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Children's Perceptions of Their Writing:  
The Knowledge, Strategies, Attributions, and Attitudes Children Bring to  
Writing

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Madelaine Ruth Armstrong Willcocks

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## **Abstract**

*Writing is a significant cognitive, educational, personal, and social activity. Children's perceptions of their writing impact significantly on their learning, and are clearly influenced by the instructional programmes and environments they encounter. Children's development as writers during their middle primary school years (years four to six) is significantly under-researched. Four key areas of children's perceptions are of interest to this study: knowledge, strategies, attributions, and attitudes. Consequently, this study seeks to understand children's perceptions of their writing, and the contexts within which these perceptions are developed.*

*A six week ethnographic case study was undertaken, involving eight children and two teachers in one school. The data collection methods of participant observation, interviews, 'think alouds', and document analysis were used to gain a rich understanding of children's perceptions. Data was analysed and validated using qualitative methods.*

*The findings show that children hold diverse and idiosyncratic global perceptions. Children demonstrate a range of knowledge and strategies that they bring to their writing. They are able to describe both common and novel attributions for their successes and failures. Children's attitudes are predictably diverse, and show a strong link with classroom programmes and environments.*

*While children's perceptions are clearly influenced by the classroom programme and environment, this alone does not account for the uniqueness of children's perceptions. While the two teachers in this study offered different instructional experiences, both see metacognition and self-management as having an important role in children's learning. These findings suggest that knowledge and strategy use are of equal importance to*

*middle primary children. Instructional practices loosely based on a cognitive apprenticeship model may be effective in making writing a knowledgeable, strategic, social, and authentic activity. The current curriculum inadequately conceptualises genre and pays only minimal attention to children's development of genre knowledge.*

*This study recommends that longitudinal research into the development of writing expertise in the middle primary years is needed.*

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

#### *1.1 Introduction to This Study*

Writing is a significant cognitive activity, one that has educational, personal, and social significance. The importance of writing as one of the traditional '3Rs' of schooling is generally undisputed. However, in contemporary educational circles, writing is frequently overlooked in favour of so-called new literacies.

What children think about their writing may shape their achievement as writers. This is particularly so during the middle primary years (years four to six), when children are becoming increasingly metacognitively aware. Children's perceptions of their writing may be shaped and confirmed by classroom environments and programmes.

With these notions in mind, this study fundamentally aims to explore the question, what do children think about their writing? While more detailed research questions focus this more specifically, it remains at the core of this study. In exploring this and other questions this study seeks to understand children's perceptions of writing *as they understand them*. This study also seeks to re-conceptualise children's perceptions through a more-expert lens, enabling deeper understanding and analysis of these perceptions. As part of this, this study seeks to understand the immediate context of children's perceptions, that is, the classrooms in which they operate.

#### *1.2 Chapter Overview*

This chapter presents a brief background to this study. The areas of significance are outlined, leading to the presentation of the research questions.

### 1.3 Writing

Writing is a critical cognitive activity. Put most simply, it is thought in action (Smith & Elley, 2000; Vygotsky, 1962/1986). Writing, and the telling of stories through written literacy, is also a process of making sense of the world (Bruner, 1996).

Writing is best conceptualised as part of a wider concept of literacy. It is implicitly and interactively linked with other forms of literacy, and is particularly linked to reading (Langer & Flihan, 2000). Whilst acknowledging the importance of reading and other forms of literacy, this study focuses exclusively on writing.

Written literacy is a critical component of school learning, so much so that one of the very basic goals of education is “teaching students to communicate with the written word.” (Hayes & Flower, 1986, p.1106). Education and literacy are often seen as inextricably linked, to the extent that “education has become synonymous in some minds with literacy.” (Millard, 1997, p. 34).

Within the New Zealand school curriculum, writing is a part of the essential learning area of English, and is also central to two of the essential skills, Communication Skills and Information Skills (Ministry of Education, 1993; Ministry of Education, 1994). *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* highlights the cognitive, personal, and social significance of language, in stating, “Language expresses identity... Language is fundamental to thinking and learning...Language is essential for living in society” (Ministry of Education, 1994, p.10), and hence the significance of writing.

Writing has personal, social, and cultural significance. It largely enables individuals’ learning, and allows their participation in literate culture (Millard, 1997). Writing is socially significant, in that it takes place within social settings, for social purposes, and is retained as social artefacts (Hayes,

2000). Writing also has cultural significance, in that it both reflects and is reflective of cultural norms (Hayes, 2000).

The teaching and learning of writing, and of literacy more generally, is subject to on-going educational, political, and social debate. As Soler (2000, p.vii) comments, "Literacy lies at the heart of education and is, therefore, one of the most controversial and debated aspects of our schooling system." In particular, the perceived standards of literacy are seen as a matter of public concern, however public perceptions of standards may not be aligned to educational 'reality' (Philips, 1986).

Recently, the New Zealand literacy strategy and the curriculum stocktake have promoted public and educational debate (see Te Kete Ipurangi, 2002a, 2002b; Literacy Taskforce, 1999; Literacy Experts Group, 1999). Such debate is by no means limited to New Zealand (Luke, 1998). In Australia, debate centres on the desirable contemporary perception of Australia as a 'clever country' much in line with the New Zealand concept of the 'knowledge economy'. This concept is at odds with the perceived low level of basic literacy in school leavers (Mellor et al., 1995). The United States also claims a widespread 'literacy crisis', where "we have still not succeeded in educating a fully literate citizenry" (Resnick, 2000, p.27). This sense of crisis has led to on-going research into writing processes. Taking a different approach in the United Kingdom, this recognition of so-called crisis has resulted in a re-shaping the writing curriculum. Considerable weight has been given to the formal teaching of the 'basic skills' needed for writing, such as handwriting, grammar, and punctuation (Hilton, 2001). Rapidly changing curriculum expectations and standards are a notable and apparently widespread reaction to such debate (Knobel, 1999).

Therefore, this study focuses on writing as a critical element of cognition, schooling, contemporary curricula, and society more generally. This study

fundamentally seeks to explore children's perceptions of writing during their middle primary years.

#### 1.4 *Children's Perceptions*

Children's perceptions are critical to their educational achievement (Weinstein, 1989). Children's perceptions may also help to explain differences in educational achievement (Hofman, Hofman, & Guldemon, 2001). Children's perceptions mediate between the processes of teaching and learning (Pajares & Valiante, 1999). Perceptions of writing in particular "play an important role in determining how the composing process is carried out" (Graham, Schwartz, & MacArthur, 1993, p.246). Children's perceptions of writing impact not only on how they go about composing, but also on what they compose. Perceptions of writing may also have a reciprocal impact on wider perceptions about learning and schooling (McCarthy, 2001). Children's perceptions are "influenced by the broad and situated contexts in which they act." (Kos & Maslowski, 2001, p.569). Perceptions are therefore socially constructed and reciprocally reactive with social settings.

#### 1.5 *Middle Primary Years*

There is an abundance of research describing children's learning in writing in their early years of school, however research describing children's writing in the middle primary years is more scarce (Comber, Badger, Barnett, Nixon, & Pitt, 2002; Education Review Office, 2002; Allington & Johnston, 2000). This area is of interest in this study as these children are typically beyond the so-called 'emergent' phase of writing development. Writing activities in the middle primary years are demonstrably different from those in early primary years (Comber et al., 2002). Children are more likely to be engaged in writing activities daily for sustained periods, over a range of curriculum areas. See Appendix A for details of writing within the context of *English in the New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1994).

It is expected that children in middle primary are largely able to read and write, and that they are able to “learn new concepts and information... through their textual practices.” (Comber et al., 2002, p.14). Hood (2000) suggests this can be seen as moving from ‘learning to write’ to ‘writing to learn’. This notion unfortunately implies that children in the middle primary years require lesser instruction than in the early primary years.

Children of this age are more likely than those younger to be able to articulate their beliefs about learning, therefore demonstrating metacognitive knowledge. Metacognitive knowledge is thought to be late developing, and younger or less-expert learners may not be as metacognitively aware as older or more-expert learners (Garner, 1988). Younger and less-expert learners may also have difficulty attending to and interpreting metacognitive experiences (Flavell, 1987).

### *1.6 The Processes of Learning*

The processes by which children learn are of significance in this study. As mentioned, children’s perceptions are reciprocally reactive with their social setting, and are internally constructed rather than externally fixed. The processes by which children continuously arrive at their perceptions are therefore significant and of interest to educators and policy makers seeking to improve children’s educational achievement.

Contemporary models of learning centre on the notion of constructivism to explain the processes of learning. Essentially, constructivist models centre on the idea that children construct their learning and beliefs (McNaughton, 2002). Particular to a socio-constructivist outlook, children construct their understandings specifically through the partnership between their own constructions and the socio-cultural processes of their world (Vygotsky, 1962/1986). Children co-construct both learning and their perceptions of their learning through these processes.

### 1.7 *Knowledge, Strategies, Attributions, and Attitudes*

This study focuses on four particular aspects of children's perceptions about writing: knowledge, strategies, attributions, and attitudes. While each aspect is treated relatively separately for the purposes of this and the following chapters, there are obvious and significant overlaps amongst them. For instance, children's attributional beliefs impact on their strategy use, just as prior knowledge of audience impacts on planning strategies adopted.

Knowledge is recognised as a key determinant of performance, and plays a critical role in cognition (Alexander, 1996). Young children's knowledge about writing and the processes by which they construct such knowledge have been studied extensively (Smith & Elley, 2000, McNaughton, 2002; Hillocks, 1987). Research into children's knowledge of writing during the middle primary years is less common.

Strategy use was chosen as a second aspect of children's perceptions. As writing is viewed here as a cognitive process, the cognitive and metacognitive strategies that children use whilst engaging in writing are critical (Hayes & Flower, 1986). Strategies therefore have a significant role in both writing achievement and perceptions. Children's use of strategies as they write has been studied in principle (Hayes, 2000; Hayes & Flower, 1980). However, such strategy research has been largely and inappropriately based on studies of adult writers. Much of the theoretical understanding of children's strategy use in the middle primary age group has up until now been extrapolated from studies relating to other age groups.

Attributions were chosen as the third aspect of children's perceptions. Attributional beliefs act as explanations for successes and failures. They are "relatively stable beliefs that evolve from previous experiences and socialization." (Stipek, 1998, p.62). Attributions are viewed as a sub-set of wider motivational beliefs (Hayes, 2000). Attributions are also implicated in emotional reactions to achievement, which impact on future effort and



achievement (Weiner, 1994). The exploration of attributions, therefore, illuminates perceptions of achievement and motivation. The way children attribute their successes has been studied, but not often specifically to writing, and attributions specific to writing have been extrapolated from research in other domains (Georgiou, 1999).

Attitudes were chosen as the fourth aspect of children's perceptions. This is a broad grouping that encompasses attitudinal, affective, and social aspects of writing. Attitudes are significant to children's perceptions of writing, "because it is an intentional activity that is often self-planned and self-sustained." (Graham, Harris, & Troia, 2000, p.1). Children's attitudes to writing have been researched, however this area is usually seen as being only of peripheral interest to researchers and theorists.

Generally speaking, children's knowledge, strategies, attributions, and attitudes *specifically related to children in the middle primary school years*, have not been adequately studied (Dahl & Farnan, 1998). Further to this, the presentation of children's perceptions as integrated and individualised models is rare. Such presentation may support ease of understanding, and is particularly appropriate within case study research.

### 1.8 Classrooms

Classroom programmes and environments are significant in shaping children's perceptions. Schools are major social environments for children, where they "share their beliefs, norms, values and fears for a substantial part of their lives." (Hofman et al., 2001, p.171). Writing is a social activity, firmly situated within specific contexts, and "mediated by the social organisation of classrooms, including broader social and ideological factors." (Moll, Saez, & Dworin, 2001, p.444). As such, this study explores classroom instructional programmes and the social environments in which they operate.

The term 'classroom programmes' relates to both the planned and incidental instructional programmes in writing. Instructional tasks influence children's understandings and perceptions of the nature of writing (Nolen, 2001). The term 'classroom environments' relates to the unplanned aspects of the general classroom environment, including social networks, cultural norms and tools, social and academic roles, and the physical environment. Classroom environments can have critical impact on how children orient themselves for success, and consequently, to what they attribute their successes (Nolen, 2001). Other authors have linked classroom programmes and environments to children's or adult's perceptions of writing (for instance, studies by Nolen, 2001; Glasswell, 2001; and Beaufort, 2000).

### *1.9 Research Questions*

This study recognises the significance of children's perceptions of their writing. Research presenting children's perceptions during the middle primary years appears to be limited. Classroom programmes and environments undoubtedly provide the primary social context for shaping and challenging children's perceptions, and must be understood alongside children's perceptions. Consequently, this study aims to explore the following specific research questions:

1. What are children's global perceptions about their writing?
2. How can children's perceptions be presented as integrated, individualised models?
3. More, specifically:
  - a. What knowledge do children hold about writing?
  - b. What strategies do children use in their writing?
  - c. To what do children attribute their achievements in writing?
  - d. What attitudes do children hold about their writing?
4. How do classroom programmes and environments relate to and appear to influence children's perceptions?

### *1.10 Chapter Summary and Executive Overview*

This study comprises of six chapters. The first, Introduction, outlines the areas of significance for this study and presents the research questions. An executive overview of the remaining chapters follows.

The second chapter, Literature Review, reviews theory and research relating to the children's perceptions and classroom programmes and environments. Cautions in interpreting research information are given.

The third chapter, Design and Methods, details the ethnographic case study design. The specific research methods and participants are described, along with a discussion of ethical considerations and the role of the researcher.

The fourth chapter, Findings, presents children's global perceptions of writing and the conceptual frameworks representing these. Knowledge, strategies, attributions, and attitudes are then discussed. Classroom programmes and environments are also discussed.

The fifth chapter, Discussion, presents major themes emerging from the findings, in relation to relevant theory and research.

The sixth chapter, Conclusions, presents a summary of findings and themes. Strengths and limitations of this study are discussed, along with recommendations for future research.

References and Appendices follow after these chapters.

## **Chapter Two Literature Review**

### *2.1 Chapter Overview*

This chapter presents a review of relevant theory and research informing this study, in terms of the processes by which children construct their learning and perceptions. A review of research illuminating children's perceptions about their writing and classroom programmes and environments is then presented.

### *2.2 Theoretical Framework*

This study locates literacy, and in particular children's writing, within a socio-constructivist framework. This broadly reflects contemporary understandings of the processes of learning. Many researchers and theorists also locate literacy within a similar constructivist-based framework (for instance Beaufort, 2000; Mercer, 2000; Kos & Maslowski, 2001; Nolen, 2001; Evans, 2002).

The socio-constructivist framework adopted in this study fundamentally maintains that children construct their learning through the partnership between their own constructions and the socio-cultural processes of their world (McNaughton, 2002). Key ideas of this socio-constructivist framework can be summarised as:

- Learners are purposefully active, engaging in problem-finding and problem-solving activities
- Learners co-construct their knowledge, which is both individually and socially determined, within a uniquely created zone of proximal development
- Learners appropriate collaborative interactions to generate new understandings
- Learning is situated within socio-cultural environments

The complementary notions of expertise, cognitive apprenticeship, and metacognition mediate these ideas. Each will now be discussed.

### *2.2.1 Learners are Purposefully Active*

Learners are active in constructing their own knowledge (McNaughton, 1994). Activity becomes internalised as cognition, and is therefore the basis of all learning (Wood, 1998). Learners are not seen as 'simply' active however, but 'purposefully' active, involved in activities related to problem-finding and problem-solving, in order to construct knowledge (Vygotsky, 1962/1986; Davydov & Zinchenko, 1993). Consequently, Wood (1998, p.17) describes learning as "a product of the joint construction by the child and the more expert members of [the] culture."

Problematic activity must be viewed from a child's perspective to appreciate knowledge construction processes (McNaughton, 1994). This is in keeping with many constructivist models, in that "a core belief of constructivism is the need to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it." (Evans, 2002, p.49). This resonates with the core focus of this study, that is, to explore and understand children's perceptions.

### *2.2.2 Learners Co-construct Their Knowledge*

Learners co-construct knowledge through their purposeful and socialised activity. Knowledge and learning are therefore seen as both individual and socially shared (Vygotsky, 1962/1986). Socially shared activity between less-expert and more-expert partners can extend individual achievement (Tudge, 1992). The states of less- and more-expert are better defined by actual expertise than by age (Chi, Glaser, & Farr, 1986; Tudge, 1992). This has significant implications for children's social interactions in classroom environments.

Knowledge is co-constructed within a zone of proximal development. This

zone is described as the range of achievement between what can be achieved individually and what can be achieved in collaboration with a more expert partner (Vygotsky, 1962/1986; Cole, 1985). A zone of proximal development is uniquely created in each social interaction, and does not exist independently of a particular person or situation (Tudge, 1992). The zone of proximal development is also seen as a reflection of the relationship between education (as a socio-cultural construct, as in *instruction*) and cognitive development (as a psychological construct, as in *ability*). In this sense, the role of both innate ability and maturational processes are addressed, answering a key criticism of constructivism in general (Fox, 2001).

### 2.2.3 *Learners Appropriate Collaborative Interactions*

The interactions that take place during shared activity and within a zone of proximal development are gradually internalised to form “new mental functions or new structures” (Davydov & Zinchenko, 1993, p.102), that is, knowledge. This process is known as internalisation (Davydov & Zinchenko, 1993) or appropriation (Rogoff, 1993), and has also been more fully conceptualised through the model of scaffolded interactions (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Appropriation has significant implications for social interactions in classroom environments.

### 2.2.4 *Learning is Situated*

Learning is situated, that is, tied to the socio-cultural context in which it was developed (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Beaufort, 2000). Both the learning that takes place within this context, and the learners themselves, are largely bound by the ‘rules’ of the context (Beaufort, 2000). These rules may be socio-cultural, domain-related, or a combination of both. This idea resonates with the intention of this study to explore the immediate contexts surrounding children’s perceptions of writing.

The three mediating notions of expertise, cognitive apprenticeship, and

metacognition, also adopted in this framework interact with the key elements.

### 2.2.5 *Expertise*

Expertise is particularly relevant to this study, in that it relates to the relative roles of less-expert and more-expert within joint activity. The role of the more-expert partner is typically overlooked in traditional schooling. Specifically related to writing, children are typically not able to utilise the models of expert writing they see when reading (Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1989).

Exactly what characterises expertise in writing has become somewhat contentious. Hayes and Flower (1986) maintain that writing expertise differs from expertise in other domains. They hold that expert writers are more strategic at specific points of the writing process than novices, particularly in the pre-writing stages. This view is in conflict with a more general model of expertise, where knowledge plays a more prominent role than strategy use. Torrance (1996) maintains that knowledge is indeed a key differentiator, specifically genre knowledge. This view is more in keeping with a more general model of expertise, where knowledge plays a more prominent role than strategy use. The most significant implication of Torrance's view is that experts must be considered expert only in relation to the context (or domain) in which they operate. This theoretical tension over the relative importance of knowledge and strategy use is of interest in this study.

### 2.2.6 *Cognitive Apprenticeship*

Cognitive apprenticeship describes a specific form of socialised activity, embedded within collaborative activity between more- and less-expert partners. Like traditional apprenticeship, cognitive apprenticeship "embeds the learning of skills and knowledge in their social and functional context" (Collins et al., 1989, p.454). Instructional processes operate within

collaborative and authentic activity allowing learners to “continually access models of expertise-in-use against which to refine their understanding of complex skills.” (Collins et al., 1989, p.456).

Cognitive apprenticeship is particularly relevant to the domain of writing when writing is viewed as “a set of cultural practices that people engage in.” (Resnick, 2000, p.28). Resnick (2000) suggests that school-based literacy can be better related to out-of-school literacy through instruction using the concept of a cognitive apprenticeship. Resnick (2000) claims that this may be achieved through authentic activity within authentic contexts, rather than the decontextualised and inauthentic activity that typifies school-based literacy.

### 2.2.7 *Metacognition*

Metacognition links the external world of instruction and socialisation to the internal world of cognition. Metacognition can be broadly described as “being aware of our thinking as we perform specific tasks and then using this awareness to control what we are doing.” (Marzano et al., 1988, p.9). This description highlights three broad components of metacognition; metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive experiences, and executive control processes.

Metacognitive knowledge is seen to mediate between activity, internalisation, and knowledge construction (Sperling, Howard, Miller, & Murphy, 2002). Metacognitive experiences relate to the point at which metacognitive knowledge is activated before, during, or after a task, often related to novelty or cognitive conflict. These experiences *should* have the effect of creating change in metacognitive knowledge. However, younger and less-expert learners appear to have difficulty attending to and interpreting metacognitive experiences (Flavell, 1987). Executive control processes involve the planning, monitoring, and regulation of cognitive activities. These may be externally controlled and later internalised, and as



such are responsive to instructional intervention (Marzano et al., 1988). Executive control processes are also linked to self-regulation, a concept that integrates metacognition, strategy use, and motivation (Sperling et al., 2002).

### 2.3 *Philosophical Stance*

The socio-constructivist theoretical framework itself is complemented by a philosophical stance of naturalistic inquiry. This stance is characterised by the central role of theory. Theory is described as the smallest unit of knowledge, and is grounded in both observation and linguistic structures (Clark, 1997). Through observation and logical assertions, learners construct global theoretical networks. However, theory is under-determined, that is, it is stronger than the evidence presented for it. Therefore, multiple theories can explain similar observations. This stance implies that the findings presented in this study are only one interpretation of the data.

### 2.4 *Children's Perceptions*

Research illuminating children's perceptions of writing is reviewed here, in terms of knowledge, strategies, attributions and attitudes. As discussed, the areas are clearly inter-related, but they have been separated here for closer examination.

### 2.5 *Knowledge*

Children's knowledge about writing is a vast area (Martello, 2001), and only selected aspects of this area are reviewed here. Knowledge about writing generally is reviewed, as this area demonstrates children's understanding of writing as a domain. Research exploring the specific knowledge children use in their writing is also reviewed, to demonstrate the critical role of knowledge in writing. This is particularly relevant given the contentious role of knowledge in the notion of writing expertise. Research describing children's genre knowledge and knowledge of audience is also reviewed, as classroom influences significantly impact upon these areas.

### 2.5.1 Knowledge About Writing Generally

Children's knowledge about writing generally is somewhat difficult to disentangle from their knowledge about *their own* writing. Findings about children's knowledge about writing generally are mixed at best, and may be closely related to classroom environments.

Shook, Marrion, and Ollila (1989) found children in their first year of primary schooling conceptualised writing firstly in terms of its functionality in authentic contexts. These children saw writing as purposeful and useful. A secondary concept expressed by this group was relating to the mechanical aspects of writing. These comparatively young children also included knowledge of expressive aspects in their conceptualisations.

In contrast to Shook et al.'s (1989) findings, a key piece of New Zealand research found that young children held generally negative concepts about writing (McNaughton, Parr, & Tuhiwai Smith, 1996). These middle primary children conceptualised writing in terms of it being a product that is shared when it is complete, something done alone, in classrooms, within an allocated time. However, McNaughton et al. (1996) caution that a causal connection between what children say and what they do does not necessarily exist. This caution is of concern in the design of this study.

