A Study of Humour Use in Primary School Staff Meetings

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Abstract

At a time when there is enormous pressure on school leaders and staff to perform within the externally set accountability measures every aspect of leader and teacher behaviour has become subject to microscopic scrutiny. The development of leadership and research into effective behaviours has ensured that there is a significant amount of research into how school leaders can and should impact upon organisational culture. Missing from this research base is the role that humour plays in forming and reforming organisational cultural identity.

The role of the staff meeting as being a central part of the architecture of school life in which power is both enacted and enabled led to fourteen Primary School staff meetings being recorded digitally. The captured data was analysed using a typography based upon Martin's (2003) Humour Styles Questionnaire. This typography was further developed to enable the categorisation of both the production and reception of humour within the staff meeting.

The data shows that humour is used in Primary School Staff meetings for a number of reasons: establishing a framework, conflict management, creating a safe place for contentious discussion, emotional release, reducing scrutiny and enabling topic control. In addition humour is shown as being an integral part of organisational culture and not something that should be studied separately. Understanding humour in individual schools is shown to be a complex relationship between leader, follower, context and authenticity. The production and reception of humour are shown to be equally influential in the development of organisational culture.

The paper concludes by proposing that school leaders and staff members should have regard to the way that humour use reveals the lived values of the school community.

Acknowledgements

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Chapter One

1.Introduction

1.1 Lack of Context Specific Research

This research is a small-scale study working with Primary Schools in the English education system. The study looks at the way humour is used in the staff meeting and the way that humour contributes to the organisational culture of each individual context. Although there has been some research into the role of humour use by leaders (Mesmer- Magnus, Glew and Vishwevaran 2012) and the contribution of humour to culture (Huber and Brown 2017) there is a lack of academic research into humour use in Primary School staff meetings.

This is a concern when considered in light of Palermo et al.'s (2019: 382) research that demonstrates how leadership more widely is changing. "Much more than authority or dominance, relationships seem to be fundamental to what leadership represents today". Research undertaken in sectors outside education propose positive affect theories and social contagion leading to increased productivity at work (Goswami et al. 2016). The benefits of using humour at work are often described using the language of capitalist organisational outcomes (Cooper, Kong and Crossley 2018). To apply these findings to schools feeds into the neo-conservative and neo-liberal agendas of performativity highlighted by researchers such as Apple 2014, Ball 2017 and Furlong 2013. The research undertaken in this paper recognises the uniqueness of schools as places of work and the role that leaders and staff members play in "defining discourses, subject positions and appropriate conduct through discursive practices that are distributed and self-regulatory" (Huber and Brown 2017: 1108).

1.2 Rationale

Links between industry and schools…

The majority of academic research into humour use in schools focusses on the role of humour as a didactic approach or teachers well-being (Eg. Gablinske 2014, Ghazal and Shahid 2019, Kmita 2015). Humour research relating to leadership that compares private and public sector organisations identified a difference in humour use (Eg. Holmes and Marra 2002, Vecchio, Justin and Pearce 2009.) The gap in academic research in humour use in schools is an issue because of the uniqueness of the Primary School context.

I will show throughout this study that primary schools have two factors that separate them from other places of work in relation to the study of humour. The first is that the key skill developed throughout a teacher's professional life is the ability to communicate. In other industries communication is important whilst in teaching it is the foundation of pedagogical ability. Humour is a key part of societies' communicative processes but its use has not been researched academically in the industry which has communication at its core.

The second factor is the role of hierarchical relationships, created and supported by the broader compliance frameworks that surround schools. Compared with other workplaces the hierarchy in schools is complex as individual schools seek to demonstrate the principles of distributed leadership in the post-heroic view of leadership whilst also complying with external requirements for structure. These hierarchical positions give additional discoursal rights which this study and others have shown impact upon humour use. Cosenza (2015: 92) interviewed staff working in schools and discovered that teachers viewed "leadership as something that was official in nature requiring a title". This study will show that there is a gap in the research of humour use when overlayed with the additional discoursal rights associated with hierarchy in an industry in which hierarchy is dictated by government policy.

The school community

Niekerk's 2017 research concluded that primary schools were often values-led organisations who take pride in their status as role models within the communities they serve. There is a gap in the academic research into the role that humour use plays in revealing the lived values of schools considered against their articulated values. This study seeks to address that gap.

Parkman (2019) shows the way that school leaders can often feel imposter syndrome. Holmes and Marra (2002), Milligan (2016) and Tremblay (2017) conclude that humour use is an important social skill that new members to an organisation must navigate in order to achieve insider status. There is a current gap in academic research into the way that school leaders may use humour to connect with their staff in a way that manages their self-orientated view of leadership. During this study I show that primary school leaders may value the social cohesion of their school to such an extent that they express their leadership in a way that mirrors the social conventions of the group even when their hierarchical status renders this unnecessary.

Authentic Leadership (AL)

Northouse (2017) and George (2010) view authentic leadership as the characteristic of a leader that can be evaluated by examining certain behaviours. Sidania and Rowe (2018) and McConnell (2011) describe authentic leadership as a co-constructed leader-follower approach. There is a lack of academic research that seeks to understand the link between the primacy of audience ascription within both authentic leadership and humour. During this study I will show that the audience determination of humour use has a role to play in their evaluation of leader authenticity. Humour use as a co-constructed leader-follower approach shown as an element of the co-constructed leader-follower approach that applies to authentic leadership. In doing so I show how the process of assigning authenticity is a dynamic assessment of in the moment, historic and role expectations that takes place within the discoursal norms of each individual school.

Humour classification

(Martin 2018) classifies humour that is used to exert influence as having a negative impact in the community sphere. There is a gap in academic research as to whether this description of humour use unfairly categorises the effective discoursal behaviours of all participants and fails to consider locally agreed norms of interaction. This study challenges the view that humour used to exert influence has a negative impact in a primary school staff meeting.

1.3 Psychological Effects of Humour

The inappropriate use of humour in the workplace has led to depression and anxiety (Corrine de Wet 2010) and the increased use of alcohol abuse (Huo, Lam, and Chen 2012). Humour has also been shown to have therapeutic qualities such as increasing curiosity and reducing stress (Garner 2006). Being involved in the use of humour can reduce anxiety, improve the quality of your life, boost up self-esteem and increase motivation (Cann and Collette 2014). This range of effects is well known and can be the limit of a leader's knowledge in relation to humour use. The positive/negative cause/effect relationship is seen as all one needs to know about humour in the workplace. To set that in an educational context it is important to consider the work of Sahlberg (2012) who showed how the Global Education Reform Movement threatened the teaching profession by establishing a business model approach to education. Five years later the Health and Safety Executive (2017) published a report showing how teaching in the UK had higher than average levels of common mental health disorder.

To summarise we have a profession with a concerning mental health record, humour which can significantly impact the psychological health of individuals, very limited academic research and a practical understanding of the role humour plays in school leadership which is shallow at best. The requirement to undertake this study is therefore both pertinent and timely.

1.4 Research Aims

The study into humour use in Primary School staff meetings impacts a broad range of research areas. Research above has focused on the psychological effects of humour or the positive/negative outcomes for the individual and workplace. Setting out in this study I began with some initial broad aims.

1.) To ascertain whether the use of humour in Primary Schools aligned with the existing research in other sectors.

2.) To determine how humour was used in staff meetings.

3.) To consider the specific role of leader and team member in relation to humour use.

4.) To consider the role that humour may play in organisational development.

By undertaking research in Primary Schools I wanted to avoid the criticisms first raised by Carr and Kemmis (1986) that there should be very clear links between the researcher and the practitioner. The concern I was seeking to address in Aim 1 was that research was being assimilated into the education sector without the reference to specific practice. This research paper sets out to address that concern.

For Aim 2 I was conscious of Kong et al.'s (2019: 14) analysis of the current state of research into leader humour. Kong's conclusion that "there is no strong consensus on how to measure leader humor expression" was a concern as how to measure humour was critical in understanding both its use and impact. I will show that the staff meeting is a central process for schools in which power is enacted and created and consider this against Orthaber's (2019: 161) conclusion that, "it is now widely acknowledged that humour is a multifunctional linguistic strategy that may serve a variety of interpersonal functions simultaneously". How does this duality of expression manifest itself in the place where organisational power is constructed?

Aim 3 recognises the social communication aspect of humour and begins to consider how language and discourse "systematically form the object of which they speak' (Foucault 1978: 49). The leader/team-member relationship discussion will contribute to the issue Huber and Brown (2017: 1109) identify that, "in this substantial and burgeoning literature on identities and identity work, little attention has been paid to talk about humour and there are no studies of the types of identity work undertaken in relation to humour". I will also consider whether Vecchio, Justin and Pearce's (2009: 189) proposal that evaluations about humour use by leaders are based upon, "the follower's impression of the leader's degree of integrity". An important aspect of humour use is the response that it creates in others and Aim 3 was also concerned with the response to humour. I wanted to build on Billig's (2005) notion of 'unlaughter' in which the lack of response to humour can be as powerful in communicating a message as the production of humour.

Aim 4 seeks to deepen our understanding of humour use in Primary Schools beyond the level of cause and effect. It will consider how schools operate as communities of practice and the role that humour plays in constructing organisational culture. Aim 4 will consider whether examples such as using humour as a way of inviting newcomers into a community (Plester and Orams 2008) or the bullying of subordinates (Corrine De Wet 2010) can be studied in isolation or whether they represent windows into the lived values of individual communities.

These broad aims began to funnel into specific research questions however in reaching those questions I did not want to ignore the context of the schools and my own role as research practitioner. I was also mindful of Lederer's (2015: 17) criticism of research and methodology that, "trust in mere analysis caused the intellectual to forget that every question he asks involves a decision".

1.5 Context

Schools

The Primary Schools in which the research took place were high performing when judged against Ofsted and Department for Education metrics. The headteachers had been in position from between one and four years and staff turnover would be described as stable. One of the schools was undergoing a change of Head teacher which meant that the established Deputy Head Teacher led most of the meetings. Schools had staffing contingents ranging from twenty to forty and would be described as small to medium sized Primary Schools. Attendance at staff meetings was fluid and occasionally included other members of the school community and school visitors. All the schools were in some form of collaborative arrangement with other local schools ranging from informal connections to belonging to Multi-Academy Trusts. I had previous professional relationships with all the schools involved in the research. Bera-RSA (2014) had highlighted the importance of research-orientated practice particularly within the EdD. Programme. Whilst I had no existing professional relationship with the schools during the research I wanted this work to impact both on the schools and my own practice.

The schools agreed to digitally record their staff meetings. In the methodology I will discuss "how" the process of digitally capturing data is managed. By giving recorders to teaching staff and giving them free choice over which meetings or part meetings were recorded the teachers were very much involved in "what" was being researched. By creating this link between researcher and practitioner I wanted to ensure that we worked together to undertake a piece of research that aligned with Childs and Menter's (2017) and Cordingley's (2015) stated importance of ensuring teachers were involved in the research practice. I did not purposely seek out schools where I knew humour occurred on a frequent basis nor did I consider the character or identity of any individual in the selection of my sample.

