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**A New Model of Students' Perceptions of the Primary  
School Classroom Emotional Environment**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
in  
Psychology  
at Massey University, Palmerston North,  
New Zealand

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## ***Abstract***

As part of a larger project that sought to define the primary school classroom's emotional environment, this research accessed students' perceptions of the emotional environment and developed a model of these perceptions. Study 1 trialled a new method for doing focus groups with children and modified a judgement procedure so that 8 – 12 year old children could indicate their level of agreement successfully. Study 2 used 21 focus groups with 79 8-12 year old primary school students from the Lower Central North Island. From these focus groups a list of 94 items was developed that encapsulate what children notice in their classrooms as affecting the emotional environment and the language they use to describe it. Study 3 had 63 adults use a modified decision task to sort the 94 items into groups of their selection of similarity and dissimilarity. The analysis of these data revealed 11 clusters of items and 3 underlying dimensions - Teacher Affect, Teacher Expectations and Style, and Classroom Dynamics. Each dimension has two opposing ends, and each of the 94 items can be viewed on a three dimensional map showing their relationship to each of the other 93 items along these 3 underlying dimensions. The visual graphic makes these dimensions easy to interpret for those who are likely to be organising classroom environments. This research shows that when given a chance to talk about their experiences in classrooms, students can explain what they value in a classroom, what they will remember about school, and what influences them and their learning.

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During this thesis my husband and I had several major life transformations:  
Including buying and selling real estate, for a city relocation,  
Diagnosis of a chronic illness, and our first baby which brought much celebration.

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From my family and my friends – my true inspiration  
Too many to mention, but to omit a few  
Would seem categorically, the wrong thing to do  
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Iliana, Caleb, Mia, Taine, Elysha and little Seth too,  
I send this out hoping that it leads to a new conceptualisation  
Of the way we teach our children, the next generation.

*These projects have been peer reviewed. In addition, Study 2 has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, Application 07/14.*

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## Foreword

My path to this thesis began when I was 13 years old. My parents were both teachers and when I started high school I had longer holidays than they did, so Dad would take me to school with him. Up until then, I had not really considered how different experiences can shape a person. My upbringing was very white upper-middle class. I lived with my parents, who are still married, and my brother in a house my parents owned, on a street where all the children were in the same situation – parents married, employed and owned their own home. None of us needed anything. My primary school was just around the corner and many, if not all, of my friends in my class were in the same situation.

The children in my Dad’s class lived a very different experience. I did not fully realise this for years, but one incident in particular started me on this journey I am on today. When I was at school with Dad and had nothing better to do I would sit in the library corner of his classroom and read to anyone who would listen – which I now realise must have been quite rare for some of the children, to have someone read to them. One 8-year-old boy took a particular shine to me that year and on the way home from school one day my father and I were talking about him and how sweet he was. Then my Dad said something I will never forget “Yeah – it’s a shame that he’ll be dead or in jail by the age of 20.” This completely shattered the naive illusion I had of childhood. I do not believe that my Dad was a pessimist; I think he was a realist. He worked at that same school for decades, often teaching all the siblings from a family and, sometimes, the children of former students. The unfairness of these children’s realities still makes me feel sick to my stomach, and what is worse, these children are not alone.

When I started studying, I started teacher aiding to help pay bills. I enjoyed working with troubled and difficult children one-on-one and developed skills and a niche working with the children, who, as one principal stated, “no one else here likes anymore”. I came to realise that these children, while often very dysfunctional in school settings, were living in a context I was still struggling to understand, and their “problem behaviour” in school served good purpose in every other context in which

they had to survive. My passion for trying to improve the reality for children was permanently ingrained.

Knowing that getting access into the home contexts for these children would be next to impossible, meant that for me the best course of action was to try and work with these children while at school. That meant trying to affect the way teachers think about, manage and interact with children. Resiliency literature tells us that often for children at risk it just takes one adult to show care and concern above and beyond the call of duty to make a meaningful difference in their lives (Webster-Stratton, 1999); a teacher is perfectly placed to be this person. Anecdotally, many adults can speak vividly about a teacher who had a huge impact on their self-concepts – either positively or negatively.

Teacher aiding allowed me to see how children reacted to different teachers. Some classrooms were very relaxed, happy working places, while others seemed to constantly be in conflict. Originally I believed this had much to do with the students in the class, but after a time I came to see the differences within a class were due to the leadership of different teachers – in some cases even the proximity of different teachers (Andersen, 2003). I was able to watch the internal dynamics of a class change over the course of the year as teachers and students became more familiar with each other. But the thing that was most obvious to me was how, regardless of the wider school climate (although this certainly had some effect), some teachers could settle their classes to a happy working buzz while other classes were miserable places to be, to the point that I felt quite sorry for the children stuck there for six hours a day, five days a week, forty weeks of the year.

Trying to capture details of the effect the teachers have, so that we can all learn how to be better caregivers and teachers, can be attempted many ways. For me though, hearing from the children directly was the most appealing and proved to be very telling. The hope is that the information gathered from the children can, when added to other sources of information, begin to challenge the way adults think and are taught about children and adults' roles in their lives.

## Chapter 1 : Introduction

*Building positive relationships with your students is essential. Perhaps the most obvious reason for teachers to develop meaningful relationships with students is because a positive teacher – student relationship built on trust, understanding and caring will foster students’ co-operation and motivation and increase their learning and achievement at school. Moreover, for those students who come from abusive or neglectful homes, there is research indicating that when there has been a teacher, counsellor or relative in the student’s life who has established a close relationship with that student, the long-term outcome for that student has been much better than for those who lack a close relationship with an adult during the early years. Consequently, teachers can make a big difference to a child’s future when they spend the extra effort developing positive relationships with students.*

Webster-Stratton, 1999, p30

As Webster-Stratton so poignantly illustrates, relationships in childhood have a great influence on who we become as people. What is learnt from relationships during childhood gets imprinted into our perception of ourselves, of others and of the social world. With rising rates of mental illness, especially depression, and seemingly increasing levels of social dysfunction, it is worth reviewing the quality of early relationships to see if there are changes that could be made to improve positive coping strategies. Previously parenting research has been the focus of such investigations, but with changes in society requiring more and more children to be distant from extended relatives and to have full-time care-giving provided from outside the family unit, it is becoming more relevant to look to relationships children have with people outside their nuclear family. Oftentimes a class teacher can become a major non-family adult figure in a child’s life. Because we are considering children’s relationships, it becomes pertinent to consider these relationships from the point of view of the children, rather than simply ‘dumbing down’ adults’ perceptions of children’s relationships.

## Value of Relationships

Close relationships shape who we are as a person, how we view ourselves and our world, and how we relate to others (Levy, 2000). This shaping process will happen regardless of the presence of specific environmental influences; however the environment does affect the rate and quality of development (Crain, 1992).

Therefore, childhood relationships can have a lasting effect, influencing how we relate to others, how we regulate our emotions and how we cope with stress (Schore, 2001).

Attachment literature tells us that the relationships we have in our formative years influence our perception of our contexts (Karen, 1994). Our relationships tell us who we are as people, our role and relevance in the world and how to interact with other people, everything to do with social function and perception; is the world a safe place for me, to be vulnerable, to learn, to be childlike? The more people we have who value us unconditionally, the happier and healthier we are in the world (Goldberg, 2000; van Ijzendoorn & Sagi, 1999). As children grow up they will come in contact with a wider range of people, who will have a wide range of responses to them. All of these interactions are shaped by and shape children's perceptions of the world and the way in which they function in relationships with others (Bretherton, 2005; Wickes, 2000). Resiliency literature tells us that a strong positive adult relationship is the most important protective factor against stress and adversity, and to enhance self-competence (Levy & Orlans, 2000).

The long-term effects of poor relationships are wide-ranging and costly. Social support has been linked with health outcomes, adjustment and psychiatric symptoms (Kendler & Prescott, 2006). Elliott and Place (1998) identify a child's environment, particularly within their family, as one of the potential causes of depression amongst children. When considering depression alone, the World Health Organisation estimates that depression was one of the leading causes of disability in 2000 (World Health Organisation, 2008) and by the year 2020 depression will be the second largest disease burden the world has to manage (Murray & Lopez, 1996). Bates and Bayles (1988) found that up to 15% of children do not develop as well as possible

socially, leading to disturbances internally and interpersonally and problem behaviours.

Within the discipline of psychology there are different theories of the development of negative coping strategies. For example, Experiential Family Therapy comes from a school of psychology that believes that problems develop because of lack of interpersonal and intrapersonal awareness of feelings and emotions, which leads to suppressed feelings, emotional deadness and dysfunction (Gladding, 2002). Social learning theory says that we learn values and morals when we are young and then as we age our actions are either reinforced or punished. Andrews and Bonta (2003) explain that certain behaviours are more or less appropriate given the dynamics of the environment in which they take place. All these theories highlight the role that early experiences play in influencing how a child determines what is considered reasonable, normal, healthy and appropriate, which will affect levels of function or dysfunction for years to come.

Much of what we know about the construction of children's relationships comes from parenting research. We know, for instance, that sensitive care-giving provided to a child can decrease anxious and depressive symptoms in vulnerable children (Warren & Simmens, 2005). Furthermore, limiting a child's ability to form close relationships can lead to atypical social behaviour (Zeanah & Fox, 2004). Also, children who come from stable and communicative parents are more likely to exhibit behaviours that may cause them to be attractive to others as playmates or even leaders (Vasta, Haith, & Miller, 1995). Kochanska, Aksan and Joy (2007) add that a positive mothering relationship predicts successful socialisation. However, once a child starts school, teachers and peers will moderate the family's influence on a child (Marvin & Britner, 1999).

## **Value of Schools and Teachers**

A consideration when looking at effecting change in a child's life is who the children are spending their time with. The more dependent children are on those people around them, the more important it is to treat the wider environment instead of solely focusing on the symptoms of the children (Kazdin, 2004), this wider environment

would include a child's school. In previous generations many children would have a parent not working outside the home, or at least not in full-time employment outside the home. Increasingly however, families require more than one income to survive, making the role of other-than-parent caregivers increasingly important. It is possible for teachers to fill a gap in a child's life by forming consistent, caring relationships with their students (Howes & Ritchie, 2002). However, it is also possible for teachers to be disrespectful and abusive towards their students (Miller & Pedro, 2006), further disrupting their social schemas. Andrews and Bonta (2003) identify five recognised risk factors to criminal conduct, two of which are found in the classroom, namely antisocial associates and problems at school. While pedagogy and management relate to a child's self-efficacy beliefs (Keyser & Barling, 1981), a large part of any school problems will be the child's relationship with their class teacher, which is a function of the child's prosociality (Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999), but also a function of the model the teacher provides (Miller & Pedro, 2006). Adaptation to school promotes competence and prevents maladjustment, and there is a complex mix of risks and protective factors around adaptation (Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999). Researchers are noticing the difficulties that an alarming number of children currently experience, hindering their development and ability to learn (Howes & Ritchie, 2002).

It is widely recognised that when there is a problem, the earlier the intervention the better (Guralnick, 1997; Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson, & Collins, 2005). However, for some children in New Zealand problems are not detected until they start school. This is because it is there for the first time that children are required to be accounted for, and tested compared to their peers. For some children this may also be the first time they have regular contact with people outside their family. Schools are also required to maintain certain standards of safety, health and academic performance, so there is a focus on detection of potential problems, and on what is considered 'normal' development. School staff are required to have minimum levels of understanding of 'normal' development, supported by regular professional development, so schools become potentially ideal places for detection and treatment of problems. Because children learn how to function in the world, primarily from their family, it makes sense to involve the family, and other major players in a child's life, in any needed intervention for the child (Shirk & Karver, 2003). Of course, ideally, intervention

would be more effective from a much earlier age and in the home, but, for some children, their home lives are inconsistent, and their parents are themselves needy, unaware, or incapable of dealing with problems. This makes targeting intervention at schools a potentially effective means of remedying childhood problems.

### **Components of a Classroom**

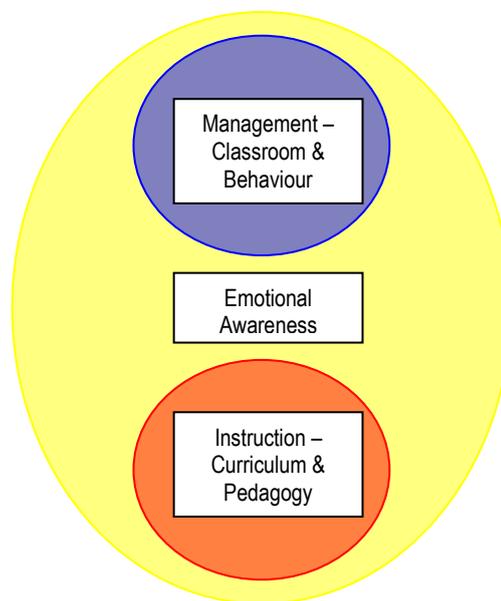
*The quality of the classroom 'climate' is crucial to the students' emotional and social well-being and to the progress that they make. Students need to feel that they are part of a warm and supportive classroom environment where it is safe and appropriate to take risks in their learning.*

Ministry of Education, 2006, p.195

As the New Zealand Ministry of Education point out, the classroom environment plays a large part in determining the quality of learning, as well as children's emotional development. There are many influences on a classroom environment, for example, the perceptions held by both the teacher and their students (Fraser, 1986). A classroom environment could be considered as a unique blend of the individual students and their skills, beliefs and perceptions, and the particular teacher and their management and instruction beliefs, perceptions and skills. These skills include those required for learning and their expression is dependent on feeling safe and valued, free from ridicule (Wessler, 2003). Some classrooms promote this mutual respect, some stifle it, and level of respect can be felt by experienced observers when walking into a classroom (Miller & Pedro, 2006). There is much research into what does and does not affect a child's ability to learn, and the relationships formed with their teachers appears to be a critical component (Howes, Burchinal, Pianta, Bryant, Early, Clifford, et al., 2008).

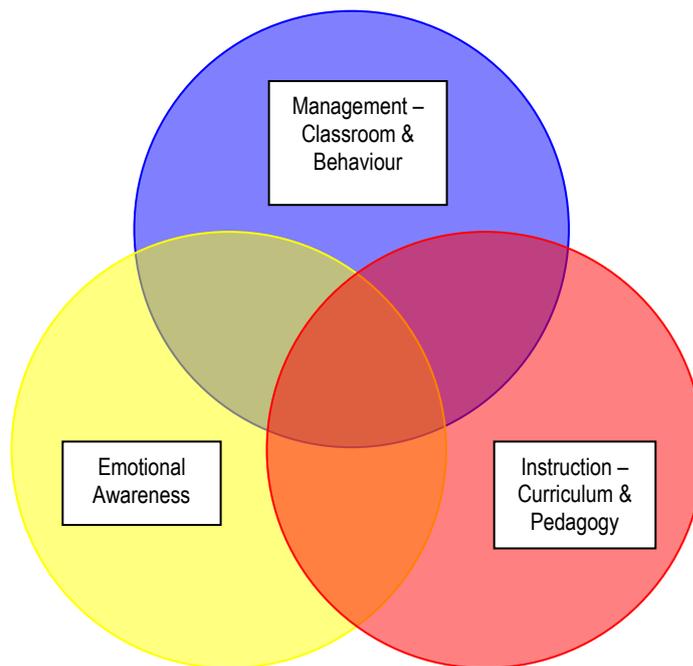
Much classroom research focuses on aspects of pedagogy and management (Chapin & Eastman, 1996). It is becoming clearer that management and pedagogy styles are closely linked with an overall environment that promotes learning. Bishop, Berryman and Richardson (2001) found that in New Zealand classrooms it was a mix of the teachers' personal qualities and pedagogical characteristics that led to effective learning environments. There is more to a classroom environment than just pedagogy and management. It has elements of social intelligence, as defined by

Marlowe (1986), but goes beyond that to include emotional awareness. Based on my experience, Figure 1 proposes how the decisions that teachers make in a classroom are influenced and informed by their level of emotional awareness and understanding of the class. It is possible that teachers are unaware of the influence of their emotional awareness, whereas the other two components of the classroom makeup will be more explicit, especially in new teachers or new situations. Teachers are also expected to account for their management and instruction, but not their emotional awareness or understanding of a class. There will be school-wide management procedures that all teachers will be required to conform to and school management will insist on seeing teachers' instruction planning.



*Figure 1* Teacher decision making processes

A school's main purpose is to teach (Gilroy, 1998), and emotionally responsive environments help to promote learning (Clark, 1997). Management, pedagogy and emotional environment work together in classrooms, each aspect feeding into the others. In Figure 2 I suggest how these three components of a classroom fit together. They are separate elements, but it is possible that they work together. If each section is considered as a sliding scale of strength and need, then an individual teacher can be placed anywhere within the central intersecting area of the model. The model also indicates that each component can be built on separately, increasing a teacher's strength in that area.



*Figure 2* Proposed model of the three elements of a classroom

## Emotion Research in Schools

There has been research conducted on students' perceptions of their learning environments (Sinclair & Fraser, 2002) but as yet, there is little research done into the emotional environments of schools. School work and emotions have begun to be linked by some; for example, Graziano, Reavis, Keane, and Calkins (2007) found that a child's emotion regulation was positively correlated with academic success. The lack of research in this area is not because classrooms do not have an emotional undertone. Classrooms, like any community, have their own social structures, values, processes, strengths and weaknesses (Gregory, 1999), but these are not necessarily clear. It is important to consider explicitly the emotions within a classroom, because if a child's environment has no expectation of or concern for social interest from a child, players within that environment, who could be agents of change, will not be providing a child with the same opportunities they may otherwise have done. When this type of analysis has been done in schools, the students' viewpoint has rarely been considered (Cullingford, 2006).

## Assessing the Child's Perspective

*"I think it's awesome that you are asking us what we think, 'cos no one ever does that!" – 10 year old boy*

Being that teachers will need to be the agents of change in a class, it makes sense to target research at them. While it is possible to do all the research and intervention at the teacher level, it is still important to consider the perception and role of the students, something that teachers value but seldom get time to explore (Cullingford, 2006). Students will have different expectations from each other and their teachers, because they come from different backgrounds; therefore it is up to the teacher to establish the accepted tone of their classroom (Miller & Pedro, 2006). Sinclair and Fraser (2002) have found that teachers perceive classroom environments more positively than their students, so talking with the students will provide useful and different data from those obtained by simply asking the class teachers. The teacher in a classroom will hold most of the power, the ability to shape the community and to change the community. However, the students will be developing into people who are better able to judge, support, condemn, alter, and discuss their community. If one wants to effect change in children's lives it is worth considering how children view their world and which areas are actually of concern.

From Piaget, in the early days of considering a child's changing abilities, through to today's modern views on child development, some facets have remained constant (Eisenberg, 1992). Children become more adult-like in their thinking gradually, but we now understand that children are not just simply small adults; children have a fundamentally different construction of the world (Siegler, 1996, 1998). Therefore, it is inappropriate to simply 'dumb down' adult constructs to apply to children; the way they will structure their world will be from a whole separate set of constructs.

Children may seem to be able to apply adult concepts to their world; this does not, however, mean that these concepts are the ones children use to organise their world (Rudy & Merluzzi, 1984). Research becomes much more difficult when considering that children may sometimes use the same words as adults in ways different to adults, as Sinclair and Fraser (2002) found in their research. Therefore, when doing research affecting children, it is important to consider children's perceptions of the

research question. Any person who has worked with children with any level of success can tell you that adults make assumptions about what children want and why they do things, but often if we just sit down and talk to children we would discover they are thinking something that we, as adults, might never have considered.

When doing research with children then, it becomes important, but very difficult, for researchers to understand how children think of their world. Children aim to please (Cullingford, 2006) and in traditional interview styles it has been shown that children will attempt to discover what the interviewer wants them to say, rather than the child saying what they actually think (Wilson & Powell, 2001). Children are also more susceptible to deferring to those that seem more knowledgeable than them (Wilson & Powell, 2001) and are practised at searching for the single 'correct' answer to a question, typical of the types of questions they get asked at school (Cullingford, 2006). Additionally, children are not used to being asked their opinion, so are not practised at having an opinion or expressing it. Though they may sound like an adult it does not mean that they understand like an adult (Wilson & Powell, 2001). New methods are needed to access better children's beliefs and understandings.

Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) has been used successfully with children as young as five years old when sorting limited numbers of familiar items. In Cooper's (2002) MDS study children were first asked to generate items, and then sort them into categories of their choosing. This took three sessions for each small class group and was quite time intensive. It was important to Cooper, though, that the children were not directed in their responses, as the purpose of her study "was to gain insight into *their* way of thinking." (p. 1230). Cooper notes that three things in particular were important to the children's ability to understand and enjoy their experience – "Visual imagery, narrative and working with their hands" (p. 1230). Lease, McFall, Treat, and Viken (2003) have shown success using MDS with nine through eleven year olds, when investigating children's implicit perceptions of their peer groups. The strengths of MDS here are that the children themselves were not necessarily conscious of their categories of organization, and as such would have been unable to start to explain these to a researcher, and that children can compare along multiple dimensions all at once.

## MultiDimensional Scaling (MDS)

Multidimensional Scaling is a research approach being used in a wide variety of disciplines and research, including Library and Information Systems (Cooper, 2002), Attachment (Kirkland, Bimler, Drawneek, McKim, & Scholmerich, 2004), Medicine (Bravata, Shojania, Olkin, & Raveh, 2008), Chemistry (Bartzatt, 2007) and children's' perceptions (Lease, McFall, Treat, & Viken, 2003). The benefits of using MDS include the fact that MDS is useful for finding implicit structures participants use for organising data (Lease et al., 2003). In addition, the end result of Multidimensional Scaling is a geometric graphic (Lease et al., 2003), much like a map or globe which makes the data easier for laypersons to read. The graphic shows the relative similarities and dissimilarities of the data as actual meaningful space on the map (Kruskal & Wish, 1978), so constructs that are quite similar appear close together and constructs that are different are viewed at a distance from each other. One strength of MDS is that the researcher can ask participants questions without revealing the research hypothesis (Stewart, Hill, Stewart, Bimler, & Kirkland, 2005). It also allows researchers to explore an area that has no current theoretical understanding, as there is no need for prior conceptualisation of how items might relate to one another (Kirkland, et al., 2004).

As Vygotsky noted, communication between people requires a shared understanding of concepts (Berk, 1999). The way that a person classifies information reflects their understanding of that information, based on their experiences of that information (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973). MDS allows participants to group data any way they see as relevant, permitting researchers access to implicit understandings of items even if participants themselves are unaware of their implicit categorisation (Lease et al., 2003). In MDS concept development comes from grouping ideas into categories and giving these categories names (Joyce & Weil, 1996).

One use of MDS is to analyse relationships and uncover underlying dimensions. GOPA (standing for Group, Opposites, Partition and Addition – the process that participants use) is a technique used for this purpose (Kirkland, et al., 2004). It allows for the plotting of data in three dimensions, which means that every item will be plotted according to its average distance from every other item in the data set.

The way that data are gathered to be able to return this type of result is by using a MOSS board, called that because it uses a Method Of Successive Sorts. The MOSS board helps participants decide the frequency or level of agreement they have for each item in a set of statements. Using a MOSS board is a tangible experience: each item is printed onto a card and participants shuffle the cards then physically place them onto the board, which has a series of boxes printed on it, each box representing a specific level on a continuum of agreement. Cooper's study (2002) noted the importance of visual and tangible tasks when working with children, so MDS, and in particular a MOSS-style board, seems a good fit for child participants.

### **Age Group for Consideration**

Developmentalists believe that during middle childhood learning to be social creatures is of primary importance, and that there are many factors that influence this process (Lease et al., 2003). Investigating emotions in the classroom is a developing area of research interest, mainly for early school experiences and then again at high school. Fraser has begun the work of describing the elements and effects of the environment; however the middle childhood years have largely been overlooked (Sinclair & Fraser, 2002). This is probably for several reasons. The recognition that the earlier the intervention the better (Guralnick, 1997; Sroufe, et al., 2005), is the probable reason for research into the early years. For high school-aged research the focus is on the students and on areas under students' control, like reducing drop-out (Townsend, Flisher & King, 2007) and truancy (Richtman, 2007) and increasing engagement (Bennett, Lubben & Hogarth, 2007; Maccini, Malcahy & Wilson, 2007) and achievement (Smith & Star, 2007). Research in schools largely ignores children in the 8 – 12 year old age group, which is when, as Erikson tells us, they are starting to develop their own sense of self as unique individuals, their sense of identity (Santrock, 1994). At this age, children are more able to tell us what they think, but are still unable to make conscious change, so any emotional intervention would still need to be targeted at the classroom teachers; as it will be the teachers who are capable of metacognition and conscious change.

Considering school environments becomes more appropriate as children mature and their horizons expand. As children develop, their fears become more socially

orientated, and previous experiences shape how they see themselves and their place in the social world (Wilson & Powell, 2001). Younger children tend to be fearful of things they do not understand, whereas typical fears in the 9 – 12 year old age groups include school performance anxiety and their appearance (Wilson & Powell, 2001).

## The Current Research

*I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I have tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humour, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized.*

Ginott, 1976, p13

This research was done within the working environment of a larger scale research team. In 2006 a team of researchers at Massey University received a government grant to explore the idea that the emotional environment of the classroom is a distinct and important part of a classroom's construction, and that through educating teachers the emotional climate can be improved. The Te Āniwaniwa team has been developing different ways of accessing and assessing the emotional climate of primary school classrooms, and exploring the components of a well managed emotional climate.

The aim of this research was to seek the student voice, to uncover their perception of their classrooms' emotional environment and discover the language they use to describe it. The goals of this research were (a) to develop a set of statements that could be used in an assessment tool and (b) to organise these statements so that underlying constructions of classroom facets could be illuminated. The tool would be able to be used in conjunction with other methods of assessment, but this tool would be unique as it would directly assess individual classrooms from the perspective of students who were eight to twelve years old.

Therefore, there were several areas of needed development. First, it was necessary to find a tool that could be adapted for use with eight to twelve year old children, and adapt it so that results were valid for this age group. Then, a format was developed for obtaining items from children for eventual inclusion in the tool. Then data were gathered, organised and analysed into meaningful areas of understanding. This was a five step process.

1. A tool was needed that could reliably and validly assess children's perceptions. Children's perceptions are important but I needed to be able to obtain them without interfering in the content. It was thought that a revised MOSS board might work; it is a tactile experience and participants do not have to write anything, which is better when working with children, as they may find it more enjoyable and a lot of children take an immediate dislike to a task if they are required to write anything. There were, however, concerns about; (a) whether 8-12 year old children can be taught to use this process; (b) what modifications would need to be made, if any, to the current board for this task to be as independent as possible; (c) which age groups can perform these tasks validly.
2. A method of interviewing children that accessed the concepts they could see affecting the emotional climate of the classroom was required. This method needed to keep the children focused, engaged, honest and for all of this to happen quite quickly so that they would not miss too much class time.
3. Themes that developed from the interview data would illuminate areas of concern for these child participants and might provide some idea as to what organisation would be seen in the later theory development.
4. A list of items that accurately and comprehensively represented students' perceptions of the emotional climate of their classroom needed to be compiled for inclusion in an assessment tool. If a MOSS process is to be used for this future tool, the structure of these items needed to conform to specific parameters, but still have meaning for child participants.

5. Finally, the end product would be a model that is meaningful for students and could be used by teachers and school management. This model accurately and comprehensively organise the items that the child participants had provided earlier, and show the underlying dimensions of the students' perceptions of the primary school classroom emotional environment.

The first two outcomes were addressed in the First Study – Testing Methods. The second two outcomes were addressed in Study 2– Item Development. The final outcome was the result of Study 3 – Structural Analysis.

## Chapter 2 : Study 1 – Testing Methods

### Method

This research contributes to a larger body of inquiry – defining and capturing the emotional climate of the primary school classroom, which was Year 1 of a larger three year project with the aim of changing teachers’ behaviours in order to positively influence children’s emotional development. My research focused on the students’ perceptions of the classroom’s emotional climate and it is intended that this research will contribute to a yet-to-be constructed measure.

The focus of this study was to identify and classify students’ perceptions of the emotional environment of the primary school classroom. The purpose was to identify item statements that were relevant to and understood by the participants and pertinent to the themes of the larger project (Study 2). Small group interviews with upper primary school students were used to gather statements reflecting students’ perceptions of the classroom emotional environment. It is intended that in the future these items will be used in a measure that can be administered in primary schools to help identify teacher strengths and weaknesses; thus, it was also necessary to test the proposed procedure of this measure to see if it could be reliably used by children in the intended 8 – 12 year old age group (Study 1), and to evaluate whether items selected could be used with this methodology. The items were then organised using an adapted GOPA analysis to determine clustering and organisation of concepts (Study 3).

### ***Design***

Two separate studies were undertaken during this first phase. One served as a training exercise where interviewing techniques and methods were refined, and the other served to trial a revised MultiDimensional Scaling procedure called Method Of Successive Sorts (MOSS) style Children’s Decision Board and to test its validity in comparison to an ordinary Likert-style children’s questionnaire. A local school was

recruited to trial this data-gathering technique administering a survey they had designed. That study is discussed here. To protect the anonymity of the school involved, some of the concepts in the items have been generalised in this discussion.

### ***Participants***

Fifty six primary school students participated in Study 1 – Testing Methods.

Class teachers at the school constructed a list of about six students of varying ability from each of the eight classes in the participating school (Y0-Y6 – 5-10 year olds). Parents of the students on this list were asked to give consent before students were interviewed. Out of 47 students, 37 returned completed consent forms.

Thirty students, from seven of the eight classes were interviewed; the Year 0 – 4 (5-8 years old) students were interviewed individually, and Year 5 and 6 (9-10 years old) students two at a time. In the eighth class, twenty-six Year 5-6 students completed the questionnaire with their teacher as a class exercise.

Approximately half of the students interviewed were assisted in completing the Likert-style questionnaire, and the other half used an adapted GOPA sorting methodology. Which style each child completed was determined by alternating methods as I proceeded down the list according to age, so approximately half of each age group and half of each classroom did the questionnaire and the other half the card sort task.

### ***Materials***

An adapted Likert scale type questionnaire was developed in consultation with the school management. The questionnaire had 26 items divided into 3 focuses:

1. Building a special community
2. Relating to others and
3. Learning.

Each child were given either their own copy of the Likert style questionnaire and a pen, or a set of 26 cards, approximately half the size of a playing card, each with a printed statement from the questionnaire, and an A3 size laminated amended decision-making MOSS board (see Figure 3). Feedback from teachers who had experience with the original board had been sought to evaluate what changes they would make to the process so that their students could use it. Teachers suggested improving the flow and changing the language, so during Study 1 different configurations of the boxes and different language were tried.

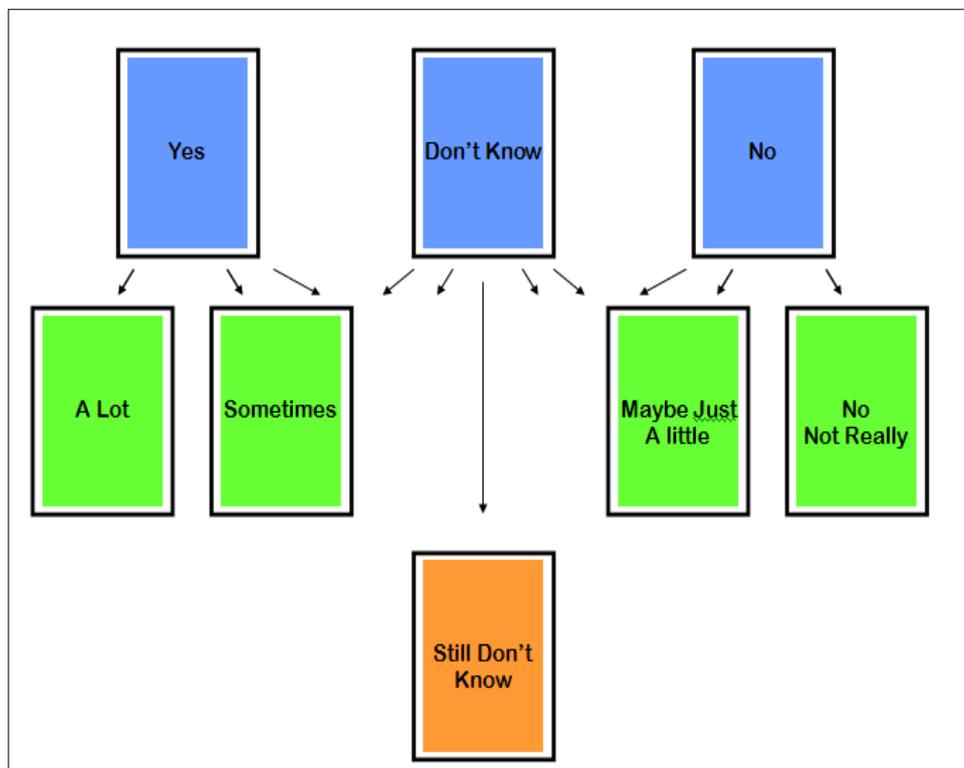


Figure 3 Amended MOSS decision making board

The items the students were responding to were identical in both formats, but the response options were slightly different. The questionnaire had 5 options for response, in order, 'Strongly Agree', 'Agree', 'Disagree', 'Strongly Disagree' and 'Don't Know'. The MOSS board had 'A Lot', 'Sometimes', 'Still Don't Know', 'Maybe Just a Little' and 'No Not Really'.

## ***Procedure***

Students were withdrawn from class, one or two at a time depending on their age, to the school kitchen where there was a space set up to work and they could do so uninterrupted.

Each child was assisted to complete either the questionnaire or the card sort task. The items were read to the younger children and any child could ask for assistance at any stage.

Completion of the card sort task went as follows. The child read through each statement and decided which blue box, 'Yes', 'Don't Know' or 'No', each card should be placed on. If they did not understand a card or had trouble reading any words they could either ask for help or place the card on the 'Don't Know' pile. Once all the cards were sorted the first time, the students picked up the 'Yes' pile and decided which green box the card should go on, either 'A lot' or 'Sometimes'. When the 'Yes' pile was finished, the student were asked to sort the 'No' pile into either 'Maybe just a little' or 'No Not really'. Once both the 'Yes' and 'No' piles were completed the 'Don't Know' pile could be sorted onto any of the green, second stage boxes. At this stage the student could receive help with understanding the 'Don't Know' cards. If the child still could not decide, the card was placed on the orange 'Still Don't Know' box.

Regardless of which task the student carried out, once they had finished they were asked to explain half a dozen of their decisions, picked at random. It was explained that they had done some fabulous thinking and that I was interested in why they had made some of their decisions, rather than suggesting they had responded incorrectly.

## ***Analysis***

Notes were taken as to how long each task took, which questions the children each found difficult and what needed to happen to resolve each issue for each child. As a validity check, after the exercise was completed students were asked questions about why they had chosen some of their answers. Their responses were assessed by the researcher according to comprehensiveness. After all interviews were complete,

responses were tallied for all participants and a between-groups comparison was carried out comparing different ages and different methods.

### ***Ethical Implications***

This project was peer reviewed. The code of Ethical conduct for Research involving Human Subjects (Massey University Human Ethics Committee, 2006) was respected throughout the study. The school involved took responsibility, as lead researchers, for ensuring staff, students, parents and the management committee were informed and gave consent.

## **Results**

### ***Children's MOSS style process***

Two aspects of the Children's Decision Making Board were tested during Study 1. First, can children validly use the card sort task and does it have any advantages over typical questionnaires? Second, what changes need to be made to make the board and items as user-friendly as possible?

### ***Card Sort Task versus Questionnaire***

There were some benefits of using a questionnaire over the card sort method; however, the cognitively complex task of aligning answers to the correct statement could sometimes confuse the students. The students completed the questionnaire more quickly than the card sort task. The Year 5-6 students also required less help completing the questionnaire than the card sort, once the procedure had been explained. However, many children expressed apprehension as they had not filled in a questionnaire before, and had difficulty working out which boxes to place their ticks in. A ruler was provided as a guide and students were assisted to move it down to reveal the next question; this helped somewhat, but was not foolproof. Therefore, unsupervised children completing questionnaires may have problems with ensuring they give the intended answers for each question.

In discussions with students following the tasks, students provided feedback on the reasoning for their item responses. I need more reassurance that any of the Y0-1 (5-6 year olds) responses were meaningful. Some statements given by children in this age group revealed a stronger interest in the process of the method, than in the content of the task. For instance, one student asked about moving the cards around, “Can I move this over here?” and seemed delighted that they were allowed to put them anywhere and proceeded to move cards from one side of the board to the other throughout the procedure. Almost all the Y5-6 (9-10 year olds) responses seemed relevant and justifiable given the content of the task, due to the answers they provided when I discussed the task with them afterwards. My perception was that some of the Y2-4 (7-9 year olds) students were capable of meaningful responses, more so for the card sort than for the questionnaire.

