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**EMOTIONAL COHERENCE IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP:  
THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PERSONAL IN INTERPRETING  
AND SUSTAINING PRIMARY SCHOOL HEADSHIP**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines how primary headteachers experience, and talk about, emotion and meaning in their daily interactions, and sets out to understand further how the affective impacts on their leadership. It presents a reflective journey into the affective world of the primary headteacher, concentrating on the personal side of headship. It argues that primary headship is reliant on the personal emotional quality of the headteacher, and at the same time a quality of the social relationships in the school. By using an iterative process, the research argues that emotion and leadership are closely tied together, and this is of crucial importance in creating, modifying and sustaining both the headteacher and the emotional coherence of the whole school.

The research draws on the headteachers' own reflections on emotions as well as the influence of their life history, school context and emotional epiphanies. The affective is examined firstly by exploring the literature outside the educational leadership and management field that deals with emotion. This leads to an examination of the metaphor of emotional textures. Then, using qualitative methodology, this metaphor is used to discuss and draw upon on a small-scale study of primary headteachers to discuss the reality in the mind of the participants. Observation is then used as an analytical tool to develop understanding of the need for emotional coherence in primary school headship. The concept of a personal leadership narrative is developed to show not only that an individual's complexity is not adequately served by competency approaches to emotion, but also that primary school headship is a complex synergy of emotion and leadership. Finally, the implications of the findings for adding to leadership theory and practice are discussed.

## **DECLARATION AND WORD COUNT**

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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# CHAPTER 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO EMOTIONAL INTERPRETATION AND PRIMARY SCHOOL HEADSHIP

*Music heard so deeply that it is not heard at all.*

(T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*)

## 1.1 Setting the context

In introducing this thesis, I want to emphasise why I wanted to study this area. To begin with, I have a deep professional interest in how the primary headteacher's emotional geography (Hargreaves, 2000 p. 152) can profoundly influence the emotional climate of the primary school, which has been reflected in my earlier writings in the area (Crawford, 2002, 2003, 2004). Additionally, my personal background in counselling and psychology means that I am concerned with emotional reality and the construction of the self and, how headteachers, as people, function in leadership roles. In other words, how personal emotional reality might shape their view and practice of leadership by the influence it has on the ways that they view and recall leadership situations. The thesis has an emphasis on the personal, and how the researcher's own ontological position may affect the story that is told. This is reflected in the way the research is written up. It follows, then, that this thesis is both the story of an individual's journey through research into emotion, and also the stories of individual headteachers. It is a journey both through and about the stories that people tell to each other and to themselves that shape the meaning of the work they do, and the research that they carry out. Most of all, the thesis stresses the interplay between leadership and emotion, and how growing understandings of emotion can enhance and even challenge some of the prevailing orthodoxies in regard to educational leadership.

The research approach adopted as a basic tenet that social reality is made up of many layers; layers which include the uniqueness of every person: their personality and life history, the place where they work, and the people they work with. The stance taken in this thesis is that these layers are woven together, and given their meaning, by the affective aspects of social reality. The thesis takes what is known about educational leadership and emotion in the leadership literature, looks outside the leadership research base at the various perspectives on emotion not often

considered within educational leadership studies, and applies the ideas generated to the case studies of primary headteachers. For this process to be fruitful, it was necessary to work with ideas for example, from social psychology, before reaching conclusions. As Hart states:

There is an imaginary element to research. This is the ability to create and play with images in your mind or in paper, reawakening the child in the adult. This amounts to thinking using visual pictures, without any inhibitions or preconceived ideas and involves giving free rein to the imagination.

(Hart, 1998 p. 23)

Expressing the overall purpose of the research is the main purpose of this introductory chapter. Throughout the thesis, there is an emphasis on the importance of extending knowledge of the affective domain both for practitioners and theorists in the field of educational leadership studies.

The introduction also provides a guide for the reader to the overall structure of the thesis. The rationale for the study is presented, and the research and its background briefly described. Then, the ways that the thesis seeks to establish new knowledge are described, leading onto the research questions. The main methodological considerations of the research are then outlined, aligning it firmly in the qualitative paradigm. This section shows how the study was progressively focussed, not just by collecting empirical data through interviews and observation, but also by using the literature as a tool for interacting with the key themes. It stresses the iterative nature of the methodology, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three. The final section of the introduction presents the structure of the thesis including an overview of the phases of the research and the way the data were analysed.

## **1.2 Rationale – why study this area?**

The rationale for this research was threefold. Firstly, to explore literature about emotion that was not explicitly concerned with educational leadership, but with the aim of informing it. Secondly, to value the personal voice and life stories of educational leaders as a way of exploring leadership issues. Lastly, my aim was to re-focus attention on the individuals who become primary heads, because their individuality is less considered in the literature, and they are arguably more daily accountable than their secondary counterparts because they are often more visible.

The nature of educational leadership is already well explored. In much of the current work on educational leadership, one issue stands out: the contested nature of leadership, reflected in the emphasis on multiple ways of describing and analysing it. This trend has been described by Leithwood as 'adjectival leadership' (Leithwood, 2006), where the description becomes more important than the meaning. In setting out to research in this area, my primary aim was not to add to the many meanings of what might constitute leadership, but rather to explore individual lives in order to frame their leadership against research into emotion outside the educational leadership field. With this aim, the research is framed, to paraphrase Bottery (2004 p. 2) to help primary headteachers deal better with the emotions which surround them, emotions which affect the realisation of their visions of educational purpose.

### **1.3 Background to the research focus**

My professional background was originally in primary schools, both as a teacher and a deputy headteacher. Some of these schools were ordered and calm places to work, others chaotic or tense. From this experience came an interest in professional support (Crawford et al., 1998), and later, leading in difficult circumstances (Crawford, 2002, 2003). The latter research carried out in primary schools in special measures, served to emphasise the part that the headteacher can play in empowering staff in order to achieve transformational effects:

As followers internalise the leader's vision, and trust and confidence in the leader are high, followers feel more confident and they develop a sense of working together as a team.

(Crawford, 2002, p.279)

The research also noted the emotional strain on those in leadership positions in difficult contexts. One headteacher stated:

It's very tiring, the paperwork and the waking up at 5:15 am and thinking about things. It takes a huge amount out of you, and there is only so much energy and amount of time you can put in. (ibid. p.280)

This viewpoint led me to consider what the nuances of emotional strain might be for other heads in different contexts, noting that headteachers could unwittingly support the idea of headteachers being of central importance in the school, and that ideal 'professional' behaviour is rational and carefully emotionally controlled. Both of these

concepts were, it seemed from this research, often adhered to by the headteacher at great personal cost. This earlier research had suggested that a rational ideal is illusory, not just in terms of desirability but also in practice. A developing interest in headteachers as people lead to the investigation that follows.

The thesis consists of an identification of a thematic framework from the literature, followed by case studies of primary headteachers. The literature was used not just as a background to the case studies, but also as a means of conceptualising a thematic framework for them. In the first exploratory stage of the case studies, which consisted of interviews and intensive reading of the literature, four headteachers were interviewed about emotion and leadership, and the idea of critical emotional incidents, or affective events was introduced. In the second phase, four new headteachers, plus one from the exploratory phase, were each interviewed three times, based on Seidman's concept of reflective interviewing (Seidman, 1998). Each interview explored a different layer of emotion and leadership, to attempt to conceptualise how such layers are woven together, and given their meaning, by the affective aspects of reality. The layers drawn from these interviews were used to frame an observational study. This was carried out with one of the headteachers to add depth, and explore issues further. So, the data have been obtained from three sources: the literature, a series of interviews and an observation. Chapter Four looks at this process in detail.

## **1.4 Primary school headteachers and emotion**

Why then is emotion so important, and why is it important to primary headteachers in particular? Primary schools were chosen as the setting for the research for two main reasons - my own interest in primary schools as a research area, as detailed above, and my background as a former primary school teacher and governor. An underlying principle for the choice of the headteacher in primary schools was due partly to the growing importance of their personal accountability. The English school leader is held very accountable, through such markers as OFSTED and league tables, for the success or failure of their school. This can be felt, as noted by the headteacher in the quote above, as a very personal responsibility. Parents and the community more widely, may still view the headteacher as the most important person in the primary school, responsible for their child's progress or lack of it. As a result of such accountability, headship is an ever more demanding role. Gronn (2003) views the

current climate for educational leadership as 'greedy work' (p.147), as it asks more and more of headteachers. As Shields aptly describes it:

Educational leadership is widely recognised as complex and challenging. Educational leaders are expected to develop learning communities, build the professional capacity of teachers, take advice from parents, engage in collaborative and consultative discussion making, resolve conflicts, engage in educative instructional leadership, and attend respectfully, immediately, and appropriately to the needs and requests of families with diverse cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Increasingly, educational leaders are faced with tremendous pressure to demonstrate that every child for whom they are responsible is achieving success.

(Shields, 2004, p. 109)

Additionally, the social setting of a primary school is small and a relatively closed environment, with a limited number of key players even in larger primary schools. This meant that such settings are a valuable environment in which to focus on the person of the headteacher and his/her emotions and thoughts. This may also be true for smaller secondary schools, and would be a useful avenue to investigate further.

Leading effective primary schools has been described as facilitated by the headteacher's recognition and understanding of the environment created by emotions and the power of often subconscious emotion (James, 2000). A very helpful starting point for focusing on this area is that made by Denzin (1984, p.2), who suggests why emotion is so important. He proposes that:

Emotions cut to the core of people. Within and through emotion, people come to define the surface and essential, or core, meanings of who they are.

This places a firm emphasis on emotion at the centre of personal understanding of self. Understanding of self can also be the key to understanding others, and the relationships those others have with the headteacher. This can include staff, but also parents, students and the wider school environment. The importance of emotion in relationships is clearly stated by Newton et al. (1995) who believe:

Our feelings signal to us, sometimes clearly, sometimes inchoately, something of the quality of our interactions, performances, and involvement in the world around us. (p.122)

In other words, how these feelings are embodied in personal practice is very important. Halpin (2003 p. 77) talks of the operational image of the headteacher which echoes this. He notes 'the important psychological function that communicating positive invitational messages has for enabling individuals and groups to build and act on a shared vision of enhanced learning experiences for pupils'. This public face of headship will be elaborated further in later chapters.

Relationships with staff, pupils and parents, and their role in personal practice of headship can be described and examined in numerous ways, but this thesis is written from the perspective that such relationships are quite literally at the *heart of* education (Sergiovanni, 2003). In summary, both personal experience and my research work in primary schools have led to my personal value position that the headteacher him or herself is at the centre of these professional emotional relationships, and that their *heart for* education sets the context for all the other important relationships in the primary school. This view has resonance with the concept of the head as tribal leader, or carrier of culture suggested by Sergiovanni (1995), and his or her role as a social or moral agent (Murphy & Beck, 1994).

This focus on the headteacher might at first seem to be going against the grain of current educational leadership thinking, when there is so much emphasis in both research and policymaking into forms of distributed leadership, and most recently, system leadership. However, experts in the field (Hallinger & Heck, 1998, 2005, Harris & Lambert, 2003, Southworth, 2004), still suggest headship is a crucial factor in primary schools, where an effective headteacher may enable leadership in its distributed form. Leadership as a concept is polysemic, however, and there is room for differing points of view that can contribute both to theory and practice.

## **1.5 Emotion as a populist concept**

Overall, the motivation for this study was to connect with the personal side of educational leadership by looking at research into emotion, in order to uncover more about the influence of the affective in the reality of the primary headteacher's life. Although strongly aware of the influence of the concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) (Goleman, 1995, 1998, Salovey & Mayer, 1990) upon educational leadership, one key principle of the research was to avoid making emotion and leadership yet another box to be ticked on competency driven assessment, whilst recognising some of EI's important contributions to the debate about emotion and leadership. Ornstein and Nelson (2006 p. 44) note that 'The bedrock competency (of EI) is self-



awareness. People adept at self-awareness recognise their emotions, their genesis and the potential outcome of their state of feeling' and these suggestions tie in with the overall rationale of this thesis. It is important to note the dangers of oversimplification in converting complex concepts into 'bite sized' competences. As Fineman (2000b, pages 277-278) argues:

There is (...) a danger that emotions become another 'topic' to add to the contents list of the textbook, rather than incorporated into the warp and weft of organizational processes and theory. (...) Emotionalizing organizations exposes many traditional organizational processes to possible new interpretations and understandings.

Developing the nuances of the personal in primary headship seeks to bring out new interpretations and understandings by understanding emotion not just as a competence of leaders, as in the EI framework, but as a lens through which to view leadership. Thus, framing emotion as inherent to the practice of leadership rather than separate from it, with all organising actions inseparable from and influenced by emotion, is a key part of the research rationale.

## **1.6 What new knowledge has the research sought to establish?**

The research undertaken for this thesis was intended to generate new understanding about the relationship between leadership and emotion; in particular, I sought to explore areas of emotion that were not generally applied to primary school leadership; for example, but not only, the social, psychological and biological aspects.

An early barrier towards extending that knowledge was the word 'emotion' itself. Gerrod Parrot (2001) suggests that everyone knows what emotion is until they are asked to define it, then it becomes much more difficult. The fluidity of this area is implicit in the usage of terms such as 'emotion' itself and the related words 'affect' 'emotionality' 'mood' and 'feeling'. The dilemma is also reflected in the broad characterisation of emotions as either positive or negative elements of organisational culture. Oatley and Jenkins (2003, p.350) explain this dilemma in a useful way:

Emotions can take over our lives. Sometimes they prompt actions for reasons of which we are not fully aware. Indeed emotions often have

aspects that we do not completely understand. They can be mere beginnings of something vague and unformed, with meanings that only become clear as we express them to others. At the same time, we sense that emotions lie close to our most authentic selves.

Reading research about emotion, it is also clear that any definition of emotion is closely related to the researcher's perspective on studying emotion. My own perspective is broadly psychological and interactionist, but draws upon other perspectives including the social constructionist. The latter perspective has a key role in explaining discrepancies in why people behave as they do in certain situations. Interrelationship is a very important tool, both as an explanation of the difficulties of emotion and leadership as a subject, and conversely its power in interpersonal contexts. As Frijda explains (1988, p. 60), most definitions of emotion are related to:

- The individual
- Stored information
- Dynamic interaction with the environment.

These ideas are inevitably complex in their relationship to each other. But however we look at these psychological terms, the observable, physical manifestations of emotion can be described and analysed in very many different ways. Bentley's (1928) seminal work on emotion concludes that emotion is a topic to talk about and disagree on, but to him its 'essential characteristic is a progressive activity of the organism when faced with a predicament' (p.21). For education, progressive activity could be viewed as actions taken by leaders. In order to establish new knowledge, focusing on the social and cultural psychology aspects of emotion may generate new frameworks for leaders. In other words, the power of emotion may be concerned with incompleteness or leading when we do not know the answer. Emotions can be biologically based, but also culturally informed (Hess & Kirouac, 2004). As Oatley and Jenkins put it (2003, p.282):

Emotions are among nature's heuristics – they prompt conclusions where we don't know enough, or don't have the time or other resources to decide exactly.

Emotions more generally, they suggest (p.283) have two aspects which have a substantial effect on other mental processes – an informational, conscious part which

understands the object of our emotions and a second controlling part that has been constrained by evolution for coping with situations such as threats.

New knowledge about emotion and primary headship cannot be generated if the terms used in the discussion are unclear. In the psychological literature, the term 'affect' is often used to indicate this area, and will be used in this thesis when a generic point is being made about emotional aspects of behaviour. Put succinctly, in terms of a working definition, affect in primary schools is made up of:

- Feelings (what we experience internally)
- Emotions (feelings that we show)
- Moods (feelings that persist over time)

It follows from this definition that most of the focus will be on emotion, although feelings will play a part in the discussions. The affects of organising can be studied from a number of standpoints, and these will be discussed. Helpful though these modes of analysis are, they tend to treat feelings and emotions as 'objects' that are separate from organisational practice rather than inherent to it, and thus central to the practice of leadership. However emotion is conceptualised, whether the biological or the social is given dominance in the discussion, affect has a real and vital role to play not only in personal effectiveness as a headteacher/leader, but also in understanding leadership itself. This is because working together in groups has a biological and a social component. Oatley and Jenkins (2003, p.313) describe this relationship thus, 'love and anger related to affection and power, are twin emotional poles of human social life'. To summarise briefly, emotion is linked to leadership through being:

- Interactive and personal, shaped by identity, meaning and memory
- Related to working in groups
- Biologically based
- Culturally informed

These aspects will be explored further in the literature review. Previous work on leadership and emotion will be critically analysed, and links made to the practice and theorisation of headship in primary schools in order to add to the knowledge in this area.

## 1.7 Designing the research questions

Four specific areas were chosen for the study, and it is from these that the research questions are drawn. These areas are drawn both from prior readings and research on emotion and educational leadership, and a professional interest in human relationships. This prior knowledge of some of the literature meant that there was a place for *a priori* as well as emergent conceptualisations. The beginnings of a framework within which to develop ideas were:

1 **The emotional management of the headteacher.** The inner workings of the mind are a challenging area to explore, but, at the outset, although it was clear that access to others' inner worlds would only ever be partial, and unverifiable, the need to understand how headteachers conceptualised emotion and its relation to their leadership outweighed the disadvantages. The conceptualisation also appeared closely connected to the self-awareness aspect of EI. This area was also the one most closely associated with current research into emotion in leadership, dealing as it does with the other key aspects of the EI framework - motivation, self-regulation, social skills, and empathy (Layard, 2005). This study sought to look at how other emotional factors, drawn from individual life history, might influence primary headteachers.

2 **The personal history of the headteacher.** Personal histories remain relatively under explored in primary headship, although there are some good examples (Pascal & Ribbins, 1998). An area for further attention was to see whether there was any connection between headteacher's personal histories, the way they conceptualised emotion and leadership, and how they behaved as leaders. The headteacher's professional identity, Gunter suggests (1999, p. 230), may be an intrinsic part of a person's life more generally, and it follows that it might be useful to consider how far a person's emotional identity influences their personal educational leadership narrative. The personal history aspect had clear connections to the previous area, because it seemed likely that the emotional management of the individual would be informed by personal history.

3 **Emotion and leadership in education.** There is a large body of research, particularly in the fields of psychology and biology that deals with emotion. It was not clear at the beginning of this study whether leadership research in education made full use of this research, and not just the summary version that Goleman provided for business use. Although both Beatty (2000) and James (2000) explore how the

affective experience of educational leadership can be described and mapped, there were still other issues, relevant to emotion and leadership, that remained unexplained, in particular the links between the biological and the social. From this other body of literature, it might be possible to draw on ideas to develop the field of education leadership further.

**4 The relation of emotion and educational leadership to both theory and practice:** The influence of the affective is a significant part of human dynamics. An area to be further explored was what it could add to our understanding of leadership, particularly in relation to practice and leadership development, and also in terms of headship sustainability or work/life balance. This area draws together conclusions from the other themes.

Identifying these areas lead to the development of the research questions. These questions are:

1. Is the headteacher's own emotional management important to their leadership practice and if so, in what ways?
2. What part do personal histories play in the way that primary headteachers view emotion, feeling, and leadership?
3. How does research into emotion enrich educational leadership studies, in particular our knowledge of primary headship?
4. What do the results of this study suggest for headteacher development and training?

In view of the complexities of emotion and leadership, the broad research purpose was not to look for definite answers, but rather using these questions to focus the study on expanding current knowledge in order to gain fresh understanding of primary headship.

## **1.8 The research path outlined**

The research was carried out over an eighteen-month period, with the first phase taking place in Spring 2003, and the second phase beginning in September 2003 and lasting until September 2004. All the way through there were reciprocal relationships between my review of the literature, the phases of the empirical research and

preliminary data analysis. This process is described in more detail later. Finding a conceptual framework for the data presentation was key to beginning to understand more deeply some of the key issues. As the literature was reviewed, it became clearer that emotion and leadership had a close and complex relationship. Lupton's (1998) conceptualisations of 'emotions as inherent' and 'emotions as socially constructed' helped the articulation because it enabled me to examine the educational leadership literature to ask which of these two perspectives different authors were using to discuss emotion and leadership. This led to the emergence of some key areas, related to the inherent/socially constructed overview, which I began, tentatively, to call textures. At the same time, the empirical stage began to test this thematic framework, and the process of data reduction began. I wanted to see if and how headteachers make judgements by combining what they know with what they feel (Oatley and Jenkins, 2003, p.278). One way to explore this is through interviews as emotions can be described and emphasised through talk, part of the language of human social life, providing the frame within which people relate to each other, and to their inner self or what I have called, *emotional being*. This aspect is what makes the research methods for this study integral to its overall framework in a way that perhaps other studies are not. Sarbin (1989), notes when people are asked to give a descriptor of a particular emotion, they almost always tell a story. Sandelands and Boudens (2000) put this very simply:

We note that stories have a unique epistemological significance. They can tell a truth about feeling even while they tell many lies about fact. This is because a story states facts, but exemplifies feelings (...) the emotional truth of a story is evident (p.60).

This thesis both tells a story, and asks headteachers to tell stories. I believe that talk and story telling are part of the life of the school that might not at first appear a particularly important aspect of leadership, but such activities frame the school's social world. Oatley and Jenkins (2003) also give a compelling suggestion for the power of talk in social relationships. They suggest that it is through talk that people define and redefine both their relationships and their own sense of self. By presenting experiences to others through talk, they argue, people build both positive emotional bonds and deep aversions to specific people. This seems an area that has not been explicitly made or drawn upon by many primary educational leadership commentators. Thus, one of the main intentions of the research was to explore

aspects of emotion through talk and story, and critical incidents, and for these purposes interviewing was most appropriate.

The emphasis on the social in leadership can be seen in a review of recent leadership research carried out by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL, 2004). The review suggested that implicit in much of the research is the view that leadership is a dynamic, social influencing process. More than this, the review stated, 'it is a social process which is subtle and interactive' (p. 202). Leadership as a social process (Bell & Harrison, 1995, Duke, 1998) depends on the relationships that are built both within the school, and also in the wider community. Social intercourse is crucial to effective leadership, and is part of the emotional geography of the primary school. Talking about emotion with primary headteachers allows insight in the emotional inner world, or emotional 'being' of that headteacher.

## **1.9 Methodological perspectives**

A relevant and well thought out methodological approach is always important in research, but in this work it was particularly so because of the intimacy of emotion and potential sensitivity of some of those involved in this particular research journey. Reflecting on emotion and leadership was part of my prior research, and both my own work and others (Beatty, 2000, Crawford, 2003, James, 2003) was within an interpretative tradition. This tradition suggests that what is recorded is constructed from a subjective perspective. As a reflective researcher and former teacher, I was already steeped in the subject area of primary school headship, and this knowledge provided a basis from which to develop an understanding of the various approaches to researching emotion. The self cannot be removed from the methodology chosen, and using the first person serves to emphasis this approach, as does the use of epigrams at the beginning of each chapter as a means to focus and reflect, even when not explicitly drawn upon in the chapter. When researching emotion and leadership, the interpretive approach is both strength and weakness. It is an asset because interpretation of emotional events is strongly personal, drenched in affect, both for the researcher and the headteachers. This can stimulate thought and make imaginative leaps in the research, and produce what Morrison (2002, p. 23) calls, 'insightful, critical, systemic and skilful accounts'. It is also a weakness because such awareness of self and emotion is challenging, and could lead to biased and uncritical work. This tension will be explored especially in terms of life story. Despite this

tension, the interpretive approach seemed appropriate for accessing at least some of the complexities of emotion and educational leadership.

Another key methodological consideration was how to begin to understand the role of memory in emotion. This was because so much of the research would involve recall of past events. The psychological literature (Harris, 2004, Haviland-Jones & Kahlbaugh, 2004, Isen, 2004, Lupton, 1998) shows that there are difficulties in researching emotion, both in obtaining access to people's memory and in establishing their memory of events. However, by asking the headteachers for autobiographical recollections, and also to explore past affective events related to their leadership, and describe them in emotional terms, I hoped to capture both some emotional immediacy, as well as understanding of the events that may trigger emotions and feelings. In order to prepare myself for the interviews, I had to uncover a variety of literature sources so that I could deal with the mechanisms of their recall effectively. At the same time, it was necessary to draw upon personal skills to capture the immediacy of the stories, and to reflect back understandings to the interviewee. This drew on my counselling training, which stresses that the meaning of an experience can be brought out by a skilful interviewer through a process of reflective listening. So, although the questions were drawn up in advance of the interviews, attentive listening meant that there were sometimes avenues explored which derived from something that was said at the time. By observing non-verbal clues as well, reflective listening can uncover some of the internal consistencies in interviews, and summaries as the interview progress allow for the interviewee to challenge understanding. Negotiating such common understandings is still interpretive, but in the interests of validity I decided that all participants would be offered the opportunity at each stage to verify the accuracy of the accounts of their experiences. However, such checking may give an erroneous appearance of accuracy, as though immediate mistakes about dates, for example can be altered, a revised account of emotion may be no more or less accurate than its predecessor. In other words, the over layering of emotion (when it is said, and then again, when checked), may mean that both accounts will be 'true', but neither is more authentic than the other.

## **1.10 How to read and understand the thesis**

Linked to my personal research background, was an idea that had been forming for some time. This idea was that it was insufficient to concentrate research attention on



either 'emotion' or 'leadership', however these concepts were defined. To understand primary headship more fully, it was necessary to examine why the phrase 'emotion and leadership' as two separate terms, did not seem to move forward the conceptualisation of the area. Such conceptualisations as existed meant that these concepts were either considered separately or discussed as a relationship between two quite disparate concepts. The thrust of the thesis is the intention to frame how headteachers' experience, and talk about, emotion and meaning in their daily interactions, and how, if at all, the affective impacts on their approach to leadership. As this took shape, it became clear that the separateness implied in the phrase 'emotion and leadership' was not how I conceptualised it. Although the experience of work is saturated with emotion (Ashforth, 1995) emotion is often viewed as tangential rather than fundamental to leadership, but leadership cannot function without emotion. This thesis contains the argument that primary headship is at once a personal emotional quality of the headteacher, and at the same time a quality of the social relationships in the school. It is also framed within the local and national context, which in turn influences the personal emotional response of the headteacher. In order to begin to unpick this relationship, and focus on enriching leadership studies and offer some practical ideas for development and training, the thesis is iterative in nature, moving between what the literature suggests, and what the headteacher perceives in order to open up the influence of emotion on a primary headteacher in his/her role. This is done in the following five key iterative stages:

- Familiarisation and examination of the literature;
- Identifying a possible thematic framework;
- Collecting the case study data and applying the thematic framework to it;
- Reading the data across the whole;
- Mapping and interpreting the data.

The first part of this process begins with an in depth discussion of the literature, which underpins and accords with my initial analysis of emotion as more than just a part of leadership or a new leadership skill to be learnt. It examines some of the paradoxes of educational leadership and emotion, and leads into a methodological discussion where the iterative nature of the thesis is explained more fully. The analysis begins with the literature, as a way of identifying a possible thematic framework; this leads to a preliminary conceptualisation of the emotional textures of leadership. This framing of emotional textures of leadership is an attempt to both

suggest complexity and depth, while at the same time acknowledging that such conceptualisations are only partial. Thus, three textures, or layers, are suggested as a thematic framework for reflection and consideration. These textures were first drawn up partially as a pragmatic attempt to signal the pervasiveness of emotion in leadership, and partially as a way of suggesting the inseparability of the two concepts. These textures were not meant to be complete, and have limitations, which will be outlined. They are used as conceptual entry points into the area. Their use is in fusing emotion to leadership more closely. These textures are described in Chapter Four as:

- Emotional regulation in educational leadership
- Emotion weighted decision-making in educational leadership
- Emotional context in educational leadership

How this conceptualisation came about is explained, and its limitations discussed. This discussion is followed by an empirical research account of the case study heads. Applying the initial framework and the empirical work to the observation of one headteacher, leads into a discussion of an emotional narrative for headship in primary schools. This narrative not only focuses on people and relationships, and the social interactions they invoke, but it is suggested that the narrative also frames the headteacher's practice. The final chapter draws emotion and leadership together, alongside a reflection on the process of the research. Throughout, the emphasis is on the reflective and the relationship of the literature to the empirical research.

The next chapter starts this reflective process by examining the literature.

## **CHAPTER 2: PERSPECTIVES ON EMOTION AND LEADERSHIP**

*What is the use of talking, and there is no end of talking,*

*There is no end of things in the heart.*

*(Ezra Pound, Exile's Letter, 1915)*

### **2.1 Introduction**

There is a treasure trove of information that could be presented in a literature review about emotion and leadership, as a great deal of research has been carried in both these two areas. The amount of published work in both fields makes it impossible to present any review as exhaustive. As this research as a whole has a commitment to context and the need to contextualise (Ribbins and Pascal 1998), the purpose of an overview of the perspectives in the research literature is to contextualise this study within the broader parameters of a subject area which extends across psychology, biology, sociology, psychiatry, anthropology and philosophy. Focusing on the perspectives of leadership and emotion allows for the presentation of a chain of thought that aims to portray a coherent whole. This chain of thought is presented in a way, which strives to represent, at least partially, the development of ideas over a period of time, in keeping with the reflective nature of the thesis. It will do this by presenting an overview of the literature on educational leadership, focusing on primary headship, and giving a synthesis of current developments in research on the affective. In analysing the literature on emotions and leadership from a range of perspectives, emphasis will be placed on the importance of such knowledge for primary headteachers. This familiarisation and examination of the literature begins the process of identifying a possible thematic framework, which is continued in Chapter Four.

As part of the process of identifying such a framework, I will suggest that research on emotion and research concerning leadership needs to be more closely aligned. Emotion and feeling are clearly relevant to how organisations function, and I will look closely at past and present theoretical perspectives on emotion and leadership before a focus on primary headship in particular. The overall aim of this chapter is to frame and justify the importance of emotion and leadership, both for the practice of

headship in primary schools, and in terms of the theoretical base of leadership studies.

## **2.2 Educational leadership and headship – an overview**

Conceptualisations of leadership in education differ from conceptualisations of leadership outside education because education has a unique purpose. The work of educational leaders is distinct because it deals with the hearts and minds of young people and those in the wider community context. Educational leadership is thus deeply concerned with teaching and learning, but it cannot ignore more abstract ideals of how people work and learn together. The contradiction of leadership, I believe, is that it is (at one and the same time) about a social function and also about the individuals who hold the keys to certain resources in an organisation that enable the leadership function to take place. In other words, educational leadership is concerned with people and is contained both in personal roles, such as headteacher, and as a function within a social setting. In order to further understand leadership, in terms of a function within a social setting, and as a fluid concept, Ogawa and Bossert (1997 p.19) argue: 'leadership flows through the network of roles that comprise organisations, ...with different roles having access to different levels and types of resources.' Leadership is related to the distribution of resources through social networks, and is intimately related through social emotion, and particularly in the feelings of the person who is the object of this study, the primary school headteacher.

Fiedler (1978) suggests that the key to leadership is engendering a sense of purpose and confidence in followers, and how they are influenced towards the achievement of a task. Law and Glover note that all leadership takes place within a climate of high expectations:

Teachers and educational leaders are expected to help others make sense of a complex world in which there is less predictability and more uncertainty – a major challenge which requires high-level skills, knowledge and understanding.

(2000, p.263)

Earley and Weindling (2004, p.4) summarise the two central factors they see in any analysis of leadership; the relationship between leadership, power and authority, and the fact the leadership is about people interacting in groups. My contention is that there should be more focus on how the affective influences this interaction; without

emotion and feeling, the task of leadership, as with living, would become almost undoable, because the leader's emotional involvement with the emotional world of the school is crucial. To begin to examine this more closely, I will look briefly at both educational leadership and the particular role of the primary headteacher. Earley and Weindling (2004) describe the recent history of development for headteachers as a changing discourse, from management to the leadership of learning (p.13–16). They note:

The emerging model or theory of leadership that underpins current discourse, as expounded by NCSL and others is one of transformational and instructional leadership, or even more recently, learning centred leadership. These forms of leadership focus less on the leader, (...) therefore the modern conception of leadership in schools focuses strongly on 'learning' and does not reside within any one individual. (...) Nevertheless, the leadership demonstrated by the chief executive or head, at the apex of the organisation, is obviously crucially important (p.14–15).

Although the NCSL also argue for understanding the self and work with others, examining the literature on emotion can, I think, bring a closer understanding of the relationship between the leader and the led.

In terms of how educational leadership is situated in the literature, one useful way it could be viewed over the last two decades is as a cornucopia of multi faceted and often unhelpful labelling. Many types of leadership have been identified, described and discussed. For example, in 1999 Leithwood et al. identified six labels that have been used to describe types of leadership; instructional, transformational, moral, participative, managerial and contingent. The very act of labelling sets each apart from the other, even although there is a large degree of overlap between several of these types, for example, transformational leadership and participative leadership. Both require people skills and emotional sensitivity. Bottery (2004, p.16) suggests that this epidemic of labelling is unhelpful for educational leaders:

Officially sponsored definitions of leadership have acquired an impact upon the lives of educational leaders through being prescriptions rather than descriptions, prescriptions that mis-describe the way in which the work should be done. In so doing they may simply ask too much of educational leaders.

Sugrue (2005, p.6) maintains that the focus over the last two decades has been on conceptualisations of school leadership that have evolved from the school effectiveness and school improvement research, and have therefore ‘Unwittingly shaped and circumscribed the discourse on leadership’ (ibid.), mainly to do with the standards agenda. The crux of his argument is that although many types of leadership e.g. transformational, distributed, servant leadership etc, are advocated in the educational leadership literature, for those who actually practice headship, these typologies add nothing of any real value. This may be overstating the case, but Bottery (2004, p.13) suggests that ‘the very literature that is intended to provide some signposts can itself begin to look like a bewildering maze.’ Interestingly, Bottery also implies that these labels have had more impact than more theoretical models of leadership. He argues that if leaders took anything at all from all this, it was that leadership is in essence rational. It is the very act of labelling that may add a patina of rationality. Looking at theoretical models of leadership, as I have done for a number of years, the opposite thought occurred. Theories that were described rationally seemed to have emotional connections, whilst some, such as ‘invitational leadership’ (Stoll & Fink, 1996) have more explicit connections to emotion through the emphasis on affirmation, respect, trust and support. Yet reading summaries of the main leadership theories with a focus on emotion can be helpful:

Trait theories, for instance, have suggested that leaders possess certain distinct personal qualities; style theories have suggested that leaders are distinguished by the different importance they place on the management of tasks or the management of relationships; situational theorists have argued that different situations actually require different kinds of leaders; and contingency theories have suggested that the best way forward is through the matching of a particular leadership style to a particular situation.

(Bottery 2004, p.13).

Examining this summary, it is clear that although trait, style, situational and contingency theories, can apply to ‘the leader’ and to groups, the affective is a thread that runs through them all. In other words, emotion and rationality are interpenetrated.

This is not to argue that the emotions have been neglected in educational leadership. There has been a growing tendency in the last ten years to examine how emotion is linked to leadership in education. Before the 1970s emotion was a small and largely

neglected aspect of leadership in education (Richardson, 1973, Woolcott, 1973). This continued to be the case until the last few years when emotion and educational leadership has become a growing and expanding field of study (Beatty, 2000, Gronn, 2003, James, 2000, Tomlinson, 2004) often viewed from the psychotherapeutic viewpoint. Parts of the educational leadership literature also deal with issues related to emotions such as values, motivation, and followership (Bell & Harrison, 1995, Bolman & Deal, 1997, Evans, 1999, Russell, 2003) but not on the emotional practices of leadership. In leadership research and writings in education, emotional aspects are often viewed as an adjunct to other related leadership discussions (Gronn, 2003), as personal memoir (Loader, 1997), viewed from the viewpoint of the teachers in a school (Hargreaves, 2000), or related to emotion intelligence or personal effectiveness (Fineman, 2000b, Goleman et al., 2002, West-Burnham & Ireson, 2006). Rarely is the emotional inner space of the headteacher, or his/her emotional 'being', and its connection to leadership discussed, yet when such connections are made they can be astoundingly powerful and relevant to practice (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004, Beatty & Brew, 2004, James, 2003). Some of these connections will be discussed further in Chapter Four. The context of the primary school (Southworth, 2004) is discussed in the leadership literature, but not explicitly in terms of emotion and leadership. There are references to emotion often in the lives of headteachers in small primary schools (Hayes, 1996, Revell, 1996), but these have a tendency, perhaps because of size of school, to focus on the emotional practice of teaching.

Sugrue (2005, p.13) argues that transformation of schools would be better served by re asserting the importance of 'individuals, their biographies, and their passions, in how schooling has the capacity to work for the advantage of all learners.' This reassertion is important, and is a recent focus for research into emotion and leadership. At the same time, a focus on the individual and their passions may seem to be going against the grain of the prevalent thinking in educational leadership. With more emphasis on distributed leadership in schools, the figure of the dominant primary head would seem to be old fashioned and out of step with moves toward systems leadership, for example. However, the relationship of educational leadership theories to primary headship has always proved problematic. Before turning to emotion in particular, I will present a brief summary of this dilemma.

## 2.3 The centrality of the primary head

Hall and Southworth wrote a 'state of the art' headship review in 1997, looking at both primary and secondary headship, tracing some of the changes to headship since the 1988 Education Act, not all of which will be rehearsed here because they are not directly relevant to emotion and headship. Nearly ten years on from that review, it is worthwhile to look at their conclusions on primary headship, and the role of the headteacher. It is particularly relevant to note that they wrote that a key challenge for headteachers is 'to be ready for the future but draw on foundations established in their own personal and professional pasts' (Hall & Southworth, 1997, p. 152). They do not elaborate on what such foundations might be, but arguably they will have an emotional component.

According to Hall and Southworth, before the 1988 Education Act, primary heads were 'pivotal, proprietarial and paternalistic' (p.153). Power was conceptualised as personal and individual. Although headteachers suggested to researchers that they were aware of the need to be less dominant, they found it hard to achieve in practice. As they put it, 'The rhetoric of heads had changed, but the reality of power relations in schools remained unaltered' (p.154). A series of observational research studies in the 1980s (Coulson, 1986, Nias et al 1989) appeared to confirm this. They suggest that headship is 'the licensed promotion of an individual's professional values', which 'legitimises their exercise of power in the school' (p.155). Hall and Southworth conclude that these early studies show a view of headship that is most often concerned with tasks and managerial rationality, and is gendered in nature. Post 1988, they argue, the primary headteacher has struggled with externally mandated reforms, and at the same time continued to feel personally responsible for their schools, for which they are now even more accountable. They note that the primary head remains a powerful figure in the school, 'Although aspects of primary headship have changed, one of its strongest and most notable feature endures' (p.159). Overall, they conclude that it is still not known how heads influence and shape their schools, but they sense that the 'belief in heads monopolising leadership is at the very least softening' (p.165). More recent work by Southworth (2004) has examined other aspects of primary headship skills and how these might relate to such various features as school size, context, headteacher experience etc. Even more recently, it could be argued that concerns over recruitment in primary headship, rather than a strong research base, have led to calls for alternative models of headship, such as



executive leadership (where one headteacher runs several schools). In 1997 (p.167), Hall and Southworth wrote:

Presently we are only on the brink of exploring, let alone understanding, how leaders establish and sustain learning schools.(...) we are probably, at best, only approaching the end of the beginning in our understanding of headship.

Understanding primary headship can mean a better understanding of primary heads, their past present and future needs, and how their centrality in the school may be less linked to positional power than to affective concerns. In order to consider this, evidence will be presented about the affective side of headship, selected from a range of perspectives. The bias of this review is clearly and explicitly toward finding those aspects of research into emotion that illuminate headship, whether the conclusions are unfashionable or not. Oakley and Jenkins give a clear account of how they view emotion in the preface to their book (1996, p.xxiv).

Like the skilled action needed when you write your signature, an emotion has a biological basis of components and constraints. It also has a history of individual development. It is only fully understandable within a cultural and interpersonal context.

It is my contention that headship could be substituted for emotion in that summary. Emotion is central to all aspects of human experience. There is a synergy between views of leadership as a process, distributed throughout the school, and the emotions of the headteacher, and how he or she manages those emotions as a leader. In more recent work Southworth (2004) has suggested that leadership research has moved away from whether heads and other leaders do make a difference, to focus on the ways that they have this influence. This thesis argues that emotion is one of those pathways of influence, and a very important one. In order to consider whether this is borne out in the literature, an overview of emotion in organisations is presented, because it is at the organisational perspective that the impact of emotion may be felt, and it is at the organisational level that many research studies have been carried out.

## **2.4 Organisational emotion**

Although the leadership literature points at a growing awareness of the affective dimension of organisations by theorists (Beatty & Brew, 2004, Duignan & Macpherson, 1992, Ginsberg & Davies, 2002, James & Vince, 2001) it is not always

clear whether there are just close ties between leadership and emotion, or a deeper relationship. In order to begin to understand educational leadership and emotion, and the part played in this by the primary head, a concentration on organisations is helpful:

The emotional field is one the organizational researcher can explore with some joy. It contains an abundance of conceptual riches, which, with wise use, can transform our rather grey and tidy picture of people in organizations to one which ranges in emotional colour, passion and individual purpose.

(Fineman, 1996, p.223)

Emotion and leadership is in danger currently of becoming 'grey and tidy' by an over emphasis on competence and emotion, and one way to bring back 'colour and purpose' is to look at the individuals and the organisation and their inter-relationships.

However, there are many differences of view about how far organisational culture exists and what it comprises (Bennett, 1995, Morgan, 1998). Cultures can be viewed as socially constructed realities (Berger & Luckmann, 1991), where members of an organisation may share basic assumptions and beliefs. These operate unconsciously. Levenson's (1999) definition of culture is that it:

not only creates the social world, it guides people in the affective reactions needed to function in that world. (p.513)

He defines culture as a community of shared meanings. It is as if these shared meanings are bound by the affective relationships within the group. Levenson suggests that emotion can help individuals to define group boundaries, and social anxiety motivates people to avoid behaviours that would have them evicted from the group. He views collective emotional behaviour as a way of solidifying group bonds and negotiating group related problems (p.512). Thus, he advocates that the primary function of emotion is to serve as a signal that helps us clarify (after the first onset of feelings) our views, and thus institutional feelings will alter behaviour. Put another way (Beatty, 2002):

Emotional patterns and reasons behind our dealings with each other in organisations help us to picture the emotional spaces between and within people. (p.73)

It seems then that emotion can influence culture and vice versa. It has also been argued (Meyerson & Martin, 1997) that the definition of what culture is and how cultures change depends on how one perceives and enacts culture. At the extreme of this argument, it could be said that almost all structures within schools can only be interpreted through the emotions, beliefs, values and behaviours of the people involved (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 71-72) in creating and enacting them. If the culture of an organisation is created and sustained at least partly by the emotions of the participants, it is important that those in leadership roles learn to manage their own and others' emotions. Some of these emotions may be conscious displays, some unconscious or conscious feelings, but it may be that the unheralded, and unacknowledged aspects are key for the leader's own emotional understanding of him/herself.

In particular, because of the often intimate, small-scale nature of primary schooling, the primary headteacher is particularly close to leadership situations where his/her emotion is a crucial element. Emotion is crucial to the primary school headteacher in the daily enactment of their role. Maintaining appropriate professional boundaries, handling difficult emotional events (e.g. bereavement, family issues) and managing the emotional responses of themselves and others are often experienced within a setting where they are the most visible person to stakeholders. Interpretation is a key aspect of leadership and emotion, and a headteacher copes daily with situations that have an emotional component. This resonates with a renewed emphasis in educational writing on teaching as an emotional practice. For example, Hargreaves (2000) talks of teaching as having a set of specific emotional 'expectations, contours, and effects' (p2). He sets out a conceptual framework for what he calls emotional *geographies* of teaching. Primary headteachers in particular are embedded in the emotional conditions and expectations of their work, or what has been called (James, 2004) the emotional *geologies* of the school. These two metaphors, geographies and geologies are powerful because they suggest that the terrain of emotion and leadership cannot be mapped simplistically for training purposes as they require deep knowledge and exploration. The primary head needs to understand the interconnectedness between emotion, their own feelings, and the affective relationships in the organisation.

Exploring this interconnectedness requires the headteacher to have knowledge of the pathways of emotion, and how this may fit with the literature from leadership in education. Hochschild (1983) wrote:

Emotion functions as a prism through which we may reconstruct what is often invisible or unconscious – what we must have wished, must have expected, must have seen or imagined to be true in the situation. From the colors of the prism we infer back what must have been behind and within it.

(Hochschild, 1983, p.246)

This emphasis on the emotional prism is a useful metaphor for seeing educational leadership and emotion as both transparent and yet deceptively powerful in reflection the concerns of individuals and the organisation.

Oatley and Jenkins contend that:

Emotions, then, mark the junctures in our actions. Something has happened that is important to us. Emotions are the processes that allow us to focus on any problem that has arisen and to change course if necessary. And if we ask what the readiness is about, or what the plans are about, for the most part they concern other people.

(2003, p.107)

It is these critical processes sustained by emotion that are so important to the primary school headteacher. At such times, a headteacher has to manage both their own emotion (expressed and unexpressed) and those of others in the school community from staff to parents. So, in the school community, the negotiation of meaning is vital, as emotions become part of 'the taken-for-granted structure' (Denzin, 1984 p. 88) of the school.