Personal Position

Leaving school in the mid-80's I became the first member of my family to attend university. It was here that I first discovered the accuracy of the term "muddle class". I didn't fit the academic world because in the 1980's when only ten percent of the population were given the opportunity to study at this level family background was a significant factor. The experiences of my upbringing excluded me from the language choices and shared histories that created the social groups in the first few weeks of university life. But I was also seen as an outsider in the community in which I had grown up where practical physical work was considered the only worthwhile endeavour in a person's life. Humour provided me access to both communities. By sharing funny stories about my life at home I created shared experiences of laughter and fun with people at university. At home I would tell stories about the ridiculousness of university life as I sought to remain an "insider" within my own community. I think it would be legitimate to question the authenticity of my nineteen-year-old self but I am keen to avoid Holmes' (2000) infinite regression concerns when researching humour. At this point the significance of this time in my life is that I discovered that humour gave you access to communities from which you were otherwise excluded.

Entering teaching I taught in a range of schools with the common characteristic of being in areas of high social deprivation. Young people and their families presented with multiple needs requiring the involvement of many different agencies. It was whilst working with young people that I reflected on the way that humour seemed to transcend our accepted metrics for measuring intelligence. There appeared to be no direct correlation between the young people who performed badly in formal tests of speaking and listening or comprehension and those that understood humour. Relating to this research there appeared to be something in humour as a method of communicating that was in some way alternative or differently understood.

Becoming a Head Teacher in 2005 I progressed to become the Chief Executive Officer of a Multi-Academy Trust working alongside Head Teacher colleagues. As my leadership experience and research knowledge developed I began to see the

importance of culture as the defining element of organisational identity. I had always seen Primary School Head Teachers as significant people in their local communities. They have enormous connectivity into the communities they serve and their views are spread widely. The impact of leader behaviour on staff and young people is well researched but as the size of the schools and then organisations that I led grew so the role of organisational culture became increasingly important. The culture co-created through dialogue within individual schools informs the way that decisions are made that have daily impact on the quality of staff and young peoples' lives. In terms of this research I was drawn to consider the role that humour had in enabling or challenging culture or if it went further and revealed the lived values of an organisation. All of these needed to be considered as I approached the writing of the research questions.

1.6 Research Questions

1.) How is humour used in a Primary School staff meeting and how does that impact within a community of practice?

2.) What factors may contribute to gaining a better understanding of humour use in Primary Schools?

3.) Can humour use in a Primary School staff meeting reveal the lived organisational culture?

4.) What implications for school leaders and other meeting participants can be suggested by gaining a better understanding of humour use within Primary School staff meetings?

Chapter 2

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The focus of my research is to better understand the role that humour plays in Primary School staff meetings. From that starting point four initial threads emerged that weave through any discussion about humour use in schools. They are the use of language, the social connectivity of humour, authenticity and the context in which humour occurs. I show that each thread has a greater or lesser influence at different times and how those threads combine to provide a framework in which humour use in Primary Schools can be understood.

My research was triggered by Robert and Wilbanks' (2012: 22) suggestion that "humour's pervasiveness in human interaction blinds us to its existence, importance and influence" which they suggest causes us to simply take humour for granted without proper understanding or scrutiny. The research area was further narrowed by Watson and Drew (2017: 1) who show how humour's role in "both the process and practice of leadership and management has been largely downplayed over the years". One of the few elements that current theorists do agree on is that there is a lack of research into the effects of leadership humour in a range of contexts and how to measure it effectively. Kong et al.'s (2019: 14) analysis of the state of research into leadership humour suggested that "there is no strong consensus on how to measure leader humour expression". This strongly resonated with my lived experience of school life as well as the lack of literature in humour use and school leadership. To address the challenge of subjecting the area to proper scrutiny I will firstly set out a brief introduction to those four threads. I will argue throughout the thesis that understanding humour use in schools requires an evaluation of the production, reception and the specific context of individual expressions of humour. I will then discuss some theoretical approaches to humour drawing upon a range of overlapping areas of study such as organisational psychology, physiology, leadership identity and humour effect.

I will review the theoretical approaches to humour in the Literature Review and then look at styles of humour with particular reference to those styles that may impact the development of organisational culture. I will then discuss what current literature informs us about the response to humour and the role of laughter and smiling. I will then narrow the focus to firstly look at humour within the workplace and then humour use within meetings. Having followed that process I will conclude this chapter by proposing a definition of the humour applicable to the context in which I am researching.

This process will begin to provide a theoretical frame in which the research questions can be properly answered. Firstly though I will begin by addressing a common misconception by outlining what I am not researching. To do that I will set out the difference between a sense of humour and humour expression in relation to a school leader.

2.2 Sense of Humour or Humour Expression

I do not intend to discuss a leader's character in terms of having or not having a sense of humour. This is because a sense of humour is included in those characteristics that are only measurable by their linked behaviours. Educational leaders may be described as ethical, transformational even charismatic where characteristics are evidenced by behaviours that align with the descriptors. As I will show later an important element of all of these characteristics is the involvement of the audience in determining their inclusion in the description of a leader.

A sense of humour was described by Martin and Lefcourt (1986) as the likelihood of an individual experiencing or expressing a humorous state. Humour expression was described by Kong et al. (2019: 13) thus, "leader humour expression is a behavioural occurrence construct tapping how often or the extent to which a leader expresses humour in interactions with followers". I intend to only look at humour from the expressed perspective because doing so will create a better understanding of the role that expressed humour plays in the context of a school staff meeting. Leadership character is an important area of study and I will address it in this research through

the lens of authentic humour use. I will also show that the perceived intention and actual reception of humour has far more impact on leadership than their predilection to using humour. This humour expression perspective also aligns to Schnurr's (2009) research that describes leadership as 'a dynamic performance – something people do – rather than a static attribute'. I will seek to show how that dynamism may be contained within a community of practice as well as an individual in relation to humour use.

2.3 Four Threads Overview

Context

The predominant manifestation of humour expression found within staff meetings and recorded during my research was language based. This links to and further extends the pervasiveness to which Roberts and Wilbanks (2012) referred when considered in light of Yukl's (2002) claims that verbal behaviour accounts for eighty-two per cent of a leader's work time. My research will show the links between effective language use and humour expression in the leadership of schools. Context will range from societal level issues affecting all schools to the personal relationship of those engaged in dialogue.

Language

Salzmann (1993) reiterates the point made by many biologists that the ability to learn language is almost universal throughout the human race. It is so fundamental to us as a species that it must be seen as part of our shared ancestry. The actual language that one learns however is purely cultural and an accident associated with the location of birth. The ability to communicate becomes very much a situated cultural norm rather than a biological process. As well as sector level commonalities, I will show how each individual school creates its own unique situated norm. Saville-Troike (1989) breaks down that communicative ability into competences related to reception and production. A key component of most humour expression is the requirement for a

social element thus the production and reception of humour will become two distinct themes when researching humour use.

Social Aspects of Humour

One of the first things a new teacher or member of staff has to do when joining a school is understand the linguistic access rites unique to that environment. Saville-Troike (1989) refers to hard- and soft-shelled communities based on how easy it is to access their context specific language. In education there are a significant number of abbreviations and meta-language that exist only in the individual setting. Education is not alone in this regard. Simpson and Mayr (2010) in their research into prison language found thirty-two different words that meant prison officer. They address this aspect of language development from the point of view of creating social groups. It is the ability to access the language of the group that marks a person as an insider or an outsider. Holmes and Marra (2017: 139) explored this aspect of insider and outsider identity construction within the workplace further and found "the conceptualisation of identity as an ongoing, dynamic and negotiated co-construction between the outsiders and the workplace insiders. These negotiations contribute to the relative success or failure of attempts at the formation of an insider identity". As the way in which we communicate becomes ritualistic and reiterative so we reinforce the social structure of that particular setting. Those with access to the language become part of the insider group. At a macro-level that process can be used by power brokers of all descriptions to choose communication choices that support their particular ideology. Simpson and Mayr (2010) identify how this repetition and the presentation of information as common sense normalises the associated ideology. Linking this to the micro level of a school staff meeting there are similarities in the way that language is chosen to support a dominant ideology. However humour may also form part of the challenge to dominant ideologies. I will show in the analysis chapter the role humour may play in determining organisational direction. It is this ability to access situated language choices and understanding accepted methods of communication that are important in the formation of insider groups in the workplace.

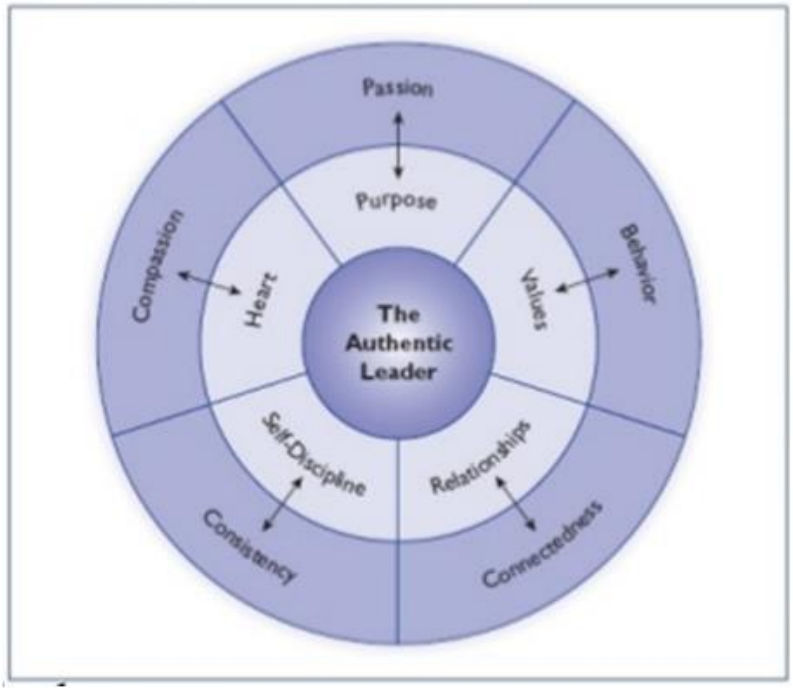
Authentic Leadership

In determining the role that authenticity plays in the use of humour in Primary School staff meetings I will first look at recent research in the field of Authentic Leadership (AL). I will then discuss any implications of that research in humour use and how AL and humour use may interact within staff meetings.

The Authentic Leadership approach came out of the transformational leadership studies which sought to differentiate between leadership approaches which achieved the same end but had a different moral foundation. On the one hand authentic transformational leadership was seen as being morally grounded whereas in-authentic transformational leadership was described as being based on deception and manipulation. Thus the term authentic leadership became a way of describing the difference in leadership approach and then a separate field of study in its own right.

AL research tended to, and still does for some researchers, focus on analysing the behavioural traits of leaders and comparing them with audience and organisational outcomes. The diagram at Fig 1 below shows George's (2010) model of authentic leadership which typifies a behavioural evaluation approach to AL.

