkay 1988). I have chosen Graeme as an example of one of many teachers whose earlier (including childhood) experiences were clearly impacting on their current perceptions, experiences and (re-) orientations in ways that these practitioners appeared, at the start of the study, to have been only superficially aware of but that had played a not inconsiderable part in determining the manner of their experiencing of mandated policy and their classroom implementations of it.

The first of the respondents, Bill, was an assistant principal. At the time of interview, he was in his mid-fifties and had been teaching for nearly thirty years. In line with current national revivals in streaming and setting and in stricter dress codes, Bill's school had recently moved away from mixed-ability teaching towards more widespread setting of students according to ability, and had changed from being a non-uniform school to one in which the wearing of school uniform was compulsory.

Bill's attitude toward each of these developments had remained ambivalent. While the decision to adopt school uniform, had, he told us, been taken very democratically, involving teachers, parents and pupils, he had openly opposed it at the time on the grounds that the existence of school uniform was likely to create even more problems

- including more staff-pupil conflicts - than it would solve. Even though this view was based on Bill's own experience of having moved from a uniform-school to a non-uniform-school, he had, by the time of our interview, come to accept that 'probably, overall, [introducing uniform] was the right thing'. His subsequent, elaborate defence of his position, however, suggested a continuing lack of comfort with this personal shift of view as, indeed, with his shifting ground over mixed-ability teaching:

'I think we had to go for uniform because of the rivalry, the competitiveness - and parents overtly wanted it ... I think probably overall it was the right thing. You know, I think it was because of a sense of identity. We made the uniform friendly. Most of the parents like it. Some of the kids didn't, but most of them did.... I think it's very hard to know in the long run. You know, our intake has gone up, and we are much more popular. That might be one of the reasons.... I think it might lead to an improvement in exam results, and a good [government inspection report] - you know - because those things do have an effect, quite a large effect, out there. But I'm still not....Again, I suppose it's like the mixed-ability thing: I'm willing to go along with whatever we agree democratically. But I was not one of the people necessarily in favour.'

Bill, it seemed, had done what many teachers are compelled to do when confronted by enforced change with which they are not in agreement: he had put his initial feelings and views to one side, and gone along with the change reluctantly; rendering his immediate professional experience less happy, perhaps, but simultaneously offering him his only hope of long-term survival. In order to justify his change of position, and perhaps to express his discomfort with it or to render it more acceptable

(to himself or to others), Bill interestingly explained his shift of attitude with reference to an ideology of *democracy* that he clearly felt he and others would approve of: i.e. ‘I was not one of the people necessarily in favour ... [but] I’m willing to go along with whatever we agree democratically.’

Bill’s understandable capitulation to a policy that he does not like is, in itself, of interest and importance, and examples such as this have much to tell us about the increasingly coercive effects of public policy on resistant individuals as policy becomes part of institutional hegemony. As Coldron and Smith (1999:711) in their account of how practitioners ‘actively locate’ themselves in ‘social space’ argue, external policies which ‘impose greater degrees of uniformity and conformity’ threaten to ‘*impoverish* the notion of active location, restricting the number of potential positions the teacher might assume’ (1999, p.711, emphasis added: see also Ball and Goodson 1985:2). However, in order more fully to understand the *mechanisms* of such forms of local policy enactment, it is important to recognise and understand the part played by the individual psyche, and the ways in which the psyche interacts with - and perhaps is manipulated by - the policy imperative. In this regard, Bill’s testimony immediately brings to mind Billig’s (1997) discussion of the predisposition we have to regulate our feelings in order to fit in with situational norms, and our shared understanding of the potentially damaging impact of conflicting demands. It might also, depending on the reading we take, illustrate the same writer’s comments (1997:143) on how individuals will ‘[resolve] a neurotic conflict through fantasies about the ideal self’ (in Bill’s case, the consistent democrat).

Whichever interpretation we prefer, Bill sends out a clear message in reflecting on his initially reluctant support for school uniform and ability-setting, that he did not want to rock the institutional boat: a position reflected elsewhere and repeatedly throughout his interview, through references to himself as ‘a pretty reasonable bloke’, as ‘liking to get on with everybody regardless of their educational views’, as being a ‘middle-of-the road sort of socialist’, and (indeed) of ‘not liking to rock the boat’. In the discussions leading up to the local policy changes that he is most concerned to talk about (setting by ability and the introduction of school uniform), reflected on in an interview in which he is prepared to allow his continuing ambivalence to show through, Bill seems to have been compelled to subordinate one set of feelings - to do with educational and political *ideology* - to another set, to do with not wanting to lose popularity through giving offence to the developing ideological and symbolic order of the school: that is to say - though at first sight the reverse may seem true - in the struggle between ideology and desire, it is desire (the desire for popularity, for acceptance, for personal and institutional equilibrium) that wins. As Billig (1997:146) expresses this in considerations of conversation analysis and discursive psychology:

‘It is as if speakers find themselves inhabiting a normative structure which is more powerful than their individual feelings and to which they have to conform for interaction to proceed.’