The National Educational Monitoring Project (NEMP) writing assessment (Flockton & Crooks, 1999) asked middle primary children 'what people need to be a good writer', targeting their knowledge about writing generally. Children were asked to choose three statements from a list of ten, thus limiting the range of responses. While presentation of the list was standardised, the order of presentation of the items may have influenced children's responses. The most common response related to using imagination. Other common responses included willingness to try things out, and using punctuation. The least common responses were to read or write a lot, to like writing, and to talk about writing.

### 2.5.2 *Specific Knowledge of own Writing*

Children's specific knowledge about their own writing may appear different depending on research methods used. Children appear to differently describe and enact their knowledge about their own writing. Kos and Maslowski (2001) interviewed middle primary children about what made *their own writing* good. Just over half of the responses related to handwriting, writing often was a less frequent response, and 'using ideas' was a markedly infrequent response. In contrast to this, when children were interviewed about what made a 'good writer' 'good', just under half of the responses related to handwriting, and responses relating to using ideas were comparatively higher. The distinction that children made between themselves and other writers is of significance. This study aims to target children's perceptions of themselves as writers, and will address this issue in the design and methods.

Alongside the interview data, the children in Kos and Maslowski's (2001) study were audiotaped as they worked in small groups at writing tasks. The data from these audiotaped conversations (which can be seen as enacted knowledge) was markedly different from the interview data (which can be seen as described knowledge). Children's talk most frequently related to giving and receiving help from their peers, the organisation of their writing, encouraging more detail in each other's writing, and idea generation. In contrast to the interview findings, handwriting concerns were strikingly infrequently discussed. These differences demonstrate sound reasons behind McNaughton et al.'s (1996) caution about the discrepancies between what children say and do. This caution is of significance, and is addressed in the design and methods of this study.

### 2.5.3 *Procedural Knowledge*

Hillocks' (1987) early synthesis of research suggests that knowledge about writing can be viewed in terms of two relatively discrete areas; discourse and content knowledge, enabling writers to recall content, and procedural

knowledge, enabling writers to transform this content knowledge into text. This procedural knowledge is closely related to composing strategies, which are discussed shortly.

Procedural knowledge may also be viewed in terms of its expressive and mechanical aspects. Graham et al. (1993) found that both age and expertise impacted on children's procedural knowledge. Younger and less-expert children focussed their knowledge on mechanical aspects of writing, in contrast to Shook et al.'s (1989) findings. Older and more-expert children focussed their knowledge on expressive aspects. Children at middle primary level described their knowledge in terms of *both* the expressive and mechanical aspects of writing. They related writing problems to mechanical aspects, but said they would use strategies related to both expressive and mechanical aspects to try to fix such problems. However, the research questions focused children on describing what their teacher thought of their writing, which may have influenced the findings.

Children's procedural knowledge may also relate to more mundane aspects of writing, neither specifically expressive nor mechanical. Middle primary children in Pollard and Trigg's (2000) study were uniquely pragmatically concerned about the procedural demands of writing. Children were particularly concerned about recording and avoiding repetitive tasks, but retained a high level of interest for the actual writing tasks.

#### 2.5.4 *Genre Knowledge*

Genre knowledge (or knowledge of discourse structures) is an important and under-researched component of knowledge about writing (Hillocks, 1987; Torrance, 1996). Children's use of genre demonstrates "both social and cognitive processes influencing children's writing" (Dahl & Farnan, 1998, p.56). Genre can be described as "conventionalised ways of using language for a particular purpose, following ground rules which reflect the cultural traditions of a particular group of society." (Mercer, 2000, p.111).

Children in their first two years of primary schooling hold clear preferences about the genre they use for writing (Shook et al., 1989). Shook et al. found that children preferred to write using a limited range of manageable and modelled genre (such as lists, notes, captions), using familiar topics (such as people, animals, events). In contrast, Chapman (1994) found that children of the same age used a wide range of up to fifteen clearly differentiated genre. The use of this range of genre was not specifically related to the instructional programme, and instead, certain genre appeared to emerge through “social dialogue, the literate socialization processes, at play in the classroom.” (Chapman, 1994, p. 364).

Intertextual knowledge is related to children’s genre knowledge. Intertextual references “reveal the nature of the relationship between the children’s narrative and literary competences on one hand, and their experience of books and written language on the other.” (Fox, 1993, p.11). Fox claims that the intertextual references made by children demonstrated their understandings of literacy “as though they know what you have to do to become a storyteller is *do what other storytellers have done.*” (Fox, 1993, p.12, original emphasis). Fox (1993) found that young children made intertextual references including direct and entire retellings of known stories, direct quoting from known stories, and the use of ideas, themes, and characters from known stories.

#### 2.5.5 *Knowledge of Audience*

Knowledge of audience is significant to this study in that it specifically addresses the relationship between children’s knowledge and the classroom programme and environment. Children’s knowledge of audience is under-researched in primary school aged children (Wollman-Bonilla, 2001). It can be described as an awareness of the potential reader within the social context of writing. A sense of audience may create a zone of proximal development, where children can “better understand and anticipate their readers’ needs and expectations, allowing them to stretch beyond their

sociocognitive capacity as it might be displayed in other situations.” (Wollman-Bonilla, 2001, p.188).

Research with children has typically described the teacher as the primary audience for writing rather than a more genuine audience, as “it is often assumed that children do not have the sociocognitive capacity to be audience-aware.” (Wollman-Bonilla, 2001, p.187). Young children develop knowledge of audience when they write “in a context characterized by an authentic and responsive audience.” (Wollman-Bonilla, 2001, p.201). Children’s knowledge of audience is not apparently affected by writing ability or sociocognitive development.

There are however, contrasting views about children’s knowledge of audience across age groups. The findings of Shook et al. (1989) concur with Wollman-Bonilla’s (2001) findings that even very young children showed knowledge of audience. However Nistler (1990) found that young children demonstrated minimal knowledge of audience. Nistler (1990) also found that middle primary children showed a wider knowledge of audience, and referred specifically to elements in their texts that were designed with a specific audience in mind.

These contrasting findings demonstrate that knowledge of audience is *perhaps* determined within the instructional environment, which would point to a close relationship between children’s perceptions and the classroom influences.

Knowledge of audience appears to be linked to strategy use. In Gallini and Zhang’s (1997) study, middle primary children who showed high audience knowledge were more likely to use metacognitive strategies in their writing.

## 2.6 *Strategies*

Research relating to several aspects of children’s strategy use is reviewed

here. Research describing the use of specific strategies for composing and revising is reviewed, as these activities are considered critical in the writing process. Research relating to the use of self-regulatory strategies, specific to writing, is also explored, as this relates to the role of metacognition in the development of expertise.

### *2.6.1 Composing Strategies*

Composing strategies are closely related to procedural knowledge. Composing strategies enable writers to transform discourse and content knowledge into text (Hillocks, 1987). Generative strategies are used to initially form discrete chunks of text. These chunks are then transformed into verbatim units, “a sequence of words not yet recorded, but which the writer can state upon request.” (Hillocks, 1987, p. 73). This process is constrained by the limits of working memory. Verbatim units are then recorded as ‘graphemic units’, which may not necessarily correspond to the verbatim unit. In this way, writers are involved in ongoing editing “during recording, sometimes omitting, adding, or changing a word” (Hillocks, 1987, p.73). Therefore, composing involves a wide range of strategies used to generate, transform, remember, and adapt text as it is composed.

### *2.6.2 Revision Strategies*

Use of revision strategies appears to be highly dependent on knowledge. McCutchen, Francis, and Kerr (1997) found that content knowledge supported revision for meaning but made no impact on surface level revisions. Reading strategies also influence the use revision strategies. In particular, error location as a reading strategy is critical for revisions involving problem detection and problem diagnosis.

The NEMP found that middle primary children used revision strategies very infrequently (Flockton & Crooks, 1999). On average, less than 1% of children made any substantial revisions, and around 5% of children made slight revisions. Use of revision strategies was only evidenced by apparent

changes in a written text, potentially influencing these findings.

Knowledge and use of revision strategies may be responsive to instructional intervention. Fitzgerald and Stamm (1990) found that interventions during small group conferences enhanced *some* children's knowledge and use of revision strategies. This was particular to children who initially displayed the least amount of knowledge about revision and used the least revision strategies. This research again highlights the close relationship between knowledge and strategy use.

### 2.6.3 *Self-regulation Strategies*

Self-regulatory strategies for writing appear to be used by more-expert writers. Graham and Harris (1997, p.414) found that more-expert writers used adaptive strategies to "help them manage their writing behaviour, the composing task, and their writing environment." In contrast, less-expert writers tend to use strategies that minimize the complexity of writing "into tasks of telling what one knows, doing little planning or reflection in advance or during writing." (Graham & Harris, 1997, p. 415)

While early self-regulatory strategies may be both "ineffective and inelegant" (Graham et al., 2000, p.6) they are responsive to both developmental and instructional change. Self-regulatory strategies appear to fade with increased expertise, which may be due to automatization of these strategies rather than inherent fading (Graham et al., 2000). Such automatization or fading of strategy use may influence research findings in this study, and is considered in both data collection and analysis.

### 2.7 *Attributions*

Research relating to common and less common attributions is reviewed here, along with research illuminating the link between attributions and strategy use.



### 2.7.1 *Common Attributions*

Effort and ability are the most common general attributions (Weiner, 1994). An effort attribution is thought to be more conducive to adaptive motivational beliefs, in that effort is relatively controllable. However, the problem of 'effortful failure' remains, whereby exerting effort at a task may not be enough to ensure success. Ability attributions are less conducive to adaptive motivational beliefs, in that ability is perceived as a less controllable state, which is possibly connected to luck (Weiner, 1994).

Research by Gipps and Tunstall (1998) in part confirms Weiner's (1994) notion of effort and ability as common attributions. Children in their first two years of primary schooling identified effort as a major attribution for writing success and specific ability as a lesser attribution, with attributions being relatively stable across other domains. This finding of stability is at odds with Weiner's (1994) assertion that attributions are domain-specific rather than domain-general. Gipps and Tunstall (1998) related the prevalence of effort attributions to the frequent exhortations of the classroom teachers to 'try hard'. Atkinson (2000) confirms this link between teachers' and children's beliefs, establishing that the motivational beliefs of secondary school aged children are strongly linked to those of their current teacher.

### 2.7.2 *Less Common Attributions*

Less common attributions are also of significance in understanding the ways in which children perceive and attribute their successes and failures. Gipps and Tunstall (1998) also identified a wide range of less common attributions for writing success, including generalised ability, task speed, task difficulty, teacher feedback, interest and motivation, home influence, and time spent in school.

### 2.7.3 *Attributions, Strategy Use, and Achievement*

Adaptive attributional beliefs may be linked to higher self-regulation and

achievement (Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997). Georgiou (1999) confirms this, finding that middle primary children who attributed successes to internal factors were more likely to achieve highly. Conversely, attributions to luck and other external factors were negatively associated with achievement. However, Graham et al. (1993) do not support this view. They found that attributional beliefs related to writing were generally similar between ability groups in children of this age.

## 2.8 Attitudes

Findings about children's attitudes towards writing are extremely mixed. The NEMP used a Likert-type scale to survey middle primary children's attitudes towards writing and found that:

- 45% liked writing at school 'heaps'
- 27% liked it 'quite a lot'
- 20% 'a little'
- 8% 'not at all' (Flockton & Crooks, 1999, p.58).

These children also reported enjoying writing stories, letters, poems, and diaries. These generally positive findings are encouraging.

However, secondary school students in Philips' (1986) ethnographic study reported a range of negative attitudes towards writing. The attitude that they were dealing with an unwanted and onerous chore was prevalent in children's discussions about writing. The differences between the NEMP findings and Philips' findings may in part be explained by differences in method and approach, as well as the age differences in the participants.

In interviews with middle primary children, Pollard and Triggs (2000) found that children did not have particularly strong feelings about writing, but where feelings were expressed they were generally negative. Children described writing generally as "painful, threatening, and not enjoyed" (Pollard & Triggs, 2000, p.70). Given this finding, it is surprising to note that in this study, children also reported uniformly enjoying 'writing

stories'. This apparent contradiction appeared to be closely linked to the actual writing task, in that children reported positive attitudes towards writing stories (which they perceived as an easier, less threatening option), but negative attitudes towards more formal writing tasks.

### 2.9 *Cautions*

There are several cautions in interpreting research findings about children's knowledge, strategy use, attributions, and attitudes. Firstly, McNaughton et al. (1996) note that research findings relating to children's knowledge and perceptions of writing may be unduly influenced by inappropriate interview questions. Secondly, developmental concerns may also impact on what children report, in that children are more likely to describe what is prominent in their minds at the time of research (McNaughton et al., 1996). This issue is described here as 'fore-front' reporting. Thirdly, what children say and what they do may not be the same (McNaughton et al., 1996; Kos & Maslowski, 2000). This necessitates a multiple method approach and caution when using limited data.

### 2.10 *Classroom Influences*

The social influences on children's perceptions are also examined, in this instance, specific to those within classrooms. There is of course significant overlap between what can be considered programme-related and what can be considered environment-related. Elements that relate to the planned and incidental instructional programme implemented by the teacher are linked to programmes, and those that relate to social and cultural aspects of classroom life are linked to environment. Research relating to classroom programmes and environments is reviewed here.

### 2.11 *Classroom Programmes*

To give a clear frame of reference, discussion of classroom programmes is grouped around four broad categories: traditional, process-based, holistic, and eclectic. These categories broadly demonstrate the range of

contemporary approaches towards writing instruction (Ludwig & Herschell, 1998). The reviewed research demonstrates the wide range of elements that may be included in an instructional programme, and also the difficulties in grouping and comparing types of programmes. The reviewed research informs this study by giving a coherent framework to discussion of classroom programmes in relation to children's perceptions.

### *2.11.1 'Traditional' Classroom Programmes*

In a broadly traditional approach, writing is viewed as "a simple educational skill." (Smith & Elley, 2000, p. 36). This approach intended to demonstrate the correct grammatical forms of the language, and may be typified by a focus on the production of a correct written product (Hillocks, 1987). Writing is decontextualised from other literacy activities, and is more generally taken out of a context of use (Hammond, 1996). This type of instruction is often perceived as simpler yet less effective (Hayes & Flower, 1986; Hillocks, 1984), and has been largely abandoned at both policy and practice levels in New Zealand (McNaughton, 2002; Smith & Elley, 2000).

Research on the effectiveness of this approach is not generally positive. Hillocks' (1984, p.159) meta-analysis of experimental studies concludes that the traditional approach is "the least effective mode examined, only about half as effective as the average experimental treatment."

### *2.11.2 'Process-based' Classroom Programmes*

The second broad approach is the process-based approach, which appears to be grounded in cognitive approaches (for instance Hayes, Flower, Schriver, Stratman, & Carey, 1987; Hayes & Flower, 1986, 1980; and Graves, 1983). The essential differences between this and the traditional approach are the focus on process rather than product, and the shift in ownership and control of writing from teacher to learner (Graves, 1983). Assumptions underlying a cognitive process approach are that writing is goal directed, that these

goals are hierarchically organised, and that writers use planning, generative, and revising strategies and processes (Hayes & Flower, 1986).

As with other approaches, there is of course wide variation in how an approach is used in a particular classroom. Lipson, Monsenthal, Daniels & Woodside-Jiron (2000) present case studies of eleven teachers, all using what they called a process approach to writing. However, the findings indicated four clearly differentiated sets of epistemological beliefs held by the teachers. Only one 'set' was considered actually related to a process-based approach. These surprising findings highlight the wide range of influences on instructional programmes, and cautions against treating a 'classroom programme' as a fixed and readily identifiable entity. This is of significance to this study, and implies that the way teachers use specific terms in their discussion of their programme should be questioned.

Research regarding the effectiveness of process approaches is mixed. Hillocks' (1984) meta-analysis of experimental studies showed a generally positive effect size for two broadly process based approaches.

### *2.11.3 'Holistic' Classroom Programmes*

The third broad approach to writing instruction can be called holistic, and is based on Cambourne's model of literacy learning (Cambourne, 1995). The essential differences between this approach and the process-based approach are that ownership and control of writing are distributed between teacher and learners, rather than wholly seated with the individual learner, and the socio-cultural aspects of classroom environments are more explicitly acknowledged. Here, the programme and environment are treated as a single entity.

Research specifically evaluating holistic approaches, and in particular Cambourne's model in action in classrooms, is lacking and needed.

#### 2.11.4 'Eclectic' Classroom Programmes

The fourth broad grouping of instructional programmes can be called eclectic. Such programmes may draw from the approaches mentioned, or from other sources, in a deliberate or incidental manner. *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1994), and its supporting documents are clearly oriented towards a combined process-based and holistic approach (Education Review Office, 2001; Openshaw, 2000). This is most strongly demonstrated in the statement of characteristics of teaching and learning programmes in English, which states "Language is best developed through an integrated approach to learning. Programmes should incorporate integrated, holistic approaches to learning and teaching, and use a combination of approaches." (Ministry of Education, 1994, p.11).

The Education Review Office (2001, no page number) maintains that this relatively recent curriculum focus is generally positive and effective, and that "The greatest improvement in primary schools has been in the teaching of written language."

#### 2.12 Further Cautions

There are, however, significant limitations on research into the effectiveness of different instructional approaches. Firstly, the broad categories as described do not demonstrate a polarisation of types of classroom programmes. This review presumes the understanding that any classroom programme is not 'off the shelf', pre-packaged, or fixed in any sense. Secondly, the very nature of classroom programmes and innovation may confound research findings, as discussed earlier and highlighted by Lipson et al.'s (2001) research. Harris and Graham (1994, p.247) also note that "a consistent finding in literacy research is that innovative programs show superior effects over conventional practice." Thirdly, the wide range of research methods used, and the applications of these methods, makes research difficult to compare (Hillocks, 1984). Finally, it is generally held that "no one intervention or approach can address the complex nature of

school success or failure.” (Harris & Graham, 1994, p. 245). As such, research on the effectiveness of classroom programmes and instructional approaches is at best a small view of a larger picture.

### *2.13 Classroom Environment*

Classroom environments can have critical impact on how children orient themselves for success, and consequently, to what they attribute their successes (Nolen, 2001). Research relating to several elements of classroom environmental features is reviewed here; social factors, the task environment, and teacher’s perceptions. These elements are considered to be significant in that they encompass both planned and incidental elements that co-exist in the classroom environment, and may influence children’s perceptions.

#### *2.13.1 The Social Environment*

Social factors are significant within the learning environment (Hofman et al., 2001). Peer collaboration appears to impact on both children’s and teachers’ perceptions (Nolen, 2001). Working preferences related to collaboration also appears to impact on other perceptions. Gallini and Zhang (1997) found that children who preferred to work alone reported stronger self-efficacy beliefs and use of metacognitive strategies. Children who preferred to work in groups showed higher audience awareness and also used more metacognitive strategies. In particular, these authors highlighted the complex interplay between features unique to the task and content, features of the social and cognitive environment, and children’s socio-cognitive constructs.

#### *2.13.2 The Task Environment*

The types of tasks within an instructional programme are significant. Philips’ (1986) ethnographic study demonstrated significant mis-match between children’s and teachers’ perceptions of the task environment. In two secondary classrooms, teachers perceived that they gave full and

coherent instructions and guidance for writing tasks and that the tasks were relevant to the content. Children however reported perceptions of both difficulty and boredom, and saw writing tasks as both irrelevant and onerous. Hofman et al. (2001) also note that teachers and children's perceptions of the same environment can be markedly different. Wallace (1996), also with children in secondary schooling, reported that children who identified with novel and meaningful tasks were more likely to be engaged with learning.

Allington and Johnston (2000) find that effective writing instruction in the middle primary years is characterised by writing tasks that involve problem-setting and problem-solving, managed self-selection, and collaboration.

### *2.13.3 Teacher's Perceptions*

As highlighted by Philips (1986) in particular, children's perceptions may not relate to teacher's perceptions. As Weinstein (1989, p. 192) acknowledges, "what students perceive about teaching behaviour may not in fact resemble either teacher intent or observed practice." The ideas of teachers are seen as important within classroom environment (Glasswell, 2001). Teachers in Glasswell's (2001, p.350) study held "multiple and simultaneous goals for writing activities, only some of which were met through direct teaching." The specific literacy concepts held by teachers may also influence classroom programmes. Cahill (1998) surveyed primary school teachers about their concepts of literacy, and found that they focused on the situational and expressive aspects of literacy, describing their own literacy as deliberate and reflective. Lipson et al. (2000) conclude that that teachers' beliefs were critical in establishing classroom programmes, in turn influencing the classroom environment.

### *2.14 Summary: Children's Perceptions*

Children can both describe and demonstrate their knowledge, strategy use, attributional beliefs, and attitudes, in general and specific terms. Age and



expertise appear to impact on children's procedural knowledge (Graham et al., 1993), and children may describe and enact their knowledge differently (Kos & Maslowski, 2001). Children's strategy use may be knowledge dependent (Torrance, 1996; McCutchen et al., 1997). The range of attributional beliefs may be wider than was initially proposed (Weiner, 1994; Gipps & Tunstall, 1998). Adaptive attributional beliefs may be associated with higher achievement (Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997; Georgiou, 1999), which is, however, disputed by Graham et al. (1993). Attitudes towards writing have been found to be more positive in younger and less expert children, and more negative in older and more expert children (Philips, 1986; Flockton & Crooks, 1999). Attitudes towards different aspects of writing are not necessarily similar (Pollard & Triggs, 2000).

#### 2.15 *Summary: Classroom Influences*

The New Zealand curriculum appears to be based in a combined process-based and holistic approach characterised by ownership, authenticity, and engagement in the writing process (Hayes et al., 1987; Hayes & Flower, 1986, 1980; Graves, 1983). This is generally considered more effective than traditional approaches (Education Review Office, 2001; Hilton, 2001; Lipson et al., 2001; Hillocks, 1984). However it is rightly acknowledged that there is wide variation in how such approaches are translated into day-to-day classroom programmes (Lipson et al., 2001). Social factors within the classroom environment significantly impact on children's perceptions (Nolen, 2001; Gallini & Zhang, 1997). Features of particular tasks also impact on children's perceptions and in particular motivational beliefs (Allington & Johnston, 2000; Gallini & Zhang, 1997; Philips, 1986).

However, research regarding classroom environments and programmes is both limited in scope and quantity. Further, the nature of classroom innovation lends itself to positive research findings. There is also limited

empirical research on the nature of classroom environments.

### *2.16 Chapter Summary*

This chapter reviewed research relating children's perceptions, specifically knowledge, strategies, attributions, and attitudes. Research relating to classroom programmes and environments was also reviewed.

## Chapter Three

### Design and Methods

#### 3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter outlines the design, methods, participants, ethical considerations, data collection, data analysis, and data validation techniques used in this study.

#### 3.2 Ethnographic Case Study Design

A broadly qualitative approach is taken in this study. The research setting is naturalistic in keeping with the recent and noted move towards classroom based educational research (Hammer & Schifter, 2001). Specifically, this study adopts an ethnographic case study design.