Patterns of responding between the different age groups show similarity in responses between the Year 5-6 students and the Year 2-3-4 when completing the card sort task. Table 1 shows the level of total agreement, that is, the percentage of responses given that were positive, for each age group and each method. The agreement levels are high for each group, but especially for the Years 2-3-4 and Years 5-6 students who completed the card sort task. Given the assumption that the Year 5-6 students are most capable of valid answers, due to the quality and confidence of their replies to questions asked about their responses after the procedure was complete, the similarity in patterns of responding would suggest that the Card Sort procedure was also a valid method of assessment for Years 2-3-4, whereas the questionnaire, which has more varied levels of responding, was less valid.

Table 1

*Agreement Percentages Compared Between Groups of Respondents*

		Years		
		0-1	2-3-4	5-6
Method	<i>Card sort</i>	76	91	92
	<i>Questionnaire</i>	89	75	63

In general, the children found the Card Sort task easier to complete, primarily because it helped them to determine the level of agreement. That is, they found determining if something was “A lot” or “Sometimes” easier than deciding between “Strongly Agree” and “Agree”. With many of the children who completed the questionnaire, time needed to be spent at the start explaining the concepts of ‘Agree’ and ‘Disagree’, and then ‘Strongly’. It was not clearly evident that children fully grasped the nature of the difference between simply agreeing and strongly agreeing with a statement, which seemed to be displayed in their pattern of responding. Many children would answer either only ‘Strongly Agree’ or only ‘Agree’ for the majority of their answers, that is, the child would tick most of the boxes all in the same column. When comparing patterns of responding, 38% of students who completed the questionnaire had 90% or more of their answers in the same column, compared with only 19% of students who completed the card sort. This shows that there was a higher degree of differentiation in the card sort answers.

The justifications of response choice seemed stronger and more confident for those children who had completed the card sort. The types of reasons given for response choice varied between methods, for example, “I can’t remember why” (in response to ‘Strongly Agree’ to the statement *I have a say in what I am learning*) and “Cos not everyone does” (in response to ‘Agree’ to *It is important to look after our playground*) as examples of responses for Y4 (8yo) students on the questionnaire, compared with “There’s no bullying and the Five Finger Tool (a school-wide strategy for problem resolution)” (in responses to ‘A Lot’ to *I feel safe at our school*) from a Y3 (7yo) student and “Sometimes she’s too busy to listen to me” (in response to ‘Sometimes’ to *My teacher listens to me*) from a Y5 student using the card sort task.

With the questionnaires done in class, there was a much larger ‘Don’t Know’ response level. The level of ‘Don’t Know’ responses was also higher in the supervised questionnaire group than in the supervised card sort group, as seen in Table 2.

Table 2

*Percentage of 'Don't Know' Responses for Each Age Group and Methodology*

		Years			Mean
		0-1	2-3-4	5-6	
Method	<i>Card Sort</i>	5	1	3	3
	<i>Questionnaire</i>	8	10	29	16

Development of the Children's Decision Board was based on Bimler and Kirkland's (2001) original adult MOSS board. To address flow issues, the boxes on the board were made bigger, and the words were placed at the top of the box, so the children can actually place item cards in each box and still read the words, as they could not remember what each of the boxes represented for the duration of the task. For some children, getting the cards inside the box was important, and they would spend quite some time readjusting the cards so they fitted inside the boxes properly; thus making the boxes big enough was important.

There were three levels of decisions for the children to make during the task, so these were colour coded. First, the children needed to decide on which blue square to place their item. The blue boxes are all lined up on the board, so the rest of the boxes can be hidden from view. Then the students picked up each of the blue piles one-by-one to decide which green square each item would go in. There are also arrows from each of the blue boxes down to which green boxes they correspond with, see Figure 4 .

In addition, "sometimes" was moved up to the first decision process. With the younger children especially, students would often place an item on "sometimes", which was in the second decision phase, rather than "yes" or "no" in the first decision phase. For an item like "Our teacher yells at us" they could not decide between "yes" or "no", they really wanted to put it on "sometimes" in the first decision, because the teacher did not yell all the time or none of the time, and they did not understand that in the second decision process they would be able to say how much a particular item was true.

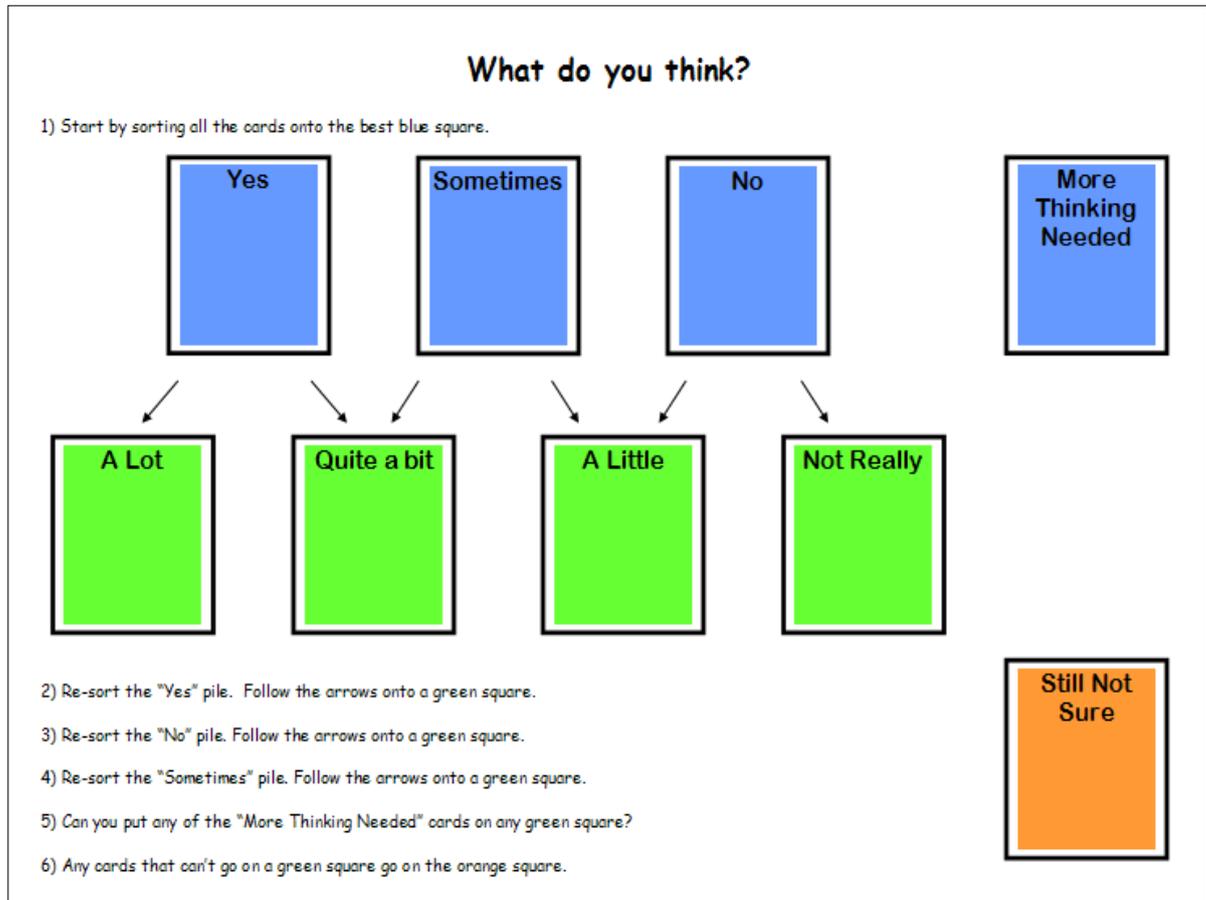


Figure 4 Children's Card-sort task decision board

The second decision process required the students to place each item on a green square. At the beginning of the session, the children would need to discuss that each square was on a continuum, so related to each other. The wording of each square went through many changes, finally ending in "A lot", "Quite a bit", "A little" and "Not really" as these were the words that the children seemed to use to describe decisions at this level, and they were universally understood.

Additionally, on the original board the first decision level was between "yes", "no" and "don't know". "Don't know" was changed to "more thinking needed" because children tend to believe that if you ask them a question they should know the answer (Wilson & Powell, 2001). Also, this allowed children to ask for help in a less threatening way, if they did not understand or could not read any particular words. Once the children had re-sorted the "Yes", "No" and "Sometimes" piles, it was possible to approach each child to help them with the few items they might have in the "More thinking needed" pile. Usually, this was almost unnecessary as once the

children had become familiar with the four green boxes they could easily place any other items also. If not, clarification of the words or concepts was enough for the students to place the cards. If not, there was an orange “Still not sure” box the children could use. “Still not sure” was a less threatening choice than “Still Don’t Know” which was the original wording.

### *Item Styles*

Several of the questions contained words that most children struggled to read, including the Y5-6 (9-10 year old) students. Examples of problematic words include: Important, Environment, Understand, Responsible and Conferences.

Several questions were phrased in such a way that almost all students asked for help understanding the question. Examples of the original statements and how they were rephrased so the students could understand it, follow:

*It is important to look after my classroom environment*

Rephrased: I think it is important to look after the things in my classroom

*I have a say in what I am learning*

Rephrased: I get to help decide what I learn about

There were several questions that were generally misunderstood by most students. Examples of the original statements, the problem the statements caused and how the statements could be rephrased so the students could understand are as follows:

*I am responsible for my behaviour choices*

Children seemed to just hear the first three words and respond accordingly. Most felt that they were responsible.

Rephrased: My behaviour choices are my own,

or

I choose how I behave

*I know what I am learning*

This question was interpreted along the lines of how smart a student feels, that is, they know their times tables, rather than they know that they are learning numeracy skills.

Rephrased: I know what we are learning about,

or

I know why I need to learn what I am learning

The questions were all phrased in the positive, tending towards a socially desirable or well-taught response. Almost universally, children responded with *Strongly Agree / A Lot* or *Agree / Sometimes* (Questionnaire / Mapping), see Table 1. Responses tended to vary across the continuum for only a few questions, but this seemed to be for reasons outside the intent of the survey. Examples of this include:

*There are people in need at my school and in my community*

Once children understood the question, most were quite unclear how they should answer. This could be because this particular community is relatively affluent, and there may not be a high level of visible need.

*My parents think it is important to come to our school events*

Children found this question hard to answer also, as they had to think about what their parents may or may not think, a difficult cognitive task for this age group. The children who disagreed with this statement mentioned that their parents are too busy, or would only come if the child had a role to play.

*Assembly helps me to understand the value we are talking about*

Many younger children did not know what Assembly was, or what a value was. Many older children felt that they already had an adequate understanding of the value and that Assembly dragged on.

*New children in our school feel that they are part of our school's family*

Here the difference seemed to be that feeling like part of the family or knowing people would take time, so new children would not, but after a while they would.

Suggested alternative: New children in our school quickly feel like they are part of our school's family

*Teachers help me to sort out problems in the classroom/playground*

Children who disagreed with this almost always said, when asked, that teachers want them to try to sort out their problems on their own first, but that if they could not the teacher would then help. Students also said that sometimes teachers are too far away or too busy to help when they need it.

*My teacher trusts me*

A few children felt that it was too hard to comment on what their teacher was thinking, and were even unwilling to guess. Maybe a more accurate way of asking this question would be to ask about behaviours that the teachers might do that could demonstrate trust.

*I have a say in what I am learning*

Once children understood this question, those who responded negatively tended to say things like “Our teacher tells us what to do and when to do it”, “Sometimes we can choose if we do Art or Story Writing,” or “Sometimes we get to choose what type of writing to do, poetry or a play.”

Therefore, when it came time to select item statements for possible inclusion in Study 3, items were carefully selected and balanced, ensuring language, phrasing and concepts were as simple as possible, familiar to the students and able to be easily read and understood. Also, a balance of negatively and positively worded statements was included, to ensure that children attended to each item separately.

## Chapter 3 : Study 2 – Item Development

### Method

#### *Design*

The second study in this research built on the focus groups' methods devised during Study 1, intending to gather item statements for inclusion in the third stage.

#### *Participants*

Seventy-nine Year 4-8 (8-12 year olds) from local primary schools participated in 21 focus groups. The children interviewed came from classes that had each been nominated as having a teacher of outstanding ability at creating a positive emotional climate.

Classes were selected for participation through independent nomination. Meetings were held with itinerant teachers, Ministry of Education staff, and school principals. Advertising was placed in local papers and online, targeting the same groups and parents, asking for nominations of teachers they thought of as possessing higher than average emotional skills with their class. A list of selection criteria was provided as part of the Nomination form, to enhance reliability of the nominations, see Appendix A. There are 69 primary and intermediate schools within the local City Council catchment ("City schools are going green," 2007). The nomination process used by this research included a larger geographic area to achieve greater diversity, and to try and avoid research burnout that many schools in the Palmerston North area experience.

Teachers were not approached to participate unless they had received more than one nomination and each principal agreed to the teacher's selection. This was to try to ensure that the teacher's nomination was a function of the selection criteria and not a form of social desirability and to facilitate school-wide acceptance of the research process. Once teachers had more than one nomination, they and the relevant

principals were contacted and asked if they would be willing to consider participating in the project. Once interest was received from a teacher and supported by the principal, six varied classes were selected, so as to try to include a diverse range of participants. Six classes was an appropriate number due to the fact that each class would hopefully provide at least three groups of students, totalling over 18 groups for interviews. The six classes included two age bands, Middle Primary (Years 4-6, 8-10 year olds) and Senior Primary (Years 6-8, 10-12 year olds), and covered the decile scale, divided into bands of either low, mid, or high decile, in order to foster participation from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. For the intended and actual demographic variability of classes, see Table 3 and Table 4. Age and decile variability were important to ensure a range of ability and experiences, and previous research (Harvey, 2004) indicates that gender and ethnic background of the teacher should be considered also. The larger geographic area included in this study also allowed for variation in school size and location, as previous research has found differences between rural and urban school environments (Dodendorf, 1983). While the teacher demographics are skewed in favour of female, relatively inexperienced, and pākehā/New Zealand European teachers, this is representative of the teaching population as a whole (Demographic and Statistical Analysis Unit, 2004).

Table 3

*Intended Demographic Spread of Participating Classes*

		Decile rating		
		<i>low</i> (Decile 1-3)	<i>mid</i> (Decile 4-7)	<i>high</i> (Decile 8-10)
Age band	<i>middle</i> (Year 4-6)	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
	<i>senior</i> (Year 6-8)	Class 4	Class 5	Class 6

Table 4

*Actual Demographic Spread of Participating Schools and Teachers*

	School					Class Teacher		
	<i>Decile</i>	<i>type</i>	<i>size / total roll</i>	<i>location</i>	<i>Special Features</i>	<i>teacher gender</i>	<i>teacher ethnicity</i>	<i>teacher experience</i>
<b>Class 1</b>	2	Yr0-8	small 104 stud	small town		female	Pākehā	3yrs
<b>Class 2</b>	5	Yr0-6	large 500 stud	city	bi-lingual	male	Māori	4yrs
<b>Class 3</b>	10	Yr0-6	medium 226 stud	city	Catholic	female	Pākehā	19 years
<b>Class 4</b>	2	Yr0-8	large 280 stud	small town		male	Māori	5 years
<b>Class 5</b>	6	Yr7-8	large 327 stud	city		female	Pākehā/ Māori	2 years
<b>Class 6</b>	7	Yr0-8	small 167 stud	country	Recently merged	female	Pākehā	5 years

Seventy-nine students participated in 21 small group interviews. Students were 8 – 12 years old, had English as their first language, and had been with their teacher for at least two full school terms (more than 20 weeks). Interviews took place with groups of between three and six children, with three or four groups coming from each of the six classes involved. Because of the ages of participants, the interviews were conducted in small groups to help the students feel comfortable enough to participate (Andersen, 2003). Active consent was required from the students' parents and the students themselves; therefore, groups were comprised of all students who had returned both the parents' and their own consent forms prior to the interviews starting. These groups provided a diverse sample. The scope of this project did not allow for other demographic factors, like gender and ethnicity to be controlled. For the demographic information of participants see Table 5.

Table 5

*Demographic Data and Number of Participants in Each Participating Class.*

Class			Participants		
Class	Other Info	class roll	n	%male	Year
Class 1	Teacher was new to the school this year	26	12	67	12 x Y6
Class 2	Teacher new to school this year – came in part way through the year	20	7	14	5 x Y4 2 x Y5
Class 3	Teacher had some students for second year	28	17	24	10 x Y4 7 x Y5
Class 4	Teacher had some students for second (and in one case third) year	28	13	31	8 x Y7 5 x Y8
Class 5	Teacher was just recently registered	26	12	58	7 x Y7 5 x Y8
Class 6	Teacher was also Deputy Principal, so had time out of class regularly	25	18	56	14 x Y5 4 x Y6
<b>Total</b>		153	79	44	15 x Y4 23 x Y5 16 x Y6 15 x Y7 10 x Y8

Male students were under-represented in this sample. Only 44% of participants were male, while during that time, 51% of students enrolled in Years 4 – 8 in New Zealand were male (Data Management Unit, 2007).

### **Materials**

1. Digital Dictaphone (Olympus WS-200S Digital Voice Recorder), video camera (Panasonic NV-GS230) and directional microphone (Sennheiser MKE 300).
2. Feelings Tic-Tac-Toe as a warm-up game. A 3x3 grid was made with cartoon pictures of people and creatures showing different emotions on their faces. Some of the faces had clear emotions (love, crying, sick, happy), while some of the faces could be interpreted several ways (anxious/scared, excited/embarrassed, sick/cold, angry/hot).
3. Day 1 Activity. A game consisting of a spinner and coloured envelopes with questions inside. The list of questions is Appendix B

4. Day 2 Activity. 2 or 3 sets of cards, each printed with a single item statement from the previous day's interviews. Amended MOSS decision boards from Study 1.
5. Brainstorming activity. Printed key terms (found in Appendix B), A3 paper, sellotape, post-its, pens
6. Parents' and Child's consent pack (see Appendix C)
7. Schools' information and consent pack (see Appendix D)

### ***Procedure***

Once full permission and co-operation had been obtained from the schools, active consent was sought from all parents and students in each class. The first contact with the students was usually a brief "pop-in" to the class to drop off the Parental Consent Packs to be given to the children to take home. I was quickly introduced and the purpose of the consent packs briefly outlined. The students were told to talk to their parents about the information in the Consent Packs and that there would be more information at the class meeting in a few days.

After parents had been informed, via the Parental Consent Pack, a class meeting was held with me and the class teacher present, and the Child Information Sheets and Consent Forms were given out. At the class discussion, I was introduced as the researcher and the methodology and purpose were explained. The aim of this personal approach was to try to enthuse the children about the project and reduce apprehension, to start building rapport and to try and explain the complicated consent procedure. Also, to eliminate later disruption when students were to return to class after data collection, a brief explanation was given that some interview games were going to take place with students from the class in a few weeks. Hopefully, this prevented students being asked questions after the research; and thus helped to protect confidentiality. It was explained that before anything could happen, permission was needed from both the students and their parents. Therefore, the students needed to make sure that their parents got the letter, information booklet, and consent form in the Parental Consent Pack, and they were told that more packs were available if needed.

Enough time was spent on the explanations to ensure that the children understood the purpose of the research, what would happen during the small group interviews, and when and where they would take place, as it was unreasonable to assume that all children would understand their letters, how to fill in their forms, or that their parents would discuss them adequately with their children. The reason for their parents and the students needing to return both consent forms was explained and confidentiality was discussed. They were also told to return the forms to a drop-off location at school, which had been prearranged for easy return, or they could post them back to the university for confidential return. This meeting usually took between 15-30 minutes, depending on the number of questions the students asked. Most often, a tamper-proof box, into which children and parents could deposit their forms, was provided in the classroom. This was also explained to the schools' office staff, to help prevent confusion with other school notices and to prevent lost forms.

When possible, a few days later I would stop into the school to check the returns. This allowed a starter participant list to be constructed, so that at least the names of the first group of students could be identified for the teacher prior to the day of the interview. It also served to remind other students to bring in their forms and often allowed any issues to be addressed. A reminder was sent to the class teacher a few days prior to commencing the data gathering, to remind them to ensure somewhere private was booked at the school for the interviews to take place, and to ask the teacher to remind the children to bring back both the parent consent form and the student consent form if they wanted to participate. This process achieved about a 50% return rate for both Parent and Child forms.

### *Focus Groups – Day 1*

On the first day of data gathering, I arrived during a break time so that groups could be finalised with the class teacher. Teachers were given a list of all students who had returned both forms, and were then asked for their advice on group composition. All students who were at school and had returned both forms were interviewed, but the teacher could provide guidance on which students would or would not work well together, or could arrange groups as best suited other planned activities for the interview period. For example, at several schools some students would have had to

leave part way through the second interview for choir or Kapa Haka practice; so it was possible to include them in the first interviews of the day to ensure they did not miss either activity.

Small group interviews were held on school property in a quiet place away from other staff and students as negotiated with the school, for example the library or a conference room. The discussions took between 25-80 minutes, as the situation dictated, the teacher allowed and as long as the students could remain engaged. The process began with setting up the camera and games in the interview room and putting “please don’t disturb” signs on all entry points, although these were not always adhered to by school staff, and then going to the class to collect the students. Groups of students varied between three and six in size, depending on the number of consents returned and the number of students available at the time of the interview. Once the children were settled in the interview room I began by introducing myself again and briefly chatting with the students as a group so they could relax. I then made sure the students knew what was going to happen and why, and re-affirmed that they knew they could leave if they wanted. I also discussed confidentiality, ensuring they knew how it would apply to this situation and explained that the dictaphone and video camera were recording only so that I did not have to take lots of notes during the interview, and that no school personnel would ever get to see or hear the tapes.

The Small Group Interview formats focused on what their *current* teacher does that *helps* them. However, the students often used other teachers as reference points, as was to be developmentally expected (Damon, 1983). As much as possible conversation was directed away from that comparative tactic. I paid particular attention to the aspects of their classroom’s emotional environment the children observed and the language they used to explain these concepts, with the intent of finding statements that would be appropriate to be included in a future measurement tool. As the interview process can be quite subjective, regular training and reflections on the video was provided by a research supervisor, and two of the 21 interviews were conducted by an experienced researcher other than me.

There were two stages of data gathering, taking place over two days. However, the same warm-up game was played before each interview. The warm-up game was called “Feelings Tic-Tac-Toe”. A 3x3 grid was made with cartoon pictures of people and creatures showing different emotions on their faces. The game was played in teams (usually boys versus girls – as selected by the students). The regular rules of Tic-Tac-Toe were observed, with each team taking turns to place a counter on the square they wanted, but prior to counter placement a member of their team had to tell the group (or sometimes whisper it in my ear if they preferred) of a time they had felt the same way as the person in the cartoon. Interpretation of the emotion in the picture was left to the students and sometimes this led to brief discussions around emotions. If the teams needed to be balanced in terms of even numbers, I also participated in the first few rounds. Depending on the students and the time available, several rounds of the game were played (“to give the other team a chance for a rematch/tie-breaker”) but each new round had new conditions, and served as part of the data collection. The second round stories had to be about a time the students had felt that way at school. This led to follow up discussions if appropriate and potentially useful, about what had happened and how the situation was resolved. The third round stories were about a time the class teacher had felt that way, and how the students knew. The second and third rounds turned out to be useful in terms of data collection. Sometimes, at the students’ request and if time allowed, another round or two was played at the end of the focus group. Following the warm-up game, either the Day 1 or Day 2 activities were conducted.

The first stage of data collection entailed discussion of aspects of the classroom environment, conducted in the context of a game. For eleven of the first day groups, the Day 1 Envelope game was introduced following the warm-up game. For this game I spun the spinner, and whichever child the spinner pointed to got to choose an envelope from between 8 – 20 different coloured envelopes. For some reason, a sparkly brown envelope was almost always selected first. The chosen child could then read out the question inside, or hand it to me or a friend to read out. All children chose to read the question out themselves, sometimes with help from a friend. The questions were all phrased as open questions or as the first part of a sentence. Closed questions were avoided, as these types of questions are more commonly considered by children as having a single correct answer (Cullingford,

2006). Once the question had been read aloud everyone could choose whether or not to they wanted to answer and I fuelled discussion by prompting individual students and asking follow-up questions when appropriate. Discussion continued as time allowed, usually until everyone had said everything they wanted to say on each particular topic. Then the spinner was spun again and the next child selected an envelope with a question inside. This continued until everyone had had a turn at selecting an envelope.

For two of the first day groups, a different brainstorming activity was tried, following discussion with the class teacher to ensure students' capabilities with brainstorming, in order to gain some different types of answers. It had been suggested by the supervision team that it would be useful to try to obtain more information specifically regarding the relationships within the class and how the teacher influences them. Some key terms were identified by the larger research team and these were put in the envelopes instead of questions. When a student selected an envelope, the term was stuck onto the centre of an A3 page and students were asked to write down on post-its as many different definitions for this term and the actions and feelings related to it as possible. The "post-its" were then stuck onto the A3 sheet around the term in the centre. Responses were briefly commented on by the researcher as appropriate. Then the students were asked to write down things the class teacher did in relation to any of the previous responses and stick them on top of the corresponding statement. This allowed students to further explain an idea they may have had or to expand on something someone else had said.

At the conclusion of each Day 1 session I asked two follow-up questions. This ensured that every group answered, and that the students left the interviews in a positive frame of mind. The questions were "What's the best thing about being in Mr/s ..... class?" and "If there was one thing you could tell all the teachers and principals about what they can do to make schools happy learning environments for children, what would it be?" On average, these game-based day one activities took 40 minutes to complete, including the pre- and any post-discussions.

After the first day of data gathering at each school I reviewed the tapes of the day's discussions, sometimes with research supervision, and generated a list of item

statements from the children about their teacher and the environment within their classroom. Item statements were edited into short, clearly stated sentences and given an arbitrary identifying number. The complete list can be found in Appendix E.

Depending on the age and ability of the students, 15 – 30 statements were selected for each class for the second stage of the student data gathering. Selection of items was based on the first day's discussions, ensuring no unnecessary repetition between schools. Particular attention was paid to statements that summed up themes from multiple interviews, and in order to ensure some degree of objectivity, I was assisted in the selection and definition process by other members of the larger research team.

To check inter-rater reliability, approximately 12.5% of the Day 1 transcripts were given to an independent rater to identify parts of the transcript and the content that they would have considered for item statements. I reviewed the same parts of the transcripts and recorded possible items statements. This led to four scores: the same content for items, similar content for items, items that only I would have used and items that only the rater would have used. A total of 62 items were identified, with a 63% agreement on item content. I had been testing statement styles as I progressed with the Study 1 process and had learnt lessons that the rater had not. This led to a slightly different process being used between the rater and me. This meant that there was a higher rate of similar content than the same content than if the rater had been able to identify the most useable item statements. An example of this process can be seen in Appendix F.

### *Focus Groups - Day 2*

For the Day 2 activities, the item statements chosen from the Day 1 Focus Groups were printed onto small cards, with their identifying number, to be used with a third, and sometimes fourth, small group from each class. For this activity the students worked in pairs. This sometimes meant that a child from Day 1 interviews might have been interviewed again on the second day, in order to make up numbers. This student was selected, with the child's permission, at the teacher's discretion. Each pair was given an amended decision board and a small deck of cards on which were statements about the teacher and classroom. As a pair they had to decide how relevant the statement was or how frequently it happened and place it on the correct

square on the decision board. If they could not read or understand the statement, or if they could not agree where it should be placed it went on the “Needs More Thinking” square and I, who floated between the groups, would try to clarify the statement. Once all the groups had finished sorting all their statements, the placement of statements was compared and discussions took place about the placements, especially differences in placements. Sometimes the group could suggest another way of phrasing the statement so that everyone could agree on the placement. These discussions allowed the researcher to establish that, in most instances, placements were based on thoughtfulness. The decision to include both “desirable” and “undesirable” items was made during Study 1. When all the items were “desirable” actions in a teacher, students got into the habit of placing items in the same piles without reading them. Mixing the “good” and “bad” items into one deck made the students slow down and more carefully read and consider each item before placement. Because this model is intended for use as a diagnostic tool to be used by children in future, it seemed necessary to make this adjustment now.

At the end of each session children were given a chance to ask any questions they had or comment on anything else they wanted to say. They were thanked for their help and escorted back to class. At the end of all the interviews the class teacher was shown the activities that the children had participated in and they too had a chance to ask any remaining questions they might have had. Details of any child’s comments were not revealed.

## ***Analysis***

After each of the focus groups, a list of quotes was formulated that summed up themes from the interview. The following day these quotes were tested on another group of students to ensure the statements were understood and universality of meaning. Each item that passed this test was added to a master list and at the end of all the focus groups there were several hundred items. These statements were organised into categories so that duplicates or items that had strong similarities with others could be deleted. The items were then prioritised using two criteria. The first criterion was those statements that featured at more than one school, as these items were considered to represent strong themes. I next selected those statements that

students easily agreed upon during the second day of interviews, as these items were seen to have strong meaning and relevance for the students at this level. The items were then sorted by six independent peer reviewers to establish which seemed redundant or not as applicable to the emotional environment of the classroom. Items were then considered to see if several statements could be merged into one overriding statement. This process continued until there were fewer than 100 items to make the Study 3 task more achievable for participants (Kirkland, Bimler, Drawneek, McKim, & Scholmerich, 2004)

### ***Ethical Implications***

This project was peer reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee. The code of Ethical conduct for Research involving Human Subjects (Massey University Human Ethics Committee, 2006) was respected throughout the study.

## **Results**

### ***Children's Decision Making Board***

As the intended use of the final model and statements is to use them in the MDS MOSS process in future projects, the children's decision making MOSS board underwent further testing during the second day's interviews. After each of the six classrooms' interviews, the MOSS board was revised to make it more user friendly for children. Some revisions came from researcher observations and some directly from students' suggestions. For the final board see Appendix G. Item Statement styles were also adapted to better fit the MOSS process after each class. It was found that the board could be used suitably by most students in each group; however, the younger groups needed more instruction and supervision, especially at step two when the children had to decide 'how much' any statement applied. The younger groups also found the co-operation needed for pair decisions more difficult, but as this is not the intended end purpose of the board, no revisions were made to that part of the process. The biggest adaptations were the introduction of coloured steps, the

wording of each decision; and the addition of a 'Sometimes' box to the first decision step.

### ***Items***

Once all the interviews were completed, a list of all the revised statements from the Day 2 interviews was compiled, a total of 183 statements. These statements were organised into categories so that duplicates or items that had strong similarities with others could be deleted. For the statements and their categories see Appendix E. The items were then prioritised and sorted by six independent peer reviewers to establish which seemed redundant or not as applicable to the emotional environment of the classroom. Items were then considered to see if several statements could be merged into one over-riding statement. This process continued until there were fewer than 100 items to make the Study 3 task more achievable for participants (Kirkland, et al., 2004). The final list comprised 94 items and can be found in Appendix H.

### ***Dominant Themes from the Interviews***

Over the course of the interviews and after reviewing the interviews, items and transcripts several times, five distinct themes were identified. The most pervasive difference between groups seemed to be developmental differences, and the most pervasive similarity seemed to be the presence and understanding of bullying. This study did not aim for a strong focus on either of these concepts (the larger research had a separate study into bullying), but they played a large part in the data collected, so will be discussed first, the developmental differences as a possible variable and bullying as an additional theme to the data collected. The other themes that emerged were most relevant to the emotional climate of the primary school classroom, and they are Behaviour Management, Interpersonal Knowledge and Intimacy, Good at Teaching and Classroom Feel. Examples of these themes will be provided as quotes from the interview transcripts. To make the segments easier to understand without the surrounding discussion, where possible, I've taken some liberties with the exact quotes. Also, throughout the interviews I would frequently summarise what I

thought the children were saying to check I understood them and to try to keep them on track.

### *Emotional Awareness Developmental Differences*

There seemed to be almost three different developmental levels within the 8-12 year old age group interviewed. Some of the younger children had difficulty talking about their nominated teacher's feelings or reasoning. They could talk about things their teacher did, things that made them better friends within their class, but could not always see that this was ever the teacher's intention (1A). Things were seen as simply a reward or punishment for the children's behaviour. The middle age group realised that their teacher had 'feelings' and could tell me easily many instances and reasons for many feelings, unlike the younger children (1B), even if it meant making some assumptions (1C). Some of the older children could speak eloquently about their teacher's intentions and reasoning. The overriding feeling coming from the older children was that their teacher was concerned about the type of student and person each child would be in the future (1D). Another developmental difference was the children's beliefs regarding the teacher's permanence of affection for them. The older children could see that a teacher's bad mood did not change the global picture, while this was harder for the younger children to see (1E). All five sub-themes are discussed below.

Each new speaker starts on a new line and the researcher is identified in bold print. Pseudonyms have been used throughout to protect participants' privacy.

#### **1A – Not able to see the teacher's intentions**

For the younger children interviewed, being sent outside was seen as punishment, regardless of the end result; whereas older children could see that the same action may have different results and therefore a different purpose.

Class 2 (Year 4 & 5 class)

...there's these three, four, five girls who didn't get along and it was last week, so they had to go and go to the garden and do weeding, and And then they became friends again.

**So do you think that going into the cloak bay and talking and doing gardening and stuff, do you think that all helps you?**

No.

No, you have to do that for a punishment.

It becomes clear that the Year 4-5 students are not able to perceive that the teachers' intention when sending them outside was to help resolve the interpersonal situation, leading to them restoring their friendship. Instead the children see the teacher's instructions simply as punishment, regardless of the end result. In contrast, in the following extract the Year 6 children are retelling what happened after others in the class had an argument.

Class 1 (Year 6 class)

**So if she can tell you're upset, what does she do?**

She says, are you all right? Do you need to go outside to cool down? And Yeah.

**So, if she sends you outside of class, is that a punishment?**

No.

No.

Oh, no.

She has sometimes.

She has, sometimes.

OK

To just settle down.

No, sometimes, it depends if you're

**OK. So she does sometimes send you outside the classroom**

Yes

**As a punishment?**

Yeah.

Yes.

**But if you're upset,**

If you're upset, she'll say "Do you want to go outside and have a little time by yourself?" And you go outside.

Class 4 (Year 7 & 8 class)

But he always knows, because like, if we're having a bad day, we just sort of sit there

Bad mood look on our face and not doing anything, and he will warn us, and if we don't do it, then he'll take us aside, or take us outside and he'll say "Look, what's wrong?" And we'll explain it to him, and then he'll like, he'll back off but keep an eye on you in case it gets worse.

And sometimes he'll let you go and sit by yourself and think about it for a while.

Think about it. Yeah.

It's cool-down time. He gets you to go and sit, you don't have to sit by outside, you just sit by yourself.

It helps.

Yeah.

In contrast to the Year 4 - 5 students, these Year 7 - 8 students are able to distinguish that the teacher's telling them to go outside was an opportunity to settle down one's feelings and also that there is some latitude provided in class, at the teacher's discretion, if they are having a bad day.

### **1B – Comparison of instances and reasons for teacher's feelings**

During our warm up games, the younger children struggled to retell instances of their teacher's emotions, whereas the middle and older age group realised that their teacher had 'feelings' and could tell me easily many instances and reasons for many feelings.

Class 3 (Year 4 & 5 class)

**So this time, the story has to be about a time that Mrs N.... felt the way the person in the pictures feels.**

Ooh, gosh!

Hahaha.

Oh, no.

What if you can't?

What if you can't do a story?

I don't know if I can do that.

**Well you can talk to your team mates.**

I don't know,

**Ok, so when did Mrs N.... feel like that?**

What was it?

Sad.

I think she never feels like that.

In these extracts, the Year 4 - 5 children do not find the task easy and are quite apprehensive about their ability to complete the task, whereas, in the following extracts, the Year 6 - 8 children find the task easy, enjoy retelling stories about their teacher and are able to discuss their teacher's feelings.

Class 1 (Year 6 class)

**It has to be a time that Mrs X..... felt that way.**

Oh.

Oohh

Oh, yes.

Yes

Yes.

I hope we go first.

I hope we go first

OK.

I hope we go first

Class 4 (Year 7 & 8 class)

Mr S.. feels like that sometimes when someone talks in class.

**How do you know he feels that way?**

Because he gets really frustrated and he'll say

Put your name on the board'.

Yeah. His expression says it all, because when he's happy he smiles and when he's sort of angry he sort of his face

(growls)

**And how do you know?**

Cos he's our teacher.

He doesn't like losing.

Cos he likes winning.

Yeah, he loves winning.

He loves winning because he's very competitive.

These Year 7 - 8 children can not only give me instances of a particular emotion, but can also go into detail about what aspects of his personality allow the teacher to feel that way.

### **1C – Older students began to make assumptions about their teacher's feelings**

Even if they could not think of a specific or overt instance of their teacher feeling a particular way, the older children were able to make assumptions about when their teacher might have felt a certain way. In contrast, the younger children would avoid specific squares in the warm-up game, to avoid specified topics for discussion.

Class 1 (Year 6 class)

...when she Miss X..... got married.

**She was in love?**

Yeah.