Fineman (2003) writes that leadership is 'imbued with emotion and central to the organising process' (p.76), and that emotion 'unites leaders and followers in a complex emotional web' (2003, p.90). Diener and Lucas (2000) argue that in any subjective measure of well being (SWB) that a person may make about their life and work, emotions play a pivotal role, not only because emotions are with people all the time, but also because 'a person who interprets his or her life as composed of desirable events will experience more pleasant than unpleasant emotions over time'(p.333). This is relevant to educational leadership because SWB may be a component in whether a headteacher interprets his/her headship as sustainable over time. Thus, affective concerns are a majority part of the study of organisations, connected as they are to areas such as values, principles and judgments; those very concepts that lend emotional colour, passion and individual purpose to schools.

Emotion is crucial to the functioning of organisations. Armstrong (2000) suggests that the role of emotion in organisations can be viewed in two important, but different, ways. Firstly, it can be viewed as problematic, so that emotions need to be 'managed'. Alternatively, it can be seen as a useful management tool that can help discover what is really happening in a situation by revealing hidden motives or background. The dilemma of studying emotion in organisations is that some emotions are more socially acceptable than others, and this may have a particular resonance in schools. This is because emotions inhabit organisations in various ways (Rafaeli & Worline, 2001). They also stress that there are multiple views within organisations as to what constitutes emotion – an observable display or an internal experience (p.115), and this is the dilemma of the imprecise nature of the terms used in the discussion. Thus, being clear about terms can help clarify the way that emotions or feelings inhabit both schools and the people within them. Feelings could be said to inhabit people, and emotions inhabit schools. One is related to the self and the other to the organisation. The central issue that links the study of emotion to the study of leadership is that working with others requires connection not just with other people but also with your own self.

Hargie and Dickson (2004 p. 226) argue that there is an ongoing tension between private self and group identity, and that an important part of self is the idea of 'place identity'. This has three components based around insideness:

- 1 *Physical insideness*: Knowing your own environment in terms of physical details and having a sense of personal territory.
- 2 *Social insideness*: Feeling connected to a place where you know people well.
- 3 *Autobiographical insideness*: Knowing 'where you come from', and 'who you are' (original italics).

(Based on Hargie and Dickson, p.226)

Both social and autobiographical insideness are conceptually relevant to emotion and leadership, because, as Anderson (2002, p.2) suggests, 'the self is possible only in the web of connected lives', and it is the relationship of the primary head's self with connected lives that this thesis focuses on.

There are two other important concepts related to emotion that need to be discussed before perspectives on emotion and leadership are examined: emotion as the language of the mind and emotional labour.

## 2.5 The language of the mind

Emotion can be viewed as the language of the mind. Damasio views feeling and emotion as twins, each with an important role to play, which is difficult to separate out, and draws his distinction from research into brain injury. This showed that when people with a severe brain injury lose their ability to express an emotion in an observable display (happiness, sadness, for example), they also lose the ability to experience the corresponding feeling cognitively. Strangely, however the converse was not true. Some patients who had lost their ability to experience emotions internally could still express the corresponding emotion in terms of putting on a display at appropriate times (Damasio 2004, p.5). This has lead Damasio to hypothesise that the ways that the mind and body work together emotionally 'are the expression of human flourishing or human distress' (p.6), or as he states 'The investigation of how thoughts trigger emotions and of how bodily emotions become *the kind of thoughts we call feelings* (my italics) provides a privileged view into mind and body.' (p.7)

Thus emotion is viewed as a particular way of thinking or as Damasio would suggest, as the translators of how one's life *is* into the language of the mind (p.85). Brain injury patients were unable to make this translation, and therefore not able to function as well in social settings because they were unable to use feeling to make sense of a situation; only able to replicate the emotional expression that they saw given by others. This is relevant to my thesis because of the importance of feeling to make sense of emotional situations.

## 2.6 Emotional labour

Emotion can also be viewed as a process that requires continuous conscious and unconscious management. Hochschild (1983) introduced the concept of emotional labour. She viewed an individual's emotional state as being shaped by their position in the social system and in the power relations within them.

The importance of this conceptualisation was to bring to the attention of researchers how emotion could be used for commercial ends, or what she called 'the managed heart'. She studied the role of emotion management in the life of flight attendants, and explored the tensions that build up when an individual has to give a particular performance as part of their job. So, airline hostesses for Delta had to make passengers feel welcome onboard, and were constantly exhorted to smile. She

conceptualised 'emotional labour', where workers may be required to simulate or suppress feeling in order to maintain a specific outward appearance that produced the required emotional state in others.

I use the term emotional labor to mean the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labor is sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value.

(Hochschild, 1983, p.7)

Hochschild stated that this labour/work operates through *feeling rules*:

Feeling rules are standards used in emotional conversation to determine what is rightly owed and owing in the currency of feeling. (p.18)

Feeling rules are those that are deemed to be appropriate to the social settings e.g. happy when with good friends, sad at funerals etc. The actual management of the feelings occurs through what Hochschild called surface and deep acting. This distinction is important because surface acting is more likely to take place in the school context, where Heads may feel able to change their expressions to try and alter their emotions, which is surface acting, but may find it more difficult to apply deep acting.

Hochschild argues that deep acting involves 'Visualizing a substantial portion of reality in a different way ' (p.121). In other words, deep acting may involve educational leaders in reframing an organisational situation in ways that are more in tune with parts of themselves (Bolman & Deal, 1997), and their internal emotion state or feelings. It has been suggested that emotional dissonance is such an loathsome state that people want to escape it if at all possible, as it is associated with job dissatisfaction and depression (Ashforth & Tomiuk, 2000 p. 185). They also note (p.200) that such dissatisfaction is the greatest in roles where negative emotions have to be expressed, but that people who identify strongly with their roles may be able to act the part without feeling they are being inauthentic. Hochschild suggests that such emotional reframing may help to avoid some of the consequences of emotional dissonance. Hochschild argued that the negative cost of emotion work was lost capacity to listen to our feelings, and sometimes even to feel at all (p.21). Gronn (2003) has asked whether there is a particular kind of emotional labour that is peculiar to schools. Although emotion characterises and informs the culture of any organisation, the intensity of school life and the variety of relationships that occur,

can offer the ideal context for a more profound version of emotional labour. Unlike flight attendants (where both their audience for their acting differs from flight to flight, as well as their team members), headteachers face the same situation on a recurring basis, hence making the labour more consistent and profound.

The conceptual underpinnings of research into organisations, emotional labour, and the mind are all different. The perspective adopted by a writer heavily influences any account of research into leadership and emotion, by the way investigations are framed, and the theoretical position taken. The way studies are described, and an emotion ascribed is a complex relationship between the individual (writer and subject), and the information available. The last three sections have focussed on emotion in organisations, and the ways that the practices of individuals in organisations have been explained. This perspective could be described as social constructionist, as it views the organisation as the means of framing emotions, and thus its connection to leadership. The importance of the social perspective is that it draws on insights which have immediate practical applications for leaders, both in their own role, and in membership of teams. As a perspective, it can also be studied from various viewpoints, which are discussed below.

The social constructivist perspective on emotion and leadership, because of its immediacy and clear relationship to practice, may draw the discussion away from other standpoints, such as the psychological, which also have something to offer the primary headteacher, particularly from the viewpoint of personal understanding. I would argue that the inherent or the personal side of emotion and leadership needs to be combined with the socially constructed viewpoint to make a coherent emotional whole. In order to look at this more closely, in the following sections the leadership literature is examined using categories drawn from Lupton (1998), so that both the personal and the social can be brought together to enhance understanding of emotion and leadership in primary schools.

## **2.7 Emotional perspectives on leadership**

Approaches to the study of emotion and leadership can usefully be discussed by utilising Lupton's (1998, p.10) categorisation of the broad underlying tendencies, viewed as a continuum when discussing emotion in the humanities and social science literature. These she describes as:



- Emotions as socially constructed: the phenomenological, psychodynamic and structuralist perspectives,
- Emotions as inherent: the biological, cognitive and physiological frameworks.

'Emotions as inherent' are concerned with the self, and 'emotions as socially constructed', are based on that dynamic interaction with the environment. Lupton emphasises that this distinction has a significant degree of overlap, which needs to be borne in mind when discussing the perspectives. This duality of inherent emotion and social emotion links most of the perspectives on emotion, but with important differences, which are discussed in the following sections.

It is emotions as social constructions (others, although linked to self) that will be considered first, then emotions as inherent (self but linked to others), but it is important to reiterate that both perspectives are mutually complementary. These emotional perspectives can be linked into the leadership literature in various ways. The following sections expand on this in more detail.

### ***2.7.1 Educational leadership and emotions as socially constructed***

#### ***The phenomenological perspective***

This perspective, applied to educational leadership, has opened up the field to some new insights in to emotion and leadership in recent years. It is also a perspective that I was initially drawn to. Beatty's work draws considerably upon the phenomenological perspective, and in particular she was influenced by the work of Denzin (1984). Adopting this approach the experience of emotion is seen as 'integral to our selfhood and the ways in which we assess and deal with others' (Lupton, 1998 p.21). Defining emotion from the phenomenological perspective is very dependent on a person's own judgment of a situation. Emotions are central to Denzin's own framework for human existence. He maintains that:

People are their emotions. To understand who a person is, it is necessary to understand emotion.

(1984, p.1)

So, an individual's inner experience is viewed as a result of self-feeling, that is the way that a person processes real and imagined social relationships.

In a sense, emotion lies in the way a person's selfhood relates to the social world, and is experienced by that person in various ways. Denzin (1984, p.5) suggests this

when discussing the idea of emotion generally being about self-feeling, or essentially self-referential:

Emotion is self-feeling. Emotions are temporally embodied, situated self-feelings that arise from emotional and cognitive social acts that people direct to self or have directed toward them by others.

If emotions are self-feelings, they are not to be regarded for Denzin as objects. He suggests that emotions should be viewed as processes, arguing (p.50):

What is managed in an emotional experience is not an emotion but the self in the feeling that is being felt.

He makes a distinction in definition between emotions, feelings and emotionality. The last is the process of being emotional, when the self is involved in day-to-day activities. Feelings, Denzin proposes, are the sensations of the body during such interactions. He also labels those who one interacts with, emotional associates. Later, he suggests that all emotional terms carry what he calls a 'double referent' (p.50). They not only reflect feelings of the self, but also they position feelings that you direct or feel toward others, so that they are in a sense phenomena of the cultural language employed in that specific setting. Crucial to this study, Denzin suggests that, particularly in the western world, a vital component of emotion is the way people need to justify their views, or what he calls emotional accounts of their emotional practice; he views these as central to an understanding of self-feeling. Beatty (2002, p.49) notes that for Denzin 'all experiences of being emotional are situational, reflexive, and relational', while Lupton suggests that for Denzin 'the practices of the person reveal the self'(p.23), or as Denzin states:

Unlike purely cognitive practices, which are taken for granted and not emotionally disruptive of the flow of experience, emotional practices make people problematic objects to themselves. The emotional practice radiates through the person's body and streams of experience, giving emotional colouration to thoughts, feelings and actions. (p.89)

The concept that 'emotional practices make people problematic objects to themselves' (ibid) is very important for leaders to understand, and the emotional accounts of primary headteachers that will be considered in Chapter Six are in effect one way in which such problematising may occur.

The phenomenological account of emotions has similarities to both the psychodynamic and the structuralist perspectives, because these too are concerned with the social dynamics of people in organisations. As Beatty (2002) points out emotion is particularly important in maintaining social membership in groups, which in turn is one of the pathways of leadership influence.

### ***The psychodynamic perspective***

The psychodynamic perspective on emotion can give the researcher some valuable insights into leadership, as it has influenced many facets of the social sciences. I will introduce it here, and then go on to look at its links to the structuralist perspective. Oatley and Jenkins (2003) suggest that the key contribution of the psychodynamic approach to the study of emotion is to demonstrate that emotions are not simple and clear cut, and often the meanings of emotion only become clear when they are expressed outwardly, either to another or by further reflections or psycho-analysis. Denzin, in fact acknowledges the influence on his work when he talks of his own past:

My body and my stream of consciousness are moving emotional sites. They are filled with emotional memories, childhood experiences, semi recognisable images of my parents (...) and interiorized images of myself as a distinct object and subject. (p.43)

At the centre of this perspective is the view that emotions of all kinds, but often difficult, perhaps, negative ones, can move from the unconscious level of the mind to the conscious, influencing motivation and action in social situations. In other words, that there is a distinction between feelings in the mind and viewed emotions. People can use much of their energy coping with feelings that have the potential to cause harm or disruption, such as hate, fear etc. For leaders, this aspect has the power to change the working context significantly, but the study of the relationship of the conscious to the unconscious could be seen as limited in its practical implications, because of the difficulty of ever really knowing what people are feeling. However, awareness of this aspect of unconscious feeling is important for a headteacher. In leadership research, there are some inklings of psychodynamic approach in the 1970s that are undervalued today, such as the work of Elizabeth Richardson. Her conceptual framework drew on two sources: the psychoanalytical and the study of institutions as systems. It is useful to look at this work in some detail to bring these two perspectives together.

### ***The structuralist or systems perspective***

Richardson's '*The teacher, the school, and the task of management*' (1973) is a seminal book in the history of educational leadership and management, and aspects of her work foreground some of the more recent discussions in educational leadership in the psychodynamic dimension. Her work is almost unique in its complete, long-term view of an educational organisation and its component parts. For three years in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Richardson worked in Nailsea Secondary School near Bristol. She was perhaps one of the first people in the educational management field to refer implicitly to emotion in the study of leadership and relationships by her focus on staff relationships. Her role was as an educational consultant/researcher at Nailsea School, and many of the conceptual ideas in the book can provide a pathway not only towards clearer definitional frameworks of emotion and leadership, but also indicates how ideas in this area were first generated from her analytical framework.

Central to her framework, is the concept of *boundary* because as she stated 'it helps us to examine independence and interdependence' (Richardson 1973, p.16). Boundary is a concept upon which James (2003) also draws in his work. In other words, the person in any situation has to relate him or herself to the groups and communities in which they come into regular contact.

Of particular relevance to this thesis is the part of her theoretical framework from social systems theory that drew upon the idea of the sentient group, or a group of people working together who are able to respond to each other emotionally as well as intellectually (p.23):

Every member of a school – whether pupil or teacher – needs to feel that he belongs to at least one sentient group. It is from the sentient group that we draw the emotional strength that enables us to do our jobs. If there were no satisfaction in belonging to such groups we should be personally weakened and therefore less effective in our roles. Sentient groups are not necessarily related to tasks. But in a healthy institution they ought to be.

Sentient groups are about belonging, and personal relationships, so although they may be related to parts of the school in terms of subject, they should not be viewed as sub-cultures because they are about feelings of belonging rather than ways of behaving in a particular group. Although Richardson's work was with a large secondary school, the application of this conceptualisation to the primary school

headteacher is clear. The emotion strength of a group may well be stronger in a small primary school, and be a source of positive or ill feeling. The boundaries between the work group and the personal in the primary school are more fluid, and staff have closer interaction, making sentient groups more common and obvious to observers. The headteacher is often more visible to many parts of the school community from staff to parents and governors. The internal world of the headteacher will relate quite closely to the staff, the pupils and the community, as so many of the boundaries are fluid. Conceptually, Richardson was primarily interested in the interplay between the person and the group, and some of this interest may be particularly relevant to the data for this research. Moreover, her framework is valuable as a clear starting point to relate emotion to leadership. She felt that an essential aspect of leadership was (p.36):

To seek understanding of the interplay between the rational and irrational forces and, through that growing understanding, to use the authority that has been invested in the leadership role to help those to whom one owes leadership.

Irrational can be viewed in this context as emotion, in direct contrast to more 'rational' parts of the organisation. In other words, the leader needs to be able to understand where these two apparently irreconcilable concepts meet and merge. Although Richardson notes that the leadership role is not always invested in the titular leader, she highlights the powerful interplay between the rational and irrational paradigms. These paradigms could be viewed as too divergent to ever usefully converge, but this early work points up some of the synergies between the two that later writers take up. Schein (1985) for example, regards emotion as an important part of leadership in organisations, and as part of what makes an individual respond to a leader's authority. Fineman (2000b) argues strongly that the emotions of control form a large part of work relationships, as leaders shape events by using their positional power (Hales, 1997). This power allows unscrupulous leaders to decide how social emotions such as fear and shame can be exploited for their own power agendas. This perspective may go some way towards explaining the pivotal position of the primary head.

Primary schools may often have small, tightly knit sentient groups. Such schools, it has been suggested (Carlyle & Woods, 2002, p.154), make use of individual and collective emotion in several important ways; as a bonding agent, emphasising and strengthening the relationships between people in teams; as a means of effective

communication by helping to provide the most favourable atmosphere for communication to occur; and as a way to focus in on areas of the school for quality improvement. Improvement arguments, as was suggested earlier, can unwittingly lead to a concentration on the more rational aspects of educational leadership. But as Richardson made clear through her use of social systems theory, the interplay between the two is subtler than this, and the leader's understanding of the emotional aspect of the school can be crucial to not only to planning, but also to managing difficult interpersonal situations. This focus on emotion and difficulties is a strength of both the systems and the psychodynamic perspective.

### *Difficult emotions*

In the leadership and emotions literature both James and Beatty deal with the way difficult problems are handled in reality in school. Faced with such problems, James argues that, as a social defence, most people split off their difficult feelings and project them upon someone or something else (James, 2003, James & Jones, 2003). He suggests that this is how many teachers and leaders in education cope with genuine emotional difficulty – by other people becoming the 'good' or the 'bad' object. For example, in the case of negative emotion, the head might suggest that the real problem at the school is not the pupils; it is the paperwork. James notes that researchers themselves can unwittingly become 'the unacknowledged good or indeed the bad object in this process' (2004, p.3). He suggests that psychodynamic theory can help uncover and explain organisational processes, but that on its own it is not as powerful as when it is linked to social systems theories and a wider perspective of institutional transformation.

Some of these difficult emotions, such as shame, and its related feeling embarrassment, are central to the psychodynamic perspective of organisations, as is the concept of anxiety. These specific emotions, Beatty proposes, affect our own feelings, and how we deal with others' feelings (p.34). Again, these are social defence mechanisms for the individual concerned. She argues, like James, that there is a tendency in organisations to pass any feelings of shame that leaders may have about some social interaction somewhere else. This predisposition is an emotional avoidance strategy by the leader as it avoids them having to deal with their own strong emotion. Again, this is an example of splitting or projecting emotion elsewhere. Lupton (1998, p.29) suggests, 'Individuals within groups can project destructive feelings such as anxiety and fear, so that the group takes on these'. In the leadership field, Gronn's more recent writings (Gronn, 2003, Gronn & Lacey,

2004) acknowledge the power of workplace emotion in relation to leadership, and trace the way that this has evolved over time. In particular Gronn notes that the balance between the rational and emotional aspects of leadership has changed over the years, often in response to national policies, which require task orientated or person, orientated leadership (p.130). Gronn also observes that there has been more or less work into the rise and fall of heart work or head work depending on national policy ideologies (Barley & Kunda, 1992). Similarly James and Vince have suggested that the nature of the emotional dimension of leadership is the 'void between standards and practice' (2001 p.307). Gronn also uses a psychodynamic frame to focus in on the concept that at some stage in their relations with their followers and colleagues, all educational leaders (male or female) can become psychological containers for other people's emotions (Gronn, 2003 p.131). In particular he highlights the vulnerability of headteachers under the thrust towards accountability and what he calls new public management (NPM) (p.134).

The psychodynamic frame emphasises the role of anxiety in organisations, and suggests that a holding or containing role is an important one for the headteacher, but that managing anxiety within the school serves to emphasise the headteacher's own personal vulnerability. How the headteacher manages these potentially toxic emotions (Frost & Robinson, 1999) is crucial to the success of his/her leadership. A crucial recent study (Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004) is that of the 'wounded leader'. This research looked at how leaders managed what they call 'the chronic conditions of leadership life: vulnerability, isolation, fear and power' (p. 311). After hearing the stories of many leaders in North America, Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski conclude:

After listening to many leader stories, we make the assumption that the interpersonal and intrapersonal experience of leadership wounding is itself a defining characteristic of leaders, an important source of emotional and social learning and a critical opening to the exercise of leadership. (p.313)

If wounding is a defining characteristic of leaders, particularly in the way that it helps them learn more about themselves as leaders, then it would seem correct to argue that this experience is essential, and cannot be rationalised out of the leaders' experiences. The experience of wounding, although common, is a magnification of the many emotional textures that are involved in the practice of headship. It serves to highlight the fact not only of the importance of emotion in leadership for sustainability, but also draws our attention to the aspects of emotion and leadership that have been

significantly researched because of their wounding impact on leaders' lives. Many of the feminist writers in educational leadership positions were driven by the difficult events they had experienced as they went about their day-to-day practice in schools (Boler, 1999). Wounding may have a purpose in that it can help leaders learn more about themselves as leaders, but it will also be related to their inherent selves.

### ***2.7.2 Educational leadership and emotions as inherent***

This emphasis on feeling and 'being a headteacher' is an opportune time to look at the emotions as inherent, a perspective which has not been emphasised in the educational leadership and emotion literature, yet I would argue has a great deal to tell the reader about the emotional responses that, in the past, have been responsible for our very survival. My thesis is that they are still very important, but have been marginalised, because they are less easy to define and 'manage'. The remnants of this debate tend to reside in the educational leadership literature in discussions about social context, stress management, and personality.

#### ***The biological perspective***

The idea that emotions are inherent (within the person), originates from several key nineteenth and early twentieth century writers, in particular the works of Charles Darwin and William James, who have been highly influential in the direction of research into emotion. Darwin's (1872), writing emphasised not only the evolution of emotion in humans but the universality of certain emotions across cultures, for example fear and disgust. Recent work tends to support this theory (Ekman & Friesen, 1986). Ekman and Friesen have suggested that it is useful to distinguish between innate emotions, which are the same across cultural contexts, and display rules, which have strong cultural variations. Darwin viewed emotion as a biological necessity in terms of survival, but even when viewed in biological terms subjective feelings form the display of emotion, therefore emphasising again the role of social meaning. James (1890) concentrated on the feeling of an emotion within the body. For example, if pursued by a bear, then the emotion of fear is the feeling of our bodily responses to the bear. James also proposed that without emotion everything we experience would be without real meaning – a pale rendering of reality, which concurs with Elster (1999 p. 84):

Put simply emotions matter because if we did not have them nothing else would matter. Creatures without emotion would have no reason for living,



nor, for that matter, for committing suicide. Emotions are the most important bond or glue that links us together.

Biological perspectives on emotion stress the importance of the ways that some feelings cause chemical changes in the body that can aid survival. Fear and the 'fight or flight' reaction are familiar from any stress management textbook. Thus emotions are firmly located within an individual, and in particular in their body's reaction to certain emotional events.

These works laid the foundations for the understanding of emotion in the biological and social sciences, and the biological perspectives are intimately related to the social perspectives discussed above because as Oatley and Jenkins (2003, p.193) argue:

Some individuals for reasons of upbringing, or genetics, or both, come to have a bias towards experiencing and expressing certain emotions more than others.

So the physiological is important. In Frijda's seminal text on the emotions (1988) he argues that there are three classes of phenomena that lead to the use emotion as a category. These are the use of emotion as a:

- Behavioural phenomena;
- Physiological manifestations;
- Subjective experience (1987, p.2).

The physiological manifestations have been discussed above, so I will turn to behavioural phenomena. These are relatively straightforward, because both Frijda and Arnold (1960) agree that for humans there exist tendencies to exhibit expressive behaviour, and that such tendencies are present both prior to execution and independently of execution (p.70). Both Arnold and Frijda call these tendencies *action tendencies*, part of *action readiness*. For Frijda, action tendency and emotion are the same thing, or as he puts it (1988, p.71):

Emotions are tendencies to establish, maintain or disrupt a relationship with the environment.

He argued that a major characteristic of emotional behaviour is that it represents coping activity (1987, p.96), which connects back to the reasons headteachers might have for engaging in emotional labour in schools.

Aspects of events will tap into people's emotions in different ways. Subjective emotional experience is defined by Frijda as 'a distinctive kind of subjective awareness' (p.176), and is firstly purely the physical experience of the situation. Frijda's relatively simple statement hides the complexity of the concept, and is contextual to the particular social situation that the person is concerned with. As Frijda (1988, p.193) describes it:

How the situation looks to a person depends as much upon that situation's inherent properties as upon those of the person himself. The overpowering nature of an event is complementary to the person's powerlessness, the painfulness of an event to the person's vulnerability, the accessibility of an object to the degree to which the person feels he can grasp opportunity. Relevance for action and response to action, actual or potential, are etched into the perceptual world.

So the physical sensations of emotion and the events that stimulate emotion are intimately related. Oatley and Jenkins (2003) look at this relationship by describing emotion in three parts. They argue that emotion is usually caused by a person consciously (or unconsciously) evaluating an event as relevant to an important concern (a goal). The emotion is felt as positive when a concern is advanced and negative when a concern is impeded. Finally, an emotion is usually experienced as a distinctive type of mental state, sometimes accompanied or followed by bodily changes, expressions and actions. This definition is useful for leaders to be aware of, because it highlights the role of cognitive appraisal in emotion and leadership. I want now to examine the cognitive perspective and in particular the concept of cognitive appraisal in relation to emotion because of this importance, and its potential links to the emotional intelligence paradigm.

### ***The cognitive/psychological perspective***

Oatley and Jenkins (2003) provide one of the clearest overviews of the psychological perspective, and suggest that some consensus is developing within the field (p.96). Crucially for educational leadership, they argue (p.97):

Though examples are easy, definitions of emotion are difficult. They need specification of what philosophers call necessary conditions (without which an emotion would not exist), and sufficient conditions (so that if these occurred we could be certain that an emotion was present). Frijda proposed that the necessary condition of an emotion is the change in readiness for action. (...) It does not offer a sufficient condition because we can imagine people getting ready for an action, making sure they have money ready to go shopping, for instance, without this being emotional.

Linked to this an important concept is that of cognitive appraisal. Work on appraisal can be traced back in part to Freud, but particularly to the work of Lazarus (1991). Lazarus argued that emotions are elicited by significant events. According to Lazarus, primary appraisal has three features:

- *Goal relevance*: emotion occurs only if an event is relevant to a concern or a goal;
- *Goal congruence or incongruence*: causes positive emotions occur when moving towards a goal, moving away from a goal causes negative emotions;
- *How much ego involvement* someone has in the event, encompassing the value the person puts on the event.

If, as Frijda describes, emotions are 'changes in action readiness elicited by meaningful events' (p.401), then a person is faced with events, appraises them, and decides how to handle them. Its particular relevance to leadership comes because Frijda suggests that it is not a case of just 'having' emotions, but of deciding how to handle them, and what any given consequences will be. This concept is similar to that of emotional labour.

Emotion can be suppressed or acted upon, depending often on the person's history of similar events (p.403). As Frijda aptly describes it, 'experience is not merely a result, an output, of the emotion process. It is one of its essential ingredients' (p.464). Or as Solomon (2000 p.11) states:

What remains at the core of all theories however is awareness that all emotions presuppose or have as their preconditions certain sorts of cognitions – an awareness of danger in fear, recognition of an offence in anger, appreciation of someone or something lovable in love.

When studying leadership and emotion the cognitive backcloth is important, as it is against this that the social world is constructed.

## **2.8 Relationships between the perspectives**

Whichever perspective, inherent or socially constructed, is used to examine emotion, overlaps inevitably occur. In emotion and leadership discussion, the social construction approach appears to have the dominant voice. This could be for many reasons, but Fineman (2003 p.9) gives a convincing argument, addressing the dominance from the perspective of organisational change. He views the social route, rather than the biological one having the most use for productive change in organisations. Lupton's conceptualisation reminds us, that however useful the social aspects are for the management of organisations, the emotional self is always related to the body, because we experience and are aware of emotion mainly through our own bodily reaction to stimuli and events. This relationship to the biological is important when considering leadership, because it is often only mentioned in the literature when discussing difficult issues such as stress management or conflict. Aspects of personality, temperament and upbringing may be viewed as being too near to the discredited trait theories of leadership. However, being aware of personal bodily responses and the link to social aspects is an important part of emotional management. The biological perspective is crucial in reminding us that emotions have a functional role in indicating costs/risks to survival that operates irrespective of social/cultural perceptions (in the same way, for example that infections in hospitals occur irrespective of cultural beliefs of what constitutes good cleaning practice). This could be summed up by noting that although social perceptions will control what people do, biological constraints decide how this occurs, i.e. a headteacher may be fearful inside and sweating outside, but because they are a headteacher they may feel socially constrained to put on a calm front.

## **2.9 Summary**

The literature on emotion extends across many disciplines. Drawing more consciously upon them has the advantage of extending thinking on leadership and emotion. Looking at this literature contributes to leadership studies in various ways. In terms of the leadership literature, the biological or the cognitive perspective have rarely been drawn upon, and there has been little attempt at integration between the various perspectives, or even acknowledgement of the continuum between social and inherent as described by Lupton. This is mainly because the 'emotion as social'

aspect is as seen relevant to those in positions of leadership because it draws on what is seen and can be inferred from action, and therefore has an immediate relevance to practice. The biological or the cognitive perspective on the other hand is more complex to understand initially and has not been related closely to leadership practice in schools, except perhaps when stress and sustainability are discussed. These perspectives on leadership and emotion are summed up in the following table (Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1 Perspectives summary**

<b>Emotion as inherent</b>	<b>Emotion as socially constructed</b>
Biological perspective (James, 1890, Elster, 1999)	Phenomenological perspective (Denzin, 1984)
<i>Stress, personality, styles, traits</i>	<i>The feelings and the self</i>
Cognitive/ Physiological perspective (Frijda, 1988, Lazarus, 1991, Oatley and Jenkins, 2003)	Psychodynamic and systems perspective (Richardson, 1973, James, 2000, Beatty, 2002)
<i>Emotion and action, goal relevance</i>	<i>the unseen aspects of emotion/feeling</i>
	Structuralist/sociological perspective (Fineman, 2003 Gronn)
	<i>Application of emotion to the organisation.</i>

All of these perspectives are valuable to the study of primary school leadership. Lupton's (1998) work (and her framework of emotion as inherent, or emotion as socially constructed) is useful because it allows particular ways of thinking about emotion and leadership to be considered. Knowledge of the whole continuum leads to emotional coherence through emotional understanding. Stein, Trabasso and Liwag define emotional understanding (2000 p.439) as:

Emotional understanding describes and focuses on the personal significance and meaning of events experienced in everyday interaction. People continually monitor and appraise the state of their world in an effort to detect changes in the status of personally significant goals...one of our core assumptions is that memory of an emotional event is a function of how the event was understood as it occurred.

Relating this back to Richardson (1973), the influence of the leader on the sentient group is substantial. In other words, when looking at the connectedness of emotion

and leadership, it is the focus on emotional understanding, which is the most important.

This chapter has outlined the way that leadership studies have focused on emotional concerns, and drawn a distinction in the literature between emotions as inherent and emotions as social. It is clear from studying the literature that such a distinction is helpful for understanding, but that, for emotional coherence, emotions are both inherent and social. This understanding was the result of my initial literature review. Those in leadership positions are right at the interface of this dichotomy, where their inherent emotions meet the social context. After completing this initial review, the empirical research was designed. The next chapter reflects this process by returning to the question of methodology. Following that, as in the iterative nature of the work, chapter four begins to add to the knowledge in the area of leadership and management in education by exploring literature that is not often accessed in this field.

## **CHAPTER 3: MAPPING THE STUDY – METHODOLOGY**

*The strange thing about life is that though the nature of it must have been apparent to everyone for hundreds of years no one has left any adequate account of it. The streets of London have their map; but our passions are uncharted.*

(Virginia Woolf, *Jacob's Room*)

### **3.1 Introduction**

Robson suggests that one of the challenges inherent in carrying out investigations in the 'real world' lies in saying something about a complex, relatively poorly controlled and generally 'messy' situation (Robson, 2002, p.4). This 'messy' situation exists when dealing with emotion and leadership, where the literature is complex and multifaceted. When I began to try to characterise my methodology, I realised that I was most concerned with 'Interest, meaning, interaction, intersubjective life – its character and the process of its creation, rules of the game and the maintenance of social life' (Ribbins, 1995 p. 255).

This chapter outlines the nature of the empirical research, its context, and my role in the research. It outlines some of the challenges of researching emotion and leadership. It starts with a focus on the personal and a discussion of memory, identity and the personal narrative, in order to set the context for the way that the research was conducted, and go on to look at how the research study was framed. Finally, the tools used are presented along with a rationale for their choice, and I will argue why I felt these were the most effective as a means of answering the research questions. I will return to some key details about the use of the tools when I examine the data in Chapters Six and Seven, as this is in keeping with the reflective nature of the entire research journey.

### **3.2 Aspects of the personal – identity, temperament and memory**

Although identity, temperament, personality and memory are important constructs from the psychological literature, which are examined in the literature on emotions, they are underused in the educational leadership field. However, they help explain

the use of life story as a technique, and therefore they form an important background to the narratives that are told in this study.

When life stories are used in social science, it is:

From two alternative but often combined perspective. Either they have been used as material in studying lives in their social context (...) or they have been viewed as texts that reflect individuals' personality or identity construction'

(Alasuutari, 1997, p.1)

Three of the research questions are related closely to the person of the headteacher.

1. Is the headteacher's own emotional management important to their leadership practice and if so, in what ways?
2. What part do personal histories play in the way that primary headteachers view emotion, feeling, and leadership?
3. How does research into emotion enrich educational leadership studies, in particular our knowledge of primary headship?

It follows then that the fourth question relates to the personal development needs of the headteacher.

4. What do the results of this study suggest for headteacher development and training?

This emphasis on the personal meant that the constructs of identity, temperament and memory are part of background to the methodological considerations that were considered when both planning and conducting the research. In planning the empirical research, I identified key aspects of these constructs which are described below. During the empirical research, both the life stories and the critical incidents were examined with the knowledge that these constructs would play a part in the stories that were told, and the way that I examined them as a researcher.



### **3.2.1 Personal history and identity**

Research by Haviland-Jones and Kahlbaugh (2004) has shown that emotion may be a central organising feature in some dynamic constructs of identity, because emotions and thoughts are the things that are most real to people at any given moment. To find the inner self, they argue, requires a dynamic construction of identity or an 'ongoing construction of connections between emotion and self-knowledge' (p.293). The interviews allowed at least a small part of this connection to begin, both for the interviewees and for myself. This dynamic approach to identity that Haviland-Jones and Kahlbaugh espouse sees emotional events as what they call the 'glue of identity'. They argue (p.301) that identity itself is 'a product of intersubjective memories, present events, and emotional resonances', and that one of the functions of emotion is to glue together chunks of experience to provide meaning. This 'gluing' is important for the idea of personal emotional narratives.

### **3.2.2 Temperament and personality**

The personality aspects of emotion are many and various. Personality theorists (Oatley and Jenkins, 2003, p.218) tend to picture personality in five broad areas, all of which have emotional qualities:

- Neuroticism (anxiety, hostility and depression)
- Extraversion (warmth, positive emotions)
- Openness (to feelings and ideas)
- Agreeableness (trust, straightforwardness and compliance)
- Conscientiousness (achievement, self striving and usefulness).

However, temperament as a concept is useful when discussing how people change and develop over time emotionally, and is described here, rather than in the literature review because it is more relevant to way that the research approach was constructed.

Oatley and Jenkins (2003, p.207) define temperament as:

Those aspects of behaviour and emotions that are constitutional, that are stable over time and across situations, that have a neurophysiologic underpinning and that have some degree of heritability.

They also note (p.216) that in different conceptualisations of temperament emotions play more or less important roles, but that:

Patterns in emotional responding, established in childhood, continue to affect choices that people make throughout their lives.

This was something that I wanted to explore empirically. Bates (2000, p. 392) also suggests that personality aspects of emotion have their basis in genetic and cognitive processes which can remain relatively stable over time, but that temperament can be conceived as able to change due to different experiences and environmental conditions. Although Bates is primarily concerned with how temperament aids adjustment to new situations for young people, it is probable that some of his conclusions are pertinent to adults. In particular his suggestion that an understanding of how temperament, emotions and the environment work together is the precursor to practical solutions to problems links to the theme of emotional regulation which I laid out in the introduction.

### **3.2.3 Memory**

It has also been argued (Gerrod Parrott & Spackman, 2000) that memory is important 'not just as a phenomenon itself, but also as a component of virtually all thinking: perception, social judgement and problem solving all rely on the recall of stored information' (p.476). They distinguish the part of emotion in memory (p.477) in two specific ways:

- *As a characteristic of what people are remembering:* that is to say, emotion may be a major part of the original incident that a person recalls for the researcher.
- *As a characteristic of the psychological state of the rememberer:* in other words, emotional recall may be influenced by how the rememberer is feeling when they are asked to recall earlier emotions.

Psychological states, they suggest, affect memory both at the time of the incident (encoding), and when the memories are being recalled (retrieval). Methodologically this means that research which is based on retrieval and recall of particular incidents should take great care to make sure that the psychological state of the interviewee is as calm as possible, in order to facilitate accurate recall. In terms of accuracy, Gerrod et al. also point out that there are many methodological and conceptual concerns if you attempt to manipulate emotional states. However, as this research is concerned

with emotion and leadership, and not pure emotional states, this is not quite as problematic, but is still a methodological and ethical concern. Asking the interviewees to recall emotional areas of leadership forces the researcher to look at what is true and accurate, as the intensity of feeling can both increase or decrease the accuracy of what is remembered (Christianson, 1992).

Other studies on significant emotional events, and people's memories of them, (Linton, 1982, Oatley & Jenkins, 2003, Waganaar, 1986) have raised other issues concerning memory. In particular, Oatley and Jenkins (2003, p.270) conclude that emotional events that remain in the memory as distinct episodes have the following features:

- 1 The event must be salient and perceived as strongly emotional at the time it occurs or soon afterwards.
- 2 Your life's subsequent course must make the event focal in recall: either a turning point, the beginning of a sequence, or instrumental in later activities.
- 3 The event must remain relatively unique.

The idea of distinct episodes drew me to the idea of critical incidents. As Earley and Fletcher-Campbell point out (1989 p. 80), critical incidents can act as a basis for discussion and, more importantly, they provide evidence for issues that are of major concern. Denzin calls such moments 'epiphanies', and he writes:

Epiphanies are interactional moments and experiences which leave their marks on peoples' lives. In them personal character is manifested. They are often moments of crisis. They alter the fundamental meaning structures in a person's life.

(1989, p. 70)

Emotional epiphanies offer a means of exploring emotional events within an empirical framework. Briner concurs with Rime et al (1991) that when we listen to others or ourselves talk about work, much of what we say involves a discussion of emotions, as we tend to talk about how events at work made us feel (Briner 1999, p.321). This can in turn influence whether we frame events as positive or negative feelings, and whether we can handle the anxiety generated by thoughts of these events (Hirschhorn, 1997, James, 2003). Cognition of emotion is thus related to the many facets of memory.

### **3.2.4 Developing a leadership narrative**

Recognising the role of memory is crucial to understanding how emotion and leadership are connected, because developments in memory research relate to the idea (that I began to develop from the reading) of a personal *leadership* narrative. It is clear that emotion is linked to leadership in many significant ways, through past events, through talk, through the personal sense of self, and in the culture of schools and schooling. All of this is linked to the part that emotion plays in relational events, and how they are encoded and received in the individual's memory.

A way forward methodologically is not to regard the leadership narratives as memories per se, but much more as stories that people use to make sense of situations. As Ginsberg and Gray Davies suggest (2002, p.52), stories can be a productive way of examining leadership. Briner (1999, p.337) also maintains that:

Emotion occurs in the context of our personal narrative – our history, present and anticipated future.

In primary headship research, the link between emotion and personal narrative has been taken up by several authors (Pascal & Ribbins, 1998, Southworth, 1995). These accounts have an emphasis on leadership. Personal leadership narratives depend on emotional involvement and recall. In David Loader's study (1997) using the narrative, story telling approach of his professional life as an Australian College Principal, he cites the personal as being very important in being an effective leader. In fact he argues (p.145) that personal reflection and a level of revelations in interactions with other school leaders could provide new insights into situations and allow conversations to have more meaning for those involved in school improvement.

Oatley and Jenkins, in a slightly different way, also look at events and their emotional impact. They state that specific features give events emotional impact – their importance to a goal, their unusualness, their unpredictability, the absence of existing skills to deal with them- also make the event distinctive in memory (2003, p.271). They also suggest (p.282) that when information about something is incomplete, then emotional influences become even more important to decision-making, because emotions are heuristics. As Oatley and Jenkins argue:

Emotions serve important functions...derived from our evolution, that help to bridge across those places where we do not know enough, or do not have sufficient resources, to decide how best to act. In general, emotions

seem to have two parts, an information part which becomes conscious, so we typically know the objects of our emotions, and a control part that sets the brain into a mode that has been selected during evolution for coping with recurring kinds of situation, such as making progress towards a goal. (p.283)

Emotional influences and social relationships are related to the personal leadership narrative of the headteacher, as a very important influence, as well as the organisation's 'emotional histories' built up over time from everyday interactions, part of the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1991), and the culture of the organisation. This may in turn influence the interpretation of events by the participants involved in such interactions.

Emotional narrative depends on the contextual definition of the event. For example, in experiments carried out by Isen (1970), one group of people were given some perceptual/motor skills tests. Another group were randomly selected from this main group and told that they had done well. Isen wanted to see whether this positive emotion had any effect on their subsequent behaviour. Those who had done well, or thought they had, were more likely than the rest of the group to go to the assistance afterwards of a 'stranger' who had dropped her books (Isen's assistant). Subsequently, her work went on to demonstrate that happiness can have a widespread effect on cognitive evaluation (Isen & Simmonds, 1978). More recently (2004) Isen has argued that, all else being equal, positive affect can lead to improved decision-making and problem solving, possibly by working on a person's intrinsic motivation. The influence of emotion depends on what it makes the person think about, and that is determined not by the emotion on its own, but in conjunction with the various aspects of any given situation that, put together, influence the person's goals, judgements, and expectations. This underlines the importance of the social context and the personal leadership narrative in terms of understanding emotion.

### **3.2.5 Summary**

Identity, personality, temperament, memory, and the stories we tell are therefore of crucial importance in investigating emotion and the primary headteacher, because they form the background to the way the methodology was developed. They, like emotion, are difficult concepts, but are directly relevant to the empirical research.

As Beatty (2002, p.120) clearly puts it:

Emotions are messy. As you begin to reflect upon them, they change. Emotional memory is difficult to rate for reliability. Emotions do not submit easily to quantitative or qualitative analysis.

How leaders make a difference is also a messy process. Herein lies the challenge within the field – to revitalise theories of leadership not just to include emotion, but also to be proactive and insistent in maintaining that without emotion, there is no such thing as leadership. Leadership itself, perhaps, grows from a complex interaction between identity, memory, temperament and emotion, and experience and training. Instead of viewing these as separate, a personal leadership narrative could allow for a more holistic approach.

### **3.3 Studying emotion**

In order to explore some of these ideas more fully, and explore the concept of a personal leadership narrative, there were a variety of methodological approaches to be considered to achieve the 'best fit' to the thesis research questions. A qualitative approach was taken in order to examine the wealth of facets of this topic, and this approach is now outlined along with some of the challenges that this brought to the research. I will also discuss validity, reliability and ethical issues. Finally, the impact that my research choices had on data collection will be discussed.

A fundamental way of looking at research is to consider your own ontological position. Cohen et al. call this 'assumptions which concern the very nature or essence of the social phenomena being investigated' (2003, p.5). Perhaps because I have worked in research environments for some while, the nature of social reality has often been a feature of discussions. Different ontological positions will inevitably lead to different kinds of research. In my case, as is apparent from the preceding discussions in this chapter, my position is primarily phenomenological, viewing people as social actors within differing, but valid, representations of reality. Mason (2002) stresses the importance of realising at the start of the research process that alternative ontological positions tell different stories, and part of the researcher's role is 'to see their own ontological view of the social world as a position which should be established and understood, rather than taken for granted' (p.14). Part of the role of this chapter is to do just that.

Looking at my epistemological assumptions is straightforward in the sense that I see knowledge as 'personal, subjective, and unique' (Cohen et al., 2003 p.6). This connects to my ontological assumptions, and leads clearly to the ways in which I would wish to collect and analyse data. This will be considered in more depth below. It also ties into my assumptions about human nature, people and the environment and the way that I might view this through personal accounts and observation. These assumptions mean that I favour 'the alternative view of social reality which stresses the importance of the subjective experience of individuals in the creation of the social world' (Cohen et al., 2003 p. 7). Any perspective that I adopt will be reflected in my methodology. I hope to make these assumptions even more discernible, as I examine how the research was framed, drawing upon relevant research methods in the areas of emotion and leadership.

Both my ontological position and my epistemological assumptions, whilst being intensely relevant to the study at hand, are also true for my research position as a whole, in all the work that I do.