(See also Mulkey’s [1988:79] argument concerning the avoidance of disagreement.)

The relationship between ideology and desire is, of course, notoriously difficult to chart, especially when desire is understood in its repressed (and repressive) form rather than, as I have done here, in its more accessible guises. (For one of the more interesting attempts to do this, see Žižek 1989). Certainly, space allows for no such enterprise here. I want to suggest, however, that it is in this ‘have to conform’ - this sense of compulsion - that the desire can be found: that is, the desire both resists the symbolic/ideological order and simultaneously urges obedience to it. To apply our *initial* (essentially sociological) analysis to an understanding of Bill’s response, we might say that here is an example of the victory of a dominant over a non-dominant ideology - one that we might find examples of across a wide range of practitioner experience. Without in any way wishing to undermine such an analysis, our second analytical pass suggests that we are also seeing a triumph of desire - with, of course, its own history in the biography of the individual - over ideology, and that in order to see the ‘whole picture’ we need to visit both of these analytical perspectives. This might lead us, among other directions, to the view that without the presence of individual desire, with its tendency both to resistance and to compliance, the local implementation of public policy, especially where this appears to involve the imposition of an oppositional ideology, might be significantly harder to achieve.

Graeme: the return of the past

The second of the two teachers I have chosen to discuss in some detail, Graeme, had been in teaching for nearly twenty-five years - a career spent at just two secondary-

schools in the same area of a major city. Having qualified at a small training college in the nineteen-seventies, Graeme had begun his career as an English and Drama teacher, and continued to work within the English Department at his current school. After six years of teaching, however, he had opted to specialise in the pastoral aspects of education, and had been a Head of Year ever since.

Having experienced what he called an ‘appalling’ education himself, Graeme had rather drifted into teaching with a tentative vision of ensuring that some students at least got a better deal out of the system than he had. In interview, Graeme maintained that his own school experiences - in particular, the more negative ones - had helped him to understand his own students’ feelings and needs, especially in years 9 and 10 when they were going through ‘the strains and stresses of puberty’. This feeling of being able to empathise with his students had helped to keep Graeme in a job that, for many years, he had ‘enjoyed tremendously’. Recently, however, he had become disillusioned with teaching, finding it increasingly less rewarding to teach the younger students, and he was now, at the age of forty-nine, looking for a move out of the profession altogether.

Our early analysis of Graeme’s testimony had, as with Bill, focussed on essentially sociological issues from an essentially sociological perspective; in particular, an interest in the ways in which mandated policy becomes internalised and/or transformed within schools by teachers and school principals. We were interested in comparing the extent and effects of such internalisations and transformations across a range of schools and classrooms, and drew for support largely on the work of McLaughlin (1991), Ball (1997) and Gerwitz and Ball (2000) related to

‘reorientation’ changes (temporary or compromise adjustments to structures and practices) and ‘colonisation’ changes (more permanent alterations to a teacher’s or school’s ethos and philosophy) brought about through the effects of public policy change (see also Moore et al 2002a, 2002b). Within this theoretical paradigm, Graeme’s story had been one of increasing disillusionment brought about by increased bureaucracy, by the insistence of a results and performance culture, by changes in teacher-parent and teacher-student relationships and by a de-emphasis on what Graeme called ‘the socialisation aspect [of education] ... the preparation for life’ - all leading to an enforced teaching style away from (to quote Graeme) a ‘progressive’, ‘liberal’ approach towards a ‘more reactionary’, ‘more abrasive’ one. In short, Graeme had self-presented as an interesting example of a classroom practitioner putting policy into practice at considerable - and highly visible - cost to his own immediate job satisfaction: a process he was finding so difficult as to make him want to quit the profession altogether.