Love, love, love

**How do you know?**

Oh, everyone is

Yeah

Cos if she wasn't in love, she wouldn't have got married.

Oh yea.

Class 4 (Year 7 & 8 class)

**So how did you know he was nervous?**

Umm, cos he sort of had to rush around like all different places, and that,  
and try and find people and when he couldn't find people he was sort of  
like uh oh, worried and stuff

### **1D – Older children could see that the teacher is concerned about the type of person they will be in the future**

The older children could tell that their teacher talked to them about problems, not in an attempt to tell them off, but in an attempt to problem solve any issues and to build their character.

Class 4 (Year 7 & 8 class)

He sort of encourages you, or if you're one of those real quiet kind of people, like he doesn't ... doesn't pick on you, but he like makes you answer the question because he wants you to like excel and like try and participate more than you usually do, and so he like just asks

Yeah

He actually

Worries

Cares about us, not just

The work

Thinks of us as just students, he thinks of us as individuals.

And if anybody's got into trouble in the weekend or something, he'll have a umm talk to them just like about right choices

and why they did it,

**Mhmmm**

And what we want to do. And if we keep doing the stuff that will affect the way we act, it might affect our futures.

### **1E – Older children could see that a teacher's affection for children did not change**

Younger children found it difficult to distinguish between temporary moods and ongoing affection for students, whereas the older children understood that a mood may make a teacher react differently, but their teacher's feelings about the children remained constant.

Class 2 (Year 4 & 5 class)

**And so do you think when he gets upset with someone, he doesn't like them anymore?**

Yeah,

No.

He still likes them, he's just getting

Angry and frustrated

Angry and frustrated because they're not doing what he's told them to do,

**My teacher likes us all the time?**

No not really.

Cos he sometimes yells, and ....

Cos sometimes he doesn't like, it's like, um being naughty. He doesn't like us then.

**Mmmm.**

Well. He still likes us; really, he just doesn't like us being naughty and that. Like he doesn't like it.

**OK.**

Sometimes when people get into trouble, um, and the person has been good, they don't get a treat, they don't and, they feel um their teacher doesn't like them the same way how a person that's good.

**Ok. So you think if you have been naughty, he doesn't like you quite so much?**

No.

Class 3 (Year 4 & 5 class)

Yeah, sometimes she cares about us, because sometimes she's too busy talking to other people.

Sometimes she does care about us and sometimes she doesn't.

**And, and when she doesn't it's . . .**

Not fair.

Quite mean.

Not fair.

**So you think that she's doing it because she doesn't care about you, or because she's too busy to care about you?**

Too busy

Too busy

She doesn't not like me, she's just too busy.

Yeah.

In the previous extracts the Year 4 - 5 children are struggling to tell me how their teacher feels about them in difficult circumstances. Compare that with the certainty in the following Year 6 response.

Class 6 (Year 6 class)

But she still likes all of us.

Yeah

**She still likes you even if you are naughty?**

Yup

Yeah.

### **Relevant Item Statements**

Following are some of the items generated during Study 2 interviews that were selected for Study 3. During Study 3 these items were differentiated by teachers as being suitable for different age children, which may indicate that teachers already know that there are developmental differences in regards to Emotional Awareness. *Some items were reversed or were selected from comparison remarks for more balance.*

#### Items seen as being more suitable for younger children (as indicated by teachers during Study 3)

- 1 My teacher growls
- 2 Our teacher yells at us
- 3 My teacher is grumpy
- 5 We get told off lots
- 11 Our teacher tells us how bad we've been
- 13 Our teacher tells us all off even if we weren't all being naughty
- 15 My teacher tells off the wrong people
- 18 If our teacher is having a bad day, we get in trouble
- 89 My teacher calls kids mean names

#### Items seen as being more suitable for older children (as indicated by teachers during Study 3)

- 4 If I don't understand, my teacher gets angry at me
- 21 My teacher has favourites
- 38 My teacher is too busy to help me
- 61 My teacher doesn't realise how other people are feeling

- 63 Our teacher is hard on us  
77 I think my teacher needs to be different in some way  
80 The class rules are hard to follow  
92 My teacher needs more training  
93 Our teacher thinks that people in our class are bad

### *Bullying Theme*

As could be expected due to the pervasive nature of bullying as a phenomenon, discussions about bullying came up in every class. Almost every group spontaneously named a particular student who was either a perpetrator or a victim, and this single named student was constant through each of the three or four groups from that class (2A). Sometimes a feeling of frustration was expressed about the seemingly poor management of a bully within the class or school (2B). The children felt that the class teacher protected the students while they were in class; however, there may still have been issues in the larger school (2C). When bullying came up, definitions were discussed (2D).

Each new speaker starts on a new line and the researcher is identified in bold print.

#### **2A – Spontaneously naming a single student**

Almost every group of children interviewed self-identified a student who was the centre of concern within their class when bullying was discussed. This was surprising as these classes had been nominated due to the emotionally competent nature of the teacher; it was thought that perhaps these classes would not have any bullying, which shows how pervasive bullying either is or is perceived to be.

#### Class 2

She always does it,  
She always does that.  
Yeah, she always shouts in my ear, and ...  
shoves me, and hits me  
She's the class bully.

## Class 3

And when N.....goes out of the classroom.

And then we're happy so he won't annoy us.

**If they would put N.... in another class, do you think that class would then feel sadder?**

Yeah.

Probably

He's a menace

N.....'s a menace.

He trips us up, and then he blames like the person who was

Was closest.

The previous two extracts are examples of there being a single student within each class who was perceived as the bully. The following extract shows how there may, instead, be a single victim.

## Class 6

... like K....., he gets teased a lot about his eyes, that he can't see, and he also farts a lot.

And his farts

Yeah, he farts real bad, so everybody calls him skunk.

**Mmm. So do you think um, K.... gets upset by all this?**

Yeah.

Yeah.

Sometimes he does.

Yeah. He starts to, um, starts to

Cry

Sulk a bit in class

## **2B – Feelings of frustration around management of a bully**

Within one class, the single bully seemed to have a larger effect on the students than on the other five classes interviewed. Within this class, there seemed to be high levels of frustration about the teachers' and school's lack of ability to deal with or to acknowledge the problem.

## Class 3

**You said you wanted it to be dealt with. What do you mean by that?**

I just don't want N..... to get away with it. Um, I mean, I've been in his class....

I mean everybody's just sick of it

Mmmm.

There's a boy that I know and he's been in his class since, ... for four years, and he's just absolutely sick of him.

And so am I

I wish there was just one way the teachers could just do something to stop him annoying us.

Yeah.

**2C - Teacher protected the student while in class; however there may still have been issues in the larger school.**

Within another class, there was not a bully but a victim that stood out during discussions with classmates. The children could see that this child was protected when around his class teacher, but not when out and about in the wider school or around other teachers.

## Class 6

**Ok. So what does Mrs C.... do when people pick on K.....**

Well they don't really do it about, around Mrs C.....

They do it when she's not there, and when she's like gone.

And we went into the senior classes and one said, one person went and said

"Oh eye, K....." and made really big eyes, because he has bigger eyes than normal.

**2D – Defining Bullying**

Students differentiated between good-natured teasing and bullying, considering persistence, intention, and how it made the receiver feel as defining differences. These conversations were quite long and convoluted, it seemed that children were not used to discussing bullying, so it sometimes took them a while to be able to express their points. During some of the Study 1 interviews, with students from classes whose teachers were not nominated as being emotionally well-adjusted, it became clear that students sometimes consider teachers as bullies. This was also

borne out in this research, but only when discussing other teachers. As the focus of this study was their current classroom teachers, this discussion was not included here.

To make this section easier for the reader I have selected brief segments of dialogue from one of the interviews and included them under the three defining characteristics of bullying.

Class 1 (Year 6)

*Persistence*

... bullying is when they do stuff for nothing. Like they just come up to you. And they keep doing it.

**So being teased is always being bullied?**

If they keep doing it, it is

*Intention*

**So, why's that not bullying? Why's that teasing?**

Um. It's cos it's not, it's your joke.

If it's a joke is a difference between bullying and teasing.

**Is it whether or not it's funny?**

Yeah.

Yeah.

**To the person being teased?**

Yeah, if they get the joke.

If you know they don't want to bully you or anything

*How it made the receiver feel*

**Is it whether or not it's funny?**

Yeah.

Yeah.

**To the person being teased?**

Yeah, if they get the joke.

You know they don't want to bully you or anything

Bullies are, bullies are when the other people don't think it's funny.

And also bullying is like crying, and you don't like it.

Yes.

I always get teased though, so it's not bullying

I take it as a joke

I'm not taking it that way.

### *Behaviour Management Theme*

The behaviour management in these nominated classes tended to focus on giving clear guidelines so students knew exactly what was expected of them. This involved warnings for misbehaviour, giving the students a chance to self-correct prior to any punishment (3A), and rewarding the desired behaviour or action rather than punishing those who did not meet expectations (3B). Teachers were not shy about telling students when they felt let down by their behaviour, but did so in a calm explanatory way (3C). This worked because these nominated teachers were quite open with the students and at ease talking about their feelings (3D). Children knew where they stood with these teachers at any point in time, they knew when they were pushing boundaries and knew how their teacher would react (3E). Children also felt that the teachers were fair and firm without being grumpy (3F) and seldom punished people who did not deserve it (3G).

#### **3A - Warnings before punishments**

Children in these classes were given warnings when they were seen to be misbehaving, rather than being punished in the first instance. This seemed a more fair way of operating to the children, and allowed them to learn, correct and grow. Here the children are discussing how the teacher handles a child who misbehaves.

#### Class 2

Because every time my friend K.... gets in trouble he gives him a warning.

Mhmmm

Like “One more time and you’re going to Mrs T …..”

...he sometimes gives us warning because “If you do that again, you’re like going over to Mrs T……” Or he goes “You might have to write lines”,

Class 5

And if some people continue to be noisy she gives them warnings, and if they continue to be noisy they get detention.

### **3B – Rewards-focused systems**

The teacher’s strategy of focusing on rewarding children for doing what the teacher wanted, rather than punishments for not doing what the teacher wanted came up in five of the six classes. Children saw this as a more motivating tool than punishments. It also allowed punishments to be saved for persistent or particularly poor behaviour. Here the students are discussing rewards, when they occur and the effect of promised rewards on their behaviour.

Class 2

Yeah, you get a fun day. Because Mr P said um “If you guys be good you’ll get a game day” which means we play games, x box, things, the playstation.

Movies,

and ever since that’s happened, we’ve all been very good.

Mr P helps me behave when he gives me treats and that, so I keep on behaving, and he gives me free time, and lets me play with a friend, and that and lets me go to the basketball court, and so I play with a ball and kick it around.

Class 1

She gives us free time when we get our homework done

Class 5

Like what she does for the homework and stuff. You get points, you get Golden Time and we’ve just finished a Banana Boat Race, which is like

If we did our homework for a week, then we got a bowl, and then we got a

spoon, and then it keeps going on, and we get ice cream and chocolate fudge Sauce

And in the first two terms, every time we did our homework we got a little raffle ticket, and at the end of the term she draws out the numbers and you get to pick a prize.

### **3C - The teacher will tell the children when they feel let down**

Most of these teachers were open enough with the children and respected enough by the children to be able to tell the children how they were feeling. This allowed children time to self-correct behaviour before being punished and it served to teach the children about their own experiences of feelings.

#### Class 2

Sometimes he's very like, he breathes.

He's like "My temper's growing up to there."

**So he tells you guys if he's getting upset?**

Mmhmm

**Gives you lots of warning if he's going to get mad?**

Yeah.

In one class of older children, the teacher's open disappointment about poor behaviour when a reliever had been in the class in Term 1 had such an effect on the children that they remembered the incident several terms later, and meant that there had not been any more problems that year with relievers.

#### Class 5

Yeah, and like she had a real big growl at the class. It was nearly at the end of school she was just about in tears actually, that made us feel guilty.

Yeah.

Yeah

Cos she was like, she was growling us and then afterwards, when we left, then she was like

Crying

She was nearly crying. She was so like

Disappointed at us.

### 3D – Teacher openly discussing feelings

These teachers seemed to be themselves around their students. They were perceived as open people, not afraid of showing and discussing their emotional reactions; if the teacher was having a bad day, the teacher was aware of that and they were likely to warn the class.

#### Class 1

##### **So how did you know that she was angry?**

She started crying. Because we were pills.

Yeah. Yeah.

Because she told us.-

She told us.

Yeah

#### Class 4

##### **Can you guys tell when Mr S..... is having a bad day?**

Mhmm

Yeah

##### **How?**

Cos something might have happened in the morning, and he's sort of like, not all there, and he's like

And he tells us.

Yeah.

Saying, "Oh, I'm not having such a good day"

#### Class 5

##### **So how do you know if she's in a bad mood?**

She tells you.

She

Yeah.

She says "I'm in a bad mood today, so don't make me upset."

While the expectation was always that the teacher would be firm but fair, this sort of openness from the teacher meant that the children never had to guess how they would be treated on any particular day.

### **3E - Students know where they stand**

Children knew where they stood with these teachers at any point in time, they knew when they were pushing boundaries and knew how their teacher would react

Class 5

And we know that there are consequences for not getting it done.

### **3F - Teachers are fair and firm without being grumpy**

Teachers could be strict, while also being reasonable, around things like time-management, presentation, and behaviour, without being seen as punitive or grumpy. Strict is separate from grumpy, and was seen as a more motivating and productive strategy.

Class 1

#### **What makes her cool?**

Um, everything she does, she gives us free time.

Her attitude.

Yeah, her attitude, and

Yeah.

She's funny.

She's funny, she can take a joke.

Yeah.

Like most teachers, they'll be like, "stop mucking around, get on with your work!"

Yeah. But she like laughs at the kids.

#### **OK. What do you think? What's the best thing about being in Mrs X.....'s class?**

She's not an old lady, like all crabby and that.

Class 5

And you can't really get away with much. From her, but she's not too over the top strict.

Sometimes she is really strict, and sometimes she's just like really, really nice

Here again, the conversation was often a comparison with other teachers, which, for ethical reasons, I have chosen not to discuss here.

### **3G - Only punish when deserved**

In these classrooms, managed by emotionally aware teachers, children could see that if their teacher was having a bad start to the day, or if the teacher had to tell someone off, that there were few or no carry-over effects to the rest of the day or other students.

Class 1

**And if she tells someone off before morning tea, what's she like after morning tea?**

She kind of calms down, really when she's had like something to drink and eat

Yeah

When she's been at the teacher's hall.

And calmed down a bit

Class 3

**What does she do to get over feeling angry?**

She calms herself down.

She, um She always takes the pressure.

Sometimes she would go to

She would take a deep breath in and then she would look at me.

Sometimes she would say she was going to go to another classroom when she'll just go out into the hallway and just, breathe.

Ok.

She gets some fresh air.

This extract also shows that even children as young as 8 or 9 years old can see through their teacher's deceptions, and they can recognise an attempt at emotional self-regulation. The following quote demonstrates the older children's ability to notice emotion self-regulation also.

Class 4

Saying, "Oh, I'm not having such a good day"

But he doesn't take it out on us, like he won't take it out on us; he'll take it on a pen or something, but not on us.

Yeah.

**So it doesn't change your day at all if he's having a bad day?**

No

Sometimes

**Sometimes?**

Sometimes he gives us really hard work.

Yeah

### *Interpersonal Knowledge and Intimacy Theme*

Students felt that these teachers knew them as individuals, and often their families (4A), and that these teachers liked all their students (4B). They felt that these teachers were available as much as possible for students (4C). Students felt close to these teachers and felt that there was a mutual trust, they could tell these teachers about their lives and problems and the teachers could be trusted with this information and to help where possible, whether their need was personal (4D) or academic (4E). This all came from a feeling of being relaxed around these teachers (4F). In many instances the mutual regard meant that teachers would open up to students regarding aspects of their own personal lives also (4G). The overall feeling was that these teachers, in comparison to others, actually enjoyed their job (4H).

#### **4A – Teacher knew the students**

The children felt that these nominated teachers knew all the students well and, in some cases, were seen as part of a local community. It was not unusual for the families of the students and the teachers to know each other.

Class 3

She knows me really good

Class 1

**So what lets you know her well?**

Because she comes round for tea sometimes.

**Does she go to everyone's house for tea sometimes?**

Yup.

No.

Just mine and.

S....'s.

And mine.

And mine.

Yeah, she went to our house for drinks.

In the following extract the children discuss how well the teacher and the teacher's son are known by the students and their families.

Class 2

And I also like Mr P because my Mum and Dad know him and

Yeah, so do my parents

And um L..... used to go to this school, whenever I go around to his house to play with him it's just like school every day.

#### **4B – Teacher likes the students**

The children thought that, unlike some teachers, these nominated teachers liked teaching, some going as far as to say that these teachers would still do this job if it was unpaid. Generally, the impression was that these teachers liked children, liked helping children and liked coming to school each day. This first class had some quite high needs and challenging students in, but the children felt the teacher liked them all, and they obviously liked her.

Class 1

And she said that she likes us because we're all good kids, and we are always a laugh

Like, she's really nice.

And she likes us being in her class as well.

**OK. So how do you, how do you know she likes you guys being in her class?**

Because she tells us.

**She tells you that? And when you say she's nice, what does that mean?**

She knows that we're happy. And

Yeah

She knows that all of us can be happy if we all get along.

**So she really wants for you guys to be happy?**

Yeah.

Yeah.

**Excellent**

And um, if we're sad or something, she can sometimes tell, and she'll try and make us happy.

**Yeah? What will she do?**

Umm. She'll try and cheer us up.

**OK**

And help us if she can.

Ummm. She likes spending time with us, like when we play games and that.

Yeah.

Mmmm

**OK. So I'm really hearing that you guys think that Mrs X.... likes being with you guys and helping you guys.**

Yeah.

Yup

**Yup? Do you think there's any other reason that she likes her job?**

The lot

She likes helping us out with our work if we find it hard.

**Mmm. I see, cos she likes helping you learn?**

Yuh.

Says she likes working with children. A lot.

She gets Jujing (slang for money)

**She gets paid? So do you think that's one of the best things about working? Do you think she'd do it if she didn't get paid?**

Maybe

I think she actually would though.

Yeah, she probably would, but still, getting paid

If you don't get paid, you can't live, basically.

In the next excerpt, the children were Year 7-8 students, and quite animated when talking about how much their teacher liked them.

Class 5

She always tells us how much we mean to her, and how much we like make her happy and stuff, and how much of her time we take up.

#### **4C – Teacher is available to students as much as possible**

The impression from the students was that these teachers strove to be available to students, whenever possible. In one class, the teacher had extra responsibilities in the wider school, so she used a tin that students could put notes to her in if there was something they wanted to tell her anonymously (not tales) or talk to her about, so that she could stay in touch with students.

Class 1

**So is Mrs X..... ever too busy to help if you've got a problem or something?**

Sometimes.

Yes.

Sometimes. Like with the production she was pretty busy

Busy

But we could still tell her, go to the staff room or the office and ask if we really wanted to .

Mhmmm.

So we could tell her any time really. She does have that tin that she checks.

And, um like I told Mrs X.... some things I felt really sad. And she said that I could come and talk to her when I wanted to.

**OK. And so you think it's important that you can tell your teacher if you're upset?**

Yes.

Class 4

**Can you tell Mr S.....?**

Yeah.

Yeah, he's a real open-minded person.

That's what we like him for

It depends what's on his mind. Sometimes he just says no, go away.

Ah yeah, especially if he's busy.

**Yeah?**

But he says to come back obviously a little bit later, or he'll call you over. Or he does that for me.

Does that to us, yeah

The students were aware that the teacher did not necessarily always have time to talk right then and there, but knew that the teacher would make time at some stage.

#### **4D – Dealing with personal problems**

The students felt they could tell these teachers about their personal lives and problems and the teachers could be trusted with this information and to help where appropriate.

Class 1

and she's happy for us to go ask questions if we're like...

She's got a thing that we can ask questions.

Like about puberty.

**So you can put secret questions in?**

Yeah,

if we're afraid to ask

In school class or something

"if you want me to talk to you about it, write can you talk to me about it Mrs X...."

She talks to you about your question and gets it all solved, and then done.

But you don't have to write your name

Yes, if you're scared, you don't

Only if you want Mrs X..... to acknowledge

She gets the personal questions

**If you are upset about something would you tell your teacher?**

Yeah, I would

I would

Yeah, I would because if we didn't want her to tell anyone she wouldn't tell anyone else.

**So she'd keep your secret?**

Yeah.

#### **4E – Dealing with academic problems**

The students knew they could tell these teachers about academic problems, the teachers would not make them feel stupid and would provide them extra help needed to learn.

Class 2

he gives me help when I don't know what to do, and I say Mr P can I please have some help?' And he says um, and then he says 'OK then, I'll give you some help' and then he helps me and I'm confused at first, and then I get it

Class 3

we're lucky that we've got a teacher we can actually learn from

Class 1

Because if it's hard, Mrs X.... will understand and she'll come to us and say 'what?'

Explain it to us

Oh, yes, she'll explain it to us. Otherwise she'll explain it to the whole class.

Class 4

I learn best when Mr S... takes me, aside and explains it more, and like shows me and doesn't get angry about it or something.

Class 5

If you don't understand, she'll talk to you more about it. Just so you can understand it.

**And if you don't understand, how does she know that you don't understand?**

You usually tell her.

There, you go ask her.

Yeah. By

And she'll come and sit down and help you.

#### **4F – Students relaxed around teacher**

The ability of the students to be themselves and ask for help came from a feeling of being relaxed around their teacher, knowing their teacher, feeling that their teacher accepted and liked them and their teacher being predictable.

Class 1

**How easy is it to relax around your teacher?**

Very easy

Very easy

**Why do you say that, N...?**

Because she's easy

Calm, kind

Very, very easy

Fun

Fun.

Good

**Yeah?**

Not, like "Blah blah blah blah" like some teachers are

**So she works in quite a calm way?**

Yeah

Yeah

**So she doesn't yell very much?**

No.

Nuh.

**Is that what you're saying?**

Only when she gets really peed off.

Yeah.

Really

Yeah, cos she says, 'I'm starting to get really cross with you.'

**How easy is it to relax around your teacher?**

I find it really easy

**Yeah?**

I find it easy because she's nice to us, and she's not like mean.

**Ok.**

So we don't have to get all nervous.

#### **4G – Teacher shares about their personal life with students**

In many instances the mutual regard meant that teachers would open up to students regarding aspects of their own personal lives also.

Class 5

##### **What's important to her outside of school?**

Her cats.

Her study.

She tells all these funny stories about what happens, like outside school, working and stuff, ....

Oh, and um she told us one story ...everyone was saying oh, cool shoes, eh? and she told us why she got new shoes, because her cat peed in them.

##### **Eerrooh**

yes.

And so she got new shoes

And then her cat peed in those, they were orange and black and she, they were her favourite shoes, and they came home and they got wet.

She put her foot in.

#### **4H – Teachers like their job**

The overall feeling was that that children felt that these teachers, in comparison to other teachers, actually enjoyed their job and enjoyed working with children.

Class 1

She likes meeting new people, like new kids.

she likes helping people learn

##### **Ok, so that's quite important for a teacher, isn't it?**

And also she learns as well.

##### **Yeah?**

She learns

And she's got a good reputation as a teacher and stuff.

she learns from us children.

cos she likes working with us.

**Why do you think she likes that?**

Um. Because she says when she's really sick and she's got to go home, early she says that she doesn't want to go home because she wants to work with us.

**So how do you know she thinks it's fun to work with children?**

Because

Cos she helps us and she says I love working with you kids. And I hope I can do it for next year.

And she goes, ah, I might have to go down to the junior section, but I hope I can stay up here with you guys.

Yeah.

Laughs a lot

And she laughs with us and all that

Oh, she don't really tell us that she likes us, she just she acts like she likes us.

Yes, she doesn't just like

she doesn't actually just come up to you and go 'Oh, I like you as a kid'

(general laughter)

She just tells us she likes us other ways. Like in the morning, she goes I like teaching and you others are great kids, blaa blaa and blaaa

Yeah. Yeah.

**So there's no 'I like you', it's other things she says and does? Like helps you?**

Yeah.

And it's that she like does everything

She said she hopes that she's got us again next year in a different class or something like that.

*Good At Teaching Theme*

Students saw these teachers as good at teaching. The teachers understood the students' learning needs and their differences (5A), which enabled them to set realistic goals and push them enough to motivate the students without intimidating

them (5B). These teachers were seen as people who strive to make the learning as interesting and fun as possible (5C). The students felt that their teachers liked helping children learn (5D).

### **5A - Teachers understand students' academic needs and differences**

Students saw these teachers as good teachers, they understood the students' individual learning needs and how these might differ within a class, without there being any judgements from the teacher or other students about students who were below average in any area.

Class 2

And he knows that I can't write properly, and he's not going to force me to write other things, not too long, because I still can't handle my pencil properly,

Class 5

She knows us individually, she knows what standard we're at, and how well we can do so. If she thinks that um we can be pushed harder then she will push us individually, not everybody, so that people don't feel uncomfortable about what we're doing and stuff.

Oh, and when there are some people, like there's a small group and she takes them down to the mat to do different tasks,

**Mhmmm.**

and because the work we do is in sometimes a bit hard for them.

### **5B – Teachers able to set realistic goals**

The teachers' understanding of students' individuality and personalised learning goals meant that teachers were able to work with students to set achievable goals, which motivated students rather than making anyone feel stupid.

Class 1

**So you think the teacher really understands what's easy and hard for you at school?**

Yes.

Oh, Yeah

Yeah

Um yes, because she does, um she tests us and all that to see where we are.

Quite a bit.

To see where we are in our work, just whatever we're doing.

Class 5

Like Miss N... she knows what standard each of us are at, so she won't give us hard work that's too hard for each for us. She will give us like at our own skill level work.

Yeah

### **5C – Work is interesting and fun**

Students could see that, as much as possible, these nominated teachers strived to make learning interesting and school fun.

Class 4

It's like he remembers what it's like being a kid.

Class 2

#### **What's the best thing about being in Mr P... 's class.**

Being in Mr P 's class is, all the work that he gives us, he always gives us fun work. Say it's maths and it's like plussing or times, and Mr P tells us to do it the fun way, like, like think of a simple number in our head and then like add it,

Class 1

She works hard to get to being a teacher, and now that she's real good at it, and the children like her, cos she knows that. The children like her as a teacher, because she's nice and kind. And plays lots of games.

### **5D – Teachers liked helping students learn**

This all meant that students felt their teachers liked helping children learn.

Class 1

she likes helping people learn

Um. She likes if we get our spelling words right she gives us points, and she's happy.

Class 5

Yeah, and she really cares about our work as well. It has to be at a good standard.

Class 4

He's really happy when some of us go up to 15+ in our reading ages  
Yup, and then he goes and brags to all the other teachers.

### *Classroom Feel Theme*

All of the above components of a nominated teacher seemed to affect the overall feel of the class. Students felt like everyone in the class was valued and that they worked well as a supportive team (6A). These classes seemed to have few internal disruptions or negativity. Younger students could not always see the teacher's role in this; due to the developmental levels discussed earlier. Older students could talk about class debates and discussions that dealt with internal problems (6B), or, if more appropriate, private conversations they had had with their teacher (6C). Either way, issues were dealt with directly, not swept under the carpet (6D).

#### **6A – Everyone was valued as part of the team**

Students felt like everyone in the class was valued equally by their teacher, which seemed to lead to a feeling of unity.

Class 4

**'What's important to your teacher?'**

Kids!.

(This response was loud and in unison)

### **6B – Class Discussions**

Older students talked about the class climate as an open one, with class debates and discussions that dealt with internal problems.

Class 1

um we sometimes have class meetings, and she says you can tell us like anything.

But sometimes people don't like telling it out loud.

### **6C – Private conversations**

Sometimes private conversations were used as a more appropriate way of dealing with small group issues or personal problems.

Class 2

'cos Mr P seen it on his desk and he saw "fifth best friend", and he was, like, 'I wouldn't like to be your fifth best friend, I would like to be just a friend'

Class 1

**So if she can tell you're upset, what does she do?**

She says, are you all right? Do you need to go outside to cool down? And

Oh, yeah

She takes us out from the group, and she says are you all right?

She says oh, what's the matter, what happened.

Are you all right?

Are you all right, sweetie?

Yeah.

Class 5

For some people, that, she takes them outside, and like talks to them and asks them what's going on and who made them upset, and why they're upset,

### **6D – Issues dealt with**

In these classes, issues were seen to be dealt with directly, not hidden or ignored.

Class 2

And sometimes when we're angry and we're not getting on with each other at morning tea or lunch, he tells us to go out in the cloak bay and apologise to each other and think about what we have to do

Class 6

And she'd help us sort it out if it keeps going on.

Yeah

She wouldn't let it go on.

Like arguing with other people. Like if it's in the classroom.

Like it will happen every day, and won't get sorted out. (Year 6 class)

she tries sorts everyone's problems and that.

She doesn't like leave anyone's problems, like just to keep going.



## Chapter 4 : Study 3 – Structural Analysis

### Method

#### *Design*

The third study in this research used a modified GOPA (an acronym standing for the sorting procedure Group, Opposite, Partition and Add) (Kirkland, Bimler, Drawneek, McKim, & Scholmerich, 2004) type Multi-Dimensional Scaling (MDS) design to organise, according to similarity and dissimilarity, item statements children had made during Study 2. A Naming section was added to the GOPA procedure (hereby identified as GOPAN), to assist in the model development phase of this process. Hierarchical Cluster Analysis and MultiDimensional Scaling were employed to explore the models' underlying dimensions of meaning.

#### *Participants*

For Study 3, 63 adults volunteered. Volunteers were known to the larger project's research team, either through the research or via other networks. The reason for using adults, and not children, was due to the abstract nature and length of time taken for the data gathering activity. Participants could all read English competently. Participants were divided into three participant groups, based on their classroom experience. The first group was considered 'Experts' because they were either teachers nominated for Study 2 of this research, or they were professionally familiar with primary school classroom practice and had had some further emotionally relevant training. The second group, the 'teacher' group, were participants who were teachers or were professionally familiar with primary school classroom practice. Group three were participants who did not fit into either of these two categories. For the number of participants in each group, and their ethnic background see Table 6. Stable maps can be produced with 30 sorts (Bimler & Kirkland, 2001; Kirkland, et al., 2004), so the overall map in this case should be very stable, and some of the subgroups also.

Table 6

*Number of Participants and Ethnic Background per Group*

	Expert		Teacher		Other		Total	
	<i>n</i>	<i>ethnic background</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>ethnic background</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>ethnic background</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>ethnic background</i>
<b>Female</b>	17	15 x NZ E/P 1 x P/M 1 x Asian	16	14 x NZ E/P 1 x P/M 1 x Māori	10	7 x NZ E/P 2 x Asian 1 x P/M	43	36 x NZ E/P 3 x P/M 1 x Māori 3 x Asian
<b>Male</b>	7	5 x NZ E/P 2 x Māori	5	5 x NZ E/P	8	7 x NZ E/P 1 x P.I. / P	20	17 x NZ E/P 2 x Māori 1 x P.I. / P
<b>Total</b>	24	20 x NZ E/P 2 x Māori 1 x P/M 1 x Asian	21	19 x NZ E/P 1 x P/M 1 x Māori	18	14 x NZ E/P 2 x Asian 1 x P/M 1x P.I. / P	63	53 x NZ E/P 3 x P/M 3 x Māori 3 x Asian 1 x P.I. / P

NZ E/P = New Zealand European or Pākehā

P/M = Pākehā and Māori

P.I. / P = Pacific Islander and Pākehā

For those who had been teaching, the average length of time teaching was 15.4 years. The ‘Expert’ group had less average time teaching than those in the other ‘Teacher’ category, by almost five and a half years. The average age of all participants was 41 years old, however, the average age of the ‘Others’ group was approximately ten years younger. The average age of all teachers surveyed, whether ‘Expert’ or ‘Teacher’, was approximately equivalent to the average age of all teachers in New Zealand, at 44 years (Demographic and Statistical Analysis Unit, 2004). Again there is a much higher number of female than male participants, and New Zealander / European / Pākehā ethnicity than other ethnic groups, but this reflects the current situation in New Zealand primary schools. In the 2004 Teacher Census (Demographic and Statistical Analysis Unit, 2004), 82% of primary school teachers were female, and 80% were European/Pākehā. In this study male teachers were over-represented.

## **Materials**

1. A deck of 94 cards, each with a different item statement and identifying number printed on it. Item statements were selected from Study 2. Cards were 30mm x 75mm. For a list of statements see Appendix H.

2. Information and Consent forms see Appendix I.
3. GOPAN Instructions and Recording sheets (amended from (Kirkland et al., 2004) GOPA procedure), see Appendix J

### ***Procedure***

As it was largely a self-directed task and instructions were provided, on some occasions it was possible to arrange small groups of participants to complete the task at the same time, in the same location, with me present to answer any questions that arose, or for participant to complete the task on their own. Each participant was provided with about two square metres of space to be able to move the cards around, a deck of 94 cards with item statements on, pen or pencil and the instruction and recording sheet. After reading the information sheet and asking any questions, participants signed the consent form and began the activity. Participants had as long as they needed to complete all five steps, but were encouraged to try and complete the task within an hour.

The instructions and data recording form for the activity proceeded like a workbook. The instructions for each of the five activities featured at the start of each section and space was allocated for recording participants' responses. Responses could be recorded by a research assistant or by the participant themselves. Participants were told that there was no incorrect way of sorting statements, and that this exercise was not individually diagnostic. For a copy of the instructions and recording sheet see Appendix J.

GOPAN stands for the five tasks of the procedure – **G**roup, **O**pposites, **P**artition, **A**ddition and **N**aming. The participants were first asked to do the **G**rouping Phase. They read through each of the items on the cards and had to decide which ones could be grouped together. They placed all the cards that went together in a group on their work surface, and were then able to move cards around until they were happy with their groups. They were given no guidance on how to group, other than to aim for between 10 and 20 groups with between one and nine items in each group. Participants were told, via the information sheet, that the statements were quotes that had come from child interviews about the emotional environment of the school

classroom. However, participants could decide to group the item statements any way they wished. If the participants asked for further guidance, they were told to focus on the intention or content of an item statement rather than the words or phrasing used. This first phase usually took about 30 minutes and the participants found it the most difficult. Once participants were finished grouping, they recorded the number of each card on their recording form in the appropriate space. These groups formed the basis for all the remaining activities.

The second step was the **Opposite Phase**. Here participants were asked to review their groups and decide which pairs of groups were least similar, or opposite to each other. They then recorded any card number, one from each group, in the appropriate place on their recording form. They were asked to try to find at least three pairs of opposites if they could.

The **Partitioning Phase** was next. Participants were asked to review each of their original groups that had more than two item statements and to see where they could divide items to further sub-group them, that is, which items within each of their original groups were most similar to each other. If they asked for further clarification, they were told to aim to split each of their original groups into smaller groups of about two or three, but they could have items that stood alone or in groups of up to five or six, if they thought that was appropriate. Once they had sub-grouped each of their original groups, the item numbers were recorded onto their recording sheets in sets.

Step Four was **Adding**. Here participants were asked to review their original groups and decide which pairs of groups could be merged, or added, that is which of their original groups were most similar to each other. They then recorded any card number, one from each group, in the appropriate place on their recording form. They were asked to try to find at least three pairs they could merge if possible.

The fifth step, **Naming**, was where participants were asked, if they could, to name each of their original groups. Participants could decide what types of names they could use, anything was permitted. If participants preferred, they could complete this step alongside the first step. Names were recorded on their recording sheets. Some

brief demographic data were collected, but responses remained anonymous. Participants were thanked for their participation and given the opportunity to ask questions. The activity took, on average, slightly longer than an hour.

## ***Analysis***

Two end products were intended with these data, both are suitable for non-metric sorted data, as was collected here. The final statistical analysis of these data was beyond the scope of this Master's Thesis, as with other work conducted by the larger research programme. Raw data were sent to Dr David Bimler who designed the original computer programme for final statistical analysis. The programmes yield outputs that are described here. The first of these was a Hierarchical Cluster Analysis (HCA), where items are grouped, and can be compared via a dendrogram, according to a hierarchy (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). The outcome of HCA is a dendrogram. A Dendrogram is a two dimensional representation of how much agreement there is between participants on how item statements should be grouped. It is sometimes called an H-Tree, as it looks like the branches of a tree. The closer each item appears on the dendrogram, the higher the level of agreement, and the shorter the 'branch' between each item. This helped to improve our understanding of the similarity across items, as well as formed the pre-step to the MDS analysis.