##### 3.2.1 Ethnographic Design

An ethnographic design is appropriate for three key reasons. Firstly, the purposes of ethnography and the purposes of this study concur. The purposes of ethnography are to construct theories that correspond to lived realities and contribute to a wider theoretical network (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999; Anderson, 1989). Similarly, the purpose of this study is to understand children's perceptions as they understand them, and to reconceptualise these perceptions through a more-expert lens. Secondly, ethnographic design is appropriate within the educational context of the research. As Preissle (1999, p.650) notes, educational ethnography is the exploration of "the culture of ... teaching and learning as they occur in people's ordinary daily activities." Thirdly, ethnography is consistent with the adoption of a philosophical stance of naturalistic inquiry (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Construction of theory is central to both ethnography and to naturalistic inquiry.

##### 3.2.2 Case Study Design

This study also intends to explore classroom programmes and environments,

making a further design element necessary. A case study design is appropriate for three key reasons. Firstly, case study research is study of the singular, or the bounded system (Stake, 1995). It aims to study the single case in depth and in context. The major aims of this study are to explore children's perceptions (where each child can be seen as a single case), and to explore these within the context of the classroom (where each classroom can be seen as a single case). The study of each case can reveal "both unique and universal understandings." (Simons, 1996, p.225). Secondly, case study research is essentially an exploration of context (Stake, 1995), which, while seen as a determinant of actions, cannot be wholly responsible for these. In this sense, a case study design element is also in keeping with the theoretical framework of this study, in that the contextual embeddedness of social reality is acknowledged.

Therefore, an ethnographic case study design is both warranted and viable. This design is appropriate as it seeks to understand the cultural knowledge of participants, as they understand it, and to understand how this knowledge is employed (Canen, 1999). The two elements of the design are melded but distinct. The ethnographic element of the design involves the study of the school lives of the participating children as developing writers. The case study element of the design involves the in-depth study of the two bounded systems of the classrooms involved. No particular method is dictated by this design, instead a flexible multiple method approach is used (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

### *3.3 Methods*

The multiple method approach of this study is in keeping with other research exploring children's perceptions (for instance Kos & Maslowski, 2001; Weinstein, 1989). The key methods of observations, interviews, protocol analysis, and document analysis were used in this study.

Two key implications for the multiple method approach are highlighted by

the reviewed literature. Firstly, methods need to explicitly target children's perceptions. Poorly targeted methods may contribute to distorted findings; for instance, the NEMP's (Flockton & Crooks, 1999) use of written text as the sole source of evidence use of revision strategies. Secondly, multiple methods are warranted in relation to both children's perceptions and classroom programmes and environments. This is particularly so given McNaughton et al.'s (1996) caution about the difference between what children say and do, and Lipson et al.'s (2000) discrepancies between teachers' self-reporting and other data.

### 3.3.1 *Observation*

Observation was used as a key tool in this study, and is noted as a key tool in educational ethnography (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Observations were focused on specific writing-related events within the classrooms. The whole classroom context was observed, along with specific observations relating to the writing activities of both teachers and children. The full range and sequence of writing instruction and activities over six weeks were observed. Initially, the following areas were of particular interest:

- how the instructional programme operated;
- what writing activities children engage in, how often, and to what extent,
- when and how the teacher is involved in children's writing processes,
- what children talk about as they engage in the writing process, and to whom they talk,
- how the content and context of interactions between teacher and children impact on activities,
- how children and teacher handle questions and problems.

Although this list initially guided observations, it did not limit the full extent of observations, nor serve as a theoretical base. In this study, early observations were used to contextualise data, to generate initial categories

and themes, and to generate interview and informal questions. Later observations were used to continue to contextualise data. Emergent themes were noted in the observations during the data collection period, and observations were more specifically targeted as necessary, to confirm or disconfirm these themes.

Observations were recorded in writing on site as exactly as possible, with reference to contextualising information. Code names were used in recording observations.

### *3.3.2 Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews were also used in data collection. The broad aim of these interviews was to allow participants to describe their perceptions in their own words. Two interviews were held with each individual teacher, and two interviews were held with each class group of children. The initial interviews were based in early observations, and were used in part to generate questions to guide later observations. Later interviews were used in part to verify observational data.

The interviews were specifically in a 'conversational style', and were based on a series of statements and open-ended questions. The questions were both direct and indirect, in keeping with common methods in ethnographic case study research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Questions and statements were developed from earlier observations, and further developed into a broad schedule, which was used as a guide for questioning rather than a prescriptive structure. Questions and statements were then selected from the schedule as appropriate, in line with children's responses, and in keeping with a natural conversational style. Active listening techniques were used so that responses were clarified and elaborated upon before a new question or statement was selected (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, Anderson, 1989). During the interviews, children's participation was informally monitored to ensure all children were able to discuss their perceptions. The

interview schedules are available in appendix B.

The interviews with children were held with classroom-based groups of four children, within classroom time. The small group setting appeared to facilitate the conversational style and open discussion of the interview questions. Interviews were held in a small resource room adjacent to the children's classrooms. This location allowed easy access to documents held in the classroom, which children referred to in their interviews. The location was also relatively private, allowing children to speak freely and without interruption. Interviews with children were held during the second and fifth weeks of the data collection period and each lasted for approximately forty minutes. Interviews were audiotaped with the express consent of children and their parents.

Interviews with teachers were held individually, at a time convenient for the individual teacher. Interviews were held in the teacher's classrooms, where there was easy access to documents. Interviews were held in the third and fifth weeks of the data collection period and each lasted for approximately one hour. While it was intended that interviews would be audiotaped, one of the teachers stated a preference that the interviews were not audiotaped. Consequently, interviews with teachers were not audiotaped but instead recorded in writing at the time.

### 3.3.2 *'Think Alouds'*

A 'think aloud' procedure was used with children as they engaged in aspects of the writing process. This is also referred to as 'protocol analysis' but for ease of reference in this study, the term 'think aloud' is used. This procedure involved "the overt, verbal expression of the normally covert mental processes" (Baumann, Jones, & Seifert-Kessell, 1993, p.185). In this instance, the 'think aloud' method required the writer to either continuously verbalise their mental processing, or to stop periodically to verbalise mental processing.

While ‘think alouds’ have been shown to be fruitful data sources, they are also disputed as an efficient and effective data collection method (Sperling et al., 2002; Cooper & Holzman, 1985, as cited in Hayes et al., 1987, p.180). Key criticisms are that this method has a poorly defined object of research, that data is untestable, and that self-reporting, by novices in particular, may be inaccurate. Thinking aloud may also be a source of cognitive overload for children, as “at times learners’ level of strategies and skills may preclude them from also thinking aloud while engaging in learning and monitoring tasks.” (Sperling et al., 2002, p.54). Thinking aloud may also be time-consuming and cumbersome (Sperling et al., 2002).

Despite these criticisms, this study upholds the use of ‘think alouds’, for much the same reasons as Hayes et al. (1987). Firstly, ‘think alouds’ are used to construct theories rather than to test them. Secondly, this method has been found to be an ecologically valid method, and that the relevance of such data can be assessed relatively easily. Thirdly, self-reporting allows access to internal perceptions that cannot be accessed in other ways. Finally, the cognitive load issue was in part resolved by a minor change to the method, discussed below.

‘Think alouds’ took place after the third week of data collection, in order that rapport between researcher and children was established. Rapport with the researcher may be critical in ‘think aloud’ methods (McCutchen et al., 1997). It is acknowledged here that data from ‘think alouds’ must be contextualised against other data. It is also acknowledged that thinking aloud may have changed children’s performance as writers (Baumann et al., 1993), again highlighting the need to contextualise this data against other data sources.

Two or three ‘think aloud’ sessions were held with each child. Prior to the first think-aloud session, the researcher modelled writing whilst thinking aloud for each classroom-based group of children. This modelling session



was then discussed with the children, to ensure that they had an explicit understanding of what was expected. After one or two 'think aloud' sessions, the protocol was changed slightly. In the earlier 'think alouds', children were asked to 'talk their thinking' *as they wrote*. However, the data indicated that this was difficult for some children, which have been caused by cognitive load issues (Sperling et al., 2002). The method was then changed for all children, whereby they were asked to write for five minutes, then stop and talk about what they had written and what they had been thinking about, and also what they planned to write in the next five minutes. This changed method was modelled by the researcher with each classroom-based group of children, and discussed with the children. This 'write-stop-talk' cycle continued for the duration of their normal writing session, approximately 40 to 45 minutes. The researcher maintained the timing of this method. All 'think alouds' were audiotaped with the express consent of parents and children, and fully transcribed.

### 3.3.3 Document Analysis

Document analysis was used to contextualise and triangulate data from both children and teachers. Denzin (1997) notes that the act of talking about and reflecting upon perceptions serves circuitously to shape perceptions, therefore other sources of information should be used to gain insights and to further legitimise interpretations. In this instance, therefore, a range of written products was used.

Written products may be written in a specific 'insider' language, potentially causing obstacles to understanding (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). However, this obstacle was in part negated by this researcher's pre-existing role within the particular community of the school (see section 3.6 *Researcher Roles* in this chapter for further discussion of this). Where insider language was obvious within documents, it was clarified during interviews.

A range of written products covering the whole school year from January to the end of the data collection period in July were selected, photocopied, and analysed. This included a wide range of children's written products, jointly selected by each child, their teacher, and the researcher. Products included written plans, annotated drafts, published pieces of writing, written reflections, and self-assessments. The teacher and researcher selected teacher's written products. These included short- and long-term plans, modelled writing, reflections, assessments, and conference records for participating children. All written products were dated and authenticated by their author.

### *3.4 Participants*

This study involved a purposive sample of one school, two teachers, and eight children.

#### *3.4.1 The School*

The school involved was that with which the researcher had a prior relationship. This school was selected for two key reasons. Firstly, local knowledge and familiarity with the school setting were significant factors in selection (Schensul et al., 1999). The researcher had and maintains an on-going and enduring professional relationship with staff of this school (see section 3.6 *Researcher Roles* in this chapter for further discussion of this relationship). This facilitated early discussions with the school Board of Trustees, teachers, and parents. In educational ethnography, the relationship between researcher and researched becomes a personal, rather than impersonal one, as the researcher becomes involved and embedded in the world of the researched (Preissle, 1999). This relationship was particularly relevant to this study, where the researcher was already embedded in the world of the researched, and a personal relationship in part already existed. Secondly, the school has a strong research culture, with several staff members currently conducting on-going research. The school was recruited through the Board of Trustees. The Board was initially approached by e-

mail at a very early stage for informal access arrangements. The Board was more formally approached after this to give formal consent once ethical approval had been secured.

Hill Street School (a pseudonym) is a large suburban primary school. In 2002 it has twenty classes, although this number has varied in recent years from nineteen to twenty three. It has a teaching staff of twenty three, and a roll of approximately five hundred children. It is a contributing primary school, with classes from year one to six. Recent statistical information indicates the ethnic make-up of children within the school is approximately 65% New Zealand Pakeha, 8% Maori, 9% Pacific Island, 10% Asian, and 8% Indian. It holds a decile rating of 8.

#### 3.4.2 *The Teachers*

The two teachers involved were selected on a reputational and purposive basis from the eight teachers in the appropriate age-related area of the school. There were two criteria for selection. Firstly, the ability and willingness to describe classroom environments and programmes, and secondly those not taking part in or conducting other classroom-based research. To recruit the teachers, they were informally approached by e-mail after the Board had formally given consent. After e-mail discussion and later face-to-face discussion, both teachers consented to participate in the research.

Karly (a pseudonym) is female, Maori, and over 40 years of age. She has nine years of teaching experience, and jointly leads a team of teachers in the senior area of the school. She leads and participates in other curriculum and administrative teams within the school. She is currently undertaking a post-graduate qualification in education. John (a pseudonym) is male, Pakeha, and under 40 years of age. He has three years of teaching experience. He is a member of a different team of teachers from Karly, and also leads and participates in curriculum and administrative teams within the school.

### 3.4.3 The Children

In order to recruit the participating children, the two teachers were each asked to nominate up to eight children in the classrooms to take part in the study. From this initial group, a final group of eight children were chosen in discussion between the researcher and teachers. Children were selected on the basis of two broad criteria. Firstly, having an age-appropriate writing ability, as assessed by the teacher's routine methods. Secondly, being able to articulate their perceptions. Age and gender were not intended to be strictly representative, but a degree of balance of age and gender groups was sought. Brief demographic information about the children is presented in Table One. Pseudonyms are arranged as follows: names beginning with letters A, B, C, and D are children in John's classroom, and names beginning with letters E, F, G, and H are children in Karly's classroom.

**Table One: Demographic Information – Children**

Name (Pseudonym)	Gender	Classroom Teacher (Pseudonym)	Age at the time of data collection (years, months)	Year of schooling	Ethnic background the child associates with
Adam	Male	John	11.1	6	Chinese
Bernice	Female	John	9.9	5	NZ Pakeha
Charles	Male	John	10.6	6	NZ Pakeha
Deidre	Female	John	10.0	5	NZ / Malaysian
Eugene	Male	Karly	10.9	6	Croatian
Francesca	Female	Karly	10.11	6	Maori / Niuean
George	Male	Karly	10.11	6	NZ Pakeha
Harriet	Female	Karly	11.1	6	Chinese

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

This study upholds the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Teaching and Research (Massey University, 2001). Ethical approval was sought and obtained prior to data collection (refer to Appendix C). The key principles of informed consent, confidentiality, minimizing harm, truthfulness, and social sensitivity were upheld throughout.

### 3.5.1 *Informed Consent*

The participants (children, their parents, teachers, and the Board of Trustees) were fully informed, in appropriate ways, of the research aims and methods. Four separate information sheets, for children, their parents, teachers, and the Board of Trustees, were developed and approved by the Massey University College of Education Ethics Committee. Samples of these are included in Appendix C. After receiving this information, participants were given consent forms to either consent or not to participating in the research. Sample consent forms are included in Appendix C. Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

### 3.5.2 *Anonymity*

While anonymity could not be wholly guaranteed, all efforts were taken to maximize anonymity of the children, teachers, and school involved through use of pseudonyms, physical protection of data, and the use of non-identifying information in reporting.

### 3.5.3 *Minimising Harm*

Harm to children was minimised through classroom-based research methods. The activities of the researcher were mostly consistent with everyday classroom activities, and the setting for the research was mostly within the classroom context. For example, observations, interviews, and think-alouds took place within and close to classrooms. The school involved is one in which there is a culture of 'visitors', where it is commonplace for familiar and unfamiliar adult visitors to be routinely present in classrooms. For this reason, it was not seen as uncommon for an adult visitor to be present within classrooms.

Harm to teachers involved was also minimised. This was through conducting interviews in settings (and times) chosen by the individual teachers, and by conducting interviews on an individual basis, rather than paired interviews. Care was taken to make no evaluative judgements about

the teachers themselves or the instructional programmes in their classrooms.

#### 3.5.4 *Truthfulness*

Truthfulness was maintained through the use of multiple sources of information and corroboration of data. Some difficulty with the accuracy of data in teacher-to-teacher interviews was predicted and seen (Burgess, 2002). This was due to a presumed 'common knowledge' between teachers, relating to the subject of the interview, which while presumed, may not be present nor shared with a research audience. Therefore, in order to uphold both truth and accuracy of voice, objects of discussion that were considered common knowledge were explicitly noted and explained.

#### 3.5.5 *Other Ethical Codes*

As a practicing teacher, the researcher was also bound to uphold the New Zealand Educational Institute's Code of Ethics (New Zealand Educational Institute, 2001). The core principle of this code is to uphold best practice in the profession of teaching and in education more generally, by giving "...personal services to others through concern for and responsible promotion of, the education and welfare of children, students, support staff, and teachers." (New Zealand Educational Institute, 2001, no page number). This was upheld through conducting and reporting on the research in a manner that demonstrates concern for and promotion of the welfare of teachers and children at all times.

#### 3.5.6 *Particular Ethical Dilemmas*

Ethical dilemmas particular to this research pertain to the position of the researcher as a former teacher within the school involved. Further discussion of the researcher role is presented in this chapter in section 3.6 *Researcher Roles*. It was predicted that personal and professional relationships with teachers involved would inevitably change as a result of this research. However, as such relationships are constantly changing, this was neither negative nor detrimental.

No evaluations of the teaching and learning programmes were made as this was not consistent with the research aims, and instead programmes and environments were viewed to contextualise children's perceptions. Only non-identifiable information is reported here and elsewhere, so that there are no evaluative implications for the children, teachers, or school involved.

The nature of the researcher's prior knowledge of the children involved posed an ethical dilemma. Where this arose, the researcher's prior knowledge was identified, written as a side-bar to field notes, and specifically suspended.

Teachers were understandably interested in children's perceptions, posing a particular ethical dilemma. Where necessary, children's perceptions were only reported to teachers in very general terms to the teacher involved, in the interests of obtaining clarification and corroboration. However, such discussion was consciously delayed until the final week of data collection, to avoid inducing any change in teacher's perceptions during the data collection.

### *3.6 Researcher Roles*

The role of the researcher in this study was complex and challenging. Typically, the role of the researcher in ethnographic case study is embedded within the world of the researched (Bassegy, 1999). However, this embeddedness does not ensure a static or consistent role (Burgess, 2002). As expected, the researcher adopted distinct, multiple, and sometimes concurrent roles during the course of research (Burgess, 2002). The three roles discussed below must be seen in light of the researcher's pre-existing role as former teacher at Hill Street School.

#### *3.6.1 Passive Classroom Observer*

In the first week of the data collection, extending into the second, the researcher adopted a specifically passive role in the classrooms. This role

was adopted in order that the presence of the researcher in the classroom did not significantly alter children's activities. This role also facilitated the participants' comfort with the presence of the researcher, which supported rapport building. The researcher was re-introduced into the classrooms by the classroom teachers, as '*Madelaine who used to teach here, but is now back doing research*' (J OBS 5). Children in both classrooms showed curiosity about this research. As the school has a strong research culture, the children understood the concept of research, and could differentiate between the roles of teacher and researcher.

During the first and second weeks of data collection, the researcher was relatively passive in the children's world. Listening and note-taking were the predominant classroom activities undertaken by the researcher during this time. However outside of the classroom, the researcher was actively engaging both of the teachers, taking the more active role of participant observer and professional colleague. The researcher specifically monitored discussions between the teachers and researcher, in order that they did not specifically prompt changes in teachers' instructional programmes or actions.

### 3.6.2 *Participant Classroom Observer*

After the initial one to two weeks, the researcher adopted a more strongly participatory role in the classrooms. This role was undertaken in order to become more actively engaged with children's experiences. However this was participation in the activities of the children, rather than participating in the usual teaching activities expected of an adult in the classroom community. This unexpected pattern of participation was expressly disconcerting to some of the participating and non-participating children in the classrooms. This was expressed in their conversations with the researcher, some of which were specifically geared by children to be 'teacher-child' in nature. For example, children asked the researcher for specific editorial advice about their writing. Conversations of this type were



handled gently, with a quiet referral back to their classroom teacher for classroom issues. Consequently, the researcher was seen as a benignly unhelpful adult.

### 3.6.3 *Professional Colleague*

This role, initially undertaken by default in the adult world of the school, was more complex than the passive and participant classroom roles. It was not a role consciously adopted by the researcher, rather it was the ‘default position’ of a teacher within the school. This role was defaulted onto the researcher due to the pre-existing role held as a former teacher within the school. The role of professional colleague was one that was assumed by the participating teachers and the teams of teachers they worked within. During the first week of data collection, it became clear that this role was being assumed of the researcher. It also became clear that the role came with specific responsibilities, including providing information, support, and expertise. In particular, giving specific feedback to the participating teachers about their classroom programmes in writing was expected.

During the second and third weeks, the researcher took active steps to concurrently avoid this role and to preserve the relationships between the researcher and participating teachers. Deflection and avoidance were two key strategies used by the researcher to circumvent this role. Queries about how the researcher could support the classroom writing programme were deflected. This was done by: changing the subject in the conversation, talking generally about writing and writing research, and specifically deferring judgment. Queries that could not be deflected in this way were answered with a ‘can’t answer’ position. This was explained with a re-iteration of the researcher’s intended role as an observer rather than as a colleague. The research aims were also re-iterated, particularly in terms of the non-interventional focus of the research.

After the third week of data collection, both participating and non-

participating teachers slowly relaxed their expectation that the researcher would fulfil the role of professional colleague. Queries relating to supporting their classroom programmes decreased in frequency. In recognition of this again changed role, during the final week of data collection the researcher discussed significant findings from the literature reviewed with several teachers, both participating and non-participating. This discussion was framed in terms of 'what current research says about improving classroom programmes'.

The researcher was particularly conscious of the complexities of the roles undertaken, and took care that this did not hinder data collection and reporting.

### *3.7 Data Collection*

Data was collected over six weeks, planned in terms of three semi-discrete phases, using the multiple-method approach described earlier.

#### *3.7.1 Phase One*

The first phase, lasting one to two weeks, aimed to develop initial impressions and generate questions for the further phases. This involved general observations of both classroom environments and children as they engaged in the writing process. Observation during this phase was largely passive, with initially minimal interactions with participants. Interview questions, for both teachers and children, were developed from these observations. A sample observation record is included in Appendix D. Observations and field notes were recorded in classrooms as much as possible, with some off-site recording of general impressions and notes to supplement observations. During this phase, the researcher was careful to build rapport and trust with both teachers and children. As part of the process of building rapport with children, interactions became steadily more frequent. In building rapport with teachers, informal conversations in and out of the classroom became more frequent also.

### *3.7.2 Phase Two*

The second phase, lasting two to three weeks, aimed to collect specific data from children, while continuing observations of children and the classroom programme and environment. Observations become more participatory than passive during this phase. The researcher was more actively involved in interacting with children as they were writing, although was careful to not intervene in an instructional sense. Conversations with teachers were more frequent, and became increasingly focused on the classroom. Semi-structured interviews took place with small groups of children. Questions and statements were generated from observations during the first phase of the research, and were developed into an interview schedule for the first interviews. Children were also asked to think-aloud as they engaged in the writing process. This was modelled for and discussed with children prior to beginning, and the method was modified somewhat in the following phase. Samples of extracts from interviews and think-alouds are included in Appendix D.

### *3.7.3 Phase Three*

The third phase, lasting one to two weeks, aimed to corroborate and clarify data collected from children, using semi-structured interview with teachers. Questions were generated from the first two phases, and were developed into broad interview schedules for the second interviews. Further participatory observations and think-alouds took place with children. The think-aloud method was changed from concurrent to timed during this phase. Written products from both teachers and children were selected and copied.

The data collection timetable is demonstrated in Table Two. A summary of the range and amount of data collected is demonstrated in Table Three.

**Table Two: Data Collection Timetable**

Type of Data	Participant	Observations	'Think Alouds'	Interviews	Documents
<b>One</b> (Weeks 1 and 2)	Teachers	Programme and environment	None	Multiple informal discussions	None
	Children	Writing activities	None	First group interview	None
<b>Two</b> (Weeks 3,4, and 5)	Teachers	Specific elements of programme	None	First and second individual interviews	Tentative selection of documents
	Children	Writing activities	Concurrent think-alouds	First group interview	Tentative selection of documents
<b>Three</b> (Week 6)	Teachers	Specific elements	None	Presenting initial findings from this study	Document selected and copied
	Children	Writing activities	Timed think-alouds	Second group interview	Document selected and copied

**Table Three: Summary of Data Collected**

Participant	Each child	Each teacher
<b>Type of Data</b>		
<b>Observation</b>	4 hours	10 hours
<b>Think-Alouds</b>	2 hours	None
<b>Interviews</b>	1 hour 20 minutes	2 hours
<b>Written Products</b>	60 pages approximately	30 pages approximately

### 3.8 Data Analysis

Data was analysed in ethnographic and analytic models (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). This involved three processes: data recording and organising, coding, and generation and verification of themes.