While such a perspective again revealed much about the manner in - and extent to - which public policy becomes operationalised locally, highlighting some of its more insidious characteristics (Moore 2004), it was clear that another perspective would be required if we were to make a meaningful stab at answering an additional question that had become increasingly hard to ignore during the process of our data gathering and analysis: that is to say, ‘Why is it that teachers adopt the different strategies that they do in their negotiations with policy mandates, and how is it that some teachers - *regardless of their initial ideological positioning* - find the process far more difficult (or far easier) than others?’ In this case, what was it *about Graeme* that had made him so desperate, so unwilling to continue to do as he was told, when others in his school

of a similar ideological disposition had been willing to carry on? (It is important to point out here that Graeme's difficulty was not just about a clash of ideologies; nor was it indicative of a generally defeatist attitude. Graeme could 'talk pragmatism' as well as the next teacher, and, like Bill, was also able to justify setted teaching and school uniform - neither of which he had originally supported - through reference to local issues of results and behaviour.)

In order to begin to answer this question, we felt that we needed to think more about Graeme *the person* - and more about Graeme's *life*. Fortunately, we already had a good deal of information about this from Graeme's response to an initial question put to all our interviewees in the *Reflective Practice Project*, 'What brought you into teaching?' This question had initially been included as something of an 'ease-in' to the interview, and we had been sceptical to the possibility that it might yield much usable data given our more pressing research imperatives. We had been surprised, however, to find that respondents actually had a great deal to say, often providing many unsolicited details of their personal circumstances and aspirations, and in some cases responding almost as if in a confessional - details which (as in the case of Graeme) were often to prove particularly helpful in explaining some of the experiences and orientations discussed later on in the interview. Graeme's response offers a particularly illuminating and accessible example of the kind of 'soul-baring' undertaken by many of our respondents. This extract is taken from the very beginning of Graeme's interview:

Interviewer: I wonder if you could say something about what brought you into teaching and what motivated you to become a teacher in the first place - and perhaps when you made that decision?

Graeme: Well I dropped out of the sixth form at school and had five years wandering, doing all sorts of jobs of this and that, selling things and getting a motor cycle. Eventually a friend who was going into teaching suggested that I might be good at it. I thought about it and having had such an appalling school experience myself, which I hated, I think that led me to think perhaps I would like to make it better for others. That's what took me into it: I think it was that eventually.

Interviewer: Was it bad teachers, or - ?

Graeme: No my own school. It was different things. It was to do with [family circumstances] and the fact that I was sent to a boarding school that I hated [...] and a whole lot of things. And they put me back a year because [of] my attainment, and with that my confidence totally went after that. I was twelve. I had done very well at school and suddenly I am sent to somewhere where I am told I am not doing well and that was it. I did no 'O' levels, started the sixth form and couldn't stand it any longer and dropped out.

Interviewer: Those negative experiences - you say they helped you?

Graeme: Those negative experiences have helped me as a teacher I am sure.

Interviewer: Is that in the way you respond to the kids?

Graeme: I think the way I respond to them, yes, because I do understand to an extent, I understand all that they feel.

One of the more interesting aspects of Graeme's testimony is that while he recognises the impact of his own experiences of schooling on his desire to become a teacher himself - and a particular *kind* of teacher - he does not appear to make the same kind of connection between his experiences of schooling and his decision to *leave* teaching. When asked to explain this latter decision, he tends to concentrate on the clashes between his own preferred teaching style and the style that he feels is being imposed on him from a variety of 'outside' forces - seemingly overlooking the 'inside' force that is also at work. Graeme's situation brings to mind not only Sigmund Freud's conceptualisations of repetition and transference (ibid), but the exemplary study of Anna Freud's of how transference and repetition work in practice. This study, summarised by Britzman and Pitt (1996:118), tells of a governess employed to help three children with their academic work. The governess quickly fixed on the middle child, deemed by his parents to be the least able, formed a close attachment with him, and raised his achievement to a remarkable degree. No sooner had the child demonstrated his academic success, however, than the governess resigned her post, appearing to lose interest in the child altogether. Explaining the governess's behaviour, Britzman and Pitt (1996: 118) continue:

'Her identification with this child was due to feelings of being ignored and misunderstood in her own childhood. She came to see how her devotion for teaching this child - a devotion Anna Freud names as "rescue fantasy" - turned to envy when the child became successful ... [T]he child served as a representation of a condensed version of her own childhood.'

Given Graeme's observations about his own childhood, it is not fanciful to begin to understand his own difficulties at least partly within these same contexts of repetition and transference. That is to say, what is at stake for Graeme is not simply a threatened ideological/educational stance, but a threatened *re-enactment*: indeed, a threatened *expiation* of sorts - and, hence, a threatened purpose that lies beyond stories of wanting to contribute something useful to society. From this perspective, the key observations in the snippet of conversation cited above are 'I would like to make it better for others' and 'I understand all that they feel': in other words, just like the governess in Anna Freud's study, Graeme's students had as much of a *function* in Graeme's professional life as he had in their socio-academic lives: they, too, '*served as a representation of a condensed version of [his] own childhood*' - and in rescuing theirs, Graeme was, effectively, rescuing his own.