Fig 1. Behaviourist Model of Authentic Leadership



Northouse (2017) describes the way that the Authentic Leader can be characterised by five dimensions: Purpose, Heart, Self-Discipline, Relationships and Values. Each of these have an observable and therefore researchable characteristic associated with them. As an example, Authentic Leaders are described as being able to build relationships and this can be observed in their connectedness to their followers. The argument is that by sharing their own experiences and listening to the experiences of others the AL shows connectedness with their audience which is evidence of their ability to build relationships which in turn is one dimension of authentic leadership. Similarly by being sensitive to the needs of others and willing to help them, Northouse argues, a leader's behaviour demonstrates the compassion characteristic. This shows that the leader has the heart dimension required of the Authentic Leader. This process of linking the behaviour to the characteristic to the dimension continues and is said to lead to a determination of the extent of AL in one individual.

For many researchers (Cerne et al. 2014, Sidania and Rowe 2018, McConnell 2011) it is precisely this focus on one person and their behaviour that does not align with their views on true authentic leadership. For Mackenzie (2003) the problem with defining this once dominant conceptualisation of authentic leadership in this way is that it becomes very difficult to separate the construct from the effects of the construct.

Tomkins and Nicholds (2017) and McConnell (2011) raise concerns about the nature of self and which particular self one is being true to when determining the authenticity of leadership. Modern conceptions of self do not describe a single core self but rather a plurality of selves which are activated by interacting with context specific variables. Cerne et al. (2014: 466) described AL as a "mutual understanding of situational imperatives". In doing so they began to look at a more significant role for the follower in determining the nature of authentic leadership. Other AL researchers began addressing the requirement to understand the relational elements of AL rather than leadership behaviours and traits. Sidania and Rowe (2018: 627) elaborated further on this theme, "This leadership-centrism has significant implications in that it gives prime importance to the self of the leader, not only compared to other factors such as followers and contingencies, but also to other aspects linked to the leader such as expected role requirements."

One of the linking issues for the proponents of AL that was far more aligned with follower behaviour was centred around the concerns raised by the narcissistic leader. If we assign authenticity as relating to behaviours that are "true to themselves" then the narcissistic leader may indeed be acting in this way. It also raised the concern of the dogmatic leader and Sidania and Rowe compare the two approaches adopted by Nelson Mandela and Margaret Thatcher. For the former the values remained deeply committed throughout his life – a fervent commitment to the overthrowing of apartheid. The behaviours changed though to embrace the relational elements of leadership required to effect real change. The latter took the approach of conviction over consensus and in doing so maintained her authenticity (true to herself) at the expense of her ability to remain as leader. Thus when looking at authentic leadership the support of the follower becomes a critical component because it is followship that assigns legitimacy to leadership.

Gardner and Avolio (1998) when looking at charisma identified how it was both a part of the leader make-up and equally an ascription by the follower that determined the charismatic-ness of a leader. The same can be said of authenticity where it is the perception by followers of whether the leader's behaviours are driven by an internal value system that is the more important factor in determining authenticity than simple self-assertion. At a more basic level of course behaviour cannot be described as leadership without their being a follower who grants legitimacy to that title. It is the followers who determine whether the leader's language and behaviours authentically embody the values of both the individual and the organisation they seek to lead. For Sidania and Rowe (2018: 623) it is not the simple evaluation of a leader's morality that determines authenticity, "It is more the case that the overlap between leaders' and followers' value systems leads to impressions of authenticity."

The relationship between Authentic Leadership and Humour

Regardless of the stance that a researcher takes regarding the nature of authentic leadership there are clear links to humour use as I will show now. If one assumes the Northouse (2017) view of evaluating authenticity through their linked behaviours, the leader-centric view, then it would follow that a researcher interested in the leader's

use of humour would determine whether humour use showed, for example, connectedness or compassion. My own research though shows the importance of the audience in determining whether something is received as humour. Similar to the Sidania and Rowe (2018) view of AL being a co-constructed leader-follower approach humour can also be seen in this way. It is often the audience that will determine both authenticity and humour. One area of authentic leadership that I will look at briefly because of its overlap to humour use is psychological safety. "Psychological safety reflects an individual's perception of the consequences of taking interpersonal risks in the work environment." (Kark and Carmeli, 2009). Humour use in the work environment can often be seen as a risk.

Walumbwa et al. (2010) describe four related components that form a higher order AL construct. They are self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing and internalised moral perspective. The use of humour in the workplace requires an understanding of the overlapping components of self-awareness and relational transparency. However claims of self-awareness and relational transparency need to be supported by the followers' views rather than being self-assigned by the leader. In order to provide a working environment which respects the psychological safety in relation to humour use it will be important that all stakeholders have a role in determining acceptable humour use. Meyer (2000) suggests that "the audience or receiver of the message determines how it (humour) is interpreted and what actual function the humour use serves". Or as Alberts et al (1996) propose it is the receiver that determines whether a comment is light-hearted stress relief or veiled criticism.

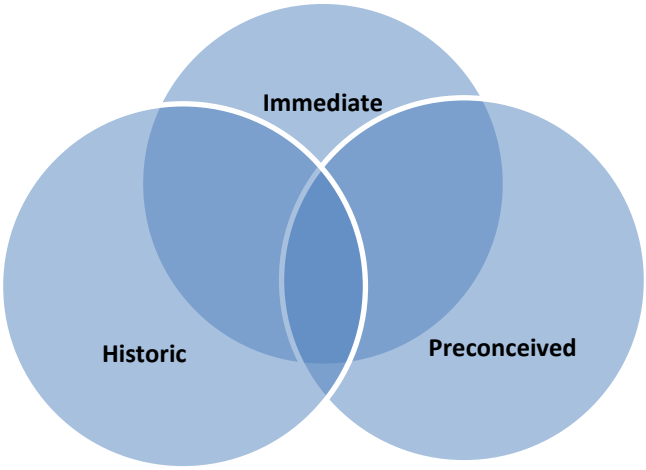
The role of authenticity is also a theme in the work of Vecchio, Justin and Pearce (2009: 189) "present results suggest that the impact of humour in an educational setting, and perhaps more broadly in non-profit sector settings, may depend on the follower's impression of the leader's degree of integrity." Whilst they were looking at leader integrity in terms of how leader behaviour relates to follower outcomes I will extend their view of integrity to include the perception of authenticity applied to whoever is using humour regardless of their hierarchical status. It therefore follows that you cannot separate out one aspect of leader or follower behaviour when evaluating authenticity. The use of humour by either leader or follower will be evaluated for

authenticity by the audience and that evaluation will form part of the wider perception of leader or follower authenticity. Regardless of the intention of the speaker when using humour it will be the perception of authenticity that contributes to the evaluation set out in Fig 1a below.

Authentic Leadership, humour use and the Primary School Staff meeting.

The importance of a leader's authenticity was shown by Härtel and Ganegoda's (2008) research which concluded that where the humour used by managers was perceived as having non-genuine intentions then this led to mistrust and difficult employee relationships. My research extends that view to show that an evaluation of authenticity is important for both leader and follower and that poor quality relationships are the likely outcome of perceived inauthentic humour use regardless of hierarchical position. As discussed earlier, authenticity is not something that can be self-ascribed but is an assigned evaluation of others. In a primary school staff meeting participants will assign authenticity to other members of the group based on complex social and professional interaction processes. I propose to break down that complexity into three fluid influences continually impacting the evaluation of authenticity.

Fig. 1a. Evaluation of Authenticity



The immediate assessment refers to what is occurring in the moment. Applied to humour use the perception of authenticity comes from the perceived intent that the audience has of the person using humour during a particular exchange.

The second is historic which is the already held view by meeting participants of how particular individuals are perceived to use humour. This view is formed by combining immediate evaluations over time to create an expectation of how a contributor uses humour in a meeting.

The final element is the preconceptions attached to particular positions within a staff meeting. School leaders use language and behave in a way that to a greater or lesser degree is moderated by the expectations of the position. NQTs' evaluations could be undertaken in the same way but the expected behaviours associated with the position will be different. Indeed all participants will be impacted upon in some way by their given position within the school/meeting. Those expectations will draw upon sector and regional influences with a smaller level of organisational variance.

Research Implications

From a research perspective I am not proposing to separate authenticity in humour use from the broader audience evaluation of authenticity, (leader or follower). The assignment of humorous intent and authenticity are both dependent upon audience perception. Humour is part of a wide range of linguistic choices that participants in an exchange make, the value in its research comes from the contribution it makes to audience perception of authenticity rather than as a separate evaluation. Holmes and Marra (2002) identify how social identity can be so fluid that it can change during a single interaction. If we approach the research from a purely linguistic perspective it can be possible to capture a moment in time in that fluidity that becomes defendable from a research perspective but does not capture the dynamics of the individual context. Hay (2001) building on the work of Tannen (1993: 166) points out that "the true intention of any utterance cannot be established from the examination of linguistic form alone." O'Driscoll (2013) proposes that assigning intention to others, which is a process within audience determination of authenticity has a number of

particular problems. The first is that we are not the participant, secondly the participant may not themselves be aware of their intentions and thirdly their intentions may be fluid during the course of an exchange.

When discussing the nature of teasing in the workplace Strahle (1993: 227), recognised that interactions "can be understood only with regard to the participants' specific relationships". I think the same can be said for evaluations of authenticity, they can only be understood with reference to relationships. My methodology shows that the approach I adopted in this research is best articulated by Hay (2001: 722), “While criteria based on speaker intention are clearly fraught with problems of indeterminacy and subjectivity, I decided to work within these limitations, and attempt to use as much objective evidence as was available in each case …… The disadvantage, however, is that for some categories, the classification of examples would not necessarily be replicated by analysts less familiar with the speakers and context.”

2.4 Theoretical Approaches to Humour

At one level it is possible to see definitions of humour as being similar to Duchamp’s response to the question, What is Art? Duchamp’s work, “The Fountain” (1917), was in fact a public urinal which was first rejected and then lauded by the art world for the response it created. Art was anything that a person perceived it to be. Throughout history philosophers, psychologists, biologists and business analysists have been among the many thinkers who have tried to answer the question, what is humour?

Psychoanalytical Theory: begun by Freud and reported latterly by Martin and Ford (2018) humour is described as a release of excess nervous energy. This theory proposes that humour allows us to take pleasure from what are normally repressed sexual and aggressive impulses. It is linked to the underlying arousal theory which proposes that humour is largely determined by the level of emotional arousal we feel in each situation.

Group Identity Theory: Apte (1985) argues that humour establishes boundaries between in-group members and outsiders with identity being based upon "getting the joke". This theory is based upon anthropological views that began with apes grooming each other by picking at each other's fur. As the group anthropomorphised, grew in number and language became the dominant communicative approach so the group grooming activity became based in humour.

Incongruity Theory: (Koestler 1964) Sometimes referred to as the Schema Theory in which humour is based upon something clashing with what our minds had prepared us to accept. Goel and Dolan (2007) evidence how social norm violations represent an example of an incongruity between expected and actual behaviours. A sub-theory of this would be reversal theory (Martin 2007) where humour relies on the reversal of roles or characteristics.