### **3.4 Methodological perspectives in detail**

Hammersley et al. (1994) propose that researchers are drawn towards qualitative approaches because social life is variable and complex. They suggest that qualitative approaches have the following general characteristics:

- (a) A strong emphasis on exploring the nature of a phenomenon, rather than testing hypotheses.
- (b) A tendency to work with unstructured data.
- (c) A small number of cases investigated in detail.
- (d) Explicit interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions during the analysis of the data.

(Adapted from p.11)

This I used as a guide when I began planning. Robson (2002) states that flexible qualitative designs are 'necessarily interactive, enabling the sensitive enquirer to capitalize on unexpected eventualities' (p.6). Another key point about qualitative methods is put by Delamont (2002) who states:

Much of the force of qualitative argument comes from drawing our attention to contrasts and highlighting paradoxes to make the audience look afresh at social phenomena (p.182).

These general concerns are the background to the specifics of researching emotion and leadership.

### **3.5 Emotion**

Fineman (2000b) proposes that anyone who studies emotion in organisations has to tackle the empirical problem of how to study such processes. Researchers have to decide how to do justice to the expressive richness of emotion life, and the fact that people may be unable to articulate what the affective experience of work is like (p.13). Fineman charts ways in which such studies of emotion can be framed, and they are adapted here for this research with its focus on primary school headship:

- Wider social structures frame our emotional experiences. In primary schools, wider social structures can include parental concerns and wider policy changes and global influences.
- Context matters, as different schools encode different rules of feeling and emotion display – the collective emotion.
- Expressed emotion and private feelings do not necessarily correlate, and the individual does not always know them, or understand them themselves.
- Emotion is, frequently renegotiated within the collective emotion of social settings, and is subject to interpersonal, group, and political influence.
- History is important – organisations have ‘memories’ or ‘emotional backcloths’.
- The collective emotion can often blur the distinction between public/private, work/home.

(Adapted from Fineman, 2000, p.13)

The empirical research aimed to explore some of these background issues, especially exploring the context of the school and that interviewee’s role as a headteacher. It is not an easy task to study emotion, because the researcher has to become very much a part of the interpretive setting or what Fineman calls ‘emotional ethnographies’. Taking all these points into account, Fineman suggests, the researcher is lead towards qualitative methods that engage with feeling and emotion



in ways that place emotion in the wider context of organisations. He argues for 'lived experiences, honouring actors' perceptions, justifications and accounts, bearing in mind that the investigator is now part of the interpretive setting '(p14). This is an important point. Because a researcher has their own emotional history, it is inevitable that they will become much more of a participant observer (Fairclough, 1989, p.167) during the course of the investigation. This means that at all times, during the research, analysing the data, and writing up, one is intensely aware of one's own feelings for the subject matter and the bias that could invade the subsequent material. Recognising this is the first step in militating against the worst excesses of emotional bias.

This study drew on some of the conceptual elements of Fineman's emotional ethnography, which lies within the interpretive paradigm with its involvement with the individual. This approach itself draws on the phenomenological tradition of research in that it holds great store in the primacy of subjective consciousness, with an understanding of consciousness as meaning bestowing, and that we can gain knowledge of these through talk and reflection (Cohen et al., 2003 p. 23). Throughout the research, the emphasis is phenomenological because of the focus on everyday life and how both participants and interviewer interpret it. This is particularly true of the autobiographical elements. Erben (1996) argues that such research is 'concerned with the hermeneutical investigation of the narrative accounts of lives and selves.' (p.160). The research paradigm within which this research lies can be summed up by Roberts (2002, p.80), when he suggests that interpretations and the consciousness of the interpreter make up an approach that acknowledges that individual lives are full of 'ambiguity and incompleteness'. Thus, the researcher's aim must be for authenticity by use of clear methodology, suitable instruments, with the aim of analytical coherence (Erben, 1998).

### **3.6 Case study**

Part of the challenge in research design was to decide how most effectively to portray the 'reality' of experienced emotion in schools, and to comment critically on my own role in the research. The first realisation, as described above, was that as a researcher, especially in the field of emotion, I would become part of the social world studied, and that there is no escape from this (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983).

Although it could be argued that the research is subjective in nature, it could be said that the only truth is that constructed by those who are involved in the research.

Being aware of such criticisms emphasises the importance of making sure that the reporting of the research is as accurate as possible. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) suggest that the construction of the research account needs particular care, taking into account the final audience (p.215). This, they say, is a complex process and advise (p.230):

Be aware of the different organisations that are available for textual arrangements, think about their analytical implications, and on that basis make informed decisions.

This is part of what Denzin and Lincoln (1994) call the 'inescapable problem of representation' (p.11). My personal preference, as a researcher in the field of emotion, is towards narrative enquiry, and the need to highlight emotion in organisations as socially embedded phenomena. Elliott (2005, p.3) notes that a narrative approach to enquiry conveys the meaning of events in a clear way for a specific audience with the aim of offering insights into people's experience of the world. She states (p.4), 'The meaning of events within a narrative derives both from their temporal ordering and from the social context in which the narrative is recounted.' In research, we construct what Elliott calls second order narratives to make sense of the world and other people's experiences. My approach to writing this up is to attend to it as second order narrative for the purposes of assessment, but more importantly to explore the idea of a personal leadership narrative. The approach taken in this study takes account of both the researcher's and the participants' construction of the social world.

The overall method adopted was that of case study, a very broad term that takes in many variants. It could be very generally described as, 'The study of the instance in action' (Macdonald & Walker, 1977 p.86), or as Kemmis expresses it, 'Case study consists in the imagination of the case and the invention of the study' (1980). A major proponent of the approach is Yin (1993). He categorised case study in three forms: exploratory, explanatory and descriptive. This research is exploratory as it seeks to ask questions and make connections concerning the area of emotion and leadership. Bassey (1999) quotes Stenhouse (1985) who identifies four broad styles of case study: ethnographic, evaluative, educational and action research (p.27). The research adopted a multi-case approach (five primary heads) as a study in depth, over time, supported both by interview and observation. There are elements of ethnography in the approach. As Robson (2002) outlines, ethnographical studies are more a question of a general style, and require detailed description, analysis and

interpretation of the social setting, and there is always a danger that the researcher may 'go native' (p.187). Ethnography involves generating specific issues that can be examined more closely and tested for validity, and ethical issues may arise.

Paradox is the crux of case study (Bassey 1999). As Simons suggested:

(We need to) embrace the paradoxes inherent in the people, events and sites we study and explore, rather than trying to resolve the tensions embedded in them...Paradox for me is the point of case study. Living with paradox is crucial to understanding. The tension between the study of the unique and the need to generalise is necessary to reveal both the unique and the universal and the unity of that understanding. To live with ambiguity, to challenge certainty, to creatively encounter is to arrive, eventually at 'seeing' anew.

(Simons, 1996, p.238)

As Delamont (2002) convincingly argues, it is fine to do all the fieldwork, but 'in the end it is the theoretical and analytical concepts that determine whether the work will be remembered' (p.169). Naturalistic and interpretative accounts often rely for their validity on what is called 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) with the aim of making the familiar strange, and the exotic familiar by its use of themes or analytic categories (p.170). In a study by Ribbins et al. (1988, p.161), it was noted that the interview itself is a context, in which the researcher has to interpret and infer motives, finishing with their own interpretation. Throughout the study, I have tried to maintain a balance between the headteachers' self-perceptions, the concepts in the literature and the choice of appropriate research tools, always bearing in mind Ribbin's comment that 'At the end of the day, of course, the researcher may be imposing his own interpretation on what he observes, but this is simply unavoidable' (p.161).

### **3.7 The phases of the research**

There is a relationship between the phases of the research and the research instruments employed. The first phase was in essence exploratory as I looked at the relationships between the literature on emotion and the felt life of the headteacher through interview. As noted before, I was interested in the headteacher's expressed feelings, not in the impression of others about the feelings of the headteachers. Although it might be argued that this subjective approach is invalid, as others perceptions should be taken into account, I would argue that it is how the heads feel

that is important, rather than the emotion that they display to others. Hence, as I began to argue in Chapter Two, the interviews were as valid a way as any of reaching that part of them. Interviews concentrated on three key aspects at Phase Two, which were dealt with in three interviews, adapting an existing model (Seidman, 1998):

- 1 Their view of emotion
- 2 Their personal biographies
- 3 Stories concerned with emotion, or critical incidents.

Although interview two was solely concerned with personal biography, both interviews one and three covered the other two areas.

The third phase involved observing one case in his or her context. The detail of this is given elsewhere, in particular in Chapter Eight, but I feel that it was relatively successful because it enabled me to see Ben interacting with his staff, parents and pupils and I was able to relate this not only to the information that he had given me in the three interviews, but to the study as a whole, and in particular the research questions, as it grew out of the previous phase.

## **3.8 Research tools**

### **3.8.1 Interviews**

Interviews formed the main data collection tool of the research. Robson (2002, p.80) advises a general principle that needs to be followed in looking at research tools – they must be appropriate for the research questions. My research questions seemed to call for a personal, narrative approach to interviewing. The person of the researcher is very important for this study, partly because of the subject matter (intense, private), and my intent to be reflexive. Interpretive studies are distinctive because ‘they see people, and their interpretations, perceptions, meanings and understandings, as the primary data source’ (Mason 2003, p.56). Interviews were a tool with which I was experienced, and well developed listening and questioning skills could be used in order to frame questions, and initiate discussion about emotion, a complex subject. Qualitative researchers have been described as finely tuned instruments with considerable skills (Hammersley et al 1994. p.60) but who also bring to the research their own values, belief and self. My own counselling training was one

of the skills that seemed relevant to this approach, because of the training in asking questions and carefully listening to answers.

### ***Sampling for interviews***

Sampling was purposive in order to select cases that might be particularly informative. In a similar study, Pascal and Ribbins (1998), for example, intentionally do not offer a representative sample in their study of primary heads. Part of their criteria was 'people we expected to be interesting' (p.7), and given the sensitive nature of this doctoral study, the sample was of necessity people who were willing to speak about their emotions and engage in dialogue with the researcher. Some of the pilot group were known to the researcher, and this was a factor in how much, or how little they were willing to reveal (Roberts, 2002). Patton (2002) says that 'purposeful sampling- cases for study (e.g. people, organisations, communities, culture, events, critical incidents) are selected because they are information rich and illuminative, that is, they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest; sampling then is aimed at insight about the phenomenon, not empirical generalisation' (p.41). The sample was also, to some extent, an 'opportunity sample' in the sense that these were headteachers who have agreed the researcher access, and were relatively easy to contact in terms of distance and their own schedules.

Interviews as a tool for research have recently been subject to critical scrutiny by methodological researchers. Hammersley (2003) notes that this critique rests on:

What is regarded as an increasing over-dependence among qualitative researchers on interview data, and above all their use of such data as a window on the world and/or the minds of their informants (p.119).

This is not a debate about the 'truth' of interview data, or even the incompleteness of it, but rather, Hammersley suggests, 'scepticism about the capacity of interviews to provide accurate representations, either of the self or of the world (ibid.)'. His own view is that such critique is a useful check when carrying out interviews, and making researchers think more about what interviews can and cannot provide. However, he argues that:

the fact that people have background assumptions, preferences, interests etc. does not automatically mean that their accounts are biased...nor does the fact that interview accounts are always constructions mean they cannot be accurate representations. (p.123)

The usual typology of interviews that one sees is that of structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. This research utilised a mainly semi-structured approach, with a prepared set of issues and questions, but with the opportunity to follow up questions that had particular relevance to emotion and leadership. The approach used, with its three part structure, draws on the work of Irving Seidman (1998). Seidman suggests that interviewing is often the best 'avenue of inquiry' (p.5) when researchers are interested in the life experiences of people and the meaning that they take from that experience. He devised an approach which he termed in-depth, phenomenologically based interviewing, with a particular structure and approach to interviewing technique and data analysis. The main feature of the approach is the idea of conducting three separate interviews with each participant. Seidman describes (p.11) the rationale for this approach as follows:

People's behaviour becomes meaningful and understandable when placed in the context of their lives and the lives of those around them. (...) The first interview establishes the context of the participants' experience. The second allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs. And the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them.

He recommends the interviews taking place close together, and over ninety minutes. This research adheres to the basic tenet of his approach that each interview provides 'a foundation of detail which illuminates the next' (p.13). So, the first interview establishes the context of emotion and leadership, and the details of that experience. The second is a focused life history, and the third a reflection on the previous interviews and the meaning. Seidman notes that in all three interviews, participants are making meaning:

When we ask participants to reconstruct details of their experience, they are selecting events from their past and in so doing imparting meaning to them. When we ask participants to tell stories of their experience, they frame some aspect of it with a beginning, a middle and an end and thereby make it meaningful. (p.13)

Although this research takes place over a year, rather than months, this change of timing enabled the establishment of a substantial relationship with the headteachers. Seidman proposes that this relationship is vital component (p.15). He notes that alternatives to his structures and procedures can, and should be explored, as long as

the researcher allows reconstruction and reflection on meaning within the context of the participants' lives. This I hope my structure maintains.

### ***Validity, reliability and generalisation through interviews and observation***

Silverman (2000) proposes (p.100) that the best research often 'makes a lot out of a little', because, sharp focus should have the effect of producing a 'thorough, analytically interesting research study' (p.10). This brings the discussion to issues of validity, reliability and generalisation. These matters are of immense importance to any research study, but particularly a qualitative one. Cohen et al (2003) make the point that validity and reliability as concepts are multi-faceted, and that it is unwise for researchers to assume that threats to validity and reliability can be ever erased altogether (p.104). Rather, they suggest, the research can ease the effects of this problem by attention to the concepts throughout the research. Hammersley et al. (1994) argue that validity in qualitative research often rests upon three main features: unobtrusive methods to ensure data reflects the scene studied; respondent validation; and triangulation. All these issues have been a feature of the research, especially respondent validation in terms of the autobiographical work. As Hammersley points out, validity can ascribe itself to accounts, not just to data or methods. He proposes (Hammersley, 1992) that any qualitative account will only be a representation of the reality, not a reproduction of it (p.50-51). This can be described as 'interpretive validity'. Seidman's three-interview structure helps with validity because it places comments in context, encourages the participants to reflect on the internal consistency of what they are saying, and:

If the interview structure works to allow them to make sense to themselves as well as to the interviewer then it has gone a long way towards validity.

(Seidman, 1998, p.17)

He focuses on the fact that we should have confidence in the validity of the account for the participant, which is something in which I have placed great importance through subject validation and reflection. Seidman also argues that although there is room for multiple approaches to validity, and triangulation, one must beware of 'formulaic approaches' (p.20) to validity. Mason (2002, pages 190–191), suggests that triangulation is useful if it:

Encourages the researcher to approach their research questions from different angles, and to explore their intellectual puzzles in a rounded and multi-faceted way. This does enhance validity, in the sense that it suggests that social phenomena are a little more than one-dimension, and that your study has accordingly managed to grasp more than one of these dimensions.

The research did also, in a small way, triangulate the interview data with another form of data collection i.e. observation, and that is discussed further below. Cohen et al. (2003, p.115) make the point that triangulation may draw upon either normative or interpretive techniques or use them in combination. They suggest (p.113) that 'methodological triangulation', uses the same method on different occasions (in this research, the three stage interview), as well as different methods on the same object of study (in this research, interview and observation of one of the participants was carried out). Thus triangulation in the research was based on the assumption that internal validity was increased by the three interviews, and the participants' validation of the accounts. All the headteachers were sent their accounts for validation, both the interviews and the finished life histories. Using observation as a research tool with one of the headteachers meant that the internal validity of his account could also be framed against my view of him as a participant in his school's emotional lifeworld.

Turning to reliability, in terms of consistency and replication over time, Cohen et al. (2003, p 119) argue that although qualitative research should aim for replication:

In qualitative research reliability can be regarded as a fit between what researchers record as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched. i.e. a degree of accuracy and comprehensiveness of coverage.

This means such methods as respondent validation, as mentioned above, clear recording and faithfulness to real life (p.120). Cohen et al. are practical in their suggestions for minimising characteristics of interview bias whether from the interviewer, and their opinions or preconceptions, or respondent misunderstandings (p.121). This involves recognising that the interview is, as Cohen et al. describe it, 'a shared, negotiated and dynamic social moment.' (p.122). I endeavoured to generate such a social moment, particularly given the nature of research into emotion and leadership.



My role as a person known to the interviewees needs to be considered closely. Seidman describes what he calls 'the perils of easy access' (p.34) to interviewees. None of the interviewees were close friends of mine, but for the second phase of the research they were drawn from a close acquaintance pool. This was because I found from the Phase One/pilot, where half were known to me, and half not, that people who knew me were more likely to talk deeply about potentially difficult areas, perhaps because they viewed me as trustworthy. Seidman suggests that interviewees that involve friends or acquaintances are prone to assumptions of understanding and that nothing should be taken for granted (p.36). This was avoided partly at least as I was exploring emotion and life history – an area that I had not previously explored with these people, and was an area of research where part of the process was to investigate multiplicities of understanding.

Part of the interviews involved recall of specific emotional events, which I initially termed critical incidents, although later, on reflection, the term emotional epiphanies was used as it encapsulates the meaning more clearly. The next section reflects on the way that such events are used in this research.

### ***Critical incidents***

The term 'critical incident or event' can be used in a variety of ways. For example, Wragg (1994) uses the term in observing teacher behaviour. A critical event might aid understanding of a teaching style, for example. Cohen et al. call them (2003, p.310) 'frequently unusual events' that are particularly revealing of the subject being studied. The idea of a critical incident and its analysis is that a detailed event can reveal a significant insight into a person or situation. By asking the participants to recall a specific event through means of a narrative, I hoped to gain insight into their emotional frame of reference for the incident.

In contrast, Harris (2004) reflects that orthodox Freudian theory would suggest that 'our ability to know and report on emotions that we feel is limited' (p.281). He suggests however that it is important to remember that people do have access, 'however partial' to their emotional experiences, and therefore 'we shall not fully understand human emotions unless we take that capacity for awareness and reflection seriously'. Harris therefore argues that fuller understanding depends on 'a less immediate and more reflective meditation on their history and their subjective appraisal of events' (p.281).

As part of the interviews, all of the headteachers were asked to reflect on two incidents that had occurred over the last few years that seemed to them to involve strong positive or negative emotion, so that it had lodged in their memory. I termed these incidents, emotional epiphanies (see Chapter Seven). In that sense, the heads, rather than the researcher have decided which incident is critical to them. The description of the incident reveals various emotions and descriptors of them, and the process of reflection, with questioning by the interviewer offers an opportunity to unravel the lived experience for the physical and mental components of the emotion as experienced. Analysis will look for links to the biographical components of the interviews, in particular any links with emotion and identity.

### ***Personal histories***

Personal history was also a part of the interview schedule. I wanted to encourage the headteachers to reflect upon their lives and careers within a clear, but supportive framework:

Life historians examine how individuals talk about and story their experiences and perceptions of the social context they inhabit.

(Sikes & Goodson, 2001, p. 1)

Life history, as Gronn and Ribbins (1996) identify, has advantages and disadvantages. They are talking directly about leadership biographies, but much of what they say could be applied to the study of emotion and biographies. I have added these, in brackets. The advantages of biographies are:

- They can be inspected for the development and learning of leadership attributes (or the use of emotions in leadership)
- It can be seen how these (emotional) attributes influenced their careers and the emphasis they have placed on certain institutional level questions (p.464).

At the same time, biographical research is very demanding on the researcher. As a field it has many facets, but for the purpose of this research, Roberts' definition (2002) will be used. He suggests (p.3) that life history is used 'to denote work, which uses the stories of individuals and other personal materials to understand the individual life within the social context.' The role of life history in the research will be as part of the collection and interpretation of 'personal' or 'human' stories in the same way as one might use documents in research. Sikes and Goodson (2001) suggest that any life history approach recognises that lives are not compartmentalised and

that there is a critical interactive relationship between lives, experiences, and perceptions (p.2). They also remind the researcher that although life history provides some evidence of the way that people (in this case headteachers) negotiate their identities and make sense of the social context, social life is very complex and any frameworks suggested must be offered with explicit recognition of their limitations.

The challenges of memory were mentioned earlier in this chapter, but need to be borne in mind at this stage as well. The interviews were making use of the way people construct a narrative of experience, and the way their ideas develop over a year's time frame: both longitudinal and retrospective, as the interviews took place over this time period. Roberts sums up the process of recalling events and putting them in a particular personal context, when he writes:

In our own personal conceptions of our biographical time we are aware of our own mortality but not our actual end; we also remember the 'past' but cannot live it again except in the imagery of recollection. (p.171)

Striving for authenticity (Erben, 1998) was my aim. As with all the work conducted for this research, the participants checked the accounts for factual detail. The accounts will, I hope, be true to the individuals and thus valid. At the same time these accounts can only ever be a portion of the truth. It will reflect both myself as a person and the headteachers, and it was an opportunity to explore this technique for possible further research. Josselson sums this up as:

Narratives select the elements of the telling to confer meaning on prior events – events that may not have had such meaning at the time. This is a narrative transposition of Kierkegaard's famous statement that we live life forward but understand it backwards. In understanding ourselves we choose those facets of our experience that lead to the present (...)  
Narrative models of knowing are models of process in process...personal narratives describe the road through the present and point the way to the future. But the as-yet-unwritten future cannot be identified with the emerging plot, and so the narrative is revised.

(Josselson, 1995 p. 35)

This focus on personal history was in the second of the three stage interviews.

### **3.8.2 Observation**

Observation was used in the final phase of the empirical data gathering research in to build up a picture of the day-to-day life of Ben, one of the heads. The observation of Ben was undertaken:

To be open-ended and inductive to see things that might otherwise be unconsciously missed, to discover things that participants might not freely talk about in interview situations, to move beyond perception-based data, and to access personal knowledge.

(Cohen et al., 2003)

There is also, as Cohen et al. suggest, freshness to data gathered in this way that cannot be done in other forms such as a questionnaire. Observation enabled me to gather data on the setting of Ben's school, with its staff, pupils and parents and the daily routine interactions that went on, as well as the more formal setting of a parents evening. However, Ben himself was selected as an example rather than as a hypothesis, to follow up the findings from the interviews.

Gold (1958) framed the role of the researcher as a continuum for total involvement to complete detachment. My role was somewhere between participant-as-observer (because everyone involved knew my school's background) and observer-as-participant (which is what I was striving for). Observation was naturalistic, so that descriptive field notes were made recording conversations, non-verbal communications and recording of the time, plus any relevant contextual data. I strove to be as unobtrusive as possible, and by the end of it, Ben volunteered that he had forgotten I was there when a visitor came and I was sitting in the corner of his office.

Moyles (2002, pages 172-174) suggests that observation is a powerful and flexible tool for research because it can give the researcher insights into social settings and enrich data gathered by other techniques. Fineman (2000) posits that what is missing from the study of emotion in organisations is the real time emotional study. This is particularly true of primary schools. The history of work based management studies needs to be briefly examined to see how they relate to the research design here. At first, the idea of observing headteachers in the workplace seems like a good idea. For example, Carlson's (1951) study of nine Swedish managing directors is cited by Gronn (2003) as the start of an enduring interest in managerial work practices. This interest in managers and how and what they are seen to be doing in the workplace reached a wider audience with the work of Mintzberg (1973, 1990) who suggests that

managers have a specific set of roles. He decided that roles were important by asking, 'Why did the manager do this?' in a study of five Chief Executives in American companies. He observed them for over one week each. Mintzberg's 'structured observation' method means that less extended field study was required of the researcher. As he puts it:

The researcher observes the manager as he performs his work. Each observed event (a verbal contact or a piece of incoming or outgoing mail) is categorised by the researcher in a number of ways (for example duration, participants, purpose) as in the diary method, with one important difference. The categories are developed during the observation and after it takes place. In effect, the researcher is influenced in his coding process not by the standing literature or his own prior experience, but by the single event taking place before him, In addition to categorising events, the researcher is able to record detailed information on important incidents and collect anecdotal materials

(Mintzberg, 1973, pages 231-232).

However, Gronn (2003, p.79–80) cites a number of problems with this approach. First, the notion of an event is contestable in itself. Who defines where it begins and ends the researcher or the participant? Secondly, there is the difficulty of who attributes purpose to an activity and which ones. This problem of disputed interpretation of what happens during an event means that subjectivity is a real issue. Thirdly, Gronn suggests that quantification of managers' deeds meant that qualitative analysis was marginalised. He argues that the study of managerial work using the individual manager as the unit of analysis can lead to some difficulty. However, when you are dealing with emotion, the individual is the unit of analysis, because it is his/her interpretation of the feeling that leads to the emotion that will inform the researcher's picture of the event.

Observation of events has uses in studying emotion and leadership, but if used as the primary method could become more a reflection of the researcher's viewpoint than that of the headteacher. It could however, inform as part of a larger study, as it is used in this study. Here, Pascal and Ribbins argue (1998), there is a gap in the literature on leadership. They suggest that many more accounts are needed of how the personality of the headteacher influences how he or she plays the role (p.5). Ribbins focuses on re-discovering methods of research that have a commitment to

context and the need to contextualise. Observation helps to understand the context better particularly if the researcher clearly understands the nature of the role she is in.

Bell (1987, p.91) notes that the way in which observations are recorded can be down to personal preference. Throughout, she notes, (p.98) the researcher needs to bear in mind the key purpose of the observation, and keep in mind three questions:

- What do I need to know?
- Why do I need to know it?
- What shall I do with this information when I have it?

After the observations, I made some extra notes that filled in some of the gaps before they faded from memory, and in order to review myself whether any of the events I had witnessed were relevant in particular to this study. As I carried out the observation after the interviews, the observation allowed me to observe whether the school context I saw tallied with Ben's accounts, and also how his description of emotion fitted with how he behaved as a headteacher day to day. It was a form of triangulation.

### ***3.8.3 How the empirical data were gathered***

The interviews were carried out in three distinct phases. To begin with (Phase One/pilot), I carried out a small study of four primary school heads, three women and one man, interviewing them once only. The purpose of this was to identify key themes for discussion, to tie them into the literature, and to test out whether headteachers were more or less likely to talk freely if they knew the researcher already. All four were drawn from personal contacts, two known to me, and two recommended to me as heads that would be willing to talk freely about emotion and leadership. Three women and one man between the ages of 48 and 55 were interviewed in the summer of 2003. All had their leadership described by OFSTED as good or better. More detail is given about these heads in the next chapter. I then reflected on these first stage interviews and drew out key themes (Crawford, 2004) as I read more literature relating to leadership and emotion.

After the initial interviews five primary school Heads (three women and two men) were chosen (Phase Two), each to form the core of the study over the course of a school year. Only one, Eleanor, was from the initial study. The purpose of this was to follow up key themes generated from the first interviews and explore the topic in

more depth, looking at the part played by memory and autobiography. As mentioned previously, each Headteacher was interviewed at least three times. These interviews took place during the school year 2003/2004. When they were completed, the task was to re-examine my research questions, consider the themes that had been drawn from the literature review, and begin to analyse the data that had been generated.

Finally in Phase Three, from consultation with the interviewed sample, one headteacher, Ben, was asked to be involved in an observational study. This period of observation study was not only aimed at triangulation but at understanding better the social setting in which Ben lead. The observations took place in the Autumn Term 2004, and involved two days in school, both before and after a parents evening that I also observed.

### **3.9 Ethical issues**

Ethical issues vary depending on the nature of the research. This research has particular ethical considerations, and in order to conclude the discussion of pertinent issues in carrying out the research, these need to be considered carefully.

The research design was planned in order to answer the research questions, and begin to understand what emotions mean to the particular headteacher, and how they affect the leader's view of him/herself as a leader. A particular issue was to take into account the need of all headteacher participants to feel safe and secure in discussions. Ethical considerations had to remain paramount at all times, as emotions are an area where there may be particularly sensitive and confidential information revealed by those involved in examining their own role and the part played by their emotions and feelings. Difficulties could arise over access or the ability of the headteachers to describe emotional situations. Nevertheless, it is my intention to view as positive the concept that the researcher is seen as part of the interpretive setting, or over time as one of the participants' 'affective sets':

The organizational researcher as observer, interviewer, confidant or participant has, in different ways, access to how actors express and represent their feelings.

(Fineman 2000, p.14)

The British Educational Research Association (BERA) in their published ethical guidelines (BERA, 2004) for researchers suggest that all educational research should be conducted within an ethic of respect for:

- The Person
- Knowledge
- Democratic Values
- The Quality of Educational Research
- Academic Freedom.

(2004, p.4)

In this research the particular concern is for the persons (headteachers) involved. BERA suggests taking clear steps to get voluntary informed consent, and this research follows that advice. Also, BERA proposes (p.7) that the participants' data should be treated in a confidential and anonymous manner, and this has been done through the giving of pseudonyms and obscuring place details.

Biographical research also has its own ethical considerations. As Thomson et al. (1994) state:

Interviews which explore the ways in which a person has remembered his or her past can be rewarding for the interviewer but may be disturbing or even damaging for the interviewee. Unlike the therapist, oral historians may not be around to put together the pieces of memories that they have deconstructed and are no longer safe (p.34).

I tried to make sure that this did not happen with the headteachers' recollections, both by asking the questions sensitively but also by allowing them to discuss any particular difficult areas outside the interview situation. My counselling training helped, as I felt I had the necessary skills to do this. In fact, there was only one occasion where an incident was discussed between myself and the head, after the interviews took place and therefore outside the research, at that headteacher's request. Also, one headteacher from the pilot study was quite emotionally vulnerable at the time, so I did not invite her to be part of Phase Two as I felt it would be unethical to do so.



Roberts (2002) also suggests that biographical research must take particular care of ethical issues surrounding informed consent and confidentiality. This is not only true during the initial phases of the research but also later on during the writing up and publication. Cohen et al. (2003, p.51) define informed consent as involving:

- Competence – the person given the consent must be mature enough to give consent.
- Voluntarism – participants must choose to take part, and understand that any exposure to risk is taken knowingly.
- Full information, or reasonably informed consent – an explanation of the process, a description of the benefits and costs of participating, offer to answer all queries concerning the research, and informing the participant that they are free to stop participation at any time without prejudice.
- Comprehension – the participants understand as much of the nature of the research as is practical

Competence was addressed in that all the headteachers were mature professionals. They willingly volunteered to take part, and I gave them full information on the project, and they were clear that they could withdraw at anytime. At several points during the interviews, I reiterated these points. I also sent them my accounts for verification and amendment.

### **3.10 Summary**

Many of the readings (Bassey, 1999, Delamont, 2002, Robson, 2002) call for artistry in social enquiry in a project of this nature. Research into emotion and leadership is both complex, in that there are many layers of meaning involved, and yet deceptively simple because the information was gathered from knowing participants. The perceptions of the headteachers are in a sense their own reality, and as such, add to the knowledge of these areas and how headteachers view their role in primary schools, yet seen by and through a lens of emotional understanding. There is no doubt that I started out as a novice in these emotional settings, bearing in mind the suggestion by Hammersley (1995) that the researcher needs to watch, listen, formulate hypotheses and make errors (p.89). The process is a demanding one. Mason (2002) puts it very aptly when she describes qualitative researching as exciting and important, because it 'engages us with things that matter, in ways that matter (p.1). So, despite the difficulties of this sort of research, an overarching thrust

to the research is that it is important to educational leadership, and it does matter. As suggested at the beginning, this process will involve reflexivity perhaps best defined at this stage in the way Delamont describes it:

It means that the researcher recognises and glories in the endless cycle of interactions and perceptions which characterise relationships with other human beings (2002, p.8).

The process of recognition begins in the next two chapters. The next chapter moves into the analysis by identifying a possible thematic framework within the literature. The thematic framework is used to begin to discuss both the emotional processing of the headteacher, and their management of emotions. Through examining the literature in this way, the language and experience of emotion that headteachers bring to their work can be highlighted, and contextualised, revealing a framework within which the empirical data is analysed. By this method, not only their individuality and their sense of belonging in a group, but also in part their own leadership identity will be focused upon.

## **CHAPTER 4: TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

*The unstoppable humming of the most universal of melodies that only dies down when  
we go to sleep*

(Damasio, 2004 p. 3)

### **4.1 Introduction**

Interpretation of emotions, the process of presentation and analysis, and the final drawing together of understandings need to start from somewhere. Just as much research into emotion looks at individual motivation and interpretation of events rather than emphasising the fixed and the predictable (Gerrod Parrott & Spackman, 2000), so developing a thematic framework that reflects the literature has an individualist component. This forms part of the overall aim of the work as a continuous iterative process, with five main steps:

- Familiarisation and examination of the literature;
- Identifying a possible thematic framework;
- Collecting the case study data and applying the thematic framework to it;
- Reading the data across the whole;
- Mapping and interpreting the data.

This chapter deals with step two, and this and the next three chapters form the core of the thesis. The thematic framework returns to the literature as data in order to develop how the concepts of 'emotion as inherent' and 'emotion as social' can be translated into meaningful constructs for studying the primary headteachers. This was through the concepts of emotional textures. These are:

- Emotional regulation in educational leadership: Managing self and Managing others
- Emotion weighted decision-making in educational leadership
- Emotional context in educational leadership

These will be explained in detail, and related back to the literature.

## 4.2 The challenges

A summary of the challenges inherent in any study of emotion and the workplace are presented by Briner (1999) and is worth quoting at length:

One of the great dangers of this new interest, however, is that emotion may come to be studied as a phenomenon that is somehow separate from behaviour and cognition at work: that we look at emotion as a new and separate aspect of work psychology. To take this approach would be a fundamental mistake as, to repeat the point I have made many times already, emotion is intrinsic to work behaviour and not a separate part of it (...). For researchers and practitioners who are interested in emotion, a key task is to put emotion into what they are already doing, thereby helping to integrate emotion with their existing research and practice. If this is not done, the theoretical and practical relevance of emotion to almost every aspect of work behaviour will remain unexplored and emotion will once more become marginalized within work and organizational psychology. (p.342)

Briner argues for the integration of emotion within existing research and practice, and this would seem to be an excellent aim for those that study leadership. Rather than emotion being either, 'out there', to be acknowledged but not dealt with, or a subject only of interest to those concerned with emotional difficulties/troubles, the aim of this thesis is to put emotion into what headteachers are already doing by focusing on that connection to self through emotion.

In chapter two, perspectives on emotion were discussed alongside the leadership research in order to signal a growing awareness of the affective dimension in the literature of educational leadership. The constructs of 'emotion as inherent' and 'emotion as socially constructed' were considered, as was the role of headteacher in primary schools. In order to clarify this further, an examination of the importance of the overlap *itself* in the different perspectives from 'emotion as inherent' to emotions as socially constructed' is important. What was it about these perspectives that could be applied to the empirical study of the primary heads? Firstly, the educational leadership literature currently suggests that emotion is an important part of their leadership, although much of the work tends towards the social, external aspects of emotion. Secondly, there is a lack of engagement in the educational leadership literature with the inherent, personal aspects of emotion, which is curious, because

emotion is with leaders all the time, whether they acknowledge this consciously or not. As Damasio eloquently puts it, and from which I took this chapter's epigram:

But there they are, feelings of myriad emotions and related states, the continuous musical lines of our minds, the unstoppable humming of the most universal of melodies that only dies down when we go to sleep.

(Damasio, 2004 p. 3)

The difficulty for those in headship positions is perhaps to acknowledge the personal, to somehow look at the 'continuous musical lines of our minds' in ways that enhance personal effectiveness and help manage any inner anxiety. However, as Fineman (2000b p.278) puts it (in the context of organisational theory):

Yet that is where the problems begin. As we become keener to grasp that which is hard to grasp, the limitations of our social sciences become all too clear. Do we thrust emotion into the old paradigmatic pots, or do we break the moulds? And if we step out, who will listen to us and with what credibility?

Conceptually it is sometimes hard to make connections that stand up to scrutiny. Fineman (2003) describes this facet as making 'the connection between feeling, body and social meaning' (p.16), and is a very important concept for me. This link has been discussed in the leadership literature (Loader, 1997), and indeed there are other examples in the discussion of the 'wounded leader' (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004) where crisis experiences brought this home to headteachers. Too often though these discussions are theoretical or related to other larger school issues, such as school improvement or stress management. The educational leadership literature rarely considers headship from the perspective of the headteacher; what it feels like to be in that role. This is probably because such subjectivity is viewed as suspect, but viewed from understanding the emotions of leadership as a key to long term sustainability and high functioning in headship, it seems much more valid. In other words, the fact that headteachers are emotional beings is not always readily apparent in the educational leadership literature.

The cultural and organisational perspective of the primary school is the background against which personal biography and personal meanings met, and help shape emotional expression. In the next chapter, I will examine in detail the stories of headteachers, focusing on their biographies and emotional experience to try to

understand how they understand emotion and its impact on their own leadership stance. This emphasis on the lived experience of emotion is an attempt through research to look at how emotion can support what primary heads do in ways of which they are not always conscious. Before the preliminary contextual framework is discussed in detail, there is an overarching issue that needs raising – that of gender and educational leadership. This issue is at once important yet tangential to the research in this thesis. Important because primary schools are mainly staffed by women, and the majority of the headteachers interviewed are female. Tangential, because the issue of how gender concerns influence social interactions is not central to the research. However, a brief overview is necessary, particularly because some of the data are concerned with life story, where gender concerns are apparent.

### **4.3 Headteachers and gendered identity**

Feminist discourse has helped shape the way headship is conceptualised, particularly in the educational leadership field (Coleman, 2002, Hall, 1996). Hall's work was important in focusing researchers attention on gender and headship. Primary schools in England are mostly female environments in terms of staffing. This is reflected both in the teaching and support staff, although a disproportionate number of men go on to become primary school heads. This is true in Scotland and Wales, and many other countries internationally (Howson, 2005).

If emotion is sometimes discussed in terms of the rational/irrational divide, so it can also be characterised in terms of a gender divide because both gender and emotion are over-arching concepts. Social values and gender stereotypes (Sachs & Blackmore, 1998) can serve to legitimise the supremacy of the rational because harnessing emotion as a way to present ideas, or reach conclusions is not seen as legitimate. Gender stereotypes would have us believe that men are rational and cool, and therefore superior, women are irrational, emotional, too personal and thus inferior. Blackmore argues (1999) that looking at women in leadership specifically too often makes women the problem rather than problematising the concept of leadership within the wider context of power and gender relations (p.6). This issue is particularly relevant to this thesis as looking at the wider concepts helps move away from emotion being seen as 'feminine', and therefore somehow suspect, and as a way of illuminating leadership of both men and women through their own voices. This is one aim of the empirical data that examines lives.

It is maintained by some writers (Martin et al., 2000) that the discourse of many feminist organisational theorists encourages deeper exploration of emotion in organisations as it refuses to separate the public and private faces of emotion, or in other words the emotional context. Blackmore (1999, pages 164-165) has argued that when women display what might be viewed as unprofessional, non rational negative emotions e.g. anger they can be viewed as uncaring, and if they cry they are seen as weak. She suggests that women can be trapped into the positive aspects of emotion such as warmth, care and patience and have to manage the negative emotions of others at the same time. In other words, they must be both 'vulnerable and strong' (p.165).

Coleman (2002 p.82) notes that women can feel exposed as leaders because of preconceptions and expectations that the leader will be male. Some feminist writers argue that writing about the emotional dimension of school life and leadership is one of the great silences of organisational analysis in education (Sachs & Blackmore, 1998). In particular they argue 'the discourses of schooling privilege headwork over heartwork' (p.270). At the same time they argue that the terrain of emotion is not just for women. Men also have to work within an emotional context. Sachs and Blackmore argue that men may in fact put up with more from the impact of restrictive expectations on their means of doing emotional work. This issue is examined with the male primary heads in the study. More generally they argue 'effective leadership is also about, or requires managing emotions or making emotions visible' (1998, p.265). They also confirm that emotionality has been seen as the opposite, less favoured cousin of rationality, because it has been used as part of the gender discourse. They discuss implicit rules about the display of emotion in leadership, such as never showing that you can't cope. The female headteachers that Sachs and Blackmore interviewed wanted to be professional and the professional face, marked by absence of emotion, was part of how they defined their professionalism.

Fitzgerald (2003) suggests that recent studies on woman and educational leadership 'can be conceptualised in terms of three complementary and overlapping domains: profiles, patterns and practice' (p.431). These three domains she identifies as:

- The climate within which women leaders operate, and thus how they are viewed;
- Their occupational and professional challenges within personal and policy contexts;

- The charting of a relief map of women in leadership (Coleman, 2002, Hall et al., 1986, Mumby & Putnam, 1992).

Grogan (2000) argues that the various discourses we used are dependent on our relative power in each discourse (p.127). She sees these shaping women in leadership as 'we are moulded by or subjectified by a discourse in the sense that we learn to make meaning of our experiences according to the dominant values and beliefs expressed within the discourse'. This shaping is true of both men and women (Collinson & Hearn, 2003), and is a part of the overall context of headship in primary schools which will be looked at in the data.

Finally in discussing overarching gender issues which relate to emotion, it is pertinent to return briefly here to Beatty's work, especially in the way she defines 'the notion of a professional fragmented self' as an emotional issue for educational leaders' (Beatty, 2002 p. 110), particularly female ones. She also notes the importance of stressing the power of emotion for both men and women when it comes to leadership. As she states (Beatty, 2003, p.111):

If the discourse on emotion were to be associated with critical feminist argument it could predictably be self-marginalizing. The examination of emotion and leadership is not a feminist issue. Neither is it merely a matter of care, though caring is of vital importance. Matters of emotion (...) are universal.

Both men and women, it would appear from the literature on emotion and leadership, still can learn a great deal by reflecting on the inner emotional experiences of leadership as part of their professional growth and sustaining them in headship. Coleman (2002, p.157) stresses the importance of evidence that shows that female communication patterns differ to men, and this is important to note for researching emotion. She also found in her research that female headteachers are in a way freer to express their own leadership style:

So it is the men who are in someway trapped by a stereotype that places the majority of them in a straitjacket of expectations of male dominance, of which women headteachers are free (p.157).

Rather than relying on emotional stereotypes that may be gender related, the internal, 'emotion as inherent' parts of the headteacher's emotional being need to be considered. In particular, for women, the role of their domestic/family responsibilities



needs to be considered in terms of its impact both on their careers and the emotional context of their leadership.

#### **4.4 A suggested initial framework of analysis from the literature**

To get to this emotional 'being', a preliminary conceptual framework from the differing perspectives on emotion will be developed from the literature, with the main aim of pulling out aspects that have both connections to the themes of this research and also the greatest practical use for primary practitioners in headship positions. The next section looks at the initial framework developed from the literature, but it would be unwise to describe this as a linear process. In some ways, the iterative framework of this research could be more helpfully described as a 'hermeneutic circle'. This phrase refers to the circle of interpretation necessarily involved when understanding a complex idea. The circle refers to the difficulty of understanding any one part of an idea until you understand the whole, but it also isn't possible to understand the whole without also understanding all of the parts. It is a way of explaining and expressing how understanding and interpreting a complex idea is an ongoing process that takes time. As more information is acquired, an interpretation gradually changes to incorporate that. Thus the first stage looked at the literature, the second identified a framework, and the third collected the data and applied the framework to it.

Developing a thematic framework from the literature is similar in process to that undertaken by the architects of emotional intelligence (EI), Salovey and Mayer. Their original work, and the emphasis within it, was concerned with a discrete set of conceptually related mental processes that involve emotional information. They view these key processes (expressed intrapersonally and interpersonally) as a way of approaching what they called 'life tasks', with what they call emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, Salovey & Meyer, 2001), a concept later popularised by Goleman (1995). These four processes are:

- Appraisal and expression of emotion (self and others);
- Regulation of emotion;
- Utilisation of emotion;
- Emotion's facilitation of thinking.

This research on emotion struck a chord with leadership because of the emphasis on the intra and inter personal (inherent and social), and the fact that these emotional processes were related to life skills. Salovey and Meyer considered it important that individuals were able to apply these processes to emotional content in social situations, assessing their own feelings, and that of others, accurately. These processes appear to have direct application to leadership, which is the direction Goleman followed later. The way that the mind operates is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is important to note that Salovey and Mayer also suggested that emotion helps the processing of information, as was suggested in Chapter Two, as well as developing multiple options in any given situation. This leads to a high level of emotional reasoning and knowledge. Using such knowledge in interpersonal relationships is a key tenet of EI in their conceptualisation, as is the idea that a person should consciously reflect on their emotional state at any one time. Goleman developed these ideas into his competence framework, which is discussed elsewhere.

Salovey et al. (2000, p. 504) also make an important point about the intrapersonal, which is underemphasised in the discussion of Goleman's work on competences as related to leadership in education, perhaps because the intrapersonal is a more difficult area to access. They state:

We believe that emotional competencies are fundamental to social intelligence. This is because social problems and situations are laden with affective information. Moreover, emotional competences apply not only to social experiences but to experiences within the individual. Indeed, some investigators have argued that self-knowledge and the individual's inner life are characterized most saliently by emotional experiences. Thus, emotional intelligence is more focused than social intelligence, in that it pertains specifically to emotional phenomena and yet can be applied directly to a broad range of emotional problems embedded in both interpersonal and intrapersonal experience.