If we adopt this viewpoint, we can suggest that Graeme's genuinely felt aspirations for his students connect very strongly - and semi-consciously - to the brutality of his own schooling and a need to expiate that brutality: so that when he finds himself pushed by factors in the 'external' social world (e.g. changes in public behaviour and in government education policies) towards replicating that *same* brutality, he does all that

he feels he can do: he resigns. (For a comparison with the way in which some young black and working-class teachers cite their own poor education and a desire to help make the system better as key motivational forces in their decisions to become teachers, see Moore 2005.)

Recognising the emotional: understanding compliant and resistant responses

This paper has argued that the individual social actor's journey into and within the socio-symbolic world is simultaneously a journey into and a positioning within the socio-economic order (an order of laws and regulations, of power relations and hierarchical 'locations') and a journey into and a positioning within the psychic order (an order concerned with the allowance, control and denial of desire). The navigation of this journey - undertaken within the contingent context of practicality/practicability and the idiosyncratic context of initial and ongoing social induction - is germane to the individual's subsequent sense of identity and is of critical importance in the ways in which we continue to experience and to understand social situations, interactions and events including those situated within our professional and 'public' lives. To understand the journey and its effects in the fields of educational policy and practice suggests the importance of a joint focus on - but at the same time a breaking down of the semiotic boundaries between - both agency and structure. In particular, it argues for research into the idiosyncratic ways in which blunt, 'universal' policy is received and worked upon by those charged with its implementation (Ball 1993). This requires a recognition that teachers (no less, indeed, than their students) are constantly positioning and repositioning themselves in relation both to the practicalities of their daily work and to the demands of their 'inner selves': that is to say, these positionings

and repositionings occur in neither a social nor a psychic ‘vacuum’ (Hartnett and Carr 1995; Smyth 1995).

There is a growing body of literature (e.g. Boler 1999, Britzman and Pitt 1996) suggesting that the emotional - that *desire* - is too often left out of our understandings of classroom practice and experience, and that this omission can be detrimental both to our development as reflective individuals and to the development of our practice - a view elaborated elsewhere by Zizek (1989) in relation to our desire for approval in the eyes of others. Critically, the overlooking of this dimension seriously hampers our understanding of - and subsequent ability to respond constructively to - those other issues concerning practical (re)orientations in relation to dominant hegemonic views of teaching and schooling and to dominant policy perspectives on teaching and schooling. From the practitioner’s point of view, it can also prove critical in determining not so much the manner in which public policy is implemented at the local level but in the sense that the practitioner makes of the more negative and troublesome aspects of their work experiences and the extent to which these do or do not prove ‘fatal’. Hoggett (2004: 84) has suggested in this respect that ‘[W]e must learn to enjoy our [internal and external] conflicts; it is only when we are afraid of them that our troubles begin.’ While this may be easier said than done, one is left wondering, in respect of the experiences of Graeme (above), whether or not a more reflexive consideration of his difficulties, carried out within a more supportive professional environment, might have helped him to reach the same kind of equilibrium achieved by his colleague Bill and others, whereby he could have continued in work that he clearly saw as important without completely sacrificing either his motivation or his ideals. This is not, of course, to argue the case for compliance: far from it. For such reflexivity and support

might also - though with more attendant difficulties, perhaps - have suggested a more genuinely *resistant* response in place of Bill's compliant one, the latter simply having demanded a cost too high for Graeme to be prepared to pay.

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'I wanted to be liked by the children. ... At the start, I was intimidated by them and my aim then was to fight back: if I get them to like me, they won't intimidate me, they'll like me.'

Carrie: student teacher, *Reflective Practice Project*

'It's a bit of a persona in a way and not really wanting that persona to be too far away from who I [really] am, because then it feels like you are having a role all day long and I think that's very hard work, having to actually pretend to be someone different.'

Celia: student teacher, *Reflective Practice Project*

Part of what I realised was that I'd had this feeling of kind of being watched all the time - as if there was some expectation of classroom performance that I was constantly not living up to. It helped talking about this too, and realising I wasn't the only one experiencing things this way. Another bit, related to that, was that I actually wanted the kids to be 'more personal' to me, if that makes any sense. I think I needed to be liked and respected, and strange as it seems now I'd never actually understood that myself - how my need was contributing to the overall problem.'

Marlene: *Autobiography Project*