Superiority Theory: (Gruner 1997). Whilst linked to the psychoanalytical theory this warrants mention on its own because of its resonance with my research and also its negative connotations. Here humour is based on a desire to dominate and express aggression and power over others. It can be either used on an individual basis or in a group setting as a warning to others.

Play Theory: (Burghardt 2005). In defining play in animals and transposing that into anthropological study, Burghardt proposes that play must have five key characteristics:

- it does not contribute to current survival
- it is self-rewarding
- it differs from "serious" forms of behaviour
- it is performed repeatedly
- it occurs when the animal is not surrounded by immediate threats

Strong (2013) applied this play definition to humour. Whilst it is possible to find evidence for the first four major theories, the play theory appears less compelling for

a number of reasons. Whilst humour can be self-rewarding a significant part of humour use that we will see later is group rewarding and can be self-defeating. There is also a body of work which evidences how humans faced with both physical and emotional threat at work will use humour as a coping strategy. Pouthier (2017: 755) suggests, “joking provides important coping mechanisms through which employees can mentally disengage and emotionally distance themselves from the troubling or threatening situations that come with their job.” This coping strategy of humour use is often seen as the more positive side of Gruner’s superiority theory in which superiority can be gained over a situation or negative emotion.

Further Psychological Perspectives

Psychologists have sought to add to these existing theories. Apter (1992) built upon the arousal theory of Freud to identify telic and para-telic states of human consciousness. A telic state of mind is focused and purposeful and a para-telic state is receptive to arousal. As a para-telic state can be triggered by context understanding the in-situ interactions of staff meetings becomes an important factor in whether participants are open or not to using humour as a discoursal framework.

Warren and McGraw’s (2010) benign violation theory may also have relevance within a school staff meeting. Related to Fiske and Taylor’s (1991) schema theory humour is described as something that does not fit or violates our existing frame of reference for the world. For Warren and McGraw that violation must be benign although "benign-ness” is clearly a value judgement based on each circumstance.

More recently Chan (2016) approached humour by looking at the neural pathways stimulated by different jokes. Chan describes the Tricomponent theory of humour as having the three essential elements of comprehension, appreciation and expression. Martin and Ford (2018) approaches humour from a psychologist’s standpoint and adds the fourth dimension which includes a social element even when that social element is not immediately obvious. Approaching this in line with my research questions then the social interaction element is important but as I will show later in

this thesis any definition of humour may be entirely context specific. The inclusion of a social element in the definition of humour requires the humour to be understood, appreciated and result in some level of response by an audience. Finally as I moved forward in my research I have been conscious of Martin and Fords' (2018: 72) recognition that, "there is a movement away from vague, broadly defined grand theories toward the development of testable research theories often addressing narrower questions related to the humour experience." It is an understanding of this detail within a school setting that is central to my research. Having looked at theories relating to humour generally I now want to look at styles of humour before returning to humour within the workplace.

2.5 Styles of Humour

Kong et al. (2019) noted the difficulties associated with trying to measure leader humour. One starting point is to understand the style of humour we are seeking to measure. Martin's et al.'s (2003) theories on different styles of humour offer an overview of what we may expect to see within a staff-meeting. They proposed four styles each of which has both a positive and negative relationship to the self and to the community. Within a staff meeting these styles may give us an insight into the way humour impacts on the school leader as well as the other meeting participants. The four styles are:

Affiliative Humour. Martin relates this positively to extraversion, cheerfulness, self-esteem and intimacy and sees this style as largely positive in impact. Schnurr (2009) in their research into humour within the workplace took this further and describes a gender difference in the use of humour. This suggests that females may be more likely to engage in affiliative, conversational humour whilst males may be more likely to engage in single event, performance-based humour. Given the gender inequality in the educational sector in general and Primary Schools in particular this may have sector wide implications.

Self-enhancing Humour. From a positive perspective this may be related to someone being open to experience, having psychological well-being and good self-esteem.

Negatively though it may be related to depression, anxiety and generally to neurosis. This is the opposite side to the aggressive style of humour. Humour is used to enhance the self in a way that is tolerant and does not undermine others.

Aggressive Humour. Sartre (1946) described humour as the means by which a bigot could express their hatred in a way that did not expose their bigotry. Martin et al (2003) describe aggressive humour as positively related to hostility, anger and aggression and negatively related to relationship satisfaction, agreeableness and conscientiousness. In the workplace the person who uses this style regularly is the bully who uses humour at the expense and detriment of relationships with others.

There are though degrees of aggressiveness that may or may not be in some way affiliative. For this reason Robert and Wilbanks (2012) suggested that for something to be received as humorous the first thing a person must do is determine whether humour is the dominant element in the exchange. If we perceive something as overly aggressive we can never overcome the aggression to see the humour. Viewed alongside the benign violation theory (Warren and McGraw 2010) each person will decide what is "benign." Sexist and racist comments are generally considered abhorrent but in some settings occasion laughter. Sexism and racism are not benign and are therefore not considered humorous by the majority of people. Context and the social construction of humour become key elements in seeking an understanding of humour use. In a staff meeting there will be an assessment by the audience of the dominant element of the content. Part of that context is the relationship between the producer and the target of a joke. Giuffre and Williams (1994) showed how the same language was viewed as benign camaraderie or sexual harassment depending on the hierarchical relationship between those involved. Trying to establish the dominant element in staff meeting humour will form part of my later research analysis.

Self-defeating Humour. Not to be confused with self-deprecating humour this is related to negative emotions like neurosis, depression and anxiety. Holmes and Stubbe (2003) show how self-deprecating humour can be used in the workplace to de-emphasise power relationships and status. However humour in which someone puts themselves down simply to ingratiate themselves into a situation (self-defeating) has

negative group impact. Schnurr and Chan (2011: 21) show how self-denigrating humour used by leaders can cause confusion amongst followers who can be conflicted in how to respond. “This challenge for the listener seems to be particularly precarious in situations where self-denigrating humour is used in asymmetrical relationships, such as by superiors to make fun of their own mistakes or inabilities towards their subordinates”.

Martin (2016) saw the self-enhancing and self-defeating styles as being two sides of the agency or autonomous dimension in which they were heathy and unhealthy respectively. The affiliative and aggressive humour styles he saw as two sides of the community dimension again healthy and unhealthy respectively. The boundaries between the four styles that Martin describes are blurred and it is this fluidity of boundaries that creates complexity in why we find things funny. These styles of humour require a vehicle for delivery and in meetings that vehicle is language.

2.6 Language/Power/Humour

In their work on the role of humour in meetings Watson and Drew (2017: 1) show how its role in “both the process and practice of leadership and management has been largely downplayed over the years”. They also show that engaging in humorous discourse presents an opportunity for participants in a meeting to exert influence and therefore exercise leadership. When researching the linguistic and paralinguistic features of talk in meetings, Coates (2007) identifies a high degree of overlap with the features of humorous discourse. The distinctive features relating to the use of language in meetings are:

- overlapping speech
- the co-construction of utterances
- repetition
- laughter
- metaphor

These structures all co-existed in the meetings that they studied. The linguistic structures identified by Coates prevalent within a meeting appear to be so closely related to the linguistic features of humour that its use seems almost inevitable.

Fairclough (2015) continues this vein by looking at the language use of the leader specifically in the way that it can be used to dominate the narrative. The four linguistic features used in meetings by leaders to achieve this dominance are:

- Interruption
- enforcing explicitness
- controlling topic
- formulation

Explored in relation to humour it is possible to see how humour can be used to achieve all these elements. Humour not only interrupts physically but can also be used to support or undermine a direction of thought within a meeting. In the analysis I will show the role that humour plays in enabling topic control by meeting participants. As Butler (2015) shows it can be used to support the dominant view or it can be used to attack outlying behaviours and views and thus have a moderating impact upon the discourse. Topics or solutions that lie outside group defined norms are laughed at and dismissed. Shotter (1993) when looking at how reality is constructed through language discusses how leadership can be seen as speaking authoritatively in a way that describes a situation and then getting others to agree to that description. Once that has been established the leader uses language to defend against criticism of that stated position. This could occur within a staff meeting either through the actions of an individual or a group and humour may be used in both the establishment or defence of a position by using by Butler's "outlying views" principle.

Humour as Mediator

Butler also shows how humour is used in a meeting as a regulatory valve to mediate between those people who do and do not conform to the social norms. Where a person engages in behaviour like that of a machine by presenting formulaic and process driven responses it is humour that is often used to defend the social norm

associated with that particular meeting or context. Kets de Vries (1990) shows how that process can sometimes be attributed to a single individual person within the workplace whose role it is to push the boundaries of humour to define, redefine and protect the social boundaries that the school or workplace community accepts.

Where the leader seeks to use humour to dominate or belittle others the consequences can be significant. Pundt and Herrmann (2015) showed how the use of aggressive humour by a leader impacts on the quality of the professional relationship between a leader and a follower which results in reduced productivity and a reduction in achieving workplace goals. Perhaps more worryingly is the research of Huo, Lam, and Chen (2012) who show how the use of aggressive language-based humour in meetings by a leader correlates to a higher consumption of alcohol in those targeted by that humour. What is clear in their research is the increased stress levels in those individuals who perceived themselves to be victims of leader aggressive humour.

Language based humour can be used to create both an insider-outsider social group and an insider-outsider view of acceptable ideologies. What constitutes an insider or an outsider is co-constructed by the social group concerned (Orthaber 2019). As an example, research by Bahan (2006) shows how humour targeting in the deaf community is not only aimed at people with good hearing. Some comedians within the deaf community use humour to attack members of their own community who have chosen cochlear implants as a procedure; they see the procedure as an attack on their culture and disagree that deafness is something that requires “a cure”. Applying this to the workplace we can see how power is constructed through the formation of various insider communities with fluid membership boundaries.

The Use of Power

One of the concerns raised by discussions relating to power stem from the word itself. Similar to the word “game” there is no single consistent theme that unites the different definitions of power. Wittgenstein describes usage of the word power in its different contexts as having “family resemblance” but no common single essence.

Lukes (1976, 2004) sees power in three dimensions. One dimensional power can be seen as the way in which a conflict between opposing views or interests is resolved through the exorcism of power. This behavioural approach, Lukes argues, can be appealing to social scientists who overly focus on the motivations and actions of individual actors in the system. The two-dimensional view of power adds controlling the narrative to conflict winning to give a broader view of power. By controlling the agenda and manging out unwelcome issues from the discourse power becomes about structural determinism.

The debate about methodological individualism or structural determinism both include an element of one party gaining some form of ideological dominance over another, one group's or individual's wants over another. In his radical view of power, Lukes (1974) puts forward the view that these wants may themselves be the product of a system that works against their best interests. His third-dimension view of power describes power as fluid and relational and existing separately to the observable mechanisms of its use. Garland (1990: 138) describes this as "the various forms of domination and subordination and the asymmetrical balance of forces which operate whenever and wherever social relations exist. These power relationships, like the social relations which they invest, display no simple pattern."