This insight from Salovey and Meyer made me ask whether the literature that I had explored in Chapter Two in terms of perspectives had anything important to say that would be of benefit to primary headteachers' interpersonal and intrapersonal experience, and whether there were other aspects of the literature that would add to the richness of the thematic framework, before the empirical stage of the research was completed.

## 4.5 From perspectives to textures

Chapter Two considered emotional perspectives drawn from the work of Lupton and applied them to educational leadership. These were:

- **Emotions as socially constructed:** the phenomenological, psychodynamic and structuralist perspectives,
- **Emotions as inherent:** the biological, cognitive and physiological perspectives.

These perspectives served to highlight that most research in educational leadership concentrates on emotions as socially constructed, possibly because this focus has more instant practical applications, but also because research into the intrapersonal has more difficulties associated with it.

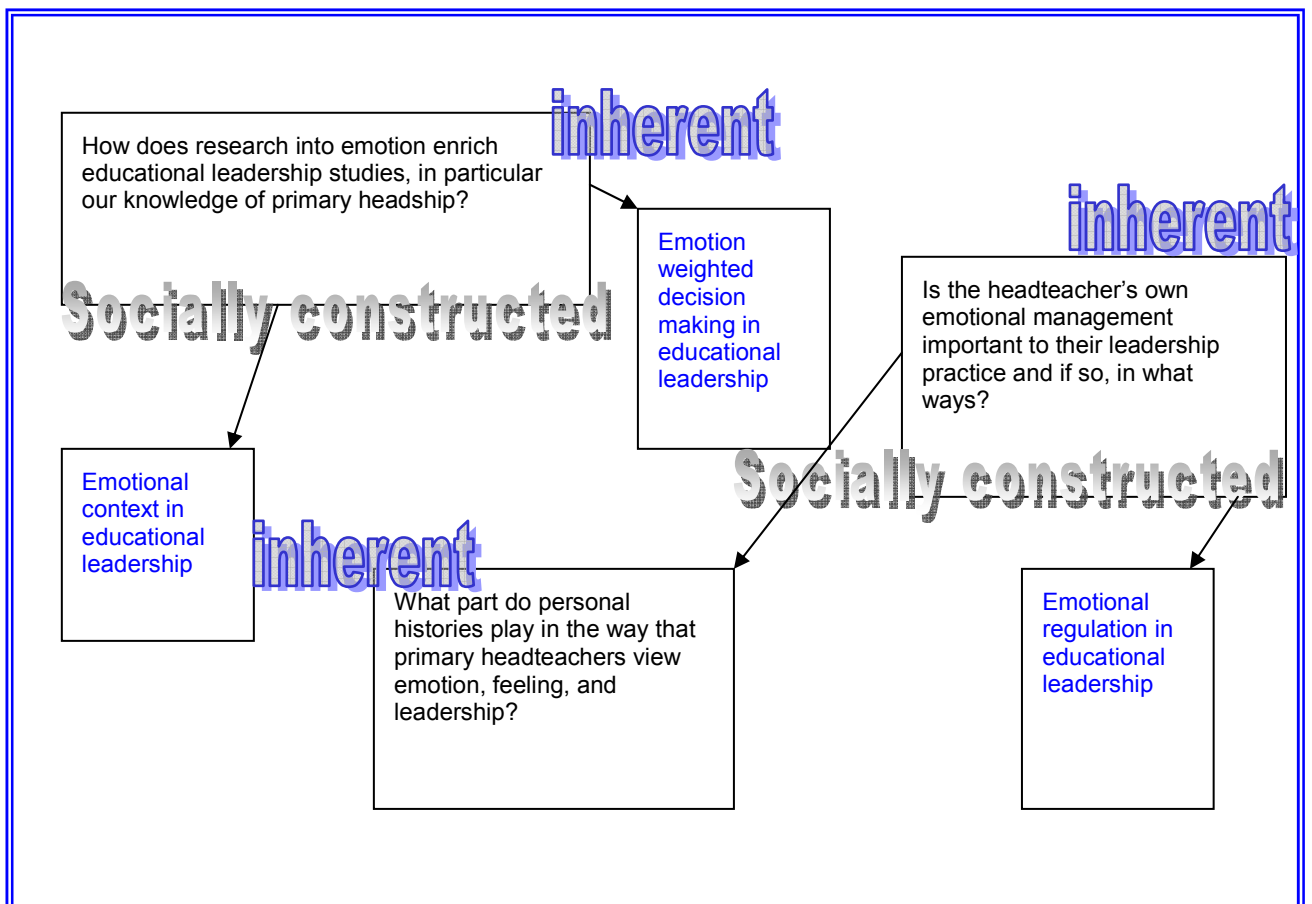
One of those difficulties may be emotionality, or the process of being emotional, which can be viewed as out of control, or somehow difficult to deal with. This leaves the researcher with a conundrum – can using dispassionate terms to discuss emotion somehow negate emotionality? Acknowledging the need both to value the process of being emotional, yet also the need to discuss the process rationally, lead to the laying out of the emotional textures of leadership. The process was as follows. First, the research questions were examined and the inherent and social perspectives were matched to the questions. Finally, a key concern was identified which was termed an emotional texture. These relationships are shown diagrammatically in Figure 4.1.

Each texture is not put forward as exclusive or all embracing concept that has distinct boundaries. Rather the textures are offered as a means of acknowledging how closely emotion and leadership are linked. There may be more textures than are identified below. In fact, the complexity of the area suggests that there must be. However, specifying particular textures allows for closer examination of where the rational and the emotional aspects of leadership come together, and this is the main purpose of the conceptualisation. They are used as conceptual entry points which help link emotion and leadership more closely in terms of thinking about the issues that are important to primary school headship.

The name 'emotional textures' was inspired by a section name in Fineman's book, *Emotion in Organizations* (2000). The word 'textures' made me think more about the richness and multiplicity of emotion and leadership. I have defined them as:

- Emotional regulation in educational leadership: Managing self and Managing others
- Emotion weighted decision-making in educational leadership
- Emotional context in educational leadership

These will be explained in more detail, but the links to both the research questions and the 'emotions as inherent', 'emotions as socially constructed' continuum and shown diagrammatically below.



**Figure 4.1** Relating the questions to the textures

Dictionaries define textures in various ways, but most definitions emphasise that a texture reveals some typical and distinctive about something complex. The term 'Emotional textures', therefore, draws on the interplay between the various

perspectives discussed, especially the inherent/socially-constructed continuum. Leadership might then be viewed as the skilled interweaving of the person, and the social situation, and emotion as the glue that holds the two together. As Kemper suggests (2004):

Identity, the self, and self-esteem are social outcomes. Even the capacity of mind to reflect and to rehearse alternative courses of action (...) is socially given. Threading through, between, and around these elements of the person are emotions. (p.45)

The idea of textures seems to me to be useful in capturing some of the essence of the literature on emotion as it relates to leadership. The concept of texture could also help begin to answer the first key research question in terms of seeing what primary headship looks like from the emotions perspective, whilst at the same time concentrate on key question two, concerning the headteacher's own emotion management and leadership practice. In other words, the concept of emotional textures is a means to capture the essence of emotion and leadership as it relates to the first two research questions, and the fieldwork was an opportunity to apply textures to the real lives of the headteachers in the study. Thus emotional textures could be viewed as a distinctive and interwoven part of the complex concept called leadership. Each emotional texture will be examined in terms of the literature to see whether such a theorisation is useful or not.

## **4.6 Emotional regulation in leadership**

This texture draws on the various perspectives – the sociological and the work of Hochschild, the psychological concept of regulation, and the idea of playing a role. Goffman (1961) proposed that every kind of social interaction is like a game, in which we take on roles. We can become more or less strongly engaged in a role, with fulfilment more likely to occur when we are fully engaged in a role. This can of course lead to tensions when the role we are being asked to play, perhaps in terms of leadership, grates against our innermost values, creating what Hochschild terms emotional dissonance, which is explored below. The management or control of emotion impacts heavily on the public face of emotion in school leadership. The strain of 'performance' can have a negative effect on leadership, the joy of performance a positive effect. Just like Hochschild's flight attendants who had to fake emotions they did not feel, so primary headteachers may have to put on what they believe to be the appropriate emotion for a headteacher. Over a longer period, this

way of managing, Hochschild argued was lost capacity to listen to our feelings, and sometimes even to feel at all (p.21).

Emotion creates part of the social reality of life, and social encounters can be regarded as some sort of dramatic interaction. Dollard et al. (2003) suggest that human service work has some unique aspects. They note that in direct person related jobs, such as teaching, nursing, social work, each employee is fully responsible for high quality and satisfactory service delivery, unlike in a factory where problems can be fixed before reaching the customer (p.84). Also, they suggest that in human service work, customers have particular expectations and behaviours, or organisational customer perceptions (OCP) that represent an addition source of stress (p.85). Headteachers in primary schools could be seen to be at the sharp end of OCP, and the emotional labour that this involves is an important part of leadership, through positional expectations amid the hierarchy of schools. Dollard et al. also made the interesting point that as well as positional emotional labour, human service work involves customer related social stressors (CSS) which can operate particularly on an individual level during what they call employee-customer interactions. In schools, the notion of the customer could be broadened to include pupils, parents and staff.

Morris and Feldman (1996, p. 987) define emotion work as the 'effort, planning, and control needed to express organisationally desired emotions during interpersonal transactions'. This requires effort, but Hochschild and others (Hochschild, 1983, Zapf, 2002) have argued that it is only when *emotional dissonance* occurs that stress becomes an issue. Hochschild defines this, as the frequent need to display positive emotions that are not the same as the neutral or negative emotions that you are actually feeling. Dollard et al. note that emotional dissonance has often been associated with ill health in human service work, because eventually individuals suffering with emotional dissonance lose the capability to regulate their own emotion. This capacity for self-regulation is an important internal resource (p.86) for those who work in very people orientated environments. Without it, work related stress is more likely to occur. On a cautionary note, Oatley and Jenkins (2003, p.192/3) note:

The concept of emotion regulation is a confusing one. It has been used both to refer to a pattern of emotionality (e.g. showing high levels of intense anger), and to the hypothesized processes that may operate on our expressions of emotion (e.g. trying to distract oneself). Some individuals for

reasons of upbringing, or genetics, or both, come to have a bias towards experiencing and expressing certain emotions more than others.

In terms of emotional regulation in leadership, the latter definition was the original intent. This does not mean that patterns of emotionality are not relevant, as is their emphasis on individuals. When emotional regulation and stress are discussed, both interpretations can add insight.

#### **4.6.1 Stress as regulation**

Cooper et al. (2001, p. 70), observe that models of stress are in essence theories about emotional reaction, but in the stress research there is a confusion between constructs so that, for example, happiness (an emotion) is thought to be the same as job satisfaction (an attitude). Their definition of stress is very clearly to do with personal transactions in an organisation:

Stress is not a factor that resides in the individual or the environment; rather it is embedded in an ongoing process that involves individuals transacting with their environments, making appraisals of these encounters, and attempting to cope with the issues that arise (p.12).

This view of appraisal derives from the work of Lazarus that was described in Chapter Two. Although Cooper et al. are primarily concerned with the many aspects of stress, they make the useful point (p.71), which relates to expressed/unexpressed feelings that:

Emotions offer a rich and useful source of information about what is happening to a person. Exploring emotional processes in work settings would increase our knowledge and understanding of the transaction between the individual and the environment.

Headteachers need to be able to access this source of information within a school. Cooper et al. suggest that one way this can be facilitated is by beginning to classify emotions into categories.

#### **4.6.2 Regulation and classifying emotions**

Thus far, although the perspectives on emotion have been discussed, the naming of emotions has been left out, because the classification and naming of emotion is in itself complex. There is some agreement that the four primary emotions are anger, fear, sadness and joy, which are social emotions.

Some other examples of social emotions could include:

- Pride
- Embarrassment, guilt, and shame
- Appreciation (admiration, respect)
- Contempt
- Gratitude
- Anger and remorse
- Joy
- Distress
- Envy and jealousy
- Fear
- Relief
- Liking and love (and the opposites, dislike and hate)

Merely listing such emotions, however informative, is not of much use to a primary headteacher. More useful perhaps is the grouping together of emotions under differing headings. Lazarus (1995) drew together key emotions under three headings:

- Negative Emotions (anger, fright, sadness, anxiety, guilt, disgust, jealousy)
- Positive emotions (happiness, pride, relief, love)
- Mixed emotions (hope, compassion, gratitude)

In itself, even this schema is not particularly helpful in terms of the workplace. The ability to 'play' the role of headteacher is linked to the emotional health of the organisation as a whole, and although recognition and classification could bring issues to the fore, they are not really leadership tools. It can however, make leaders aware of the nature of some emotions. For example, Argyris (1996, 1999) views organisations that function well as psychologically safe, but suggests that it is much more common for organisations to be places where relationships are superficial and wary. If a school wishes to be psychologically safe for its headteacher, I would suggest it has to move from positive and negative classification per se, to an awareness of the role of emotions.



Pekrun and Frese (1992) suggest that positive and negative emotions can be further classified. Social emotions are often background emotions that arise from social interactions. So, in a school, for example social emotions may make up what could be described as the mood of the organisation. These sorts of emotions can be looked at separately from task related emotions. Tasks happen within the context of social emotions in the longer term, and may be unexpressed most of the time by, for example, the teachers in a primary school. This background of social emotion may influence a task related issue, which draws on them, but staff will also draw upon the cognitive ability to examine how helpful these emotions are. Lastly, they suggest that people's cognitive ability will also allow them to understand what prospective emotions may arise in the future from the situation. So, it seems that emotions as they are discussed in everyday usage are powerful essences of organisations, whether expressed or unexpressed.

Summing up, from a biological perspective, emotions apply to certain specific, self-referent experiences of both the body and mind (Oatley & Jenkins, 2003); they reflect a person's values (Stein et al., 1994), and are primarily cognitive. Research into human stress helps to highlight the fact that they are also socially experienced through a personal narrative, in other words, an interactive state, involving a subject, an object, and the relationship between that subject and object. Emotions in organisations can be suppressed or acted upon, depending often on the person's history of similar events (Frijda 1987; Fineman 2001). Bodily changes may or may not give signals that the person involved is emotionally stimulated, because of what is viewed as professionally correct, or because of the emotional labour (Hochschild 1990) that is involved. The emotional cost of emotional regulation as unexpressed feeling can be considerable in terms of stress within the organisation. Alternatively, emotional regulation will influence the way that emotion is expressed. Fineman (1995) suggests that emotional costs can be considerable because people not only have to deal with managing the dissonance, but also coping when the tension between what they feel, and the required emotion is too hard to manage. Hence emotional regulation in leadership is part of the headteacher's emotional textures of leadership because without this texture, primary heads could not draw upon personal reserves in times of crisis, and enable their staff to most helpfully express their own feelings and emotions.

## 4.7 Emotion-weighted decision-making in leadership

In looking at the literature on primary headship, I noted that Hall and Southworth categorised headship before the 1988 Education Act as 'pivotal, proprietarial and paternalistic.' (1997,p.153). In particular, this argument was drawn from the power that the headteacher exercised over his (in the main these heads were men) school, as in Southworth's study of Ron Lacey. Having researched primary schools in special measures, one of the notable features was the pivotal emotional figure of the headteacher in the school. When conceptualising the textures, a starting point for trying to find a way of expressing some of the contradictions between accountability and distributed leadership was to conceive of a texture that offered some emotional explanation. Thus, I asked myself when reading the literature; what leadership function does a primary head need to exercise that was not so important for a primary teacher more generally and where emotion might play an underrated part. This led to the concept of emotion weighted decision-making as a pivotal part of the primary headteacher's role.

Decision-making is an important part of primary headship, and of educational leadership and management more generally. Decision-making links to an important property of emotion because, as Oatley and Jenkins have argued (2003, p.82), emotions arise in our daily lives largely in terms of problems to be solved. This particular attribute has been termed the 'aboutness' of emotion (Gordon, 1974, Oatley & Jenkins, 2003, Parkinson, 1995), simply because most emotions can be said to be 'about' something. The popularity of emotional intelligence (EI) as a competency framework may be because of its relationship to the 'aboutness' of emotion, and EI's implicit suggestion that emotion and decision-making is mainly a competence that can be learnt. This is not to negate the importance of understanding the links between emotion and decision-making. Ornstein and Nelson (2006, p. 44) helpfully suggest that most researchers into EI would agree that the key competence is that of self-awareness. As they put it:

People adept at self-awareness recognise their emotions, their genesis, and the potential outcome of their state of feeling.

They also make the useful point (p.45) that any circumstances where emotion is heightened are likely to result in behaviours that are not always desirable, and that training around the key competences of EI may be beneficial to people in service industries. It has been suggested (Earley & Weindling, 2004) that the interest in

emotional intelligence is really part of a quest for superior performance in leadership. Earley and Weindling, and the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) programmes such as the Leadership Programme for Serving Heads (LPSH) do not question the use of the concept of EI to form a competency framework, or discuss any wider implications of the study of emotion and leadership. My argument is that much, although not all, of this discussion is superficial and avoids debate of the difficult and more elusive aspects of emotion for leaders. The point that I am making is that self-awareness is more than a competence, and that the EI/competence route in educational leadership has been seen as a short cut to effectiveness rather than part of a developing and complex affective paradigm for leadership.

Decision-making is often conceptualised as a rational process. Henry Mintzberg (1979) has argued that the work of leaders, including decision-making, sometimes involves the application of rationality – which he calls the 'cerebral' aspects of leadership, and sometimes rests on the development of vision and encouragement of others – which Mintzberg refers to as the 'insightful' aspect. The cerebral approach stresses calculation, and tends to see the world as if it were the components of a portfolio, using the language (words and numbers) of rationality. The insightful aspect stresses commitment, and sees the world as an integrated whole, using a language that emphasises the personal values of the individual. Personal values are closely related to the language of emotion, and remind the reader that the competing strands of an organisation's life cannot be ordered and controlled. This is developed in the business literature, particularly in the work of Fineman (2000, 2001, 2002, 2003).

Fineman proposes that the idea of the rational organisation as a place where emotion can be controlled out of existence is a naïve assumption by those who manage (Fineman, 2001). He argues (2000, p.10) that the management is about order, and this ordering is actually carried out by using emotional preferences and emotionalising our understandings of situations. For example, in decision-making in leadership roles, leaders may view the process as having been carried out rationally, in neat steps. Fineman suggests (2003) that this view is emotionally infused. Decision-making is portrayed as rational in retrospect, but is often an unfolding, conflictual process. He advocates the view that there is a Western tendency to rationalise our emotions, and make them look unemotional, as emotion is not seen as a legitimate way of either presenting ideas, or suggesting how we reached conclusions (2000, p.96). He also notes that social values and gender stereotypes reinforce this viewpoint. It could be compelling to suggest that we could somehow

read the runes of emotion in order to restore rationality by managing our own feelings better. This is partially the view of those that advocate emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). The essence of what Fineman proposes is that because we want to think and believe that what we are doing is rational, we create social discourses that define how we ought to feel and display emotion. Justifying how one behaves emotionally in a social situation in school can be termed 'professional behaviour'. Fineman suggests that it is this is often necessary as it lubricates and reinforces social relationships (2000: p12). Fineman (2000b) suggests that this helps re-define what is meant by rationality. He defined rationality as the presentation of emotionalised processes so that they are acceptable to others. This may be what many leaders in schools attempt to do, and is a point I will return to below.

For the educational leader, this knowledge of the display of emotion can be crucial to effective leadership in several ways; as part not only of decision-making, but also emotional regulation in leadership. Decision-making may have a rational base, but emotion is part of the process, before and after decisions are made. Ginsberg and Gray Davies (2002) in their research on educational decision-making, argue that whatever kind of leadership is being exercised, leaders have to make decisions, and live with the consequences (p.269). One of the conclusions of their research was that educational leaders are rarely prepared in their training for leadership for the deeply emotional experiences that occurred in their schools. In their writings they suggest:

While it is often 'lonely at the top' for leaders, it seems unhealthy and counter-productive to be isolated when making difficult decisions...(they wonder) whether some case-based training, further emphasis in MBA or educational leadership programs or creating avenues for leaders to share their concerns with peers could be beneficial... (p.279)

A focus on the leader's feelings, and therefore a less 'rational' approach is also a feature of the work of Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski (2004). The inner emotional experiences of leadership are a feature of their work, which does not deal with decision-making, emotional or otherwise. However, it does connect because their research acknowledges that there are leadership events that leave 'wounds'. Many of the day-to-day decisions of headship may cause emotional fallout. These wounds may be caused by a variety of affective effects, and they argue for a:

shift from the traditional cognitive realms to the affective with specific emphasis on immediate, subjective experience and perspectives capable

of allowing for a deeper consideration of the inner emotional experiences of leadership. (p.312)

This shift is one that is seen in the educational leadership literature as it begins from the mid 1990s onward to look more closely at immediate, subjective experiences, perhaps as a reaction to the failure in many instances of more rational approaches, and what Raynor calls the 'illusion of control' (Raynor, 2004 p.35) in the rational model. The headteachers in Raynor's study are discussed by him in terms of immediate, subjective experience, for example, as were the teachers interviewed by Beatty (2002).

Fineman's view is that feelings and emotions lubricate, rather than impair rationality. We receive cues for emotional patterns, and these cues have characteristic feelings associated with them e.g. defeat is an emotion that can arouse feelings of shame and fear. Most emotions and feelings are intentional e.g. we worry about something, we are angry with someone. Oatley and Jenkins (2003) argue that the core of an emotion is readiness to act and the prompting of plans, or decision-making (p.96). In fact Fineman suggests that they make difficult decisions possible, and ease dilemmas because what is important and worth thinking about in a situation is cued by emotion. As he argues:

We may collapse the rational/emotional distinction. Rationality is no longer the 'master process', neither is emotion. They both interpenetrate; they flow together from the same mould. From this perspective there is no such thing as pure cognition; thinking and deciding is always brushed with emotion, however slight...we may be dimly aware of these processes, or they may be unconscious.

(Fineman, 2000, p.11)

Allowing emotion into such aspects as decision-making serves to remind leaders of the part played by emotion more generally, for example in emotional wounding. This emotional texture prompts leaders understanding of how someone's inner world may have a profound impact on the school setting. This is because leadership is an important and essential component that helps emotionally sustains organisations.

## 4.8 Emotional context in leadership

In a sense this texture is the most important to the argument that emotion and leadership cannot be separated. That is because the idea of emotional context applies to the leader, the followers, and the social context they create together. In other words, emotional context is more than the social context of the school, because emotional context is also created by the internal state of the participants. Parkinson puts it this way, when discussing how emotion works:

The idea is that emotion is private and internal; the reality is that it is intrinsically interpersonal and communicative or performative. However, ideas about emotion can also contribute to the way that emotion is played out and regulated in everyday life. To the extent to which we take our ideas about emotion seriously, they are bound to influence how we react to our own and other people's actual emotions.

(Parkinson, 1995 p. 25)

Emotional context in leadership brings together both psychodynamic and organisation theory which suggests that the individual has a need for coherence between themselves and the social context (Fineman, 2003, Gabriel & Griffiths, 2002). Parkinson suggests that emotion, rather than being 'private, reactive, and partly uncontrollable' is 'public, active and tactical' (p. 304) and this is reflected in the workplace - from emotion being something that was undesirable in organisational culture, there is now a plethora of initiatives that seek to harness emotion (Gabriel & Griffiths, 2002) in the organisational context.

I have already briefly examined one of the most influential books of recent times, *Emotional Intelligence* (Goleman, 1995). To recap, Goleman argues that the emotionally intelligent have abilities in five main domains: they know their emotions, manage their emotions, motivate themselves, recognise emotion in others and handle relationships (p.43–44). The dangers with this 'emotional intelligence' approach have been noted by several writers (Beatty, 2002, Fineman, 2000a). Fineman (2000a) calls it the 'seduction of emotional intelligence' (p.108) because the rationale for it is very similar to what has been argued so far in this review – that emotion and cognition work together. However, Fineman's argument is that Goleman goes beyond this, stating that in conceptualising emotional management as just another workplace competence, Goleman promises a form of rationality that is at best illusory, and perhaps even fake (p.110), and that as an approach it is aimed at

managerial behaviours. Therefore, Beatty argues (p.29/30), EI emphasises working smoothly together, and 'pursuing goals', which means that in fact your perspective may narrow, not widen, and avoid any more deeper and problematic emotional meaning. The wider literature (Bolman & Deal, 1995, Fineman, 2000b, Ogawa & Bossert, 1997, Sergiovanni, 2003), seems to suggest a far stronger meaning for emotional intelligence, not aimed at managerial behaviours, but at the whole culture of the organisation, and the values of its stakeholders. In other words, it is aimed at leadership.

Some researchers (Sandelands & Boudens, 2000) argue further that feeling is 'not primarily an individual response, but a crucial faculty of life lived in groups (...) feeling is how social life appears in consciousness'(p.47). Kemper (2004, p.46) notes that there is no real argument in the literature over the fact that social relations produce emotion, but he proposes that 'social relations can be usefully expressed in two dimensions, power and status, and that a very large number of human emotions can be understood as reaction to the power and/or status meanings of situations.' 'This means that, although the psychological/physiological is still relevant, the idea of connectedness with others in the organisational setting assumes greater importance. Sandelands and Boudens found that people convey their feelings about the affective quality of relationships at work very indirectly. They note:

When we ask where is feeling in people's accounts of work, we find it not in statements of feeling but in stories about work (...) stories invite readers into the workplace, to see and feel what workers see and feel (p.55).

Stories are a way into the workplace, and enable discussions of difficult areas. Part of the empirical research, was framed to tap into these stories.

The affective properties of relationships form part of the emotional context of leadership. In any group of people in school, whether it is staff or parents, there will be differences in the amount of emotional energy used in any group. Kemper (2004, p.49) notes that peripheral members of any group derive only a small amount of emotional energy from that group, but that:

Together, power and status constitute a grid of social relations that underlies all social interactions, providing the individual with greater or lesser amounts of emotional resources of a relatively stable nature. Thus,

at the high end are the emotions of confidence, enthusiasm, and trust, while at the low end are depression and distrust,

A connection with the leadership literature can be discerned here by the reference to power as part of groups (Hales, 1997), but it is the idea of emotional resources that relates to emotional context, and how the group, and/or the leader might provide those emotional resources. This will be examined in the empirical research. It is in the emotional context that definitions of emotional meaning take place, and part of the leader's role could be to help define those meanings. Emotional meaning, as described by White, is a useful idea because it brings together the 'emotions as inherent', 'emotions as social' construct into something useful when examining leadership. White (2000, p.30-31) suggests:

Focusing on 'emotional meaning' rather than simply 'emotion' underscores the importance of the interpreted aspects of emotion as it enters into ordinary social life. (...) The phrase 'emotional meaning'...can be read as refereeing to the emotional aspects of meaning as well as to the meaningful aspects of emotion. The phrase can refer to the ways biologically based affects are interpreted and given meaning or to the manner in which language and other communicative acts obtain affective force.

In other words, it does not abandon the biological base of affect, yet at the same time he emphasises how emotional power is usually within a specific social context. The emotional context of the primary school will draw on inherent emotions in the people, and the way they construct that in a school context. The headteacher is at the centre of much of this creation of emotional meaning, and it is an important texture of leadership because within the emotional context, all the other aspects of leadership and management (finance, curriculum etc.) take place. Earlier, the way both men and women are framed by their gender roles was discussed. This could be an aspect of emotional regulation in leadership, but it could also be argued that gender issues are more a part of the emotional context of leadership. In other words, it is the emotional context of leadership that helps or hinders both men and women in their leadership roles.

Both emotional regulation and decision-making will add to the emotional context, so it could be argued that emotional context is not separate, but overarching. What the



concept of emotional context does it to emphasis the links between biological and social aspects of emotion, and the creation of emotional meaning.

## 4.9 Summary

Outside education it has been suggested (Levicki, 2001) that the best quality leaders in industry are those are able to manage their emotions and those of others most effectively. When Carlyle and Wood (2002) studied teachers under stress, they commented that policy makers have only just begun to realise the significance of emotion in teaching and learning. The same may be true of educational leadership. Carlyle and Wood also noted that schools where many teachers described themselves as stressed were ones in which there was a negative emotional climate, marked by fear, lack of trust, blame, low respect and chronic anxiety (pages 8-13). They report that teachers felt that many of the problems they were facing in schools were caused from the leadership's inability to handle difficult emotions. A label such as 'being emotional' was used to individualise and discount individual emotion (p.14). Thus, leaders could imply that an individual teacher's emotional expression 'exposed an individual personality trait, rather that signalling organizational anxieties.' This encapsulates the 'emotion as socially constructed'/'emotion as inherent' dilemma. Both are inevitably intertwined, and more understanding of the latter could help primary headteachers in management of staff. All emotions, whether negative or positive, share communication purposes. Consideration of such concepts as emotional labour, and emotional wounding can also bring this area into sharper focus, because they denote the power of emotion to shape context.

Emotional textures as a framework are offered purely as a means of beginning to analyse and conceptualise the pervasiveness of the affective in educational leadership. They represent an endeavour to encapsulate the inherent/social dilemma and as a way of understanding how emotion imbues both the person and the organisation. The three textures which have been offered as a framework: emotion weighted decision-making in educational leadership: emotional regulation in educational leadership: and emotional context in educational leadership are not meant to be complete or enduring. Rather, they are offered as a means of underlining the importance of the affective aspects of leadership, but go further. Conceptualising leadership as underpinned and made up of emotional textures suggests that the power and influence of leadership is felt through such elusive, yet powerful concepts.

Effective leaders constantly foster purposeful interaction and problem solving and are wary of easy consensus (Fullan, 2001). In fact, it has been proposed (Hirschhorn, 1997) that the issue that makes the central and defining task of managing people so complex is that the manager/leader must bring her person/her self to the role. So, one of the key connectors between emotion and leadership is managing oneself within a network of relationships. Leaders must be consummate relationship builders with diverse people and groups- especially with people different than themselves. Fineman (2000 p.1) makes a key point when he states:

As emotional arenas, organizations bond and divide their members. Workaday frustrations and passions – boredom, envy, fear, love, guilt, infatuation, embarrassment, nostalgia, anxiety – are deeply woven into the way roles are enacted and learned, power is exercised, trust is held, commitment formed and decisions made. Emotions are not simply excisable from these, and many other, organizational processes; they both characterise and inform them.

'Being' a headteacher is a complex weave of emotional textures. These textures characterise and inform the individual leader personally and professionally. The thesis proposes that, in general, the word 'emotion', as suggested in the introduction by Denzin (1984) defines the surface and essential, or core, meanings of who we are as people. Using emotional textures as a thematic framework means that collecting the case study data and applying the thematic framework to it is a means to understand more clearly some of the multifaceted relationships that can occur in social settings such as a primary school, and between people such as headteachers and those they relate to in daily work life. The textures will be explored and related to the headteachers understanding of emotion and leadership and their own personal emotional narrative. The next chapter introduces the headteachers and begins the process of applying the thematic framework to the case study data.

## **CHAPTER 5: AN OVERVIEW OF THE CASE STUDIES**

*Attend to the messages you hear and make sure it pierces to your heart.*

*(Extract from *The Rule of St Benedict*)*

### **5.1 Introduction: a guide to the structure of the findings and the analysis**

I now want to focus on the empirical part of the research. In order to do this, a brief reminder of the research questions and how they shaped the work is presented. Then, I look at the phases and time frame of the research and present short, pen portraits of the headteachers who are the focus of the case studies. Brief biographical information is provided, as well as brief information on their length of service and the communities they work within. All the reflections that follow are shaped around the initial research questions, which were:

1. Is the headteacher's own emotional management important to their leadership practice and if so, in what ways?
2. What part do personal histories play in the way that primary headteachers view emotion, feeling, and leadership?
3. How does research into emotion enrich educational leadership studies, in particular our knowledge of primary headship?
4. What do the results of this study suggest for Headteacher development and training?

These questions shaped the work because they gave shape and form both to the literature review, and the thematic framework, drawn from an analysis of specific literature.

### **5.2 Introducing the empirical phase – the headteachers**

As previously outlined, the research was conducted in three phases. Three of the four headteachers in the first or pilot phase were different to the main study group. I want to introduce all case study headteachers in order to place them into the context

of the research, and before the patterns and meaning drawn from the data are discussed. The first three who only took part in Phase One will be described in slightly less detail as they were the subjects of only one interview, although data from this phase is used in the analysis. The main phase of the study used a three interview framework. One headteacher took part in both phases, and Ben alone took part in Phase Three, the observation. An overview is given in Table 5.1. It can be seen from the table that most of the headteachers were in their fifties, and generally very experienced. It was the experience of most of them that I hoped would aid their reflection on headship, but I also wanted to contrast this with people newer to the post, such as Ben and Francesca. Also the contexts of the schools vary from very challenging in terms of high deprivational indices (Jack, Laura, James) to areas of less deprivation. However, none of the schools was in a situation without particular challenge of some kind. In constructing the initial phase, I wanted to refine both the aims of the project and the instruments, keeping the focus on emotion and leadership. I began to frame my own thoughts about how headteachers experience emotion and meaning in their daily interactions, and how, if at all, this emotional management impacts on their approach to leadership. This phase was a chance to specifically look at the way headteachers feel, describe, contain and manage their own emotions in the primary school. The research proceeded by seeing whether particular themes emerged, and what these were. In fact, it was very difficult to stop the headteachers talking. Rich data was produced, and I had to look at it carefully in order to compare it to the thematic framework from the literature to specifics that were important to the link between emotion and leadership. Phase one also made me focus my research questions to the specifics of the emotional textures of leadership, and the relevance of this to primary leadership practice.

All the interviews were fitted around the constraints of the school day. For Phase One, I chose the headteachers in order to test out some of the ideas that I had gleaned from my (at that stage partial), reading of the literature. Each fully written up interview was sent back to the head teachers, with a request to correct any inaccuracies, but also to comment on the experience in the light of further reflections that they may have had after our discussions. An example of this is given in Appendix A.

Because of the complex area of emotion, particular care was taken with designing an interview schedule. This was one of the chief aims of Phase One – to produce an interview schedule that produced useful data. The process of design is part of a

'feedback loop' (Wield, 1998), and I found that the questions on the interview schedule were in fact only a prompt to some of the many issues that developed, and were highlighted by the participants. It was clear from the beginning that more information was forthcoming from the interviewees towards the end of the interview rather than at the start, and later in the subsequent, written discussions about the interview transcript. The interviewees began to 'warm up', and to put their trust in the interviewer as the series of interviews progressed.

Although the sample for Phase One was small, it is interesting to note that despite the very different contexts and sizes (from 150 to 367 on roll) of the primary schools that the interviewees were running, their views were very similar. This may have been because their ages were broadly similar, and all had been from five to fifteen years in post, so all were experienced Heads. Three of the four also described their family background as stable. This aspect was only briefly explored in the first interview. The initial interview was roughly structured into two halves. The first part of the interview explored their school and personal background, their own understanding of 'emotion' and how they expressed emotion publicly and privately. Then, the interview attempted to get the participants to identify critical incidents that they considered to be important, concerning emotion and leadership. I asked them to identify two incidents at school in the past few years that they would identify as have emotion as a strong characteristic of the event. They were then asked to go through these incidents with me describing how the emotion was manifested, what feelings were involved, and how they handle themselves at the time, and afterwards. Finally, they were asked to consider what they had learnt and if any kind of support would have helped them to handle it better or differently.

**Table 5.1 The case study heads**

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Phase of Research</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Experience</b>
1	Gill	First	54	F	Market Town	Third Headship
2	Mary	First	55	F	Seaside Town	Second Headship
3	Jack	First	51	M	Urban Challenging	Second Headship
4	Eleanor	First and second	50	F	Small town	First Headship
5	Laura	Second	50s	F	Large town	Second Headship
6	James	Second	54	M	New Town: not the same as Francesca	Third headship (plus 2 acting)
7	Francesca	Second	51	F	New Town	First Headship
8	Ben	Second and Third	43	M	Large Estate in large town	First Headship

The descriptions of the headteachers are taken from the interviews of Phase One and the first interview of Phase Two. I will be using quotations from the research in order to bring readers into the reality of the school the heads work in. In this research, the person of the headteacher was particularly important, so suitable contextualisation is vital in order to understand the research carried out with them, and to place the headteachers as emotional beings within the primary schools where they lead. Each school and headteacher will be introduced, as well as the rationale for asking that headteacher to take part. The school background will be important within each case study, but it is not crucial to the research as it was an incidental to the choice of headteacher, rather than a significant factor. Each head was chosen from a personal pool, as described earlier, and the school's significance is purely because it is the context within which they work.

During the interviews (which were carried out at the same time as the extended literature review) theories started to form which lead to the emotional textures of leadership. I kept a research log throughout, which I found particularly helpful in refining my thoughts during the literature review and all three interviews, as it began

a process of mapping and interpretation from which my framework could be revised (Lacey & Luff, 2001). The interview notes were written up and returned to the headteacher for verification. Then the thematic framework was applied to the data using manual coding and on an Excel spreadsheet. This process is explained in more detail below. As Silverman reminds any writer of research:

In writing up research, we tell (structured) stories about data. It is only natural then that our readers should expect to be told how we gathered our data, what data we ended up with and how we analysed them

(Silverman, 2000, p.233)

As a warning, perhaps, Coolican suggests that all such accounts are by their very nature, selective:

The final report of qualitative findings will usually include verbatim quotations from participants which will bring the reader into the reality of the situation studied...The quotes themselves are selections from the raw data...Very often comments just stick with us to perfectly encapsulate people's positions, on some issue or stance in life, which they appear to hold.

(Coolican, 1990, p.235-6)

Encapsulating people's positions is a good aim, and the analysis aimed to achieve this, at least partially.

### **5.3 How the data were analysed**

Miles and Huberman (1984, p.23) describe qualitative data analysis as 'a continuous, iterative enterprise', and, as such, it is difficult not to leave out something substantial in the account. Boyatzis (1998 pages 12-16) notes that this approach has three major obstacles which the researcher has to try to overcome. These are:

- Projection
- Sampling
- Mood and style.

Sampling is a danger if the material is not representative. Projection occurs when you unwittingly attribute to someone else something that is actually an attribute that

comes from you, not them, and this can happen, for example, when you are very familiar with the situation, as I am with primary schools. Qualitative data, Boyatzis suggests, provides a greater temptation for this to occur, and lessening this is helped if the researcher allows the participants to examine and verify the information themselves (respondent validation), and the original information is preserved in the final analysis, which I adhered to. It would be hard not to agree with Boyatzis when he says that qualitative information is subjective (p.15). He argues strongly that there are ways that help lessen errors: being rested, developing or finding a clear code, establishing consistency, coming back to the research at various points, and suspending rational judgments to go with the raw information. It is only at this stage of the thesis that it seems that all is in place for this to happen. The case studies of the headteachers need to be thought of as bounded examples of real people and their emotions. The data were gathered systematically and rigorously (Cohen et al., 2003, p.182), and I have tried in the analysis to avoid the classic errors such as distorting the case for sensation, selective reporting, blandness, pomposity or an anecdotal style (Nisbet & Watt, 1984, p.91). This was done through verification with the interviewees and scrutiny from my supervisor. In doing so, I hope to generalise in an exploratory, philosophical fashion from the small number of empirical cases that I studied, posing questions for further investigation.

This research was iterative in terms of its approach and style, and during the analysis there was also a recursive relationship between the data and the literature. These next three chapters will therefore endeavour to move between the interview and observation data, including the life histories, focusing on the research questions, whilst at the same time using the concepts drawn from the literature to re-examine and appraise them. What follows first is an account of how the raw interview data from the first and third interviews were analysed.

#### **5.4 Interviews: recognising the data themes**

Field notes were made by hand. It has been suggested (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p.50) that raw field notes are 'illegible, sketchy and often contain less than one half of the original interview'. I would argue the records of these interviews were clear, and that the interviewees were allowed to verify and add to my account. Notes taken at the interviews kept in inverted commas showed any speech that was taken down verbatim. In writing up the verified accounts from notes, both these quotes and field notes were used. A decision was made early on, with the participants agreement,



that once the accounts of the interviews were verified, passages from the accounts could be used as if they were spoken, to bring the speakers' accounts to life. Great care was taken to retain the original story and meaning, which is why I asked the participants to verify and authorise each account. In particular, I wanted to relate back to the idea of story telling, and how a response to story telling can be not to challenge the facts but to engage with the meaning As Gabriel (2000, p.31) says of his accounts collected from various organisations:

Many (accounts)... are highly charged narratives, not merely recounting 'events', but interpreting them, enriching them, enhancing them, and infusing them with meaning...such accounts can be seen as an attempt to re-create reality *poetically*.

An example of this process is given below from the interviews with 'Mary':

**Field notes:** Emotion 'almost a sixth sense'; 'not rational'; 'all about feeling affecting what you are doing'. Emotions that spring to mind readily include 'fear, anger, frustration, sadness, frustration and disappointment'.

**Account, sent to Mary for verification:** Emotion is almost a sixth sense, and is not rational. It is all about feeling affecting what you are doing. Emotions that spring to mind readily include fear, anger, frustration, sadness, frustration and disappointment.

**Used as quote:** Emotion is all about feeling affecting what you are doing. Emotions that spring readily to mind are fear, sadness, frustration and disappointment (Mary).

This method was used throughout, with the verified accounts being the material from which the analysis was drawn. An example of written-up notes of interviews sent to the interviewee is given in Appendix A, as is their initial analysis.

Organising and presenting data in a meaningful way involves using the research questions to work towards answers. I intend to use the voices and experiences of the headteachers to reflect on what is known about leadership and emotion. At the same time, I recognise that arguing in this way means that I need to remain aware throughout of my own role in the shaping of the data. This strategy is called by Blaikie (2000) the *abductive research strategy*, because it is interpretive and moves between the data, the experience and broader concepts (Mason, 2002).

Miles and Huberman (1984, p.79) argue that a researcher is what he or she displays, and that narrative text is a cumbersome form of display. I argue that display can be

seen in terms of spatial format, but also in terms of the researcher elucidating clearly at all times how the process of meaning making was achieved. Narrative text from the interviews was taken after verification, and simply coded by hand into a governing structure drawn from the literature (see below). These codes were prespecified from the literature, and had been used to frame the interview questions. In that sense, they were explanatory codes, looking at emerging ideas. The data were then put into Excel in order to make it easier to compare different data sets and see where commonalities and differences lay.

- BAH** Being a head
- ED** Emotional descriptors
- NE** Naming emotions
- EL** Emotional Labour
- OS** Own Schooling
- OC** Own Childhood

In order to look at this more closely, the example below (Table 5.2) is from the interviews, on being a headteacher.

**Table 5.2**

<b>Code BAH (Being a head)</b>	<b>Names</b>
Became a head to make children's learning exciting.  Worst thing about Headship is dealing with capability issues with teachers.	<i>Mary</i>
Seeing plans come to fruition, with children.  Redundancy: 'ripped me apart'.	<i>Gill</i>
Headship as a way of having an influence.  Enjoyed the fact that the school is becoming better and that it is making a difference.	<i>Jack</i>
She enjoys the children and doing something for them. She feels one step removed, and this gives her an overview.  The negative sides are the constant flood of paperwork, consultations, no chance to consolidate change.	<i>Eleanor</i>

<p>Wanted to run a school my way.</p> <p>Most enjoys is helping develop staff and children. He enjoys working in a happy achieving school by this he does not mean SATs results. The most difficult thing is time and the external pressures.</p>	<i>James</i>
<p>When he did the NPQH, he had the growing realisation that he could do the job.</p>	<i>Ben</i>
<p>'Sort of fell into headship'.</p> <p>An emphasis on developing adults in schools as well as children.</p>	<i>Laura</i>
<p>She enjoys most about the job is people – working as part of a team, expanding children's and adults' horizons. 'Watching individuals grow into more rounded beings'.</p> <p>'Totally frustrating form filling'.</p> <p>'You do the same information for 2 different reasons for 9 different people'.</p>	<i>Francesca</i>

The initial coding and verification was done as near the interviews as possible as I felt that this would help to facilitate the ongoing data collection. It also helped to shape and reshape my perspective as I did this. It was at the later stages that I began to put the data from the interviews into tabular form, bearing in mind that I was also aware of the dangers of display:

Displays can be an excellent way of summarising and comparing findings within and across case, but they are also straitjackets; they can bully the data into shapes that are superficially comparable across cases.

(Miles & Huberman, 1984, p.89)

Displays are a way of helping the researcher to adjust her mental map of the area, and can add linkages between all the data.