The second end product was a Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) three dimensional (3-D) map, which allows items to be seen graphically in relationship to all other items and allows for the identification of underlying dimensions (Hair et al., 2006). Bimler and Kirkland's (2001) programme produces a map, which plots the average distance between each item and all other items in the deck, looking for a minimum-stress solution. This allows data to exist in more than the usual two dimensions. It is best viewed in three dimensions, and looks similar to a world globe, with each item plotted like a city would be on a globe. It is most similar to a transparent globe of the world. An MDS 3-D map is intended to be viewed in 3-D, as it allows researchers to find underlying concepts not usually found with alternate methods. Hence, to be viewed in two dimensions it either needs to be slightly warped and laid flat, as the world appears in most atlases, or, as usually happens with MDS maps, it

is viewed so you can see the items closest and furthest away from you simultaneously (as evident in Figure 14 in the results section). Each map presentation can be spun slightly, thus changing where items seem to appear in relation to others. The axes indicate underlying dimensions and are able to be viewed and weighted, so that the first dimension represents the first decision process used by participants, and so on. Placement of items onto the geometric map is done by calculation of average relative inter-item similarities and dissimilarities, based on the participants' judgements. Bimler developed an algorithm that finds dissimilarity matrices and that leads to a three-dimensional semantic map (Kirkland, et al., 2004; Stewart, Hill, Stewart, Bimler, & Kirkland, 2005). The way that the map is then organised allows further calculations to be done so that the underlying structural organisations become clear.

### ***Ethical Implications***

This project was peer reviewed and submitted to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee. The code of Ethical conduct for Research involving Human Subjects (Massey University Human Ethics Committee, 2006) was respected throughout the study.

## **Results**

The Hierarchical Cluster Analysis will be presented first, followed by the results of the MDS mapping. Links between the two types of results will be presented at the end.

### ***Hierarchical Cluster Analysis (HCA)***

A hierarchical cluster analysis was performed to see how the 94 items were grouped, HCA is used prior to MDS analysis to help inform the MDS solution.

The entire dendrogram for these data can be seen in Appendix K. A clear split can be seen, with slightly more than one quarter of statements sitting in the top part of the dendrogram, these items can best be described as the more 'undesirable' item

statements. This clear split was expected due to the intentional inclusion of both positively and negatively worded items in the deck. How the ‘undesirable’ items fit together and how they cluster together can be seen in Figure 5.

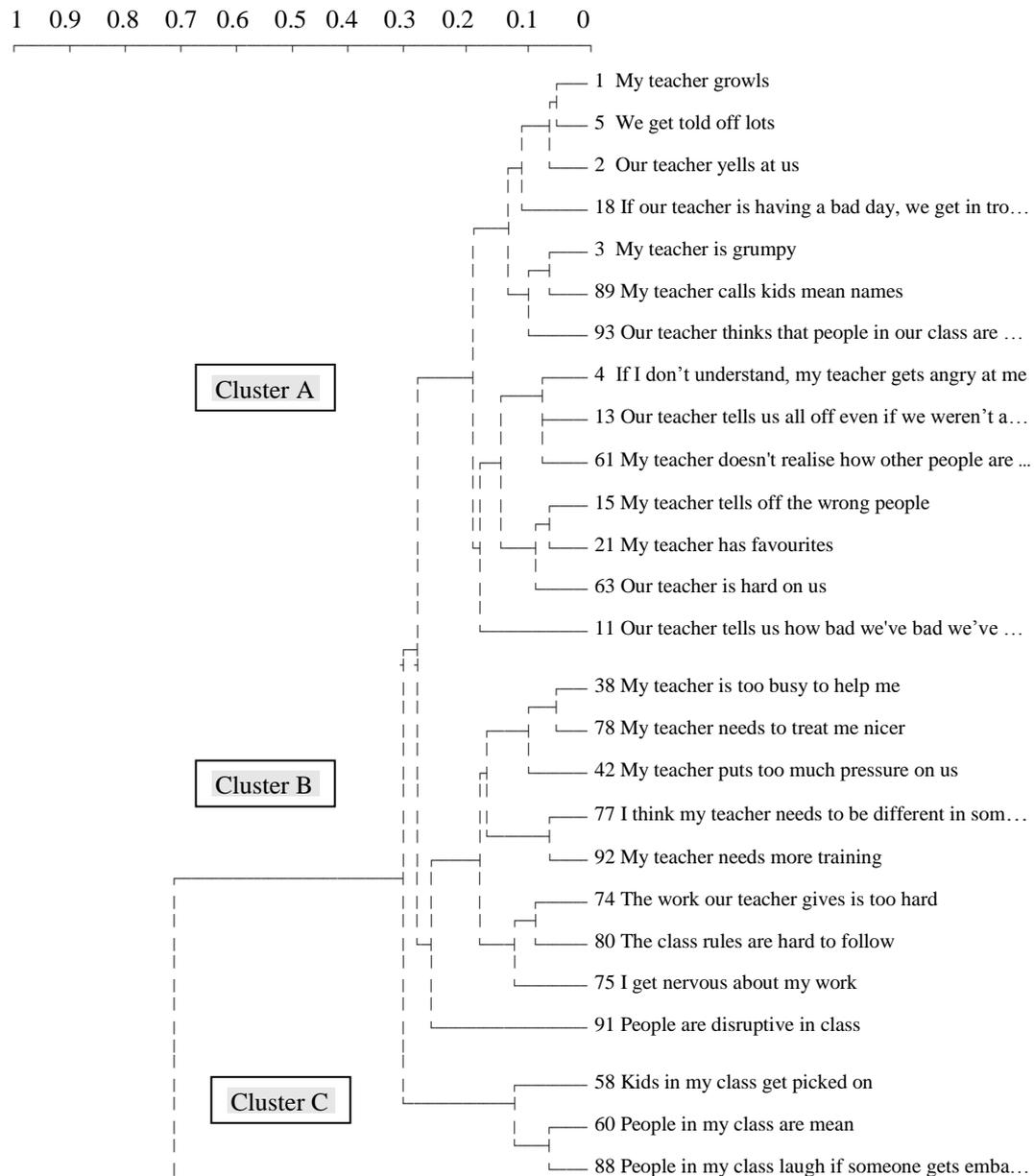


Figure 5 ‘Undesirable’ portion of the dendrogram

The top half of the ‘desirable’ dendrogram is seen in Figure 6, and the bottom half in Figure 7. Further splits can also be clearly seen, suggesting high agreement of conceptual sorting between participants.

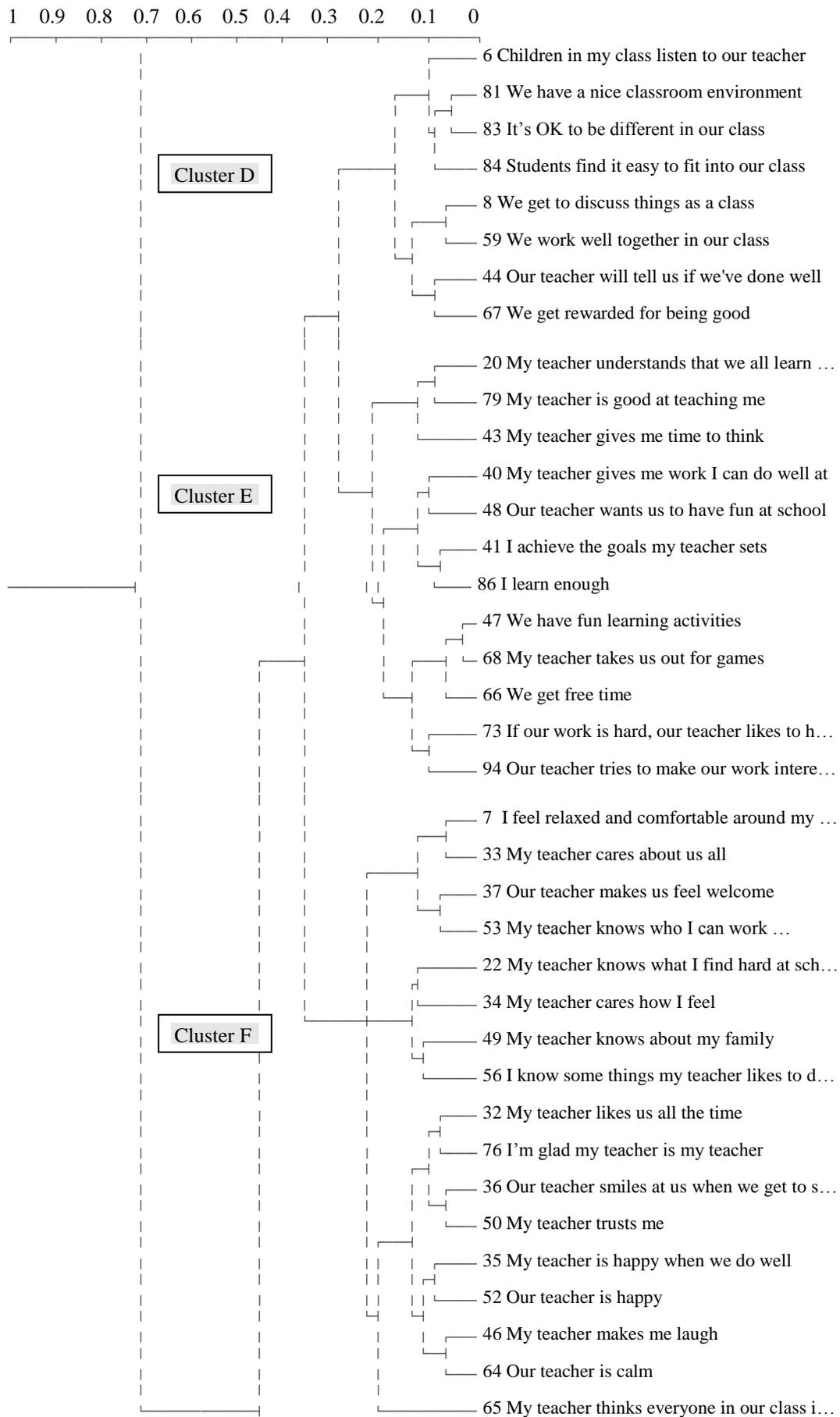


Figure 6 Top half of the 'desirable' portion of the dendrogram

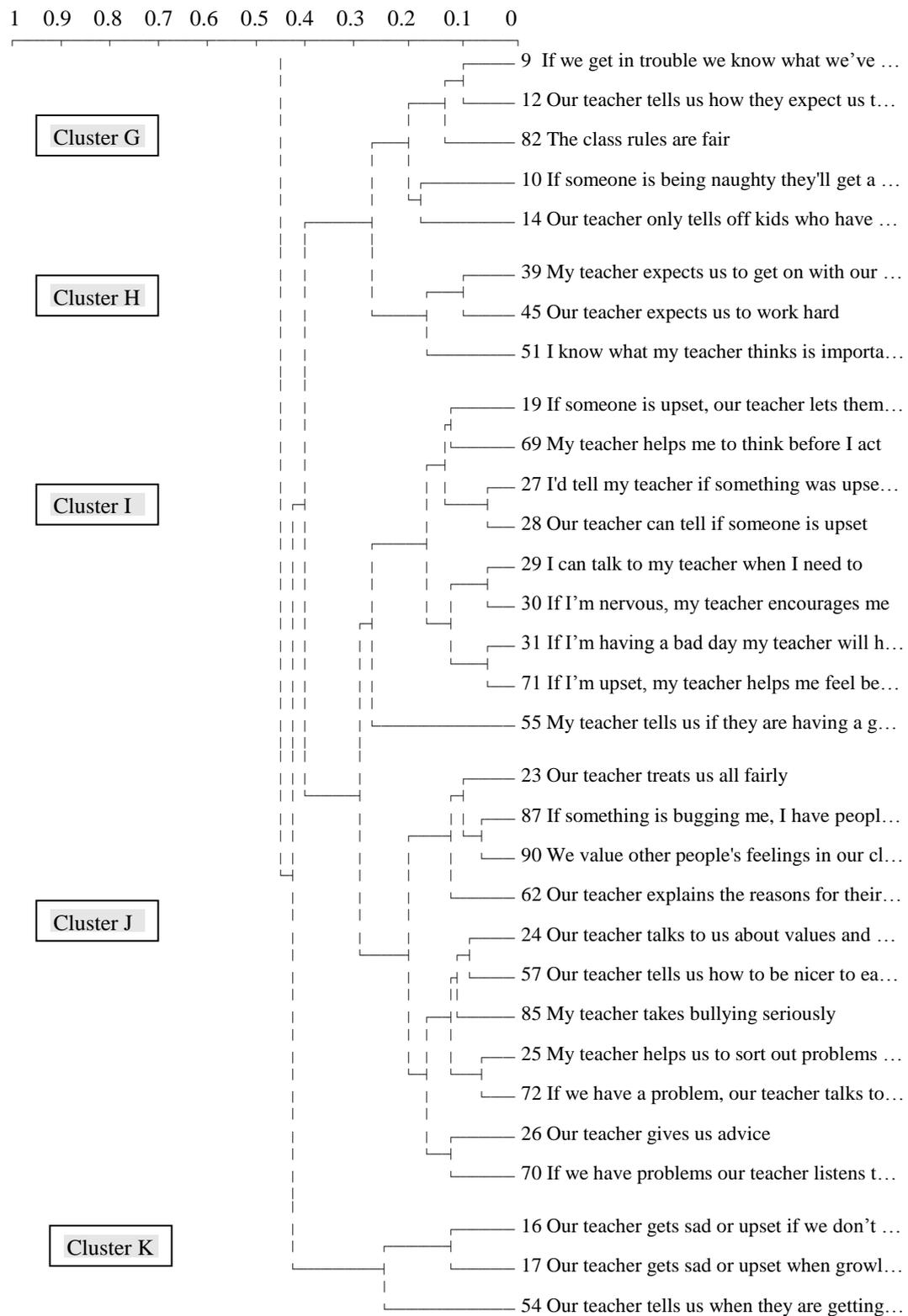


Figure 7 Bottom half of the 'desirable' portion of the dendrogram

## Clusters

Using the dendrogram, items were divided into eleven clusters (A-K), as seen in Figure 5, Figure 6 and Figure 7, groupings occurring at approximately 0.2 on the dendrogram scale, unless that left an item on its own. Clusters illustrate the closeness of relationships. Then the data from the Naming section were reviewed to see what names participants gave to groups that had multiple items from each cluster, to get an idea of the concepts that participants were using when sorting these items. Table 7 shows the items that make up each ‘undesirable’ cluster and a summary of concepts considered when participants were grouping these items; Table 8 shows the ‘desirable’ clusters and a summary of concepts.

Table 7

*‘Undesirable’ Clusters with Item Statements and Types of Names Used By Participants*

Cluster	Item statements from Study 2	Summary of types of cluster names
A	1 My teacher growls 5 We get told off lots 2 Our teacher yells at us 18 If our teacher is having a bad day, we get in trouble 3 My teacher is grumpy 89 My teacher calls kids mean names 93 Our teacher thinks that people in our class are bad 4 If I don't understand, my teacher gets angry at me 13 Our teacher tells us all off even if we weren't all being naughty 61 My teacher doesn't realise how other people are feeling 15 My teacher tells off the wrong people 21 My teacher has favourites 63 Our teacher is hard on us 11 Our teacher tells us how bad we've been	Shouldn't be teaching Inappropriate / negative Teacher Behaviour / qualities Not listening, unfair, insensitive Unfairness
B	38 My teacher is too busy to help me 78 My teacher needs to treat me nicer 42 My teacher puts too much pressure on us 77 I think my teacher needs to be different in some way 92 My teacher needs more training 74 The work our teacher gives is too hard 80 The class rules are hard to follow 75 I get nervous about my work 91 People are disruptive in class	Teacher not knowing / sharing / understanding / trusting Poor rapport Insensitive Growly Problems with Teacher
C	58 Kids in my class get picked on 60 People in my class are mean 88 People in my class laugh if someone gets embarrassed or sad	Bad Social Disrespectful environment Class Interpersonal Atmosphere

The cluster concept summaries in Table 7 indicate that participants distinguish within

the ‘undesirable’ items, elements of the teacher (A and B) from the class as a whole (C) and possibly management (A) from interpersonal items (B). Distinctions in Table 8 are less clear. The difference between cluster D and E seems to be again a class as a whole (D) compared with teacher aspects (E), however both D and E seem to be about working together, whereas cluster F seems to be more about knowing each other. Clusters G and H seem similar, although cluster G seems to be more about behavioural expectations and H about work expectations. Cluster I seems to be about teaching the students personal emotion regulation, whereas Cluster J is about getting on together. Cluster K seems to be about the teacher being emotionally open or vulnerable. Some participants thought that a teacher being emotionally open or vulnerable in class was a good thing, while others thought that it crossed a professional boundary.

Table 8

*‘Desirable’ Clusters with Item Statements and Types of Names Used By Participants*

Cluster	Item statements from Study 2	Summary of types of cluster names
D	6 Children in my class listen to our teacher 81 We have a nice classroom environment 83 It's OK to be different in our class 84 Students find it easy to fit into our class 8 We get to discuss things as a class 59 We work well together in our class 44 Our teacher will tell us if we've done well 67 We get rewarded for being good	Working as a class Class Interpersonal Atmosphere Rewards
E	20 My teacher understands that we all learn in different ways 79 My teacher is good at teaching me 43 My teacher gives me time to think 40 My teacher gives me work I can do well at 48 Our teacher wants us to have fun at school 41 I achieve the goals my teacher sets 86 I learn enough 47 We have fun learning activities 68 My teacher takes us out for games 66 We get free time 73 If our work is hard, our teacher likes to help us 94 Our teacher tries to make our work interesting	Good teacher Classwork Rewards / Fun

<b>F</b>	<p>7 I feel relaxed and comfortable around my teacher</p> <p>33 My teacher cares about us all</p> <p>37 Our teacher makes us feel welcome</p> <p>53 My teacher knows who I can work well with</p> <p>22 My teacher knows what I find hard at school</p> <p>34 My teacher cares how I feel</p> <p>49 My teacher knows about my family</p> <p>56 I know some things my teacher likes to do at the weekend</p> <p>32 My teacher likes us all the time</p> <p>76 I'm glad my teacher is my teacher</p> <p>36 Our teacher smiles at us when we get to school</p> <p>50 My teacher trusts me</p> <p>35 My teacher is happy when we do well</p> <p>52 Our teacher is happy</p> <p>46 My teacher makes me laugh</p> <p>64 Our teacher is calm</p> <p>65 My teacher thinks everyone in our class is good</p>	<p>Teacher knowing / sharing / understanding / trusting</p> <p>Rapport / enjoyment</p> <p>Affection</p> <p>Personal Knowledge</p> <p>Class Interpersonal Atmosphere</p> <p>Good teacher</p>
<b>G</b>	<p>9 If we get in trouble we know what we've done wrong</p> <p>12 Our teacher tells us how they expect us to behave</p> <p>82 The class rules are fair</p> <p>10 If someone is being naughty they'll get a warning before they get in trouble</p> <p>14 Our teacher only tells off kids who have done something wrong</p>	<p>Good communication about behavioural expectations</p> <p>Fairness / rules</p> <p>Punishments</p>
<b>H</b>	<p>39 My teacher expects us to get on with our work, unless we're having a problem</p> <p>45 Our teacher expects us to work hard</p> <p>51 I know what my teacher thinks is important</p>	<p>Good communication about work expectations</p> <p>Fairness / rules</p>
<b>I</b>	<p>19 If someone is upset, our teacher lets them go and calm down</p> <p>69 My teacher helps me to think before I act</p> <p>27 I'd tell my teacher if something was upsetting me</p> <p>28 Our teacher can tell if someone is upset</p> <p>29 I can talk to my teacher when I need to</p> <p>30 If I'm nervous, my teacher encourages me</p> <p>31 If I'm having a bad day my teacher will help</p> <p>71 If I'm upset, my teacher helps me feel better</p> <p>55 My teacher tells us if they are having a good or bad day</p>	<p>Teacher knowing / sharing / understanding / trusting</p> <p>Teacher empathy, attitudes, openness, helpfulness</p> <p>Resolving Problems – Trusting relationship</p>
<b>J</b>	<p>23 Our teacher treats us all fairly</p> <p>87 If something is bugging me, I have people to talk to in my class</p> <p>90 We value other people's feelings in our class</p> <p>62 Our teacher explains the reasons for their decisions</p> <p>24 Our teacher talks to us about values and what's right and wrong</p> <p>57 Our teacher tells us how to be nicer to each other</p> <p>85 My teacher takes bullying seriously</p> <p>25 My teacher helps us to sort out problems with our friends if we can't do it ourselves</p> <p>72 If we have a problem, our teacher talks to us about it</p> <p>26 Our teacher gives us advice</p> <p>70 If we have problems our teacher listens to us</p>	<p>Good social</p> <p>Getting on with others</p> <p>Open discussions</p> <p>Resolving Problems – Trusting relationship</p> <p>Behavioural Expectations</p>

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K	16 Our teacher gets sad or upset if we don't listen	"Sad", almost on edge
	17 Our teacher gets sad or upset when growling at us	Poor emotional regulation
	54 Our teacher tells us when they are getting upset with us	Teacher (too?) openly expressing feelings

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### ***MultiDimensional Scaling***

To further understand how the clusters fit together, 3-D mapping was undertaken. Three weighted dimensions are seen using this 3-D mapping, several views of which can be viewed in Appendix L. In Figure 8 it is possible to see the entire map and the three dimensions, labelled X, Y, and Z, which will be called Dimensions 1, 2 and 3.

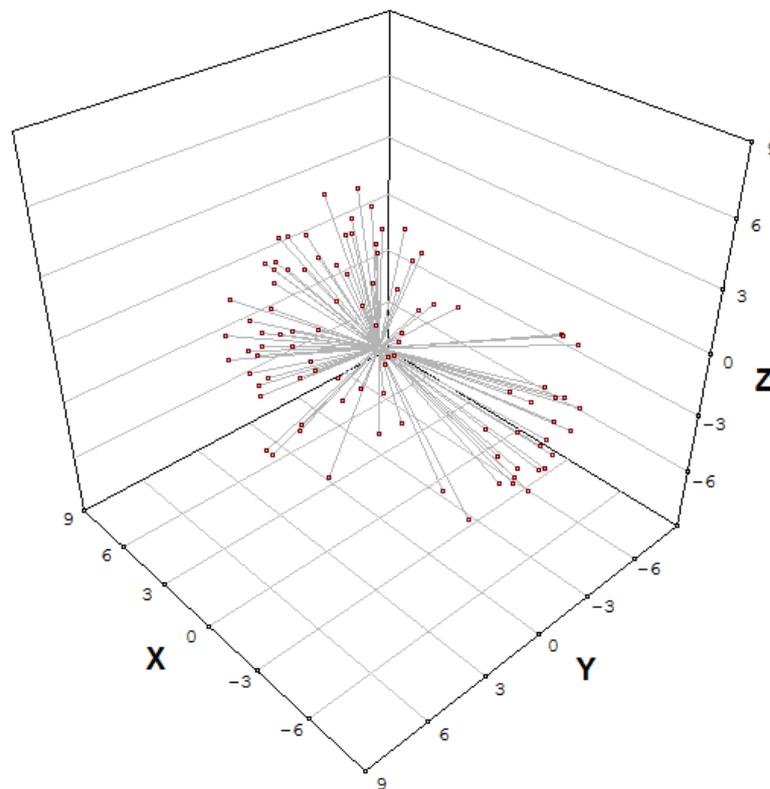


Figure 8 Three dimensions shown in 3D

#### ***Dimension 1 – Teacher Affect***

The first dimension split is again clearly illustrated in the map, see Figure 9. Each point on the map is one of the 94 item statements that were sorted by participants, and each point has a line showing its distance from the centre of the map. The two ends of dimension once again seem to divide the items into the purposeful ‘desirable’

and ‘undesirable’ items included in the deck. When viewing this dimension on the map or ‘globe’, it is clear to see that the ‘undesirable’ items are considered much more extreme, and uniformly so, than the ‘desirable’ items. The ‘desirable’ end forms an even hemisphere, while the ‘undesirable’ end turns the ‘globe’ into an egg-shape.

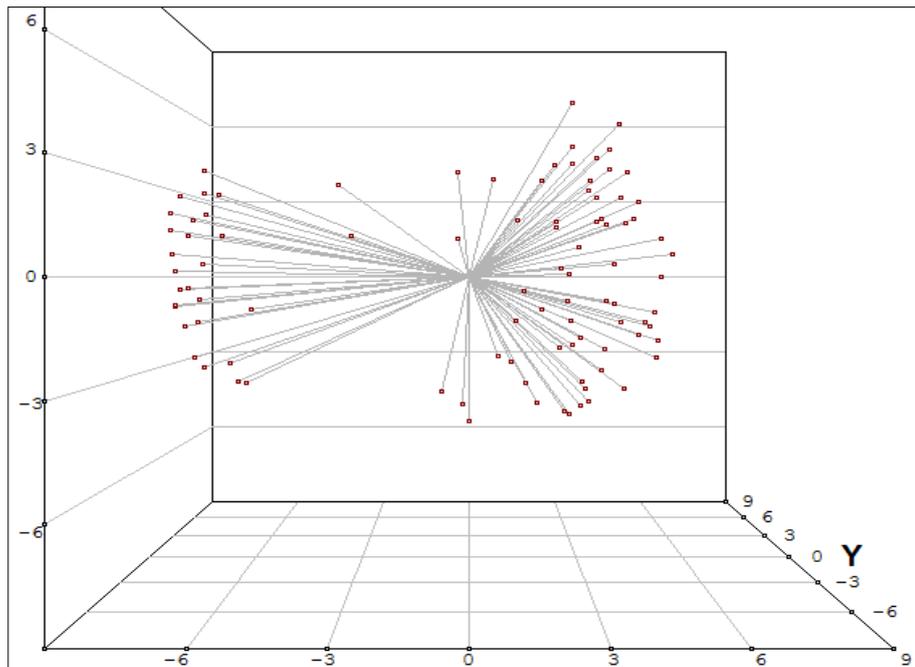


Figure 9 Dimension 1 – Teacher Affect.

'Disagreeable' items on the left, 'Agreeable' items on the right

After discussing the Naming section with some participants and then reviewing the Naming data, how participants sorted the items became clearer. A variety of techniques were used, some participants used conceptual names, some considered each group from the point of view of individuals they knew and summarised what that person thought about school, and some named each group by what the students in a class might think about the class. The types of names used for groups based in this first dimension indicate that this dimension reflects the teacher's ability to relate to the students. Examples of names used by participants include: Desirability, Teacher Affect, Empowering, Agreeableness and Teacher Quality. Therefore, Dimension 1 seems to be about a variety of teacher characteristics and is called 'Teacher Affect'.

Items at the most extreme of each end of the continuum are summarised in Table 9. It was then possible to review the Naming section of the data gathering to see what names were given to groups that had items from an end of this dimension, the items and types of names are summarised in Table 9. There were many groups from the raw data that represented each end of this dimension, types of names generally fitted easily into two distinct categories, as can be seen in Table 9. D1- is called "Disagreeable" and D1+ is called "Agreeable".

Table 9

*Items from Each End of Dimension 1's Continuum and a Summary of Names Used By Participants*

<b>D1 – Students' Perception of Teacher Affect</b>		
	D1- Disagreeable	D1+ Agreeable
<b>Items</b>	1 My teacher growls 2 Our teacher yells at us 38 My teacher is too busy to help me 42 My teacher puts too much pressure on us 58 Kids in my class get picked on 78 My teacher needs to treat me nicer 89 My teacher calls kids mean names 93 Our teacher thinks that people in our class are bad	20 My teacher understands that we all learn in different ways 36 Our teacher smiles at us when we get to school 37 Our teacher makes us feel welcome 43 My teacher gives me time to think 50. My teacher trusts me 53 My teacher knows who I can work well with 79. My teacher is good at teaching me 84 Students find it easy to fit into our class
<b>Types of suggested names</b>	Negative Unfair Bad Authoritarian Nasty Bad attitude Insensitive Wrong focus Grumpy Unprofessional Disrespectful Environment	Approachable Positive Safe Understanding Insightful Honesty Just like Mum Personal touch Teacher loves job Interpersonal knowledge Positivity

Another consideration when viewing the map is the compactness of the Disagreeable end when compared to the more spread out items of the other end. This indicates that the Disagreeable items were more often considered by participants as belonging together. Also the Disagreeable items were more extremely undesirable than the Agreeable items were considered desirable, that is, the Disagreeable items are further along the continuum from the centre, or neutral, than the Agreeable items are.

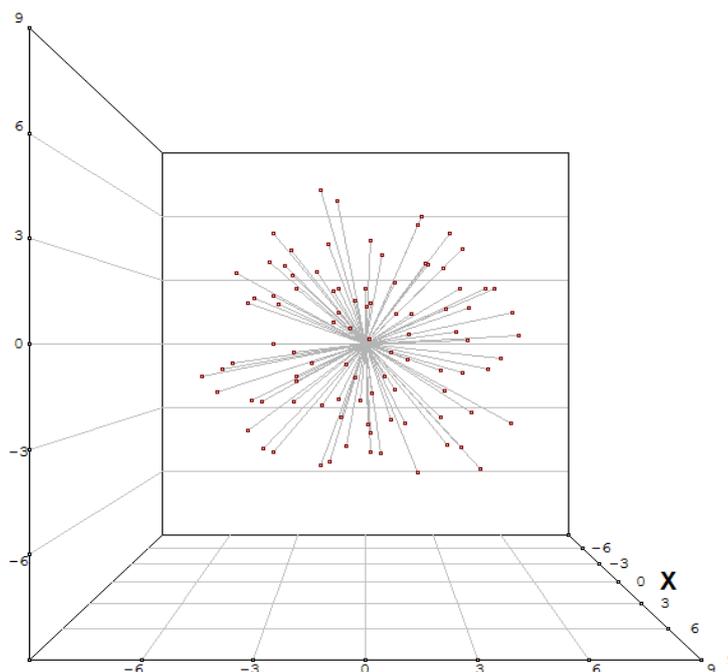
With the Teacher Affect dimension it is also quite easy to see on the map a third group - the items most neutral or central to the continuum. They are:

- 14 – Our teacher only tells off kids who have done something wrong
- 39 – My teacher expects us to get on with our work, unless we're having a problem
- 45 – Our teacher expects us to work hard
- 54 – Our teacher tells us when they are getting upset with us
- 55 – My teacher tells us if they are having a good or bad day
- 65 – My teacher thinks everyone in our class is good
- 86 – I learn enough

This result may mean that these items are considered as having a neutral value along this dimension, or they may be conditional on circumstances, or they may have been considered too ambiguous by adult participants, some participants judging them as 'desirable' and others as 'undesirable'.

### *Dimension 2 – Teacher Expectations and Style*

The second way the data were split by participants forms the second dimension, seen in Figure 10. Referring back to the Naming section of the data gathering, groups that had items from both ends of the second dimension had names like Fairness, Close to



*Figure 10* Dimension 2 – Teacher Expectations and Style  
 'Academic' items on the left, 'Interpersonal' items on the right

children, Teacher knowledge and understanding, Culture, Connections teacher has with students, Teacher sensitivity/support, In tune with the class, Regulation, Mood responsiveness and Teacher knowledge, understanding and beliefs. Dimension 2 has been called “Teacher Expectations and Style.

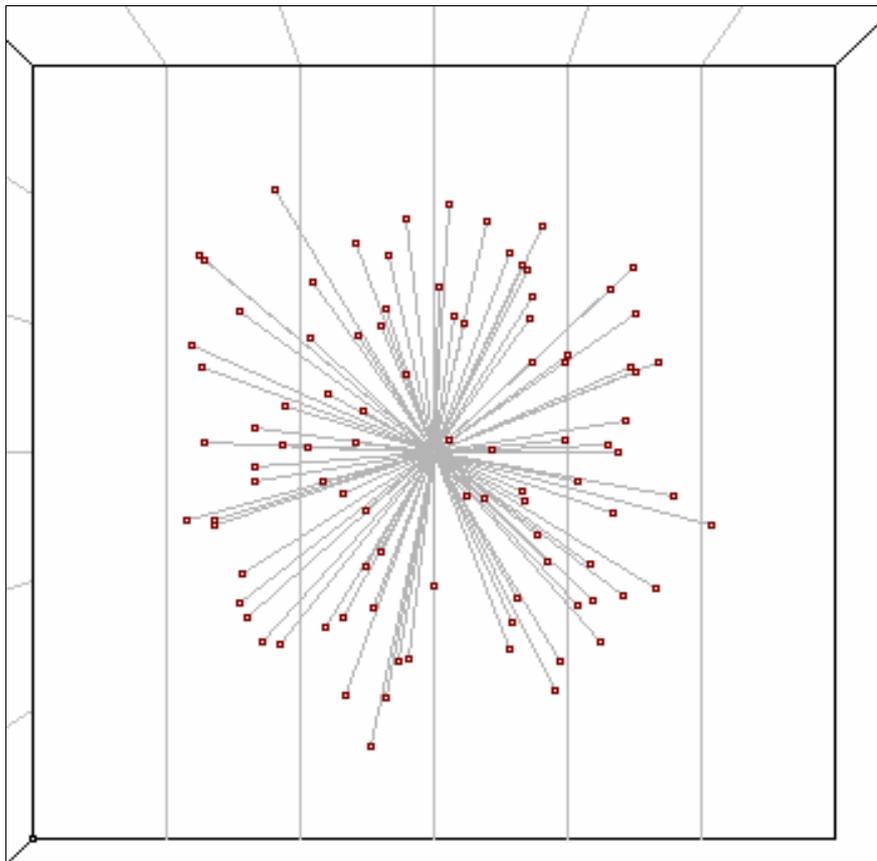
Remember that items from each end of the Teacher Affect dimension are inter-mixed within each end of the second dimension, so rather than ‘good’ or ‘bad’, what is important here are the underlying concepts. In Dimension 2 the items are more evenly spread along the dimension, with items at the most extreme of each end of the continuum seen in Table 10, along with a summary of suggested names. The items at each end of this dimension seem to show a distinction between the types of expectations that teachers might have, the first end being work, learning and management focused and the other end being more relational and emotional type items.

Table 10  
*Items from Each End of Dimension 2’s Continuum and a Summary of Names Used By Participants*

<b>Dimension 2 – Students’ Perceptions of Teacher Expectations and Style</b>		
	<b>D2- Academic/Management</b>	<b>D2+ - Interpersonal/Emotional</b>
<b>Items</b>	40 My teacher gives me work I can do well at 41 I achieve the goals my teacher sets 42 My teacher puts too much pressure on us 67 We get rewarded for being good 74 The work our teacher gives is too hard 75 I get nervous about my work 80 The class rules are hard to follow 86 I learn enough	11 Our teacher tells us how bad we've been 16 Our teacher gets sad or upset if we don't listen 17 Our teacher gets sad or upset when growling at us 18 If our teacher is having a bad day, we get in trouble 19 If someone is upset, our teacher lets go and calm down 27 I'd tell my teacher if something was upsetting me 28 Our teacher can tell if someone is upset 29 I can talk to my teacher when I need to 56 I know some things my teacher likes to do at the weekend 61 My teacher doesn't realise how other people are feeling
<b>Types of suggested names</b>	Teaching and learning attitudes to school work Learning Fairness Expectations Work Good things and rewards OK to get help and support Bad – strict More training needed	Emotions of students Talking to the teacher Trusting the teacher Positive qualities Emotional security Teacher helps sort problems – feel better Emotion Management Approachable teacher In touch with emotions Thin Boundaries Too close to students

### *Dimension 3 – Classroom Dynamics*

The decision and distinction within Dimension 3 is less clear, as is to be expected, as the third criterion is less dominant in the data. When looking at the map it falls along a similar spread to dimension 2, as can be seen in Figure 11. Items at the extremes of each end (mixing again both ends of the Teacher Affect dimension) are seen in Table 11.



*Figure 11* Dimension 3 – Classroom Dynamics  
‘Class Aspects’ on the left and ‘Teacher Aspects’ on the right

Referring back to the Naming section of data gathering, there were no groups that had items for both ends of this dimension. Each end of the dimension did, however, have groups in the raw data. Some suggestions for names from the data for each end of this dimension are also seen in Table 11.

Again, items from each end of the Teacher Affect dimension are inter-mixed within each end of the third dimension, so rather than ‘good’ or ‘bad’, what is important here are the underlying concepts. The first end of this dimension involves more items focusing on the teacher’s strengths and weaknesses, while the second end could be strengths and weaknesses of the class.