Hayward (2000: 30) takes this view of unseen power sited within the relationships and communities that surround and shape us and proposes that, "The ways people act, how they conduct themselves, think, feel, perceive, reason, what people value, how they define themselves in relation to communities to which they experience themselves as belonging are in significant part the effect of social action.". Elster (1999) saw this as manipulation or what they called, "adaptive preference formation" in which the desires and beliefs of one individual or group were determined by external factors over which they had no control. The relationship between leader and follower roles was expanded upon by Bourdieu who saw it as moving beyond the constraint or consent model. Rather than seeing the follower as subject to "mechanical coercion" or free and sometimes calculated submission the locus of power was perceived as a natural and self-evident part of the habitas.

Scott (1990) describes this as being either thick or thin false consciousness. In the thick version ideological dominance is achieved by persuading followers to believe and support the values that justify their role as subordinate. Giving the example of the caste system that is supported by both those at the top and the bottom, Scott shows how subordinates can be manipulated into supporting and believing in their own subjugation. In the thin version of false consciousness leaders convince followers that the order of things is both natural and inevitable. Submission here is achieved through being resigned to the inevitable rather than actively agreeing and supporting it.

Working through these approaches in the second edition of his radical view, Lukes (2004) concludes that, "what is clear is that the underlying concept here defined is not 'power' but rather the securing of compliance to domination." Because of the significance of given hierarchical positions within the settings I researched, the work of Shapiro has resonance. They propose that we have to understand hierarchical relationships as perfectly legitimate and when they are legitimate they do not involve domination. Shapiro (2003: 53) sees domination as 'arising only from the illegitimate exercise of power'. The determination of legitimacy comes from the Aristotelian "phronesis", the context specific practical wisdom created in each individual school setting and only applicable within that school setting. Thus the researcher who stands from afar and determines that behaviours evidence domination do so at the risk of not considering that relationships can only truly be understood by those involved.

Linking to Primary Schools where leadership is enacted through language use it may be possible to see where dominance may be sought or achieved through interaction. Noggle (2018) describes three connected processes: manipulation, nudges and salience. Manipulation is a less positive or less ethical approach to achieving ideological dominance and sits on a continuum which includes coercion and force as one extreme and persuasion and rationality at the other. Nudges may be seen as drawing attention to legitimate information to assist someone in their decision making. Blumenthal-Barby, J. S., & Burroughs, H. (2012) give the example of informing people about the dangers of smoking as nudging them towards a decision to quit. However by increasing or decreasing the salience of a point you can affect a person's decision making in more subtle ways. To continue the health analogy describing the same procedure as having a 10% fatality rate or a 90% survival rate has been shown

to affect whether a patient goes ahead with the procedure. The 10% fatality rate comment raises the salience of death thus reducing the numbers opting for it and vice versa.

For Noggle (2018: 167) the determination of manipulation sat within the complex relationship between sincerity and insincerity and rational and non-rational persuasion. "When a person engages in (sincere) nonrational persuasion, she is attempting to improve the other person's decision-making situation, for example, by improving her emotional appreciation of the relevant facts. By contrast, nonrational persuasion that attempts to trick a person into adopting a faulty mental state is an attempt to degrade that person's decision-making situation." This links to Noggle's view on salience where a manipulation is determined on whether a comment brought a fact closer in line with or further away from its actual importance. There is an obvious concern that this approach requires a subjective evaluation of whether each fact is being considered in strict adherence to its importance for decision making. That said in exploring the leaders' and followers' use of humour in specific Primary Schools it may be observable as to whether humour raised or lessened the salience of a particular fact and in doing so had a significant impact on manipulating decision making.

Phatic Communication

One aspect of language that forms part of constructing power around an insider/outsider culture is the use of phatic language or small talk within an organisation. It forms part of the social constructivism process as an element of the constant communicative flow of humanity described by Shotter (1993). It also has strong links to the use of language within humorous expressions defined earlier. Salzmann (1993: 173) discusses language and styles of speech as "badges of ethnicity and social identity" and shows the impact of phatic language on organisational structure. They accept that whilst small talk does not convey detailed cognitive information it is loaded with social information. Salzmann gives the example of a disagreement at work that leads to a three-day silence. At the end of this when one person asks the other about the weather it is the social use of language that is far

more impactful than the content. To ask about the weather after three days of not communicating feels far more like a statement that says, “Ok we have not spoken for three days, I don’t like that situation, shall we try to fix it.” Though none of those words is spoken the meaning would be clear for all involved. This has obvious links to humour use in those examples in which the words used are offered and understood as having a different and sometimes completely opposite meaning to their linguistic definition.

What research does show us about phatic communication is that it re-orientates people into a social rather than a role-based relationship. My research will be examining humour expressions whilst predominantly in a role situation and seeks to understand if the use of humour affects that formal relationship frame. The staff meetings I recorded allowed for both phatic and non-phatic communication. The role or social relationship is established by the communication processes occurring in the meeting. Relating this to language use Sullivan (1988) describes three types of leader/subordinate communication. Perlocutionary is described as task focussed, locutionary as meaning making and illocutionary as relational. Whilst there is an obvious link between humour and illocutionary communication I think researchers looking at humour in education could be accused of limiting their research to this area. This has been at the expense of researching humour use as an effective perlocutionary and locutionary device. For instance Gablinske (2014: 33) bases their conclusion that the use of humour in the classroom, “would help students not only to relax, but also help understand and retain the material by judging the quality of the relationship.” Humour plays a significant role in the forming of relationships however within the school context I will show that its use is far broader and its impact more extensive.

2.7 Humour Defined

Interviewed in 2016, Martin identified four elements in relation to humour: cognition, emotion, a social element and laughter. For something to be considered humorous first it has to be understood. This is followed by an emotional response to that cognition, a weighing up of appropriateness and acceptability. It is almost universally

sited within a social context even if that context is not immediately obvious and there is usually an observable response. Bergson (2008) defines humour as fundamentally three things. It is intrinsically human, unemotional and communal. Whilst the human and communal elements have agreement with Martin the unemotional needs further investigation. Bergson proposed that humour is entirely a cognitive process in which it is the function of the brain to determine whether humour exists. It is not an emotional response. This has led scientists such as Chan (2016) to perform magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans to determine brain function during humour events. The different views on the emotional element of humour make an interesting debate not least when you try to evaluate humour in terms of laughing at things your cognitive sense tells you are inappropriate. The debate is also about where your values lie. Are values cognitive or emotional as it is these values which will often determine the benign-ness evaluation discussed earlier. Raskin (1985) noted three key theoretical perspectives to explain why people laugh or experience humour; cognitive-perceptual, (incongruity) social behavioural (superiority) and psychoanalytical (repression).

Laughter Response

"Loud laughter is the characteristic of folly and ill manners; it is the manner in which the mob express their silly joy at silly things" (Lord Chesterfield 1748).

In the tri-component theory of humour (Chan 2016) expression is the third essential element to define something as humorous. One possible response is a smile or laughter. Smiles and laughter have been researched from a variety of overlapping perspectives but the two main areas are physiological and psychological. This overlap can best be summarised by the work of Bachorowski and Smoski (2001). From a physiological perspective they describe laughter in terms of acoustic levels, the number of laughter bouts and the milliseconds that each bout lasted. Later in 2001 writing for a psychology journal they describe laughter in terms of its positive social effect. I wanted to research the role of expression, particularly laughter in responding to humour within the staff meeting to ascertain if it gave an insight into the overall

role that humour plays in staff meetings. Bergson (2008) saw laughter as having three elements. The first is that we laugh only at what is human which points to the importance of ridicule in the experience of humour. This ranges from gentle teasing to outright mockery. Secondly Bergson argues as humour functions through the intellect rather than the emotions there must be an absence of sympathy. Bergson's third claim is that laughter is inherently social describing it as reverberating among a group of people 'like thunder in a mountain' (2008: 11). Nikopoulos (2016) described laughter as having four elements. It communicates information, is similar amongst all human beings, when we laugh is highly variable and laughter is generally associated with positivity.

One of the biggest concerns about laughter for this research is the function that laughter performs in the discoursal practices that flow within a staff meeting. Group laughter may assist in the formation of teams by reducing the hierarchical distance between participants (Kangasharju and Nikko 2009). It may also create team spirit and show solidarity (Murata 2014). The complexity of the laughter response was shown by Haakana (1999) who demonstrated that unilateral laughter was found to be much more frequently connected to negative activities than group laughter. I was particularly drawn to Billig's (2005: 193) description of "unlaughter". This is different to not getting the joke. Unlaughter is a conscious decision not to laugh when social convention dictates that we should and in doing so we speak, "volumes of criticism" against those who do laugh. Considered against Kangasharju and Nikko's (2009: 116) conclusion that laughter is "an almost obligatory element for a smooth progress of communication in face-threatening or challenging situations", we begin to see the role that the response to humour may play in the exorcism of power within a staff meeting. To understand that aspect of humour use I need to establish if it is possible to identify authenticity and inauthenticity in the response to humour.

Authentic Response

To study humour response from a physiological perspective Watson, Mathews and Allman (2007) connected participants in their experiments to MRI scanners and

applied humorous stimuli. They found a correlation between pre-identified humorous segments and brain activity in a certain area. They, along with other researchers (Alter et al. 2005), suggest that this proves that authentic responses to humour are linked to observable activity within the brain. Provine (1996, 2000: 42) concluded that only twenty per cent of laughter in the workplace was actually in response "to anything resembling a formal effort at humour". Laughter in the workplace for Provine is far more about social communication than it is about humour. There may be scientific evidence to support this in the work of Alter et al. (2005) who identified, again using MRI scanners, that not only was there evidence to show areas of the brain are active during laughter but that those areas were activated by the sound of laughter from others. This secondary activation occurs even when there is nothing obviously humorous that has triggered the laughter response. This and other similar research led to Gervais and Wilson's (2005) conclusions that laughter undertook two functions. The first was to signal your state of mirth to others and the second was to trigger a similar state in those others. Laughter as an expressive response may contain a lot more than a genuine appreciation of humour. Provine's (2000) conclusion that laughter may have a significant role to play in organisational and social signalling and Alter et al.'s (2005) view that the brain may simply activate our laughter response unknowingly appear conflicted. In the methodology and analysis chapters I will show how that conflict was broached. Another observable response to humour events are smiles. Are they a better indicator of authentic mirth?

The Duchenne Smile

Possibly. Frank, Ekman and Friesen (1993) identified eighteen different types of smiles only one of which was genuine. It was called the Duchenne (1990) smile. Building on this work McLellan et al. (2010) identified that participants in their experiments had a high success rate in determining which facial expressions were genuine and which were posed. There are also close correlations between the features of this genuine smile and the play face of primates identified by Van Hoof and Preuschoft (2003). The baring of teeth, the pulling back of lips and the wide-open eyes are evidence of the

evolutionary and social aspects associated with humour. This ability to recognise the genuine smile in others may be important for assigning leader and follower authenticity and its relationship with workplace humour. This primate response may also be the evolutionary starting point of the importance of reception in humour use. Of course, smiling and laughter are only two of many possible responses to humour.

Humour Response.