## **5.5 Phase One Headteachers**

### **5.5.1 Gill**

Gill was an experienced Headteacher of a medium sized (200 pupil) Church of England junior school in a market town in the Midlands. The school was her third headship in the church section of education, and she had been in post for just over eighteen months. I knew her from a training course that I had led, where she had

been vocal in her opinions about current difficulties in primary schools due to staff shortages. It is significant to the research, I think, that I interviewed her at a time of great personal tension when it had become obvious that her school was to close in a local merger with the infant school to become an all through primary school. She had decided to apply for the new headship, but expressed the view that she would not be the favoured candidate as the infant head was 'better liked' by the governors, and would get the post. This in fact turned out to be the case, and Gill later took early retirement. It should be noted too, that the interview itself was carried out under difficult circumstances. Staff and children with queries constantly interrupted us. Gill seemed unwilling, or unable to stop this happening, despite requests from myself. There was tension in the school that day because one of the younger pupils had been the victim of an attempted abduction by a non-custodial parent the day before. However, she was very forthcoming about why she had gone into headship – it seemed to be the expected thing in teaching to do that. She enjoyed being a Head because she valued 'seeing plans come to fruition with children,' but found that tasks such as having to deal with staff redundancies alongside the merger 'ripped me apart'. The word she used to describe what emotion meant to her seemed to reflect the difficult situation she found herself in: 'tense angry overwhelmed astonished' were the words that came to her mind when I asked about what emotions she could name. She told me of the situation regarding the merger, and the governors meeting that dealt with how staff would have to be made redundant, and that she would have to apply for the merger headship. She felt that it had been made very clear that her job was to 'clear up' the staff before the merger, but that there would be no place for her afterwards. The language she used to describe her feelings as she came out of this meeting was very evocative: 'I was wearing a beige jacket, and when I came out my skin was the same colour as the jacket!' Although I felt she would have made a good candidate for Phase Two because she was prepared to be open about her emotions, I felt that given her emotional state due to school plus family difficulties at the time (her husband was also under threat of job loss), it would be unethical to invite her to continue with the research.

### **5.5.2 Mary**

Mary was in her second headship in a large (350 pupils) Catholic primary school. She had returned (as the head) to the school in which she had been a probationary teacher many years before, and she noted that this was rather like 'coming home'. She was a very responsive interviewee, and someone I had known when she was a headteacher in a previous school, for whom I had carried out a training event. Mary's

faith was an important part of how she saw herself as a headteacher, reflecting her values about the importance of good relationships. I would have continued to use her in Phase Two, but unfortunately her new school was over one hundred miles from my base, and was therefore not practicable for research purposes. However, the interview that I did with her was crucial in shaping Phase Two, as it highlighted to me the importance of stories to emotional understanding. Mary seemed to both mentally and physically relive the emotion as she told the story. She told a very revealing story about emotion and leadership that will be examined later, which helped to emphasise the power of emotion and story.

Mary was also very explicit about emotion and leadership. She described emotion as something that spills through into her practice as a Head as she makes a point of talking through feelings with her management team. She also gave me some key insights into the emotional labour of headship as she talked about controlling her emotions, in particular that she had learnt to control anger through constant practice. When we talked about her childhood, she revealed that her father had taught her this skill. He encouraged her to talk through her feelings, so that in a way her father taught her anger management.

### **5.5.3 Jack**

Jack is an experienced head in a medium sized (250 pupils) but very challenging nursery through to Year 6 primary school. He was not known to me prior to the research, but suggested by a mutual friend in education. Jack is one of the longest serving primary heads (12 years) in his local area, and the school, which is large, serves an estate where there is high deprivation, and high social mobility. Jack regards the school as being one of the only stable aspects in the lives of both the students and the parents, and was an advocate of extended schools and nurseries long before it became government policy. Part of his role as headteacher, he said, was to remain positive despite all that the social circumstances could throw at him. In the early years at the school, he had lived some distance away, and the drive home, rather than being an extra stressor, had been, he felt, an opportunity to unwind and reflect on the days happenings. Jack is very approachable but reserved.

He described emotion as all about feelings, and named intuition and concern as the two key emotions he could think of straight away, which were, in the light of the other interviews, unusual choices to make. Intuition could be deemed a skill, but on reflection, it seems to me that intuition is a way to describe the feelings that we build

up over the years in doing a specific skill, such as teaching. Unlike Mary he suggested that the emotional side of headship was usually best kept to yourself, or as he described it 'keeping things compartmentalised', but in fact this could be another descriptor of emotional labour. In all the preliminary interviews, childhood was briefly explored in order to see if this could offer insights into inherent emotion, The key aspect of Jack's childhood appeared to be the fact that he had been an only child until he was thirteen, and he felt this had made him quite self reliant. This self-reliance seemed to help him cope with the challenges of the school, and ongoing staffing difficulties. Jack would have been an interesting addition to Phase Two, but I felt that he was uncomfortable over some aspects of the interview, and we agreed that this would be the only one. This could have been due to the subject matter, the circumstances at the time, or the way the interview was conducted. It could also have been due to the fact that we did not know each other prior to the interview. Whatever the reason, I felt that another male headteacher would be an invaluable asset to the study, so that both men and women could be represented, and in the event two men who I knew better agreed to take part.

## **5.6 Phase Two Headteachers**

Two of the markers that differentiated the Phase Two group of five headteachers significantly from the pilot group were the breadth of experience of headship that the group had, and that they were all people that I knew before the research. Three semi-structured interviews were carried out with each head teacher. Notes were taken during the interview, and written up within two days. Tape recorders were not used because of my prior experiences of using them in research that involved potentially sensitive information (Crawford, 2003).

### **5.6.1 The contexts**

The contexts of these schools were all very different. Each head in this section is presented from the most experienced to the least experienced. My opinion of the headteachers as effective inter-personal communicators was reinforced during the second phase of the research, when, quite by chance, four of the five headteachers were subject to an OFSTED inspection of their schools. One could argue that OFSTED's judgements about headteachers are in their own way subjective, but I think it is useful to give a short summary here of what the OFSTED reports did say about the leadership of the four (James, Eleanor, Francesca, Laura), because it not only reinforces some of the things that I will be discussing; it also shows that each in

their own way was judged as carrying out their leadership effectively in their particular context (Table 5.3).

**Table 5.3 OFSTED Reports**

<b>Headteacher</b>	<b>OFSTED comment on leadership</b>
James	Leadership is good. Aspirations are high, and the headteacher has a clear vision and works determinedly.
Eleanor	The headteacher successfully creates a caring and supportive atmosphere, and provides good leadership. She has established good relationships with all sections of the diverse community.
Laura	Through her very good leadership, the senior management and staff of the school unite to implement improvements in provision. Parents have got confidence in the leadership of the school.
Francesca	The headteacher's leadership is good. (Note – this was a very terse OFSTED report)

These judgements were interesting because although they reinforced my perceptions of these headteachers and their schools, they did not capture the person of the headteacher. The following picture portraits endeavour to do this in a small way. They are more detailed than the descriptions of the Phase One heads for two reasons; firstly because the time spent with them was much longer; and secondly because the empirical data drawn from them is more complex, and needs greater contextualisation.

The context of the school is presented, and the headteacher introduced so that the reader can begin to absorb some of the personal nature of the headteacher.

### **5.6.2 James: the most experienced Head**

The most experienced headteacher in the research, and the only Scot, James was several terms into his third headship when he became part of this research. James had been a Head for twenty-one years in three substantive Headships, plus two acting Headships, all in one of the original new towns in the East of England. He is in his fifties. The school where he is currently head, has 280 children, eleven classes, sixteen teachers, twenty-five Teaching Assistants (TAs) and takes children with physical disabilities. Thus it is a hybrid between mainstream and special school, and has a hydrotherapy pool and a physiotherapy room. It has two specialist teachers as support to adapt or allow access to the curriculum. The school has children with

visual impairment. When James came to the school he found that the school was more a special school than a mainstream school, and one of his aims was to turn the school back into a mainstream school and include the physically handicapped children. Previously, it was too restricting for the mainstream children. He arrived at the school on 2nd September 2002, and was interviewed first on the 3 November 2003. At the point he arrived, (coincidentally he assured me) all the senior management team left. The youngest member of staff at the school had been there three years but most others had been there 10 years or more. The catchment area is mixed in an established town in eastern England. The area has private rented housing and also refugee housing provided by the local authority. He noted that he loses some children to other schools in the area, from what he called 'aspiring families'. The SATs results were on a rising trend when he arrived – approximately 80 per cent science, 70 per cent English, 70 per cent maths but he noted that the trend was upwards. James was very adamant that it was part of his educational philosophy that there is more to school than the tests, and other educational activities should feature strongly in the life of any school, such as trips, productions, music, guitars and clarinets.

James became a head teacher because he 'wanted to run a school my way'. He didn't want to become a cynical classroom teacher. He suggested that it is a young person's job in the classroom, because it is a difficult job and there are many pressures on staff. The thing that he most enjoyed about being a headteacher is helping develop staff and children. He enjoys working in a happy achieving school. The opportunity for him to leave schools has arisen for example into industry, but he enjoys moving a school forward and, when he seriously considered leaving headship, the other options did not appeal.

### **5.6.3 *Laura: the new school experience***

The second most experienced headteacher in the research, we had met on a headteacher training course, where my initial impression of her was of her dynamism. Laura had been a Headteacher for twelve years when she was interviewed. She is in her early fifties. Her first headship was in a two teacher small village primary in a leafy English county, and following that she became Head of a new school on a green field site in a large market town in the same county. Her current school is the eighth biggest primary school in the county. She set up this school from scratch, picked her own staff team, and was able to furnish the school and resource it with her own educational philosophy in mind.



The school was built for a new estate in a town on the corridor of a major motorway. More houses were then built and Laura had to manage large expansion of the site. At first, the school was single entry, with seven classes. Year on year the school expanded and they had to have mobile classrooms and eventually a £1K extension was built. There are now eighteen classes, six part time teachers, eleven TAs and a non-teaching deputy with 420 on roll. Laura make it part of her practice 'to grow staff' and many staff are people who either started their career there, or have come back there after having a family. For example, she has a policy of never having supply teachers, which she has done for three years, and has no staff insurance scheme. She believes that investing in your staff will be repaid.

The catchment area is diverse. It has a highly mobile population with people moving on in terms of jobs. It is an area of blue-collar work, with both parents working and high employment but 'culturally deprived'. She noted, 'Children are not talked to'. There is a high amount of family break-up – almost one a week in the school. Laura suggested that it was a 'must have' society locally.

Laura originally worked in an EBD outreach for 5 to 16s, working with schools and Heads. She had no headship ambitions at that stage, but wondered what she would do next. She thought of becoming an adviser, and then a head, and 'sort of fell into headship', when she applied for one. Laura's motivation for being a head revolves around the fact that she loves moving people forward, and would say that she is passionate about education and children. She feels that children have one chance at school and that it should be in a secure and loving environment. She thinks she has a good relationship with parents, and has always put an emphasis on developing adults in schools as well as children.

Laura actually enjoys most things in headship, even the difficult things. She enjoys being a facilitator. Things that can be wearing are factions, usually due to personality, she believes. 'Troublesome people can be tiring!' She enjoys the reading and writing part of the job, and finds it a useful intellectual challenge, even keeping paperwork in order.

#### **5.6.4 Eleanor: from acting to reality**

Eleanor works in a middle school in a small town on the edge of a larger urban conurbation that was about to change status to junior school. My connection with Eleanor was the most close to me of all the heads, as we had once worked together for three years in the 1980s when we were both classroom teachers in a primary

school, although I had not seen her a great deal in the interim. She has been five years at this current school, although she was Acting Head for five terms whilst a Deputy Headteacher at her previous school. Eleanor said that she was actively looking for a change of headship, and would like to set up a new school. She is fifty. Eleanor has also worked in the special needs sector. Her career path to headship was the most eclectic of the group, which will be shown more clearly in the next chapter. The fact that she was the headteacher I knew best may have been advantageous in that I had some experience of how she handled emotional events from the time we worked together, However, this very knowledge of her external behaviours did not mean that I necessarily had any more understanding of her emotional views than any of the other heads.

The school is quite a small one and has one hundred and fifty children on roll; nine teachers, EAL teachers, and 40% of the students are from minority ethnic groups. Particular issues that challenge the leadership of the school are that the roll is falling due to demographics, and there is 35% mobility. At the time of the research, the school were about to undergo an OFSTED inspection, which they passed.

Eleanor feels that if she is honest she became a Head accidentally. After she became acting Head she realised that she would find it difficult to go back to her previous role, and she liked being the person who makes decisions. Eleanor most enjoys the fact that being a headteacher in a smaller primary still gives her a chance to enjoy the children and do something for them. She feels one step removed, and this gives her an overview.

#### **5.6.5 *Francesca: two years into first headship***

This is Francesca's first full Headship although she was an Acting Head at another school. I knew her from my governing role in the school where she was a Deputy Headteacher. She has been at the research school, two years and two terms. She is in her fifties. It is in the older, established part of a new town in southern England. There are 206 pupils on role, 15% mobility, what she called 'trickle' mobility with parents moving their children from the established area around the school to another part of the city where new schools are being built. There is a high concentration of schools in a small area, and that means that parents can move children around fairly easily. There are 8.6 teachers; eight class teachers and herself, 5.6 TAs, 1.4 office staff, and 20% ethnic minorities which is high for the area. Many families have lived in the area for generations and there is a real neighbourhood feel about the area in

terms of pride in local industry and history. However, 50% of the children are single parent or re-constituted families, and lead what Francesca called 'Disorderly and fraught lives'. There is a full ability range despite what it might seem with the low FSM. She felt that many people do not claim out of pride. The upward trend in the schools SATS matches the National trend figures, except that they are 15/20% below. In the thirty-two years the school has been open, she is the third head. There are also long standing staff in the school, although two have come as NQTs more recently.

When she started teaching, she just wanted to be a class teacher. 'Loved it, still do'. As time passed, she found that there were many things that impacted on the classroom, rather than just the teaching, Salary was a factor as well. The only option for promotion at the time was into management. She thought she would stop at Deputy Head, as she had more say across the school, but she began to realise that she could do as well as some Heads that she knew.

Francesca has a very personable manner, that is very engaging, and it is perhaps not surprising that she stated that the thing she enjoys most about the job is people – working as part of a team, expanding children's' and adults' horizons, or as she put it, 'Watching individuals grow into more rounded beings'. At the time of the research, she went through a very difficult OFSTED inspection. It was difficult because of the attitude of the inspection team, and the school put in an official complaint. It is noticeable that the report for this school is terse, especially about the headteacher's leadership, which may reflect the tensions in the process.

#### **5.6.6 Ben: the new boy**

Ben had been a Headteacher for only ninety days at the first interview. Previously he was the Deputy Head of the same first school. I had met him on a deputy headteacher's course when he was Deputy to Mary (Phase One). First impressions of him are that he is shy and reserved, and it was Mary who had suggested that he might have something to offer the research, especially being that rare thing, a man in charge of a first school. He is in his early forties, and thus both the youngest and the most inexperienced headteacher in the group. The school has 206 children on roll, but its capacity is 240. It is on a new housing estate in a large town, and has recently had its application to open a nursery turned down.

There are eight teachers, eight f/t and p/t LSAs and five lunchtime supervisors. One is both an LSA and a LT supervisor. There is an office support of two, a senior LSA,

a site supervisor and one cleaner. The catchment is mixed from social housing to five bedroom houses. When he did the NPQH, he had the growing realisation that he could do the job. The previous Head was an OFSTED inspector; Ben was often left for weeks in sole charge. His NPQH group was a good mixture of people, and he felt empowered after that experience. He has always enjoyed teaching the younger ones. He studied sociology at University and did a work placement in a nursery. He has taught up to Yr 3. Ben thinks that he prefers working with first school staff as he believes that they are more child centred. He has never felt financially motivated, as a headteacher because he enjoys working to shape the future for young children. Ben later became the subject of the observational Phase Three of the research, which is detailed below.

## **5.7 Phase Three headteachers**

So far the empirical research had looked at emotion and leadership in primary headship from the perspective of the headteacher. The third phase enabled me to observe for myself the behaviour of a headteacher in context, going about day-to-day tasks. All the heads in Phase Two were asked if they were willing to be observed, and all said that they would. Ben was chosen for two reasons. One was pragmatic, as his school was the easiest for me to reach on a daily basis, and the other reason was because he asked me to feed back the observations to him as part of his professional development as a new headteacher. We discussed how this could be done in the light of his professional development needs as a new head and the work he was doing with his mentor head. In fact, due to other factors, this feedback phase did not occur, but he is hoping that we will be able to discuss the finished thesis in the light of his development needs.

Initially, the plan was to go into school for three days in September 2004. The first day was to be a general day when no particular event was scheduled to take place in Ben's calendar, the second was a day when they were preparing for a nursery event, and the third was the day of the nursery event itself. All these events took place over a few weeks. After carrying out day one, a family bereavement meant that I missed the preparation day for the nursery event, which linked in to the third observation. After discussion with Ben, we decided that I would instead observe preparations for parents evenings in October, and the evenings themselves, as this would give a good opportunity to see him interacting with members of the wider school community. This is what was eventually done.

## **5.8 Looking forward**

This chapter introduces the next three chapters where data are analysed, the findings presented, the conclusions reviewed. The case studies have been presented in context, as a prelude to the findings and the analysis. Further, this chapter gives a flavour of person, with their backgrounds given, thus reinforcing the personal as an aspect of this research, both in their willingness to talk about personal matters and their relationship with me as the researcher. It is from this background that I introduce the findings from the case studies, using framework of emotional textures.

## CHAPTER 6:

# PRIMARY HEADSHIP THROUGH AN EMOTION LENS: THE FIRST INTERVIEW

*The deep well of unconscious cerebration.*

(Henry James, preface to *The American*)

### 6.1 Introduction

It is a truism to say that the process of analysing and interpreting the interview data begins almost as soon as you start collecting it. The practice of exploring the data is a gradual but sustained one, even as it is being carried out, and I was conscious of this aspect during all the reading, interviews and observations. Overall I hope in the analysis to preserve the flow of the data and provide a rich description of processes occurring in local contexts (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The following chapters deal in detail with the biographical data, emotional epiphanies and observation, and the mapping of the data across the whole is carried out.

The final analysis and interpretation is, in a sense, very personal because the whole discussion deals with the subjective, the personal and the biographical. Bearing this in mind, I have tried to bring as much clarity to the analysis process as I can by giving the whole process a thematic framework, identified from the literature. The process aims to produce a bricolage, or 'a complex, dense, reflexive like collage creation that represents the researcher's images, understandings, and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.4). Reviewing the literature had led me to theorise that emotion and leadership are made up of textures that work together to inform the primary head's view of his/her emotional self as a leader. This analysis had grown after the interviews were carried out, as I continued to read the literature around the key areas. I then wanted to examine the data to see whether these categories were useful in making sense of what the leaders had told me in the interviews. The suggested categories drawn from both the reading and the early interviews are those that I have called the *emotional textures* of leadership. The intention in what follows is not to force the data to fit these pre-existing categories, but to examine the data to see whether in fact there is an important and discernable connection between the headteachers as leaders in primary schools, and these emotional textures drawn from the literature. Emotional textures are used as a first

stage of analysis to encapsulate the essence of the literature on emotion as it relates to leadership because each texture ties the emotion literature to the leadership literature. All this is done within a framework of the realisation that organising and sorting data are not conceptually neutral activities (Mason, 2002, p.172), but are part of the entire iterative process. It also begins the process of discussing primary headship from an emotional perspective. These textures are:

- Emotional regulation in educational leadership: Managing self and Managing others
- Emotion weighted decision-making in educational leadership
- Emotional context in educational leadership

Each texture will be taken in turn, and the data analysed.

## **6.2 Emotional regulation in leadership**

As I have outlined in the literature review, various perspectives point to the importance of emotional regulation (ER) in leadership. In the first interview, the headteachers appeared to view ER as a very important part of their leadership practice and their role as a headteacher, which reflects the literatures view of acting a role, or as Morris and Feldman (1996, p.987) suggest. In other words, headteachers present emotions that are desired by the organisation and help its smooth functioning. Emotional regulation appears to fall into two categories. These categories are:

- 1 Control/management of yourself
- 2 Control/management of others.

These will now be examined in turn.

### **6.2.1 Control/management of yourself**

All the participants identified the crucial importance of not letting emotions get out of control in school. They identified that emotions can help the smooth running of the school but can also hinder it, and that the headteacher's role is pivotal in this regulation. This concurs with the biological view of emotions as 'best guesses' as to what is appropriate in a certain situation that we learn to modify with experience, and that different emotional regulation strategies will have very different implications for mental well being (Gross & John, 2002, p.298). There seemed to be, as might be

expected, some differentiation between the most and least experienced headteachers. One of the most experienced headteachers in the pilot group, Jack, was very clear that, for him, there was one best way of regulating his emotions, which was 'Keep to yourself -keep things compartmentalised', whereas Mary argued that it was important not to display certain emotions, such as anger, but that these feelings needed somewhere to go and she talked of talking it through with her senior management team. Laura, also quite experienced, went further in her explanations, suggesting that the very awareness of the emotion can move one towards a positive state:

I class myself as an emotional person, because feelings are an important part of my leadership style. Emotion management in school is not about control. I aim to be positive and can control the raw stuff. I use that to move out of that feeling, and try to orchestrate those feelings towards something positive. I really believe that if you talk up, you feel up, and can talk yourself and others into becoming positive and buoyant.

Evaluation of emotional clues in themselves and others relates to the work previously discussed concerning emotional appraisal as a part of regulation. As Gross and John (2002, p.299) posit, we can learn by experience which responses are more likely to give the best result in any given situation. Thus, emotions can arise suddenly or after some analysis of the contextual issues, or as Jack also put it:

Emotions are all about feelings. You get vibes. I can smell a rat at 50 yards.

This is not to suggest that ER is always consciously applied by a headteacher. Emotion regulation can also occur outside of consciousness, without the person being aware that this is what they are doing, as for example when a headteacher has to hide disappointment or anger when dealing with a parent but does not do it deliberately. This sense of acting the headteacher role may become more spontaneous with experience. As Francesca stated:

Emotion is crucial to being able to interact with and understand other human beings. If you didn't have emotion it would make life incredibly difficult.

In terms of the psychological literature, a great deal of headteachers' ER is *response* focused – that is managing the public perception of their emotion whilst a situation is occurring. Public perception is a key indicator to others, perhaps, that the



headteacher is in control of the situation. This was certainly what was apparent from the critical incidents that were described, because the question about a situation which had generated strong emotion did not lead them towards the main other sort of regulation, that of *antecedent* focused where people anticipate the sort of emotions that they might have to deal with in advance, for example at a difficult meeting that is coming up with governors. In retrospect this was a weaknesses of the interview structures, as they tended to focus on the emotional responses rather than emotional preparation for situations. However, overall it was valuable as it did highlight one important aspect of ER, which is the personal meaning that is assigned to situations can influence what happens in that situation. Gross and John (2002, p.303) suggest that the crucial question to consider is whether some ER strategies have more to recommend them than others. The headteachers in the study each had their own ER strategies. Francesca was very aware of the changing and development nature of her own strategies:

I'm not good at allowing my own more negative emotions out! I am good at spotting others feelings and doing something about it, if I'm is upset or angry I'm not very good at sharing. It is important to control emotion in a lot of situations, certainly to do with work, and to develop a way of doing this – Eyes and teeth! *(She made a very funny face showing the putting on of a smile.)*

This suggests that the control/management of self leads into, and is tightly linked to the control/management of others. In other words, the head's own emotion practice is linked to their leadership of others through the aspect of control.

### **6.2.2 Control/management of others**

This conscious putting on of a face or role, as described above by Francesca, was also a feature of the other headteachers' viewpoints. Although the idea of acting was not suggested to the headteachers, it often occurred spontaneously. As James, the most experienced head, put it:

There's a great deal of acting in headship. *(For example when I was at the school he had to reprimand a small boy for kicking a door he called this 'acting cross')*. Having said that I don't often have to put on a happy face and I don't lose my temper in school. When things go wrong, the best way forward is to look at how you can stop it happening again.

This comment is explicitly about the control/management of others in schools, as 'acting cross' for example would be a way of attempting to regulate the emotions of other, namely the child involved. James did not see it however, as an appropriate way of dealing with the emotions of adults in the school, hence the comment above about looking forward. He continued:

I have learnt over the years not to jump in but to listen to the other side. It's human nature to be concerned over something that has gone wrong but I feel it is much better to concentrate on how to make it not happen the next time. I also think that you need to make a greater effort in school to say when things are good, not always to look at mistakes.

This was spoken in the context of three very successful headships in very different contexts as a way of managing people that had worked well for him. Ben, the newest head in the study, was also very conscious of the part of the headteachers role that seemed to be to do with the regulation of the emotions of others, in particular parents and staff, although he was acutely aware that this was not always a conscious decision. He also related the two aspects of emotional regulation together so that in fact they may not be two separate categories in reality. His own emotional control and awareness was crucial, he thought to the way that he managed and lead others:

Your emotions, if not handled, might slip out somewhere else and colour your relationship with another person. It's all to do with how something might be affecting someone else. For example, there's a child at school with a serious condition for whom the longer-term prognosis is poor. This affects the whole staff. As a Head, you have to not take things to heart. You need to be more philosophical, learning not to take things personally. As a person, I know that I am easily moved by emotional events.

The headteacher's own emotion management was important to their own practice precisely because their own emotional regulation and that of others was so closely intertwined. It may be that I subconsciously choose headteachers for whom I knew that this was the case, and this needs to be borne in mind. On the other hand, it may be that they were able to be more explicit about this connection because they were relatively open about their leadership and its emotional textures. Regulation also influenced their leadership practice in that the Heads clearly recognised that regulation was unhealthy if there were not outlets for the expression of emotion. Eleanor suggested that regulating her emotions in school was only possible, if

challenging if she was able to express them outside school. She also articulates the difference between the feelings headteachers might have inside (what is experienced in the body) and emotion (feelings that are shown), and the difficulty of it all.

I try to express my emotions outside school – try to work through things on the drive home, but don't always manage it. It's about keeping one step removed; feel things deeply although not always showing them. As a leader you need to show calm presence, and calm exterior. You may want to kill staff or parents but, (*pause*) if the Head is not calm, the school is not calm. This is very hard to do.

Playing a role is seen as more than a conscious decision, it is a key part of leadership behaviour, as Hochschild suggests, but in primary schools, the headteacher's regulation of emotion seems to be linked to the regulation of emotions in the school, for the educational benefit of all of those in the school.

All of the other headteachers talked of the role of their spouse or partner in helping them talk through some of the difficult feelings that could not be shared in school, and that this was useful but they did not want to impose upon their partner, particularly as in several cases, when they were already in education – words used included 'burden', 'boring'. Those with a partner outside education, such as Eleanor, said that it was helpful to talk to her husband as he brought her back to reality by saying 'Why are you bothering about that!' All spoke of the importance of a hobby to take them away from the emotions (football, gardening, canal boat etc.).

It was intriguing that unprompted, in interview one, only two of them (Mary and Francesca) talked about sharing such emotions with either the deputy head or the senior team.

I talk through my feelings with the Senior Management Team. Where I feel the issue is very important, if it is about whole school issues that need to be addressed, I will talk it through with the whole staff team. (Mary)

It's useful to have a listener who can understand the conflict in head's role but in a team way and offer advice and suggestions, but leave you with your own choices. If I am upset or angry I'm not very good at sharing. On a personal level here I have a Deputy who rushed to be involved like that. If as a Head you can recognise your strengths and weaknesses, a Deputy can compliment those. (Francesca)

However, when I specifically asked for affective sets in the final interview, all of them talked about people at school who were used in this way, which did include the deputy, but also the caretaker and the chair of governors. It would certainly be a fruitful subject for further research enquiry.

Question six in the first interview asked them to define emotion, as it seemed to them. This was in order to draw some inferences for answering my first research question. The responses showed an awareness of the conscious and unconscious parts of emotion, and the useful differentiation between feelings and emotion that was discussed in Chapter Two. The rawness of feeling was stressed:

It's the bit that you get when you take out the logic, awareness and thinking parts. It's the raw bit underneath or sometimes on top. (Laura)

Both of the male headteachers focused in on how emotion was part of the mind as well as the bodily reactions that expressed it.

Emotion is feeling – an internal reaction to things that happen. (Ben)

It's not really a state of mind but how you are feeling and your response to external factors (James)

James' response in fact sums up a key dilemma for headteachers between *wanting* to be rational and *knowing* that they are emotional. Hence, for headteachers, emotion cannot legitimately be viewed as a state of mind, because it is irrational, but at the same time James argues that it is how you are feeling inside when faced with external factors. This is a major dilemma for headteachers because of the prevailing view of rationality in primary schools as the acceptable face of schooling. This will be returned to in the conclusion.

The second emotional texture of leadership was also used to analyse the first interviews.

### **6.3 Emotion-weighted decision-making in leadership**

I have already noted that emotions arise in our daily lives largely in terms of problems to be solved, and this was recognised by the headteachers.

The key factor is to recognise yours and others emotions and deal with them. (Francesca)

When they were asked specifically how they used emotion in making leadership decisions, the answers were again related to the difficulty of acknowledging the validity of emotion. Emotion-weighted decision-making was a component built up by professional experience, but difficult to acknowledge. James' response touched upon the difficulties of judging classroom performance, and was, for me, surprising:

Judging classroom performance can be up to 75% emotional, and it's a subjective thing and subject to feeling. You have a sense of things when you walk into a classroom. You look at the kids and the eyes. It's like when you are a teacher; you can see when the light is switched on. I have concerns about teachers who just deliver but you can't fault them for it. I would rather see a connection to certain children – to find the key to that child. It's all about making connections, and not just thinking it is a job. They may go on to other paths in life from something that happened when you taught them he feels so it is a huge responsibility.

It was this passion for changing and influencing that he told me kept him in schools and was a theme of the life histories as well. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, which looks at personal history. Francesca also noted the importance of the affective dimension in making decisions about staff and their competence:

All manner of informal situations contribute to views of people as teachers – conversations, things you know and hear about people's lives outside school. You form a quite secure view on whether a person is committed to job and want to develop etc. All these are things that are difficult to quantify, but useful as a means of supporting more formal views. It is the intuitive side and it can be used to back up perceptions, but people can surprise you so it is not an exact science!

Ben suggested that this process of emotion weighted decision-making in fact works both ways, especially perhaps as an inexperienced headteacher he was fundamentally more aware than the others of what others had to offer him emotionally:

Watching the SMT teach helps you see that happy children are key. It's helped me to make a few tweaks that have changed things more than I expected, especially with the younger children. I've also realised that I'm

different to the previous head (*whose deputy he was*), more than I thought then when I was offered the post. It makes me want to be even more proactive.

This can be positive, as above, or negative.

Thus, emotion weighted decision-making is a complex activity. Eleanor noted that the headteacher is could be described as a sponge for everyone else's emotions, and is in fact expected to be able to absorb difficulties feelings without any negative consequences for themselves. So, emotion weighted decision-making could be seen to nested inside the next texture, emotional context, whilst at the same time having a particular powerful influence on leadership because of the strategic role of decision-making.

## **6.4 The emotional context of leadership**

In Chapter Three, I noted that the psychodynamic view of organisations suggests that the individual has a need for coherence between themselves and the social context (Fineman, 2003, Gabriel & Griffiths, 2002). The importance of the context of schools to the effectiveness or otherwise of the leadership of the headteacher is noted in the leadership literature (Duke, 1998, Fiedler, 1978), but I believe that this emotional coherence is a fundamental key to life lived in groups, and in particular in the primary school. Elizabeth's Richardson's research (discussed in chapter Two) suggests that it may also be a key factor in secondary schools. Clear understanding of the emotional context, I would argue makes the headteacher effective as a people manager, a key part of leadership. In some schools, this is difficult, or even impossible due to the lack of coherence in the lives of other members of the school group, whether they be staff, students or parents which means that they are dealing with difficult emotions. This may be due to social factors, such a poverty and deprivation, but it can also be subtler, as the most experienced head of the group noted, and to do with staff relationships or cohesion:

I think that the closer the staff become, the less I have to deal with the fringe issues, as things begin to just happen. (James)

This could also be seen as related back to power in emotional contexts. If a group is close, the contextual power of emotion will inspire such emotions as confidence, enthusiasm, and trust (Kemper, 2004). Similarly, Ben, the newly appointed head talked about openness and how you can tell that things are beginning to cohere:

Partly it is about perception of where the school is going, and sharing in it. Ideally you want everybody to be pulling in the same direction, involvement, the chipping in of ideas and this involves commitment, emotionally. (Ben)

Emotional commitment to ideas is important to an effective emotional context for leadership, as is emotional understanding of the school community more generally. Several of the headteachers talked about the complete emotional context of the school, i.e. not just within the school's physical boundaries, but the school community as a whole:

It's ...difficult parents know that they'll be listened to, if not agreed with (Eleanor)

On a basic level it is that you can see that the whole community knows that you care about the whole school and then even more at a more detailed level about specific people (mum in hospital etc.). These are the things that are important and delightful. (Francesca)

'Important and delightful' encapsulated Francesca's idea of what emotional context in the school was about, which was part of her underlying values of an ethic of care for individuals. I will look more closely at the connections between emotional context and life history in the next chapter. As Francesca put it

I try to encourage caring as a staff as it is good for individual self-esteem and teams. I always send each child a Christmas card.

The fascinating idea of a 'fierce conversation', suggested by one of the Heads, for me encapsulated some of the difficulty of the emotional context because it suggests that emotion can be used both intuitively, perhaps through experience, in order to aid social cohesion, and also very knowingly, as was suggested in emotional regulation.

I can have fierce conversations with parents or staff, but I think it is appropriate to let people know why you are feeling as you are, try and get them to see how their behaviour contributed to the situation, and to move on from it. (Mary)

This is part of the negotiation of emotional meaning, which is a key part of the emotional context of the school.

There is more to be said about emotional context, and it will be returned to in the next two chapters as the research is drawn together.

## **6.5 Summary**

This chapter has used the initial theorising of emotional textures, as drawn from the literature and the data gathered in the interviews as an analytical tool. It begins to answer my first two research questions, and at the same time expands the theorisation to explain this further. By dint of defining emotional textures into three specifics, one has to be careful that the layering of textures, or where things overlap, is not missed out in the analysis. For example, emotional context will influence how a headteacher will have to regulate his or her emotions in responses to situations. If the staff works closely (emotionally) together (as Ben and James suggest above), the head may be more able to have 'fierce conversations'. Similarly context will also have a large bearing on whether a headteacher feels secure in terms of emotion-weighted decision-making.

One could argue that it the striving of the headteacher towards emotional coherence in leadership that is important, as it seems most influential on the emotional context. However, coherence may not be possible without a headteacher who is able 'to be a headteacher', in other words, someone who can play the role and regulate their own emotions sufficiently to influence others. This apparently simple statement belies not only the emotional labour involved, but also the personal background of the headteacher. These personal stories, or life histories, of the five, second phase heads, and the critical incidents need to be analysed as well, and related back to their reflections on emotion in primary school headship, in order for a fuller picture to emerge. This analysis takes place in the next chapter.



## **CHAPTER 7:**

# **NARRATIVES – EMOTIONAL EPIPHANIES AND LIFE STORIES**

*The thoughts we chose to think are the tools we use to paint the canvas of our lives.*

(Louise Hay)

### **7.1 Introduction to narratives**

During the interviews, there were two occasions when the headteachers were specifically asked to talk about particular aspects of their lives; critical incidents in interview one, and the whole of interview two. These were written up as narratives and returned to them for verification. These narratives are related to the third research question concerning the part personal histories play in the way that primary headteachers view emotion, feeling, and leadership. Although this was dealt with briefly in Chapter Three, it is appropriate at this point in the thesis to emphasis some key points about the narrative approach.

The aims of this chapter are three fold. Firstly, to consider the narrative approach more closely. Then to draw on both the headteachers' stories of their past, as shown in life history and critical incidents, and examine these narratives, to see if there are explicit or implicit connections with the theoretical framework. Thirdly, to make connections here between the first and third interviews, and the narrative strands of incidents and life story. To bring this all together I will then look at the place of the narrative to the research more generally by returning to the emotional textures of leadership.

#### **7.1.1 A narrative approach**

Interpreting personal stories, and seeking to understand the part they play in individuals' everyday lives in schools is difficult. This narrative approach fits in with my overall approach to this research in believing that objective truth does not exist in these sorts of encounters. As Cortazzi (2002, p.200) suggests:

A collection of narratives of personal experiences in education often has a characteristic that many researchers fail to emphasise. This characteristic is the emphasis given to such personal/professional qualities as dedication and devotion, patience and persistence, enthusiasm, struggle and sacrifice, hard work and humour. Narrative research may thus quite naturally find

itself tackling the all-important but often research neglected humanity of teaching and learning and of its leadership.

Goodley et al. (2004) suggest that the whole role of analysis within life story research has been questioned and that all the researcher can hope to do is to illuminate the life stories and demonstrate the analytical content within them (p.148–149). They also go on to argue that research has a responsibility to take things further, and that 'analysis aims to offer a helping hand in guiding the reader to the theoretical significances of a narrative.' (p.149). My aim is to look at the stories that the headteachers told, and relate them to the overall research.

Stories that are told give substance to the feelings held by the participants (Fineman, 2003, Gabriel, 2000, Gabriel & Griffiths, 2002) but interpretation of them is hermeneutic, and defined both by the preunderstanding of the interpreter, and the presocialisation of the other person. The same is true of the critical emotional incidents that were described by the participants in the first interviews. It may be, in fact, that critical incidents is not the best way of describing such moments. Earley and Fletcher-Campbell suggest (1989, p.80) that critical incidents can act as a basis for discussion and provide evidence for issues that are of major concern. In this case those concerns are emotional. Denzin's concept of emotional epiphanies seems to offer a clearer understanding of the interaction involved in such incidents and how the fundamental meaning structures in a person's life can be affected.

What gives such events their power is how they touch upon the concerns of the interviewee emotionally, as I hope to draw out in the analysis that follows. They result from the interaction of an event's actual, or anticipated, consequences, and the concerns of the participant (Briner, 1999). This leads to a key point. Social constructionists suggest that such stories not only represent personal emotions but also actively constitute the emotional form of work life. Fineman's argument is that although we can express our feelings directly: 'I'm so glad you invited me', our feelings often are encased in the stories we tell, and that these stories importantly give legitimacy to our feelings (Fineman, 2003). He even goes so far as to suggest that they are a *key mechanism* of emotional expression because they allow people to safely express difficult feelings. Stories can help people over any difficulties they may have with whether it is professionally acceptable to discuss feelings. As Fineman notes (2003, p.17) 'The story is not a measure of the objective truth of an event, but is a fine indicator of our feelings and how we wish to present them.' Stories resonate in different ways with different people but also entail diverse and even contradictory

meanings for a single person (Gabriel, 2000, p.90). All the stories told here are intense, and have an emotional purpose. The meaning of all of them will be different for the headteacher, this researcher and the reader, as good stories can possess many meanings, but this analysis will concentrate on the researcher's own definition of their meaning. Cortazzi (2002, p.200) puts it thus:

A narrative perspective allows the exploration of research activity itself as a story. That is much research writing (not only narrative research) is reported and presented as a story, with a kind of constructed plot, which is in effect, a rhetorical design aimed at persuading readers of the interest, if not the truth, of the research.

A narrative approach focuses on the relational, and what Roberts (2002, p.15) calls the 'reality producing' nature of the interview. This approach seems well suited to an investigation into emotion and leadership because of the focus on relationships. Muller (1999) notes that the narrative approach 'stresses the 'lived experience' of individuals, the importance of multiple perspectives, the existence of context-bound, constructed social realities, and the impact of the researcher on the research process' (p.223). These are all parts of the approach that I have tried to use, with the reality of lived experience of individuals being vital. Roberts (2002, p.119) also states that narrative analysis focuses on the individual and the interplay between the individual and the social, which is vital to education.

Autobiographical memory is also a device for that individual to question and reconstruct their past in response to questions. Roberts (p.138) suggests that a key feature of autobiographical memory is how the individual links the memories with the formation of the self, or what he calls a 'phenomenological connection', and the second interview allowed this to occur in its connection between self and how the teacher/headteacher part of themselves has developed over time. In terms of the headteachers stories about their lives, it is constructive to draw upon the work of Josselson and Leblach (1995) who argue:

Through narrative, we come into contact with our participants as people engaged in the process of interpreting themselves. We work then with what is said and what is not said, within the context in which that life is lived, and the context of the interview in which words are spoken to represent that life. We then must decode, recognise, recontextualize or abstract that life in the

interest of reaching a new interpretation of the raw data of experience before us. (p.ix)

Finally the stories that are related in this chapter have been subjected to what Elliott (2005, p.158) calls the 'most explicitly reflexive stage of the analysis process'. This is where the reader reads the text in a sense, for herself, in that I put myself along with my own background, history and experiences behind my analysis of both the heads' lives and their critical incidents. This is where the dual aspect of emotion is felt most keenly in this study as I am responding both emotionally and intellectually to them as people, whilst at the same time being aware of the need for validity in any examination of the empirical data.

## **7.2 How the stories are told**

In both analysing and telling the headteachers stories, I wanted to differentiate between the life histories and the incidents in a clear way for the reader. In order to bring the immediacy of the telling when I wrote them up, I used the first person for the critical incidents, as opposed to the third person in which I have written up the life history accounts. This was partly to highlight the intensity of the emotions of the incidents, but I also wanted to experiment with this as a mode of analysis. The researcher begins the work of analysis at this point because as Goodley et al. point out (2004, p.122) telling a story of any kind is mediated by the narrator. The participants again verified all accounts.

The focus on personal background was part of stage two, and thus involves five headteachers. Life stories can be analysed in various ways, depending on one's epistemological position. My analysis draws upon voice relational approaches to life work in feminist research (Brown & Gilligan, 1993, Larson, 1997), which is itself in the hermeneutics tradition. In this approach, the material is presented as a story that was told and verified. I will introduce each account, then show the account itself, and suggest some interpretations. As Cohen et al. state (2003, p.167):

Essentially the validity of any life history lies in its ability to represent the informant's subjective reality, that is to say, his or her definition of the situation.

They also remind researchers that a key task is to decide how much you should intrude upon your assembled data. Editing, they state, is 'almost a sine qua non of any life history' (p.167). They advise turning the story into 'a structured and coherent

statement that uses the subjects words in places, and your own as researcher in others, but retains the authentic meaning at all times' (p.168). Emotional themes are then drawn out from each, which are then pulled together at the end of this chapter. There are many other themes, concerned with career pattern or professional development, that could have been used, but the focus has remained on the emotional side of leadership.

Reading and re-reading of the narratives using the voice related approach identified these themes. This is described by Goodley et al. (2004) as a process which involves first reading for plot in the story, as well as a personal response to the narrative, then looking for the 'I' voice and the relationships described, and finally placing people within their social setting. Manning and Cullum-Swan (1994, p.465) suggest that such interpretation is 'rather loosely formulated, almost intuitive, using terms defined by the analyst.' Josselson, (as discussed in the methodology section) argues that the narrative approach understands lives within social settings and describes identifying meaning as:

An effort to approach the understanding of lives in context rather than through a prefigured and narrowing lens. Meaning is not inherent in an act of experience but is constructed through social discourse.

(Josselson, 1995, p.32)

Having looked at all five accounts, I will then analyse the key themes in terms of the emotional textures of leadership, and begin to map and interpret the data from both the empirical and the literature.

## **7.3 The headteachers' stories**

### **7.3.1 James**

James is the most experienced, and the oldest headteacher in the group.

#### ***Childhood and schooling***

(James' schooling began in Scotland) James can remember starting school, but is not sure of his actual age. He knows that his older sister joined him there. He describes primary school as 'happy days', and a place where he enjoyed getting involved in sport. In the infants he used to go to the older boys playground to play football with them. He knew them from the estate, as it was the sort of place

where you knew everyone. The school was quite large with 20 classes, and he remembers both formal and informal things about it. He can remember the tawse and also the teachers he related to well. From the 5th year to Yr 7, he represented the county at football so became a 'known' person. He took the 'qually' at 11 and didn't get into the Academy where his sister went. His father was quite happy as he could have appealed to get James in, but thought that the High would be fine, and that James would fit in better there. He continued with the sport, and then when he was fifteen they moved to England, where there was a different syllabus and the Grammar would not take him. He went to the secondary modern in a large southern coastal town, and started at the beginning of the two years leading up to O levels. The school created a special class for O levels of only 20 children which was started when James arrived. Everyone else took CSEs. The Grammar took you for A levels and James says these experiences are why he has 'a thing about selection'.

James sees his family as important in his life as they 'always supported, always there'. Schools gave him mixed messages about himself. Some teachers were supportive, and he can think of particular individuals whom he could relate to. At the Secondary Modern, for example, there were three teachers who he respected a great deal. At the Grammar school, it was slightly different – 'the values were misplaced at times'. He recalls in particular his ex Army Lower Sixth teacher, who was very difficult to relate to. He enjoyed his school career, and followed his sister into teaching.

James's account retains throughout the images and the voice of Scotland where he grew up especially in its vocabulary (tawse, qually). There is also a strong narrative of personal beliefs and values as he talks about the happiness of early childhood and the closeness of the neighbourhood that he lived in. It has a nostalgic quality to it, and contains some mixed messages about schooling. Despite the formal systems and the corporal punishment that existed in the 1950's, he is clear that primary school was a happy time, and that he perceived his primary schooling as good. This is in contrast to his experience of secondary schooling. A major emotional support for him would appear to be his sporting ability that was above average, and therefore he was valued for it in schools. This was able to sustain him when other parts of his life were not so easy. He also stresses the support of his family, but his failure to get into the higher school, and the move to England at a significant time (due to examinations) are key points in the narrative in terms of the wider context. He

described 'a thing about selection', and 'the values were misplaced at times', with real passion in his voice. This *passion for social justice* is a connection throughout his narrative. He recalls teachers who he can relate to, and that overall he enjoyed school, which is in conflict with some of what he says overall, perhaps because he is looking at his childhood experience through adult lenses. Thus, he stresses *relationships, support, passion for social justice and values* in this narrative.