Firstly, data from all sources was written or fully transcribed, and initially annotated with contextualising information. Code names were used in all recording. Data was organised in 'sets' for each participant. For participating children, each set contained notes and transcriptions from observations, interviews, think-alouds, and copied documents, along with

anecdotal notes and contextualising information. For participating teachers, each set contained notes from observations, interviews, and copied documents, along with anecdotal notes and contextualising information, as well as the data sets pertaining to each of the children in their classroom.

Secondly, broad coding categories and sub-categories were developed and refined from the data. Each data set was coded twice, initially and again after a period of several weeks, as a validation method. Comparison of early and later codings revealed only minimal differences. After both codings, data was re-organised within each set according to the coding categories. Patterns and themes were noted as they appeared within data sets, and compared with themes arising intuitively from the data. Constant comparison between data sources and between initial and later codings was used to clarify and confirm patterns (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). In order to retain the individual focus for children, each data set involving children was considered and analysed individually. Each data set involving teachers was considered with data sets of children in their classroom.

Thirdly, the themes that emerged during coding were explored and verified. Each theme was then tested against the data, including negative instances where applicable. Data was re-organised around each theme, and the tentative case descriptions relating to classrooms were prepared. These were then tested with the participating teachers. Comments from teachers were considered in line with other data sources.

Individual conceptual frameworks were prepared to present children's perceptions. The use of conceptual frameworks is held to be significant and relevant. Firstly, conceptual frameworks are directly related to philosophical stance adopted in this study. Secondly, presenting knowledge within a conceptual framework is an increasingly used model in educational research (for instance, see Cambourne, 2002; Flockton & Crooks, 1999).

Thirdly, conceptual frameworks may be a more accessible method of

presenting research findings, therefore, there is potential for research findings to be better disseminated in educational circles.

The three data analysis processes as described did not function as discrete phases however, and the process involved moving backwards and forwards through the phases several times. For instance, data was re-organised several times, as necessary, data was also re-coded as necessary, and themes that were not entirely borne out by the data were discarded.

### 3.9 *Data Validation*

This study seeks validation of data, however, conventional concepts of validity and reliability are not appropriate in this instance. This view is not unique to this research, as Schensul et al. (1999, p.272) comment:

“Ethnographers have struggled for decades with positivistic criteria for reliability and validity, because the methods, field conditions, and objectives of ethnographic research do not lend themselves to the same kinds of detachment and control over practice that are possible in [experimental research].”

#### 3.9.1 *Quantitative Conceptions of Validity and Reliability*

There are three key reasons for the inappropriateness of quantitative conceptions of validity and reliability applied to this study. Firstly, the philosophical stance of this study is naturalistic, however quantitative concepts of validity and reliability are based in a positivist philosophical stance (Schensul et al., 1999). Secondly, the methods used in this study dictate that the researcher is the most important data collection instrument (Schensul et al., 1999); this precludes many quantitative methods of assuring reliability and validity. Thirdly, the nature of the settings and participants also preclude quantitative assurances of reliability and validity (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999), because the natural setting for the participants is used.

However, it is necessary to validate the research. This can be done in a variety of ways, which are outlined here.

### 3.9.2 *Validity*

Two contemporary and related forms of validity are applicable to this study. Firstly content validity, which describes the degree to which the data collected is reflective of the 'reality' of the situation groups (Schensul et al., 1999), and secondly, construct validity, in a contemporary frame, which describes the relationship between the data collected and the generated theory. Key strategies to validate the data and address threats to validity will now be outlined.

Two key strategies to validate this study were used. Firstly the methods selected aimed to capture the 'lived experiences' of the participants. The multiple method approach was warranted in light of both the research reviewed and for validation purposes. This may have supported content validity. Secondly the analysis of the data in sets ensured the integrity of data from each participant. This resulted in individualised findings, allowing for individual differences in perceptions. This may have supported construct validity.

Threats to validity were identified and addressed systematically. The first threat was observer reactivity. This may have resulted in the participants withholding information or lying, consciously or inadvertently, as "what they say and do is affected by their perceptions of who researchers are, what they want to know, and how and with whom they interact in the community." (Schensul et al., 1999, p.279). This threat was significant due to the embedded nature of the researcher within the setting, and due to the complex and changing roles the researcher undertook in the study. Several strategies were put in place to reduce this threat. All research activities took place in settings where the participants were comfortable and felt some control over their surroundings. Further, interviews and 'think alouds',

potentially the more invasive research methods for the participants, were held later in the data collection period to enable rapport and trust to be established. These two factors may have reduced any potential observer reactivity. While the six week time frame of the data collection may have reduced observer reactivity in part, an extension of this would have further reduced this threat.

The second threat to validity was arriving at spurious conclusions. To address this threat, some independent corroboration of findings was used, with the teachers in particular. Their comments were considered in keeping with the data analysis processes as described. The time frame of this study allowed a sufficient amount of data to be collected to ensure that time-specific events and conclusions did not feature largely in the data sets.

The interview questions and statements were carefully framed in a register that children used. This framing was informed by careful listening to the register being used. Jargon and unfamiliar words were avoided. This framing may have also helped children articulate themselves more precisely, which will have avoided gathering spurious data.

Inter-observers checks were not possible, however discussing observations with teachers and interpretations of these observations, and also re-coding of data allowed some inter-data checking.

The third threat to validity was failure to describe methods, settings, or findings adequately, including the use of idiosyncratic or inconsistent terminology. In-depth descriptions of methods, settings, and findings have been used here to avoid this threat. Where terminology could potentially be unclear, this has been explained. Idiosyncratic terms have been explained in detail. Other use of terminology has been consistent and coherent.

The fourth threat to validity was selection and regression effects. This



relates to the findings being only attributable to the particular participants of this study. This could only be controlled by presenting a clear description of how participants were selected, and by careful reporting of demographic information

### *3.9.3 Reliability*

The replicability of results, over time, settings, populations, and researchers is a lesser concern than validity in ethnographic research, as replication is not a desired outcome (Schensul et al., 1999). Reliability is however a necessary component of validity. Reliability was therefore in part assured using the key strategy of rich description (Schensul et al., 1999).

Rich description was used in describing the design elements, in particular the setting, participants, selection methods, researcher role, and methods. This description may support replication of the study in a similar environment, and also adds to the transferability of the findings. This description also supports the validity of the findings. Rich description was also used in presenting the findings, in particular the contextual information, the cases, and the conceptual frameworks, and the conclusions of this study.

### *3.9.4 Associated Methods of Data Validation*

Two associated methods of validation that are commonly used in qualitative research have also been applied here. The notion of trustworthiness has been used to support data validation, much in keeping with a contemporary view of validity as is taken in this study (Anderson, 1989) Trustworthiness involves the proving of data against itself, across multiple sources, over time, and using multiple methods. This has been done in this study, as described earlier. Data that has not been proven in this way has not been discarded altogether however, and continues to inform the findings; as Anderson (1989, p.257) states: “One of the advantages of ethnographic case study research has been its ability to study outliers.”

The notion of wholism has also been applied to this study (Anderson, 1989). This involves looking beyond the individual pieces of data to see the complete picture. This has been done in this study by organizing the data firstly into sets, relating to teachers, classrooms, and children. This organisation allowed data from each participant to stand individually, but also allowed data relating to each classroom to be viewed as a whole, in analysis of classroom programmes and environments.

In conclusion, while every effort has been taken here to validate the findings of this study, it must be recognised that “There can never be a final, accurate, representation of what was said or meant – only different textual representations of different experiences.” (Denzin, 1997, p.5)

### *3.10 Chapter Summary*

This chapter has outlined the ethnographic case study design of this study, along with the multiple method approach, utilising observation, interview, ‘think alouds’, and document analysis. The school, teachers, and children participants have been described. Ethical considerations were outlined and addressed. The complex and multiple roles of the researcher were described. The data collection, analysis, and verification methods were described.

## Chapter Four Findings

### 4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter describes children's global perceptions of writing, and presents the individual conceptual frameworks for each child. Children's knowledge, strategies, attributions, and attitudes are discussed. Features of the classroom programmes and environments are described.

### 4.2 Children's Global Perceptions

While each child's global perceptions were idiosyncratic and diverse, they could each be characterised by an individual organising theme. This section presents the global perceptions in terms of this organising theme, and conceptual framework for each child.

#### 4.2.1 A Note on Coding

It is important to note here that children with names (as pseudonyms) beginning with letters A, B, C, and D are in John's class, and children with names beginning with letters E, F, G, and H are in Karly's class. Direct quotes from children or teachers are indicated as such, and the code shown refers to field notes. The code shows the first letter of name of participant, the data set, and the on-page reference to the completed data set. Code 'OBS' refers to the data set for observations, code 'DA' refers to the data set for document analysis, code 'INT' refers to the data set for interviews, and codes 'TAC' and 'TAT' refer to the data sets for concurrent 'think alouds' and timed 'think alouds' respectively. For example A OBS 123 refers to observation of Adam, referring to cell 123 of the field notes.

#### 4.2.2 Adam

Writing is a serious and fruitful business for Adam, one that is heavily rule bound. He approaches his writing with a mix of applied diligence and excitement. He takes considerable care to make sense of the task of writing,

and aims to 'manage' the task in an almost business-like way. Adam sets his own rules for writing, but happily and enthusiastically breaks them. The conceptual framework representing Adam's perceptions is shown as Figure One.

#### 4.2.3 *Bernice*

Bernice is very tentative in her approach to writing; it is a task she feels unsure about. John aptly describes Bernice as '*getting there*' (J OBS 79), and Bernice sees her writing as gradually but hesitantly improving. She is unsure about how to improve her writing, which makes it a complex and confusing process. She generally enjoys her writing however, but is not willing to give it a public audience. The conceptual framework representing Bernice's perceptions is shown as Figure Two.

#### 4.2.4 *Charles*

Charles consciously and skilfully manages himself and his writing. Like Adam, he views writing as a serious task. Added to this, he feels a sense of pressure and frustration about his writing, related to his perception of a lack of time needed for the amount of work involved in writing. He feels somewhat unappreciated as a writer, and although he rejects social involvement with his writing, he wants his writing to be enjoyed by a wider audience. The conceptual framework representing Charles' perceptions is shown as Figure Three.

#### 4.2.5 *Deidre*

Deidre sees herself as a capable writer, who is interested in and excited by writing. She feels strongly self-motivated to write, and is very keen to share her writing with an audience, which is something she hasn't yet had the opportunity to do. She sees her writing in terms of its ongoing improvement, and holds specific views of what this improvement might mean. The conceptual framework representing Deidre's perceptions is shown as Figure Four.

#### 4.2.6 Eugene

Eugene enjoys his writing as long as he can follow his own interests. If he is restricted and not able to follow these interests (which are fairly particular) he finds writing singularly uninteresting. He is also very concerned with the social impact of his writing. Most of his writing deliberately and playfully subverts many of the features of 'acceptable' writing in his classroom. The conceptual framework representing Eugene's perceptions is shown as Figure Five.

#### 4.2.7 Francesca

While Francesca sees herself as an expert writer, she feels a huge sense of frustration about her writing. She is painfully aware of her audience, which restricts the enjoyment she gets from writing. She consciously uses writing as a social tool, and sees writing primarily as a means to a social end. The conceptual framework representing Francesca's perceptions is shown as Figure Six.

#### 4.2.8 George

Writing is George's passion. He sees it simply and unequivocally as the most important thing he does. He relishes in what he sees as the 'fun' of composing, and also enjoys the expanding social opportunities that his particular style of writing offers him. He has a strong metacognitive awareness, and an emerging understanding of how this helps him in his writing. The conceptual framework representing George's perceptions is shown as Figure Seven.

#### 4.2.9 Harriet

Like Francesca, Harriet sees writing as a means to a social end. However, unlike Francesca, writing is not a successful social tool for Harriet. She is frequently concerned with concealing her more novice status. She takes advantage of the socialised nature of writing in Karly's room to avoid writing, and also to publicly describe the success of her own writing. The

conceptual framework representing Harriet's perceptions is shown as Figure Eight.

### *4.3 Children's Conceptual Frameworks*

The following eight pages present the children's individual conceptual frameworks. The individual organising theme is shown centrally in each framework. Each framework is then broadly arranged around knowledge, strategies, attributions, and attitudes. Where perceptions appear to overlap these broad categories, this is clearly indicated. Major themes in perceptions are shown in rectangles, minor themes and explanatory notes are shown in parallelograms.