Table 11

*Items from Each End of Dimension 3’s Continuum and a Summary of Names Used By Participants*

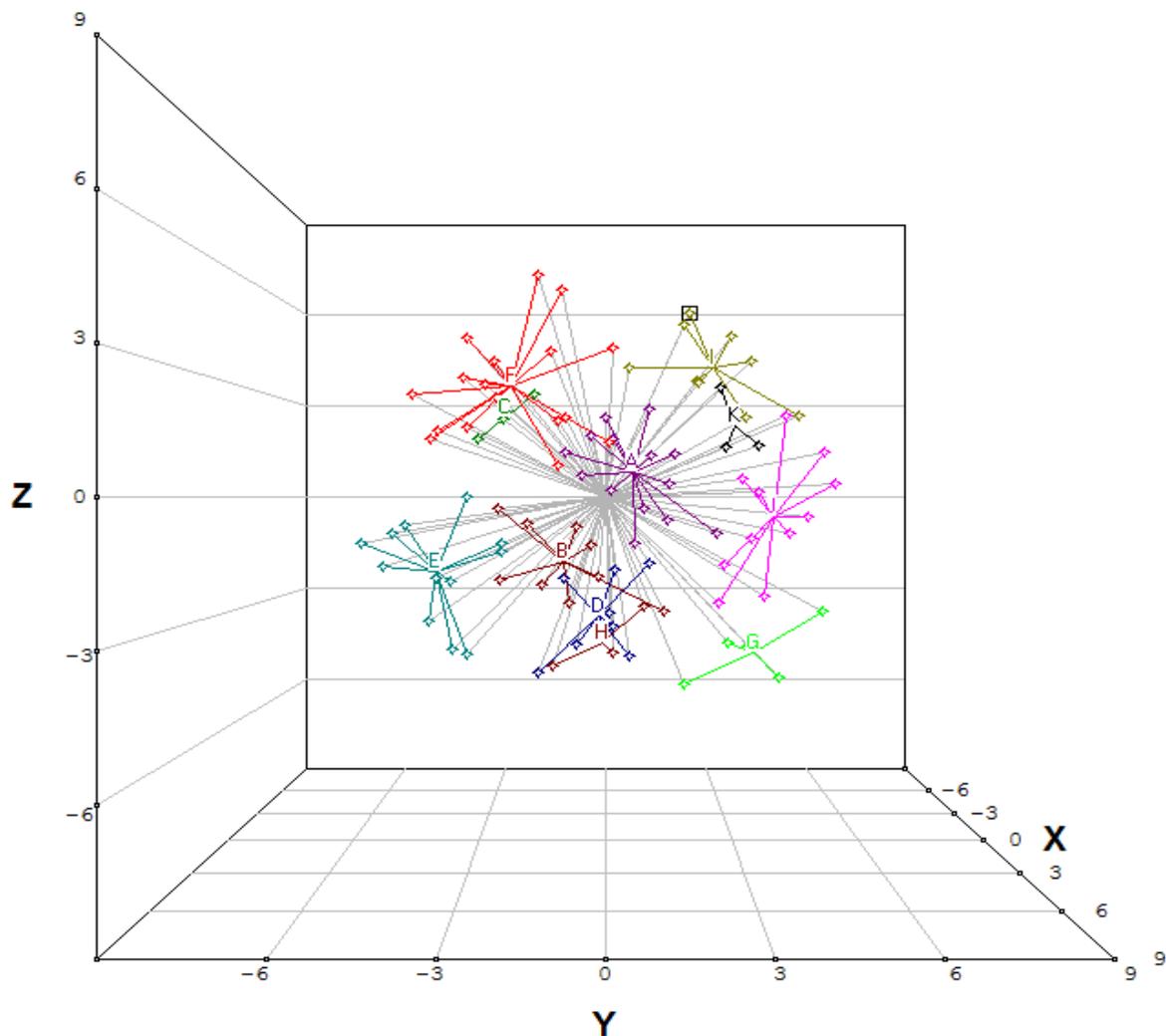
<b>D3 – Students’ Perceptions of Classroom Dynamics</b>		
	<b>D3- Teacher Aspects</b>	<b>D3+ Class Aspects</b>
<b>Items</b>	21 My teacher has favourites 32 My teacher likes us all the time 35 My teacher is happy when we do well 36 Our teacher smiles at us when we get to school 38 My teacher is too busy to help me 52 Our teacher is happy 76 I'm glad my teacher is my teacher 77 I think my teacher needs to be different in some way 92 My teacher needs more training	9 If we get in trouble we know what we've done wrong 12 Our teacher tells us how they expect us to behave 14 Our teacher only tells off kids who have done something wrong 58 Kids in my class get picked on 60 People in my class are mean 82 The class rules are fair 83 It's OK to be different in our class 87 If something is bugging me, I have people to talk to 88 People in my class laugh if someone gets embarrassed 91 People are disruptive in class
<b>Types of suggested names</b>	Friendly teacher and interpersonal relationships Super teacher Teacher inadequacies and weaknesses Bubbly / happy teacher Teacher doesn't know what they're doing Lack of training Much loved teacher Positive teacher interaction and teacher demeanour My teacher needs . . . Teacher's feelings Ways to improve teacher Positive teacher Focus on behaviour Teacher's feelings towards children Criticisms of Teacher	I don't like my class Class rules Teacher feedback to students and fairness Badly behaved students Lack of care Unfair and doesn't understand my feelings – bad learning environment Our class and positive qualities Bullying Poor classroom climate Good class/ Bad class Classroom environment Fair and Consistent Behaviour Management Interactions Management strategies Children's understanding of boundaries

Past research has shown no difference in results between experts and non-experts when using MDS (Pechtel, Harvey & Evans, 2005), and when comparing maps between the ‘expert’ participants and all other participants, the same appears to be borne out in this data. Conversely a difference has been found when comparing the

genders of classroom teachers in previous research (Harvey, 2004), so a gender based comparison of responses was conducted here also. The similarity between maps, when comparing the genders, seems high (85% correlation between corresponding distances, according to Canonical Correlation), although the low number of male participants may affect the validity of this finding.

### ***Link Between Clusters and Dimensions***

Clusters from the dendrogram do not give an idea of relative distance between each other and what the underlying dimensions might be, whereas MDS does. Each of the clusters sits in three dimensional (3-D) space relative to each of the underlying 3 concepts. When looking at the clusters plotted in 3-D their relativity becomes clearer, as in Figure 12. Clusters E and K or C and G are most dissimilar.



*Figure 12* Clusters on MDS map,  
Dimension 2 on the horizontal axis and Dimension 3 on the vertical axis

It then becomes possible to further examine each dimension according to the clusters. Take, for example, Dimension 1 – Teacher Affect. Clusters A and B sit very tightly at the more ‘undesirable’ end of the continuum, as can be seen in Figure 13, while most of the other clusters are placed at the opposite end, much as expected. The exception to expectation is Cluster K. Cluster K sits towards the more negative end of the map along the Teacher Affect dimension, although much closer to neutral than the other clusters, but is placed in the more positive end of the dendrogram. It is therefore reasonable to consider Cluster K as ‘transitional’ items, that is, depending on circumstances, context and rater these items could be either “desirable” or “undesirable”.

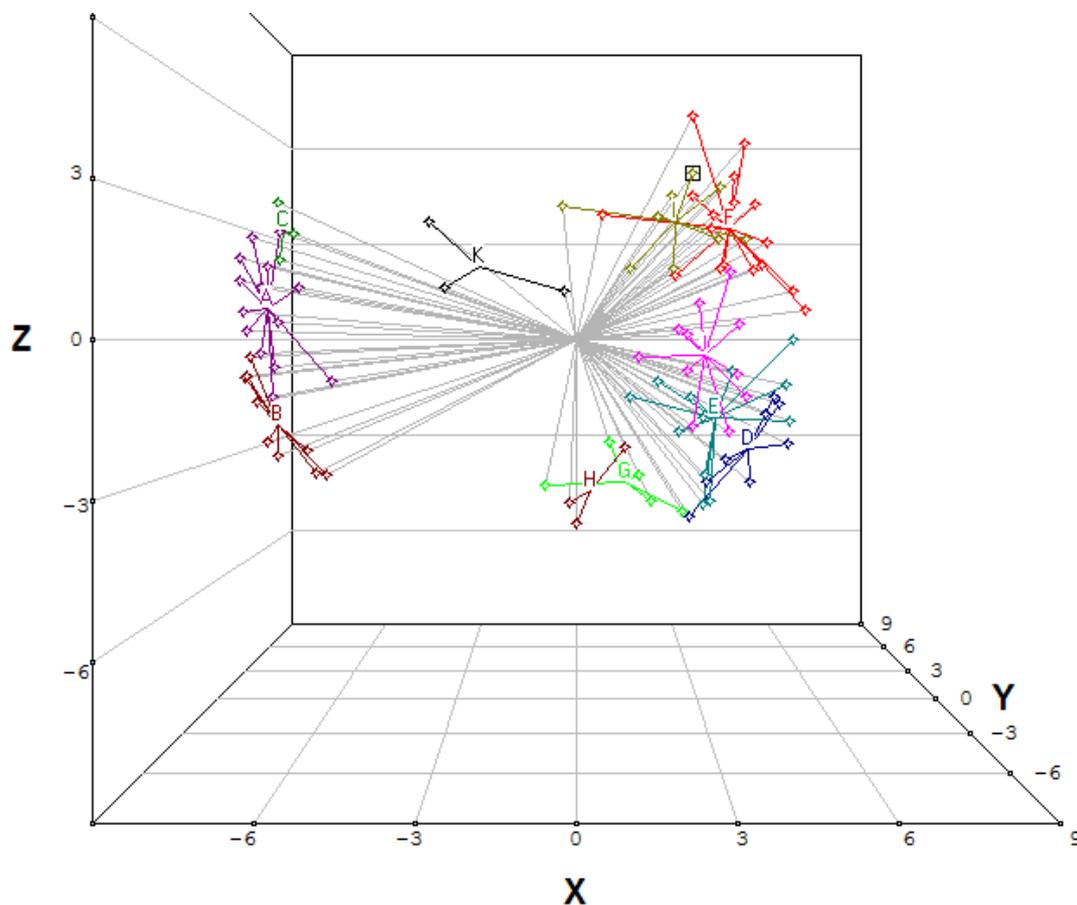


Figure 13 Teacher Affect Dimension with clusters plotted

Of extra interest, when looking at the clusters plotted on the 3-D map, is that several of the clusters appear to be opposite on all 3 dimensions, something that would not easily have been detected without the MDS mapping. Clusters E and K are opposite on all three dimensions, as are Clusters C and G and the map can be spun in 3D to show the distance between these clusters, see Figure 14. As previously discussed,

Cluster K could be considered transitional in terms of ‘desirable’ and ‘undesirable’, but towards the more ‘undesirable’ end, whereas Cluster E is more ‘desirable’. Cluster E seems to focus on school-work, whereas Cluster K focuses on emotions, so opposite along Dimension 2 also. The clusters are about equal distance along Dimension 2, although not at an extreme. Cluster E seems to be talking about the

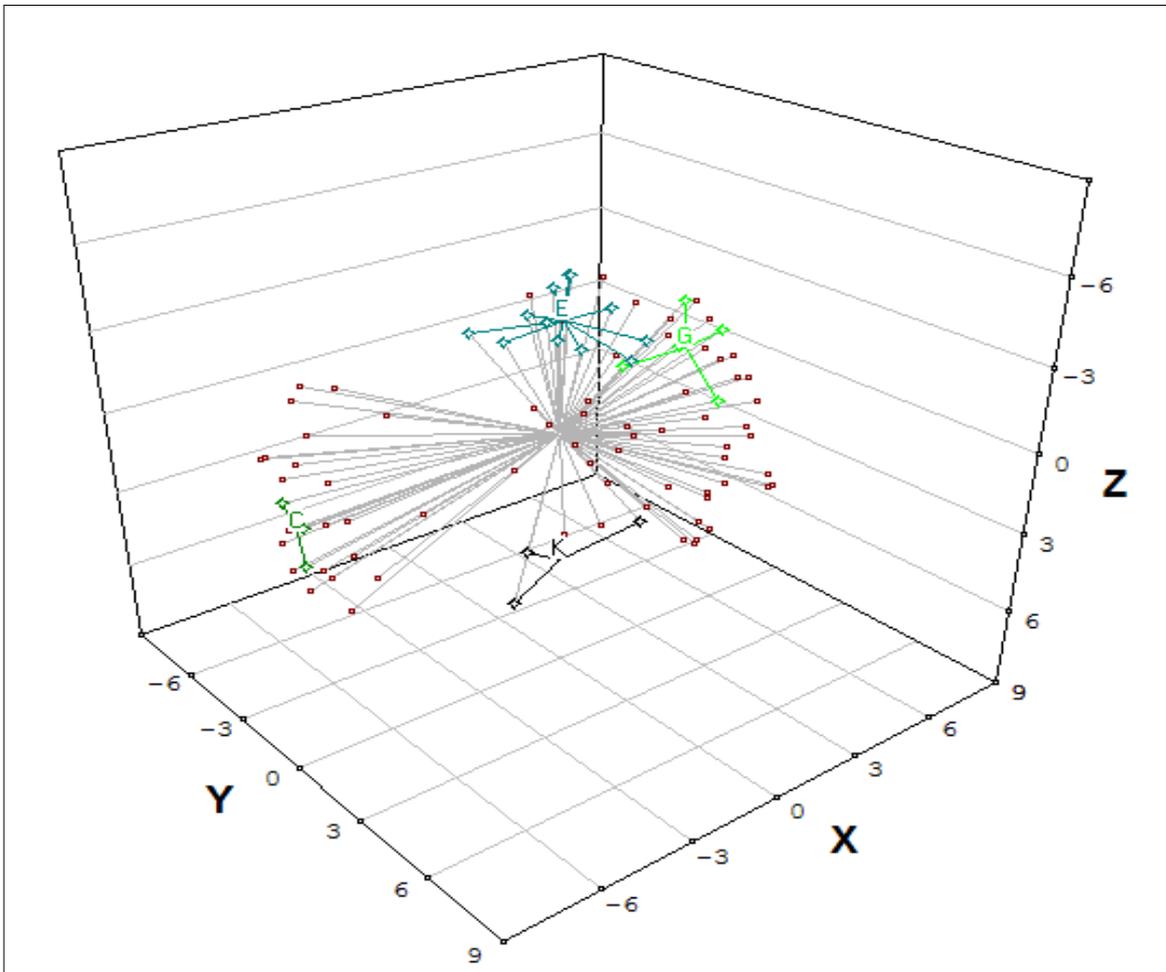


Figure 14 Comparison of clusters K & E, and C & G

classroom’s qualities while cluster K seems to be talking about the teacher’s qualities, so opposite on Dimension 3 also.

## Chapter 5 : Discussion

At the start of this thesis, five necessary outcomes were identified and three parts to the research were designed. The first two outcomes, Testing the Children's Decision Making Board and developing a method for doing Children's Focus Groups were addressed in Study 1 – Testing Methods. The second two outcomes, organising data from the focus groups and generating an Item Deck were addressed in Study 2 – Item Development. The final outcome, organisation of Item Statements, was the result of Study 3 – Structural Analysis. The results of each of these studies will be discussed below.

### Study 1 – Testing Methods

#### ***Children's Decision Board***

Using a MOSS style Decision Board was a useful way of accessing children's thoughts. The children remained engaged in the task and seemed to be able to respond validly. Using the board requires some adult supervision, but less supervision than would be necessary to ensure credible results when young children fill out questionnaires. It works for children working independently or in pairs.

All students found it easier to determine if something was 'A lot' or 'Sometimes' easier than they could decide between 'Strongly Agree' and 'Agree'. This could be because of the difference in language used or due to the card sort procedure's requiring two readings of the statements – the first to determine agreement and the second to determine the amount of agreement. Adult participants in other research have told me that they find two levels of decision-making made the task easier; I would assume the same for children. Also, the card sort task is a more tactile, visual and concrete task, which appeals to children (Cooper, 2002). More than likely, all these reasons interacted, making the discriminations easier.

The children who used the card sort had more individual variability for their answers than those children who completed the questionnaire. It is worth noting that the required responses for the two methods were slightly different, so the differences found in responding may reflect the difference in required answer.

The limitations of this board include that users needed to be able to read in English to a reasonable standard or have the items read to them, and the complex nature of deciding how much a person conforms to each item is a reasonably difficult cognitive task for children any younger than the target group, but the same could be said for traditional style questionnaires. The results from Study 1 suggest that the decisions needed for the card sorting to be meaningful are cognitively beyond a 5-6 year old age group.

One class completed the questionnaires in class as a class exercise, and in this group there was a much larger 'Don't Know' response level. It is worth noting that the teacher in this class had only been with the students for four days, the previous teacher had left after 2 ½ terms. This may explain some of the high number of 'Don't Know' responses. However, students from other classes, who had been with their teacher for several terms, who completed the questionnaire under supervision also had a higher 'Don't Know' response rate than students who completed the Card Sort task. This is concerning, as a 'Don't Know' response in this instance really only reflects a lack of data, rather than a useable answer.

The style of Item Statements and the card sort procedure were also tested in the first study. The difficulty some children had in reading and understanding some of the words used in the questionnaire and in some of the original item cards means that word and concept selection needs to be carefully considered, and sometimes the questions need to be read to and discussed with the students before they answer. A way around this issue would be to ask students for language and concepts to consider including in a measure, as was done in Study 2 – Item Development.

The questionnaire statements were all phrased in the positive, tending towards a socially desirable or well taught response, so there needs to be care taken with interpreting results. It would seem that the children mostly tended to agree with all

the statements, except when there was an understandable or expected variation. The trend toward positive responses is reassuring for the school, but not that useful if researchers want to measure change or find areas for development. A way around this is to include some negative or questionable traits as items or put the focus on other students, that is, replace *I feel safe at school* with *I feel unsafe at school*, or *My friends feel safe at our school*.

The Card Sort Task appeared, with this small sample, a more valid way of accessing children's thinking, than using a traditional questionnaire, especially in the Y2-4 (6-8yo) students.

### ***Method for Undertaking Children's Focus Groups***

For the interviews in Study 2 to be useful, children needed to be focused, engaged, trusting and for all of this to happen quite quickly so that they would not miss too much class time. The format I devised during Study 1 and used during Study 2 seemed to achieve all these goals. Students who participated in the first days' focus groups often wanted to participate in the second days' groups also.

Focus groups were chosen so that the children might feel more relaxed with the process, due to the implicit support of their peers, and so that information could be gathered from a lot of children quickly, as has been done in previous research (Andersen, 2003). To quickly introduce students to the idea that the discussions would be about emotions in the classroom, a warm up game that emphasised their feelings and perceptions of others' feelings was used. This allowed the children to open up quickly and they enjoyed the game, often asking to play it again at the end. Two extra rounds of the game were added and became part of the data collection.

To keep the children engaged, the focus groups proceeded like a game, where the children all had a chance to have a turn at choosing a different coloured envelope which held the next question. A spinner was used to decide who would next choose an envelope, this kept selection quick and fair, as fairness is important to children of this age (Evans, Yamaguchi, Raskauskas & Harvey, 2007). Also, each child was able to participate as much or as little as they wanted. Part of this engagement

process involved the children trusting me. Trust was built through the process of the students and teacher meeting me several times before the interview and asking as many questions as they needed. Students were also guaranteed confidentiality.

The process was time consuming, a lot of work needed to be done prior to the interviews with the selection and consent processes. The use of focus groups is a lengthier process for participants also, than other methods, but possibly more enjoyable as there is peer support and no writing. Following focus groups, transcription and analysis is also a lengthy process. However, focus groups provided a different type of data than could be obtained by other methods.

## **Study 2 – Item Development**

### ***Themes from Interview Data***

Relevant quotes from the student interviews were tested on a different group of students for reliability of understanding, and were then sorted into themes by myself and peers. Four of these themes were the type of data expected from the Focus Groups. Additionally, the pervasiveness of discussions about Bullying cannot be overlooked. An interesting finding was the variability provided due to developmental differences.

### ***Developmental Differences***

There seemed to be almost three different developmental levels within the 8 - 12 year old age group interviewed.

1. Younger children - had difficulty talking about their nominated teacher's feelings and seldom could see intention or reasoning to a teacher's behaviour.
2. Middle age group - realised that their teacher had 'feelings' and could easily tell of instances and reasons for many feelings, including assumptions.
3. Older children – were eloquent and enthusiastic about their teacher's intentions and reasoning, and could see an overall pattern to their teacher's emotional responding.

Future research could further investigate these differences. The fluidity of the warm-up game used here seemed to be highly indicative of these levels so could be the basis of any future research done. Consideration would need to be paid to other developmental milestones occurring in future participants as a possible explanation for any differences found. If these developmental differences are borne out by future research it could inform expectations in emotional education.

### *Bullying*

Even in these emotionally well managed classes, almost every group spontaneously named a student who was either a perpetrator or a victim of bullying, and this single named student was constant through each of the three or four groups from that class. Students differentiated between good-natured teasing and bullying, considering *persistence*, *intention*, and the *effect* on the receiver as defining differences. Of note, students noticed that teachers can be bullies too.

The definition of bullying constructed by the students is of interest and of possible use in education programs and school management decisions because it comes from the members of the population affected and reflects concepts the target group understands. Again, this research was not specifically intended to investigate bullying, so further research is required to see how global this definition is for primary school aged students. In a few instances students were asked for effective strategies for dealing with bullying, and they could not come up with any, which would suggest they have not seen or noticed any. This is of concern, due to the apparently pervasive nature of bullying found here.

The pervasiveness of bullying found in this research is of some surprise. Bullying was intentionally a non-focus of this research, because there was other research being conducted by the wider research team on bullying and as some of these participants would have been participants in both projects, I did not want to confound or influence either data set. Bullying is such a contentious issue, it deserves its own project, rather than an aspect of this research, to investigate it fully. Also, in the selection of emotionally well-managed classrooms, it was thought that bullying

would not be an issue, so the fact that it came up in almost every focus group, even though there were no specific questions targeting it, was alarming.

I was also impressed with the universality of understanding about was and was not bullying, evident in the fact that the same students were independently named throughout each interview from the same class. The defining criteria suggested by students seem an accurate and useful measure of the types of behaviours discussed by these students.

### *Behaviour Management*

It was established in the introduction of this thesis that behaviour management is separate to, but interlinked with, the emotional awareness of teachers. However, what the children had to say about behaviour management is of interest because it is possibly one of the most visible aspects of how a classroom runs, and the emotional climate will inform a teacher's behaviour management decisions. Due to its tangible nature, behaviour management is often clearly observable in a short amount of time, so could possibly become useful as a gauge on the emotional climate, as identified by the children I spoke with. It may also be possible to ask students, including students younger than the ones interviewed here, specifically about the behaviour management of a classroom, to gauge how they feel about the emotional climate. Aspects of the behaviour management programme to look for include: (a) if it is reward or punishment based; (b) explicit or implicit; (c) its level of predictability; and (d) the students' general impressions of the teacher. Students often commented on the teacher being fair, which was found Bishop et al.'s (2001) research into effective teaching also.

### *Interpersonal Knowledge and Intimacy*

This theme is more in line with what was originally expected from the data. This theme seems to be about how well people in the class know and appreciate each other. In many instances mutual regard meant that teachers would open up to students regarding aspects of their own personal lives and feelings, and invited the

students to also. The overall feeling was that these teachers, in comparison to others, actually enjoyed working with children, an interesting observation from children.

However, when it came to the Study 3 task, the interpersonal items were sometimes categorised by adults as being too close, or even unprofessional. This shows that there may be a difference with what is seen to be appropriate and desirable in a classroom. This research was not intended to investigate what adults thought about classroom environments, so future research could investigate this perception difference. One would imagine that if a class teacher, a student and their parents all had different thoughts about the level of disclosure that was appropriate in a classroom, and then this could be a source of tension that could hinder the learning process.

This theme may also be easy to assess as a gauge of emotional climate. A simple questionnaire could be distributed to teachers asking them personal questions about their students. However, it may be possible for a teacher to know a lot about their students without actually acting on that information; just because a teacher knows that a particular student needs a hug when they get upset, does not mean that they are willing to hug that student.

### *Good At Teaching*

Again teaching ability is linked with the emotional environment, this time by the students. Previously teachers and observers have noted the link (Bishop, et al, 2001). Taking risks is a necessary part of the learning process, but for a student to make themselves vulnerable they first have to feel that the environment is safe and supportive (Ministry of Education, 2006). Therefore, in classrooms where students feel safe and supported, it was expected that their learning would be of a higher level, whether the task one considers involves spelling, reading or critical analysis. This is what was reported by these students. Students saw their emotionally aware teachers also as actually good at teaching. The teachers understood the students' individual learning needs and their differences, setting realistic goals and pushing them enough to motivate the students without intimidating them. These teachers

were seen as people who strived to make the learning as interesting and fun as possible. The students felt that their teachers liked helping children learn.

What is of interest here is that students linked a teachers' ability to teach well with the emotional climate in the classroom. Specifically, this theme is inter-related with the previous theme. That is, if a teacher knows their students well, they are better able to move them forward in a suitable way. There is much scope for future research of this premise. A possible enquiry could be to compare academic or behavioural outcomes of classes when the teachers do and do not make an effort to improve the emotional environment of their classroom.

### *Classroom "Feel"*

This theme seems most in line with the research question, how the students perceive the emotional climate. In these emotionally safe classrooms, students felt like everyone in the class were valued and that they worked well as a supportive team. These classes seemed to have few internal disruptions or negativity and any issues were dealt with directly, not swept under the carpet.

This theme requires a mix of teacher characteristics and student characteristics, and it can become much like the chicken and egg debate – which comes first? While this question of origin was not the focus of the current research, previous research (Andersen, 2003) has found that the class teacher is the largest single influence in a classroom. These items may be the most representative of the students' perceptions of the emotional climate, but further research would need to be undertaken to determine if this is in fact the case.

### ***Development of an Item deck for Study 3***

This was the practical task of Study 2 required before conducting Study 3. Several items were surprising, some for their level of student understanding and others for their concepts. A final list of 94 statements resulted, see Appendix H. These items could be included in a future measure used to test 8-12 year olds' emotional development, or the emotional climate in a classroom. Not all of the items would

need to be included in a tool, as during Study 3 several items almost always occurred together, but further research would be needed to determine the most meaningful items.

It is possible that there are some items that were excluded for the sake of final numbers that are important to the understanding of students' perceptions of their classroom's emotional environment, or even that there are items that were not even considered. The way to test this would be to replicate this study with a different researcher and participants.

## **Study 3 – Structural Analysis**

### ***Clusters***

At this stage it is difficult to tell what the clusters actually represent. It would seem though that Cluster K contains 'transitional' items, that is, depending on the circumstances, context, extent and rater these items could be either "desirable" or "undesirable". When considering Cluster K's items it becomes clearer why they became 'transitional' items. Some raters could consider a teacher showing emotion in class as modelling appropriate responses, while others raters may think this indicates that the teacher cannot emotionally regulate, making them vulnerable and possibly losing control of the class. Both options are possible and it would depend on the teacher, the context and the frequency of such behaviour before desirability could be determined.

Hierarchical clusters do not show relative distance between each other or indicate what the underlying dimensions might be, whereas MDS does. Each of the clusters sits in 3-D space relative to each of the underlying 3 concepts.

### ***Dimensions***

The organisations were compared between educational experts, teachers and non-teachers, with no meaningful differences found. This finding follows the results of

other MDS research conducted in this way (Pechtal, Harvey & Evans, 2005; Pechtal, 2008).

### *Dimension 1 – Teacher Affect*

The first dimension, “Teacher Affect” was, in large part, a purposeful manipulation of the items. During Study 1 it became clear that if all the items were ‘good things my teacher does’ the children got bored very quickly and stopped paying attention, so a mix of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ items were included.

The large gap in the map splitting the two ends of the first dimension could indicate one of two things. First, that there are missing items from the deck of item statements, which is possible, and further research could be undertaken to try to fill in some more items along this continuum. A consideration here is that, due to the intent to use these items as a measurement tool one day, the statements were purposefully manipulated to include both negative and positive items. When the map is spun on its end, with the two ends overlain over each other, see Figure 15, there are fewer gaps in the data – this is probably a more useful way of considering if there are items missing. It is not necessary to have each aspect of a concept represented by both a ‘desirable’ and ‘undesirable’ item, as long as the concept is included. Further analysis of the items, where just the ‘desirable’ items were considered, bears out a similar structure to what was found with both ends included. However, the gains to the map would need to be carefully weighed against the actual gains to the model and considerations of time and whether it is actually likely to provide any new data.

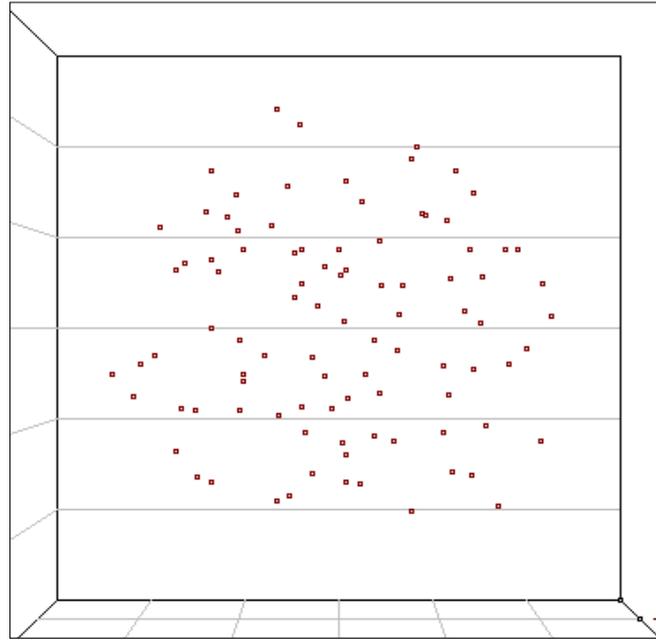


Figure 15 Looking down the Dimension 1 axis

The second possible explanation for the large gap in the middle of the Teacher Affect Dimension is that it is possible, and likely given the age of participants that this dimension is quite polarised. Children in this age group can see things as quite ‘black and white’ (Muuss, 1996), or in this case, ‘good or bad’. This is their perception of a teacher’s ability, rather than the actual effect a teacher’s behaviour may or may not have on a classroom.

To try to avoid judgements being placed on a particular behaviour, outside of a particular context, it has been decided to call Dimension 1 “Teacher Affect” with “Disagreeable” as the name for the more “undesirable” end of the continuum and “Agreeable” as the name for the more “desirable end”.

Referring back to the themes from the focus groups, the dimension of Teacher Affect features many of the behaviour management items.

### *Dimension 2 – Teacher Expectations and Style*

Again the split along Dimension 2 seems quite clear. One end of the dimension focuses on the expectations of the academic work done in a classroom and how the

classroom is managed, while the other end focuses on the expectations of the interpersonal, or 'social skills' work done in a classroom. This means that an appropriate name for Dimension 2 is Teacher Expectations and Style.

It is worth noting, that when reviewing the dendrogram after considering this second dimension from the mapping, that some of the clusters reflect the same distinction that the Teacher Expectation dimension does. Consider Clusters G and H, these appear to be the same concept, with the difference being academics in Cluster H and more interpersonal issues in Cluster G.

The Teacher Expectations Dimension demonstrates well what is meant by the original model proposed, see Figure 16. The difference between each end of this dimension is the difference between the sections of the model. Students can see that teachers have multiple roles within a classroom. More than just teaching the curriculum and keeping everyone behaving appropriately, students can see that teachers also guide the interpersonal interactions within the class. The items suggested by the students could be useful in shaping teacher training in these areas.

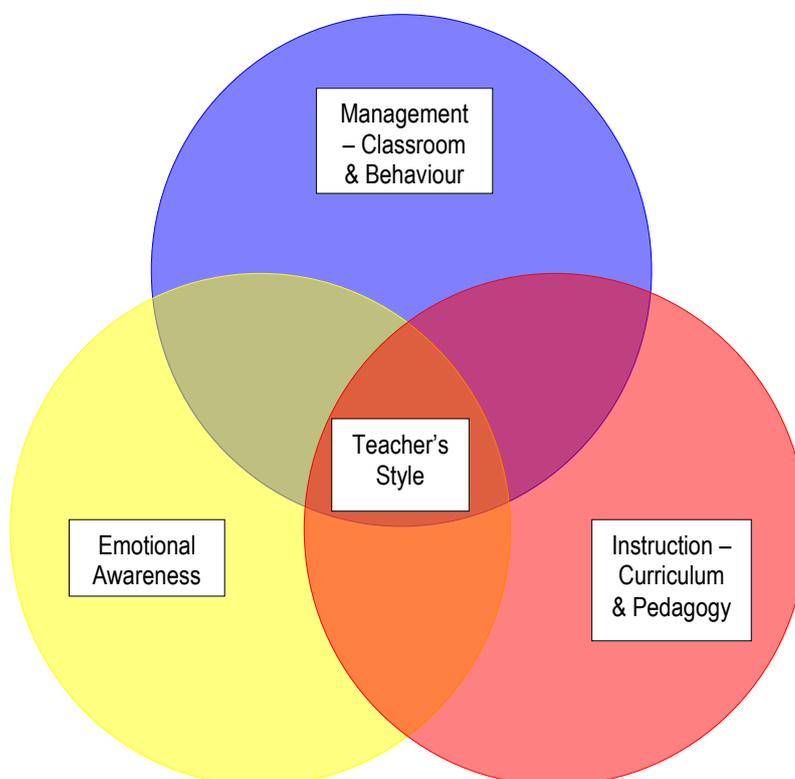


Figure 16 Model of aspects of a teacher's responsibility

Referring back to the themes from the Study 2 focus groups, the Teacher Expectations Dimension encompasses the themes Interpersonal Knowledge and Intimacy and Good at Teaching.

### *Dimension 3 – Classroom Dynamics*

This dimension would most likely have not been discovered, if analysis had stopped after completing the HCA. Referring back to the GOPAN phase of data gathering, there were no groups in the raw data that had items for both ends of the Classroom Dynamics dimension, as might be expected as this was the third level of processing – thus it is harder to see the links without the model.

Of particular interest is the inter-relationship between how a teacher is in a classroom and how the students are in a classroom, and how both teacher and students affect the Classroom Dynamics. This dimension suggests that the teacher has influence over the children's behaviour and vice versa. It might be possible to further investigate this relationship, actively changing a teacher's behaviour and mood and measuring the effect on the students.

Referring back to the themes from the focus groups, the Classroom Dynamics dimension relates well to the Classroom Feel theme.

## **Limitations**

### ***Study 1 – Testing Methods***

#### *Selection*

Due to the necessary ethical and practical selection issues, the sample selected here was not random, but was diverse.

## ***Study 2 – Item Development***

### *Consent Process*

As expected, the ethics requirement to obtain active consent from both the parents and children greatly affected the participant rate in Study 2 of this project. Written consent from parents lowers response rates for school based research between 40% and 67% (Esbensen, Deschenes, Vogel, West, Arboit, & Harris, 1996) Other research in the larger project, including one where children filled in a questionnaire, only required passive consent, and had close to 100% participation rate, this helped to ensure diversity of possible responses. This research however, required five separate pieces of paper go home to parents and two completed forms had to be returned to either the school or could be mailed to the university. During Study 1, a school principal specified that the Parent Packs and Student Packs should go home separately as it would "...scare the parents off." This approach was taken throughout the project, with a class meeting being held with the researcher prior to the student packs going home. This active consent process had a 48% non-response rate.

Upon further analysis, when comparing Socio-Economic Status (S.E.S.) response rates, the average response rate for the lower decile band was 46% and the average response rate for the upper decile band was 66%. This, almost 20% difference, reflects previous findings (Esbensen, Miller, Taylor, He, & Freng, 1999) on demographic differences in response rates, and therefore participation in research. In this research each class was treated as its own data set, so higher numbers of participants in the higher decile classes should not have directly affected data collected here, however one wonders if the S.E.S. differences found between classes would also be found within classes. That is, was it the higher S.E.S. parents from each class who returned the forms, therefore limiting the voice of lower S.E.S. students within each interview?

### *Subjectivity*

Even though several tactics were used to reduce the subjectivity of Study 2, including inter-rater assessment of transcripts for possible items, ongoing interview technique training and having a different interviewer for some of the interviews,

future research could be done by a different researcher or with a different student pool to compare gathered item statements. An interesting investigation could compare the responses of a large multi-cultural inner-city student pool with the Manawatu's student pool, done here, who are largely bi-cultural and semi-rural.

### ***Study 3 – Structural Analysis***

#### *Time Taken*

The large number of item statements used in Study 3 of this project meant that participants took between 45 minutes to two hours to complete the task, depending on the participants ease with making judgements. If more participants had been available at the time of the data gathering (Christmas Break), the item deck could have been split, therefore almost halving the amount of time required by each participant and, ironically, probably increasing the number of willing participants. Future research could easily cut the number of items used, after careful analysis of the dendrogram produced by this research, to make the task easier for participants, and therefore find more willing participants. The advantage of this would be to gather more data in specific demographic groups to more thoroughly compare female with male responses, or expert sorters with lay sorters.

## **Conclusion**

This research shows that when given a chance to talk about their experiences in classrooms, children have something valuable to say.

The dimensions found using the GOPAN process, could be potentially very useful when structuring schools. Dimension 1 was most likely a result of the data manipulation and mirrored the original behaviour management theme from the interviews, the other two dimensions were more illuminating. Children can see two distinct areas to teachers' expectations; academic and interpersonal. This could be more explicitly considered when planning classroom programmes, and links back to the original model proposed at the start of this research. Students can also see that both the teacher and the students' influence are linked, to develop the feel of a room.

Whether the students respond to the teacher or the teacher responds to the students is not clear from this research, however other research (Andersen, 2003) suggest that the students are reacting to the teacher as they respond differently to different teachers.