### ***Post school***

After school, James went to Teacher Training College in southern England where he studied Geography as his major in his Cert Ed. It was a Middle School (8-12) course. He was also part of the PE group. He opted for the B.Ed at the end of his second year, but when he did his final teaching practice he began to feel that the academic part of the course was 'jumping through hoops', and he decided he had 'had enough of essays!'

This part of our interview was interrupted by an incident where he was called out to deal with a child, so the flow was disturbed. In my judgement this may have meant either that he did not say as much as he could, or perhaps more likely, that I as an interviewer did not press him enough on his return. He was very factual in his descriptions, and the links to his childhood narrative follow in terms of sport (PE) and ambivalence about his academic ability, which is reflected again in the last sentence.

### ***Pre headship***

From central England he moved to a developing area in the East of England. He thinks partly because of his interest in urban geography; he wanted to see how a new landscape would develop. In those days, you applied to pools of teachers, and he and his 'wife to be' saw the town as an opportunity for getting a new house as they came with post there at that time. The school he was offered in the early 70s was 'the most depressing school I had ever seen'. When he saw it, he thought, 'it's a God forsaken place, there is no way I am going to stop here for very long, right?' It was in a run down area, and even in the days before high security it had huge fences, and signs about trespassing. It was also an old building. He came away depressed from his visit. When he started teaching there he 'got sucked into the job', and learnt a great deal from it about how not to run a school. The Head spent most of the time in his office. The DH and her

'henchmen' dealt with staff and 'persecuted' children. James remembers it as horrible, and one particular turning point stands out. It was the usual practice for children to return to their classroom after singing practice unaccompanied. One day, his class did not return, so he went to look for them, and found them in the hall where they were sitting being 'glowered at' by the DH. James felt that she was taking out issues with him by picking on his class. After a year, he applied for another post, but stayed and the Head gave him an extra point. Another issue that stands out in his memory from that time is the dress code note. The secretary brought him a note from the Head in class to say that he was not adhering to the school dress code (he was wearing a polo neck). Then at the end of the year on the school trip, the Head decided on the day, to come on the trip, and turned up in a safari suit, and commented that James was a bit overdressed. After two years and a term, he made a parallel move. The Head at the new school was new in post. Within 15 months with new appointments, his second school became a leading school in the area, James said the school had 'a how to do it' philosophy. The atmosphere was buzzing, and looking back he thinks this is what kept him in education. It enabled him to start afresh and he gained another point. His next step, encouraged by the Head, after four and a half years, was to apply for the DH of a brand new school that was being set up. Again, looking back, he feels he was a bit naïve not to look more closely at the educational philosophy of the Head. He moved from a democratic school to no democracy, and although he stayed five years, he let the LEA know after three that he was looking for a change. He applied for another DH which he did not get. He felt the staff looked to him, and they did try to involve the Head but there was slow development, and in particular the Head did not relate to parents 'listen to the clientele'. For example, the staff arranged a topic week at the end of which all parents were invited into the school. The Head 'did not bother to be part of it'. It was 'impossible'. A good example of the Head's inflexible approach was his decree that all boards in the school should be framed in the school's colours, which the staff felt was not always desirable. He 'would not bend'. Then a small Headship came up (80 children, 3 classes) and the Inspector asked if he were interested. He had no training at all, but there was less need then as the LEA took a great deal of the responsibility, James felt also that he had the security of knowing connections in the area, so had a ready made support network. While he was still a DH he had been offered a chance to leave education and move into retailing, He was 'sorely tempted' but it would have involved uncertain finances



and a family move so it was decided against. He was concerned that if it wasn't successful, what would he do? In some ways he regrets it, because it would have been a change to engage with the 'real world' and he does love a challenge.

James' first teaching post is described graphically in emotional terms: 'the most depressing school I had ever seen', 'a God forsaken place', which raises the question of whether this was how he actually felt at the time, or sees it in retrospect because it was a difficult school to work in. Both perceptions may be valid, and can be related to his overall *passion for social justice*.

The descriptions of the school when he was actually working in it are also clear and unequivocal in terms of what the school felt like as a place to work:

- Learnt a great deal from it about how not to run a school.
- The Deputy Head and her 'henchmen'
- 'Persecuted' children.
- 'Horrible'
- Class being 'glowered at' by the Deputy Head.
- Unfair application of the dress code

Both the Headteacher and the Deputy are portrayed unfavourably. This contrasts starkly with his next school, which is described as:

- A leading school in the area.
- Has 'a how to do it' philosophy.
- Atmosphere was buzzing.
- Enabling him to start afresh.

The Head, and this support actively encouraged him to move to a Deputy Headship, and the atmosphere in the school, he suggests, is what kept him in education. It is interesting to note that he felt he was naïve in the choice of his next post, and that he should have looked more closely at the new Head's philosophy. His telling of the next stage of his career is redolent of disappointment – 'no democracy'. 'slow', 'Head 'not bothered', 'impossible', Head inflexible 'would not bend'. He did look outside education at this stage ('the real world'), but despite having no headship training he

felt that he could move on because of the security he had in knowing connections in the area, and a ready-made support network.

James's narrative style is very striking and again I would suggest that relationships (the way he talks about the people he works with), support for self (noticeable especially when he discusses career and his passion for social justice (his emphasis on what education is fundamentally about) are key themes running through his story.

### ***Headship***

James moved into headship with no official preparation except what he had absorbed from his other schools. As he said, he had discovered how not to run a school from his experiences, and the first two sentences of what follows show that he had a clear idea of what he values in a school.

James was really looking forward to Headship. He knew what he wanted to see in practice, and he knew that he wanted to put children at the centre of it all. His LEA was one of the first to take up LMS (Local Management of Schools), so he benefited from that. He loved the school, but was maybe 'too happy, too long' and after seven years found that he was being turned down for the Headships of larger schools on the grounds of his inexperience in larger schools. The Assistant Director of Education suggested to him that he could gain this experience helping at a local school that was 'about to go down'. He looked after this school for two and a half terms and enjoyed the experience. Within a year of this, he had moved to a much larger school. This was very rewarding experience 'a great deal of happiness in the place'. Again, he was asked to help for several terms at a local school that had gone into special measures. The irony was that this was that same, depressing school in which his career had started. Following his time then, he moved to where he is now, where he has been for a year.

The way that James told this to me illustrates how deeply story telling is involved in biography. The return to the first school was said with the verve of someone revealing an exciting plot dénouement in a serial. Also, both of the schools that he enjoyed are talked about in terms of happiness – 'too happy, too long' and 'a great deal of happiness in the place'. This part of the interview engendered fresh understanding of James as a person who values support and good relationships, but as his professional confidence grows is prepared to take risks (the schools in special measures) in order to help children have opportunities. This ties in with his view in

Interview One that the thing that he most enjoys about headship is helping to develop staff and children, and working in a happy achieving school (he was clear that by this he did not mean SATs results.).

If we regard James' story as his personal leadership narrative, leadership and emotion appear to be closely linked. Firstly, the narrative points to a direct emotional comparison between his childhood difficulties at school and his choice of headship experiences. Again this is related to his passion for social justice. Those childhood difficulties, especially at secondary school, have shaped the way he approaches his own leadership in schools. The inherent and socially constructed aspects of emotion are brought into sharp focus in the way he has experienced life, through the emotions and feelings that he has experienced in childhood and early teaching (or returning to Lupton's categories of emotion, it is socially constructed, but with an inherent temperament), have shaped how he views headship, and the way he practices leadership influenced by his emotions. As James commented in the interviews, he sometimes feels he is acting, and the emotional regulation of leadership was important to him, as emotional regulation had been important through difficult times in his own schooling. At the same time, decisions he has made about his career have had an emotional weighting, and the emotional context provided by the headteachers he worked for has influenced his own views on the role of the headteacher.

### **7.3.2 Laura**

Laura was a headteacher that I had got to know whilst a trainer on the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH). She was very open to being involved in this project, and was able to express her thoughts very clearly, and especially where emotion was concerned.

#### ***Childhood and schooling***

Analysing Laura's narrative I bore in mind that the life story of James had emphasised *relationships, passion for social justice, support for self and values*. This was not to preclude other themes emerging in the next story, but was useful in terms of similarities and differences between the headteachers. In a sense this is related to grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in that grounded theory could be described as an emergent process, revealed from the whole data set.

Laura's early childhood was that of an only child at home with her parents and maternal grandmother. She could read before she went to school, and
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remembers herself at this period as a 'savage', roaming the woodlands near her house, and playing out with the local boys. Her most significant memory of starting school is that her brother was born at the same time, or just before she went to school, and she recalls him arriving with no explanation at all, or anything in the way of preparation. At around about the same time, she had to have her tonsils removed, and remembers the nurse in hospital slapping her. The cruelty of that remains with her. She went to a church primary school, which was not the one that the majority of her friends went to, and she recalls this as lonely and isolating, coming to grips with 'strange new rules'. She didn't enjoy school as she found the books boring and it all rather confusing. At seven the school became all girls, and she recalls it as very high church, involving a lot of church services. She quite enjoyed the pageantry aspect of it, the incense and the Latin. She recalls Miss Ball in the lower juniors as being very sympathetic. She also remembers that they seemed hardly ever to do PE, and she remembers making a hippo out of clay. The top class was in rows according to your academic performance leading up to the 11 plus, and the teacher drank. It was very competitive. She passed the 11 plus and went to the girls' grammar school and she is 'not girly!' It was in a beautiful place, and she went by coach. She felt a sense of dislocation at school, and somehow different as she was from a working class background – the girls were asked to state their father's profession on the first day. She strongly believes that your philosophy of education comes from childhood, and although she enjoyed the work and most of the teachers at the grammar school, she does not think it is a good system.

In contrast to James settled picture of his family context as a child, Laura talks about her childhood in terms of struggle and dislocation – wildness, loss, strangeness, but also of beauty. She talks of herself as wild and roaming, a bit of a tomboy. It is very illuminating that the stories of her brother's birth and the hospital are juxtaposed, perhaps because of their close connection in time, or because of their similarity in terms of emotional recall. Both were unexpected and harsh events in her life. Whether or not they were actually close together does not matter, as emotionally they are strongly connected for her.

She tells vividly of the strangeness of primary school for the young child – lonely, isolating are the words she uses. The strangeness was also positive in terms of pageantry – the incense and the Latin of the church services. Also, she contrasts the two teachers that she remembers most, one fondly, and one 'who drank'. In her

description of secondary school, she reiterates the tomboy ‘not girly’ and her strong feelings about the class system where girls had to ‘state their father’s profession on the first day.’

*Values and a passion for social justice/fairness* are important childhood themes for Laura, but so are *feelings and a sense of otherness*. *Gender* also features strongly. Of all the interviewees, she was the one who told her story in the most dramatic fashion.

### ***Post school***

Laura had no real idea what she wanted to do with her life, although she considered, she told me, various quite exotic options such as spy or archaeologist. She did RE, English and History at A level, although university was not really part of her family’s experience and she heard friends talking about teaching so she began to look at prospectuses. She knew that she wanted to work with people, and rather liked the look of one of the teacher training colleges – ‘Edmonds Hall’, because of its location in the country but near a city. She also had a very positive teacher role model, which may have influenced her decision.

Her college course was for 5–7 infants, and she found it ‘surprisingly interesting!’ She studied RE and Design as her subject options, and did a Cert Ed. She didn’t want to stay on and do a B.Ed as she was fed up with studying and schools. By then she had also met her first husband. She credits him with broadening her horizons.

The way this is told seems to suggest that she fell into teaching (‘surprisingly interesting!’); although friends and teacher role models obviously played a part. The half joking/half serious way she mentioned exotic occupations for me expressed her personality – able to ‘bubble’, but be serious at the same time. Like James she felt that she had come to the end of study. The description she provides is of a person in transition from school to something new and exciting.

### ***Pre headship***

I have divided her pre-headship experience into two parts, because of the career break in the middle, and the move to a special unit. Laura’s ‘patchwork’ career pattern (which is replicated with Eleanor), is a feature of women’s career patterns

more generally, in that their working lives can be influenced by the work patterns of partners (Hall, 1996).

Laura applied to work in a large English shire county. She was sent to work in a junior school in a market town, which was very large – there were 600 in the infants, plus 600 in the juniors and many of the children had been relocated from Birmingham and London, so they were not easy. It was run by a Yorkshire Head with ‘a rod of iron’, who was very particular and did things ‘in a certain way’. It was very much strong leadership, but she also remembers lots of artwork and residential. He was also ‘flawed’ and he smoked and drank, which made him ‘more human’. She recalls the excellent inset in the teaching of art. The staff were young with an average age of 28, and they were 50/50 male/female. She said ‘it was the best start you could have had – strict but caring’. She stayed for three years, and then they had a largish pay award so she and her husband decided to resign and go see the world. They were away for 9/10 months visiting Europe, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, India, Nepal and Ceylon. It was ‘a life changing experience’. When she returned, she went into schools and did some supply work. Then she got a job in a three teacher school, which had a very different way of working to her first school – it was all themed and planned, and the head was a full time teacher. It had close links with the community. She met her second husband. She felt that both her schools gave her formative experiences in which she learnt about how children learn. She was there for two and a half years, and left to have her first son, She had three children in close succession, and did some odd supply days, then went back full time after eight years.

Laura’s telling of her early career is punctuated by the occurrence of personal events: travel and pregnancy, unlike that of James. Like him however she is conscious of the impact of the headteacher on a school. She draws a dramatic picture of a man who is very particular, does things in a certain way, rules with a rod of iron, drinks and smokes. Interestingly she regards these flaws as positives as they made him ‘more human’. This is summed up by the phrase that she uses: ‘it was the best start you could have had – strict but caring’.

While bringing up her children, Laura had done some supply work with children with statements and a vacancy came up at the Support Unit. She felt that she

had had enough of class teaching and liked the relationships you could forge with children in the Unit. It was more interesting. She worked with 5–18 year olds and advised schools and Heads and children came to the Unit. She also did a lot of work with families which she enjoyed. Her first head was very charismatic and positive; very clear and caring, and she views him as another role model. He left and his replacement she describes as ‘passive/aggressive’ and a chain smoker. He was also very disorganised. She learnt a great deal about behaviour management at the Unit, especially ‘about how you have to be’. She discovered that ‘management was being about people wanting to be managed by you’. She also at this time did a two-year counselling course and a psycho drama course. By this time, she had worked with many heads and was not impressed with some of them. She didn’t want to become a deputy under a head that she didn’t feel was competent so was in a dilemma. A way out came from the LEA, who suggested a village headship in a difficult area (three children out of the 50 had statements for behaviour management).

When she looks back at the heads she has worked with, she feels that Harry (first) had authority and a vision of what the school should be like. The second, Mike, was also visionary and sure of the importance of art and drama, and the links with self-esteem. He also showed her the importance of links with parents. Teddy showed her that ‘children love zap’. He was an attractive figure. By the way he *didn’t* behave Patrick showed her how important it is to look after staff and recognise their needs.

Laura’s feelings about the headteachers she worked with come out extremely strongly here. They are clearly people who she looked to for leadership. Positive aspects include: charismatic and positive; very clear and caring; authority; visionary; attractive; links with self-esteem. Negatives are noted (passive/aggressive) but turned into positives by the way that Laura views the way they affected her (by the way he didn’t behave). There is a clear thread of *performance and optimism* running through all this. This can be seen by phrase such as: ‘children love zap’ and ‘about how you have to be’ illustrate this. The themes that run throughout are *values, support for staff, gender, performance and optimism*.

### **7.3.3 Eleanor**

Eleanor was the headteacher that I knew best from the group as we had worked together for three years earlier in our teaching career.

## ***Childhood and schooling***

Eleanor was 'desperate to go to school', probably she thinks, because of being an only child. The thing she remembers in particular is that she liked the chairs! She knew about them as the school and the church were in the same building. She remembers the first day with her mum taking her, and sitting down and not understanding why other people were crying. She also recalls the Headteacher popping his head around to say 'Hello'. It was a mixed class with all the infants in one class, possibly 40 children. You moved along in side the class and had the same teacher for three years. She remembers that you had a sleep in the afternoon. It was a Catholic school, and she also recalls the statues and the alphabet on the blackboard. This was pointed at with a stick, and the alphabet recited. Her reading book was about Rover and Kitty. When she was seven she moved up into Mrs Hargreaves class, where you sat boy/girl. She recalled spelling bees. Then she was two years in the top class, where she remembered having chickenpox. She was in the second set, and a good reader. The top set, she thinks, was probably older. The house marks system (yellow /Campion) enabled the top scorers to have 15 minutes on a Friday afternoon playing. Her infant teacher was the most influential – her husband had taught Eleanor's mother. While she was at the school the Head changed, and she went into the top class which was his. They had RE twice a day, plus Mass once a week. The Priest came in for religious instruction regularly. The eleven plus was important, and involved three papers. She passed and out of 32 she recalls that eleven passed. She had a choice of secondary schools, because Mr Kendall (the Head) had put all of them in for the entrance exams for the Catholic schools as well. She passed those. The girls went to a school which was 15 miles away from her home and involved a long day (7.15–5.00), and a walk, bus and school bus! Then at 14 the LEA stopped paying so she went by train. This had an effect on her, as she could not join in after school activities because of the train times. She recalls the staff there (nuns) as strict, but it was enjoyable. The values of her parents and the school were the same and very clear cut. She was bullied at school at one point and her parents demanded that something be done.

It was only 2-form entry, but she feels in retrospect that they were not pushed and were set to go to Catholic training college. At her A levels she dropped a grade in History, and this meant that she could not get to Manchester to do American Studies. So she went to Teacher Training College in Birmingham.



Eleanor's description of her schooling has a strong emotional focus on *people and relationships* – at primary: the picture of the headteacher saying hello, the other children crying, the teachers, the priest; at secondary school, the nuns, the bullying and *place* –at primary, the chairs, the statues, the alphabet, her reading book, and at secondary, the trip there and back. She too mentions values and the fact that the school and her parents shared the same is seen as important. In emotional terms, her feelings are anchored by the memories of people and place, which she recalled with fondness.

### ***Post school***

When analysing this interview, I had realised that a pattern was emerging of less being said about college. This was due to my own bias, I think. Unwittingly, I think that I viewed the college section of the life story as irrelevant to the whole, and this was reflected in the results I got, as I did not follow up so well when they told me about it. If I were to repeat the research, I would be aware of this internal bias and seek to mitigate it.

Lay people ran her Catholic college. Eleanor trained for Junior/Secondary, and although she was on the B. Ed course when she was offered a job she took it. At that time she feels that she 'couldn't be bothered' to do further study, and probably regrets it.

All three of the headteachers so far have talked of a feeling of regret as regards further study. It could be that this regret is offered to the researcher because of the nature of the research i.e. it is about further study, but clearly at the time of training they wanted to go straight on to work. This would be a fascinating question to explore but is outside the remit of this research.

### ***Pre headship***

Her first post was in a RC school in Birmingham –a Junior Mixed Infants and she was there for two years, and then got married. It was 'a nice school, with a lovely Head'. The deputy was more of a presence around the school. There was a very supportive atmosphere. The school was on a huge council estate of mainly Irish Catholics who had been re-housed out of central Birmingham. When she married, she moved to Leeds and didn't teach for a term, working in a large department store. Then she taught briefly in a 9-13 Middle before husband's job

took them to Kent. She recalls the female Head in Leeds as 'scary', and rather a bully who tended to shout. Eleanor herself didn't suffer from this, but others did. She thinks it has influenced her view of wanting to work with female heads! It was a very secondary middle school. Then she went to the Medway, where she worked in an 'old fashioned' junior school on a big council estate. There were big classes and it was run 'by a lovely head coming up to retirement'. There were 500 children and four-form entry. She feels she made firm friends there, and after 2 years had her first child, then went back. In her first post she advanced to Scale 2, was on main scale in Leeds, and got a point for English in Kent. Again, her husband moved back to Yorkshire, and she went onto the supply list. She had various temporary contracts and her second child at this time. They then moved to Nottinghamshire who at that time were not taking married women returners. Finally, when her husband changed post again, they moved to their current location. Initially, she worked part time for the Primary Support Team in four schools locally. Due to this, she was offered a temporary contract at an 8-12 Middle school. It became permanent and she was there for five years, becoming the SENCO. A very pleasant head (that left soon afterwards) appointed her and a new one was appointed. She felt that the whole feel of the school changed, and that the new Head did not like or trust staff, perhaps because he saw them as 'formidable women'. He rarely interacted with the children. Then a post at Behaviour support came up, and she saw it as an opportunity. There was an extra point, and it was different. She did that for three years, which she feels is the maximum as you see the worst of children in that sort of post. She also missed being involved in school. Because the future of the service itself was uncertain, she decided to apply for a Deputy Headship (DH) as she had really 'nowhere else to go!' She applied for two which she did not get. Then she applied for the DH of the school where the Head was her former DH from the Middle school. She knew she could work with him, and got the job. She then spent six years there, most of the last two as Acting Head. She learnt a great deal from this Head, especially how to deal with, and get the best out of, people. He had a supportive and critical approach to staff. He appointed people who fitted into that mould. The Acting Headship came about very suddenly. Three days before the end of Summer term the Head was asked to take over a school in special measures as acting head. She was Acting Head for two terms, the head returned, and then moved onto to another headship. She decided not to apply for the headship, as she believes that it would have been very difficult in terms of

relationships with the staff – a different distance. She just knew, she says that it would not work for her, and that she needed to move. She applied for a few headships, which she did not get, including recovering from one interview where she was told she had no ‘pizzazz’. She then got her current headship, after being advised to apply by the LEA, as the school ‘needed a people person’.

Like Laura, Eleanor’s description of her early career is a reflection of her gender, punctuated by personal events, moves around the country and pregnancy, which in her case impacted on her career progress quite substantially. Certainly her career pathway is the least smooth of all five headteachers. Emotionally, the theme that runs through her story is *relationships*: ‘a people person’, getting the best out of people, supportive, good relationships with the staff, as opposed to the bullying head she describes in her second school. There is also an element of *performance*: no ‘pizzazz’.

#### **7.3.4 Francesca**

Francesca is a headteacher that I had got to know when I was a school governor, and she was a deputy headteacher in that school. After Eleanor, she was the headteacher that I knew best, in that I had worked with her over a period of time, and in quite challenging circumstances (the school was in special measures).

#### ***Childhood and schooling***

Francesca had happy, supportive parents. She was an only child, and she said that this had good points in terms of her life opportunities, but she picked up at home the fact that she, as the only child, must be to blame if money was short, or her parents could not get a babysitter – there was no one to share that feeling with. She does not recall feeling lonely, and there were a lot of adults around – parents, grandparents, friends, and wider family. She thinks her values were influenced greatly by her father whose philosophy she summed up as ‘Whatever you want to do, I’ll back you’. Her maternal grandfather also influenced her. She particularly remembers a time in her early teens, when he was going out and he said to her, ‘You may as well come with me, as you’re the only sensible woman in the family’. Her parents had aspirations. They wanted her to do better and have more opportunities than they had had. There was no direct pressure. She remembers always knowing that they would want her to go to college or university. No one else in the family had at that point. Her father managed a

warehouse for a furniture company, but he felt that he wasn't appreciated and at the age of 50 left to pursue an alternative career, even though they had offered him a Directorship when they heard he was leaving. His mother did various jobs, such as a bank cashier and telephonist in a hospital until her eyesight failed in her forties. She didn't work until Francesca was in full time education. A defining moment is when Francesca was four. The reception class teacher refused to give her Janet and John Book Three, which Francesca knew she could read. The teacher slapped her on the back of the legs. Francesca felt very defiant, as she knew she knew better than the teacher. Francesca got a scholarship to a 'fairly posh' Church Secondary School. It was a girl's school, where the majority went into teaching or nursing. She knew by the age of fourteen that she wanted to go into something people focused, not task focused, and felt that nursing would involve too much emotion.

A strong emotional theme for Francesca is *family and values, and the way this influenced her emotionally*. There is also a thread of equity and gender and school, but these are not such specific emotional themes. Being an only child seems to have influenced her in several ways. She talks of having no one to 'share the blame with', and an influential father and grandfather. Her grandfather's phrase about her being the only sensible woman, is seen by her as a positive, rather than a reflection of anti-woman feeling, and similarly she sees her family's aspirations for her as very significant. The picture she draws is one of a strong willed child in a determined family, which is summed up rather well in her story of the teacher and the reading book. She recalls the strong emotion she felt about being right. Her secondary school is characterised by its 'poshness' and its single sex nature, and the rather traditional routes that its students' careers followed. In terms of emotion, it is interesting that she notes the emotion in nursing.

### **College**

Her Head suggested she apply to a College in Cambridge to do a Cert. Ed with the option of a fourth year, majoring in Art and French. She took a junior/secondary course and after her first teaching practice in a Middle school, she realised that she preferred the juniors as she felt that relationships were more important and positive in that age group. She enjoyed study but towards the end of the third year decided not to stay on, partly because she wanted to get out and practice, but partly because she didn't want her parents to have to

support her for another year. She had been the first person in her family to go into any further education.

### ***Pre headship***

Francesca had no wish originally to be a head. When she left college in the 1970s there were few jobs available and she went for anything going. She was offered a post in a private school, which was against her values and beliefs so she agonised over it. However it was in the right part of the country for her and it had a free flat and food included, so she decided to take it. She moved after two years to get married and then moved to another part of the country. She had admired and respected her first Head at the private school enormously. He was charismatic, visionary, inspirational and good at detail – ‘not letting things get in the way of what was important’. She went to a school in a town where she was for five years during which there was an amalgamation. She then worked for several heads where she began to think, ‘I could do better’, and it was the same in her next move to a village school as Deputy. She was forming strong opinions of what made a good head. She then became a Deputy at a brand new school, and was there five terms when her Head was phoned by the LEA to say that they needed an acting head at a local school. This was a Wednesday before the Easter holidays. Her Head said that she would support Francesca if she wanted to do it, or help her refuse if she didn’t. On the Thursday she went to meet the school’s governors, and on Friday everyone was told that she was moving after the holidays. Children and staff were very shocked.

With Francesca, I was struck by how she related her own performance and development to people she had worked with, even more than Laura who had similar views. She either saw what she wanted to emulate – ‘charismatic, visionary, inspirational and good at detail’, or saw what she viewed as substandard performance. Like both James and Laura, she made decisions about the sort of headteacher she wanted to be based on such experiences.

### ***Headship***

She was initially planning to be there for one term as it was unclear when/if the substantive Head would be returning. In the end, the issue of amalgamation came up, and she was there for two years and a term. Of course initially she had

only the Easter holidays to mentally prepare herself, and she was not able to get into the school. So, after the holidays she 'appeared' at the school, said hello to people on the playground and everyone in the school, went into the Head's office and thought 'What am I supposed to do now?' The school had had 'an unexpected, lousy OFSTED' and the Head had gone off sick. Somebody else has been there for a term, but she was needed back at her own school, and the LEA really wanted an experienced head. She was however, given free rein to do whatever was necessary – not to be seen just as a caretaker Head, This was reassuring, but it was like 'treading on eggshells' as the staff were demoralised. She had to make sure that there was not implied criticism of the substantive head. The mood changed over time. The first staff meeting, they talked and she asked them to bring their copies of the OFSTED Report to have a look at next time. They said they hadn't seen the full report. When they did they 'were all suicidal again'. It was a case of 'bringing them up'. When the amalgamation happened she had great support from the parents, staff and governors to apply for the Headship. She was prepared to not get it, as she knew she was relatively inexperienced, and that a new person in would be a 'no baggage person'. It was 'An evens chance as I knew I had done a good job'. There were three interviewees, and she was in the last two. The governors started deliberating at 5 and went onto 630. She was not impressed with the other candidate. When she was told she hadn't got it, she had to 'walk out, past staff, past staff who had wanted me to be here.' The following week she had to 'be professional' and send out letter about the new head. She must have seen twenty to thirty parents who couldn't understand why she didn't get it. After two and a half years she didn't want to go back to her old school, although her head had kept her on the books. She was then seconded to support as deputy, a school in challenging circumstances. This was intended to be for a year, She decided that she would apply for headships as they came up, but only of challenging areas. She wasn't sure about the application to the school where she is now as it was so close to where she had been as acting head. The local heads joked that she would have to give back her leaving present! She felt downhearted but applied. The first interview, she was out on the first day. This was only three days after she found out about her own school, and with hindsight she feels that she was more drained than she realised at the time. The next interview was two weeks later, and she was in the last two. Four days after that, there was her current headship, and she realised she was the most experienced on the list. She knew one of the

other candidates who asked her if she really wanted it, and she realised she did. She feels she must have shown this, and it 'felt right'.

Francesca's journey into headship is an unusual one in that she went from deputy to acting head for two and a half years, before the failure to get the amalgamated headship led to an acting deputy's post, and then her current headship. There is a sense of struggle in her story as well as emotion, especially *emotional support*, both for herself in terms of how she felt supported by parents, staff and her headteacher, and how she supported staff when they were 'suicidal' and she had to 'tread on eggshells'. There is also a strong element of having to *perform* despite deep pain: 'walk out, past staff, past staff who had wanted me to be here.' The headship that she eventually obtains 'Felt right'. Both of these last two descriptions about being wanted, and it 'feeling right' are redolent of emotion led decision-making rather than a 'rational' choice.

### **7.3.5 Ben**

Ben was someone who I had been introduced to on a training course for deputies at his previous school. Temperamentally, he was the most reserved of the case study heads, and of course the least experienced. Another man, I felt, would add to the study, and hearing that he had just taken up his headship made me interested to include him as one of the case study headteachers.

#### ***Childhood and schooling***

Ben is originally from Devon. His early memories of school are to do with a teacher with white hair, and later a teacher (Miss Hillman) with a bandage on her ankle. He also remembers lots of wood and the desks. This was his first school, and he transferred at seven to a brand new primary, which was being built in his area. He remembers it as 'horrible', and can't recall how long he was there, perhaps a year. He had a male teacher who made him stand on a table and asked the class to point, when he had problems with his bladder. He remembers thinking that this should not be happening to a child and it is something he tries to remember as a teacher. He remembers that teacher's hair in particular, possibly because he was on a table at the time. He made friends there, and also recalls making a robot with cereal packets. He didn't tell his parents how unhappy he was, but once they did realise, they removed him. He can't remember the details of this. His sister was the matron at a small prep school locally, and he went

there for an interview and went in to the second form there in January for a term. Then into the 'remove' class for the summer term, then into the third year. He stayed there until he was thirteen, even though his sister left after he started there. He felt much happier there generally and was involved in many aspects of the school. He feels that there was some pressure on him to try to get a scholarship at thirteen and go to boarding school. This pressure came from the school. He got through the Common Entrance Exam and went to a local direct grant school in Exeter. His primary had been very small and there he was always first or second at everything. At secondary school, he moved into it at 13, which was difficult, and found that some of the subject content was very different (Maths, Science). It was then he began to 'switch off' and he remembers his reports mentioning how little effort he put in. He got five O levels, but managed to miss his French exam which displeased the Head, and he had to do the retake in November. For A's he studied French, English and History and he really enjoyed them although he struggled with French. He wanted to go to Sheffield to do an English Language Degree and thought he would manage a B and a D in his other subjects, but he didn't. He had no real career plan at this stage. The headteacher suggested that polytechnics were an option, but Ben says that he felt that they were not proper universities. So, he knew that he would have to get a job.

Like Eleanor, Ben conjures up a keen sense of people and place in his memories of early childhood; people's hair, bandages, wood, desks. Negative emotions are to the forefront. His unhappy time has great detail in it, redolent of shame and failure, encapsulated in his memory of a significant personal incident, which has resulted in a strong sense of fairness for children in his current role. Educational values possibly transferred from his parents and privileged schooling, feature strongly in his story, both in terms of how his experiences influenced him as a teacher, and also him thinking that polytechnics were not quite the places for him to be.

### ***Post school***

Ben had no idea what he should do, and his parents did not push him in any particular direction. He got a job at his father's firm working as a trainee buyer, and after six months training moved to Plymouth and then Truro. He would go back to Exeter at weekends and meet up with his friends who were all at University – he went to stay with friends who were at Oxford for example. He still had no desire to do anything else, and was lazy at this period! Then his father



had to move to Plymouth as the Exeter branch was closed, and his home base was disrupted, as there was not really much space for him in the new house. He was by now getting fed up with his job (they had had a change of manager), and he got offered another job that was based in Exeter. He started work there as a trainee transport manager but it soon became obvious to him that he did not have the experience to deal with the drivers. He gave up work, and went back to his parents, sharing a small room, and did nothing at all for several months. He had no idea what to do, and no thought as to what he could be good at? He wondered, as his parents had always been involved in fostering, whether he should consider social work as an option. Then he looked at his options as a mature student at University and the idea of a sociology degree appealed. He has a friend at Liverpool and went and looked around, and at the age of 22 went to University. He had a great time, but in retrospect he can see that he was still coasting. He found the return to academic work difficult and took a while to settle, but he enjoyed most of the lectures, and got into football. He even borrowed friends' stuff to get him through exams. When he did the sociology of education, he got a placement at the University and a local state nursery that he really enjoyed. He feels he was used to younger children through his family and fostering. Then he got really interested in his dissertation when it was suggested to him that he could do it about football hooliganism. He got a good grade for this. He decided that as he enjoyed working with children, he would apply to do a 3–8 PGCE at a major red brick university. He hated his first day in school but the second placement, in a nursery, was much better. He met his wife, Sarah, on the course. His last placement was also a struggle as the teacher found it hard to leave him alone with the class; he had to be moderated before he passed.

### ***Pre headship***

Unlike the other Heads in this study, Ben worked before going to University because of his poor A level results, and a sense that he had no idea what to do with his life. When he did get to university it appears to have been a very significant time in his development; he talked about his time there at much greater detail than all the others, probably as his schooling and early career were less successful than the others. In fact all through his education, he draws a picture of someone whose confidence not only went up and down, with what he regarded as significant failures, but had strong family support, even when he felt he had let them down. This is

reinforced in the next part of his narrative, where he has a 'rough' year, a head he 'didn't rate', and felt 'close to chucking it in'.

Ben applied for several pools, and in the end both he and Sarah got a job at the same school. Unfortunately, the Head had mental illness problems, and had significant periods of absence. The Deputy was very bitter about the Head, and this made for an unpleasant atmosphere, mitigated only a little by the deputy's dry sense of humour! It was a difficult probationary year, with very little support, in an 'unstable atmosphere'. In the end, he went to talk to the Chair of governors, and then to the LEA. Nothing seemed to change, so he decided to resign and move on. It was very turbulent at the school, as three other staff had already gone. There was a demonstration of parents at the school, and eventually he was summoned to the LEA to explain what was happening. The parents were very supportive. He then got a job in Tilbury for a year, which was going through a change of Head. He then got an A allowance at another primary school for two and a half years. The Head there was 'A bit of a Will Scarlett! (*showman*)', and it was a big school but well organised and friendly. He then left and the new head Ben 'didn't rate'. He was from a 'Christian/scouting' background and Ben felt that he didn't have the staff's interests at heart. By then he and his wife wanted to relocate, and choose a new town, and wrote to all the schools. His wife got a job at a middle school, and he in the feeder first. Then the schools combined and he found the Head not supportive, and 'insecure', you never knew where you were with her. Also, she did not tackle ineffective teachers. He was now in charge of Maths, but had a very difficult class at the same time. He felt close to chucking it all in at this point. In the end, he decided to apply for deputy headships. He had five interviews, which he didn't get, and then was approached to be acting deputy at a Catholic school. Although he is not religious they were looking for someone who could teach year 2. He found the atmosphere at this school completely differed and loved it there. He felt the staff and the Head were dedicated to their jobs, and did it with humour. The Head was also willing to stand up for what she believed and challenge people. He would love to have stayed, and the governors explored the possibility, but as he was not a Catholic, it was not possible. He was offered the opportunity to stay for another year if he had wanted it. He began to look around for other deputy headships. He saw a new school advertised, and he liked the headteacher, and he got it. And, of course, he is now the head.

## Headship

Ben was in his first year of headship when he was interviewed (and the start of his second when he was observed). Again, his teaching career path has a strong sense of ups and downs. Thematically, it can be seen that the *relationships* in all the schools appear to be crucial in getting the best out of him, and healing past difficulties. This may be to do with his own emotions and sense of *fairness* and *self and self esteem*. Some of this can also be seen in the other life history stories (Francesca's loss of her acting headship, James and his secondary school pathway), and would suggest that self-esteem is an important part of the emotional context that makes up headship.

### 7.4 Stories that give substance to feeling

All of the personal life histories in this chapter are unique, yet similar. In analysing the headteachers' life histories, there are many themes that were identified that are relevant to leadership e.g. gender, but the focus here is on the several emotional themes, which replicate some of those seen in the literature, and are drawn out by memories of key people in their lives, performing (acting) a role, and the context (a keen sense of place pervades the stories. These are:

- Relationships and values, especially in the stories in terms of social justice.
- Self and self-esteem without and without the school setting
- Support for self
- Support for others

These themes related to the conceptual framework of emotional textures and the research questions. The challenge of interpretation is in part a hermeneutic one, so I then took the thematic elements above and looked to see if they were related both to each other and the conceptualisation of textures. These connections are outlined in Table 7.1.

**Table 7.1 Emotional textures and the life stories**

<b>Emotional texture</b>	<b>Life theme</b>	<b>Memory</b>
Emotional regulation in leadership: Managing self	Self and self-esteem; support for self; values	Performances (incidents) Sense of place

Managing others	Support for others; values	
Emotion weighted decision-making	Values Sense of Social Justice	Key people
Emotional context	Relationships Key people Values	Sense of place/time

However, it could be argued that although some of these themes relate to emotions, they are not specific just to emotion and feelings. Values, for example could be seen as relevant to each texture because as a concept it is the basis for the way people live their lives, so I have placed it in each. Haydon also notes (2006, p.11) that values is not a technical term, and thus when values are talked about, people are talking about something that is part of most peoples experience, and affect what people do in practice. It could be said that there are some ways of looking at values that are more relevant to emotion and leadership than others. Haydon (p.21), for example suggests that personal qualities are linked to values, as is the fact that these qualities can be developed in communities. Day et al.'s recent work (2006) on teacher effectiveness suggests that 'teachers' capacities to sustain their commitment were influenced by their vales and the contexts is which they lived and worked'. Thus, when discussing life history, the personal and the community are inevitably interlinked.

Emotion weighted decision-making is related to the theme of fairness or social justice. This is drawn out through the way they recount significant stories which are then applied to how the carry out their role as a headteacher. I would argue that incidents such as the one Ben described with the wet pants (thinking that this should not be happening to a child and it is something he tries to remember as a teacher) serve to act as underlying values as these emotions play a part in life decisions such as becoming a teacher. James has a strong sense of this in his narrative. Laura and Francesca's comparisons of their headteachers are also part of emotion-weighted decision-making because they learnt what they did not want to do through their relationships with their headteachers. In order to look at this more closely, the critical incident/epiphanies will now be examined.

## 7.5 Emotional epiphanies

In the first interview, I invited the headteachers to talk to me about events in their professional life that had caused them to have an emotional reaction, either at the time or in retrospect. This elicited various experiences with a strong emotional bias. Some of the life stories also uncovered personal epiphanies, such as Ben's experience as a child, especially if we view them like Denzin as interactional moments and experiences that leave their marks on peoples' lives. These stories however were offered specifically by the headteachers as examples of emotional events. Although most, though not all, of the stories were concerning negative emotional events, this is probably because of the impact of such events upon their practice. This will be discussed further on page 161.

Two particular stories – Eleanor's story of the caretaker and Mary's difficult teacher – both underscore the heads intention of giving the appearance of rationality even under some very difficult emotional pressure, and link both to emotional regulation in leadership and to emotion weighted decision-making. This will be explored after they have been presented.

Eleanor's two incidents are revealing for the aspects of emotion that can be seen within them –the inherent (how she reacted internally 'upsetting' 'uncomfortable' 'terrified' 'worried and frightened physically) and the socially constructed (the aftermath within the school which she had to deal with, difficult people).

### **Eleanor Event One**

Earlier this year the school administrator made a written formal complaint to me about the caretaker. I had to see the caretaker and I found it upsetting as I sort of felt it was in some ways a complaint about me. I knew that that the interview with the caretaker would be difficult, and in fact he stormed out! I just had to deal with it. Later he did apologise, but it left a ...nasty taste. There's still an aftermath of the incident within the school – the governors sorted it by giving the caretaker a verbal warning. It was an uncomfortable feeling and I was only able to share it with the Chair of Gobs and my husband. Who else is there? It's difficult to get hold of other Heads during the day.

### **Eleanor Event Two**

I had a very difficult year group with aggressive boys and children who just didn't get on. One very difficult boy had to be sent home one day. His father was a big man, who had been to prison. The child told father that the teacher had assaulted him. He came into school, and I was terrified. He said, ' I want teacher here NOW, and so I called the deputy and the teacher and was ready to call the police. I felt worried and frightened for the teacher and myself physically. Then the child kicked the teacher, and the father's attitude changed, when he saw what the child did. It was a roller coaster of an experience, and I was quite inexperienced at the time.

Fear and worry were my main emotions. Palpitating heart, shaking, although not outwardly I was later told. I felt ill afterwards. I felt ok afterwards as the father had changed his tune, and I was able to talk it all through with the Deputy. For weeks afterwards I still got panicky feelings such as I had never experienced before.

These incidents also highlight other facets of leading and emotion. The first event was unique as it was the first time she had to deal with an incident involving such emotion. The second is memorable because she told me that in her view the most difficult issues in school are to do with managing adults. Looking back, she would have been more forceful in the first one, but was new and not confident of her knowledge of the teacher. In the second one too she might have been more forceful with the complainant, or as she phrased it – 'Heading things off at the pass'. Eleanor said that she had learnt that it is really important to keep a calm front (emotional regulation), and use a measured tone, especially with parents. The look on your face is important, she suggested, or as she put it: 'Must make sure you are not leaking!' This is a clear example of emotional labour in headship, and emphasises the physical side of emotion as well.

Fineman and others (Oatley & Jenkins, 2003) remind us that shame and embarrassment are two key features of social control. A good example of this was given by Mary, one of the first phase heads, and the way she dealt with an incompetent teacher. She gave me a very detailed account of an incident in her school. She felt it had drained her emotionally.

### **Mary Event One**

I had received parental complaints about a temporary member of staff not allowing children to use the toilet, so I spoke to the teacher about school policy, but the teacher said she did not agree with it. In fact she said she was 'adamant'. This interview took place in my office, and I told her she had to conform to school policy. After I had established the facts, and heard the teacher's hard line, I felt quite angry and also nervous. My own daughter was in this class and one break arrived at my door distraught and wet, because she had been kept in and not allowed to go to the toilet. I got someone to look after her, and went to see the teacher straight away. The teacher was brought up to the Office for an explanation. She said that she was making an example of children who had not learnt their spelling. I explained that this was not school policy, and certainly not part of the spelling strategy. I told the teacher that the children were so frightened that they couldn't learn, and that she must stop it immediately. I also told her that I was very angry. I was now very concerned, so I began observations of lessons. The teacher was told when this would take place, and had to give in planning beforehand. What I saw was awful, and I can describe it as really a holding operation' I went back a week later, and found the work set was now too difficult. The teacher challenged the feedback – 'I feel you are doing this on purpose, challenging me'. The attached inspector was then invited in. Observations were done across the whole school and work sampling in the Year group. It was obvious that levels in this teacher's class were not appropriate. There were more observations by the attached inspector. During the feedback, the teacher became very angry. She shouted, 'I don't know what this bloody woman wants!' and ran out of the school. The situation moved to capability. There were targets and observations for three weeks. The teacher went off with stress for six months. I got an Occupational Health assessment and the teacher didn't come back. I had to teach the class myself for a term because of the disruption. I felt frustration and anger together. I also was disappointed that the teacher could not be helped. I feel that I would have acted quicker if my own daughter had not been in the class.

Both this incident, and Ben's life history feature a strong emotional memory around wetting. This is emotionally strong because of the link to shame and embarrassment, key emotions. In Mary's story overall she is emotional in pursuit of a rational management objective – to have the best teacher in front of that class. The telling of this story showcases the dilemma of the affective/rational interface. Mary had to work

very hard with suppressing her own feelings. Her own values, and what she believed about education and social justice were deeply involved in her recall of the situation, as well as having to separate the roles of parent (emotion of a mother) and headteacher even more than is usual, thus causing more emotional labour for Mary, and possibly her daughter. Both stories are concerned with emotion-weighted decision-making, but the second one more explicitly so.