One area of debate when seeking an understanding of humour use in Primary Schools is the role of the audience and in particular how they respond to humour in a meeting. In this review of the literature I have looked at laughter and the smile response to humour. This is because my data will show later that in the settings I researched there were very few instances of humour which occurred without some level of laughter or laugh voice attached to it. There are though very good arguments to show that laughter may not be the most frequent or the most appropriate response to humour in other researched settings.

Hay (2001) shows a range of response strategies in response to humour in the workplace.

- Contributing more humour: Here participants in a conversation build upon each other's humour by adding comments aligned with the original humour topic in support of the original contributor.

- Echoing words: Where an audience member may repeat the last or most impactful words in a humorous sentence even though they may not laugh.

- Not laughing at self-deprecating humour: Here the act of not laughing or offering sympathy to self-deprecating humour is face-saving for the contributor.

- Overlapping speech or heightened involvement in the conversation: This may be evidenced by a change in tone or pitch.

Producing these supportive responses are dependent on three implicatures that Hay (2001: 67) identifies as being, "recognising, understanding and appreciating". Non-supportive or withholding appreciation can demonstrate evidence of perhaps two of the three implicatures. As an example the sarcastic use of laughter, the Ha Ha Ha response may show the contributor that a person recognises the attempt at humour, also understands the humour but does not appreciate it. A non-response to an attempt at humour may be seen as the audience not recognising or not understanding the humour placing responsibility for the lack of cohesive communication with the audience rather than the speaker. This is linked with Billig's notion of conscious unlaughter discussed earlier. Hay identifies how unlaughter as a response is open to interpretation as simple non-understanding rather than a conscious decision not to engage with the humour.

When examining laughter as a response, Hay (2001) adds a fourth implicature that is required to trigger an unqualified laughter response: agreement. For there to be unqualified laughter the audience must agree with the sentiment or values expressed within the humour. It is possible to qualify laughter by first laughing and then adding a qualifying statement of disagreement. Laughter in this context becomes a signifier of appreciation with the agreement element denied through a clarification act. "You can laugh and then deny agreement but you can't laugh and then deny appreciation." (Hay 2001: 76). Complicating this further for the researcher is that the act of supportive response to humour is not an on/off switch but rather a graded continuum subject to frequent evaluation and revaluation by both researcher and participant.

The Problem with Laughter.

I used the work of Hay (2001) to show the most common responses to humour recorded in the work of a range of researchers. Contributing more humour or echoing words of the active speaker may signify support. Also not laughing at self-deprecating humour or taking a heightened involvement in the conversation may perform the same function. Billig's (2005) notion of unlaughter to actively disengage with the humour may signify a challenge but as Hay (2001) showed could be interpreted by

other group members as a simple lack of understanding of the content if not accompanied by additional signalling.

Provine's (2000:42) conclusions that only twenty per cent of laughter in the workplace was actually in response "to anything resembling a formal effort at humour" would seem to suggest that linking humour to laughter is overly problematic. Whilst my research shows a link between humour and laughter, I do not use laughter as an identifying feature of humour. My justification for taking that approach is contextual as I will now show.

Kangasharju and Nikko's (2009: 116) conclude that laughter is "an almost obligatory element for a smooth progress of communication in face-threatening or challenging situations". Attardo (2008) addressing the issue from a pragmatic linguistic perspective shows that laughter "is one of the many" responses to the humour. Laughter is neither a necessary response to humour for humour to exist nor is it a random event unrelated to humour. Laughter sits in a space between the two and its precise usage is determined by the community in which it occurs. For Holmes and Marra (2004) understanding the use of laughter, as well as the use of humour would be the part of the process of joining a community of practice which involves "acquiring the cultural norms of the community." Similarly O'Driscoll (2013: 180) shows how becoming a member of a community does not simply involve mimicking the existing linguistic norms but must also include "the presence or absence of emotional signals relative to norms and expectations." Arundale (2013a) agrees showing how there are not two disjointed systems of communicative behaviour embodied in a single community, one relating to linguistic norms and the other relating to behavioural norms. The two are interlinked and overlapping systems that co-exist. In the schools in which I researched there were differences in the role of laughter as one would expect from individual communities. However there was a commonality in the way that laughter and humour appear as related in the evidence that I collected.

The situated cultural norms which the schools had created individually had a commonality in the linking of humour and laughter. This created difficulties for the researcher seeking to determine why laughter occurs at all in a school staff meeting.

Laughter could be a direct response to the humour content of a comment or laughter may serve as an indicator of either intent or acceptance of some other social communication process. What Schenkein (1972) describes as the placement of laughter in conversation as both a signifier of non-serious orientation and as a signifier of acknowledgement of non-serious orientation depending on whether it is used by the active speaker or as a response to the active speaker. This determination of intent relating to laughter use is open to subjective interpretation by both the researcher and the other meeting participants.

It is for these reasons that I do not use laughter as an identifying element for humour whilst at the same time acknowledging the importance of laughter in the individual communities that I was researching. Whilst my evidence is limited to individual schools, I will show in the methodology how my approach is based on that adopted by Hay (2000: 722). Describing her approach as, "this technique effectively amounted to situating myself as part of the audience, and assessing the utterance's function by its effect on me. The disadvantage, however, is that for some categories, the classification of examples would not necessarily be replicated by analysts less familiar with the speakers and context."

Having discussed humour theories, styles and responses I will now narrow the research evidence to humour use in the workplace.

2.8 Organisational Humour.

We saw from the work of Robert and Wilbanks (2012) and Kong et al. (2019) that the pervasiveness of humour and lack of agreed consensus on how to measure leader humour expression had led to a proper scrutiny of humour in the workplace being avoided. Early work by researchers such as Mulkay (1988) described humour in the workplace as a binary choice between serious and humorous modes of communication. One logical and consistent and the other allowing for multiple simultaneous interpretations. Butler (2015) was still suggesting that humour could be either a subversive event or management tool when used within the workplace but it did have its uses. Butler (2015: 44) felt that humour, "This view is closely aligned to

the notion of working at a cynical distance, whereby employees may express scepticism towards management initiatives through the use of sardonic humour yet still fulfil the demands of the job". Billig (2005) discussed humour in the workplace as a complex phenomenon showing that it could at the same time both subvert power and reinforce social norms. Both researchers saw humour as a way in which the hierarchical structure or ideology of an organisation could be both attacked and reinforced at the same time. Humour achieves this because it has an ability to set limits as to how far the resistance can go within an agreed social setting.

Some of the most recent studies into humour in the workplace are in danger of assessing it solely in terms of functionality and impact upon productivity (West, Hoff and Carlson 2016). Martin (2018: 359) raises concerns that the treatment of humour as functionalist "has delegitimised the study of humour among many organisational scholars". Working in the broader education sector this raises questions about the links between humour and human capital in a system where schools are required to contribute to the investment in human capital within a capitalist economic framework.

Capitalist Education

Sahlberg (2012) identifies the post-modern private sector concept of teaching and learning and calls it the "The Global Education 'Reform' Movement (GERM)" in which the teaching profession is threatened by the imposition of a business model. Researchers into humour use at work could be guilty of perpetuating this view through the use of ideologically supportive language. For instance when they looked at the role of leaders' humour, Cooper, Kong and Crossley (2018: 770) described it as an, "interpersonal resource that leaders may use to engender greater desire among subordinates to voluntarily engage in behaviours that directly or indirectly help the leader". Their description of humour at work as being a socioemotional *resource* as opposed to a monetary one which impacts positively on both the subordinates' well-being and behavioural functioning raises concerns about motivations for leadership humour production as well as the link between humour production and reception.

Some research into humour identifies its use as a tool that can be used in assisting to achieve corporate aims and raise connectivity to organisational ideals rather than a unique social function. Researchers such as Wijewardena, Samaratunge and Härtel (2019) use phrases like, "humour remains an underdeveloped *resource* in the workplace." (My emphasis). Researchers describe the underdevelopment as a concern not solely from the perspective of the individual but from the increased productivity and stress buffering that leads to less sickness absence (Cooper 2008, Robert and Wilbanks 2012). This functionalist approach to humour fails to take into account Collinson's (2002: 282) research that shows that manufactured leadership humour is poorly received within the workplace and that, "in seeking to manufacture humour, managers might actually suppress it". The capitalist obsession with increased productivity fails to appreciate the humanity of interaction that exists externally of this ideology. The functional view of humour originated in the Affective Events Theory (AET) of Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) in which a single humour event within the workplace would have positive effect on an individual which would then be transmitted to others and thus have influence at group level.

Affective Events Theory

Fredrickson's (2001) broaden and build theory proposes that the positive affect of humour events influences a person's cognitive processes and outcomes. This in turn influences a worker's behavioural tendencies. Fredrickson along with the other proponents of humour being employed as a management resource base their ideas in the work of Gramsci (1971) where language was seen as the vehicle by which power was created through hegemony. It wasn't necessary to use the coercive and obvious mechanisms of state exerting control if that same level of control could be achieved through dominating the narrative in which subordinate groups are persuaded that the states truth is both natural and common-sense. When we talk about equal status within the workplace as well as the given hierarchical structure we are also referring to all staff members having the same discoursal rights. That equality is important in an exchange that involves humour at work as it relates directly to the work on defining humour by Robert and Wilbanks (2012) as I will now show. An important element in

an exchange must be the humour and if the relationship between the producer and the receiver is not one of equal status then the inequality could become the dominant factor in the exchange rather than the humour. For Simpson and Mayr (2010) the mechanics of communication within an organisation usually determine that at least one person is orientated towards the goals which creates an asymmetrical distribution of discoursal rites. This hierarchical relationship may go some way to account for Provine's (1996) conclusions shown earlier that eighty percent of laughter in a workplace is unrelated to humour.

Not for profit

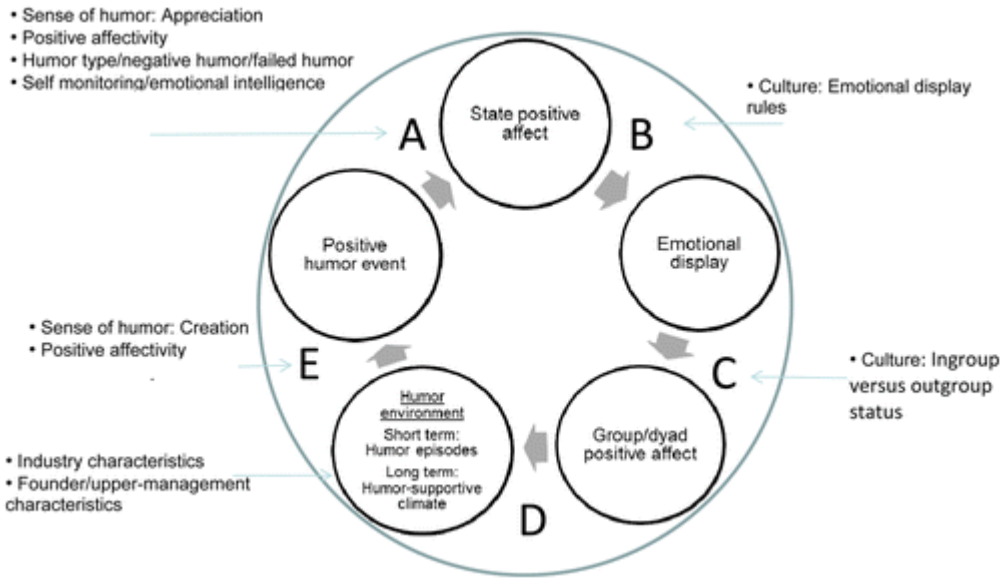
Some researchers (Riggio and Orr 2004, Werther 2004) suggest that educational leaders should use humour as a managerial tool more than their counterparts in the corporate world. They argue that this is because educational leaders have less access to extrinsic levers that can motivate employees such as financial reward or the ease with which employees deemed less effective can be removed. Vecchio, Justin and Pearce (2009: 173) also suggest that "interpersonal relations are one of the few influence mechanisms available to an educational administrator" and "public schools are representative of the type of organization where leaders may need to rely on social levers to motivate followers". As a result they propose training for leaders in humour use "as a further means of opening communication between leaders and followers and thereby enhancing performance" (2009: 188). During my research I intend to seek a deeper level of understanding about the role that humour may play in developing and revealing the organisational culture of an individual school school than a simple cause – effect, positive - negative binary choice.