This study has found what students value in a classroom, what they will remember about school, and what affects them and their learning. How a child feels about themselves and their ability to learn, affects their ability to not only achieve at school, but also to socialise and function in the real world.

## Postscript

Often times in the helping and caring professions, the end results of what one does are seldom seen. Professionals have to act in faith that they are doing the best by those they tend. Teaching is no different.

The teachers I have spoken with anecdotally throughout the course of this research see knowing their students as a necessary precursor to being able to teach and manage their students with best effect. This research has surprised several experienced teachers, in that these primary school children are much more aware of what is going on around them than expected and are more able to talk about it than they had assumed. The overall feeling from the students I interviewed was that these emotionally competent teachers, in comparison to others, actually enjoyed working with children, an interesting observation from children. How terrible must it feel if you believe that your teacher does not enjoy spending time with you.

I was never more convinced of the value in talking to students about the effect a teacher could have on a student's self-concept than during one of my Study 1 focus groups when I was determining the best way of gathering statements from children. I was speaking with a group of nine year olds, at a school much like the one my Dad had taught in. There was one boy, a self-confessed 'trouble-maker' who physically and metaphorically began to shrink in on himself the more he talked about how he felt about his teacher. At the start of the interview during the warm up games he was bright and bubbly with a sparkle in his eye. But when the conversation turned to how he learnt things from his teacher and he started to imitate the way his teacher spoke to him and the colour and life drained from this boy as he started to curl up in his seat. Unfortunately, during all three interviews done with this class, similar stories were told by a range of children, including the self proclaimed "goody goods". What was truly amazing to me though, was the students' ability to see the good in this teacher. These nine year olds were able to differentiate out good days from bad and give plausible reasons for the differences. They could see and articulate much more than many would give them credit for. My hope is that research like this enables enhanced teacher training, so teachers obtain a better understanding of the emotional climate they set for their classrooms.



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## ***Appendix A - Nomination Form with Selection Criteria***

### **EMOTIONAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE SCHOOL CLASSROOM— DEVELOPMENT PHASE**

#### **GREETINGS!**

Naumai, haeremai. Nga mihi nui ki a koe

#### **SEEKING NOMINATIONS**

#### ***What is this project about?***

Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand and manage one's feelings, as well as to understand how other people feel. Children who have difficulty recognising their own emotions and the feelings of others are likely to engage in undesirable behaviour, such as bullying, getting angry and frustrated easily, and challenging authority.

Children mostly develop emotional competence at home, with parents, family, and whanau. But they also learn a lot about feelings at school, in interaction with peers, but especially in their relationship with teachers. The way teachers create a classroom atmosphere that influences children's feelings about themselves and understanding of their feelings is called **the emotional climate of the classroom**.

Every educator knows the importance of a positive emotional climate or atmosphere in school classrooms. We know it when we see it! But how can we define it more clearly, measure it, and teach it to others? And does changing the classroom climate really improve the social and emotional behaviour of children? These are the essential questions we are asking in our research.

#### ***Project overview***

This proposed research is part of a larger three-year research project aimed at examining which everyday teacher behaviours influence students' emotional competence, to what extent, and with what social benefits. With lots of cooperation from many teachers, we have already carried out some interesting work in schools in the Manawatu in which we asked teachers and pupils to give us examples of ways that teachers help children manage their emotions and deal with their feelings.

Our next task is to define these areas of teacher behaviour more carefully. This will be done by observing interactions in classrooms and improving an initial coding system we have been developing for capturing some of the most revealing interactions. We intend to start the research in primary schools, working with Years 4-8 approximately.

- **Year 1:** The aim of studies undertaken in the first year involves gaining an understanding of the classroom emotional climate. Our team has identified five categories of teacher interaction style for an innovative model of classroom emotional climate that needs empirical and cultural validation. The aim of this particular study is to generate examples from “Master” teachers about their approach and response to emotions and emotional situations. These examples will enable us to develop a library of video examples and useful practice approaches. In this current study, teachers identified as having a warm, sensitive teaching style will participate in classroom observations involving video sampling. Teachers will critique their video samples and provide background to their responses. The eventual aim of this information and material is to incorporate understandings derived from teacher feedback and video examples into an intervention for teachers, using video sampling of positive emotional interactions arranged as modules on an interactive DVD.
- **Year 2:** The second year will investigate whether the emotional interactions of teachers’ can be modified. We are also hoping to capture certain critical incidents on video recordings and show these to other teachers. By giving teachers insight into the exact interactions that seem to be especially beneficial for children’s emotional intelligence, we hope see whether this changes the emotional climate of the classroom. These segments are for feedback purposes to the classroom teacher only. If any interactions appear useful for training teachers, we will ask permission of all involved in the video segment to use it.
- **Year 3:** The final question, which we will explore in the third year of the project, is really the million dollar issue: if the atmosphere of a classroom can be made warmer, will this actually have a beneficial effect on the pupils—reduce bullying and aggression, improve peer interactions, and increase children’s emotional intelligence. The aim of the third year is to measure the impact changes in the emotional climate has on students’ emotional intelligence and bullying.

***Why am I contacting you?***

We need recommendations, support, advice, and guidance from professionals in the educational sector to help us identify teachers who fit the following criteria:

- being emotionally aware and sensitive to the needs of students (empathetic),
- being able to connect well and build relationships with students (e.g., children want to hang around them),
- being able to interact with students in a calming manner
- affirming of students,
- showing each child they are valued,
- emotionally coaching students to show appropriate emotional and social behaviours,
- empowering their students,
- successfully engaging their students,
- providing high quality caring and learning in the classroom,
- providing emotional and mental support,
- believing in students' ability to succeed,
- students being able to calm down emotionally and get on with their work,
- minimal number of disruptions,
- holding a positive attitude towards teaching, i.e., they like their job and like students
- providing stimulating but stable structure

Nominating teachers does not mean you are obliged to take part in this research. However, if a teacher from your school is given strong nominations, we will make contact with you to discuss this research further. If a decision is made to collaborate, we will seek consent from all involved (i.e., nominated teacher, parents of students of nominated teacher, assent from students, principal, and board of trustees).

***How are we funded to do this research?***

Our project on the emotional climate of the school classroom is funded by a grant from the Marsden Fund, the New Zealand government's fund for basic research. The grant was awarded to a team of psychologists at Massey University (Palmerston North) for 3 years (2007-2009) but possibly longer if the work looks promising.

### ***Who are we?***

The research team for this project is made up of four key professionals. In alphabetical order:

**Professor Ian Evans** is Head of the School of Psychology at Massey University, based in Wellington. He has worked with schools on many different projects, such as reducing drop out, inclusion of children with disabilities, and managing challenging behaviour.



**Dr Shane Harvey** is a clinical psychologist and Director of the Psychology Clinic at Massey University, Palmerston North. He has worked as a psychologist for GSE, in which role he consulted extensively with schools in the central North Island. He also has had experience in children's mental health services and in the prevention and treatment of child sexual abuse. Shane examined emotional climate issues for his doctoral research.



**Dr Averil Herbert** (Ngati Maniapoto, Ngati Paretekawa) is a Senior Lecturer (part-time) at the University of Waikato and has been a Maori counsellor at Waiariki Institute of Technology in Rotorua, where she lives. A leading clinical psychologist in New Zealand, with very wide experiences in social welfare, much of Averil's recent work has been on Maori-centred approaches to child rearing and parent training.



**Dr Juliana Raskauskas** trained as an Educational Psychologist at the University of California, Davis and is currently a lecturer in the college of Education at Massey University, Palmerston North. Her major research interests are in the effects of bullying on children in schools and she is one of New Zealand's leading authorities on problems relating to bullying.



In addition, we are involving a number of post-graduate students in our research, and we are keen to add to our research team teachers and others interested in children and education.

Thank you for your interest, ka kite ano

Ian, Shane, Averil, and Juli

*Shane's contact details:*  
*Phone: 06 356 9099 extn 7171*  
*Email: [s.t.harvey@massey.ac.nz](mailto:s.t.harvey@massey.ac.nz)*

**I nominate the following teacher(s) whom I believe fit the following criteria:**

- are emotionally aware and sensitive to the needs of students (empathetic),
- are able to connect well and build relationships with students (e.g., children want to hang around them),
- are able to interact with students in a calming manner
- are affirming of students,
- show each child they are valued,
- emotionally coach students to show appropriate emotional and social behaviours,
- empower their students,
- successfully engage their students,
- provide high quality caring and learning in the classroom,
- provide emotional and mental support,
- believe in students' ability to succeed,
- students are able to calm down emotionally and get on with their work,
- have minimal number of disruptions,
- hold a positive attitude towards teaching, i.e., they like their job and like students
- provide stimulating but stable structure

<b>Nominations</b>	
Profession of nominator (please circle):	
Principal	Deputy Principal
RTLB	GSE
other	
Name of Teacher	Teacher's School
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

Please place this in the self-addressed envelope provided.

***Thank you***



## **Appendix B - Question List for Focus Groups**

### **Class 1**

*G1*

What do you think your teacher likes about their job?

How easy is it to relax around your teacher?

*G2*

What do you think your teacher likes about their job?

Is your teacher always fair?

How easy is it to relax around your teacher?

If you are upset about something would you tell your teacher?

### **Class 2**

*G1*

How can you tell if your teacher likes you?

My teacher helps me get on with my friends by ...

If your class is too noisy what does your teacher do?

*G2*

What does your teacher do to help you behave well?

### **Class 3**

*G1*

What do you think your teacher likes about their job?

How easy is it to relax around your teacher (comfortable)?

Is your teacher always fair?

Do you feel like your teacher is concerned about you?

What makes a good teacher?

What's the best thing about a school?

*G2*

What do you think your teacher likes about their job?

My teacher makes me feel good when ...

I learn best when ...

Do you think your teacher is concerned about you?

What 1 quality would you like in a teacher?

What 1 quality would you like in a school?

*G3*

Does your teacher understand what's going on for you?

What does your teacher do when people get upset?

How can you tell if your teacher likes you?

Do you feel safe in your classroom?

#### **Class 4**

*G1*

I learn best when ...

If you were having a bad day would your teacher know?

I know my teacher is having a good day when...

How easy is it to relax around your teacher?

*G2*

If you were having a bad day would your teacher know?

What do you think your teacher likes about their job?

Do you feel that your teacher is concerned about you?

What's important to your teacher?

#### **Class 5**

*G1*

If you are upset what will your teacher do?

What makes your teacher good at teaching?

What's important to your teacher?

If your class is too loud what does your teacher do?

*G2*

If you are upset what will your teacher do?

When does your teacher talk about how people feel?

What's important to your teacher?

What does your teacher do if someone is crying?

I feel happy when my teacher...

### **Class 6 – Key Terms**

*G1*

Working together

*G2*

Being a good friend (good, tricky, what it looks like)

Guilt

Expectations (good things, tricky, definition, what are they, what if you don't)



## **Appendix C - Study 2 – Parent and Child Consent pack**

### *The Emotional Environment of the School Classroom: Students' Perceptions of Teacher Behaviours*

Kia Ora

#### **Parent Information Letter**

#### **I am interested in speaking with your child**

Your child is invited to be part of my research. My name is Rachel Andersen and I want to find out how teachers help children learn. I want to know what teachers do in their classrooms to make their classroom a happy place. I would like to speak with a few small groups of students during school time, to gain some insight into the aspects of teacher strategy they can see and language they use to describe these aspects. I would like for your child to be one of these students.

#### ***What do I need you to do?***

Enclosed in this pack you will find:

1. A Parent Information Booklet – Please **read this** and if you have any questions, contact one of the researchers.
2. A Parent Consent Form - Please **sign this and return it** in the envelope provided if you are happy for your child to participate.

***Please note: this particular consent form needs to be completed and returned for your child to participate.***

In a few days I will meet with the class, discuss the research with them and hand out Student Consent Forms. Your child needs to read through their information sheet with you and then sign their Consent Form, if they want to participate.

***Both consent forms (parent and child) need to be completed and returned to us within 2 weeks for your child to be able to participate.***

Thanks for your help,  
Rachel

#### **Contact details**

##### **Rachel**

[Rachel.Anderson.8@uni.massey.ac.nz](mailto:Rachel.Anderson.8@uni.massey.ac.nz)  
021 538565

##### **Shane**

s.t.harvey@massey.ac.nz  
3569099 ext 7171

##### **Ian**

i.m.evans@massey.ac.nz  
06 3569099 ext 2070

## The Emotional Environment of the School Classroom: *Students' Perceptions of Teacher Behaviours*

### Parent Information Booklet

#### ***What is this research about?***

I want to find out what students think teachers do to make their classrooms safe and happy places where children learn best. I would like to carry out several 30 minute small group interviews with children in your child's class. Your child is invited to be in one of these groups.

#### ***What is the main aim of this research?***

This research is looking at ideas and language to include in a new assessment tool to help identify teacher strengths.

#### ***What will happen?***

I will collect groups of students (those who have returned both consent sheets), 4 at a time, during school time and take them to a quiet space at school, conduct the interview, and then return the students to class. That is where participation in this part of the research will end.

#### ***What will happen in the small group interviews?***

I will start by talking to the students, both individually and as a group, about several topics I am required to by Massey University's Human Ethics Committee, including confidentiality (they are not to share what other students say, and that I will not tell anyone what they say unless I think that one of my supervisors needs to know), voluntary participation (they are free to leave at any stage of the interview process) and ask if they have any questions.

Then we will play a game which asks questions about good things their teacher does that helps them feel happy and safe and learn well. Examples of the types of questions to be asked are:

"I feel happy when my teacher . . ."

"Do you think your teacher is proud of your class?"

"My teacher helps me learn by . . ."

#### ***Will the game be recorded?***

The interview will be recorded, but student details will not be stored with the recordings and there will be nothing reported that will identify your child or their school at any stage. The recordings will be held securely at Massey University until such a time when they will be destroyed. The only people who will see the tapes are members of my research team at Massey University, for the purposes of analysing the interviews. The tapes will not be used for any other purposes.

***Who is on the research team?***

Directly involved with this part of the research is Rachel Andersen. I am currently working on my Masters thesis in Psychology at Massey University. I earned my undergraduate degree with a double major in psychology and education. While I was studying I worked as a teacher aide in a variety of primary school classrooms. I have also worked as a youth worker, an educator at top visitor attractions, and volunteered for many years as a youth leader and Girls' Brigade leader. I am passionate about helping children become the best people they can be and I know that the environment they are in each day can effect them.



**Rachel Andersen**  
Psychology student  
Massey University

I am really excited to be part of a larger project, "The Emotional Environment of the School Classroom". The project leaders are excellent researchers and practitioners. The supervisors for my research are 2 of the team's leaders:

**Professor Ian Evans** has worked with primary schools on many different projects, such as inclusion of children with disabilities and reducing student drop-out.

**Dr Shane Harvey** has worked as a psychologist for Group Special Education. He also has had experience in children's mental health services.

***Why your child?***

Your child's teacher has agreed to help us with our research.

The groups will have about 4 students in each, and I will talk to several groups from your child's class. I am hoping to talk to students from 6 different classes altogether, from a variety of schools.

***Why have I chosen to do the research this way?***

I have chosen to use groups because experience has taught us that the children will feel more comfortable this way. I am speaking to 6 classes altogether because experience has taught us that there is very little new information after that many groups, but we will still be able to ensure a diverse range of students.

***Are there any risks for my child if they participate?***

I hope that by making the small group interviews into a game students will enjoy participating. Even though, there is still a small chance that some students might become frustrated or anxious about the questions. I am doing everything I can to make sure this doesn't happen, including speaking with students as part of a group, and making the conversation into a game. At any time they are welcome to leave if they would like.

***How much class time will each student miss?***

Your child will miss about 40 minutes of class time while they are helping me. I have tried to make this as short as possible, and I will work with the class teacher to try and find times that will best suit the students.

***Will I be able to find out what my child says?***

At the end of the research I will be producing a Masters Thesis which will be accessible to the public and I hope to publish some of my findings. If you are interested in having access to what I write please let me know and I will arrange that for you. Also, we intend to return to the class at a later date to share some general findings. You will be welcome at this meeting. To protect the students' confidentiality, specific feedback will not be made available to anyone at any stage.

***How are we funded to do this research?***

Our larger project on the emotional climate of the school classroom is funded by a grant from the Marsden Fund, the New Zealand government's fund for basic research. The grant was awarded to a team of psychologists at Massey University (Palmerston North) for 3 years or longer.

***Participants' Rights***

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation for your child. If you decide to help us, you and your child have the right to:

Decline to answer any particular question;

Withdraw from the research at any time;

Ask any questions about the research at any time;

Provide information on the understanding that your child's name will not be used;

Be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded

***Committee Approval Statement***

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, Application 07/14. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Professor John O'Neill, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8771, email [humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz).

***Thank you for your time.***

***I look forward to working with you and your child.***

*The Emotional Environment of the School Classroom:*  
***Students' Perceptions of Teacher Behaviours***

**Parent Consent Form**

**This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to the interview being video taped.

I agree to my child participating in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Child's Full

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

My relationship to the child (parent, legal guardian) \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Full Name -  
printed** \_\_\_\_\_

## The Emotional Environment of the School Classroom: *Student Perceptions of Teacher Behaviours*

### Student Information Sheet

Tena Koe

Hi,

My name is Rachel Andersen and, as part of my university studies, I want to find out how teachers help children learn. I know what teachers do in their classrooms to make their classroom a happy place.



**Rachel Andersen**  
Massey University Student

I would like you to be part of a small group of children from your class. I will ask you questions about what you like about your classroom and the good things your teacher does.

I will be listening to the words you use and how you say things. I will be recording the conversation, but only because I'm not very quick at taking notes. No one at your school will ever get to hear this recording. I will not be writing down your name so no-one can ask me what *you* said. I expect that you won't tell other people what other group members say. This is called a confidential conversation and it helps people say the things they really want to say.

If you are OK with me asking you questions please talk to your parents and then read and sign the consent form and return it in the envelope I've included.

Thank you for reading this,  
Kia ora

*Rachel*

#### **If you have any questions please ask.**

**Rachel**

[Rachel.Anderson.8@uni.massey.ac.nz](mailto:Rachel.Anderson.8@uni.massey.ac.nz)  
021 538565

**Shane**

[s.t.harvey@massey.ac.nz](mailto:s.t.harvey@massey.ac.nz)  
3569099 ext 7171

**Ian**

[i.m.evans@massey.ac.nz](mailto:i.m.evans@massey.ac.nz)  
06 3569099 ext 2070

#### **Committee Approval Statement**

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, Application 07/14 . If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Professor John O ' Neill, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8771, email [humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz).

**The Emotional Environment of the School Classroom:  
Student Perceptions of Teacher Behaviours**

**Student Consent Form**

My name is:

\_\_\_\_\_

*(please write your first and last names here)*

I understand that:

*(please tick all these boxes)*

- I am helping Rachel with her research for university
- If I change my mind or don't like being in the group I can ask to leave
- I won't tell anyone what someone else said
- I can ask to speak with Rachel on my own before or after the game
- Rachel will not use my name when she is writing up her research.
- Rachel will not tell my teacher what I said

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

(please write the date here)

(please sign your name

here)

***Please note:*** *this is not a legal document. Legally we need parental consent for a child to participate, this form is to ensure the child wants to participate; however, they can change their mind at any later stage*



## Appendix D – Study 2 School and Teacher Consent Pack

# The Emotional Environment of the School Classroom: Student Perceptions of Teacher Behaviours

Kia Ora

### School Information Sheet

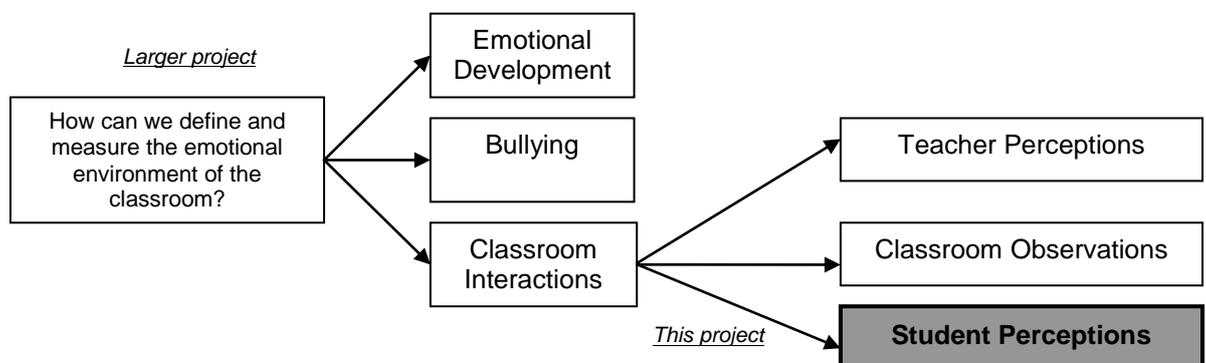
My name is Rachel Andersen and, for my MA thesis, I want to find out how teachers help children learn. Your school is invited to be a part of my research. I am interested in finding out what Primary School students think their classroom teacher does to influence the emotional climate in their classroom, to make their classroom a happy place. I would like to speak directly with a few small groups of students during school time, to gain some insight into the concepts they can see and language they use to describe these concepts.

#### *What is involved in this research?*

I need to examine the concepts and language Year 4-8 students use when talking about what their classroom teacher does that helps them feel safe and happy at school. I will hold 30 minute small group interviews with students from selected classes, usually in the form of a game, to identify what aspects of the classroom interactions help them feel happy and learn. Informed consent would need to come from the parents and students.

#### *What is this project about?*

This project is part of a larger 3 year research process. This information sheet is only asking for your cooperation with this phase of the *student perceptions* project. How this project fits into the first year of the larger project is outlined below.



***What do I need from your school?***

1. I would require your help with the informed consent process. I will need to distribute information packs to parents of the selected classroom. I will provide all the forms and envelopes, but as I will not have access to the address database, I will need co-operation from the school to distribute the forms to parents. An added accompanying cover letter from the teacher or principal would be ideal.
2. If you think it is appropriate, I may also need to set up an opportunity for the parents to meet with me. This would need to take place on school property, prior to a class meeting with me to discuss the research with the students.
3. The interviews I will conduct will be during school time on school property. I will need your help with scheduling the interviews and providing a suitable location. I need a quiet room where a small group could operate.

***What happens now?***

After selection of a classroom, and support from the school and teacher has been gained, I will provide your school with the necessary informed consent packs for parents. There will be a meeting with the selected class, me and the class teacher, to talk about the research and procedure.

Two weeks later, after consent forms have been returned, at a suitable time, I will come and collect the first group of students (about 4 at a time) and take them to the prearranged room on school property. The children will sit quietly and read a book they've brought with them while I chat 1-by-1 with the students to ensure they understand why they are there and what will happen. After a brief ice-breaker the group interview will start. At the end of the interview I will once again speak individually with the students to make sure they are happy and to answer any questions. I will then escort the group back to class. I will need to do two or three groups of students from the same class.

Once all the interviews are complete there will be an opportunity for general feedback. I will meet with any teachers, students and parents who are interested, to discuss the general findings.

***Then what?***

Once all the data has been collected a measure will be designed using the concepts and language from the children. The intention is that the measure will be able to be used by students and will create a profile of the emotional strengths in a particular classroom.

***Who am I?***

The researcher directly involved in the Student Perceptions phase is **Rachel Andersen**. I am currently working on my Masters thesis in Psychology at Massey University. I earned my undergraduate Bachelors' degree with a double major in psychology and education. While studying, I worked as a teacher aide in a variety of primary school classrooms. I have also worked as a youth worker, a child educator at top visitor attractions, and volunteered for many years as a youth leader and Girls' Brigade leader.



**Rachel Andersen**  
Postgraduate Psychology Student  
Massey University

Because I am a student researcher, I am supervised by two of the larger project's leaders:

**Professor Ian Evans** has worked with primary schools on many different projects, such as reducing student drop-out, inclusion of children with disabilities, and managing challenging behaviour.

**Dr Shane Harvey** has worked as a psychologist for Group Special Education, where he consulted extensively with schools in the central North Island. He also has had experience in children's mental health services.

***How are we funded to do this research?***

Our project on the emotional climate of the school classroom is funded by a grant from the Marsden Fund, the New Zealand government's fund for basic research. The grant was awarded to a team of psychologists at Massey University (Palmerston North) for 3 years or longer.

Thank you for sharing our interest in this project,  
Kia ora

**Contact details**

**Rachel**

Rachel.Anderson.8@uni.massey.ac.nz  
021 538565

**Shane**

s.t.harvey@massey.ac.nz  
3569099 ext 7171

**Ian**

i.m.evans@massey.ac.nz  
06 3569099 ext 2070

**Committee Approval Statement**

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, Application 07/14. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Professor John O'Neill, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8771, email humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz.

**The Emotional Environment of the School Classroom:  
*Student Perceptions of Teacher Behaviours***

**School Agreement**

If you are happy to support us with this research please fill in this form

I \_\_\_\_\_, acting

on behalf of the management at

\_\_\_\_\_, have been fully appraised of the intended research The Emotional Environment of the School Classroom: Student Perceptions of Teacher Behaviours. I am fully aware that a researcher from Massey University will be speaking privately to small groups of children during school time and on school property. This has my approval and facilities will be made available as needed.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **The Emotional Environment of the School Classroom: *Student Perceptions of Teacher Behaviours***

Kia Ora

### **Teacher Information Sheet**

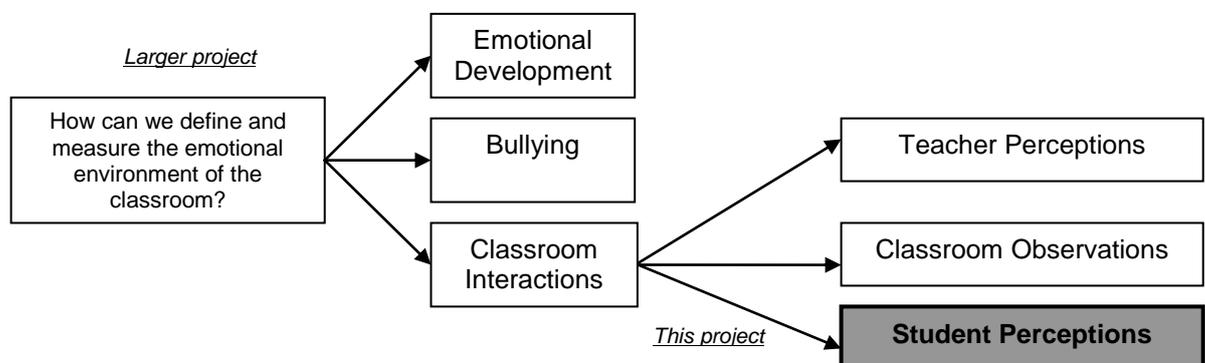
My name is Rachel Andersen and, for my MA thesis, I want to find out how teachers help children learn. Your class is invited to be a part of my research because your class has been identified as one where children work well in a safe environment and it fits the selection criteria in regards demographics. I am interested in finding out what Primary School students think their classroom teacher does to influence the emotional climate in their classroom, to make their classroom a happy place. I would like to speak directly with a few small groups of students during school time, to gain some insight into the concepts they can see and language they use to describe these concepts.

#### ***What is involved in this research?***

I need to examine the concepts and language Year 4-8 students use when talking about what their classroom teacher does that helps them feel safe and happy at school. I will hold 30 minute small group interviews with students from selected classes, usually in the form of a game, to identify what aspects of the classroom interactions help them feel happy and learn. Informed consent would need to come from the parents and students.

#### ***What is this project about?***

This project is part of a larger 3 year research process. This information sheet is only asking for your cooperation with this phase of the *student perceptions* phase. How this project fits into the first year of the larger project is outlined below.



***What do I need from you?***

1. I would require your help with the informed consent process. I will need to distribute information packs to parents of your classroom.
2. I would also need to set up an opportunity for me to meet the class, to explain the process and answer any questions they may have. It is intended that this will only take up to 30 minutes. Ideally, this would happen either first or last thing one day so parents can attend if they wish.
3. The interviews I will conduct will be during school time on school property. I will need your help with scheduling the interviews and providing a suitable location. I need a quiet room where a small group could operate.

***What happens now?***

After selection of a classroom, and support from the school and teacher has been gained, I will provide your school with the necessary informed consent packs to be distributed to parents. There will be a class meeting with me and you present.

Two weeks later, after the consent forms have been returned, at a suitable time, I will come and collect the first group of students (about 4 at a time) and take them to the prearranged room on school property. The children will sit quietly and read a book they've brought with them while I chat 1-by-1 with the students to ensure they understand why they are there and what will happen. After a brief ice-breaker the group interview will start. At the end of the interview I will once again speak individually with the students to make sure they are happy and to answer any questions. I will then escort the group back to class. I will need to do 2 or 3 groups of students from your class over 2 days. Before the last interview, it would be helpful if we could chat briefly, to help put into context some of the things the children are saying.

Once all the interviews are complete there will be an opportunity for general feedback. I will meet with any teachers, students and parents who are interested, to discuss the general findings.

***Then what?***

Once all the data has been collected a measure will be designed using the concepts and language from the children. The intention is that the measure will be able to be used by students and will create a profile of the emotional strengths in a particular classroom.

***Who am I?***

The researcher directly involved in the Student Perceptions phase is **Rachel Andersen**. I am currently working on my Masters thesis in Psychology at Massey University. I earned my undergraduate Bachelors' degree with a double major in psychology and education. While studying, I worked as a teacher aide in a variety of primary school classrooms. I have also worked as a youth worker, a child educator at top



**Rachel Andersen**  
Postgraduate Psychology Student  
Massey University

visitor attractions, and volunteered for many years as a youth leader and Girls' Brigade leader.

Because I am a student researcher, I am supervised by two of the larger project's leaders:

**Professor Ian Evans** has worked with primary schools on many different projects, such as reducing student drop-out, inclusion of children with disabilities, and managing challenging behaviour.

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Thank you for sharing our interest in this project,  
Kia ora

**Contact details**

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This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, Application 07/14. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Professor John O'Neill, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8771, email humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz.



## **Appendix E - Complete list of Items from Focus Groups**

Numbered items included in final deck

### **Openness / Behavioural Expectations**

My teacher is strict

Our teacher gets grumpy at people

24. Our teacher talks to us about values and what's right and wrong

Our teacher gets angry with us

12. Our teacher tells us how they expect us to behave

I know how my teacher expects me to behave

62. Our teacher explains the reasons for their decisions

85. My teacher takes bullying seriously

16. Our teacher gets sad or upset if we don't listen

54. Our teacher tells us when they are getting upset with us

63. Our teacher is hard on us

65. My teacher thinks everyone in our class is good.

### **Behaviour Management Techniques -Punishments**

9. If we get in trouble we know what we've done wrong

1. My teacher growls

My teacher yells

2. Our teacher yells at us

My teacher shouts

My teacher takes their bad moods out on us

Our teacher gets grumpy at one person and then everyone is in trouble

My teacher gives us warnings before we get in trouble

We get warnings before we get told off

10. If someone is being naughty they'll get a warning before they get in trouble

5. We get told off lots

11. Our teacher tells us how bad we've been

I know what my teacher will do if I do something wrong

14. Our teacher only tells off kids who have done something wrong

Our whole class will get told off, even if it's not all our fault

17. Our teacher gets sad or upset when growling at us

### **Behaviour Management Techniques - Rewards / Fun**

my teacher gives out awards

67. We get rewarded for being good

44. Our teacher will tell us if we've done well

My teacher praises me when I get my work right

My teacher praises me when I've done the right thing

66. We get free time

We get treats from our teacher

68. My teacher takes us out for games

My teacher does fun stuff with us

Our teacher helps us have fun

Our teacher is humorous

46. My teacher makes me laugh

48. Our teacher wants us to have fun at school

We get to play games

We sing fun songs in class

### **Fairness**

My teacher treats us all the same

My teacher is fair

My teacher doesn't work with some kids as much as others

21. My teacher has favourites

My teacher picks the same kids a lot

23. Our teacher treats us all fairly

4. If I don't understand, my teacher gets angry at me

82. The class rules are fair

My teacher has time for all of us

13. Our teacher tells us all off even if we weren't all being naughty

18. If our teacher is having a bad day, we get in trouble

15. My teacher tells off the wrong people

55. My teacher tells us if they are having a good or bad day

### **Problems with Teacher / Teacher Sensitivity**

78. My teacher needs to treat me nicer  
Our teacher can tell if we are upset
92. My teacher needs more training  
Our teacher can tell if someone is having a bad day
77. I think my teacher needs to be different in some way
89. My teacher calls kids mean names  
My teacher listens to me  
People get bullied in my class
80. The class rules are hard to follow
38. My teacher is too busy to help me

### **Resolving Problems – Trusting Relationships**

57. Our teacher tells us how to be nicer to each other  
My teacher helps us to sort out problems if we can't do it ourselves
25. My teacher helps us to sort out problems with our friends if we can't do it ourselves  
Our teacher will help us with our problems
26. Our teacher gives us advice  
Our teacher wants us to try and sort our problems with our friends for ourselves
87. If something is bugging me I have people to talk to in my class  
Our teacher gives us tips on how to be a good friend  
I have friends in my class  
My friends laugh at me when I am sad  
If people are hurt our teacher will help
71. If I'm upset, my teacher helps me feel better
19. If someone is upset, our teacher lets them go calm down
69. My teacher helps me to think before I act
70. If we have problems our teacher listens to us  
My teacher helps me when I ask for help  
Our teacher helps us to learn from our mistakes  
I have problems at school, either with my work or with other kids
29. I can talk to my teacher when I need to

30. If I'm nervous, my teacher encourages me
72. If we have a problem, our teacher talks to us about it
31. If I'm having a bad day my teacher will help
- My teacher helps us to calm down
- My teacher does stuff that will help me in the future
- I have bad days at school
- I get nervous at school
27. I'd tell my teacher if something was upsetting me

### **Affection / Rapport**

- My teacher likes me
- My teacher likes all of us
32. My teacher likes us all the time
- Our teacher likes all us kids
- My teacher cares about us
33. My teacher cares about us all
- My teacher cares about us all the time
- Our teacher tells us how much they like us
- My teacher likes spending time with us
34. My teacher cares how I feel
76. I'm glad my teacher is my teacher
35. My teacher is happy when we do well
- My teacher knows us children like them
- My teacher loves teaching me
36. Our teacher smiles at us when we get to school
- I like my teacher
7. I feel relaxed and comfortable around my teacher

### **Personal Knowledge**

- My teacher knows my family
49. My teacher knows about my family
28. Our teacher can tell if someone is upset
50. My teacher trusts me
- I know a lot about my teacher

51. I know what my teacher thinks is important

My teacher thinks it's fun to work with children

Our teacher is kind

My teacher works hard

53. My teacher knows who I can work well with

My teacher tells us how they are feeling

It's important to my teacher for us to be the best class in the school

My teacher thinks being quiet and sitting nicely is important

56. I know some things my teacher likes to do at the weekend

61. My teacher doesn't realise how other people are feeling

My teacher thinks using manners is important

### **Learning / Work**

22. My teacher knows what I find hard at school

79. My teacher is good at teaching me

My teacher makes learning fun

My teacher likes helping people learn

20. My teacher understands that we all learn in different ways

73. If our work is hard, our teacher likes to help us

86. I learn enough

Our teacher likes to help us with our work

My teacher helps me with my work

74. The work our teacher gives is too hard

75. I get nervous about my work

Our school work is boring

94. Our teacher tries to make our work interesting

Our teacher likes to help us with our work, but they don't always have time

Our school work is lots of boring written work

I do well at school

We can ask our teacher questions

47. We have fun learning activities

My teacher tells me to wait

42. My teacher puts too much pressure on us

We do the same things all the time

39. My teacher expects us to just get on with our work unless we're having a problem

Our teacher is happy when we achieve our goals

40. My teacher gives me work I can do well at

41. I achieve the goals my teacher sets

My teacher puts good pressure on us

My teacher puts bad pressure on us

43. My teacher gives me time to think

Our teacher will tell us if we've done a good job

45. Our teacher expects us to work hard

### **Class Atmosphere**

81. We have a nice classroom environment

Different cultures are valued in our class

83. It's OK to be different in our class

Our teacher thinks it's important that we all get on together

84. Students find it easy to fit into our class

88. People in my class laugh if someone gets embarrassed or sad

People in our class use put downs

Other kids call me mean names

90. We value other people's feelings in our class

We like working together

We work well in groups in our class

91. People are disruptive in class

My teacher listens to me

64. Our teacher is calm

58. Kids in my class get picked on

Our teacher is crabby

Our teacher is angry

93. Our teacher thinks that people in our class are bad

My teacher doesn't think anyone in our class is naughty

My teacher is easy to please

37. Our teacher makes us feel welcome

3. My teacher is grumpy

- 6. Children in my class listen to our teacher
- 8. We get to discuss things as a class
- 52. Our teacher is happy
- 59. We work well together in our class
- 60. People in my class are mean to me



## **Appendix F - Inter-rater Agreement Examples**

(Interviewer is in bold. Each new line is a different speaker)

### **What does being bullied generally look like?**

Someone fell over and hurt themselves or something

People calling you names, well someone calling you names or something

Yeah

### **So if someone pushes you**

Yeah

### **Or calls you a name**

Or something.