### **Mary Event Two**

I can tell you about a recent event that concerned one child. He had moved from KS1 to 2, and because it was felt that his teacher was over protective, he was moved to new class, with new peers. He found it hard to settle. New teachers expected him to be difficult I felt. Ways of supporting his behaviour were agreed, but not put into practice. Because of setting, he was taught by more than one teacher. Teachers were resistant to the idea of rewards for appropriate behaviour. His behaviour deteriorated, and I felt disillusioned and angry with the staff, and I talked to them about these feelings. There was flack from other parents. The behaviour support team were called in to observe him. I felt that the teachers were winding the boy up in order to prove to the behaviour support team how difficult he was, so I talked to them about the idea of respect. The Support team said that the child was being put into situations where he couldn't handle his own emotions. I was cross as I felt the staff were being unprofessional. I then did some monitoring myself, but the situation escalated. He became aggressive in the playground, and when I was out of school he was suspended for 2 days. A week later, he became very distressed, and started self-harming, banging head. He was a very angry upset child. Mother was called, and the child was angry with her when she came. Dad arrived and said he was going to remove him from the school. I felt the waves of anger from the parents, and was disappointed and sorry that the school had not been able to help. I felt that what the school had seen was probably only the tip of the iceberg for that child.

Both situations were frustrating and caused her to feel anger and disappointment. She felt there was a need to remain professional and not fly off the handle with any of the people involved (regulation). She feels it is appropriate though to let people know



why and how she was angry (context). She felt, in the second case that she had listened to the staff but they had not been able to see that it was their behaviour too. She was particularly sure that talking through situations is the best support – someone who will listen and support, especially when you have self doubt. It was the fact that there are huge emotional expectations of a Headteacher that particularly concerned Mary.

These epiphanies seem clearly to me to link to all three emotional textures and the embedded themes. All have a clear relationship to emotion and leadership, and all of them are clearly of personal concern. Two other events that were told to me are also useful to look at in terms of seeing even more clearly the subtleties of the emotional textures of leadership. James, the most experienced Head, and Francesca told these stories. Francesca's clearly relates back to her life history and emotional support.

This story came very readily to James, and he admitted it was something that had remained very strongly in his memory, and which he stated that he occasionally mulled over even now. This is perhaps because of his strong sense of fairness which was noted earlier.

### **James Event One**

The first situation that comes to mind was an incident at my previous school with a mother and her daughter. The child was the daughter of older parents who were quite protective of her. The parents came in to say that their daughter was being picked on and bullied. They claimed that she had been called names and spat on. I listened to them and said I would look into the situation and get back to them. When I had done so, I invited the parents into school. The mother and the daughter came. I explained that my investigations had discovered that the daughter was part of the problem and that she had caused it, partially, by name-calling. I was really trying to get to the truth. However, although the mother listened she didn't believe her daughter had done the things that I was suggesting. We had a good discussion about the events and I felt that we had agreed to differ, especially since the other child in the incident had apologised. Afterwards I felt it had been a very successful meeting, and that the mother had been supportive. However, within the week she sent in a letter of complaint suggesting that I was bullying her! I was very surprised not only because I thought the meeting had gone reasonably well but also because I was so used to

dealing with this sort of situation as a head teacher. I felt that the parent did not like the view of the daughter that was being revealed. The whole incident has left an emotional scar. The official complaint made me wonder in all my next parent interviews 'What are people really thinking?' I spend a lot of time trying to pick up the pieces from incidents like this. The governors looked into the incident which in the end was the mother's word against mine. Finally, it was resolved by them all agreeing to differ and the child stayed at the school. I felt that the child never got the best out of her time in school. In a way I felt that I had failed and let them down. I learnt that being fair and open doesn't always work out. It has led to a certain reservation in what I now say to parents, and I am certainly more aware of body language.

This can be set alongside his life story where he is clear about how much he values good relationships, and also, as an experienced head he felt he had the skills to work out this problem, but the emotions of all the participants were stronger than he had anticipated. He had to regulate his feelings at the time of the incident, but given that he stills mulls it over several years later, it would appear that it touched him particularly because his usual skills at reading others emotions were not working.

Francesca's critical incident relates well to the theme that comes out in her life story – that of emotional support in school. It is one of the rare positive events described,

It was a school concert, and there were a group of parents standing waiting. I had been at the school about a year, and thought I knew enough to pick up vibes and knew you rarely get a committed opinion from anyone. A child came up to me in front of all the parents and said 'I am really glad that you came to this school', and the parents said so are we. It was an affirmation of what I was doing at the school, and what you believe in. It was just a group of parents, not the school association but an average group of parents. I felt it was initiated because the child had said it. I learnt that I needed affirmation, and that as a Head you rarely got it. It was a really unsolicited recommendation of what you are doing.

Taking both her life story and this into account strengthens the idea of emotional context being very important in the exercise of leadership. This will be looked at again in the context of Ben in Chapter Eight.

## 7.6 Summary and looking forward

It is very apparent from these lives and the stories that the heads tell that the affective side of leadership is very important, whether they are male or female, experienced or inexperienced, in large or small schools. These stories reinforce the overall picture of the complexities of emotion, and the relationship between cognition and emotion, which is key to a complete picture. All of them made reference to their own belief systems, educational philosophy or core values drawn from their childhood experiences. George (2000) suggests that feelings play an important role in leadership because it is likely that a diversity of feelings influence leadership effectiveness. The tendency in telling stories about critical incidents was for the emphasis to be on the negative aspects. Negative emotions expressed in re-telling incidents, George argues, can foster careful information processing (p.1031). This can be seen by all the recalled detail. These intense negative emotions may also act as signals to point the leader in the direction of the issue that requires immediate attention in that particular situation. In other words, this could be describing emotion-weighted decision-making. The idea that headteachers can be emotional in pursuit of rational management objectives has not received much focus in the leadership literature, nor has the beneficial effects of negative emotion. As McLaughlin argues in his critical study of emotional intelligence as a concept (2005), there is a risk of emotional development being disconnected from the wider aims of the school. Simplification of emotion to ignore the relationship between the cognitive and the affective, can lead to a danger of under conceptualisation or misconceptualisation (p.27).

The importance of socialisation to the development of emotion (Matthews et al., 2002), and leadership, is an important point which is also rarely argued in the leadership literature. The process of socialisation into teaching, and then into leadership roles, requires certain behaviours in public. As developing leaders, teaching staff learn certain ways of looking, sounding or even 'being'. The expectations of parents and children, perceived, or real, may reinforce this. These stories show emotion as a key part of the collective life of the school. This process of emotion shaping means that professionals and their client groups are complicit in defining the boundaries of what is, and is not, appropriate emotional display (Fineman 2001, p.227). Headteachers can unwittingly support the notion that ideal 'professional' behaviour is rational and carefully emotionally controlled when asked to talk about leadership behaviours. This may well be illusory, as through the stories

they tell outside the official process, the control aspect is emphasised, but not idealised by them. This process has been described (James, 2000) as a recognition and understanding of the political environment created by emotions and the intricacies of managing it to make fundamental and deep-seated transformation.

For the final part of the analysis, I will take further the inter-relationship between what actually happens in school, and the stories that are told, by concentrating in some detail on Ben, the least experienced Headteacher in the study, and his story, critical incidents and the observation I carried out. The aim will be to focus on mapping and interpreting the data overall, and move the study towards discussion of what all this adds to the theorisation of primary school headship (Research Question 4)

## **CHAPTER 8:**

# **BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER: OBSERVATION AND ANALYSIS**

*Observation is not merely looking, and reporting is not simply writing, they are the product and a part of the process of seeing.*

(Southworth, 1995, p.53)

### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter will initially focus on Ben, the youngest and most inexperienced headteacher in the group, whom I observed in his school setting. In my role as observer, I made extensive field notes, kept timings of interactions, described settings and began to form informal categories as I worked in the field. I will look at both the observation and Ben's critical incidents and relate the discussion to his life story. From there, I will look at how this relates to the issues that were discussed in the literature and the interviews, in particular emotional textures, life history themes and the epiphanies. This analysis is part of mapping and interpreting all the data, which will foreground the concluding discussions in Chapter Nine. Therefore, the observation is both part of the empirical research and a key means of drawing the threads of the whole study together

For this observational part of the study, I was strongly influenced by Southworth (1995). Although his work was an ethnographic enquiry, and he spent much more time in the school (thirty five full days, and ten half days), I too wished 'to develop insights which had practical value for teachers and headteacher' (p.33) using observation and interview. My focus was different, but the process of data analysis was similar. Southworth suggests (p.47) that the process of data analysis occurs before you start the fieldwork, as you clarify the problem, and continues into the writing up of the observation. In other words, he argues, analysis is ongoing and occurs at several levels. This chapter is focused on not just the data for the observation, but an analysis of the whole. In other words, the observational analysis is used as a means of bringing together the different strands of the research, so that the whole story can be told.

## 8.2 An overview of the school setting

Pennington First School is a medium sized school with just over 200 pupils on role (for more details of the school, see page 106). Ben, the headteacher was new to the post of headteacher when I first visited in the autumn, but he had worked in the school since its opening several years previously. Thus, he was well known to staff, parents and children. It is important to remember that the purpose of the observation was to look at emotion and leadership in real time and in a particular context with someone who I had already interviewed extensively. It enabled me to have a fuller and more rounded picture of Ben as a teacher, headteacher and person, which in turn enabled me to reflect on his interview material, and draw together the common threads. To begin with, I will give an overview of what was happening in the school during the observation.

I want to make brief mention of the layout both of the school and of Ben's office, as these were important in terms of the flow of the school, and the way they reflected Ben's view of himself as a headteacher. The school has an innovative design. Entered via a small porch, with the school office on the right, the corridor leads straight into the main classroom area of the school. Just before it does so, a left turn leads to staff cloakrooms, Ben's office, and the assembly hall. Thus, the headteacher has some privacy from the rest of the school, yet at the same time, there were regular groups passing his door en route to the hall. He only once closed his door the whole time I was there, and that was to deal with a distressed parent. The main classroom area of the school has a shape that words cannot adequately describe. Suffice to say that all the classrooms and the staffroom were entered from a shared central area, and that this area formed the axis of activity where people met, discussed and observed school life.

We had originally arranged the three-day observation schedule around a school open morning for prospective parents and it was only after the first day that this changed, due to bereavement. The first day at the school consisted of both formal and informal interactions with people, both in Ben's office and around the school. Two teachers being absent unexpectedly that morning also started the day off, and he had to make arrangements for covering them in class. He also took on support roles such as the role of helper on a short field trip around the local area, and photographing the play area for use in a display for open morning. Most of the afternoon was then taken up

with preparations for open morning specifically getting the photos ready and setting up displays.

The second day I observed was five days after the first and open morning had already taken place. We discussed my attendance at parents evening instead. The day had an unexpected start when a minor car accident took place outside school, but the focus of the day was on the upcoming parents evenings (which I was now to observe), and preparations for the forthcoming visit of the Primary Learning Advisor (PLA). There were also quite a few administrative tasks such as dealing with emails alone, forms with the school secretary, the school assessment plan with the deputy, and interactions with the pupils.

The third day observed was directly after Day Two. Ben's focus for this day was the actual visit of the PLA, and more planning work to do with a bid for a nursery as part of the school. Ben had several one to one meetings on that day. The day was complicated by mass observation – myself observing Ben, and the PLA having with her the regional director observing her. I noted that I was becoming part of the school's fixtures when a class went past Ben's open door, and a child was heard to remark 'That lady's in there again'.

Finally, I attended and observed a parents evening involving the whole school, where Ben took part in interactions with teachers, parents and pupils. He did not introduce me to parents, and interestingly, no one asked who I was or what I was doing. Partly, this lack of interest in me is, I think, explained by the way Ben conducted the evening. He placed himself in the open area that lead into all the classrooms so that he could informally greet parents. None of the discussion that he had that evening was of a very private nature, for which he would have used his office. In fact the only time I did not observe him was on Day Two at his request, when a parent who was crying arrived and he took her into his office.

I now turn to the observation itself.

### **8.3 The observation**

It is important to stress again that the purpose of the observation was to contextualise the interview data. Unlike Southworth, for example, it was not as part of a greater study that elicited the opinions of staff, parents and students. Rather it was an opportunity to begin to understand Ben in the social setting of the school, view first hand how he dealt with people, and occasionally prompt him to reflect on the

relationship between what was happening and his emotional self. Most of the time, however, I tried to be as unobtrusive as possible, although making notes openly and later I wrote these up to give as faithful a representation as I could of what I had seen. This was part of general recording, an example of which is given in Appendix B. This was both verified and discussed with Ben, in the context of the interviews and the incidents. Given that this work is all about the affective, it would not be surprising if my writings were influenced by 'the constant interplay between the personal and emotional' (Southworth, 1995, p.46). I have tried to be conscious of this, especially when what was happening in school does not appear, at least on the surface, to have anything to do with the overall topic i.e. when Ben was dealing with paperwork. Ben was happy at all times to answer my questions even after the event if it helped understand the topic of emotion and leadership better.

From the observation, it was clear that although recording the data was complex, much of what I observed appeared, at least on the surface, to be mundane, uncomplicated, and unrelated to emotion and leadership. As mentioned earlier, Gronn (2003, pages 79-80) suggests that in observation the notion of an event is contestable in itself because defining where the event begins and ends is complex, as is the difficulty of who attributes purpose to an activity and which ones. Notwithstanding this difficulty, I choose to define an event by Ben's involvement with it in real time e.g. when he left his office whilst doing paperwork to deal with a visitor, this would be the end of one event and the beginning of another, even if afterwards he returned to the paperwork, because he would then need to engage with it again.

Capturing the data during the observation is complicated, and in itself selective, as any research cannot encapsulate everything that is happening in a situation, even if the focus is only on the physical within the researcher's field of vision. Once again, interpretation is a key issue, and in order that the analysis stayed focused, every evening when considering the day's observation, and writing it up, I returned to the focus of my research in the search for new insights into emotion and leadership. Because observation was only a small part of the research, at all times I was conscious that the data recorded in the school was part of the greater study, where the focus was emotion and leadership. In particular, I undertook the observation at a time when I had completed all the other interviews, and begun to form the concept of emotional textures from the literature. Thus, the observation served as a way of beginning to bring together all the aspects of the research in a way that I did not anticipate. In particular, it made me look again at the classification of textures, and



not only the relationships of each texture to each other, but also the relative importance of each in the overall understanding of emotion and leadership.

I began to analysis the observation data in terms of what was beginning to come together from the other parts of the study. In other words, to take the textures, and the life themes, and see if there were particular events that added to the analysis. Before looking at the events, I want to return briefly to the original architects of emotional intelligence, Salovey and Mayer. I have explained previously that their conceptualisation helped move me towards the idea of textures in leadership. Indeed, their view of regulation of emotion in self and others comes out clearly in the analysis as a whole. The third process that they view (as part of EI) is the utilisation of emotion in flexible planning, creative thinking and motivation. These aspects were the ones that I felt were both most and least likely to be observed in Ben’s school. Most likely, because I could attribute a person’s response to Ben as being part of the way he motivated people, and least likely for two reasons. Firstly, I could easily misattribute a response. Secondly, making judgements on planning and creative thinking might be similarly flawed. Bearing both of these in mind, it is not sensible to over claim for the observation. However, the observation served a key purpose – of bringing together the different parts of the research. This is shown overall in the following Table 8.1, and will be developed further below through my own reflections.

**Table 8.1**

<b>Emotional texture</b>	<b>Life theme/memory</b>	<b>Observational events</b>
Emotional regulation in leadership: Managing self	Self and self-esteem; support for self; values	Seriously ill child. Close staff relationships.
Managing others	Support for others; performance (as in acting); values	Seriously ill child. Assembly. Parents Evening.
Emotion weighted decision-making	Values	Seriously ill child protocol.
Emotional context	Relationships Key people Otherness or not belonging Sense of place/time Values	Calm, ordered and friendly place. Key relationships with all stakeholders – good. Head physically available.

What the table does not show is how observational events that relate to the textures influenced the mundane and the everyday. For example, the close staff relationships that I observed were in a context in which the ordinary could be carried out efficiently and with purpose - the emotional context of leadership. I will return to this after I have looked more closely at how the events linked to themes and textures from the rest of the data.

## **8.4 Observational events**

The events that were observed could have been categorised in various ways, perhaps related to people and tasks. However, because the focus of the research is emotion and leadership, I felt that people and tasks would be an artificial separation as part of my argument is that people and tasks are inseparable. It seemed more useful to concentrate on aspects in terms of frequency, those that appeared to occur on a regular, recurring basis during the observation, and those that were tied to a specific emotional event that occurred during the observation. By concentrating on regular occurrence, this also served to emphasise the importance of both the emotional context and emotional regulation in the everyday life of a head.

Many day-to-day events in the school would appear on the surface to be management tasks that make the organisation run more efficiently. Some examples of this would be:

- Ben 'touching base' with the school secretary throughout the day about matters ranging from supply teachers to proof reading letters for parents.
- Ben preparing the board for the open day and taking photos for it at break time.
- Ben moving around school before the school day, and during the parents evening.
- Ben answering letters and emails.

However, these tasks could also be viewed as only having meaning within the emotional context of the organisation. In other words, such apparently mundane tasks would only work well if the emotional context was conducive to it. Other tasks could be viewed as more directly related to emotion:

- The seriously ill child: Ben realised the impact that having such a chronically ill child had on the staff and dealt with this both in terms of protocol (what they would do if the worst happened in school), and also the staffs' feelings,

arranging for them to have opportunities to discuss their feelings together or with trained colleagues.

- Close staff relationships, as shown by banter in staffroom, people asking Ben's view. In terms of headship as performance, he gave the appearance of calm to the staff and children (Hochschild), even although he was not always feeling that way, as he revealed when he talked to me.
- Good relationships on Parents Evening – parents were free to express their views to Ben, and both parties listened to each other, It was mainly informal contact.
- Environment: I noted that the school was a calm, ordered and friendly place for the visitor. This is related to emotion and leadership because it enabled me as a visitor to feel comfortable with my role. Those contextual aspects are also very important to allow the core purpose of teaching and learning to happen for the children and the staff.

The observation fulfilled two purposes for me. Firstly, it confirmed the impression of Ben as an emotional being that I was building up in my mind from the interviews. By emotional being, I do not mean that he was exceptional as a headteacher in terms of being in tune with his own emotions and those of his staff. Rather, Ben was ready to acknowledge the emotion part of his role in a clear and consistent way. Although it could be argued that this is a biased picture because of the importance of the researcher wanting this to be so for the research, I believe that careful observation helped to reveal the veracity of this picture, as well as informal discussions with the staff, It could be argued that this could have been taken further in terms of interviewing the staff about Ben. However, my aim was to see whether what Ben had told me about himself appeared to be accurate in terms of his leadership practices, and the observation confirmed his explanations. Secondly, it confirmed to me the importance of the inter-relationship between the person and the social context. If I were to use a metaphor to analyse how Ben fitted into the school, it would seem to me that the idea of a 'comfy shoe' is very apt. He and the social context were working together. His leadership was enabled by the emotional context, and in return the emotional context enabled his leadership.

## **8.5 Ben's emotional epiphanies**

Ben's life history was full of accounts of relationships at work as being very important in getting the best out of him, and healing past difficulties. His life history was also

one that suggested that his sense of self and self-esteem had wavered at important points in both his schooling and his career as a teacher. When I first met him, he was a very new head, and still, I think viewed his identity as a teacher rather than a headteacher. This relates to the incidents described, as it is interesting that the first one is related to work as a teacher, and therefore not directly relevant to headship. In terms of emotion, however, it resonates because of the concern (relationship) he felt and that he saw reflected in the parent of the missing child.

Before I became a Head, I had a missing child who vanished from the playground as his mother was picking him up. Mother got very upset, and a search started. I found him at his house and brought him back to school. I remember particularly vividly that the mother has a 'wet face' and the child saw that his mother was visibly upset, and probably would never do such a thing again.

In terms of his own development, and also his own self esteem, Ben learnt that he could not only cope with the sudden emergency, but he felt that he was in control and could act logically throughout, despite the deep emotions involved. Although his feelings were very strong, he was able to present a calm front in the face of the worrying incident, and keep his emotion in check until later. In other words, he realised that he was able to regulate his emotions if he needed to. The other critical incident he told is more intimate, and in its own way, more revealing of what he believes about emotion and himself as a leader.

My mobile rang whilst I was teaching and it was to tell me that my mother-in-law had died suddenly and unexpectedly. I just left the classroom and went. When I got back to school, I felt it was important to talk about it with the class. I feel the same way about weekend news. Happy and sad should be shared, and children should realise that the teachers have a personal life too. This is very important in establishing good relationships in school.

His deep respect for young children, which came across in his life story, is shown here, and was also observed by me in the school. Ben learnt that sometimes the emotional labour required in a situation is too much, and that he was not able to regulate his emotion, or appear logical in such a personal circumstance. It is noticeable that he reveals in this incident a depth of emotion that might be suspect in a woman – too emotional, but he was the only one of the five headteachers to

address a personal family emotion directly, He would normally never leave a class alone (although he immediately made arrangements to get it covered). He feels that he receives good emotional support at that critical time at home, and within school. As with his life history, he told me that he feels it is the emotional support in school from other staff and parents that makes it worthwhile tackling difficult issues in education. His own evaluation of support and his own well-being is subjective, but the observation did allow for other viewpoints to be taken into account, not only by my own views but by informal discussion with the staff in the staffroom over the lunchtimes. I noted in Chapter Two that the literature does suggest (Diener & Lucas, 2000) that subjective well being is important to emotional interpretation. I want to move now to consider where the observation of Ben takes the study as a whole.

## **8.6 Why was the observation helpful to the study?**

The observational part of Ben's case study was useful to the overall thesis in two main ways, which I will outline here. Firstly, it enabled me to see Ben in a context with which he was very familiar and comfortable, and this meant that I was able to relate all the parts of that particular case study to each other – the interviews, the life history and the observation. This gave me much more of an insight in the complete person that is Ben, partly through analysis of the data and reflection on the literature, but also there was an intuitive element, which is within the hermeneutic tradition. Insight into a situation is a complex mix of cognitive analysis and emotion. Insight is achieved often, 'not by laborious pondering, but rather at a stroke, whereby patterns in complex wholes are illuminated by a kind of mental flashlight, giving an immediate and complex overview. (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000 p. 52) So, reflections into the overall empirical research were the first thing that the observational phase achieved, and these are detailed in section 8.7.

Secondly, these reflections on the overall research helped me towards both answering the research questions and also developing the main arguments of the thesis. These two critical developments are outlined and developed below.

## **8.7 Reflection**

In the methodology chapter, I argued that reflexivity would be necessary in order to make this study worthwhile. At all times, I have tried to acknowledge what I bring to the situation as a researcher, and indeed have seen writing about this as part of showing the workings for the study. My relationships with all the case study heads

allowed me to ask difficult questions, but may also have hampered me as I might have missed something crucial, perhaps for fear of giving offence or because familiarity blinded me to the obvious. This is why examining the case study data in the light of the observation of Ben helped me to see whether (in one case at least) the picture from the interviews fitted with the picture in practice. Holliday (2002 p. 175) argues:

Researchers need to show their working in their writing as explicitly as possible so that they can be fully accountable for *how* they have managed their own subjectivity, *how* they have responded to the worlds and the sensitivities of the research setting and the people in it, and *how* the data they have chosen to present supports what they want to say. Another important ingredient of rigour and validity in qualitative research is making sure that the researcher's claims are appropriate to the data she has collected and the argument she has constructed around it – and that these claims are true to the people and their affairs within the setting, without exaggeration. Underpinning this entire process, the researcher must continue to account for her own ideology, professional-academic culture and discourse and monitor how far this influences the claims made

The section that follows shows how I have responded to the sensitivities of the research setting and the people in it, and how the data in all the phases of the research supports my arguments. It will also be the start of answering the research questions, a process which will be completed in the next chapter.

### **8.7.1 *Emotional labour and support***

Although I already 'knew' Ben, I learnt a great deal about him that I did not know before the research for this thesis took place – his childhood in particular was a surprise to me, as was the depth of feeling with which he told his story. This was the longest interview that I conducted in the study, and it highlighted for me that the appearance of competence at leadership in a work setting is underpinned by emotional labour. This labour is apparently far greater for some people than others, and relates to both the past and the present context of their lives, within in an educational climate that does not often allow the personal to become visible. Visibility can open up a headteacher to criticism, of 'being emotional' and also not being able to cope. Ironically, this labour means that by the time that the headteacher has admitted their inability to keep up the labour under pressure, it may be too late for

their physical and mental well being (Ashforth & Tomiuk, 2000, Carlyle & Woods, 2002, West-Burnham & Ireson, 2006).

Talking with Ben, and observing his interactions with the staff at Pennington caused me to return to some data that I had not really taken into account in the initial analysis. This was material concerning support for headteachers. I have already discussed which people heads were most likely to discuss problems with, but watching a relatively new head at work lead me to look back at the initial interviews and in particular the response of two more experienced heads to the question – Has Headship become less difficult as you have become more experienced? James and Eleanor talked about the differences in support for them between when they started as heads and the present day. James suggested that a key difference for him was that when he started his link advisor was able to take time to talk about James as a person, asking how he was, how the family were etc. before moving on to school issues. James said that this is in stark contrast to the current visits from the Local Authority that always seem to be in a rush, and focus on the targets for SATS at Key Stage 2. James argued that although the former was less rigorous, and he did approve of the new emphasis on targets and evaluation, there was now no opportunity for him to reflect with a knowledgeable other about the nature of headship and the pressures in school. Eleanor mentioned that if she had a magic wand and could be given anything she needed to help her as a headteacher, she would ask for a confidential support person to whom she could talk without fear of judgement or comeback of any kind. This insight was developed further with Ben, who found it useful, he said, to have me to reflect on things with, without any danger of being thought in some way inadequate. Here you have a duality of leadership and emotion. Emotional labour is needed at greater and greater levels in order to present the accepted rational front to stakeholders, which means that the headteacher does not feel able to stop the labour, and at the same time, there are very few available people professionally with whom he/she could share the difficulties of the job.

It is clear that there is potential for a huge disconnection between shown emotion and private feeling, but the stress of emotional labour can be overstated as well. The headteachers were sometimes positively gleeful when they talked animatedly about playing a role –examples such as ‘eyes and teeth’ (Francesca), ‘acting the clown (Laura) ‘Must make sure you are not leaking!’(Eleanor) can be viewed like this. Ben seemed to find it useful and perhaps comforting in terms of his own self and self-esteem to play the role of head. Fineman puts it this way ‘Some are more than

content to 'fake in good faith' in the service drama.' (Fineman 2000c, p.5) How a headteacher manage the boundaries between 'faking in good faith' and excessive emotional labour is one of the insights generated by observing Ben.

### **8.7.2 Emotional context**

Observing Ben also reaffirmed the idea of the importance of emotional context. The emotional context of the school – the relationships within, both public and private, elides and interfaces with the inner emotional context of the headteacher. Waldron (2000) when discussing relational and emotional experiences at work, notes that 'all organisational emotion is relational' (p.65). This is true of emotional labour and support for heads as discussed above. The observation highlights what Waldron calls the interdependent nature of work roles in some organisations that creates the need for collective emotional performance. The idea of collective emotional performance reflects the emotional side of teaching and headship already discussed in the literature review (Hargreaves, 2000, James, 2000), but goes further as he suggests (p.66) that certain kinds of emotion are experienced in such places because people have to work so closely together. As he puts it, 'Private and public dimensions of work are in constant tension...at work, relationship violations can be humiliatingly public...(this) can have the effect of intensifying emotional reactions' (p.67). Mary and the difficult teacher would be a good exemplification of this, I was not in Ben's school long enough to witness any such relationship violations, and although it would be foolish to suggest that they never happened, I feel confident to suggest that the emotional context of the school was such that their impact would be mitigated. This in no way negates the importance of the tension that occurs when public and private collide. Waldron puts it succinctly when he notes that emotion has the power to define obligation to others in the workplace, and that one of its functions may be to define the boundaries between formal and informal rights (p.71). So, in the school, Ben would have the right as headteacher to point out errors, as he did, gently but firmly when one teacher was not able to manage the timings at Parents Evening effectively. Her emotional reaction to this was crucial in how others that were in the area at the time (the whole centre of the school is a large shared workspace), interpreted Ben's skills as a leader, and whether this was appropriate. Because of shared obligations on parents evening timings, and the emotional context of the school, this incident was accepted by the teacher as being a learning experience in public, and afterwards was laughed off in the company of other teachers, which of course may be a social defence in itself.



Eleanor suggested that if the Head is not calm, the school is not calm. As discussed, this calmness may involve a great deal of emotional labour, but it can also be to do with those emotions that the headteacher brings to the school from their outside life, their past and their personal histories. Observing Ben was helpful in this respect. Although he was a new headteacher, he was not new to the school, and the comfort levels of all the people I saw him deal with were high. I used the metaphor of an old shoe above, but this does not really go far enough. As Fineman (2000c p. 2) notes, 'emotions are intersubjective, a product of the way systems of meaning are created and negotiated between people'. The emotional context of Pennington was such (staff together from new, Ben there from the start) that Ben was able to behave as naturally or authentically as anyone can in a professional context. This enabled him to utilise emotion as a tool to maintain good workplace relationships, as long as it was seen to be genuine by the other staff. A good example of this was his concern for the very sick child, and the systems he was putting in place to support the staff, and help them to move forward in the event of the child dying at school. Again, genuine emotions can release emotional tension, and also signal to the viewer the presence of relational trust and acceptance of each others individuality (Waldron 2000, p.74–75). Building on these insights leads me to frame the concept of the personal leadership narrative.

## **8.8 Framing the personal leadership narrative**

Primary headteachers have to perform a delicate emotional balancing act most of the time. Whilst building a climate of genuine positive emotion where acceptance and trust are key, they also need to give due regard themselves to the emotional consequences of their actions to the school as a whole. This finding will be explored further in Chapter Nine. For the moment, I want to explore how this vital task of relationship maintenance can become progressively more difficult to achieve if their private face of the headteacher is emotionally out of tune with his/her public face. Closer study of the headteacher's own emotional construct of themselves as a leader came to the fore in the case study of Ben e.g. when discussing past failures and how these were resolved, the act of telling the story appeared to be helpful in its own right, and it is this that I wish to open up next for discussion.

Narrative and the power of story has featured strongly in this research, both in terms of the tales people tell about themselves and others (collective stories), and also in my overall reflective writing approach, which in many senses tells a story about

emotion and leadership. Ben's case reminded me strongly of the view expressed earlier by Briner (p.50) that emotion occurs in the context of our personal history, past, present and anticipated future. Encouraging the headteachers to tell me stories about their lives, unconsciously led them to tell me what I have termed their own 'personal leadership narrative'. The power of the personal leadership narrative, or the story that leaders tell about themselves and how it influences their own leadership of others, is underlined by Ben's case study.

Ben's personal leadership narrative is not just the facts of his personal history. His personal story influences the leadership narrative in subtle emotional ways. His unhappy childhood, low self-esteem as a teenager and parental values have been utilised by him to create a different situation for the children in his care, especially when he was first teaching. His leadership narrative indicates a striving for authenticity as a leader. Notions of authenticity are contested in the psychological literature, but the definition that is most relevant is given by Ashforth and Tomiuk (2000, p.184) who define authenticity as the extent to which a person behaves according to what they consider to be their true and genuine self. Although such definitions are bound by deeper questions about what is the self, and whether authenticity is contextual in itself, this definition struck me as particularly relevant to primary school headteachers. Earlier (p.10) I referred to Gunter's suggestion that the headteacher's professional identity may be an intrinsic part of a person's life more generally. The idea of a personal leadership narrative takes this further. It enables the headteacher to believe in the authenticity of their leadership by valuing themselves in the context of the narrative that they have woven. A personal leadership narrative can enhance or decrease their subjective emotional well-being.

Ben's personal leadership narrative leads him to believe in the power of relationships to move people forward and that it is through supportive relationships that he has become a stronger person, teacher, father, and headteacher. His leadership narrative is authentic to him but shows the way that the concept of the self can fluctuate over time. When he was first interviewed, he was only just beginning to be a headteacher. By the time of the observation, his surface acting (Hochschild, 1979) of the role of headteacher had developed into a deeper identity of headteacher, and was, as such, authentic to him.

The concept of a personal leadership narrative emphasises the individual must attend to how they feel about themselves as leaders, which in turn influences how

they engage with the feelings of others within the social context of the school. After in depth interviewing of primary headteachers, Pascal and Ribbins (1998 p. 22) noted:

It doesn't matter how many courses you've been on, and how much you know intellectually about the process of being a head if you don't develop an appreciation of yourself as a person...you will never make a good head.

Narratives are a powerful tool to help headteachers make some of their implicit personal values explicit, both to themselves and others, and have been explored as part of leadership development (Bush & Glover, 2004, p. 17). They note that Thody (1997) argues for the place of story telling techniques in leadership development. Personal leadership narratives, as conceptualised here, are different to a leadership development opportunity where participants share reflections in order to create a climate for understanding. A personal leadership narrative is more concerned with the way that a headteacher conceptualises his or her own emotional leadership path internally, although it may be narrated to others externally. This idea will be further discussed in the concluding chapter.

## **8.9 Summary**

This chapter has dealt with the observational phase of the research with one of the case study headteachers, Ben. The focus has been both on the social relations of the school, and the person of the headteacher. The personal has been illuminated through the stories Ben tells about his work and his life, both combining together to help understand further where the emotions of leadership reside. I have taken findings of the research, from literature to interviews to observation, and looked at how the textures, themes and observational events interact, and expanded on how this has caused me to critically reflect upon emotional labour and emotional management. Finally, I have looked more consciously at the idea of a personal leadership narrative, both as a concept for individual heads, and as a tool for headteacher development. Chapter Nine will pick these ideas up, and concentrate on the research questions, bringing the thesis to a conclusion.

## **CHAPTER 9:**

### **CONCLUSIONS – PERSONAL AND PRACTICAL WISDOM**

*The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but having new eyes.*

(Marcel Proust)

#### **9.1 Introduction**

Russell and Lemay (2000, p.491) describe the subject of emotion as:

Two fascinating topics sometimes confused with each other. One is human emotion, a perennial mystery. The second topic is the human understanding of emotion. This second topic is sometimes thought to be merely a surrogate for the first. In our view, the second topic is fully as profound and mysterious as the first, and fully as worthy of study.

As the study has progressed, a key insight has been that emotion is encircled and interpreted through human understandings. In other words, the biological and psychological aspects of emotion are mediated both by the social setting, and the life history of the people involved. This thesis has been framed as a journey through emotion and educational leadership, in order to investigate emotion and leadership through the stories primary headteachers tell, and thus to contribute to the knowledge base of this area. The destination has always been to seek to understand more clearly in what ways emotion and leadership are connected. The journey has travelled through the literature on emotion and leadership, taking in literature both from research into emotion and research into leadership. I have located primary headteachers' lives in a more holistic framework, that of the personal leadership narrative, and argued for a closer connection between the two concepts, viewing emotion as inherent to the practice of leadership rather than separate from it (Crawford & James, 2006). This location in the personal has also begun to reveal the importance of the gender dimension in emotion. As Southworth (1995, p.1) also found, the terrain of the journey was sometimes familiar and sometimes new, and this particular thesis is an initial mapping of the issues, which captures some of the richness of the area for more extensive research with larger groups of headteachers, both primary and secondary.

This study was undertaken to investigate the literature about emotion that was not explicitly concerned with educational leadership in order to add to the knowledge base of leadership. The research also sought to value the personal voice and life stories of educational leaders. Thirdly, the research re-focused on primary school headship, rather than leadership throughout the organisation.

Drawing on research both within leadership studies, and in the more general work on emotion and feeling, I have suggested that it is in social relationships, and the stories that are told about such relationships, that the emotions of leadership can be productively examined. Indeed Kemper (2004, p.46) argues that:

A very large class of human emotions results from real, anticipated, imagined, or recollected outcomes of social relations.

The epigram at the start of this chapter is particularly relevant to this concluding chapter. In a real sense this research has not sought out new landscapes. It has taken a familiar setting – the primary school, and its titular head and looked at it with new eyes. The person of the primary head, or what I have called their ‘emotional being’ is a significant part of the social relationships of the primary school, and pivotal to the way emotions are managed in the school. The personal side of headship is part of the overall emotional coherence of the primary school. Whilst research into emotion has signposted the importance of ‘emotion as inherent’, much of educational leadership studies have shied away from considering ‘leadership as inherent’ because this may wrongly suggest trait theories where leaders were seen as ‘born not made’ (Law & Glover, 2000, pages 21-22). The twin concepts of ‘emotion as inherent’ and ‘emotion as socially constructed’ evoke a perspective on educational leadership that re asserts the importance of the personal side of emotion, whilst at the same time not sidelining as unimportant the social interactions between leaders and followers. This approach aims to give the reader the opportunity to make new interpretations, a point acknowledged by Elliott:

To acknowledge that what we are writing is a narrative, and not simply a transparent representation of the realities of the research process is also to foreground the role of the imagined audience in shaping the narrative. (...) Narratives are a social product whose form is necessarily shaped by the relation of the author to his/her audience.

(2005, pages 165-166)

By looking at the research questions, the potential of a clearer, more coherent approach to emotion and educational leadership is put forward; one that acknowledges the power of emotion to sustain and drive primary headship.

This final chapter examines the research questions in the light of the study, and sets out the key findings of the work. The research has drawn together new perspectives from the affective literature and empirical work with headteachers by using an iterative process of familiarisation and examination of the literature; identifying a possible thematic framework; collecting the case study data and applying the thematic framework to it; reading the data across the whole, and mapping and interpreting the data. Specifically the four key research questions, and the findings of the research are discussed as a stimulus for further theorising and research. Finally, I will sum up the thesis by providing some final thoughts. These will include what I perceive were the difficulties in the research, and discuss what I would have done differently if I was to start this journey again. I will also outline some comments to indicate where I feel the research has importance, and originality.

Firstly, I want to return to the research questions related to emotion, leadership and the primary school headteacher, which were posed in Chapter One. Specifically, these were:

1. Is the headteacher's own emotional management important to their leadership practice and if so, in what ways?
2. What part do personal histories play in the way that primary headteachers view emotion, feeling, and leadership?
3. How does research into emotion enrich educational leadership studies, in particular our knowledge of primary headship?
4. What do the results of this study suggest for headteacher development and training?

These will be addressed in turn followed by an overall reflection on all four questions in the context of emotion and leadership.

## 9.2 Research Findings

### ***9.2.1 Is the headteacher's own emotional management important to their leadership practice and if so, in what ways?***

This thesis has looked at various studies into emotional management, emotional regulation and emotional labour. What all of these have in common is an emphasis on the need for those who interact with the public professionally, such as head teachers, to have a 'professional/rational' part of themselves on display most of the time. This containment and regulation is necessary for the smooth running of schools, and how primary headteachers present themselves, and how they manage the emotions and feelings that occur in everyday interaction were a key part of the case studies. All the headteachers were entirely conscious that there were times when they had to 'act the headteacher' and that often these were the times when they wanted to raise the spirits of others, or alter the mood in a specific setting (e.g. Laura and Christmas, 'Eyes and Teeth' from Francesca). Headteachers also noted that extreme feelings could not be managed in such a way (death, serious illness of a child in school), and several of them talked about the fact that it was important that others knew when they felt such distress. So, they were able to admit to very difficult feelings, but emotions, such as shame and anxiety, which might reflect on them as a headteacher, were more difficult to handle. They were also aware of the times when they needed to have someone to confide in, either inside or outside the school, but finding that non-judgment emotional outlet could be difficult at times for them.

Emotional management did not appear at first sight to differ starkly for the male or female primary headteacher. This may be partially to do with the small sample size, the nature of primary schooling (p.10) or may be part of what Stephen Fineman calls the blurring of male and female emotion in recent years:

For two decades, feminism has eroded some of the crudest signs of male patronage and blurred some of the dichotomized 'female' and 'male' emotions. Sportsmen can now cry publicly, as well as whoop for joy (Fineman, 2000a p. 107).

Neither Ben nor James reflect the gendered rational/emotional dichotomy, where rationality has been assumed as 'typically masculine' and emotionality as 'typically feminine' and rationality has been judged as the only appropriate behaviour in school leadership. These dichotomies are far too simplistic. It was easier to talk about the

task of emotional management with the female headteachers, but this may only reflect my own gender, or their particular personalities.

For all the headteachers involved in the first and second phase of the study, emotion and its management in day to day interactions was never far away. This could be seen not only in the interviews and case studies which I have presented in this research, but also in the way emotional events intruded on my research e.g. Ben and the difficult parent, James 'acting cross'. Emotional management is important to their leadership practice because headteachers in primary schools often act as a conduit for others' emotions, a trend which I have reviewed in the emotion and leadership research (Beatty, 2002, James, 2003). As Eleanor said, 'If the Head is not calm, the school is not calm.' This management of feelings and the emotional display is particularly pertinent to primary schools because in the context of young children in primary schools, emotional expression is never too far away and it is a natural part of work with younger children.

Emotional management can have a negative effect on leadership practice. Both men and women have been constrained by the educational leadership literature's focus on rationality to the detriment of understandings and expressions of emotionality as important for effective leadership. This may be particularly true in the area of decision-making, which is a vital one for leaders, and why I was drawn to look at it as an emotional texture. George (2000) argues strongly from work carried out in neurology, that the evidence suggests that feelings are necessary to make good decisions, and whilst very intense emotions may make decision-making more difficult, an intense reduction in emotion may also lead to irrational behaviour. Emotional management should not lead to total sublimation of feelings, as this may lead to greater emotional dissonance with its attendant stress. Although there are no particular examples of this in the case studies, relevant work on stress (Cooper et al., 2001) suggests that this may be the case, and would be an interesting, though challenging, area to research further. The emotion of revealing feelings through emotional display to others in a group is very little emphasised in educational leadership texts. Yet, as Hess and Kirouac (2004, p.368) note:

Such emotion displays provide information not only about the feeling state of the senders, but also about their perception of the world, as well as their relationship with current interaction partners. For example, an anger display informs us that the sender feels wronged in some way and assesses this wrong as one that can be redressed. In addition, an anger display signals



dominance and can be considered informative regarding the relative power of the anger expressing individual.

So, although the case study heads acknowledged that displays of emotions should be managed, they also saw the power of displays of emotion, whether real or put on for the benefit of the other party. Several of the critical incidents (e.g. Eleanor and the caretaker, James and the difficult interview, Mary and the incompetent supply teacher) told of this kind of emotional management. They also agreed that they did not ever want to be seen as out of control emotionally, but wanted to discuss ways in which they could flag up emotions such as anger to others in the school (Mary and the incompetent teacher is a good example of this). When emotional management is this conscious, it is part of the headteacher's day-to-day leadership practice. It may rely for its very effectiveness on the fact that it is managed. When headteachers are no longer able to manage and regulate feelings, perhaps because their self is compromised, then stress and ultimately breakdown are the more likely to occur.

Lewis (2004) argues that there are some emotions that are managed more self consciously than others. In the review of the literature, and the literature analysis, I discussed the place of shame and guilt in organisations, and these, Lewis suggests, are particularly self-conscious emotions, because only the individual who feels the shame can identify the events that cause them. He notes that all such self-conscious emotions have at their centre the notion of self (p.623). This leads into the second research question and the relation of emotion and feeling to the personal history of the headteacher.

### ***9.2.2 What part do personal histories play in the way that primary headteachers view emotion, feeling, and leadership?***

Personal histories became more important as the research progressed. In particular, I was surprised by the power of story and the social context to move my respondents, and, in particular, their memories of childhood. Earlier in the thesis (page 27), I noted that an important part of self is the idea of 'place identity' (Hargie & Dickson, 2004). Place identity and its notions of physical, social and autobiographical insideness can be strongly linked to the primary school setting because it is small enough for personal territory and connectedness to others to be very relevant. Ben, for example was very much part of Pennington, in terms of physical and social insideness. The autobiographical side of place identity, knowing 'where you come from', and 'who you are', is clearly drawn out in the life story parts of the interviews. The educational

leadership and emotion literature downgrades the importance of identity, self and emotion. There are strong arguments for more work into the connections between leadership, emotion and the headteacher's life story, as part of the understandings generated from the emotional perspective on leadership. This emotional coherence of leadership may well be necessary, I would suggest, for sustainability of leadership over the long term.

Temperament and identity may also play a part in emotion that is not readily acknowledged in educational leadership studies. Research (Caspi et al., 1987, Caspi et al., 1988) indicates that there are patterns of childhood emotionality that people carry with them into adulthood. In their follow up work (30 years later) of adults who had been ill tempered at age eight, they discovered that some patterns were relatively enduring, if gendered. For example men who were assessed as ill tempered as children were less likely to stay on at school, and more likely to move jobs. Women who were assessed as ill tempered were more affected in their home life, having more frequent divorces than women who were assessed as even-tempered at age eight. Such research is a pointer to links between the headteacher as adult and headteacher as child, especially in terms of behaviours and values, but further work would be necessary to make more generalisable connections. This is true especially in the light of theoretical dilemmas within developmental psychology, such as whether emotional development is most influenced by temperament or context (the nature versus nurture debate). Saarni, a developmental psychologist, (2000 p. 312) puts this well when she states:

Temperament provides some degree of response style consistency over time and across situations, whereas specific emotional reactions yield the variability that comes from the influence of specific contexts, specific appraisals, specific social transactions, and the unique meaning systems that are applied to make sense of emotional experience.