Emotional Contagion

Much of the research into AET is focussed on creating workplace culture and significant amounts of evidence has been gained through self-reported views in the form of either questionnaires or focussed interviews. A good example of the research

showing the link between individually experienced humour events and its impact on workplace culture is provided by Roberts and Wilbanks' (2012) wheel model of humour in organisations reproduced below:

Fig. 1b. Wheel Model of Humour in Organisations



They argue that a positive humour event creates an affect in an individual which leads to an emotional display. They go on to subscribe to the emotional contagion theories (Johnson 2008) in which emotions of an individual become part of a group identity which in turn form a group culture. When referring to humour this environment becomes one in which more positive humour events are created and thus the wheel continues to turn through a dynamic interactive process.

Building Psychological Capital

Ding et al. (2015) show an individual's connection to an organisation through positive emotions triggered by humour events. They provide empirical evidence that these positive emotions lead to psychological capital or PsyCap. PsyCap is defined as the amount that an individual is invested in an organisation through the experience of positive emotions. Crucially though they found that where humour was received

negatively this led to a much faster degradation of employee PsyCap than a positive experience of humour was able to create PsyCap. This seems to suggest that when using humour at work from the functional perspective where it is seen as a resource then failure has a far quicker and more lasting impact than success. This links to Härtel and Ganegoda's (2008) work which shows that where subordinates perceive the use of humour by a manager as having non-genuine intentions then this leads to employee distrust and strained labour relationships. This is echoed by Dutton and Heaphy's (2003: 263) assertion when looking at the quality of connectivity at work between leaders and followers that "with a low-quality connection there is a little death in every interaction". In the analysis chapter I will refer to this thread of perceived leader authenticity and the role it plays in followers' reception of humour. This will include a review of the linguistic and pragmatic perspective.

Linguistics/Pragmatic Perspective.

Researchers such as Mey (1993) and Malinowski (2003) define pragmatics as the science by which we can begin to understand the role of language at a deeper level than purely semantic. They propose that using a pragmatic approach to highlight the context of a particular comment and the perceived intention of the user enables researchers to find implicit meanings behind the simple utterances. Definitions of pragmatics are broad though; Yule (1996) adds the perception of the listener to speaker intent and context. O'Driscoll (2013) describes the boundaries of the field as "eye-wateringly fuzzy" and agrees with Haugh et al (2013. P.171) that defines pragmatics as a "perspective; that is, in terms of how the field is approached rather than the field itself".

The seminal work by Levinson (1983) began to emphasise the relationship between semantics and pragmatics as a way of understanding the nature of language. Since then the lens has moved from a focus on the linguistic actions of the speaker towards an understanding of the effect on the audience. Relational understanding (Locher and Watts 2005), face and politeness (Bargeila et al 2009, Holmes and Marra 2002) all have their basis in an understanding of social relationships rather than the semantic use of

language. Set within my research I intend to examine the significant role of the responder in establishing how humour is used for communicating within staff meetings.

Hassan (2013) building on the Cooperative Principle work of Grice in the 1960's and 1970's extends this idea; "Humour can be seen as conversational implicature. Conversational implicature is a type of pragmatic inference in which meaning is conveyed through nonconventional means." This definition raises difficulties for my research as I will show; The definition of what constitutes *"nonconventional"* can be set at community level through the processes of social constructivism. Through the volume and frequency of humour use in the individual schools we may begin to see an individual community conveying meaning through pragmatic inference as the communicative norm.

The Gricean approach also assumes a focus on the speaker who conveys their meaning either through their transparent use of language or through implicature. The resulting assumption that there is an active speaker and a passive, receptive listener does not conform to the communication processes observable in both social and work-place contexts. For Baker (1992) this is what she describes as the importance of coherence in maintaining discourse. Coherence coming from the context and structures that surround discourse in a particular environment as well as the content of the language used.

O'Driscoll (2013: 174) raises two further points in relation to the linguistic/pragmatic relationship. The first is that academic research into the actions of the speaker lend themselves to a more straightforward approach, "It is conceptually easy to ask informants what they would say in particular circumstances or to elicit from them what they say in experimental conditions, but trickier to ask them how they would evaluate what someone else says or to elicit such evaluations experimentally." When viewed in-situ it is this evaluation that determines (im)politeness, face and relational impact rather than the specifics of language use. This evaluation reveals ideas around self, the speaker and the relationship between the two within the broader context.

Secondly research will often look at language use and then overlay the context whereas in reality the audience and the speaker are immersed in and influenced by context before any words are uttered. This view which best aligns with my research approach is captured by Arundale (2013a) "There is only one system of embodied communicative behaviour, not a system of visible conduct distinct from a system of linguistic behaviour."

Moving into the specific context of a workplace, Wenger (1998) describes four key features that identify a community of practice as distinct:

1. sustained mutual relationships—harmonious or conflictual.
2. shared ways of engaging in doing things together.
3. local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter.
4. certain styles recognized as displaying membership'' (1998: 125–126).

These four elements provide the basis for a framework which allows us to distinguish between different workplaces and to determine aspects of workplace culture. For Holmes and Marra (2002: 1685) "the process of becoming a member of a community of practice, as typically happens when we join a new workplace, involves learning the appropriate behaviours, including verbal behaviours, that characterise this group and distinguish it from others." Part of that behavioural and linguistic assimilation involves an understanding of the use of and reception to, humour.

Holmes et al (2007: 443) propose that "examining humour also allows us to explore discourse which is typically relevant to the more relational aspects of leadership, that is, people-oriented rather than task-oriented discourse." They identify the way that humour forms part of the lexicon of effective communicators who use both transactional and relational skills within the workplace. Viewed from the perspective of the three main approaches to humour it is possible to see that there is an applied linguistic link to the Incongruity theory. Here humour is based upon the reception or perception of incongruity with the nature of humorous texts. The Superiority Theory is more reflective of a social relationship and the Relief Theory suggests a

psychological approach. One interpretation of the link between these three theories is that incongruity theory explains the mechanism of humorous language but superiority and relief theories provide the function or propose reasons beyond the simple observable uses of humour.

Undoubtedly by narrowing the lens to discursive analysis of individual humour exchanges it is possible to see this disconnection. In my very limited study and by looking at the totality of humour use in an individual context the boundaries between the three approaches to humour and the boundaries between relational and transactional communication seem to be far more fluid. This is particularly true when the listener is seen as an active evaluator of the communication rather than a passive recipient.

Holmes et al (2007: 235) also identify the interconnected processes of leaders' influence and workplace culture in which both have significant impact on the other. It is this view that leads to their conclusion that "leadership can be productively viewed as a discursive performance". My limited research intends to explore this further in terms of the discursive performance that can be identified in the responses of other staff members as well as the way humorous discourse is used as a leadership strategy. When researching in private sector organisations the "workplace culture" can be internally established through policy, process, interaction and the multi-faceted influences that create workplace culture. Schools are unique in that their position within broader cultural influences is far more complex. The layering impact of Government Policy, Local Education Policy, Multi-Academy Policy and finally School Policy means that "workplace culture" has significant external influence. Whilst all organisations can claim some level of external influence based on universal legal frameworks the impact of policies that determine Pay and Conditions, Gender Equality, Working Hours, Grievance Policy is significant in the education system. As an example Pay and Conditions which are externally set through a four layered tiered process in schools may at most be a one or two layered process in private companies. Each tier of influence will have an impact on the "workplace culture" discussed by Holmes et al. (2007).

Schnurr (2009:84) identifies the complexities of the relationship between communities of practice and the workplaces in which they emerge. When discussing the use of humour by subordinates within the workplace they show how humour use can simultaneously impact in a number of ways, "While humour used in this way may support subordinates in their attempts to subvert existing power relations, it also assists them in negotiating their standing in the context of their workplace or their working group.". One of the reasons for the difference in humour use by managers and subordinates may be attributable to the individualism versus collectivism continuum. Using an example taken from a meeting led by Tricia, Schnurr shows how a manager uses humour to achieve her transactional goals and then uses it again to relieve some of the emotional stress built up during the previous conversation. Humour here being shown to impact on the collective as well as individual spheres.

Taking this further Schnurr's (2009: 99) research shows the way that subordinates jointly construct humour may be reflective of the organisational values, "In particular, the ways in which leaders and their subordinates typically engage in the construction of conjoint humour …. reflect their organisations' orientation towards individualism and collectivism" and "By developing their own sets of discursive norms, workplace cultures provide their members with a discoursal framework within whose boundaries they may act."

Holmes and Marra (2002: 1685) explored the link between linguistics, pragmatics and organisational culture and proposed that, "From a sociolinguistic and pragmatic perspective, becoming a member of a community of practice actively interacts with the process of gaining control of the discourse of that community of practice.". This is because the ability to function effectively at work is based upon leaders and subordinates having a shared understanding of workplace culture and the communicative norms associated with individual communities of practice. In their research Holmes and Marra clearly show the different ways that humour impacts upon organisational culture based upon the relative structure of the workplace. Their conclusions show that there was twice as much supportive humour in a Government organisation and much higher rates of contestive humour in a private company. My research will seek to add some further insight into where primary schools fit into this

picture. One starting point is to look at the styles of humour that occur in the workplace.

2.9 Humour Styles in the Workplace

The two most frequent humour styles that occur in my research are affiliative and aggressive. Romeo and Cruthirds (2006) show how the workplace creates a given hierarchical difference between people that is not found in other settings. For Romeo and Cruthirds humour is a way in which those artificial differences are overcome by creating similarity. By sharing humour we are able to decrease the importance of hierarchy. Pundt and Herrmann (2015: 112) support this principle when applied to affiliative humour. "Leaders who use affiliative humour … make it easier for the employees to identify with their relationship to their immediate leader". Pundt and Herrmann suggest that when a leader employs aggressive humour this demonstrates superiority and emphasises difference. School leaders require a clear understanding of the impact of different humour styles if they are to navigate what Beetham (1996) describes as the combination of both formal and informal relationships that constitute the workplace. The complications continue though as the determination as to which comments constitute aggressive or negative humour are defined by the audience within a specific social context. As Robert and Wilbanks (2012: 1082) identify, "aggressive or negative humour should be considered positive if the audience perceives it to be humorous and experiences positive affect." The reception element of humour may have significant importance for a leader and the development of culture within a staff meeting.