Yeah or she'll just say what about

Or N..... then constantly does it

Really really really busy

Then she sometimes teachers or sometimes teachers just say do it

back, and they don't ever, sometimes they don't even know

what they're saying

Like if you were meant to do it back

### **Yeah?**

Cos if you were a junior, and like, a big senior's bullying you

Yeah, and I

He's year six or whatever

And when you're only year one, you can't exactly do anything back to

them because like

Because you're too small

You just got to like push them, and like

And they'll just

They wouldn't like stumble back or anything.

They're not going to stumble, like you'll they're really strong like

Yeah

You're not as strong as them and you, you could like get really badly,

really hurt by them.

Because um, sometimes they say well you can't report on me, because I'm older than you.

**Mhm**

And yeah.

Because older people are being really mean sometimes.

And sometimes seeing you say that you can't report on me because I'm older, and you're a junior and stuff.

Yeah

I could see two possible item statements that could come from this section:

My teacher takes bullying seriously

My teacher will help me if I ask

whereas the other rater noted:

To deal with bullying, teacher recommends 'doing it back' without realising victim is smaller or younger

This was noted as two similar statements for the reliability score, as it came from the same part of the transcript and captured the same ideas; the difference is in the style of the notation. I had learnt during Study One that when the statements had negatives, for example 'My teacher doesn't take bullying seriously', confused the students when it came to deciding how much they saw it in their class as part of the Day Two activity, so the word 'not' was eliminated from statements as much as possible.

Items were scored as the same if the incident and the notation were the same, as in the following piece:

**What about if you get upset? Does she help you feel relaxed then?**

Ummm

Yuh.

Yes, she's like some people get upset, and she goes, like gives them a hug or like pats them or something

**mhmmm**

And we've got mediators

**You've got mediators? What does that mean?**

Um, it means that if there's a problem in the classroom, like people just sit there and argue, they can just come along and help us.

**Yep?**

Instead of the teachers always doing it?

OK

Yeah.

**Yeah?**

I haven't yet but when Mrs X.... um when she tries to help us, I feel it's like, it's almost like she's part of my family.

Both the rater and I noted two possible items here. I wrote:

"If we're upset, our teacher will give us a hug" and "My teacher is like part of my family"

and the rater wrote:

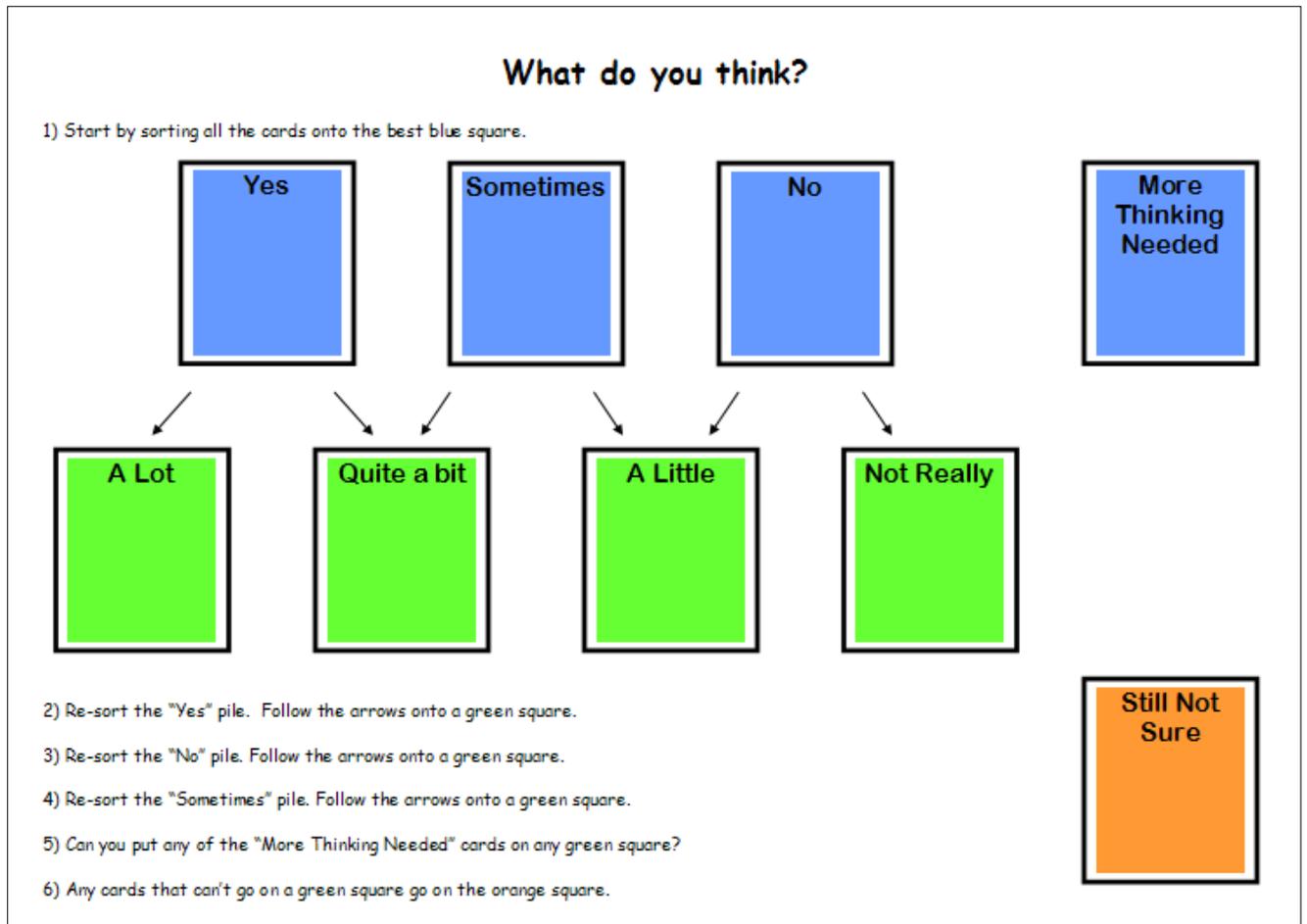
"teacher responds to children being upset with a hug or a pat" and "teacher is like part of my family"

These items were both scored as the same.



## Appendix G - Modified Children's Card Sort Decision Board

The board was A3 size and laminated





## ***Appendix H – Study 3 Item Statements***

1. My teacher growls
2. Our teacher yells at us
3. My teacher is grumpy
4. If I don't understand, my teacher gets angry at me
5. We get told off lots
6. Children in my class listen to our teacher
7. I feel relaxed and comfortable around my teacher
8. We get to discuss things as a class
9. If we get in trouble we know what we've done wrong
10. If someone is being naughty they'll get a warning before they get in trouble
11. Our teacher tells us how bad we've been
12. Our teacher tells us how they expect us to behave
13. Our teacher tells us all off even if we weren't all being naughty
14. Our teacher only tells off kids who have done something wrong
15. My teacher tells off the wrong people

16. Our teacher gets sad or upset if we don't listen
17. Our teacher gets sad or upset when growling at us
18. If our teacher is having a bad day, we get in trouble
19. If someone is upset, our teacher lets them go and calm down
20. My teacher understands that we all learn in different ways
21. My teacher has favourites
22. My teacher knows what I find hard at school
23. Our teacher treats us all fairly
24. Our teacher talks to us about values and what's right and wrong
25. My teacher helps us to sort out problems with our friends if we can't do it ourselves
26. Our teacher gives us advice
27. I'd tell my teacher if something was upsetting me
28. Our teacher can tell if someone is upset
29. I can talk to my teacher when I need to
30. If I'm nervous, my teacher encourages me
31. If I'm having a bad day my teacher will help
32. My teacher likes us all the time

33. My teacher cares about us all
34. My teacher cares how I feel
35. My teacher is happy when we do well
36. Our teacher smiles at us when we get to school
37. Our teacher makes us feel welcome
38. My teacher is too busy to help me
39. My teacher expects us to get on with our work, unless we're having a problem
40. My teacher gives me work I can do well at
41. I achieve the goals my teacher sets
42. My teacher puts too much pressure on us
43. My teacher gives me time to think
44. Our teacher will tell us if we've done well
45. Our teacher expects us to work hard
46. My teacher makes me laugh
47. We have fun learning activities
48. Our teacher wants us to have fun at school
49. My teacher knows about my family

50. My teacher trusts me

51. I know what my teacher thinks is important

52. Our teacher is happy

53. My teacher knows who I can work well with

54. Our teacher tells us when they are getting upset with us

55. My teacher tells us if they are having a good or bad day

56. I know some things my teacher likes to do at the weekend

57. Our teacher tells us how to be nicer to each other

58. Kids in my class get picked on

59. We work well together in our class

60. People in my class are mean

61. My teacher doesn't realise how other people are feeling

62. Our teacher explains the reasons for their decisions

63. Our teacher is hard on us

64. Our teacher is calm

65. My teacher thinks everyone in our class is good

66. We get free time

67. We get rewarded for being good
68. My teacher takes us out for games
69. My teacher helps me to think before I act
70. If we have problems our teacher listens to us
71. If I'm upset, my teacher helps me feel better
72. If we have a problem, our teacher talks to us about it
73. If our work is hard, our teacher likes to help us
74. The work our teacher gives is too hard
75. I get nervous about my work
76. I'm glad my teacher is my teacher
77. I think my teacher needs to be different in some way
78. My teacher needs to treat me nicer
79. My teacher is good at teaching me
80. The class rules are hard to follow
81. We have a nice classroom environment
82. The class rules are fair
83. It's OK to be different in our class

84. Students find it easy to fit into our class

85. My teacher takes bullying seriously

86. I learn enough

87. If something is bugging me, I have people to talk to in my class

88. People in my class laugh if someone gets embarrassed or sad

89. My teacher calls kids mean names

90. We value other people's feelings in our class

91. People are disruptive in class

92. My teacher needs more training

93. Our teacher thinks that people in our class are bad

94. Our teacher tries to make our work interesting

## Appendix I – Study 3 Information Sheet

	<b>Massey University</b>	
Freepost 114094, Rachel Andersen, c/o Dr Shane Harvey, School of Psychology, Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North		
<a href="mailto:Rachel@classclimate.co.nz">Rachel@classclimate.co.nz</a>	<a href="http://www.classclimate.co.nz">www.classclimate.co.nz</a>	

### The Emotional Environment of the School Classroom: Student Perceptions of Teacher Behaviours

Tena Koe

#### Information Sheet

My name is Rachel Andersen and, for my MA thesis, I want to find out how teachers help children learn. You are invited to be a part of my research.



**Rachel Andersen**  
Postgraduate Psychology Student  
Massey University

I am interested in finding out what Primary School students think their classroom teacher does to influence the emotional climate in their classroom, to make their classroom a happy place and how these ideas fit together. I have already spoken with 21 groups of students and have gathered the concepts they can see and language they use to describe these concepts.

#### ***What is involved in this research?***

You will be provided with a deck of cards with statements on, an instruction sheet with explanations of the different sort procedures which will have spaces for recording your answers anonymously. You will be asked to sort the deck of cards with statements on about teachers and classrooms into piles of similarity and dissimilarity, to identify opposite groupings, sub-divide groupings, and merge groupings, sorting according to how the items go together conceptually. Participants are not required to relate items to themselves. It is expected that these sorts will take up to 60 minutes total.

#### ***What do I need to know?***

- (a.) these items do not form a diagnostic measure evaluating you
- (b.) there are no right or wrong answers as there are no unique descriptors
- (c.) this analysis is not interested in individual results collected from each person. Instead, results are aggregated across all participants and compared to models from other parts of the research project.

Your anonymous data will be entered into a computer programme along with all the data from the other participants. The aggregated data will then be used to produce a model of how the items fit together. No individual data will ever be examined.

Your recording sheet will be kept securely for up to five years, when it will then be destroyed.

Once all the data has been collected there will be an opportunity for general feedback. I will meet with any teachers, students and parents who are interested, to discuss the general findings.

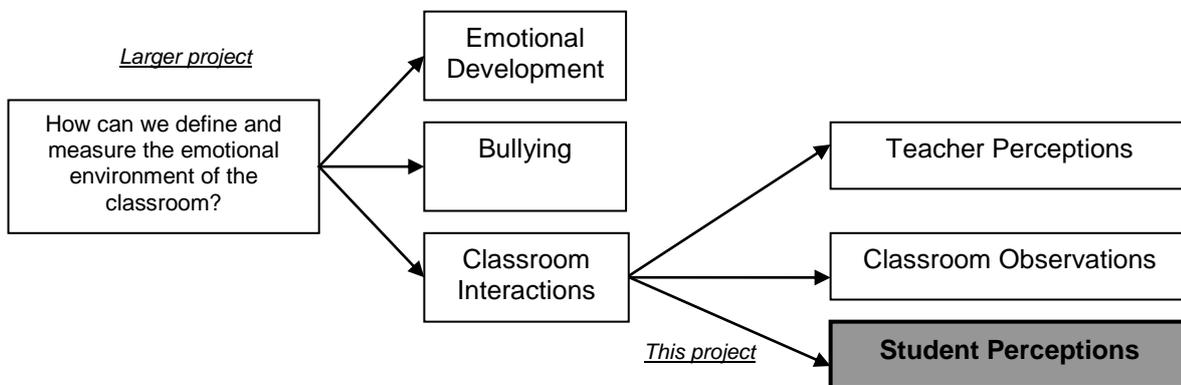
### ***Then what?***

Once all the data has been collected, a measure will be designed using the concepts and language from the children. The intention is that the measure will be able to be used by students and will create a profile of the emotional strengths and needs in a particular classroom.

### ***What is this project about?***

This project is part of a larger 3 year research process. This information sheet is only asking for your co-operation with this phase of the *student perceptions* phase. Phase One of this project has identified emotional concepts and language used by children (8-12 years old) to describe classroom environments. Phase Two intends to organise these concepts into areas of similarity and dissimilarity and to map these according to their respective relationships to each other.

How this project fits into the first year of the larger project is outlined below.



### **Participant's Rights**

*You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:*

- *decline to answer any particular question;*
- *ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;*
- *provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used*
- *be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.*
- *Completion implies consent. You have the right to decline to answer any particular question.*

### ***Who am I?***

I earned my undergraduate Bachelors' degree at Massey University with a double major in psychology and education. While studying, I worked as a teacher aide in a variety of primary school classrooms. I have also worked as a youth worker, a child

educator at top visitor attractions, and volunteered for many years as a youth leader and Girls' Brigade leader.

Because I am a student researcher, I am supervised by two of the larger project's leaders:

**Professor Ian Evans** has worked with primary schools on many different projects, such as reducing student drop-out and inclusion of children with disabilities

**Dr Shane Harvey** has worked as a psychologist for the Ministry Of Education Group Special Education, where he consulted extensively with schools in the central North Island.

***How are we funded to do this research?***

Our project on the emotional climate of the school classroom is funded by a grant from the Marsden Fund, the New Zealand government's fund for basic research. The grant was awarded to a team of psychologists at Massey University (Palmerston North) for 3 years or longer.

Thank you for sharing our interest in this project,  
Kia ora

**Committee Approval Statement**

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researchers named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researchers, please contact professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor (Ethics & Equity), telephone 06 350 5249, e-mail [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz).

*The Emotional Environment of the School Classroom:*  
**Students' Perceptions of Teacher Behaviours**

**Consent Form**

This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Full Name -  
printed** \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to be contacted at the end of the research process regarding feedback.

Contact Details

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## **Appendix J – Study 3 Instruction Sheet**

 <b>Massey University</b>	
Freepost 114094, Rachel Andersen, c/o Dr Shane Harvey, School of Psychology, Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North	
<a href="mailto:Rachel@classclimate.co.nz">Rachel@classclimate.co.nz</a>	<a href="http://www.classclimate.co.nz">www.classclimate.co.nz</a>

### **Student Perceptions of Teacher Behaviours Instruction Sheet**

There are several steps to this process. It should only take about an hour to complete.

Phase One is Grouping

Phase Two is Opposites

Phase Three is Partitioning

Phase Four is Addition

Phase Five is Naming

Please ensure you complete all five steps in order.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this stage of our research.

<b>Phase ONE – grouping</b>
-----------------------------

Make up **at least 10 (and up to 20)** different groups of similar items with **no more than 9** items per group. A group may have a single item. Keep each group's item numbers on the same line. **Please print neatly.**

Example: 7   22   1   43   78   12

a	
b	
c	
d	
e	
f	
g	
h	
i	
j	
k	
l	
m	
n	
o	
p	
q	
r	
s	
t	
u	

<b>Phase TWO – opposites</b>
------------------------------

Which of the phase 1 groups are the most different. Record these “opposites” by entering any one item number from each group on the spaces below. Try to find at least three sets of opposites.

Opposite set 1: \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_#    Opposite set 2: \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_#    Opposite set 3: \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_#

Opposite set 4: \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_#    Opposite set 5: \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_#    Opposite set 6: \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_#

Phase **THREE** – partition

For all phase 1 groups with more than 2 items, copy all these numbers onto the identical line below but use brackets to show sub groups, that is how the most similar items go together. A sub group may have a single item within brackets.

Example: (12 43 22) (1 7) (78)

a	
b	
c	
d	
e	
f	
g	
h	
i	
j	
k	
l	
m	
n	
o	
p	
q	
r	
s	
t	
u	

Phase **FOUR** – adding

Join together the most similar groups in phase 1. To show which groups go together enter any one item number from each group on the spaces below. Only some groups will join up, many will not. Try to make at least three merges.

merger a) \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_# merger b) \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_# merger c) \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_#

merger d) \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_# merger e) \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_# merger f) \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_#

Phase FIVE - naming
---------------------

For all phase 1 groups with more than 2 items, please try and come up with a descriptive name for the category.

Example: water quality

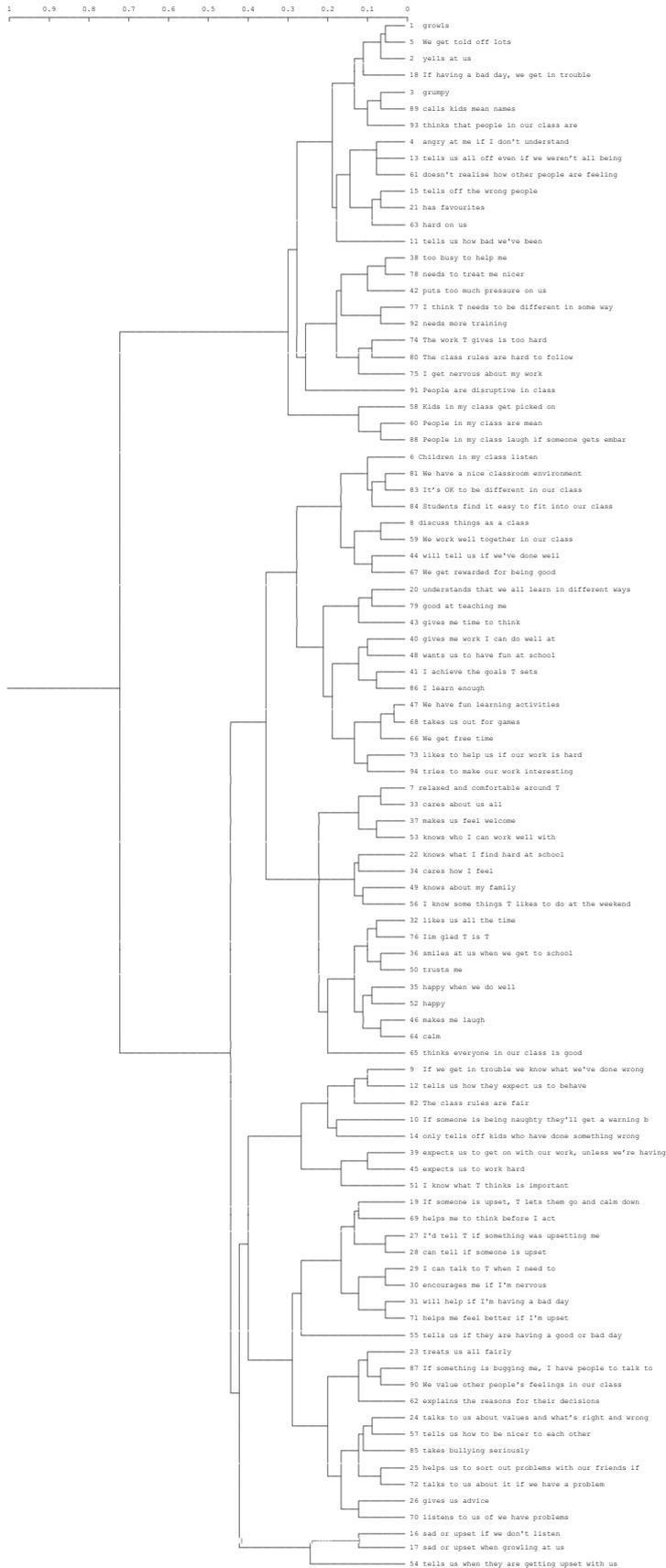
a	
b	
c	
d	
e	
f	
g	
h	
i	
j	
k	
l	
m	
n	
o	
p	
q	
r	
s	
t	
u	

Please complete the demographic data below to ensure we get a diverse group of participants.

Gender \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

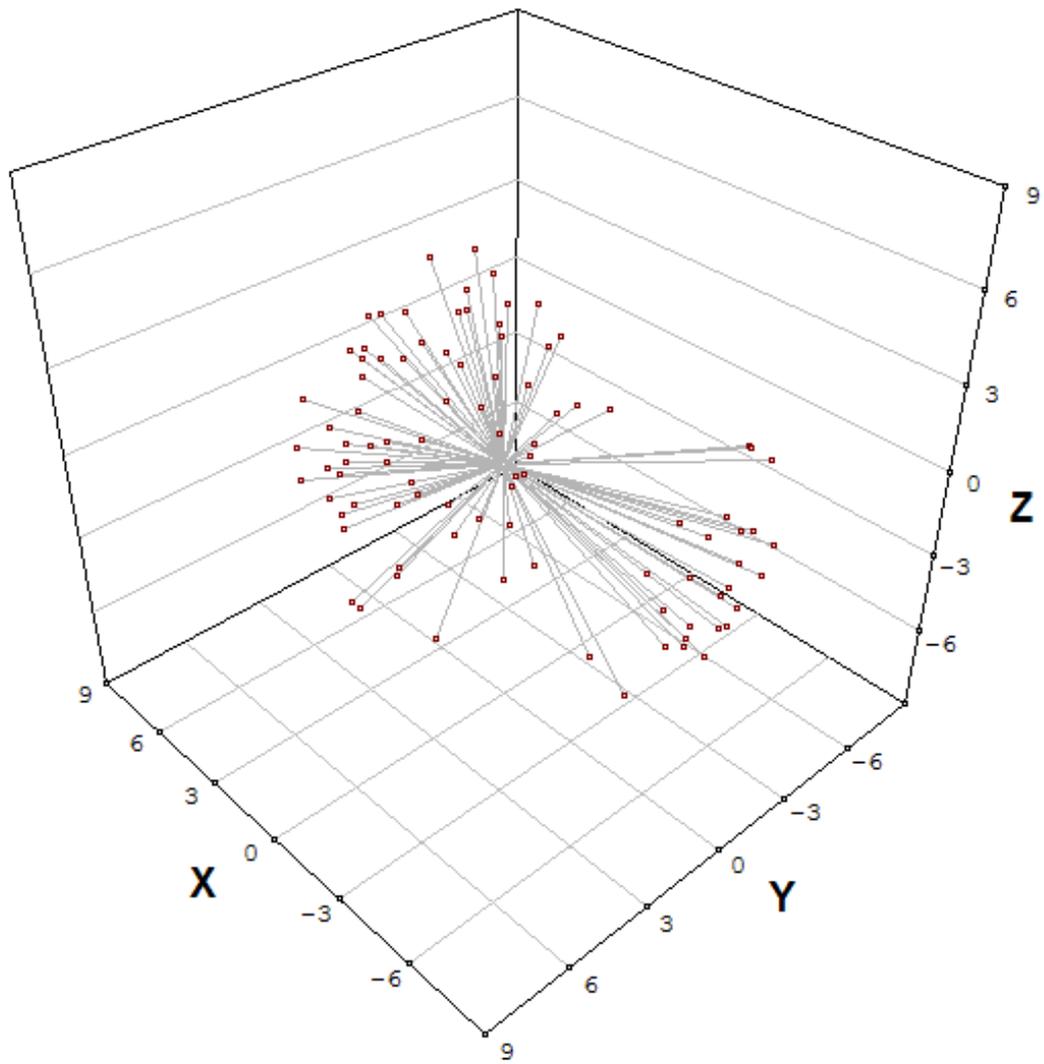
Ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_ Years teaching \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix K - Combined Dendrogram

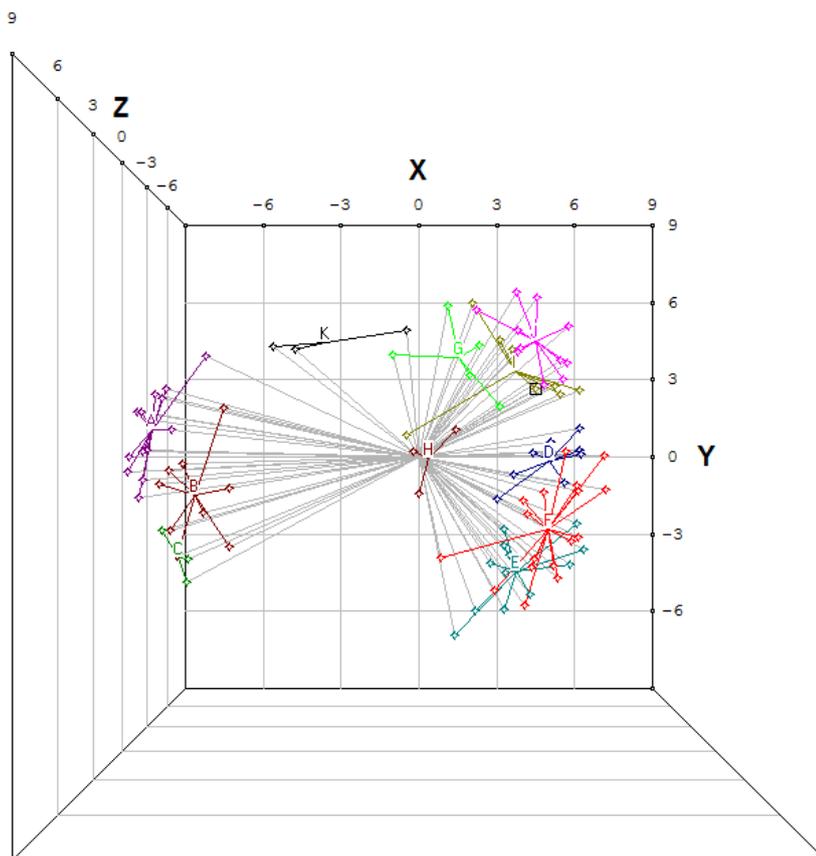
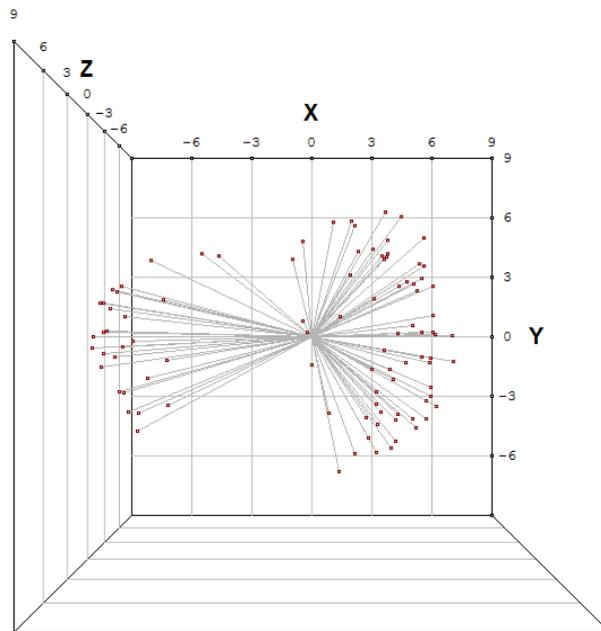




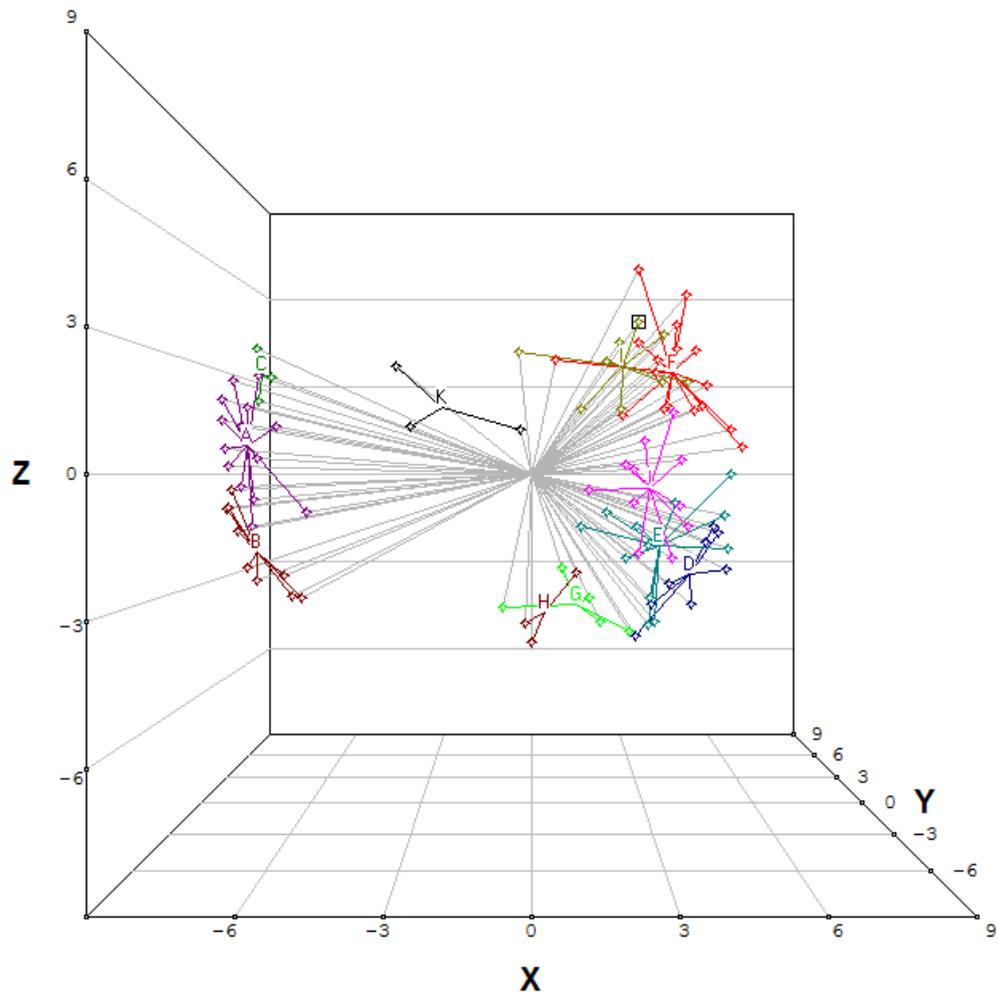
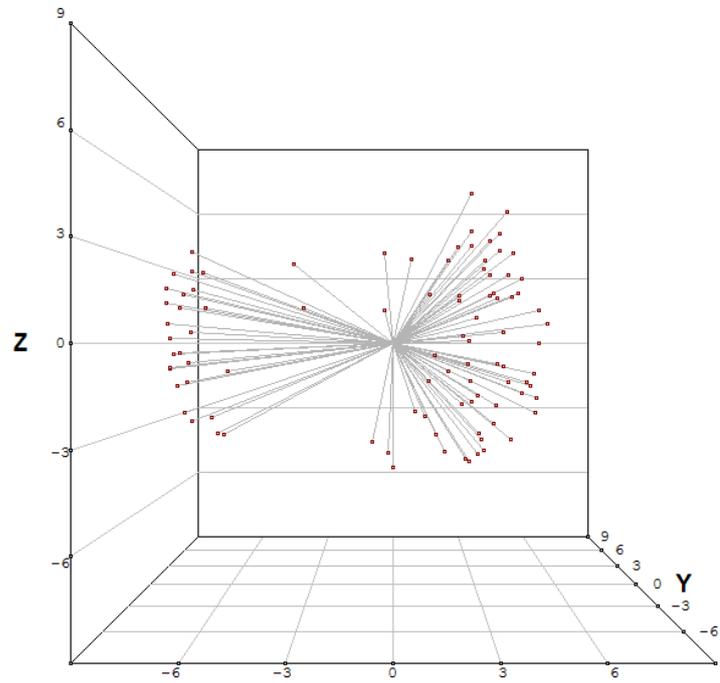
### Appendix L - MDS maps



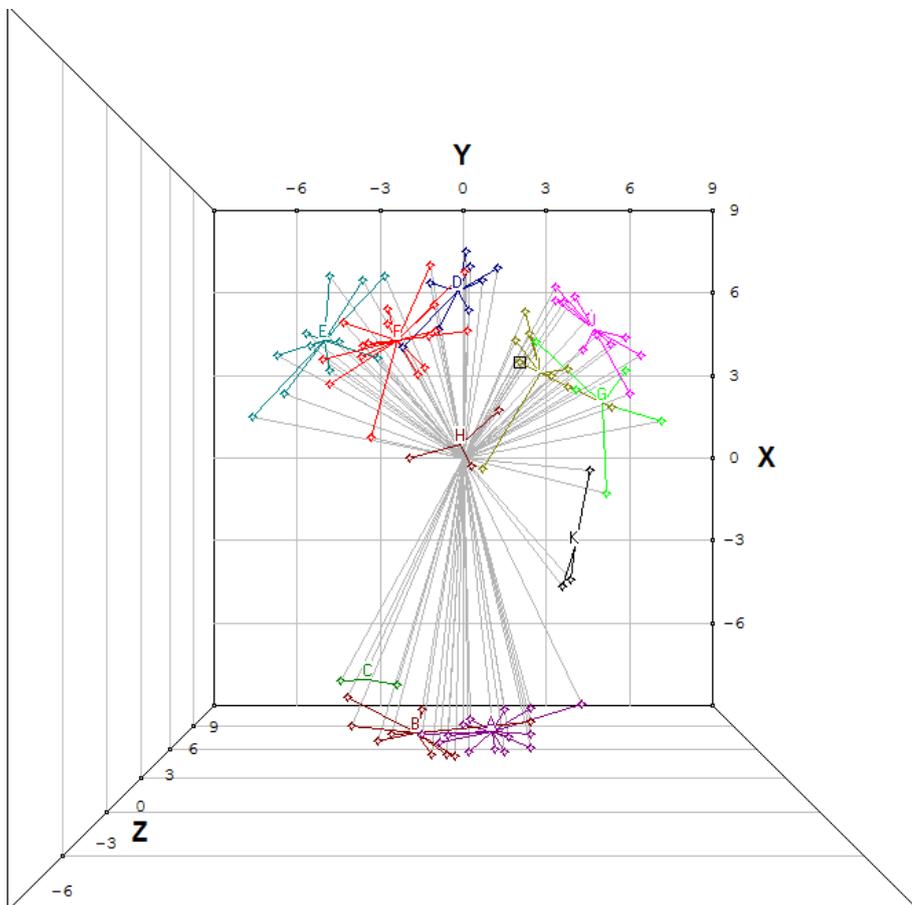
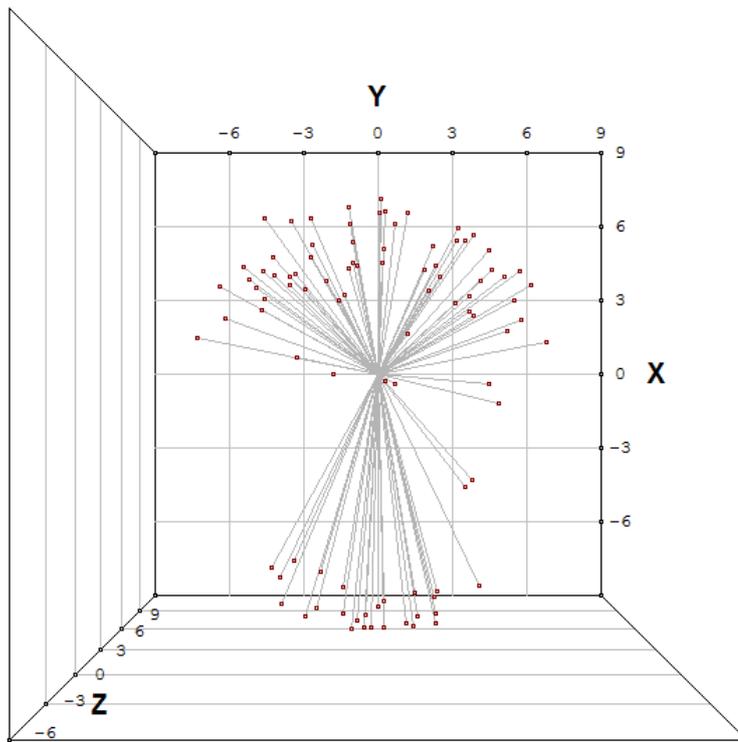
XxY