This concurs with Fineman's recommendation that, 'Ideally, we require theory that collapses the individual/ organizational/social distinctions from the outset and builds explanations interrelationally' (Fineman, 2000c p. 4), but this is particularly difficult to achieve. More manageable perhaps is theory that has certain main assumptions. Saarni's work with children is particularly pertinent for discussing the role of personal histories in the way that primary headteachers view emotion, feeling, and leadership because she states an assumption that guides her work on emotional development in children 'our emotional experiences are inseparable from our relationships with

others' (p.319). This is my thesis about leadership. Our assumptions also permeate any understanding of identity, and the way it interrelates to social experiences. She also states (ibid):

People are motivated to construct a desired identity (which incorporates social categories such as gender) that drives its meaningfulness from others' responses to the self's projected images (...) and it is in this sense that identity itself constitutes a contextual process that permeates people's emotional and social experiences.

This was a feature of the autobiographical interviews. For example, several of the heads, including James and Laura, talked about a passion for changing and influencing what went on in their schools as a key reason for being a headteacher rather than a classroom teacher or middle manager. Both were experienced heads and could, to some extent, be seen to be deriving their identity as a headteacher from the way that others responded to their skilfully projected images (drawn from experience) of what a headteacher should be. Culture and context are the setting for the individual personal history, and if emotions have a function for fulfilling interpersonal and intrapersonal goals, then the headteachers life so far, and how one assumes the identity of headteacher are very important interrelationships for study.

I have suggested that the professional and personal identities of the primary headteacher are linked together in the personal leadership narrative, which frames their practice. A personal leadership narrative is holistic because it takes in the whole person. The way that a headteacher conceptualises his or her own leadership will have an impact on the way that that leadership is then practised. The personal leadership narrative is related to the idea of emotions being both inherent *and* socially constructed. The telling of this narrative can pinpoint aspects of both emotion and feeling, and in this respect can be seen to be related to the Johari window, which allows the reflective learner to combine self examination with feedback from others in order to increase knowledge of the 'unknown self.'

Personal narratives also reveal some of the complex relationship between gender and emotion in educational leadership. When I started this study, I believed that gender would be of particular importance, but this has not turned out to be the case. I think this is due to the overwhelming importance of context in terms of this particular piece of work, and not because gender is not relevant or unimportant to emotion and the primary headteacher. Psychologists Brody and Hall (2000 p. 339) suggest that

research participants may distort their reports of emotion in ways that conform to gender stereotypes, but I have not evidence that any of the headteachers did this. Stereotypes about women being more emotionally expressive were not seen in this study, and this is probably for several reasons. Neither of my male headteachers viewed it as the cultural norm to not express emotion. In fact Ben could be said to be more emotional than several of the women in the sample. One reason for this could be that I knew him particularly well. Brody and Hall suggest that men are more emotionally expressive with people they know well, and that both men and women are more comfortable discussing feelings with women (p.342).

Hall (1996) looked at three female primary heads in her study of six women headteachers, and traced their path to headship. Barbara, Heather and Susan all shared a commitment to becoming a teacher from early childhood, which was not true of my sample. She did find, however, that 'parental influences (particularly fathers) were significant influences on the women heads' early independence self-sufficiency and desire to succeed (...) although family of origin is by no means an exclusive influence on future values and behaviour, it shapes perception of which resources achieve which results' (p43-44). Brody and Hall focus on the idea of temperament, as they suggest that temperament contributes to gender differences because of early experiences with parents and peers. Reading their thoughts on socialisation links back strongly for me to the autobiographical section of the research:

The socialisation of emotional expression is especially influenced by characteristics of the family system, including the parents' own behaviours, their gender role attitudes and behaviours, the quality of their marital relationships, their cultural and social economic backgrounds and the particular gender constellation of the children in their families. For example, the extent to which fathers are involved in childcare has been found to relate to the emotions expressed by their daughters and sons, with involved fathers having sons who express more vulnerability and daughters who express less fear and sadness and more competition relative to their same sex peers.

(Brody & Hall, 2000 p. 345)

Thus, we have Francesca identifying with her grandfather ('the only sensible woman in the family), Ben and his parents active involvement in fostering young children

(male role model), both Laura and Eleanor being only children, and James' particular gender constellation of being the only boy in the family group. It is important to note that I am not suggesting immediate generalisability from this. Rather, I am pointing towards a very fertile field for further investigation in terms of gender and educational leadership, which acknowledges the importance of the personal leadership narrative. As Brody and Hall point out, 'emotional expression and gender have complex interaction biological, social and cultural roots' (p.347). Continued research to look at how this interaction takes place in the field of educational leadership would be a very useful addition to the work on gender already undertaken in the field.

### ***9.3.3 How does research into emotion enrich educational leadership studies, in particular our knowledge of primary headship?***

The vast array of research into emotion has only been outlined through my review, but it shows that the present understandings of emotion in the leadership field are at best partial, and at worst a simplification of the most oft quoted, and populist research (EI). I want to return briefly to this before I go on to discuss what knowledge of emotion does add to leadership studies, because the popularity of EI contextualises the discussion.

In a piece that lays out how emotion has become a management commodity, Fineman (2000a) reminds the reader that it has always been known that certain work relationships require emotional skills (p.102), but with EI, what Goleman has succeeded in doing is linking such competences explicitly to business success. Fineman suggests that such management ideas become popular because of 'psychological, cultural and rhetorical factors' (p.103). If EI might just give a business a competitive edge, then it is something that business leaders should take note of. Again Fineman notes (p.105):

Presenting emotional intelligence as a learned competence or set of competences is a key ingredient of the sell (...) emotional intelligence is stripped of any 'irrational', feminine', even 'feeling' connotations that could worry or alienate managers. It is less a celebration of feeling than a resource to enhance managers' 'intelligent', rational control.

Leading a primary school is a role that requires emotional skill, and the climate has been right for EI to take its place amongst other leadership strategies for headteachers. This is related to the cultural factors suggested by Fineman, because as headship becomes more difficult to sustain (greedy work), wider social trends,

such as a willingness to discuss stress in organisations, mean that EI has been seen as a possible solution to a problem of recruitment and sustainability. It is sobering, however to bear in mind that success is not so easily defined. As Fineman graphically describes it (p.109):

The search for key, universal, characteristics of managerial success has a long history of futility. If emotionally intelligent managers succeed, so do/have managers who seem to make no conscious choice about how to express their emotions – be they typically kind, charismatic, impassive, volatile, aggressive, autocratic, even ruthless. On this basis it would, at times, be emotionally intelligent to be uncompromising, inflexible, angry or pessimistic.

In the psychological literature, assessment of the claims of EI has been carried out by Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts (2002), who note that much of Goleman's work demonstrates nothing much new in terms of psychological research as a great deal is already known about emotions and personality and they state that Goleman makes strong claims 'with little (or scant) empirical backing.' (p.13). The plausibility of EI is due, at least partially I believe, to the fact that it reminds leaders what they probably already knew; that emotion and thinking do work together, and that there has perhaps been too much emphasis on the rational and not enough of the power of emotion and feeling. EI's popularity could also be because rational discussion of emotional competences is emotionally safe, and does not require or suggest a change in internal personal feelings. I referred to this 'danger' aspects of emotion earlier, and one aspect that I would like to pursue in the future is whether there is any connection between the perceived danger of acknowledging and discussing difficult or positive feelings and the headteacher's own personal leadership narrative. The idea that educational leadership, and in this particular research primary headship, is inseparable from and influenced by emotion in all its many facets is a persuasive one, yet the current research base is incomplete.

The case studies carried out in this research have aimed to be holistic in their approach to educational leadership and emotion. The case study headteachers should be viewed as emotional beings, with the personal, affective side of their lives brought into more prominence through the utilisation of their personal leadership narrative. The literature that was reviewed in Chapter Two drew a useful conceptualisation of emotions as inherent and emotion as social based on studies of emotion from various fields, some of which are drawn on frequently by educational

leadership researchers, others such as psychology and biology that are not. Loader (1997, p.3) in his personal reflections on emotion and educational leadership argues for a more personal, inherently emotional approach to the role of the principal:

Leadership has its highs and lows, its successes and failures. Principals cry, laugh, dream and become suspicious. There are times when principals do want the fairy godmother to come and save them.

In the literature review I noted (p.18) that Ogawa and Bossert (1997, p.19) conceptualise leadership as flowing 'through the network of roles that comprise organisations'. If leadership is an organisational quality, then so is emotion. To paraphrase Ogawa and Bossert it flows through the network of people who comprise primary schools, but at the same time, emotion in educational leadership resides not only in the organisation, but also in the person of the headteacher; the inherent and socially constructed aspects of emotion working together. Both of these make up the emotional context of the school.

In the previous chapter, I speculated that primary headteachers have to perform a delicate emotional balancing act most of the time. They have to build a climate of genuine emotion where acceptance and trust are key, and others not only want to follow them as leaders, but feel able to become leaders themselves. Thus positive emotion could be a necessary condition of distributed leadership. Primary headteachers need to be able to engage themselves and others in the task of emotionalising organisations (Fineman, 2000b, p. 278). Emotionalising schools means that a headteacher allows new understandings of emotion to inform leadership, and to begin to ask how and why emotions shape these processes. All the richness of the research into emotion from many fields of study can add more to educational leadership than a concentration on any one particular perspective.

It is difficult to explain what emotion adds to educational leadership without turning to descriptions of leadership as an art. DePree (1989, p.148), in his best selling book on how to succeed at leadership, sums this viewpoint up when he states:

Leadership is much more an art, a belief, a condition of the heart, than a set of things to do. The visible signs of artful leadership are expressed ultimately, in its practice.

Emotional ways of knowing about what educational leadership is, allow for the practical. To put it another way, the research in this thesis allows leadership to have an emotional side because it is of practical value to headteachers. In other words:

Key to such research are forms of knowledge of practical value to the people involved, ways of knowing Aristotle referred to as *phronesis*. A primary principle behind this research is that it makes co-researchers of participant and practitioner; and because our curiosity, when shared, can change things, the view is that we might as well work together to make practical changes that are mutually welcomed.

Strong (2003 p. 264)

It is Aristotle's suggestion that a man of practical wisdom should be able to deliberate well about the things that are good and helpful for himself, that enables emotional coherence.

There is a certain 'old fashioned' aspect to looking at primary school headship, rather than primary school leadership, which is not in tune with much current leadership theorisation, and much of leadership training. However, I have argued that emotion has a great deal to add to educational leadership studies more generally, and I now want to look at what the study can helpfully add to the development of primary school headship. The use of the personal leadership narrative, as described above, is one way of developing new understandings of primary school headship, by concentrating more explicitly on the personal.

Whitaker (1997, p.127) argues that it has been a false start when leadership theorists have tried to see what, in the personality and experience of skilled leaders explains their skills and abilities. He suggests that a more productive avenue is to ask, 'What is it that enables successful organisations to succeed and thrive?' and that this will lead to an answer that is more complex than simply good leadership from the top. Whitaker proposes 'life-enhancing leadership' which helps people to be as effective as they both want to be, and have the potential to be' (p.128). My thesis supports this analysis. However, primary headship, done well, is much more complex than simply good leadership from the top. By asking what enables successful organisations to succeed and thrive, one of the answers may be that the emotional narrative of the primary headteacher will influence that context so others can be effective. Whitaker (p.140) implicitly acknowledges this when he notes that:



It is through the countless interpersonal transactions of the school day that people's lives are changed, organisational improvements are made, dreams are realised and needs are met. We need more understanding of those snatched moments in corridors. (...) Life-centred leadership is essentially a catalytic process, helping others to bring about changes in themselves.

The primary headteachers in this study all emphasised the interpersonal nature of primary headship in terms of getting things done. James, in particular as the most experienced head, underlined the 'countless interpersonal transactions of the school day' when he talked about how his relatively new inexperienced staff were developing:

I've got a newer staff coming in which means that a new culture of working together and openness is beginning to develop. There are still the odd situations where unnecessary problems happen and I ask the staff to ask themselves 'Are we working together?' I still think they could be more open emotionally among one another – I mean, a teacher had gone in for an operation, and the staff didn't know, so I was wondering whether I should have told them. It is a fundamental lack of closeness it makes me wonder sometimes -am I doing this wrongly? I've been trying to get them involved, as I don't have the best answer for this school, and maybe that some of these things I care too much about!

Southworth argues (2004, p.22) that the literature on primary headship is far too preoccupied with seeing leadership through the lens of the headteacher, and casting heads as 'pivotal, proprietorial and powerful', whilst in fact the landscape is changing towards distributed and 'learning centred leadership'. The rhetoric of the landscape has indeed changed, but I would argue that the headteacher is still an emotional pivot. Their own emotional well-being is still vital to create the conditions in which other sorts of leadership can develop and thrive. All the heads that I interviewed saw themselves in this pivotal position emotionally, and their personal leadership narrative emphasised their desire to make a difference by being in charge. This does not mean in charge and proprietorial. Laura's answer to what sort of primary head she was, gives a better clue:

Somebody who has clear sense of what they are trying to do and has a firm grip on what's happening and what others are doing. I aim to have open

lines of communication –so that staff know what I am thinking and why I am thinking it; a spider in the centre of a web, but not aggressive one!

It is this centrality of the leader emotionally that has come out clearly from this research. Thus the primary headteacher is not dominating and powerful in a masculine, powerful sense, but rather the headteacher's web is the one that he or she spins from his/her own emotional base, and that of the staff, forming an emotional context within which the narrative of education is carried out. To put it another way, more simply, their knowledge of their own emotional self enabled them to visualise how they wanted others to relate to each other within the school (staff, parents and children), within an emotional coherent context. Hall also notes this in her study of six female headteachers (1996). She suggests that the primary headteachers effectiveness 'depended on her sense of self-efficacy combined with support from others which allowed her to be herself' (p.186). She also wondered whether men as managers are as concerned to know and manage self as women, and notes that more research is needed 'into the relationship between men's' self-concept and their educational leadership practice. (p.187) Both men in this research were concerned to know and manage themselves, and Ben in particular was concerned with what it meant to be 'authentic' as a person and headteacher. Perhaps this is just a consequence of the sample size, or perhaps primary headship has changed since Southworth's study in the 1980s and Hall's in the 1990s. Society, as noted at several points within this thesis, is more cultural attuned to matters of emotion, and public expression of emotion is more acceptable now that it has been in the past. Hall suggests (p.199) that it is on the issue of identity that her study and Southworth's diverge, because female heads appear to be distinct from primary heads in their conception and use of power. Hall sees Southworth's 'Ron Lacey' as having messianic vision, and a capacity to supervise and control his colleagues, whereas her women had a 'concern to communicate and share their vision in a way that they became the staff's', and were more comfortable with collegial processes. As Hall notes, the problem with comparing studies is 'in knowing whether the differences are attributable to gender, the context, or personalities, since both studies involved only a few heads' (p.201). This study also involves only a few heads, but it differs in the way it was framed to specifically discuss emotion and leadership. In that task, both the male and female heads were able to consciously reflect on aspects of their lives, which were not necessarily part of their daily management tasks. Without meaning to do so, this thesis of the emotional in educational leadership reflects much

of Hall's concerns with control, power and the need to deepen self knowledge of ones self as a leader.

To summarise, in terms of adding to a conceptualisation of primary school headship, this study firstly reiterates the value of examining the role of headship and its interrelationship with leadership throughout the organisation, as conceptualised through emotion. It does this by utilising literature on emotion outside the leadership field. Secondly, by giving more of a voice to the personal leadership narrative, more questions are raised about the way headship is shaped by personal emotional experience. As suggested in the last section, more work could be done to ask about the interaction between biological, social and cultural past and the context of a particular headship. Lastly, the study has begun to uncover relationships with other studies, such as Hall's, and Coleman (2002) which signpost the links between life history, relationships at home and work, and socialisation. It has done this by relating them to men and women and the wider emotional literature in order to acknowledge the continuing importance of the primary school headteacher, but viewed from a differing conceptual base.

#### ***9.2.4 What do the results of this study suggest for Headteacher development and training?***

An effective primary head helps to create the conditions in which people will want to work to the optimum levels of their energy, interest and commitment (Whitaker, 1997). This is similar to the concept that Hay McBer uses in the Leadership Programme for Serving Heads (LPSH), which they call discretionary effort, where people are willing to 'go the extra mile' for others in the team or group within which they work. Whitaker sees leadership as something which:

will create the conditions in which the best we have to offer can effectively be harnessed in the face of difficulties and obstacles.

(Whitaker, 1997 p.127).

Educational leadership training has usefully developed EI and the idea of emotional competences, and this has proved helpful to many people. However, greater knowledge of the different perspectives that there are in emotion research would enhance the skills that primary heads have when faced with difficulties and obstacles. This point in the conclusion is not the time to discuss in detail what makes effective primary headteacher development and training. Rather, I will briefly sketch

good practice from research, and then suggest what this study could add to such development practices.

It has been suggested (Earley & Weindling, 2004 p. 174) that examples of good practice in leadership development from around the world include learning theories, mentoring and coaching, reflection, problem-based learning and case studies, action learning, storytelling and drama, journals, e-learning and learning communities. Some of these are more embedded in the leadership development of primary heads than others. For example, mentoring and coaching, e-learning and learning communities are currently prevalent in both courses from private providers and the NCSL (Bush & Glover, 2004). The difficulty with matters to do with emotion is that which I have reiterated throughout this research; emotion and leadership can be viewed as difficult territory, where the knowledge base in educational leadership is only now developing fully. Some of the methods outlined above, such as story telling and drama, reflection and journals could be seen to have particular relevance to emotion and educational leadership. They have been used in research successfully (Ginsberg & Davies, 2002), and could certainly be used to explore emotional issues in leadership. For example, the Lupton (1998) categorisation is a useful aid to thinking, and was the basis of the three emotional textures that I outlined in the literature analysis: emotional regulation in leadership; emotion weighted decision-making; and emotional context. The empirical research has made me re think whether they are still valuable as analytical tools. The finding from the empirical research is that the first two are probably sublimated within the last, and together they add to a heads emotional coherence as a leader. This requires an in-depth understanding of how affects are often more significant as rationales for and outcomes of actions rather than cognitions. So, although there may be a cognitive rationale for actions, there is an underlying and probably stronger affective rationale. In a fundamental sense headteachers are moved to action by their feelings (Gabriel, 1999). Dillard (1995) also argues that leaders not only use their experiences to lead, but they lead from themselves as people, their past experiences and their personalities and life experiences. For some headteachers, due to any of all of these factors, any display of emotion, either in themselves or others, may be perceived as inappropriate for a headteacher. Moeller (2005) suggests that viewing emotion as dangerous reflects a western set of values which split reason from emotion, and because of this value base, research on organisations has reflected what she calls the 'writing out' of emotions until relatively recently. She notes:

Rationality has almost been considered sacred and holy, while emotions have been perceived as being more or less inappropriate to talk about and thus devalued in organisations. Nevertheless, it has been recognised that emotions serve essential needs in organisations because they contribute to the development of community, commitment and collective morality (...) however, they (writers) have tended to treat emotions as an instrumental means towards the goals set by organisations.

(2005, p.89)

Moeller argues that over the last ten years there has been a move to view teaching as an emotional practice, which has been partially reflected in the leadership literature, particularly in an acknowledgement that one cannot separate feeling from perception and judgement (p.90). It has also been partially reflected in training.

The emotional coherence of leadership could be a fruitful area for effective primary headteacher development and training in several areas. For example, educational leadership research (Duke, 1998, Goddard, 1998, Gronn & Ribbins, 1996, Southworth, 2004) consistently notes the importance of context. More understanding of emotional coherence could draw on present work about context, bringing together the personal and the socially constructed perspectives. Also, given the importance of emotional regulation, developing primary heads conceptual knowledge of emotional labour could help them with emotionally coherent leadership. Parts of headteacher training, such as coaching and mentoring, look at this implicitly, but it could be developed more proactively conceptually so that headteachers have knowledge of both emotional labour and emotional wounding, and what they mean both for coherence and for long term sustainability. This could be carried out through group work with cohorts of heads at different times in their career, allowing them access to some of the deeper emotional epiphanies and emotional wounds that they may have experienced. Helpful, positive epiphanies could also be shared. The personal leadership narrative could also be utilised to discuss aspects of the affective in the context of the current school in which they work. This has implications for the training of effective facilitators for such events.

In creating emotional coherence, coaching will have a role to play although training may need to take into account more counselling focussed skills. Howe (1993, p.140) suggests that leaders draw on three key ingredients in emotional transactions:

- Acceptance (a secure emotional base for the relationship);

- Understanding (an appreciation of the other person's felt experience);
- Dialogue (the communication of understanding and meaning)

When this is touched upon in headteacher development and training (as in the Leadership Programme for Serving Heads), it can be very powerful in terms of self reflection for the headteacher, but at the same time, as with emotional intelligence, there is the danger that the power of self knowledge may either be reduced to competency assessment, or that the trainers are unable or insufficiently trained to move the reflection on beyond self absorption. Nevertheless, it is an area that could be looked at as part of reflection in composing a personal leadership narrative, and trainers could be used with sufficient conceptual background. Knowing that emotional coherence as a primary head is sustained both by their own personal leadership narrative, and the emotional textures of leadership could provide a powerful tool for reflection, given their pivotal emotional role. Earley and Weindling conclude (p.183) that:

Distributed and shared leadership, whilst welcome, still rely heavily on leadership, alongside effective management, being successfully demonstrated at the *apex* of the organisation.

The headteachers in this study were very much at the apex of their schools, whilst advocating shared leadership with their staff. In terms of training and development, the message that came through from the interviews was of the importance of the personal in headship. This is not to argue that the case study headteachers were not organisation focused, for they were. It is to note that all of them outlined ways in which they yearned to be able to share more of the emotional side of leadership with others, without being judged. The high accountability framework within which current primary headship is situated means that there are very few 'safe' emotional spaces for heads. James pinpointed this when he remarked that he used to be able to talk to his link advisor about anything that was bothering him when he first became a head fifteen or so years ago, but now almost the first words of his advisor are 'How are you getting on with raising the Key Stage 2 SATS results?' This is an oversimplification, but it ties in with creating space in training and development for heads, such as in LPSH, where they can discuss and reflect on the personal and emotional. Whitaker (1997, p.144) puts it well when he says that we need to challenge the principle that people and how they are treated is one of the least significant factors for consideration in schools. From this study, I would say that this applies to primary heads (particularly women), and the figures on the low number of applicants for

primary headships, and people wanting to progress to headship, would seem to bear this out (GTCE, 2006, Howson, 2005). To paraphrase Whitaker (ibid.) ‘What is so abusive about primary schools is the appalling waste of human talent they preside over.’ This is a strong statement, but researching into emotional and educational leadership has suggested to me that recruitment difficulties etc. are much easier to discuss ‘rationally’ than relating so of these problems to the more problematic relationship of emotion and educational leadership. Any developments for headteachers would need to be finely crafted to tackle such a difficult area, within a safe environment. Ways in which leadership development could be enriched include:

- Introducing more, in-depth knowledge of research into emotion, not just emotional intelligence.
- Acknowledgement of the difficulties of emotion and leadership, alongside proactive solutions.
- Reflections on the personal in pre, post and longer term headship.
- Emotional Management, and its relationship to emotional context and overall coherence.

Development of these areas would be challenging. This challenge is one that this research suggests is worthwhile, and could be developed alongside the current interests in positive psychology and happiness (Gladwell, 2005, Layard, 2005, Seligman et al., 2005) that are developing in the wider research and policy arena. Layard (p. 113) suggests that if we want to measure the quality of people’s lives, such measurement must be based on the way people feel. If the headteacher is the emotional pivot of the primary school, then their happiness should be a major consideration.

### **9.3 Final Reflection and conclusion**

This work has been reflective from the beginning. These conclusions cannot be seen as the final answer, but rather the beginning of a conceptualisation of emotion and leadership that moves the discussion beyond the current conceptualisation in education leadership studies. Such a conceptualisation does not treat feelings and emotions as ‘objects’ that are separate from organisational practice. Rather it suggests that they are inherent to it. It also moves the thinking away from a somewhat restricted view of feelings and emotions in the educational literature, which often limits them to conscious experience (EI) and suggests looking more widely at

research into emotion. I suggest that a focus on personal narrative and creating emotional coherence would be beneficial. Robinson (2001) notes that leadership occurs 'when ideas expressed in talk or action are recognised by others as capable of progressing tasks or problems that are important to them (p.93). It is through this personal emotional coherence that important things happen, and in a primary school it is often the headteacher who not only drives forward these ideas, but takes them to a wider audience. A wider view of coherence could allow headteachers to understand how their own personal emotional coherence is related to others in the organisation, and how a healthy emotional context allows schools to progress more effectively, and with less emotional labour for the headteacher. Senge (1990 p. 359) tells us that:

Most of the outstanding leaders I have worked with are neither tall nor especially handsome; they are often mediocre public speakers; they do not stand out in a crowd and they do not mesmerise an attending audience with their brilliance or eloquence. Rather, what distinguishes them is the clarity and persuasiveness of their ideas, the depth of their commitment and their openness to continually learning more. They do not have 'the answer'. But they do instil confidence in those around them that together 'we can learn whatever we need to learn in order to achieve the results we truly desire'. The ability of such people to be natural leaders, as near as I can tell, is the *by-product of a lifetime of effort* to develop conceptual and communication skills, to reflect on personal values and to align personal behaviour with values, to learn how to listen and to appreciate others and others' ideas.

The case study headteachers in this thesis would probably not stand out in a crowd of headteachers, but all were carrying out their respective roles carefully and effectively. What made them stand out for me was the depth of their emotional commitment to both people (staff, children, parents) and education more generally. In the face of more and more pressure, their skills were 'the by-product of a lifetime of effort', or what I have called their personal leadership narrative. Their reflections on emotion and leadership have enabled me to re-conceptualise some of the ideas that I initially had about primary headship. They were both emotionally committed, and emotionally coherent in their work in schools.



### **9.3.1 The process**

If I were to do this study again, there are many things that I would change. That is inevitable with any research study. The major change that I would make is to spend longer on the life history of the headteachers. This is because I have seen that through such life history discussions, much more can be learnt about emotion and educational leadership than I at first envisaged, especially in terms of personal professional development. Drawing on life history, can have many benefits, including:

- Benefits from engaging in self-reflection, both in terms of self-knowledge and a quiet space to reflect.
- Making theory more meaningful and accessible, and providing an important link between research and practice.
- Being therapeutic at difficult times in headship

(Goodson & Sikes, 2001, pages 73-74).

Each facet of the personal leadership narrative could be broken down and examined more closely. The concept of a personal leadership narrative could then be developed and adjusted further. More sustained work could also be carried out on whether the life story as told influences the researcher's interpretation of behaviour. It could also have been useful to develop the narrative by not adding observation, but collecting the life histories, for example, of the staff at Pennington, and looking at them in connection with Ben's leadership narrative in order to look more closely at how the emotional context of the organisation is sustained.

All the reading that was gathered for this thesis, only reinforces the reflective nature of research, and one criticism of the research could be that:

Analysis of theories of personality and of personalities suggests that we all tend to resonate to theories that reflect our own interpretation of ourselves.

(Haviland-Jones & Kahlbaugh, 2004 p. 303)

The explicit reflective process that I have adopted has tried to mitigate this effect. Nevertheless, it was a privilege to share part of these headteachers' stories about themselves, their emotions and their schools, and to that extent, I would not want to change any of the general scope of the thesis, whilst acknowledging that, in hindsight more could have been explored. However, this is a fruitful spur to further research.

In a sense, the arguments put forward here are philosophical, because:

Philosophers rarely settle or resolve philosophical questions, and unsettability or irresolvability are perhaps hallmarks of a philosophical question. Philosophical debate-and disagreement- goes on.

(McLaughlin, 2005, p.3)

The research has shown that there is still only a partial understanding of both 'emotion and leadership', and how this relates to headship. At a time of recruitment difficulties, there is an urgent need to develop such understandings by carrying out further research into the area. At the same time, various understandings from the different perspectives on emotion could be developed for primary headteachers, so that it is not only EI that receives prominence in discussions about emotion and leadership. Shared understandings of primary leadership and emotion will be even more necessary in a developing policy context of changes to the ways schools are lead. For example, will 'executive' headship of primary schools promote emotional coherence? And if so, how?

To paraphrase Southworth (1995, p.3), what I offer here is neither a definitive set of insights into emotion and leadership, nor a model of how to conduct research into educational leadership and emotion. There is much more to study and learn about this difficult and demanding topic. Its difficulties should not be a barrier to research, but act as a spur for greater endeavour. This thesis, as Southworth says of his book, 'is only a way station I have reached, and at which I have paused for a while. I am convinced there is much more to explore and territory I need to revisit' (ibid.). The personal is important in primary headship because emotional coherence both sustains leadership and helps leaders interpret context.

### **9.3.2 Conclusion**

My thesis is that leadership cannot, and does not function without emotion. Emotionally coherent primary headship is both an emotional quality of the headteachers and at the same time a quality of the social relationships of the school. Over the next few years as the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda is implemented, this emphasis on the personal and social relations is even more crucial. This thesis has stimulated several refereed articles (Crawford, 2004, 2005, 2007 in press), and I hope it is a small beginning of a deeper conceptualisation of emotion and leadership that moves the discussion beyond the current focus in education leadership studies and it is here that the research has both importance and originality.

To sum up, educational leadership is about people, and people necessarily work in an emotional context, intra-personally and inter-personally. As Glatter (2006, p.82) states:

We should consciously seek to contribute to (...) the broader field of organization and management studies, in which (...) schools and universities can be viewed – along for example with churches, counselling agencies, hospitals and prisons – as *human service organizations* whose core task is transforming humans. That is not the core task of (for example), either H.M. Revenue and Customs, in the public sector, or of Tesco in the private sector.

Research into emotion outside of the leadership field is a rich area for discussion, examination and source of 'practical wisdom'. Emotion research has shaped the educational leadership field, primarily by its emphasis on emotional intelligence, and the psychodynamic. Whilst this has had its advantages, I would argue that the educational leadership field has only begun to discover how research into emotion can enrich educational leadership. More emphasis on emotional coherence, perhaps through the stories of headteachers, and the emotional interactions that occur within the school context, could be one way of facilitating this.

Finally, this research, and my understanding of emotion and leadership have been shaped as a story, as well as including stories. All stories can be read in different ways. This is best summed up by Wells (1987, p.2) who describes his work on language development in children thus:

Some readers may be surprised at my use of the word 'story'. But I have chosen it quite deliberately. Stories are a way of making sense – of giving meaning to observable events by making connections between them. However, for any set of events there is almost always more than one possible interpretation – as a day in any courtroom would amply demonstrate. Carrying out research is, in this respect, like any other form enquiry based on evidence, Only a certain number of events can be observed and although, like good detectives, researchers have hunches to guide them in choosing what events to observe and what clues to look for, in the last resort they have to go beyond the evidence in order to present a coherent account. The available evidence is given meaning by being embedded in a story in which it makes sense.

Stories, like other language forms, are created in the telling. They are influenced of course, by other stories (...). They also have history in the accumulated experience of the storyteller. But, most important, a story is the expression of the present attempt by the teller to find meaning in those experiences. My purpose in writing this book, therefore, is to make sense of the evidence that was collected during the research project and of the ideas that I have obtained through reading and discussion, and to tell the meaning that I have made to others who share my concerns. Seen from this perspective, there can be no true stories. The evidence is never so complete or some unambiguous as to rule out alternative interpretations, The important criteria in judging the work of a story are: does it fit the facts as I have observed them and does it provide a helpful basis for future action?

This thesis, as both the story of an individual's journey through research into emotion, and also the stories of individual headteachers, hopes to have fulfilled those important criteria.

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## **APPENDIX A: HEADTEACHER INTERVIEWS**

### **Interview One**

Briefly explain nature of research (for doctorate) and stress confidentiality, anonymity, etc.

#### **(A) *The Headteacher***

- 1 How long have you been a HT?
- 2 Tell me about the school (size, staff numbers, catchment, significant features).
- 3 What motivated you to become a HT?
- 4 What do you enjoy most about being a HT?
- 5 What do you find the most difficult aspect of being a HT?
- 6 Could you attempt a definition of emotion for me, please? (Can you name some emotions?)
- 7 Do you see yourself as an emotional person?
- 8 How important is it for you to control your emotions in school?
- 9 Which are most easy/difficult to control?
- 10 What happens if you don't express your emotions? (Do you express them outside school?)
- 11 Would you say that your upbringing has influenced the way you express emotion? How?

#### **(B) *The interactions***

I would like you to think about two incidents that took place in school over the past year, which caused you to have strong emotions, either positive or negative. Then I will ask you to describe them, using the following prompts:

- 1 What happened? Who was involved? Where were you at the time?



- 2 When did you notice that you were feeling strongly about the incident? How could you tell?
- 3 How did you feel during the interaction and afterwards? Did your feelings change during the interaction? If so, how?
- 4 What do you think caused these feelings? Why?
- 5 How did you express your feelings, at the time, and afterwards?
- 6 Which feelings do you judge acceptable to express in these interactions? Are any unacceptable? Why?
- 7 Are these two incidents typical of the kind of interactions you would normally engage in? If not, why not?
- 8 Any other comments or observations about the events?
- 9 For you, what were the key characteristics of these events that make them memorable?
- 10 What did you learn about yourself from them?
- 11 What emotional support would enable you to perform your role more effectively?
- 11 Any other observations or comments? Other key issues/questions that I have overlooked?

***Interview 17/6/02 Eleanor***

Place: Her office in a Middle school in established urban area.

- 1 How long have you been a HT?
- 2 Tell me about the school (size, staff numbers, catchment, significant features)
- 3 What motivated you to become a HT?

E. has been five years at current school, although was Acting Head for 5 terms whilst a DH.

School has 150 children, 9 teachers, EAL teachers, 40% students are from minority ethnic groups. Roll is falling due to demographics, and there is 35% mobility, and she feels she became a Head 'accidentally!' After she became an acting Head she realised that she would find it difficult to go back to her previous role, and she liked being the person who makes decisions. She most enjoys the children and doing something for them. She feels one step removed, and this gives her an overview.

- 1 What do you find the most difficult aspect of being a HT?
- 2 Could you attempt a definition of emotion for me, please? (Can you name some emotions?)

The negative sides are the constant flood of paperwork, consultations, no chance to consolidate change and this is not just in terms of the curriculum, but also laws, school system review etc.

She defines emotion as strong feeling – fear, anger happiness. She wondered if the negative ones linger more in the memory.

- 1 Do you see yourself as an emotional person?
- 2 How important is it for you to control your emotions in school?
- 3 Which are most easy/difficult to control?

She said that she did feel things deeply although not always good at showing them. If anything her emotions swing, but she thinks not as much as in the past, and she feels that as a leader you need to show calm presence, and calm exterior. 'You may want to kill staff or parents but..!' 'If the Head is not calm, the school is not calm.' This she said was very hard to do. Control was sometimes difficult because you knew that you bodily reactions might give you away e.g. sweating/fear.

- 1 What happens if you don't express your emotions? (Do you express them outside school?)
- 2 Would you say that your upbringing has influenced the way you express emotion? How?

She tries to express her emotions outside school – tries to work through things on the drive home, but does not always manage it. Teachers can be very sensitive and take things personally. She tries to treat teachers as you would want them to treat

children. She had a member of staff who she described as 'bone idle' and she was shocked at how much this teacher tried to get others to do for her. She talks things through with her husband who says 'Why are you bothering about that?' and this is an excellent sounding board. She also can talk to her DH.

She was brought up a Roman Catholic and only child. Family was non tactile but loving. She said that this means she has 'Catholic guilt' and a feeling that you should not show emotions externally – everything was black and white with no grey. She was very self-contained as a child and around adults a great deal.

Two incidents were discussed:

(A) There was a very difficult year group with aggressive boys and children who just didn't get on. One very difficult boy had to be sent home one day. His father was a big man, who had been to prison. Child told father that the teacher had assaulted him. He came into school. She was terrified. Father 'I want teacher here NOW.' She called the deputy and the teacher and was ready to call the police. She felt worried and frightened for teacher and herself. Then the child kicked the teacher, and the father's attitude changed. 'It was a roller coaster of an experience.' She was quite inexperienced at the time.

Fear and worry were the main emotions. Palpitating heart, shaking, although not outwardly she was later told. She felt ill afterwards.

She felt ok afterwards as the father had changed and she was able to talk it all through with the DH. For weeks afterwards she still got panicky feelings such as she had never experienced before.

(B) Earlier this year the school administrator made a written formal complaint about the caretaker. She had to see the caretaker and she found it upsetting as she sort of felt it was in some ways a complaint about her. She anticipated that the interview with the caretaker would be difficult, and in fact he stormed out. She just had to deal with it. Later he did apologise, but it left a nasty taste.

There is still an aftermath of the incident within the school – govs sorted it by giving the caretaker a verbal warning. It was an uncomfortable feeling and she shared with the Chair of Govs and husband 'Who else is there?' It is difficult to get hold of other Heads during the day.

After reviewing the critical incidents we had a general discussion around issues.

It is really important to keep a calm front, and use a measured tone, especially with parents. The look on your face is important 'Must make sure you are not leaking!'

The first event was unique as it was the first time she had to deal with it. The second is memorable because the most difficult issues are to do with managing adults. Looking back, she would have been more forceful in the first one, but was new and not confident of her knowledge of the teacher. In the second one too she might have been more forceful with the complainant. 'Heading things off at the pass'

She feels that it is important that Head deals with emotional issues before they get to staff 'In a small school, you are a family, like a first school, they know you and you know them, smoothing over things!' Difficult parents now know that they will be listened to if not agreed with.

The Head 'acts as a sponge to everyone else's emotions'. Sometimes you do not realise how tired you are just by listening to people. On the day she was interviewed, by mid morning she had:

Checked all staff in

Talked with DH about Artist in Residence

Talked to new staff about reports

Taught

Dealt with naughty children before school

Made arrangements for music festival

Talked to teacher and pupils and Artist

Talked to difficult child

Talked with Year 6 teacher re Booster classes

Talked to Learning Mentor

Dealt with absent dinner ladies.

And she would be teaching in the afternoon and had a governors' meeting pm. And this researcher too! This is 'a typical day and can be very draining'.

All Heads could do with mentor or supervisor she said. She had once worked in a team for behaviour support that had an hour's supervision a week. Someone who just listened, say once a fortnight would help. Then she might have some energy left for the strategic part of leadership! More generally, she feels Heads at KS2 are undervalued by the government (e.g. a letter she had just received from Stephen Twigg, school's minister) and not trusted as professionals and that is something that makes her angry.

## **Interview Two**

(these questions to be used as prompts for discussion)

- 1 Can we begin by you telling me more about your personal background, and the people who have shaped the kind of person you are?
- 2 How would you describe your life from your earliest years to the end of your full time education?
- 3 What influence did your parents, friends, significant others have in shaping your views on life, your values, your aspirations, ambitions and actions?
- 4 On reflection, how important and how compatible and consistent were these various influences?
- 5 Are there any significant incidents that you recall?
- 6 How did your career develop to take you towards headship? What shaped your view of headship during those years?
- 7 How influential were Heads you worked with in shaping your view and practice of headship?
- 8 What were your feelings when you were offered your first headship?
- 9 How well prepared did you feel?

## **Interview Three**

(Use these questions only as prompts, and move back to Interview Two, as necessary)

- 1 Do you enjoy Headship? Why?
- 2 Describe the kind of Head you are. Has this changed over time? Has Headship become less difficult as you have become more experienced?
- 3 How does a second Headship differ from a first?
- 4 What are your professional values?
- 5 How have these influenced your work as a Head?
- 6 Are they linked to any emotion?
- 7 Stephen Fineman has described your important emotional connections at home and work as 'affective sets'. Who is in yours? Why?
- 8 Does emotion have any role to play in knowing effective teaching and learning is taking place? How? Have you changed the way you know this over time?
- 9 What is emotions relation to leadership, in your view? Can you give an example?

## **APPENDIX B: OBSERVATION DIARY (ANONYMISED)**

### **Pennington 7/10/04**

I arrived at just after 8.00am, and R a sales rep was there to talk to Ben about the new awning for the playground. There was a discussion of the chairs and planters. Ben used his Head's chair and leaned towards Roger who was in the comfy chair . There was a small area of concern about light and shade in the playground discussed. As Ben keeps his door open there was some ambient noise from the caretaker vacuuming outside. They looked at the detail of the design and planting, and made small comments such as 'Looks nice' 'Do the job'. S explained to R that he was looking at other quotes and anyway would have to take it to the governors meeting. Looking at 3/4 weeks before a decision could be made. R. gave a booklet to B. with all the details in it. After the business was concluded there was a jocular discussion about digital cameras (the rep had just bought one on E Bay and it had cost him more than he thought it would). Handshake concluded meeting.

A member of staff then handed in a lesson plan.

Reception teachers were both out, and B left office to main part of school to discuss with his Deputy (E). As the main part of the school is a communal space there were two other teachers who joined in the discussion about illness cover. Ben leaned against the walls with his arms crossed. The main focus of the conversation seemed to be what to do with L. and her continued absence. A, another teacher, then told him she had a problem with her car and would have to pop out 12-12 15. (See diagram of position in sketch book).

W (caretaker) and B then have a brief conversation about open morning arrangements.

R (teacher) reminded B that he was going on the Geography walk and must be involved in the car honk competition (an annual event for the school which involved the children and staff crossing a dual carriage way bridge and waving at the cars as they passed below).

Carried on discussion with deputy about how they might put a supply in reception. He then went to talk with the secretary to ask her to ring (the absent teachers) at lunch to see if they would be back for the following day's open morning.

B then photocopies his reply to the nursery consultation. Brief discussion with C at copier.

Back to the office and another brief discussion with C and DH about who will be where in the afternoon. Ends up in Staffroom with DH discussing the arrangements for the day so that they are clear on the noticeboard that is in the staffroom for keeping people in touch with what is going on. I note school cat asleep in chair!

**8.35** Still in staffroom with DH. They discuss assemblies and the Open Morning poster. Asks caretaker how healthy absent teacher sounded on phone.

School starts 8.45. Ben stands in the inner entrance and speaks to children. Someone (staff?) talks about her tyre with him. Presumably teacher who needs to sort out car at lunchtime.

**8.50** Returns to office and checks e mails. Badges for the Open Morning have not arrived. Reads through the final copy of the nursery proposal.

Ben then is called to see parent about alleged incident outside school with strange man (not observed).

Sorts out reception class arrangements with a LSA. Talks with late small child who has a chronic illness and is only in half time. Talks with L (LSA) about whether she should come in early for Open Morning. Looks at the letter to parents. Start to drink coffee but is interrupted by need to go on the nature walk.

From **9.30 to 10.05** B is just a helper on the Geography walk. He has 4 small boys and they leaf collect, spot types of houses, and count the pillars on the shadow monument 'Oh no we have counted both sides!'. Return to school.

He has a discussion with the caretaker about the new playtime equipment that has arrived. 'Thanks'.

Goes to see DH re book for assembly. Open Morning is dominating his thoughts! Goes to make sure signs for it are laminated.



**10.15** Checks PC for messages and looks at some more open morning paperwork. Checks with caretaker about OM banner and asks if they can check the fitting of it after school. 'Is that alright?' 'Fine' 'Thanks'.

I make notes on Office door and layout of the office.

**10.25** Assembly. Aesop's fable of the boastful man and about Open Morning. Only him – keeps an eye out for misbehaviour.

Checks with secretary that staff have his nos for OM.

At play he uses digital camera in playground to capture children for OM displays. Has cup of coffee at last.

After play there is an email from Chair of Govs re their weekly meeting. He is 'letting him off' We discuss benefits of good chair, which is not part of observation really but just happens. Not sure at this stage whether this is good or bad idea.

**11.10** LSA pops in to say someone else if feeling ill. More movement of staff may be necessary. Ben tells me this is probably the worst week for illness that he has ever had as a headteacher.

**11.25** LSA pops in the laminated posters and reminds B about his post.

**11.35** Pictures begin to emerge from printer, and B studies awning quote in more depth.

**LUNCH** (I leave school for lunch but return to sit in staffroom with staff and cat. I allow B some time off from being observed, but make note to view his lunch hour on next day)

**12.45** B tries to finish the pictures but is interrupted by child at door. Has to sort out a small bit of misbehaviour at lunch. Talks to the boys involved.

**1.00** Back to printing.

**1.10** Secretary pops in and tells B she has noted a spelling mistake on one of the OM items. He arranges to sort it out,

**1.15**

Answers and sends more e mails./ LSA brings on some more bits for OM. B asks her if she would mind trimming the photos. Sec brings in the plan with the spelling error and B puts it in his bag. Ben then works at laptop with posters and signing for open day until 1 55. The printer is being a tad tetchy.

**2.00** Ben goes back to the main body of the school to cut some of the display signs and do a bit of lamination. We talk about how this is relaxing and then the latest policy he is working on to do with the work load agreement. Called into computer room to look at PC. Says he is not able to fix the problem and suggests that person uses the library PC.

Goes to main hall and sorts out the display boards for Open Morning until Home time.

### ***General reflection***

Atmosphere in the school is friendly supportive and calm. Personal relationships between staff seemed characterised by humour. Old secretary had dropped in, for example, at lunchtime. Ben seems very calm and does not go into role with staff – children in assembly and bad behaviour. He has a low quiet voice.