Figure One: Adam's Perceptions of his Writing

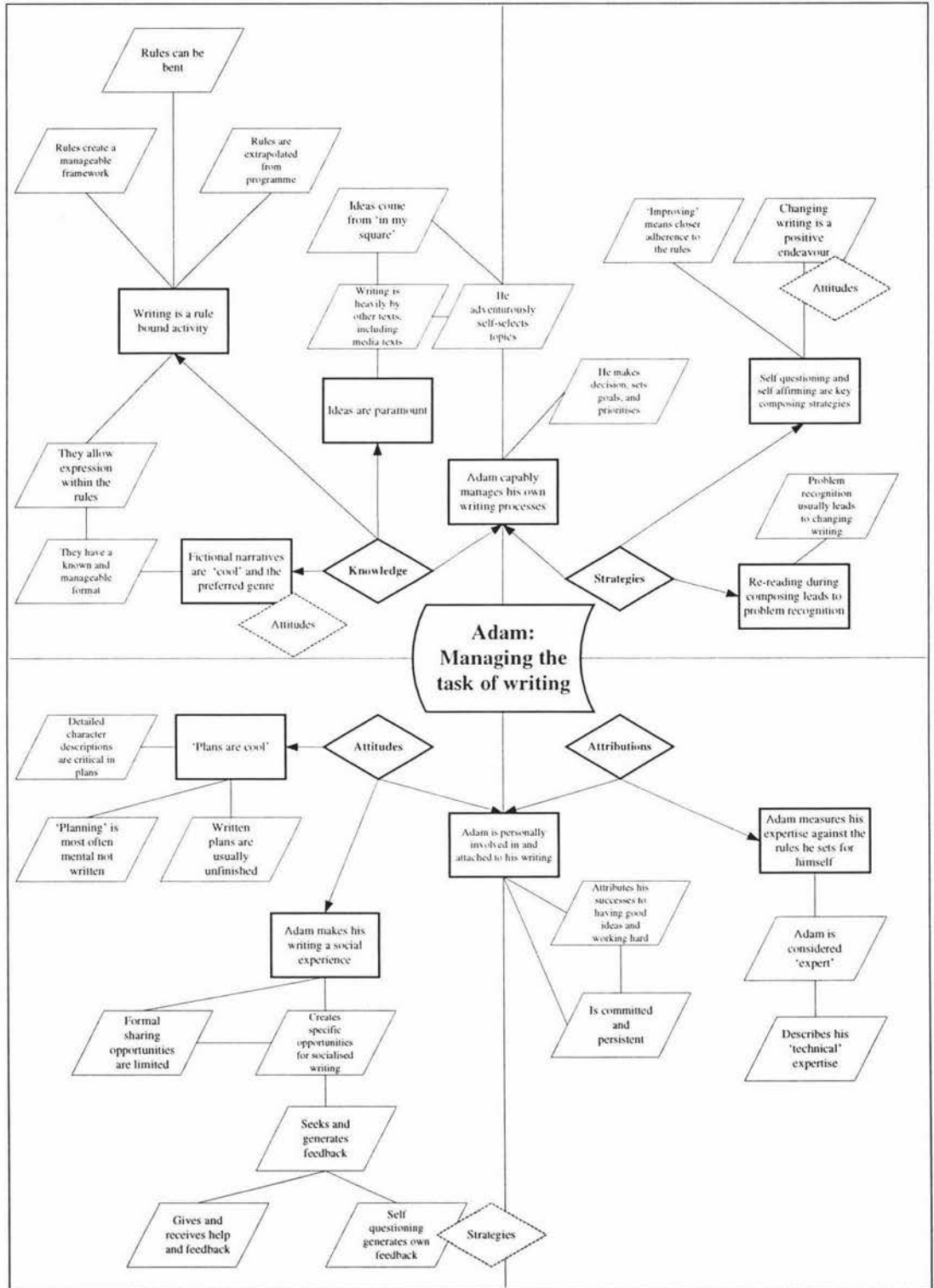


Figure Two: Bernice's Perceptions of her Writing

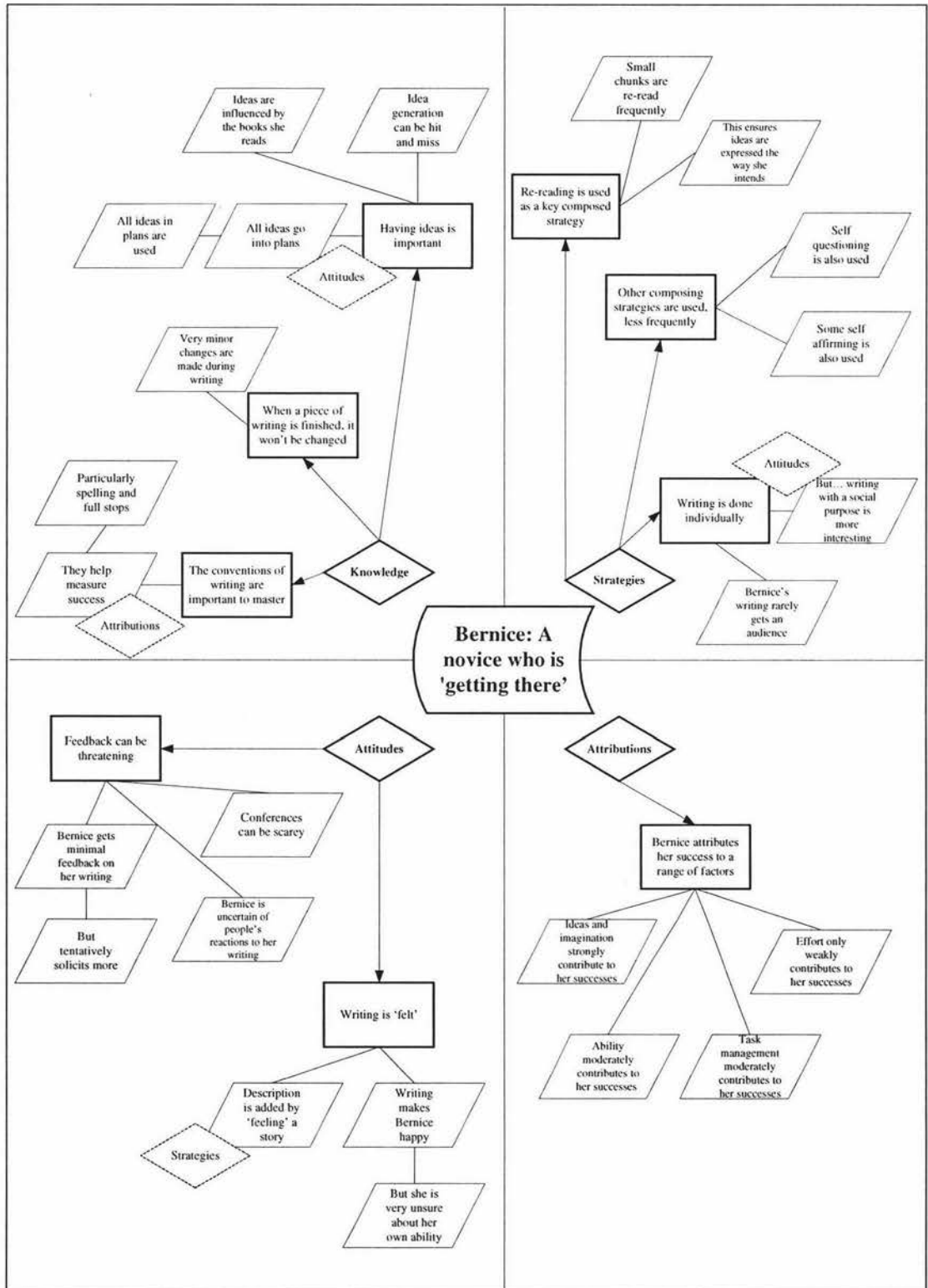




Figure Three: Charles' Perceptions of his Writing

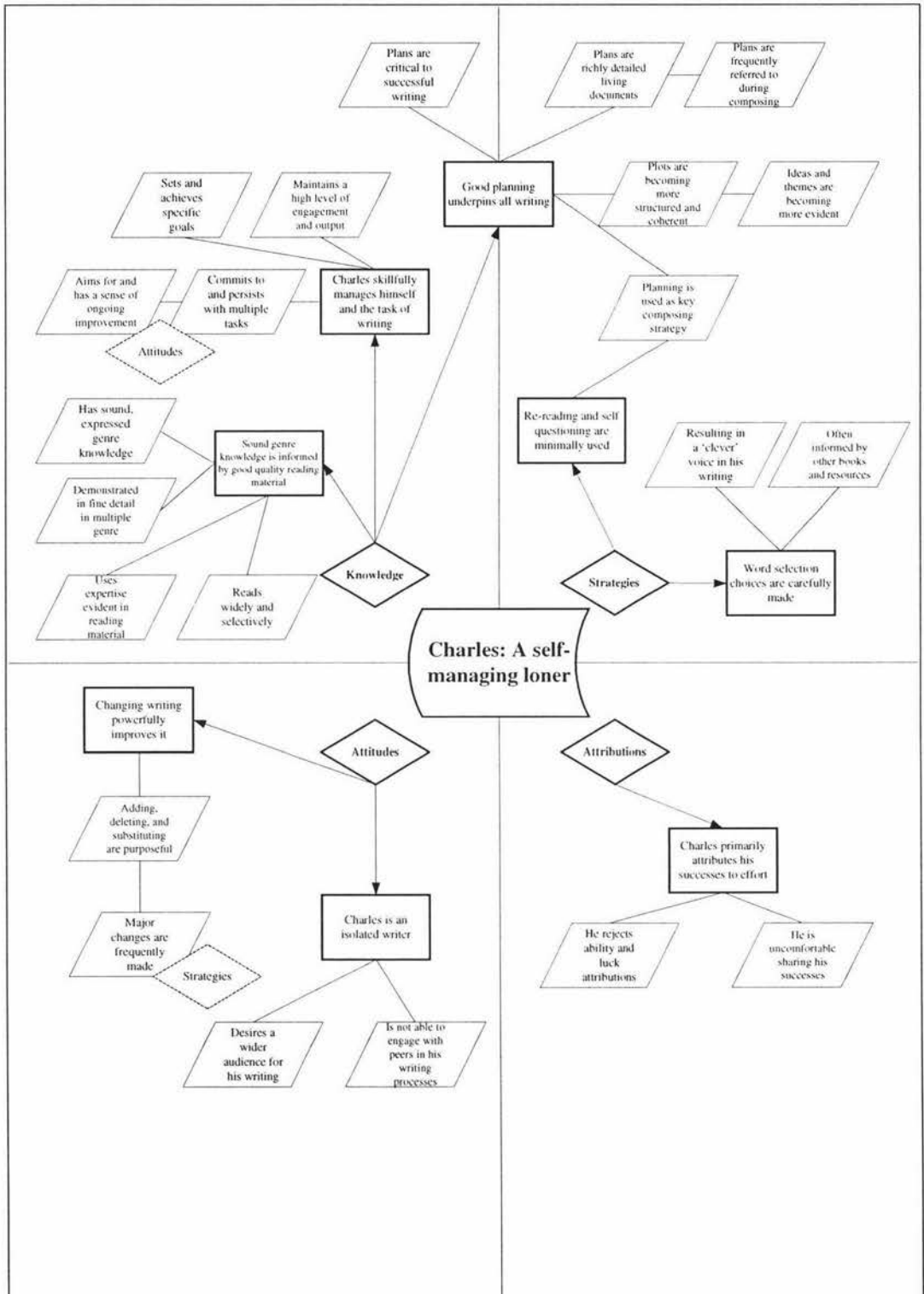


Figure Four: Deidre's Perceptions of her Writing

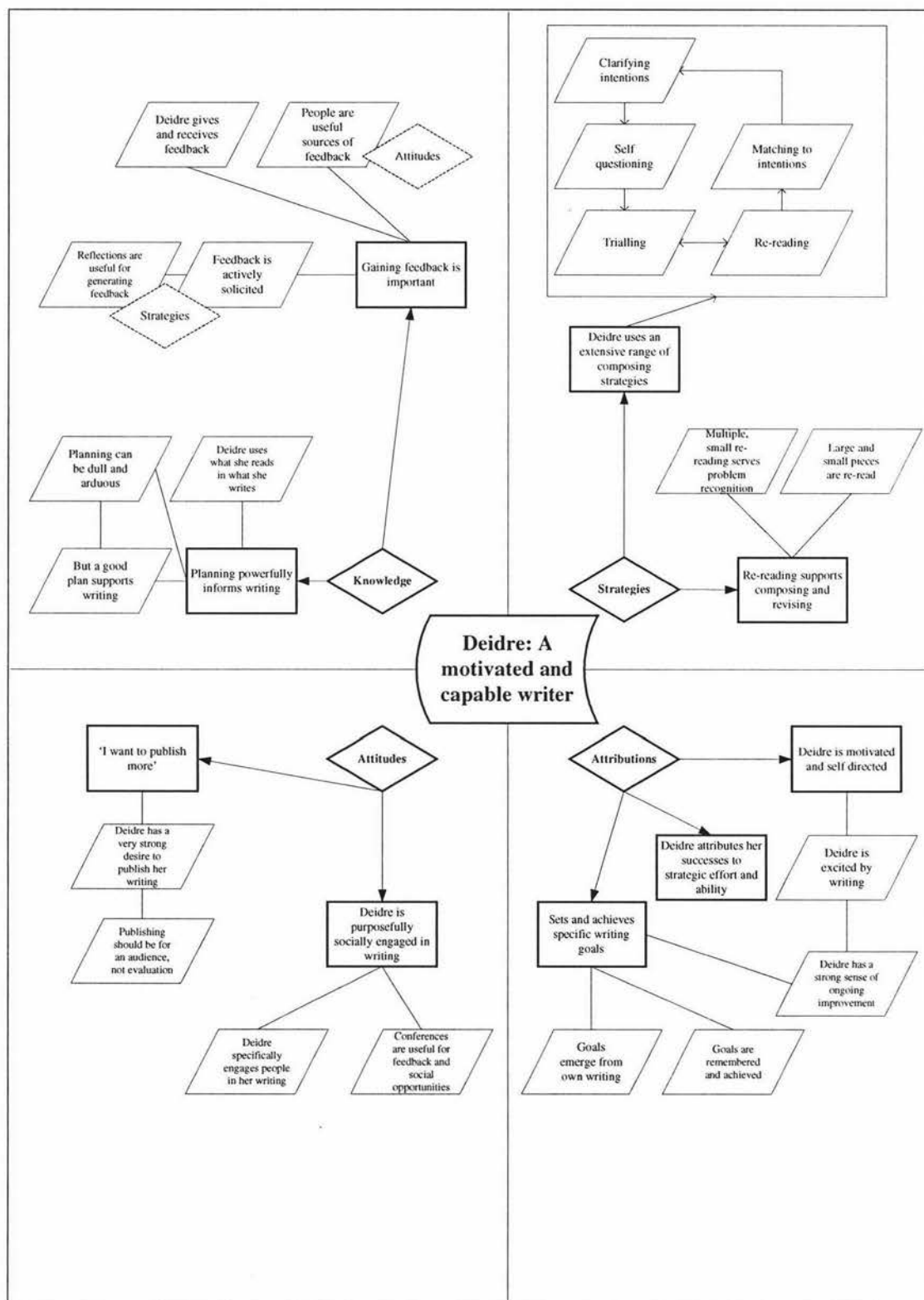


Figure Five: Eugene's Perceptions of his Writing

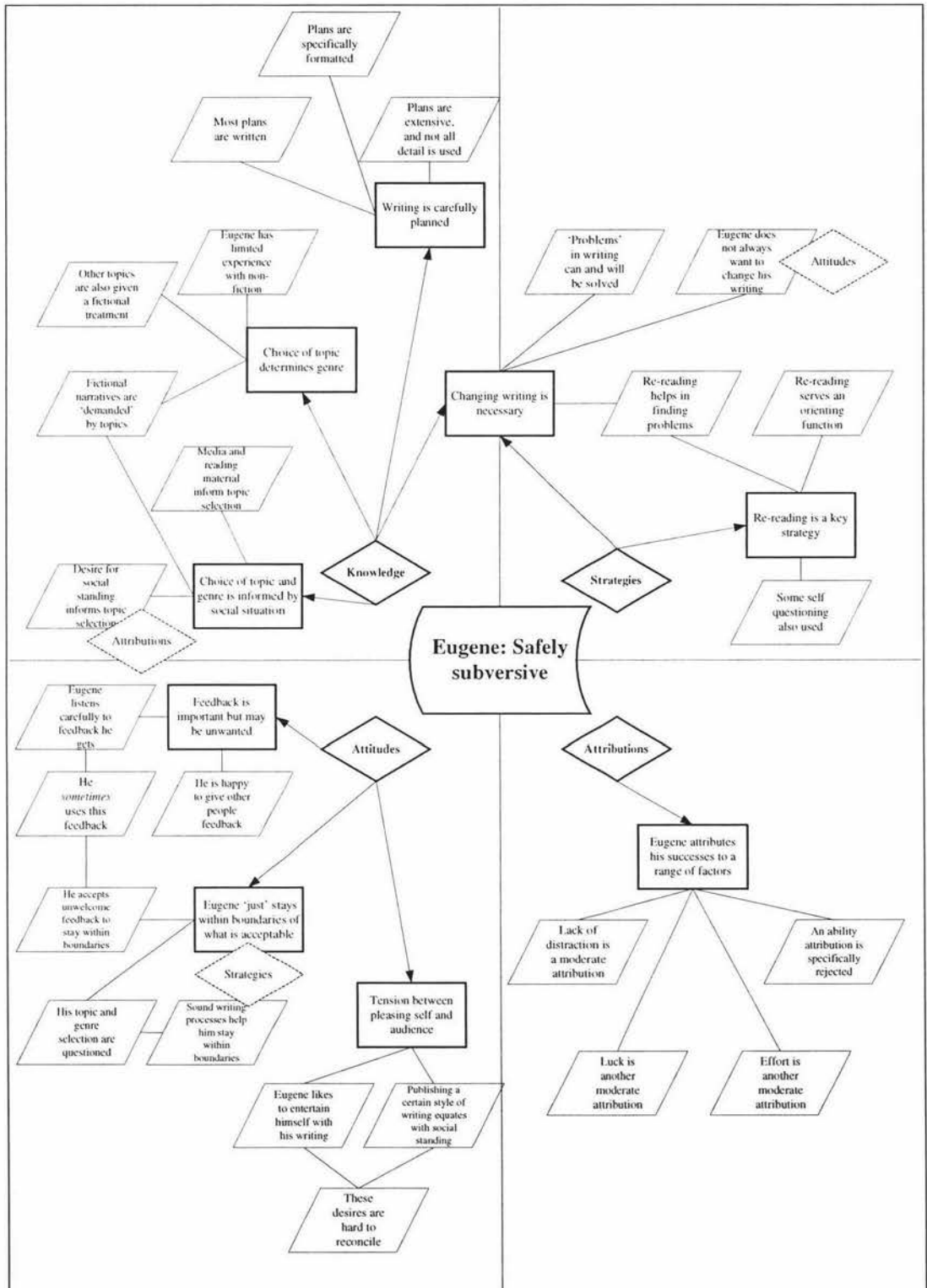


Figure Six: Francesca's Perceptions of her Writing

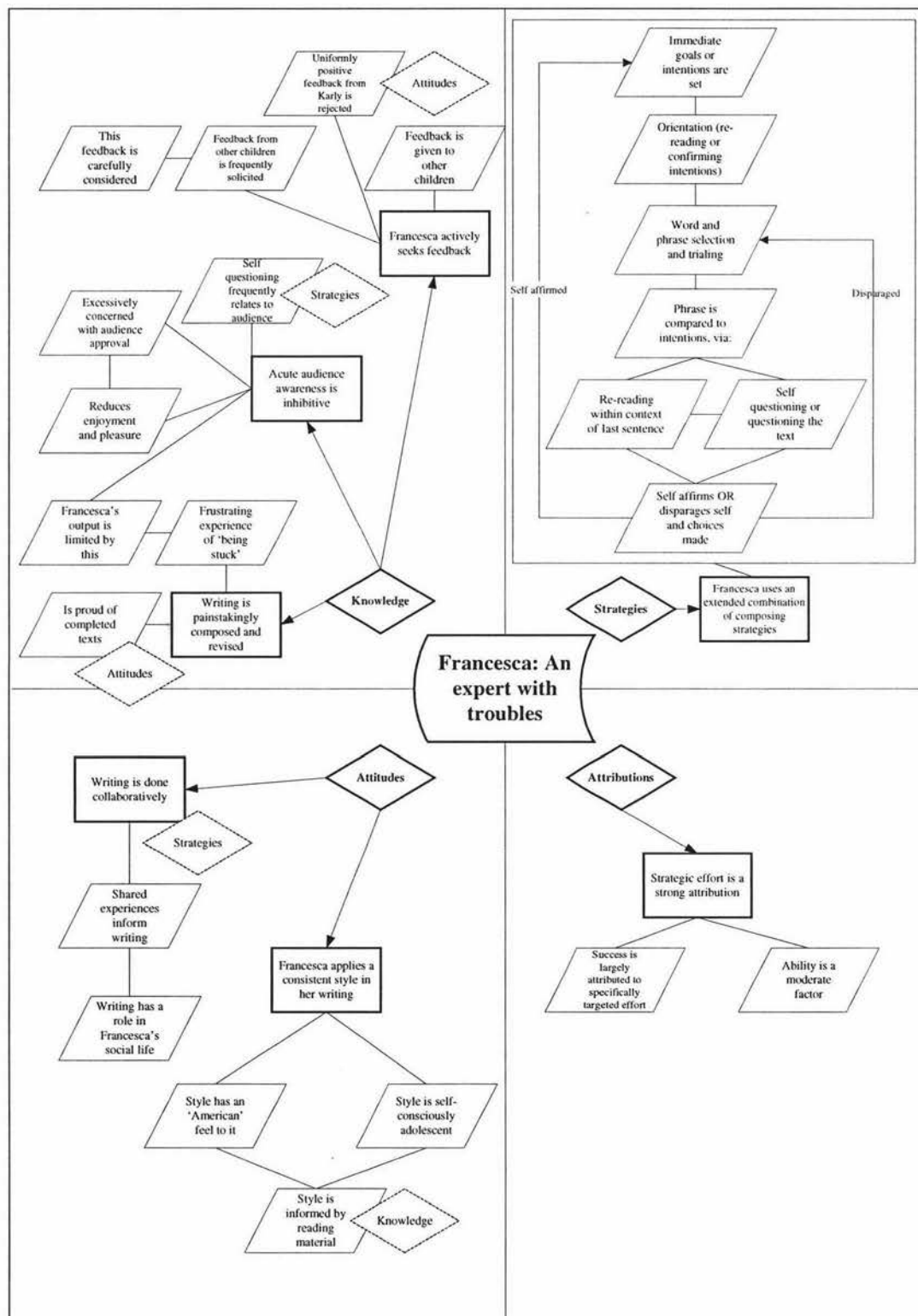


Figure Seven: George's Perceptions of his Writing

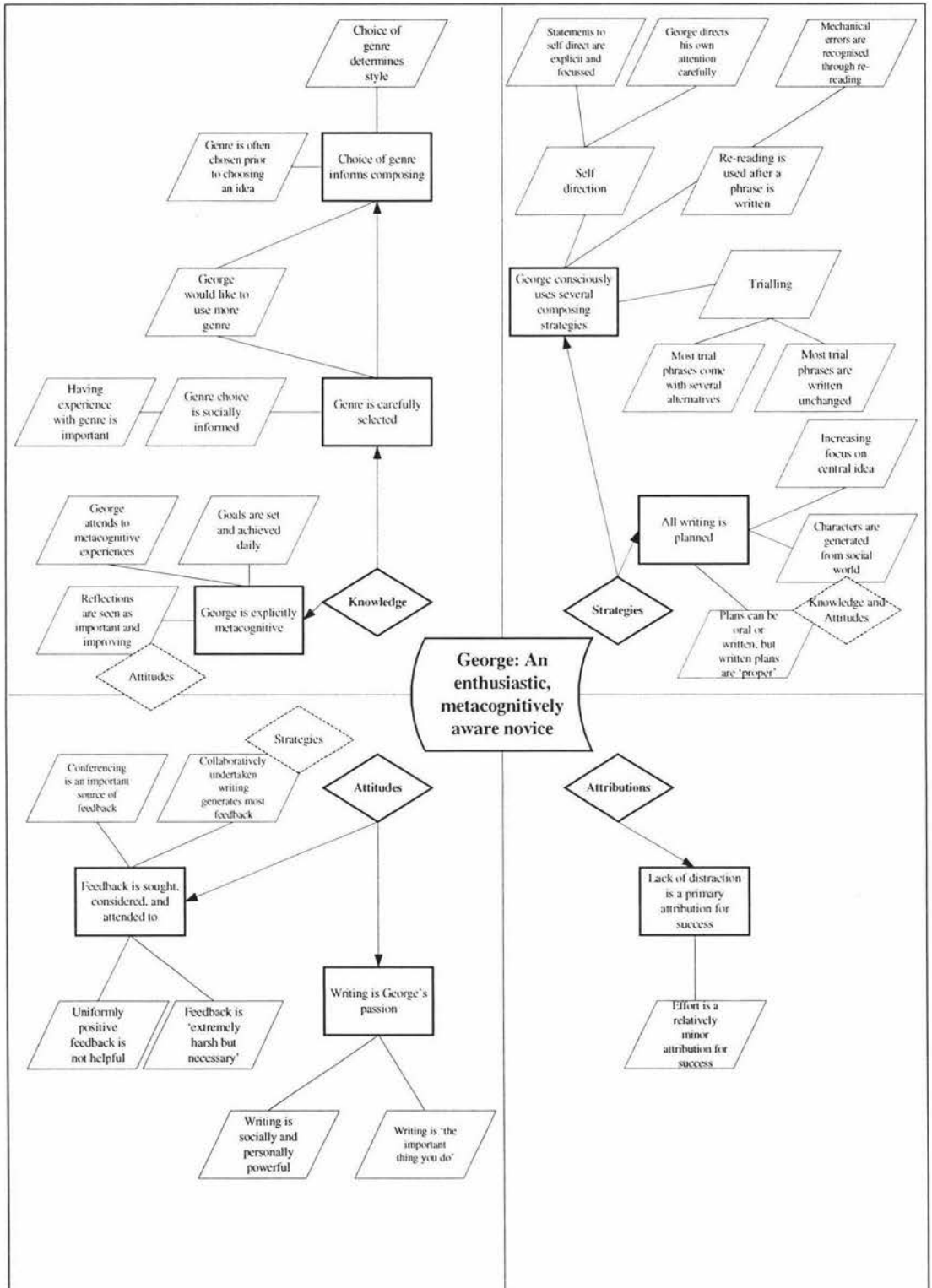
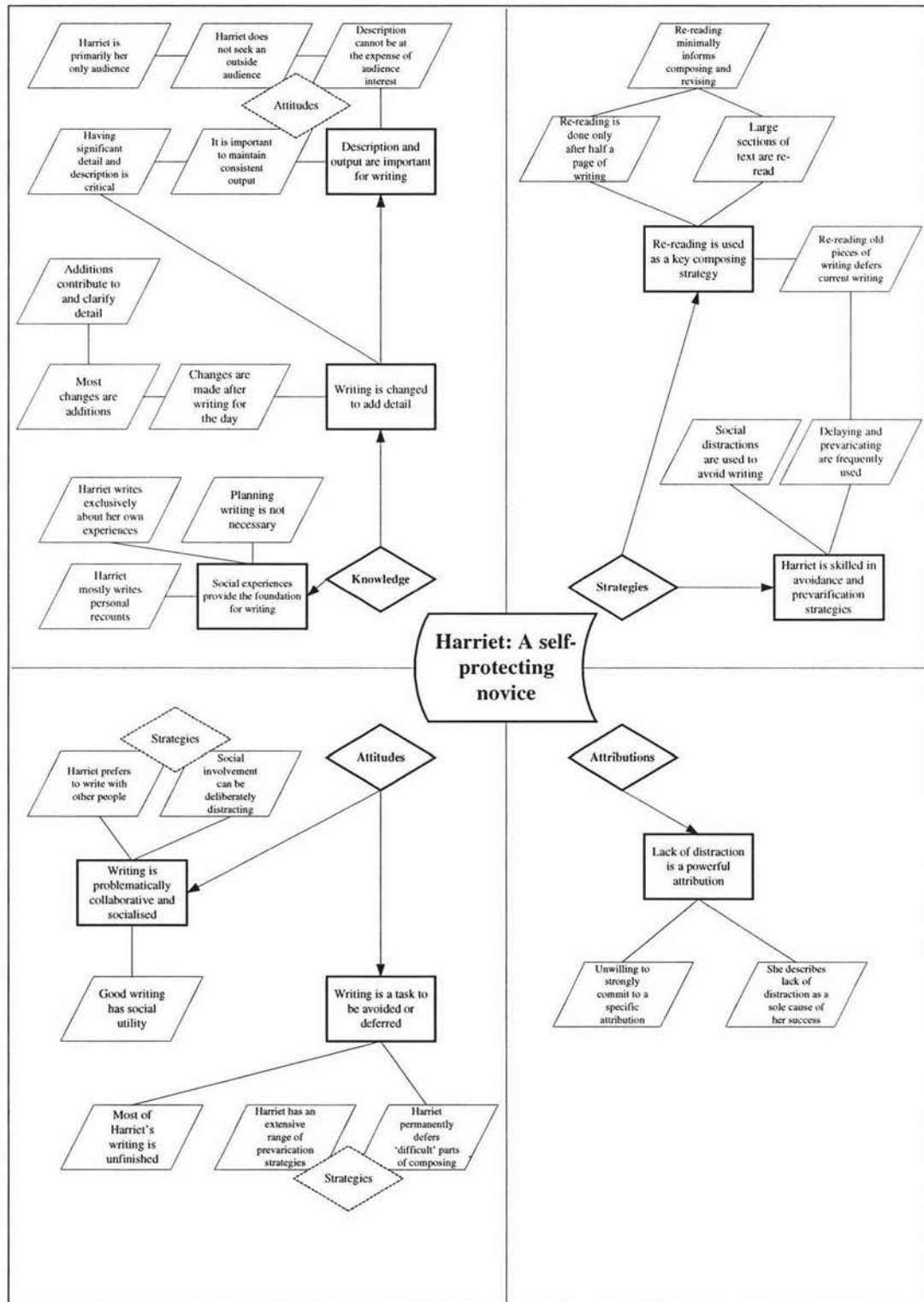


Figure Eight: Harriet's Perceptions of her Writing



#### 4.4 Knowledge

Children described and demonstrated their knowledge in three clear areas: procedural knowledge, metacognitive knowledge, and genre knowledge.

##### 4.4.1 Procedural Knowledge

Children described their procedural knowledge about writing largely in terms of its expressive aspects. Only one child, Adam, made any specific *description* of mechanical aspects of his procedural knowledge. He described his expert status as a writer as being closely linked to his spelling and handwriting ability. Other than Adam's descriptions of his mechanical expertise, children did not mention any other mechanical aspect of their writing. Bernice was equally unique in *demonstrating* a noted and relatively unique concern for the mechanical aspects of her writing; she did not, however, discuss any such concern. As she wrote, she showed considerable concern for correctness of handwriting and punctuation. Most children also demonstrated what teachers commonly call as 'spelling conscience' (Hood, 2000), and were largely able to identify and usually correct spelling errors.

Most children described and demonstrated their procedural knowledge about writing in terms of general and fairly individualised guidelines for what made good writing. Elements such as adding description and detail, consideration of audience, adding excitement and impact, and choice of genre and topic were frequently described and demonstrated by children. Adam uniquely perceived a set of firm rules for writing. These rules did not seem overtly present in the classroom programme, and appeared to be extrapolated from the classroom programme. With these rules, Adam narrowed the problematic task of writing into a tightly defined and manageable task. However, he frequently found that he could relax these rules and therefore widen the task.

Having good ideas was another aspect of procedural knowledge particularly important to two children. For both Adam and Bernice, the writing process

fell down without good ideas; good ideas generated good plans, and good plans generated good writing. Ideas were generated from '*When something exciting happens, kind of like in my square*' [a Chinese expression he picked up from his father, meaning the wide range of things that happen around a person's life] (A INT 86). However, ideas were often elusive, as Bernice comments, '*I get ideas all the time apart from writing time.*' (B INT 123). Generating ideas can also be seen as a planning strategy, highlighting the very close link between procedural knowledge and strategic knowledge, which will be discussed further.

#### 4.4.2 *Metacognitive Knowledge*

Several children also discussed and demonstrated their metacognitive knowledge. They were able to discuss their own processes of goal setting and reflection, and how these processes supported their learning and achievement as writers. Most children were able to make clear reflective statements, explaining and questioning their own actions, and setting specific short-term goals. George was particularly metacognitively aware, and was specifically attentive to his own thinking during composing. As he commented during one think-aloud: '*I'm just thinking now about how I'm going to phrase this next part of the story, I've realised that this is not right*' (G TAC 95). This metacognitive moment prompted George to re-read to re-orient himself in the text, make a significant revision to a previous sentence, and compose a new piece of text to match the revision.