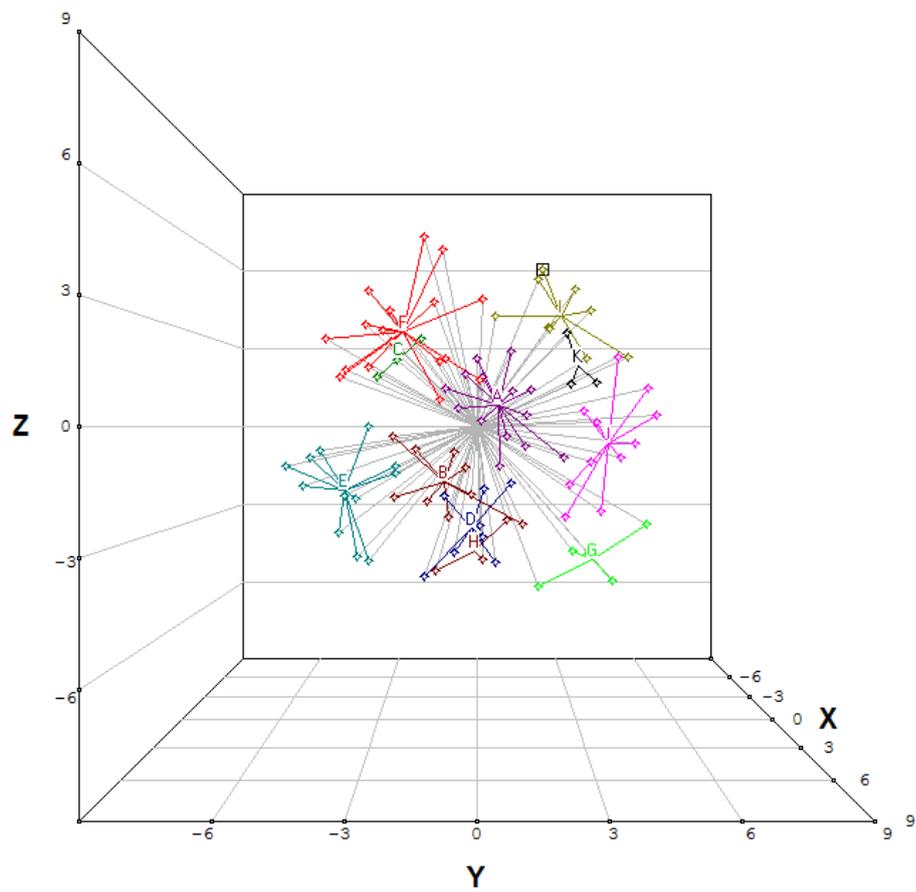
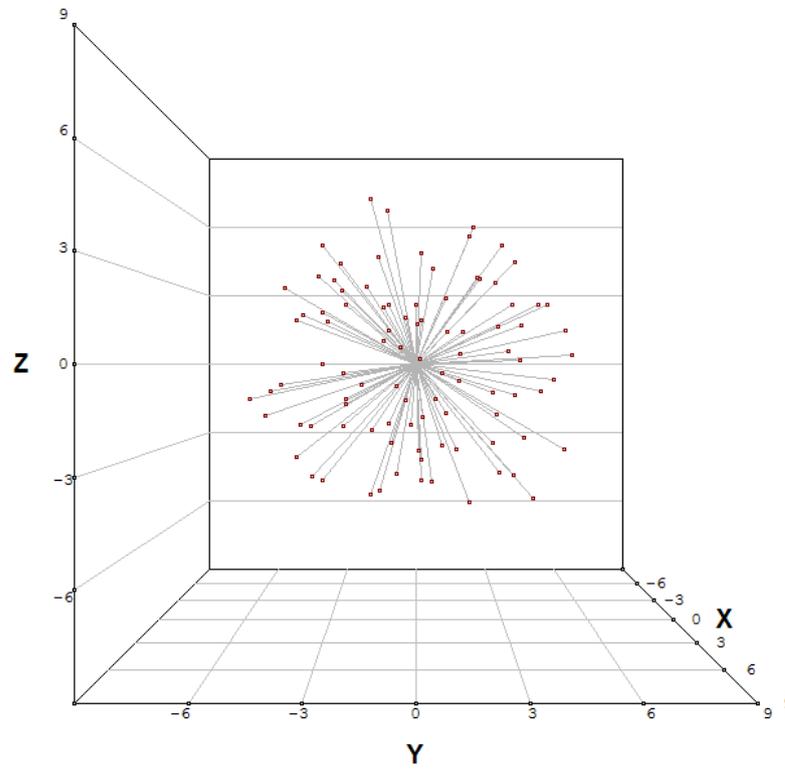
XxZ



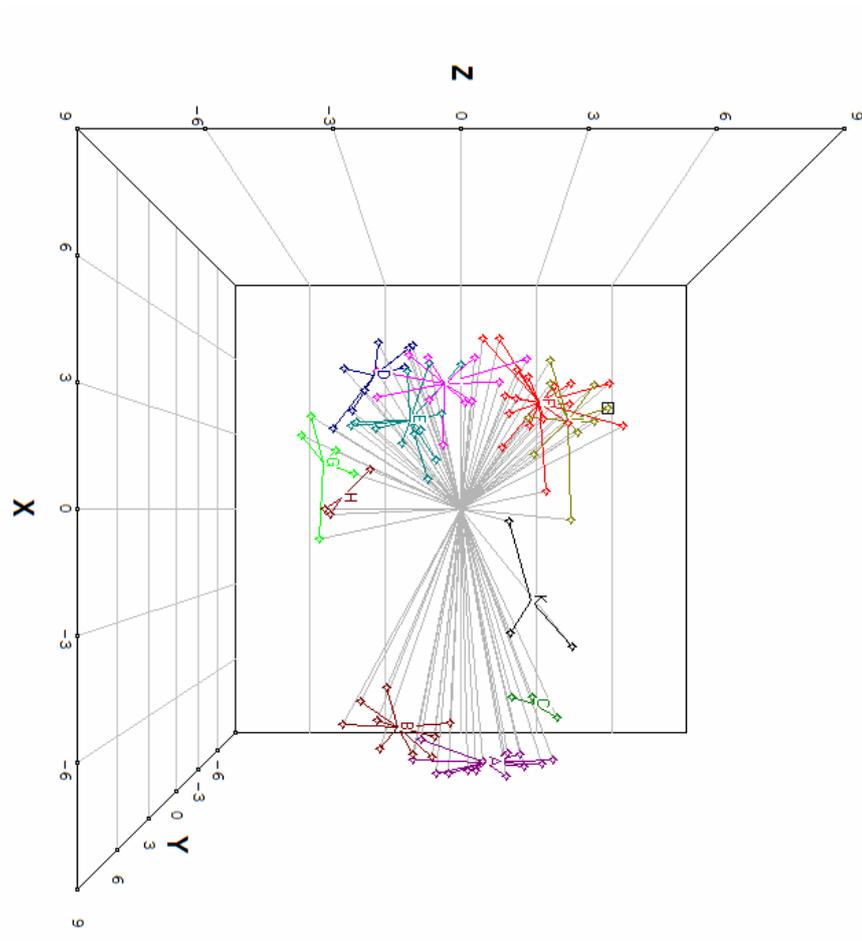
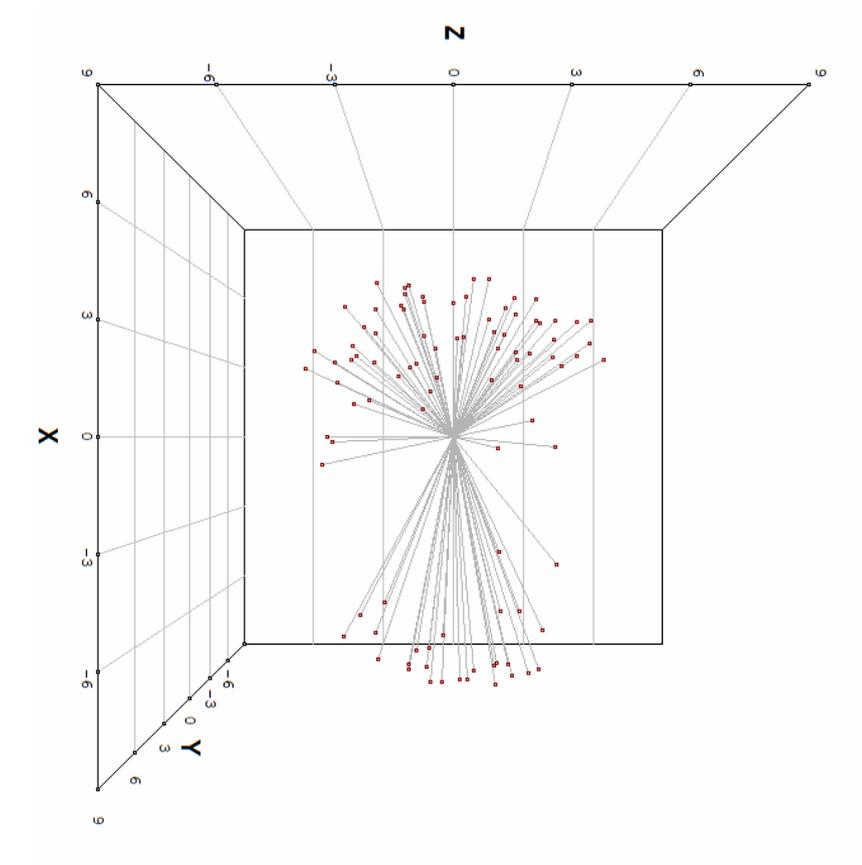
YxX



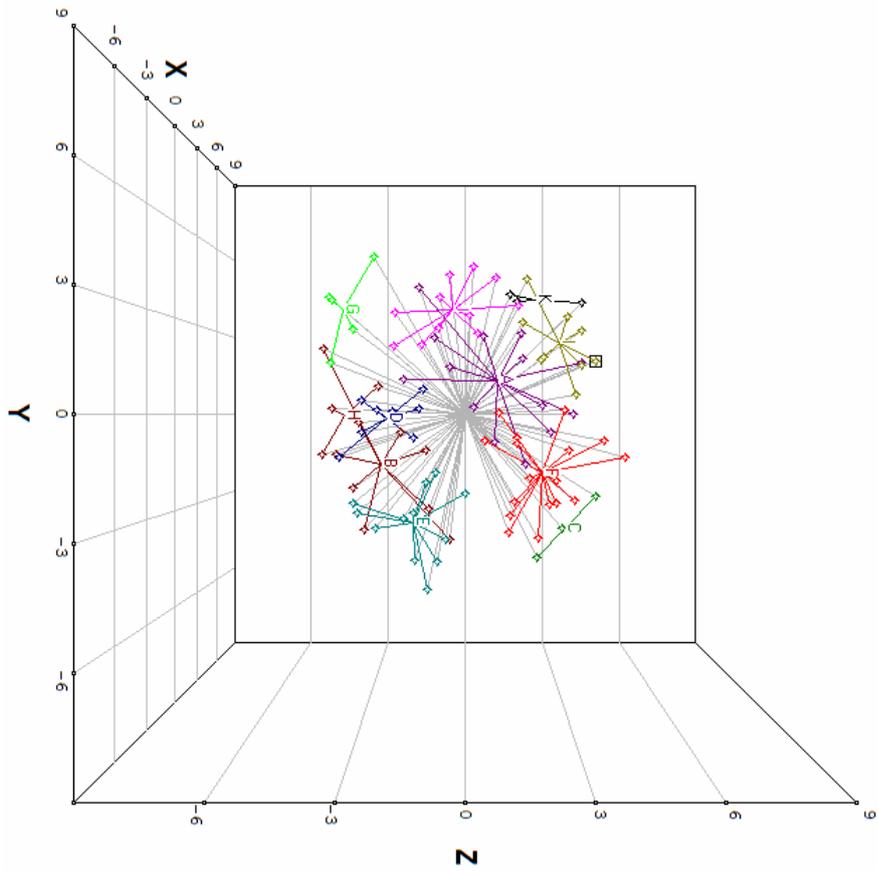
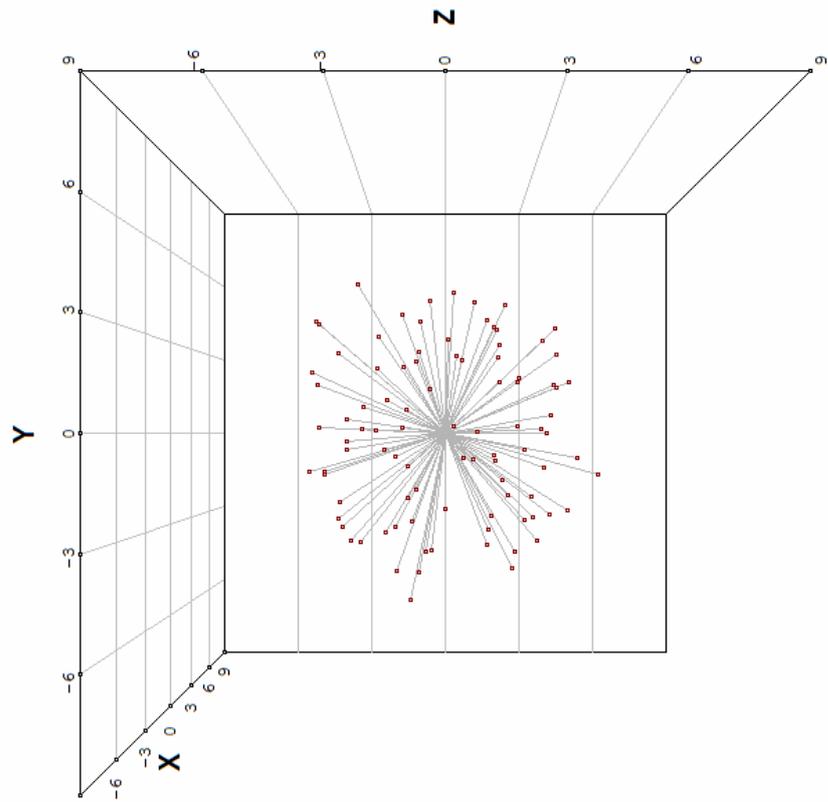
YxZ



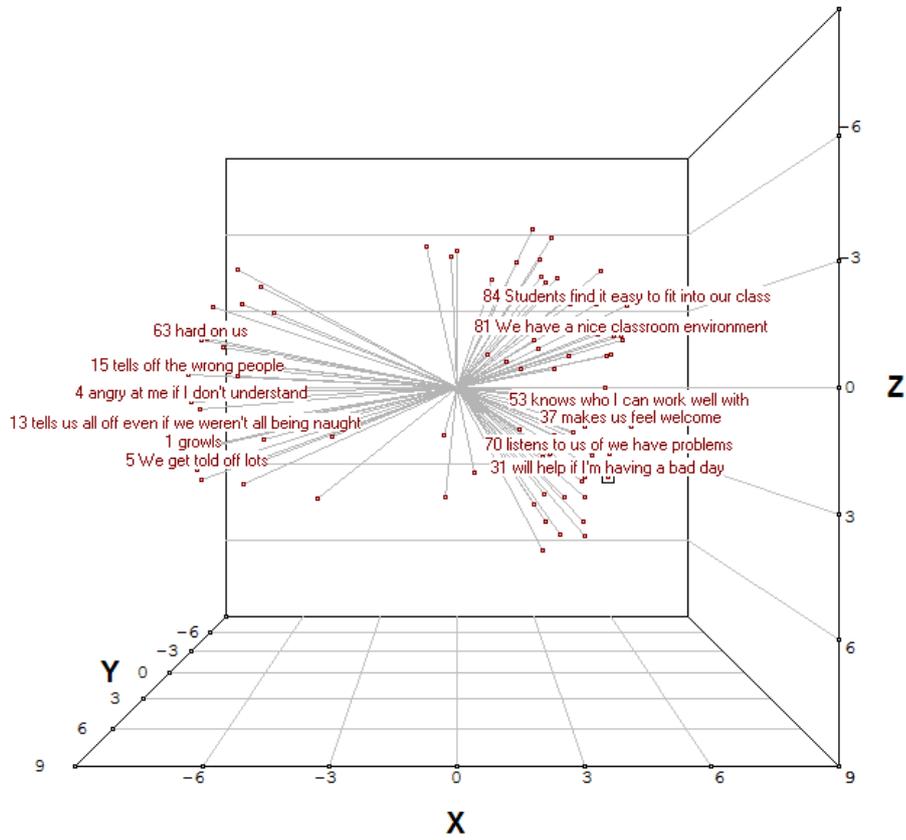
# ZxX



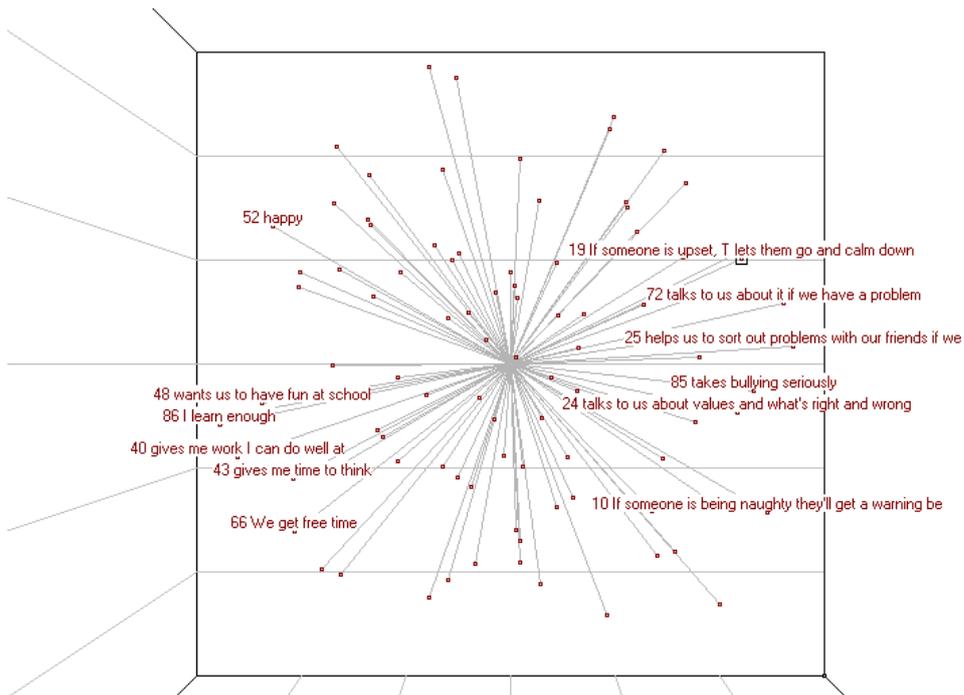
ZxY



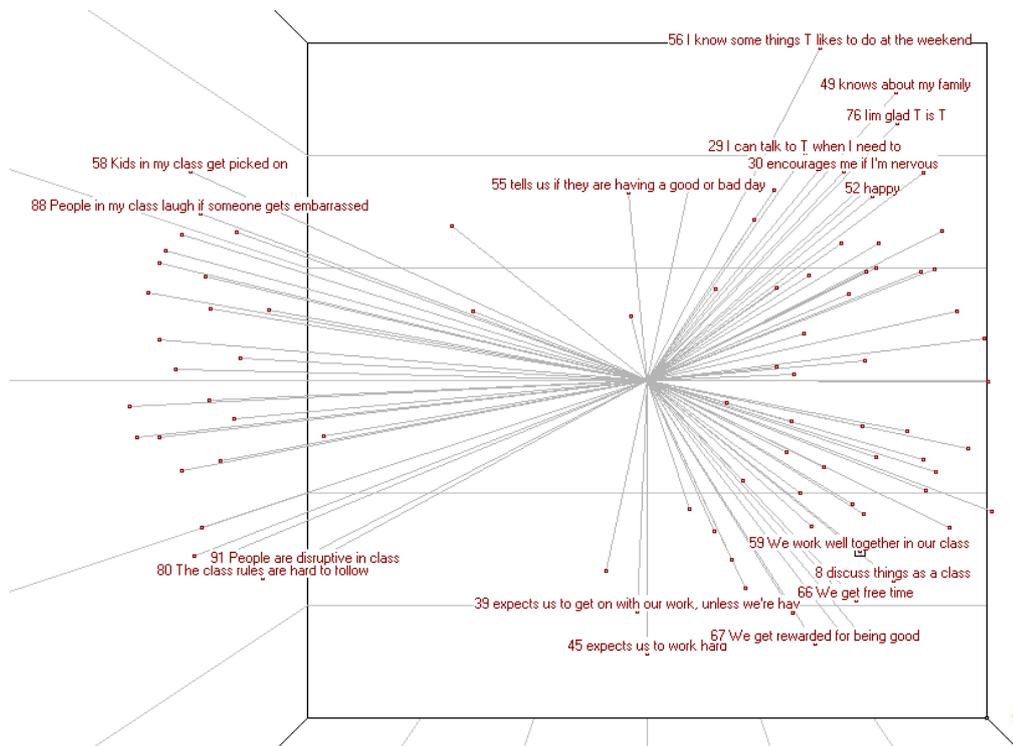
### D1 with tags



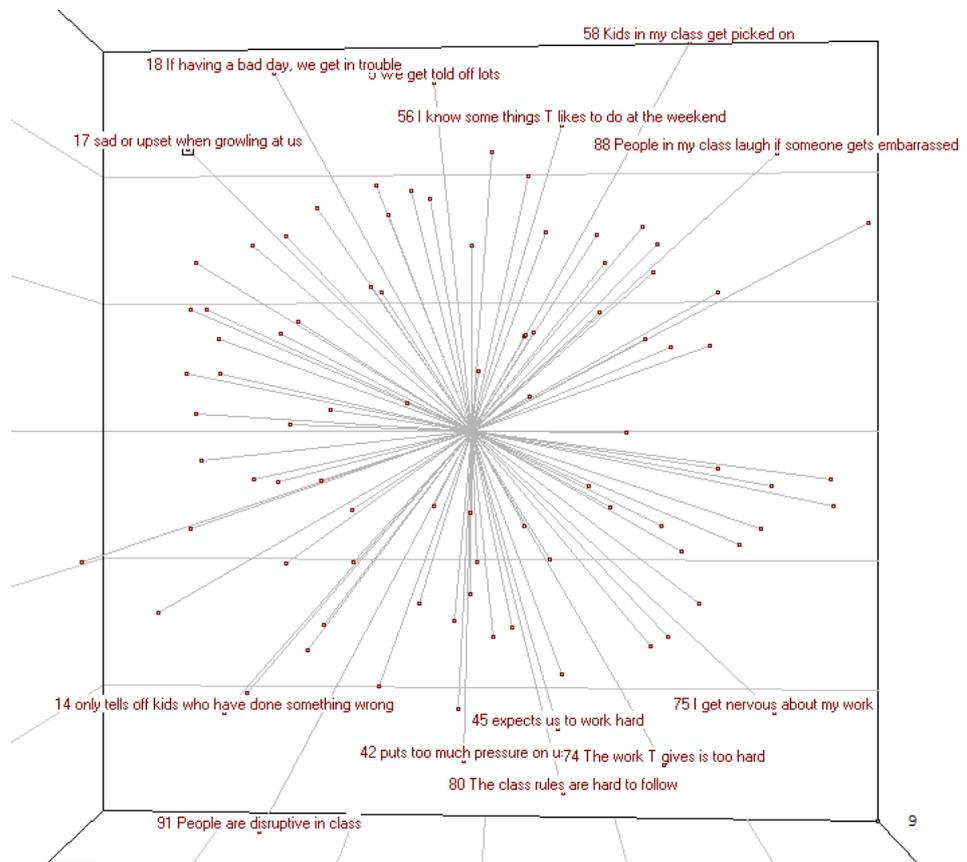
### D 2 with tags



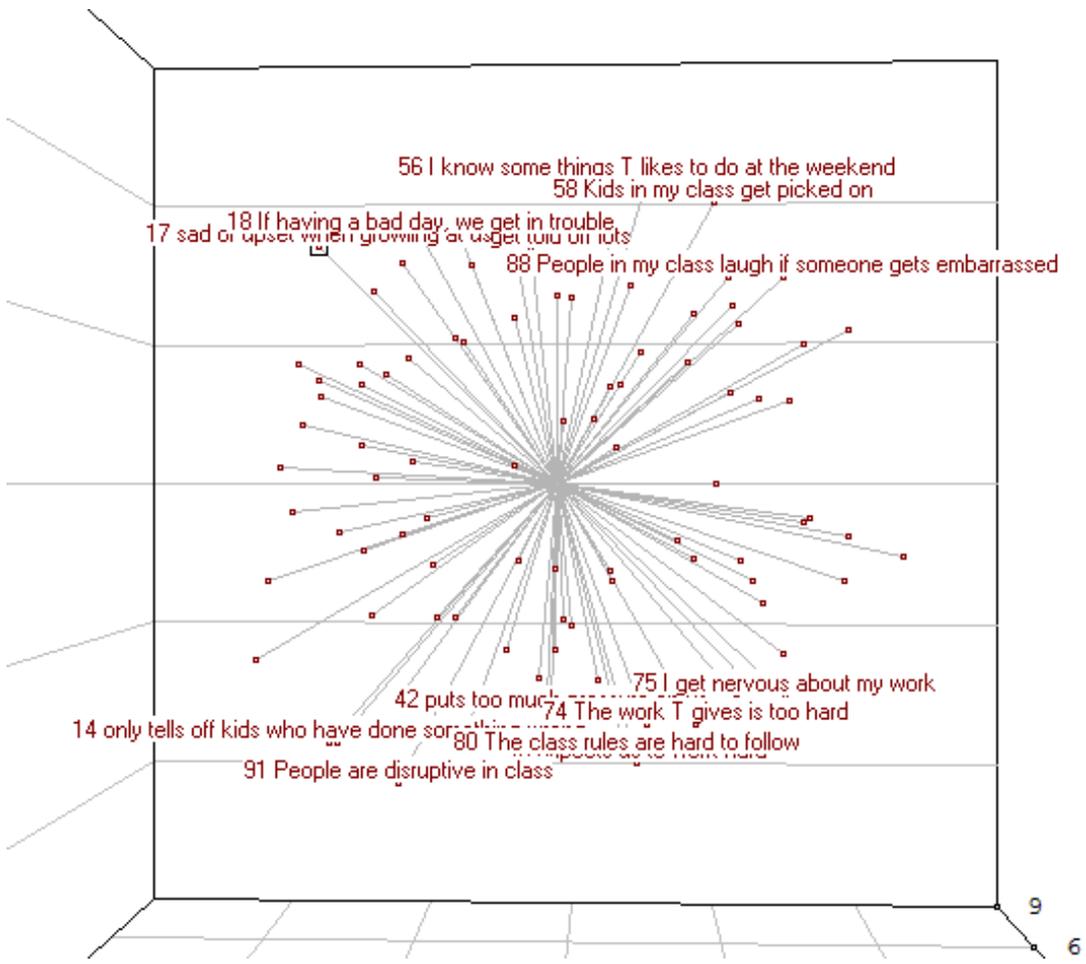
### D3 with Tags



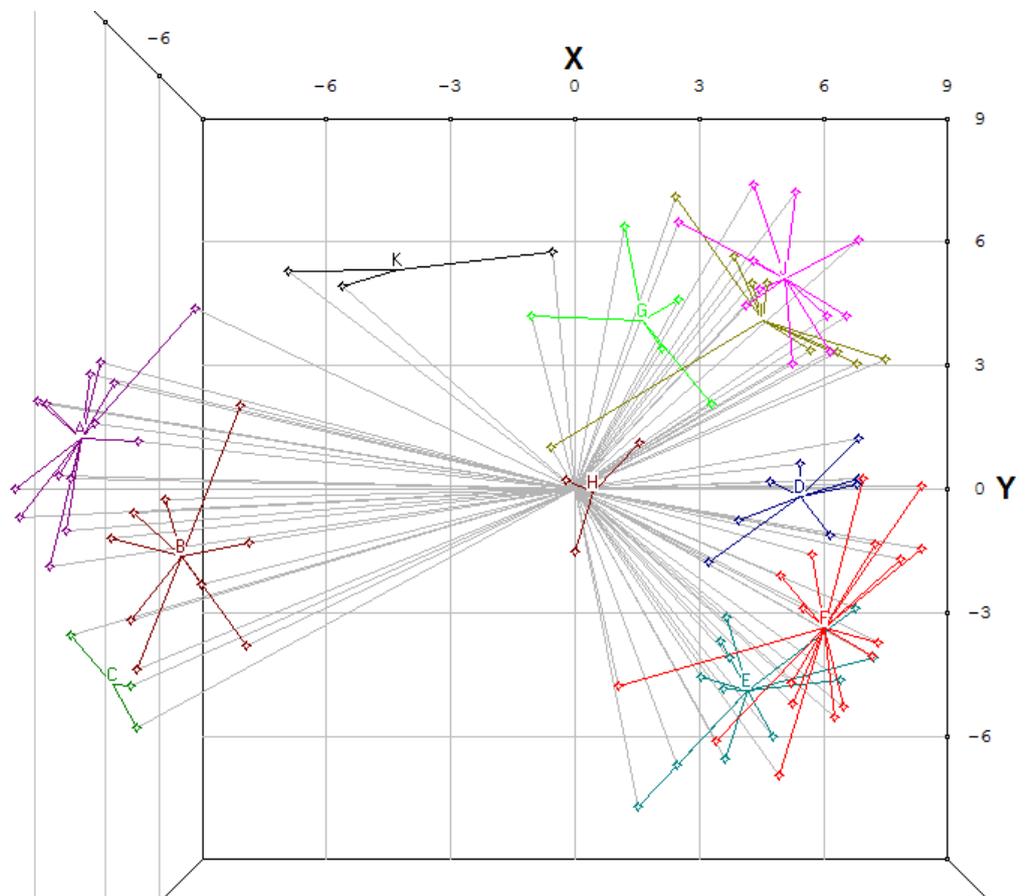
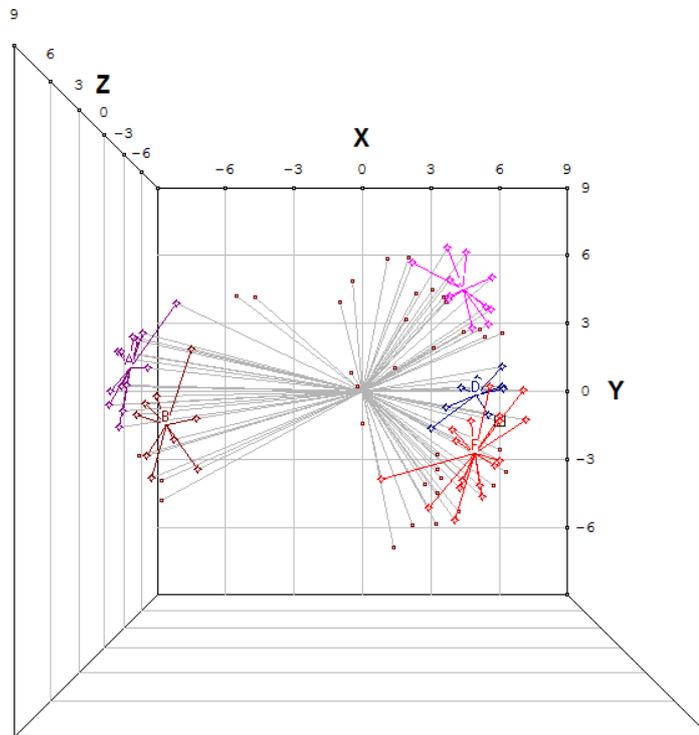
or



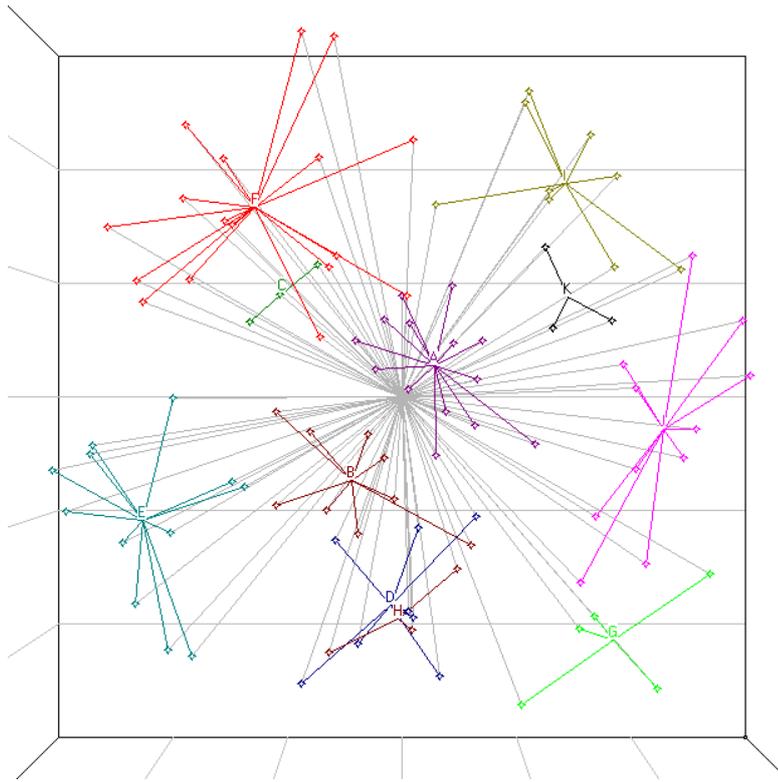
or



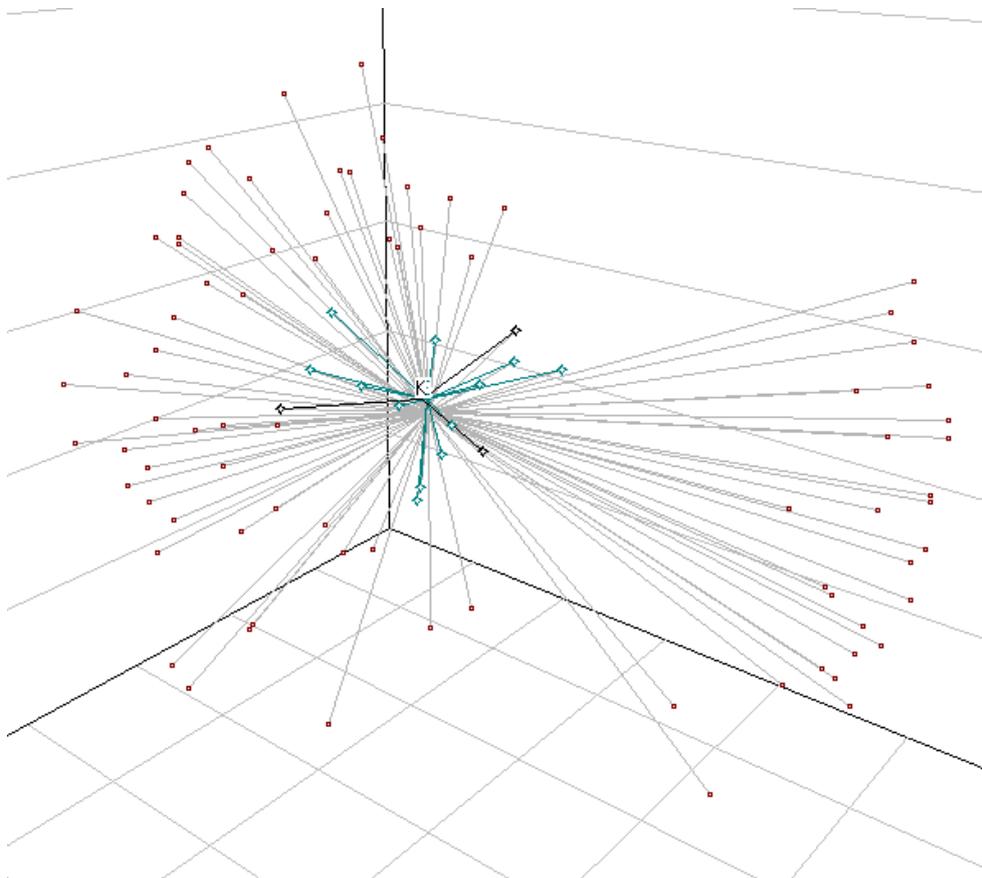
clustering



d2x d3y



E & K



E & K, C & G