#### 4.4.3 *Genre Knowledge*

Most children used their knowledge of genre to inform their writing. Genre knowledge appeared to be informed by reading, this was particularly so with Charles, who appeared to read widely. His reading appeared to be quite selective, and included primarily high quality books for children and pre-adolescents. During the data collection period, Charles read and talked about books by Ursula Le Guin, Maurice Gee, Arthur Ransom, Brian Jacques, and Philip Pulman. These selections may have been his own, or may have been



guided by John and his parents. His writing demonstrated his reading choices quite clearly, in his use of styles appropriate to genre he used. This is particularly demonstrated in his careful choice of language in one of his myths: 'As Crystal travelled on he found himself in a world of solid gold. A tower stood high in the middle. As he entered he found the gods. They were waiting. 'Welcome' said Ruby in a booming voice. 'We have been expecting you.'"(C DA 175)

Genre knowledge also appeared to be informed by the written genre apparent in classroom and social life. Particularly, Eugene's writing was notably within the 'horror-humour' crossover genre apparent in adolescent comics and graphic novels, and was particularly concerned with super-heroes of the darker variety.

#### 4.5 Strategies

All children discussed and demonstrated their use of strategies for writing. While children in John's classroom ably *demonstrated* their use of strategies, their *descriptions* of their strategy use were not particularly strong. In contrast, children in Karly's classroom were relatively more able to *describe* their strategy use in ways that appeared to closely match their actual *demonstrations* of strategy use. These differences were apparently linked to the instructional programme. Strategies for planning, composing, revising, and task management were particularly noted.

##### 4.5.1 Planning Strategies

The planning strategies used by all children centred on the use of planning models demonstrated through the instructional programme. All children appeared to have had instructional exposure to a wide range of planning models, appropriate to specific genre or more generically appropriate. Children appeared to use planning models strategically, adapting models to best fit their specific writing needs.

Strategies for generating and refining ideas were of particular concern to children in John's classroom. This concern was clearly linked to children's procedural knowledge of writing. Less-expert writers (particularly Bernice) appeared to use planning strategies that generated ideas randomly, such as free-association brainstorming, and were excessively concerned with descriptions of settings and characters in their written plans. More-expert writers (particularly Charles and Deidre) appeared to use planning strategies that generated ideas in a connected manner, such as starting with a big idea and 'chaining' other ideas from it, and focussed more on a central theme and the development of coherent plot.

#### 4.5.2 *Composing and Revising Strategies*

Re-reading was a critical strategy for composing and revising used by all children. It was relied on as a sole strategy in less-expert writers, and used as an integrated part of a wider range of strategies by more-expert writers. Re-reading served several distinct functions: orienting, clarifying, and confirming. Re-reading used as orienting allowed children to review what had already been written, either a large or small section of text. It was often used just prior to or immediately after writing a small piece of text. This was the most common function for re-reading. Re-reading as clarifying was used after self-questioning, and allowed children to make sense of what they had written. This tended to be used more for revision than for composing. Re-reading as confirming was used along with self-affirming, and appeared to give children a sense of satisfaction with their efforts.

Use of re-reading as a strategy for composing and revising did not serve as a guarantee for improvement of writing. Where re-reading was effective in apparently improving the quality of children's written expression, children re-read frequently and in fine detail. Only small parts of text, up to two sentences at the most, were re-read. Re-reading that appeared to have minimal impact on the quality of children's written expression was done less frequently, in less detail, and with large sections of text, up to a page,

re-read at once.

Three other key composing and revising strategies were used by children: self-questioning, accompanied by either self-affirming or disparaging, and trialling. These strategies were used as part of extended strategy use by more-expert writers, or in isolation by less-expert writers.

Self-questioning involved children asking a question to themselves, directly or indirectly, as a prompt for action, for instance '*How do I clarify that?*' (E TAC 63). Children's questions were explicit and usually directed towards correction, clarification, or other improvement of text. Self-questioning appeared to be used more frequently by relatively more-expert children.

Self-questioning was usually (but not always) followed by what was in effect an answer to the question. This most often took the form of self-affirming, for instance '*That's good I think*' (E TAC 64). Francesca uniquely often used disparaging in place of affirming, for instance '*That opening sentence is still weird*' (F TAT 158). Harriet and Eugene used self-questioning less frequently than other children, and their 'answering' more often used deferral rather than specific answering, for instance '*Hmm I wonder if I should change that? I'm not so sure, I'll leave it for now*' (H TAC 53).

Trialling was exclusively used by more-expert children, and allowed them to compose small chunks of text without committing them to writing. Trialling pieces of text meant these children generated far more text than other writers, although less text was committed to writing. George trialled text extensively, often generating complete sentences that he presented to himself as a series of alternatives. In the following excerpt, George is composing and trialling a small and comparatively minor phrase. This gives an indication of the care taken in generating text, and the amount of text generated prior to writing.

[trials] *'then I wanted', oh no what about this, [trials] 'he gagged me', nah no good, [trials] 'then, without warning', yep that's good, [writes] 'then, without warning'* (G TAC 108).

Both Deidre and Francesca, as more-expert writers, used the strategies described above in combination, seamlessly orchestrating them into a closely integrated process of composing and revising. Both children centred this combination on re-reading and trialling.

#### 4.5.3 Task Management Strategies

Most children, with the exception of Bernice and Harriet, perceived that they were able to strategically manage the task of writing, and used two specific strategies to do so. While Bernice and Harriet both employed task management strategies, neither saw these as effective.

Several children strategically limited the task of writing. These children placed strategic limits on their writing, through limiting daily output, imposing rules on their writing, or writing on to the exact demands of their plan. George and Harriet used their specific daily goals to limit to task of writing. These goals gave specific direction, such as *'I will finish my plan and start the story'* (G DA 189), and were generally easily achievable.

As mentioned, Harriet perceived that the task of writing was not particularly manageable, and consequently used task avoidance strategies. She frequently engaged in prevaricating activities such as: initiating conversations with other children that were unrelated to writing, moving around the room, finding resources, reading old pieces of her writing, reading other children's writing, and reading her writing to other children. She also avoided her perceived difficulties in composing, making statements such as *'That's a boring bit, I'll just skip that'* (H TAC 217). She did not return to such problematic areas when revising.

## 4.6 *Attributions*

Children's attributions were varied and multiple. Children were largely able to describe the possible reasons for their successes or failures as writers, but were often unwilling or unable to commit to a specific attribution.

### 4.6.1 *Common Attributions*

Most children attributed their successes (or otherwise) as writers to effort, with the exception of Harriet. This would indicate that most children perceived success in writing as a controllable and achievable feat. This perception is in keeping with the positive and effortful task focus in the instructional programme in both classrooms. Adam, Francesca, and Deidre, ostensibly more-expert writers, specifically described their specifically targeted effort as an attribution, rather than a general idea of effort. This 'specific effort' attribution may have been a more useful attribution than that of general effort, in that it avoids the problem of effortful failure. Bernice and Eugene, both less-expert writers, only considered effort as a moderate reason for their successes. Effort attributions generally appeared to support children in persevering with their writing, even in the face of difficulties (such as Francesca's frustration at being stuck).

Inherent ability was an attribution for Francesca and Deidre, and moderately for Bernice. This finding was somewhat unusual; it would be expected that more-expert children would reject an ability attribution, however Francesca and Deidre did not. Conversely, it would be expected that less-expert children would hold ability attributions. However, both Eugene and Charles (as less-expert writers) specifically rejected an ability attribution. These are unique findings in light of other attributional research (for instance Weiner, 1994), and warrant further investigation.

### 4.6.2 *Less Common Attributions*

Luck was an attribution for Bernice and Eugene, but specifically rejected by Charles. Bernice attributed her successes (or otherwise) as a writer to

multiple sources, and appeared not willing to commit to any specific attribution. This fits with her general perception of being unsure and tentative about writing.

Children described two novel attributions, 'ideas' and 'lack of distractions'. Both of these attributions appear to be related to luck, in that they are external and relatively uncontrollable. Ideas as an attribution may seem related to ability, in that having ideas may be internally controlled and related to planning strategies, therefore related to ability. However, children discussed this ideas attributions in terms of it being external and uncontrollable, related closely to events in their home and family lives. As Adam commented: '*(other child) is so lucky, he saw a car crash yesterday, he'll have such a good idea for a story now*' (A INT 104). Both Adam and Bernice raised having good ideas as an attribution. It is puzzling that Adam, as a more-expert writer, shared this attribution with Bernice, a less-expert writer. This suggests that attributional beliefs may be more closely linked to instructional programmes, and less to relative expertise.

Lack of distractions was an attribution mentioned by Eugene, George, and Harriet. In fact, lack of distraction was the sole attribution raised by Harriet. This external and relatively uncontrollable attribution may relate to the heavily socialised classroom environment in Karly's classroom, again pointing to the importance of classroom influences.

#### 4.7 Attitudes

Children's general attitudes about writing as a domain did not appear to impact significantly on their enjoyment of writing. It also appeared that these did not transfer to other settings for writing.

##### 4.7.1 General Attitudes

Children in John's classroom tended to view writing as a relatively solitary task, largely for one's own entertainment. Despite the solitariness of writing,

both Deidre and Adam sought to create opportunities for social engagement with others related to their writing. All were oriented towards the completion of a finished product, but none had experienced satisfaction from the publication of their writing for an audience of their peers. Their attitudes were borne out in the practice of writing in John's classroom programme. However, these attitudes did not mean that children disliked writing, in fact, all of the children in John's class said they enjoyed writing at school, and that it was also a spare time activity of choice at home. This apparent conflict requires further exploration.

Children in Karly's classroom were also generally positive about writing, with the exception of Harriet, who was publicly non-committal on this subject. All saw writing as having significant social usefulness, although both Eugene and Francesca experienced a conflict between their individual and public goals as writers. All excepting Harriet saw writing as involving an on-going process of refinement. All had experienced great satisfaction and public recognition from the publication and sharing of their writing. However, none chose to write at home or in their spare time.

Children's more specific attitudes towards writing were predictably diverse. These attitudes could be grouped around three themes: the utility and value of writing, individual or social writing, and the perception of feedback.

#### *4.7.2 Utility and Value of Writing*

Children had different opinions on the utility and value of writing. Several children (Adam, Charles, and Francesca) saw writing as hard work and sometimes frustrating, but this effort was worth it for Francesca. Eugene and George also saw writing as worthwhile in their social lives, and like George and Deidre, they saw writing as an entertaining activity. George was simply passionate about writing. He treated writing as both important and fun. Bernice was singularly unsure about writing, and seemed unwilling to make any firm decisions about how she felt about it.

### 4.7.3 Individual Writing and Social Writing

Children also had different opinions about whether writing is an individual or a social activity, and consequently about how the task of writing should be undertaken. The social aspects of writing included collaboration during writing, seeking and gaining peer feedback, and writing with a sense of audience. Generally speaking, children in Karly's class were more social writers, whereas children in John's class tended to write as individuals.

Harriet in particular found this framing of writing as a social activity problematic, as she perceived that she was especially prone to facing many disruptive 'distractions' in her writing. It appeared as though she specifically caused many distractions in her writing. However she also at times grandly and publicly admonished other children for distracting her. Bernice was particularly resistant to any social involvement in her writing, however all other children in John's classroom specifically wanted to become more socially involved, get more feedback, and to have an audience.

Eugene faced significant conflict between writing to entertain himself and writing to suit an audience. He tended to reject significant social involvement on the grounds that his writing was for his entertainment. Francesca was uniquely and acutely aware of her potential audience. She saw that writing solely for her own enjoyment, or even partially for her own enjoyment, was time-wasting: '*...it might be like a waste of time, sort of because there's no point doing it, just for yourself...*' (F OBS 218).

### 4.7.4 Peer Feedback

Attitudes towards peer feedback may be linked to attitudes towards individual writing and social writing. Bernice, who wrote as an individual, saw getting feedback on her writing as threatening. On peer conferences, she commented '*Sometimes you are too afraid to share your writing, sometimes you think they will just think it's really bad*' (B INT 153). In



contrast, Deidre, who also wrote as an individual, valued the feedback in conferences, and valued listening to other people's writing in conferences, as she wrote in a reflection: *'I went to a conference and Bernice told us her story... I think it used very descriptive language and other words instead of said. I want to use that in my next story.'* (D DA 207). This may demonstrate a link between attitude and expertise, and may in part disconfirm a link between attitude and classroom programme.

#### 4.8 *Classroom Influences*

Both teachers operated eclectic programmes, and both were in keeping with curriculum requirements. Both adopted elements of process-based and holistic approaches, including: a socially shared sense of ownership and control, children's self-selection of genre, topic, and pace of writing, a process-based orientation towards writing. Key instructional features of their two classroom programmes and environments are described here, followed by descriptions of the classroom environment.

#### 4.9 *Classroom Programmes*

John described his programme as emerging and developing, not a fixed or static entity. The programme was situated within the context of the English curriculum, and the writing programme was specifically integrated with reading, visual language, and oral language. Karly described her programme as operating on self-managing basis. Her role involved providing guidance, modelling, and opportunities for sharing. Karly saw writing, like other curriculum areas, as an opportunity for children to take part in the shared and social experience of learning.

##### 4.9.1 *Typical Instructional Sequence*

A typical instruction sequence in each classroom is presented as Table Four, giving a brief overview of instructional programmes in each classroom.

**Table Four: Typical Instructional Sequence**

<b>John's Classroom</b>	<b>Karly's Classroom</b>
Discussion of overall focus.	Karly modelling her writing, usually focussed on composing strategies and a personal recount genre.
An activity: either John modelling his writing, use of expert model, or small group activities. Usually followed by a whole class discussion.	Brief guided discussion between children, describing what they saw in modelling.
Children wrote individually, self-selecting topic, genre, and the pace at which they wrote, broadly within John's stated expectations. Writing activities were relatively wide-ranging, authentic within the domain of writing, but lacking social authenticity.	Children expected to refer back to the goal they set for themselves, choose to work individually or collaboratively, and wrote around a half a page of writing each day. Children could choose time of day they wrote, many wrote immediately after Karly's modelling. Children able to self-select their topic, genre, and pace, implicitly guided by Karly. Writing tasks were relatively more limited, less authentic to the domain of writing, but more socially authentic.
John may hold group or individual conferences while children are writing.	Karly may hold group or individual conferences while children are writing, or may engage another group of children in a different small group activity.
John reminds children to proof-read, edit, and to write their reflections towards the end of the writing session.	Children are expected to proof-read, edit, and write a reflection that refers in some way to their specific daily goal.
Discussion or sharing, which may have involved either a continuation of earlier discussions, or children sharing their reflections.	Sharing of published writing or 'tasters' (small, engaging snippets of text), not always held immediately after children write.

#### 4.9.2 Genre Models and Expertise

The two teachers used expert models in different ways. John's instructional programme specifically equipped children with a wide range of genre models, and John expected them to 'try out' this range of genre. John often used excerpts of texts by prominent and popular children's authors to demonstrate writing expertise. He also explicitly gave children permission to imitate these models, thereby accessing this expertise.

However John did not often model how a more-expert writer (such as himself) would go about composing, thus the gap between more- and less-expert was not bridged. Children had the desired goal in sight, but not the means of achieving it. Bernice's uncertainty about how to improve her writing demonstrated this.

Children were only rarely able to publish their writing, and when they did so, it was usually for evaluative purposes rather than for sharing with an audience. However, John was beginning to publish more of children's writing in a book format, and was consequently increasing the social sharing of completed pieces of writing.

Karly, on the other hand, more frequently modelled only one genre, that of personal recount. Children only infrequently had instructional experience with other genre, limiting their development of genre knowledge in many respects. Karly did not use models from children's authors, and instead exclusively modelled the process of writing for children. Therefore, on a daily basis, children in Karly's classroom saw and discussed the strategies used by a more-expert writer (this being Karly herself). However, as children were not given access to other models of expertise, their perception of expertise was more limited. In this way, these children had the means of strategically improving their writing, but had a relatively limited view of what an adult expert writer might achieve.

Children in Karly's class more frequently published their writing, thereby having a constant and reliable audience of peers for this genre, and through this, were able to develop a consistent and personal style. Children's writing was published into 'books' frequently, using a computer and then illustrated. A large number of published books of this type were prominently displayed in the classroom, and were publicly shared by their authors.

#### *4.9.3 Self-Management*

Both John and Karly saw it as important and necessary that children become increasingly self-managing, consequently becoming more aware of and in control of their learning processes. John commented that he was aiming to incorporate more self-managing elements into his programme, whereas much of Karly's programme was currently specifically self-managing. John

saw that increased self-management helped children with viewing writing as not a solely school-based activity, adding authenticity to children's writing. As an aside, recall that children in John's classroom all enjoyed writing at home in their spare time, unlike those in Karly's classroom, who specifically commented that they did not write at home.

Enhancing children's self-management inevitably required children to develop and use metacognitive ability. Two strategies used by both teachers to prompt children's metacognitive awareness and executive control were goal setting and reflection. All children in John's classroom wrote daily reflections about their progress, achievements, and difficulties, which John often responded to in writing and in considerable detail. They were less likely than those in Karly's class to set achievable short-term goals. However both Deidre and Charles did so through their reflections, apparently spontaneously, pointing to their expertise in self-management. Their goals were uniformly related to expressive aspects of writing.

Children in Karly's classroom were relatively more likely to set achievable daily goals and reflect upon their progress towards meeting them. Their goals were more often related to mundane and mechanical aspects of writing however, such as output. This may have lessened the usefulness of such goal setting.

Despite the difficulties of a lack of goal setting and mundane goal setting, children in both classrooms were able to discuss and demonstrate the ways in which they managed their own writing.

#### *4.10 Classroom Environment*

The two classroom environments were different. They were physically different, and different social norms operated in each.

#### *4.10.1 The Physical Environment*

John's classroom environment was relaxed and calm, with a cheerfully disorganized feel to it. The children appeared settled, engaged, and equally cheerfully disorganised at times. The physical layout provided a large space in the middle of the classroom set aside for the children to meet as a whole class. This space was used for the many discussions that were prevalent in John's class. Children wrote as individuals, mainly sitting at their individual desks.

Karly's classroom environment had a vibrant, excited feel to it. Children seemed busy, talkative, and highly engaged. Like John's classroom, the classroom layout allowed for a large space in the middle of the classroom set aside for the children to meet as a whole class. The layout also provided for many smaller spaces (such as low tables and benches, and pairs of comfortable chairs) for small groups of children to sit together to work. Children wrote sitting around the low tables or benches, or sitting in small groups clustered around desks.

#### *4.10.2 The Social Environment*

The most significant environmental feature in both classrooms was the social environment for writing. Children and teachers in both classrooms showed some difficulty with balancing the demands of the individual and social elements of writing programmes. Children in John's classroom wrote as individuals, without significant peer involvement beyond whole class discussions. John commented that he was trying to introduce more official routes for children to become more socially involved over their writing. He particularly wanted to have children involved in more group conferencing and publishing, and was building these elements more consistently and frequently into his programme. Children in his class uniformly expressed a desire to become more socially involved with their writing, and some children created their own opportunities for social involvement.

In contrast, Karly's instructional programme was explicitly and strongly socially shared in many respects. Children were heavily collaboratively involved with each other over the entire writing process, from idea gathering to publishing and sharing. They collaborated skilfully and with purpose, and all but Harriet saw little value in writing as individuals. However, they were at times overwhelmed by the intensity of this social involvement, particularly Francesca, whose acute audience awareness almost disabled her composing. Children in Karly's classroom, excepting Eugene, also saw little value in writing to meet individual and personal goals, such as for their own enjoyment or entertainment. This finding relates to the finding that children in Karly's classroom uniformly chose not to write at home.

Discussion was critically important in the instructional programmes and environments in both classrooms. In John's room, this reflected his belief that talk both enhances and embeds children's thinking. The centrality of discussion in his room was also a reflection of the integrated and balanced nature of the overall instructional programme for English. The discussion in John's classroom was mostly in a whole class forum. John guided these discussions exceptionally well, intuitively adopting a dialogic style. The discussions were largely focussed on the interaction between the teacher and individual children, although children were explicitly asked to attend to each other.

The talk in Karly's classroom reflected her belief that learning is a socially shared experience. The talk was largely between children, but took two quite distinctive forms. Firstly, there were official discussions between children, which mirrored the role (but not the form) of whole class discussions in John's classroom. These were significantly less guided than discussions in John's classroom, allowing children significant scope for inappropriate participation, for instance including off-task talk and lack of participation. Secondly, there were informal discussions between children during their writing time. These were informal and spontaneous, but

officially valued. There was very little talk of this nature in John's classroom. Children talked relatively purposefully, using specific communication strategies, such as active listening, to gain and elicit information.

#### *4.11 Summary of Findings*

Children's global perceptions were varied and highly idiosyncratic. All children clearly discussed and demonstrated their perceptions.

Children demonstrated the procedural, metacognitive, and genre knowledge they bring to their writing. Children mostly described their procedural knowledge in terms of its expressive aspects, and most formulated individualised guidelines for their own writing. Children's metacognitive knowledge appeared to be strongly related to expertise. Children's genre knowledge appeared to be strongly related to the classroom programme and environment.

Children were generally strategic in their writing, using strategies for planning, composing and revising, and task management. Re-reading was used as a core strategy in composing and revising by all children. Children also used self-questioning, answering, and trialling. More-expert children combined their strategy use into a well orchestrated process.

Children described effort as the most common attribution. Apparently more-expert writers appeared to qualify this as 'specific effort' rather than a generalised idea of effort. Ability was also a common attribution. Two more novice writers named luck as an attribution. Having good ideas and lack of distractions were novel attributions named by less-expert writers. Children's attitudes were predictably diverse, and showed a strong link with classroom programmes and environments. Children's attitudes tended to relate to the value of writing, individual or social writing, and their perceptions of feedback.

The two classrooms were ostensibly very different, but shared common themes. Both classrooms offered different instructional experiences with genre, and as a consequence, the role of expertise related to this also differed. Both teachers saw metacognition and self-management as having an important role in children's learning generally, and in their writing specifically. The two classrooms also differed in the extent by which writing was an individual or social activity.

#### *4.12 Chapter Summary*

This chapter has presented children's general perceptions and the individual conceptual frameworks each child. Themes relating to knowledge, strategies, attributions, and attitudes were also discussed. The classroom programmes and environments were described, along with the themes emerging from classrooms.



## Chapter Five Discussion

### 5.1 *Chapter Overview*

This chapter discusses the major themes emerging from the findings, relating to children's perceptions and classroom programmes and environments. Discussion of each theme demonstrates how the findings relate to relevant theory and research.

### 5.2 *Children's Perceptions*

Children's perceptions of writing were predictably diverse and idiosyncratic. On a global level, they ranged from a desire to avoid writing to being passionately involved in writing. All children appeared to co-construct their perceptions, through problem-finding and problem-solving activity situated in authentic contexts. This finding is in keeping with the theoretical framework underpinning this study. Children's perceptions of writing were not consistent across settings, pointing to the situated nature of perceptions. For instance, children's perceptions of writing at school were not consistent with their perceptions of writing at home. While classroom programmes and environments demonstrably influenced children's perceptions, classroom influences alone did not seem to be the major determining factor in shaping children's perceptions, pointing again to the co-constructed nature of children's perceptions. Children seemed to selectively focus on features of classroom programmes and environments that confirmed their perceptions. For instance, Charles, who saw writing as a solitary activity, consistently sought solitude to confirm this perception. Of the specific aspects of children's perceptions explored in this study, the findings relating to knowledge and strategies proved the most theoretically interesting.

### 5.3 *Writing and Knowledge*

The findings suggest that writing is a knowledge-based domain, although it

has not traditionally been seen as such (Torrance, 1996). The romanticised notion of 'the author' has also been particularly prohibitive towards viewing writing as knowledge-rich (Nistler, 1990). The findings also tentatively support Torrance's (1996) assertion that children's knowledge of genre is a major differentiator between more- and less-expert. However, the findings do not support that knowledge is *more* important than strategy use (further discussion on this follows in section 5.6 *Writing and Strategy Use*).

#### 5.4 Genre Knowledge

Genre knowledge seemed to be a critical part of children's perceptions. All children described and demonstrated their genre knowledge as being important for their writing. It was used to support choice of genre and topic, and to inform composing and revising. The model of expertise presented in each classroom appeared to inform children's genre knowledge. This is in contrast to Chapman's (1994) assertion that genre knowledge may develop solely through children's social engagement. Children in John's classroom in particular had explicit access to the expertise found in good quality reading material. This is significantly in contrast with Collins et al.'s (1989) assertion that children are typically not able to access such expertise. The findings for children in John's classroom confirm those of Hammond (1996), who found that an extended focus on reading gives children a rich context for writing.

The findings demonstrate that children's *descriptions* of their genre knowledge and their *demonstrations* of this knowledge were different. This has significant implications for interpretation of past research, and for design of future research. Children in this study *discussed* genre clearly and simply, mostly in terms of the format and function of their writing. Personal recounts, fictional narratives, myths, and plays were the genre mostly commonly discussed. This format-driven description of genre is in keeping with Shook et al.'s (1989) findings with younger children. However children's *demonstrations* of their genre knowledge was somewhat less

straightforward. Their writing showed a sophisticated, albeit tacit, understanding of genre, in terms of genre being a reflection of social mores, in a similar fashion to Chapman's (1994) findings.

#### *5.4.1 Genre Knowledge and Gender*

Gender differences in children's genre knowledge, as expressed by their choice and use of genre, were somewhat apparent. Typical classroom writing programmes may "tacitly privilege certain genres, particularly expressive personal narrative and memoir... while ignoring the visually mediated narratives... that many students, particularly boys, might find attractive." (Newkirk, 2001, p.465). The findings from John's classroom do not confirm this, while findings from Karly's classroom do so to some extent. However, Karly's unofficial (but obvious) acceptance of boys' choice of genre and topic may have reduced this 'tacit privilege'. While this may relate to the strong influence of classroom programmes, it may also be affected by the gender of the teacher.

The findings only somewhat concur with the notion that boys write media based stories and girls write stories based in experiences at home and school (Dyson, 1997). Differences in classroom programmes appeared to be more significant than gender differences in informing children's genre and topic selection. Differences between girls' and boys' choice and use of genre and topic were more noticeable in Karly's classroom, and less so in John's. Again, these differences may also relate to the gender of the teacher.

#### *5.4.2 Genre Knowledge and Self-Selection*

The freedom to largely self-select genre and topic allowed children to develop and activate their genre knowledge. This self-selection may have also contributed to children's sense of purposeful activity, to their motivation to write, and to their emergent self-management (Graham & Harris, 1997). In these ways, self-selection was a critical aspect of both classroom programmes.

Children's self-selections should be monitored or guided in some way, as: "writing about a personal experience may make fewer demands on the writer, diminishing the need to self-regulate because content is readily available and organized in one's memory." (Graham & Harris, 1997, p.418) To different extents, both teachers tacitly guided children's selections, making them more 'managed choices' (Allington & Johnston, 2000) than truly independent selections. However, children still *perceived* that they were self-selecting genre and topic, which critically contributed to the effectiveness of self-selection.

While children in Karly's classroom largely wrote about personal experiences, they attended relatively more to their specific and conscious use of composing strategies. This suggests that while their topic selections were less demanding, this allowed the cognitive 'space' necessary for children to consciously attend to their strategy use. This may have promoted rather than diminished children's ability to self-regulate, confounding Graham and Harris' (1997) recommendation as above.

Children's self-selections allowed flexibility in their choices of topics, which may have contributed to the large number of intertextual references that children made in their writing. In both classrooms, children's intertextual references were accepted, and in John's classroom, encouraged. These references related to a surprisingly wide range of books and other print and visual media. Most of the texts referred to were 'out-of-school' texts, including visual texts in popular media. This finding concurs with Dyson's (2001) finding that children frequently refer to media texts. Children's appropriation of characters, ideas, and writing styles prevalent in media based texts highlights concerns about the apparent 'commodification' of literacy (Knobel, 1999; Kress, 1998). Their intertextual references indeed demonstrated what children understood about writing and authorship, as Fox (1993) suggests. Several children described their perception that

outside texts acted as a support for their writing. In this way their intertextual references were explicit, planned, and carefully considered.

Most children in this study perceived that they were able to control and define the task of writing. This is in contrast to Torrance's (1996, p.4) comment that "Writing tasks are open ended and poorly defined problems". While it might be predicted that children's self-selection potentially made the task of writing more complex for children, both teachers clearly defined the problem of writing. Karly did this by narrowing the task to typically a sole genre, with a strong focus on composing strategies, while John did this by explicitly describing a more diverse range of writing tasks. Children also used self- and task-management strategies to define and control the task of writing.

### *5.5 Knowledge and Strategy Use*

Rather than placing knowledge as more important than strategy use, the findings of this study suggest that knowledge and strategy use are of equal importance for writers. This concurs with Troia and Graham's (2002) recent recommendations, but is in contrast to earlier theorists (such as Torrance, 1996; Hayes & Flower, 1980; 1986) who place knowledge and strategy use as rival elements.

The link between knowledge and strategy use may be more complex than previously thought. The findings of this study only partially bear out the assertion that strategy use is knowledge dependent (Fitzgerald & Stamm, 1990; Hayes, 2000). Confirming this assertion, more-knowledgeable children in this study perceived themselves to be more strategic, and indeed demonstrated this in their writing. Less- knowledgeable children were less able to describe their strategy use, and appeared to use a more restricted range of strategies.

In disconfirming the assertion that strategy use is knowledge dependent, it

appeared that children's use of strategies was strongly influenced by classroom programmes. Children in Karly's classroom, with limited but more in-depth genre knowledge, were generally more strategic. Children in John's classroom, with broad but shallow genre knowledge, were generally less strategic.

### 5.6 *Writing and Strategy Use*

Children in this study were generally strategic in their planning, composing, and revising, and in managing the task of writing. While this finding is neither new nor novel, it is significant. Interestingly, children made only minimal distinction between composing and revising, viewing these as an integrated process, and consequently adopting integrated strategies to manage this process. This finding may be related to the instructional programmes in writing. As it is, this finding sits uneasily with earlier research, which typically separates the processes of composing and revising, and the strategies used for each (for instance Hayes & Flower, 1980; 1986).

#### 5.6.1 *Re-reading*

All children perceived that re-reading was an important strategy in their composing and revising. All children used it as a critical and central strategy. It was a strategy that children described in detail, and close observation of children as they wrote confirmed these descriptions. Children used re-reading as both a composing and revising strategy, not just for revising as might be assumed from Hayes et al.'s (1987) model of revision. The importance of re-reading confirms similar findings from Langer and Flihan (2000) and Hayes et al. (1987).

Hayes (2000) highlights that reading to comprehend a piece of text and reading to revise a piece of text are cognitively and strategically different activities. The reading strategies *for writing* used by children of this age are therefore of major significance and worthy of further investigation.

### 5.6.2 *Orchestrated Strategy Use*

While re-reading was found to be a critical strategy for composing and revising, more-expert writers integrated it into a combined and well orchestrated set of strategies. This was a unique finding, not seen elsewhere in research with children of this age group. This orchestrated strategy use during composing and revising relates closely to Hayes' (2000) concept of cognitive processes used during writing, but again sits uneasily with research that separates these processes (such as Hayes & Flower, 1980;1986).

This orchestration of strategy use did not appear to be a direct feature of the instructional programme or environment in either classroom. It instead appeared to be unique to these particular children and their expertise in self-regulation. The self-managing focus in both classrooms certainly appeared to impact upon this orchestrated strategy use.

### 5.7 *Instructional Programmes in Writing*

The instructional programmes in writing in both classrooms demonstrated exemplary features of process-based and holistic approaches to writing instruction. While the two programmes offered different opportunities to children, both appeared effective. The differences between the instructional programmes do not seem sufficient to explain differences in children's perceptions.

On a general note, the findings of this study emphatically do not concur with Ludwig and Herschell's (1998) finding that issues related to classroom management and procedure significantly impede on literacy instruction and literate practices in classrooms. Both teachers met the managerial and procedural demands of classroom life in unobtrusive, embedded, and pedagogically consistent ways.

### 5.7.1 *Teacher's Professional Understandings*

The importance of teachers' professional understandings cannot be overlooked. Both teachers in this study used their personal beliefs and experiences, along with professional knowledge and expertise, to inform their classroom programmes. This finding concurs with similar findings by Comber et al. (2002, p.16), in that teachers "were constantly assembling their pedagogical resources and know-how." Both teachers also used *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1994) adaptively to complement their professional knowledge.

The notion that middle primary children have moved from 'learning to write' to 'writing to learn' (Comber et al., 2002; Hood, 2000) appears inaccurate in light of the findings of this study. Teachers in this study did not specifically hold with this conceptualisation. Children in this study were clearly not 'learning to write', as it would be popularly understood in its mechanical sense. These children were competent 'mechanical' writers, able to form letters, words, sentences, and texts coherently and mostly correctly. They were largely much more concerned with the expressive demands of writing. The children mostly used writing to express and understand their individual and social goals.

The findings also show that these children were not 'writing to learn'. In both classrooms, public and private talk (in the forms of discussion and emergent metacognition) was the primary vehicle for instruction and learning. Teachers and children were not specifically using writing to support their learning. Instead, writing was valued in its own right, and also served particular social goals.

The inaccuracy of this popular conceptualisation of children's writing development highlights the need for teachers' professional understanding of the processes of learning, as has been recommended by the Literacy Taskforce (1999). The findings also highlight the need for a new and more



accurate popular conceptualisation of writing in the middle primary years. This could clarify teacher's vernacular talk and professional understanding of children's development as writers. Such a conceptualisation could perhaps be based around children 'learning to express', which linguistically focuses on the role of expressive elements of procedural knowledge.

### 5.7.2 *Cognitive Apprenticeship*

The instructional programmes in both classrooms appeared to be loosely based on a cognitive apprenticeship model. While neither teacher explicitly described cognitive apprenticeship, several key features of this model were integrated into the instructional programmes: use of expert models to induct children into a community of writers, authentic and socially shared writing activities, and increasing self-management.

Use of expert models was critical in both programmes for building knowledge and strategy use. The more-expert partner is critical in extending individual and collaborative zones of proximal development. Therefore, the models of expertise presented in instructional programme are significant. The two classrooms offered different expert models, however both provided relevant writing strategies, thereby extending children's achievement.

Both programmes used writing activities that were either authentic within the domain of writing or socially authentic. Frequent publication of children's writing in books in Karly's classroom added social authenticity for children and their writing. Their knowledge of audience was relatively acute, adding a further dimension to the extension of children's writing development.

*English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1994, p.139) recommends that authentic writing activities should relate to "A real situation, or a setting of genuine significance *within the learning programme*" (emphasis added). This is a problematic view of authenticity

and one that requires significant clarification.

Both classrooms focussed on enhancing children's self-management. Enhanced self-management was achieved in both classrooms through children gradually appropriating the external self-managing features to develop internal metacognitive knowledge, awareness, and control.

### 5.7.3 Curriculum

The findings have demonstrated the importance of the use of genre models for teachers and genre knowledge for children. These findings have two significant implications of the teaching of writing within the context of *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1994). Firstly that genre should be conceptualised as a social and stylistic practice and less as a format for writing, and secondly that more attention needs to be given to the development of children's genre knowledge.

The way in which genre is presented in *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1994) is unclear. The glossary describes genre as: "A particular type of text, having specific and distinctive characteristics arising from its purpose, function, and audience. Genres are not fixed or discrete categories." (Ministry of Education, 1994, p.140). While this is an appropriate description of genre, particularly in light of current theory (such as Mercer, 2000; Chapman, 1994), it tends to focus on text types and formats. The achievement objectives within the curriculum appear also to use the term genre in a strongly format-driven way. For example, it is used in an achievement objective for Poetic Writing in connection with types of texts such as "letters, poems, and narrative" (Ministry of Education, 1994, p.35). This format-driven view of genre undermines the generative and creative possibilities of children's writing.

The curriculum is thereby presenting two distinct conceptualisations of genre, one based in a social discourse understanding, the other in a format-

driven, functional understanding. As teachers predictably more frequently use the achievement objectives, and less frequently use the glossary, the format-driven conceptualisation of genre presented in the achievement objectives may take precedence. Hood (2000) echoes these distinct conceptualisations.

These distinct conceptualisations have significant implications for how teachers understand genre, and therefore how genre models are used and presented within classroom programmes. The findings of this study suggest that genre, in its description and use, should be considered primarily in a social and stylistic sense, and only secondarily in the functional sense. This primary focus on the social and stylistic conceptualisation of genre echoes recent recommendations from the Education Review Office (2002) and Feldman and Kalmar (1998).

The findings also suggest the importance of genre knowledge for children. The importance of children's genre knowledge in *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1994) seems to be implicit rather than explicit. This is perhaps related to a tacit rejection of the idea that writing is a knowledge-based domain. The achievement objective that most explicitly describes children's genre knowledge is for Reading and Writing Processes: "Students should: identify, discuss, and use the conventions, structures, and language features of different texts, and discuss how they relate to the topic." (Ministry of Education, 1994, p.36). Children's development of genre knowledge is only implied in this achievement objective. Genre knowledge, in its functional sense, is also implied in other achievement objectives, but as discussed above, this functional conceptualisation of genre is problematic.

The findings of this study point to the need for more explicit inclusion of genre knowledge and the use of genre models in the curriculum. This in part concurs with Feldman and Kalmar's (1998) similar recommendation.

## 5.8 *Social Environments for Writing*

Environmental influences were by no means incidental for teachers or children, and social factors featured largely in children's perceptions. Social environments were also inextricably tied to instructional programmes. In very different ways, writing was a socialised activity for all children. The findings do not concur with the notion that school-based literacy is an individualised activity (Resnick, 2000).

### 5.8.1 *Socially Shared Writing*

Children's participation in socially shared activity may have extended their individual achievement, concurring with Tudge's (1992) similar finding. The findings also specifically support the notion that "text is the produce of social interaction between two or more participants." (Kress, 1998, p.64). Writing was socially shared in the two classrooms in different ways. In Karly's classroom, children generally perceived writing as a collaborative and shared activity. Children were specifically encouraged and expected to write collaboratively, making use of the expertise of their peers. Children also had considerable collaborative ability. Children in John's classroom perceived that writing was done individually, but also that writing was influenced by absent and more-expert partners. Children were not encouraged nor expected to write collaboratively, but were able to make some use of the expertise of 'absent' more-expert partners, that is, published adult authors.

The findings do not support the notion that children's social involvement in academic tasks promotes their engagement in such tasks (Wallace, 1996). Children in John's classroom were less socially involved with their writing, but all excepting Bernice showed a high level of engagement in their writing. Children in Karly's classroom were highly socially involved with their writing, and all excepting Harriet showed a high level of engagement. In this respect, children's engagement seemed more linked to expertise rather than social involvement, in that the less-expert children in this study

showed the least engagement in writing. This raises the question for future research, does expertise determine engagement, or does engagement determine expertise? Further to this, if there is no clear determination, then what is the nature of the relationship between expertise and engagement?

### 5.8.2 *Collaboration and Writing*

Collaboration can be seen as a specific form of social interaction, with achievement of shared goals in mind. The findings support the notion that collaboration during writing serves two key functions, to enable children to 'play' with their knowledge of texts and also to generate cognitive conflict (Daiute & Dalton, 1993). The extent of collaboration during writing, and the implications of this collaboration, were different in both classrooms. In Karly's classroom children directly collaborated as they composed and revised. Perhaps too much cognitive conflict was generated through this collaboration however, causing frustration and tension. In John's classroom, children indirectly collaborated through whole class discussions and the emerging group conferences. However, children's active or passive participation in these activities (particularly the whole class discussions) may have reduced their effectiveness.

Children who chose to write collaboratively showed greater knowledge of audience, concurring with similar findings from Gallini and Zhang (1997). Children who consistently chose to work alone showed less positive self-efficacy beliefs, and were significantly less metacognitively aware than other children, in contrast to Gallini and Zhang's (1997) findings. However the choice to work alone or collaboratively was somewhat restricted in John's classroom, where he expected children to work alone.

### 5.8.3 *Children's Social Goals*

The findings of this study concur with Dyson's (1997) assertion that children use both texts and the writing session itself to shape and achieve their social goals. Most children in this study used writing as a social tool

“to manipulate relationships, to achieve particular responses from others” (Dyson, 1997, p.18). All of the children also used writing sessions for what Dyson (1997) calls the ‘unofficial’ school work of managing social relationships. This was particularly noted in Karly’s classroom, where writing was a more explicitly socialised and collaborative activity. Children in John’s classroom strategically used their participation (or non-participation) in classroom discussions during writing sessions for the same purposes.

For some children, there was a tension between their individual and social goals. This concurs with the notion that conflict can arise between “the constraining authority of convention and rule, and the dynamic of individual desire.” (Kress, 1998, p.65). Neither teacher presented a ‘constraining authority’ nor even ‘rules’, but conventions, particularly those of appropriateness, implicitly appeared and to which were largely adhered. One child notably demonstrated this tension, Eugene, in his desire to compose texts which appealed to his own particular interests, but who also wanted his texts to reach a wider audience, in order that he could gain social favour. This tension was complicated by his choice of topic and style, which were not suited to the wider classroom audience.

### 5.9 *Summary of Themes*

Children’s perceptions were predictably diverse, and provided significant insight into the processes of learning. Writing is a knowledge-based domain, and within this, genre knowledge is critical. Strategy use is equally important to knowledge, and re-reading is a particularly important strategy. More-expert children are able to use a wider range of strategies, and orchestrated these into a seamless process. Instruction in writing that is loosely based on a cognitive apprenticeship model may be effective in framing writing as a knowledgeable, strategic, social, and authentic activity. The current curriculum inadequately conceptualises genre and pays only minimal attention to children’s development of genre knowledge. Social

environments for writing allow for play and cognitive conflict, through which children shape and aim to meet their social goals.

*5.10 Chapter Summary*

This chapter has presented the major themes relating to children's perceptions and the classroom influences upon these. Each theme was discussed in terms of its relationship to the findings and to relevant theory and research.

## Chapter Six

### Conclusions

#### 6.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents a brief summary of this study, and then highlights the limitations and strengths of the study. The implications of the study are outlined in terms of contributions made to research in this and related areas, along with recommendations for future research.

#### 6.2 Brief Summary

This study sought to understand children's perceptions of their writing, as related to the contexts they operated within. A multiple-method ethnographic case study design was adopted for this exploration.

In summary, this study found that children's global perceptions were varied and highly idiosyncratic. All children clearly discussed and demonstrated their perceptions. Children demonstrated the procedural, metacognitive, and genre knowledge they bring to their writing. Children mostly described their procedural knowledge in terms of its expressive aspects, and most formulated individualised guidelines for their own writing. Children's metacognitive knowledge appeared to be strongly related to expertise. Children's genre knowledge appeared to be strongly related to the classroom programme and environment.

Children were generally strategic in their writing, using strategies for planning, composing and revising, and task management. Re-reading was used as a core strategy in composing and revising by all children. Children also used self-questioning, answering, and trialling. More-expert children combined their strategy use into a well orchestrated process.

Children described effort as the most common attribution. Apparently more-expert writers appeared to qualify this as 'specific effort' rather than a



generalised idea of effort. Ability was also a common attribution. Two more novice writers named luck as an attribution. Having good ideas and lack of distractions were novel attributions named by less-expert writers.

Children's attitudes were predictably diverse, and showed a strong link with classroom programmes and environments. Children's attitudes tended to relate to the value of writing, the extent to which they viewed writing as an individual or social activity, and their perceptions of feedback.

The two classrooms were ostensibly very different, but shared common themes. The classrooms offered different instructional experiences with genre, and as a consequence, the role of expertise related to this also differed. Both teachers saw metacognition and self-management as having an important role in children's learning generally, and in their writing specifically. The two classrooms also differed in the extent to which writing was an individual or social activity.

These findings show that children's perceptions were predictably diverse, and provided significant insight into the processes of learning. Writing is a knowledge-based domain, and within this, genre knowledge is critical. Strategy use is equally important to knowledge, and re-reading is a particularly important strategy. More-expert children are able to use a wider range of strategies, and orchestrated these into a seamless process. Instruction in writing that is loosely based on a cognitive apprenticeship model may be effective in making writing a knowledgeable, strategic, social, and authentic activity. The current curriculum inadequately conceptualises genre and pays only minimal attention to children's development of genre knowledge. Social environments for writing allow for play and cognitive conflict, through which children shape and aim to meet their social goals.

However, this study was limited in several respects.

### 6.3 Limitations

The limitations of this study related to observer and participant reactivity, children's cognitive load and reporting issues, and the relatively small scale of the study.

Observer reactivity was identified as a threat to validity (see section 3.9.2 *Validity* for discussion of this), and strategies to reduce this threat were implemented. Nevertheless, observer reactivity may have potentially impacted on both teachers and children. The extent of this impact cannot be quantified but only speculated upon. Teachers may have given closer attention to their instructional programmes and classroom environments during and prior to the data collection period, thus changing them. This limitation may have been mitigated by the six week data collection period, although a further extension of this would have more fully mitigated this. Children and teachers alike may have told or shown the researcher what they thought was 'correct' or necessary for the researcher to hear or see. Again, the six week data collection period may have mitigated this, although again, further time would have done so more fully. Observer reactivity was further complicated by the 'known' status of the researcher, and by the complexities of the researcher role (see section 3.6 *Researcher Role* for further discussion of this).

This study may also have been limited by participant reactivity. This is described here as the participants' mutual influences on each other. This was not previously identified as a threat to validity. Like observer reactivity, the extent of participant reactivity cannot be quantified, only speculated upon. Participant reactivity was noted in children's group interviews, where children's expressed opinions may have been socially shaped or changed. This could have been predicted, in that children's perceptions were theoretically seen in this study as fluid and reactive. Participant reactivity was not noted between teachers, as they were interviewed individually. Use of multiple methods and constant comparison

between data sets may have mitigated the impact of participant reactivity.

Issues relating to children's cognitive load and reporting may have limited this study. Cognitive load issues were particularly apparent with children's 'think alouds'. As discussed in section 3.3.2 '*Think Alouds*', the 'think aloud' procedure was changed during the data collection period. Concurrent 'think alouds', where children continuously verbalised their thinking as they wrote, seemed to be overly challenging some several children.

Consequently, the procedure was changed to a timed 'think aloud', where children engaged in a 'write-stop-talk' cycle with the researcher as they wrote. This appeared to be both less challenging and more enjoyable for children. It also proved to be a fruitful data collection method. This limitation was further mitigated by using the 'think alouds' data alongside data from all three other sources, observations, interviews, and document analysis. While all data sets were considered and compared in data analysis, the extent of the problem of children's cognitive load is not sufficiently understood at this time.

The issue of fore-front reporting, along with the notion that what children say and do are not necessarily similar, also may have limited this study. The use of multiple methods may have substantially mitigated these problems. The six week data collection period may also have reduced the likelihood of collecting only time-specific data, but an extension of this period would have done so more fully.

The final limitation to this study was the small scale of the study. This is seen in terms of both the small number of participants, and in the limited time frame. However, the small scale allowed for in-depth data collection with all participants, and as discussed above, the time frame was sufficient to reduce the likelihood of gathering only time-specific data.

Despite these limitations, this study had several significant strengths.

#### *6.4 Strengths*

The strengths of this study lay in its focus, design, and detail. The first significant strength of this study was the valuing of children's perceptions. As Gipps and Tunstall (1998, p.149) explain: "Pupil's voice has come to be seen as crucially important to understanding the complexities of learning in school." The goal of this study was to understand children's perceptions. This goal was met through a consistent focus on children's interpretations of their knowledge, strategies, attributions, and attitudes, which was complemented by the re-construction of these perceptions through a more-expert lens. A theoretical understanding of children's perceptions is needed, as they powerfully influence achievement (Weinstein, 1989). This study has gained such an understanding, albeit on a relatively small scale.

The second strength of this study was its multiple method design. The methods were both observational and interactional, and allowed a large amount and wide range of data to be collected. Relatively large data sets were compiled for each participant, allowing significant comparisons between methods. This significantly contributed to the validation of the findings. These methods allowed comparison between what the participants said and did, highlighting inaccuracies in some instances. The methods also allowed in-depth exploration and analysis of children's perceptions, and of the classroom programmes and environments within which they operated.

A third strength of this study was the detail in which the methods and findings have been described. This significantly contributes to validation of the findings, and allows for close analysis.

#### *6.5 Contributions*

This study has contributed theoretical and practical understandings of children's perceptions of writing in the middle primary years. This study contributes to the understanding of the significance of children's perceptions. It also contributes to the understanding of research designs and

methods appropriate for exploration of these perceptions.

This study contributes to an emergent theory of children's writing development beyond the early years of primary schooling. Any such theory must acknowledge the co-constructive processes of learning, the dual importance of genre knowledge and strategy use, and the social contexts within which children operate.

This study has presented integrated and individualised models of children's perceptions not previously seen in research. These may be a useful model in analysing and comparing research into children's perceptions

#### *6.6 Recommendations for Future Research*

Future research is recommended and warranted relating to children's perceptions of writing and to environments for writing.

As previously mentioned, there is a noted lack of research into children's development as writers in the middle primary years. While this study adds to understandings in this area, specific and longitudinal studies are needed to investigate this more fully. Significantly, this research could inform teacher's professional understandings and contribute to future curriculum refinements.

Theoretical studies of children's global perceptions of their learning are rare. This study has indicated the significance of children's perceptions about their writing, and the complexities in this area. Further research into children's global perceptions is warranted, along with research into children's specific perceptions of writing and other domains.

The strategies children use as they read during their writing are particularly intriguing. As Hayes (2000) notes, reading strategies for comprehension are different from those used for revision. In addition to this, children's

composing and revising were seen as almost inextricably linked. Consequently, research exploring combined composing and revising strategies, including re-reading, is needed.

The ways in which children attribute their successes and failures as writers, and the implications this has on strategy use and attitudes, remains poorly understood. This study raises several vexing questions in this area:

- Why were less-expert children unwilling or unable to commit to a specific attribution?
- What is the relationship between expertise, attributions, and attitudinal beliefs? How can this relationship be described?
- What is the significance of the novel attributions described by children in this study?

Research specifically addressing these and other questions related to children's attributions, specific to writing and also more generally, is needed.

The relationships between expertise, engagement, and social involvement were found to be complex. The findings of this study may suggest that expertise and engagement are contingently linked. These relationships are significant for learning, and are worthy of further investigation.

The contexts within which children learn are both significant and generally poorly understood. As Hayes (2000, p.6) notes: "Although the cultural and social factors that influence writing are pervasive, the research devoted to their study is still young." The instructional features of classroom programmes, particularly the use of genre models, expertise, and self-managing teaching strategies, were particularly influential on children's perceptions. Research exploring these notions within the context of *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1994) is needed.

On a more general note, research that more widely examines the complexity

of instructional practices continues to be warranted. As Ludwig and Herschell (1998, p.67) comment: “Sociological, linguistic, philosophical and pedagogical perspectives must be discussed if we are to adequately account for the multiple practices that make up students’ literacy experiences.”

### 6.7 *Conclusion to This Study*

This study fundamentally aimed to explore the question, how do children perceive their writing? Children’s perceptions of their learning and particularly their writing are significant in terms of cognitive development, motivational beliefs, and educational achievement. In this exploration, children’s perceptions of their learning and writing were uncovered and presented. The contexts within which children operated were also explored. The findings highlight the dual importance of genre knowledge and strategy use, and also the importance of the social contexts within which children develop their expertise.

These findings have significant implications for theorists, researchers, teachers, and educational policy-makers. These findings also raise further questions about children’s global and specific perceptions. As a concluding comment, this study re-iterates the work of Evans (2002) and Gipps and Tunstall (1998) who call for research that understands and presents the experiences of learners, as a critical way forward for educational research.

## **Appendix A**

### **Writing and *English in the New Zealand Curriculum***

- A1 Achievement Objectives: Writing Functions
- A2 Achievement Objectives: Reading and Writing Processes



## Appendix A1

### Achievement Objectives: Writing Functions

	<b>Expressive Writing</b>	<b>Poetic Writing</b>	<b>Transactional Writing</b>
<b>Level:</b>	<i>Students should:</i>	<i>Students should:</i>	<i>Students should:</i>
<b>2</b>	write regularly and spontaneously to record personal experiences and observations	write on a variety of topics, shaping ideas in a number of genres, such as letters, poems, and narrative, and making choices in language and form	write instructions and explanations, state facts and opinions, and recount events in a range of authentic contexts
<b>3</b>	write regularly and with ease to express personal responses to different experiences and to record observations and ideas	write on a variety of topics, shaping, editing, and reworking texts in a range of genres, and using vocabulary and conventions, such as spelling and sentence structure, appropriate to the genre	write instructions, explanations, and factual accounts, and express personal viewpoints, in a range of authentic contexts, sequencing ideas logically
<b>4</b>	write regularly and with ease to express personal responses to a range of experiences and texts, explore ideas, and record observations	write on a variety of topics, shaping, editing, and reworking texts in a range of genres, expressing ideas and experiences imaginatively and using appropriate vocabulary and conventions, such as spelling and sentence structure with purpose	write instructions, explanations, and factual accounts, and express and explain a point of view, in a range of authentic contexts, organising and linking ideas logically and making language choices appropriate to the audience

(From *English in the New Zealand Curriculum Framework*, Ministry of Education, 1994, p.35)

## Appendix A2

## Achievement Objectives: Reading and Writing Processes

	<b>Exploring Language</b>	<b>Thinking Critically</b>	<b>Processing Information</b>
<b>Level:</b>	<i>In achieving the objectives of understanding and using written language, students should:</i>	<i>In achieving the objectives of understanding and using written language, students should:</i>	<i>In achieving the objectives of understanding and using written language, students should:</i>
<b>1-2</b>	explore choices made by writers, and identify and use the common conventions of writing and organisation of text which affect understanding	identify and express meanings in written texts, drawing on personal background, knowledge, and experience	identify, retrieve, record, and present coherent information, using more than one source and type of technology, and describing the process used
<b>2-4</b>	identify, discuss, and use the conventions, structures, and language features of different texts, and discuss how they relate to the topic	discuss and convey meanings in written texts, exploring relevant experiences and other points of view	gather, select, record, interpret, and present coherent, structured information from a variety of sources, using different technologies and explaining the processes used

(From *English in the New Zealand Curriculum Framework*, Ministry of Education, 1994, p.36)

**Appendix B**  
**Interview Schedules**

- B1 Teachers: First Interview
- B2 Teachers: Second Interview
- B3 Children: First Interview
- B4 Children: Second Interview

**Appendix B1**  
**Interview Schedule**  
**Teachers: First Interview**

*1. Programme Elements*

What do you see as things that are fundamental to your programme in writing?

For each idea raised...

Can you explain that to me as if I wasn't a teacher?

Why is that so important?

What does it contribute to your programme?

Where does it sit in terms of your programme?

Can you give me an example of this in action?

*2. Tasks*

Tell me about what children are doing during writing time in your classroom. And you?

How do they know what they should be doing?

How do they know about their successes?

*3. Feedback*

Tell me about how children get feedback about their writing

Who gives them feedback, and in what form?

How they take feedback, and what they do with it

Tell me about their reflections

*4. Social Involvement*

Tell me about... Conferencing, publishing, sharing, children's reflections

**Appendix B2**  
**Interview Schedule**  
**Teachers: Second Interview**

*1. Programme Elements*

(programme feature) seems to be a big part of your programme. Tell me about...

Why that is

What it contributes to your programme

How it supports children

What, if any, problems there are with this

Where this feature came from, and what beliefs underpin it

*2. Teacher's Expectations*

What do you expect from children in terms of...

Their planning

Their daily output

Their engagement as writers

Their social involvement during writing time

Their reading

Their reflections

How often they conference and publish

*3. Success*

What is it that makes children successful as writers in your room?

Do you think these children are keen writers?

Why?

What makes them persist at writing when it's difficult?

**Appendix B3**  
**Interview Schedule**  
**Children: First Interview**

*1. Starter Question*

If you had to explain to someone about what you do in writing, what would you tell them?

*2. Strengths and weaknesses*

What would you tell someone about your strengths as a writer?

And what are things you know you need to work on?

*3. Strategies*

What is it you're thinking about when you're writing?

And what are the specific tricks, or strategies, you use when you write?

What do you do when you're stuck with something in your writing?

What makes you stuck?

*4. Composing*

Do you deliberately think things while you write that help you?

Do you change your writing? When? Why? What helps you?

What are you working on at the moment? Tell us about that

What are your goals in writing at the moment? Where did they come from?

Who do you write for? Who reads your writing?

**Appendix B4**  
**Interview Schedule**  
**Children: Second Interview**

*1. Starter Question*

Looking back at your writing over this year, what's changed for you?  
How can you tell about what's changed?

*2. Successful Writing*

Now find a really good piece of your writing.  
What makes it good?  
Has it been worked on, conferenced, published, shared?  
Have you changed your mind about it at all?  
What makes a really good day in writing? And a bad day?

*3. Themes and Ideas*

What do you often write about?  
How do you plan?  
Where do your ideas come from? When?  
What do you do with them?

*4. Publishing*

Tell me about publishing  
What have you published this year?  
What would you like to publish?

**Appendix C**  
**Ethical Information**

- C1 Research Proposal Review
- C2 Sample Information Sheet: Board of Trustees
- C3 Sample Information Sheet: Children
- C4 Sample Consent Form: Parents and Children



## Appendix C1 Research Proposal Review

**College Ethics Committee**

**RESEARCH PROPOSAL REVIEW**

**Name of Applicant(s)** Madelaine Willcocks  
**Title of Research** Children's Perceptions of their Writing: Knowledge, Strategies, Attributions, and Attitudes

**THE PROPOSAL IS:**

- Approved without change
- Approved with minor amendments (as listed at Amendments below)
- Not approved until completion of amendments (as listed at Amendments below)
- Submit to MUHEC

**AMENDMENTS**

Amendments have been noted.

**NOTES**

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**REVIEWER**

**Name** Joy Cullen                      **Contact telephone number** 06 3513355  
**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_                      **Date** 26.02.02

## Appendix C2

### Sample Information Sheet: Board of Trustees



Department of Arts  
& Language Education  
Private Bag 11 222  
Palmerston North  
New Zealand

Telephone: 64 6 356 9099  
Facsimile: 64 6 351 3474

#### Children's Perceptions of Their Writing: Knowledge, Strategies, Attributions, and Attitudes

##### Information Sheet for Board of Trustees

Researcher: Madelaine Willcocks, [REDACTED]

Supervisor: Brian Finch, Massey University, [REDACTED]

The purpose of this study is to explore children's perceptions of their own learning, particularly writing. These perceptions will be represented as a theoretically grounded conceptual framework. In particular, children's perceptions in terms of the knowledge, strategies, attributions, and attitudes they bring to the task of writing will be explored. A secondary purpose of the study is to explore classroom programmes and environments in action in relation to children's perceptions. The specific research questions include:

- What knowledge do children hold about writing?
- What strategies do children use as they write?
- To what do children attribute their achievements in writing?
- What attitudes to children hold about writing, their own development as writers, and their own learning in writing?
- How do the aspects of knowledge, processes, strategies, attributions, and attitudes appear to interact and influence each other?
- How can the aspects of knowledge, processes, strategies, attributions, and attitudes be re-constructed within conceptual frameworks?
- How do classroom programmes and environments relate to these children's perceptions?

It is proposed that this study will invite one school, two teachers, and eight children to be involved. The involvement of the Board of Trustees will be to allow access for the researcher. The involvement of the teachers will include nominating children, allowing access to the classroom, and interviews. For interviews, a time requirement of up to three hours will be involved (over one school term). For classroom observations, a time requirement of up to 70 hours will be involved (over one school term, averaging 7 hours per week). The involvement of the children will include allowing observation and interviews. For interviews, a time requirement of up to a total of two hours will be involved (over one school term). Interviews with teachers and children will be audio-taped, should consent for this be provided by participants. Teachers, children, and their parents will be given full information and consent will be requested in due course.

Te Kōwhiri o Te Mātauranga

Inception to Infinity: Massey University's commitment to learning as a life-long journey

(continued overleaf)

The information gathered over one school term, from interviews and observations, will be used to formulate conceptual frameworks that attempt to structure children's perceptions of their learning. The information gathered will be stored in a secure location, with no public access. The information will be used only for this research and any publications arising from this research. After the completion of the thesis, the information will either be returned to the participants, or destroyed in a secure manner.

All efforts will be taken to maximize confidentiality and anonymity for all participants. Names of participants will not be used once information has been gathered, information will be protected, and only non-identifying information will be used in reporting.

The Board of Trustees has the following rights:

- to decline to participate,
- to withdraw at any time,
- to ask questions about the study at any time,
- to allow access on the understanding that the school will not be identified at any time,
- to be provided with a summary of the findings at completion.

Should the Board of Trustees agree to participate, please fill in the enclosed Consent Form and return to me.

## Appendix C3

### Sample Information Sheet: Children



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
Te Kōwhiri o Te Mātauranga

Department of Arts  
& Language Education  
Private Bag 11 222  
Palmerston North  
New Zealand

Telephone: 64 6 358 9099  
Facsimile: 64 6 351 3474

#### Children's Perceptions of Their Writing : Knowledge, Strategies, Attributions, and Attitudes

##### Information for Children

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I have been a teacher at your school for the last 6 years. This year, I am taking time off to do some research for a Master of Education degree at Massey University.

The research I am planning is looking into what children think of writing. I want to find out about what children know about writing, what strategies they use, how they think about their successes and challenges, and how they feel about writing in general.

I would like to invite you to take part in this research. This means I would like to find out what you think of writing. If you and your parents agree to you taking part, it would mean that you will be...

- letting me observe you while you are doing any sort of writing in class
- talking to me about your writing as you write in class
- talking with other children and me about your writing in class

This will take place over about one month, but it probably won't be every day. You won't be missing any school time and it shouldn't interrupt in your learning time. I might use a small tape recorder when you are talking with me. None of the information I gather will have your name it, and I will not be giving any information to anyone else.

If you would like to take part in the research, you have these rights:

- to not take part;
- to stop taking part at any time;
- to ask me any questions about the research at any time;
- to take part knowing that your name will not be used at any time;
- to be given a summary of what I found out at the end of my research.

Please make sure you have talk about it with your parents, and together you will need to sign the consent form that your parents now have. My contact details are below, along with the details of my research supervisor.

Regards,


Madelaine Willcocks

Researcher: Madelaine Willcocks, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor: Brian Finch, Massey University, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C4

### Sample Consent Form: Parents and Children

 <b>Massey University</b> <small>COLLEGE OF EDUCATION Te Kōwhirihihi o Te Mātauranga</small>	<small>Department of Arts &amp; Language Education Private Bag 11 222 Palmerston North New Zealand  Telephone: 64 6 356 9089 Facsimile: 64 6 351 3474</small>
<b>Children's Perceptions of Their Writing : Knowledge, Strategies, Attributions, and Attitudes</b> <b>Consent Form for Parents and Children</b>	
Researcher: Madelaine Willcocks, [REDACTED] J. [REDACTED] Z.	
Supervisor: Brian Finch, Massey University, [REDACTED] Ph [REDACTED] Z.	
We have read the Information Sheet and understand the purpose of the study. We understand that we may ask further questions about the study at any time.	
We understand we have the following rights:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to decline to participate;</li> <li>• to withdraw at any time;</li> <li>• to participate on the understanding that my name will not be identified at any time;</li> <li>• to be provided with a summary of the findings at completion.</li> </ul>	
We <i>agree / do not agree</i> to (child's name) being audio-taped, on the understanding tapes will be returned or destroyed at the conclusion of the research (please circle one). We understand that our child has the right to ask for the tape to be turned off at any time during any taped interview.	
We <i>agree / do not agree</i> to participate in the study as described in the Information Sheet (please circle one).	
Signed: _____ <i>Parent Caregiver Guardian</i>	
Name: _____	
Date: _____	
Signed: _____ <i>Child</i>	
Name: _____	
Date: _____	

**Appendix D**  
**Data Collection**

- D1 Extract: Observation Notes
- D2 Extract: Teacher Interview
- D3 Extract: Children's Group Interview
- D4 Extract: Concurrent 'Think Aloud'
- D5 Extract: Timed 'Think Aloud'

**Appendix D1**  
**Extract: Observation Notes**

21/5/02, observing Adam during a writing lesson

9.20am

Adam spends this writing session on publishing a CV. He is sitting on the floor in the middle of the room with 2 other boys, who are also publishing their CVs. The CV is a self-chosen piece of writing, for a newspaper project that a group of about 15 children in the class have opted into. This piece of writing, indeed the whole newspaper project, apparently sits outside of usual planning and conferencing routines. The CV format has not been modelled or discussed by John, and is based on a format from the guidelines for the newspaper project (which originates in a large daily newspaper).

9.45am

Adam is demonstrably social in his writing. He and the children sitting with him are very talkative, around ½ of the talk sounds on-task and is related specifically to the content of their CVs.

9.50am

I notice that the publishing that takes place is essentially re-writing the draft from their book to a clean sheet of unlined white A4 paper. Minimal formatting is taking place during this publishing.

(note that all names are pseudonyms)

**Appendix D2**  
**Extract: Teacher Interview**

John, first interview, 14/6/02

- Q: What do you see as things that are fundamental to your programme in writing?
- J: Well firstly I believe in an integrated programme, and balanced...
- Q: Can you explain 'integrated'?
- J: Integrated in terms of the curriculum, so having a balance between oral, visual, and written, and within written language, striking a balance between reading and writing
- Q: And you integrate them quite closely don't you?
- J: Yeh, particularly reading and writing, they are so closely linked, and children should use what they read in what they write, it gives them a view of what authors do, and I want them to see themselves as authors....
- Q: And how else is your programme integrated?
- J: Well the other aspects of language are all just as important, and those are integrated into a balanced language programme as well. I always start with talking, and we talk a lot about the skills of oral language, active listening and that kind of thing...

(note that all names are pseudonyms)



### Appendix D3

#### Extract: Children's Group Interview

Q:	We talked about last week about getting stuck in your writing, and what causes you to get stuck in your writing...
Francesca:	When you question your writing, like when you read back and you say to yourself 'that's not really interesting, will other people like it?' and...
George:	Like when you write a bit and you get confused but you can't just take it out because it's part of the story but you've got confused ....
Francesca:	And when you can't think of anything to add to it...
Harriet:	I'm piggybacking on Francesca, I think like when you're reading... and you're reading what you've just written and it's like really boring and you get stuck on what you think, to like make people laugh and like make people remember things that they've been through ....
Q:	So when you're writing you're writing for your audience so they can ... experience your story and it makes them think about...
Harriet:	Yeh...
Q:	What makes you get stuck Eugene?
Eugene:	Um, ... yeh... um .... Usually what my audience is and like what sort of story I should write for them
George:	Yeh like ...
Eugene:	And if it makes sense or not

(note that all names are pseudonyms)

**Appendix D4**  
**Extract: Concurrent ‘Think Aloud’**

29/05/02, Francesca, first concurrent ‘think aloud’

<i>Tape</i>	Re-reads from start
<i>Ref:</i> 8	Does that really hook my audience in? Hm, nah I’ll just keep working.
37	<p>Says: I was feeling nervous</p> <p>Writes: I was feeling .... Really... nervous... cos</p> <p>R-reads: I was feeling really nervous cos</p> <p>Says: my turn was next</p> <p>Writes: my turn was next</p> <p>Says: The slide seemed... so long</p> <p>Re-reads from ‘I was feeling....’</p> <p>Says (triallying): So.... Long.... So scarey</p> <p>I might change that later, it doesn’t sound like the right word.</p> <p>Re-reads from ‘I was feeling...’</p> <p>From up here....</p>
137	<p>Hhmm what should I write next</p> <p>How was I feeling at the time...</p> <p>Hmm scared, anxious, like fun, um, um, um</p> <p>I don’t like my beginning and I just don’t like that part (sighs)</p> <p>sounds a bit strange yep</p>
160	<p>Re-reads from start</p> <p>hmm quite like that</p> <p>Re-reads: so... long and scarey... from here</p>
196	<p>From....</p> <p>Says, triallying: Who’s next... next....</p> <p>Writes: Who’s next... shouted.... Laurie</p> <p>Hmmm</p>

(note that all names are pseudonyms)

## Appendix D5

### Extract: Timed 'Think Aloud'

17/06/02, George, first timed 'think aloud'

11.30am:

Says 'I've got it, I've got it; and writes about 4 lines quickly. Is excited. Is re-reading frequently and writing constantly, very focused

11.35am:

Q: Tell me about what you've been doing just now.

George: I'm continuing with writing, I'm making it obvious what I'm doing, how the people are, all bored and boring. I'm thinking about what was going to happen, and what happens

11.40am:

Q: Tell me about what you've been doing just now.

George: I'm deciding whether to make it a personal recount or a fictional narrative cos (plot point) could change to (alternative). A personal recount is some ways better cos it won't drag on, it's not very long, and it shows something I did. But, it's not that exciting, unless I make it exciting by putting in a couple of lies. A fictional narrative is better cos it's really exciting, you can make yourself fly, you can imagine something then write it and it'll come true. But they can get too out of hand, too silly. You can't make it too silly, you need to make it as realistic as possible and only hint that it's fake.

(note that all names are pseudonyms)

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