Schneider (1987) shows that social groupings within the workplace are often selected by a process of establishing whether humour is shared. They describe a process of attraction, selection and attrition that results in a workplace group forming around a shared sense of humour. This develops into an accepted cycle of humour, laughter and contagion within the group which is based on historical as well as in the moment humour production. Graen and Grace (2015) continue the call for workplaces to satisfy the psychosocial needs of the workforce and yet as Beard (2014) suggests

adults are facing a laughter drought. Perhaps the role of positive humour events in the workplace should be viewed as a hugely important feature of our professional lives. Not for the narrow, productivity and functionality elements of employees but for the social and emotional health of the workforce. Something that is viewed independently from its impact on productivity measures and purely from an ethical standpoint of creating workplace cultures of which we can be proud.

The Politeness of Humour?

Holmes and Stubbe (2003) propose that humour is a mediating process between power and politeness in the workplace. If seeking to rebel against the oppressive power of the dominant narrative, humour is a particular way in which an individual can express their refusal to conform. Collinson (2002: 272) describes this as "a form of 'radical functionalism', this view emphasizes the safety-valve qualities of oppositional humour." When power becomes repressive, targeting specific people or ideologies, humour can play a rebellious role and create real challenge to the dominant ideology. Some critical management theorists go further and argue that the nature of humour itself is subversive and can be disordering (Collinson 1988, Grugulis 2002, Holmes, 2000, Westwood & Rhodes, 2007). When humour's function as a resistive force is examined in greater depth then that resistance may be limited in impact. Contu (2008: 367) suggests that its impact may not occur at anything other than a superficial level. Humour may allow workplace participants to express "resistance without the risk of really changing our ways of life or the subjects who live it".

Holmes and Stubbe (2003) see humour as a means of de-emphasising power relationships within the workplace. It moves the dialogue frame from one of work to one of social interaction thus removing a given hierarchical position that only exists in the work-orientated frame. The imbalance remains though as I will show in the analysis because it is usually the hierarchical leader who determines whether moving to that new frame is appropriate in each context.

Between co-workers humour can take on a different role. It can both mitigate the giving of directives and be used to soften criticism. Whilst these are also applicable in a leader-subordinate relationship they become more effective when the hierarchical element is removed. As Kotthoff's (1996) shows co-workers who use humour are also saying that we know and trust each other to joke together and on occasion insult each other. Perhaps the critical point made by Holmes and Stubbe (2003: 110) in relation to humour in the workplace is that "any utterance has meaning at any number of levels". Navigating that meaning involves a clear understanding of both work-based hierarchies and social context. This is because power is not only about the imposing of one person's will upon another but also about defining social reality (Gal 1995).

Humour in Meetings

A key area where power and humour are evident in an organisation is the meeting. For Uhl-Bien (2006) power in meetings is not shown through hierarchy or roles but rather in the relational dynamics that exist throughout the organisation. Clifton (2009) echoed this view discussing the difference between decision-making and decision-announcing in a meeting. Whilst the latter was a hierarchical role assumed by the chair the former was a far more complex and open process involving the possibility of participation for all team members.

Organisational humour within meetings is often described using the three theories proposed by Lyttle (2007), Martin, (2004) and Romero and Arendt (2011) Respectively they are: Relief Theory which proposes that humour releases workplace stress and may be used by managers to encourage teamwork as well as to develop culture and group identity. Superiority Theory in which humour is used by individuals that hold power in a group or by those seeking to establish power. Incongruity Theory where humour deliberately violates accepted communication norms. Holmes' (2000) building on Brown and Levinson's (1978) description of humour as a positive face strategy posits Politeness Theory in which humour is a face-saving construct used by meeting participants. Humour creating a softening effect to leadership demands and follower critiques. In a meeting in which power is on show in a public sphere humour

creates an opportunity to challenge authority in a polite way. This can place the leader in a socially awkward position as once they are faced with criticism offered as humour then responding to that in any other way than accepting the humour can make them lose face socially. (Holmes and Stubbe 2003). Their research also highlighted the way that whilst humour occurred in the business elements of a meeting it was more likely to occur in transition sections. These transition sections may provide an opportunity for communities to re-connect using humour following any disagreements that arose during the business section. It may also be that the change of focus can also lead to a change in the telic and para-telic states identified by Apter (1992). Holmes and Schnurr (2005) regarded this as the way that humour has both a transactional and relational role within meetings. Humour having the function of enabling relationships to be sustained whilst achieving meeting goals.

Murata (2014: 262) looked at the role that all participants played in using humour in meetings and concluded that where there are equal discoursal rites in a meeting then all participants are 'dynamically and cooperatively constructing Relational Practice in on-going interaction, responding to this cultural communicative expectation'. This relational element is important when viewed in terms of Levi's (2017) conclusions that where there are strong relational ties in a meeting then issues that are in conflict are more likely to be dealt with constructively than where there is poor social cohesion.

Ponton et al.'s (2019) research into humour within multi-disciplinary teams found that humour contributed to the development of culture which created team cohesion and therefore contributed to the management of conflict. Culture here seen from the perspective of Smircich (1983) who described culture as the shared experiences that validate organisational values and attitudes. Kauffeld and Lehmann-Willenbrock (2012) proposed that the style of humour is important as the use of negative humour is also related to decreased team performance.

Rogerson-Revell's (2007: 8) research highlights the way that a meeting provides a context in which the communicative goals of transaction and relationship become intertwined as 'people develop, sustain or break relationships in order to get things

done'. Rogerson-Revell's suggestion that there is a flow between structured, formal communication and looser, informal communication appears to have particular resonance within the school data I collected. This shift in communication strategies that may include humour can reflect the often-broad range of topics requiring discussion in a single staff meeting. It also aligns with Watson and Drew's (2017: 317) research that sites the importance of humour use within the individual context of the meeting or organisation being studied, 'it is in the local and contextual interactions of participants that organisations are performatively enacted'. However those unique contexts sit within a wider field of influence which for schools in the UK means a neo-liberal capitalist framework.

2.10 Towards a Definition

Throughout this chapter I have narrowed the focus from looking at theories of humour to humour use at work to humour use in meetings. I will now propose a definition on which my research will be based that fits this funnelling process. As the overarching theme into which this study fits is the use of language by those with both given and assumed authority in schools I began with the initial working definition provided by Holmes (2000: 163). They defined humour in the workplace as; "Humour in our study is defined as 'utterances which are identified by the analyst, on the basis of paralinguistic, prosodic, and discoursal clues, as intended by the speakers to be amusing and perceived to be amusing by at least some participants'. As my research progressed three elements of this definition became problematic. The first was the "intention" ascribable to the speaker. The paralinguistic, prosodic and procedural clues were not sufficient to determine which humour expressions were genuine and which were part of the planned hegemony of leadership. This will be discussed further in the analysis chapter. The second concern was the use of "and" when referring to expressions being perceived as amusing. This is based upon several definitions of humour which include a required social element. During my research there were times when the speaker would offer paralinguistic clues such as a laugh voice when speaking or laughter at the end of a sentence (laugh tokens) and there would be no response from other meeting participants. Equally there were times, although rarer,

when there was laughter from the participants when none of the clues from the speaker suggested that their intention was to be humorous. I did not want to exclude those elements from my research.

The final part I intend to change relates to, "some participants". I argue that is sufficient for humour to be defined as such even when there is only one person who finds something funny including when that person is the speaker. My argument here is that by researching humour that "some participants" find amusing limits the research to only including successful attempts at humour within a meeting. This decision not to include unsuccessful attempts at humour and the requirement for a social element to be part of the definition stems from the unique way humour is viewed. *Trying* to be creative or *trying* to be effective would result in encouragement from those around us both professionally and personally. *Trying* to be funny is offered as criticism or somehow negative. This pervasive view could lead to unsuccessful attempts at humour to be removed from some research. Thus the definition of workplace humour I researched became, "utterances which are identified by the analyst, on the basis of paralinguistic, prosodic, and discoursal clues, as offered by the speaker to be amusing and/or perceived to be amusing by at least one participant."

2.11 Conclusion

In the literature review I have followed a reductive process that began with the grand theories that have historical resonance through the study of humour use. I have then looked at recent views of humour use in the workplace and then further refined that approach to humour use in meetings. I have demonstrated a lack of research into the role of humour in organisational culture more broadly as well as very specifically within the education sector. Having proposed a definition for humour that aligns to that reductive process I will now set out my methodological approach that will enable this research to answer the research questions.

1.) How is humour used in a Primary School staff meeting and how does that impact within a community of practice?

2.) What factors may contribute to gaining a better understanding of humour use in Primary Schools?

3.) Can humour use in a Primary School staff meeting reveal the lived organisational culture?

4.) What implications for school leaders and other meeting participants can be suggested by gaining a better understanding of humour use within Primary School staff meetings?

Chapter Three

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

To answer the research questions the methodology is aligned with the four threads running through the use of humour in meetings. As a reminder they are the use of language, the social connectivity of humour, authenticity and the specific context in which humour occurs. It was also important to align the methodological approach to the definition of the humour that I proposed in the Literature Review: "utterances which are identified by the analyst, on the basis of paralinguistic, prosodic, and discoursal clues, as offered by the speaker to be amusing and/or perceived to be amusing by at least one participant." To capture the use of humour in situ I chose to undertake a short ethnographic study of staff meetings in Primary Schools. I chose meetings as they represent the bringing together of the power holders within an organisation (Sandler and Thedvall 2017). This allowed me to observe the use of humour in a complex and fluid context, the social connectivity of a group overlaid with the hierarchical relationship of leader/follower. This duality of relationship is complicated in schools as meetings are often compulsory and therefore may include members of the team who have become disenfranchised or alienated.

During the methodology I will defend the use of a social constructivist approach and the collection of data using digital recorders by showing how that approach aligns with the nature of humour and the staff meetings I recorded.

I will acknowledge the limitations of my methodological approach recognising that the decisions to include certain elements has an equal and opposite decision to exclude others. As an example Schwartzman (1989) identified how the period both before and after meetings were important elements of the actual socialisation process associated with a meeting. As I will show later though there are some very specific reasons for looking at humour within the context of a meeting. This dual ethnographic and

conversation analysis approach has been designed as an outcome of the area proposed for study as I will show now.

3.2 Social Constructivism

Ka mate! Ka mate! Ka ora! Ka ora!

Ka mate! Ka mate! Ka ora! Ka ora!

Maori Haka

The ability of language-based humour to unite as well as divide is well documented throughout the social sciences. Holmes and Marra (2002) show how this division can lead to the creation of insider/outsider identity through the process of accessing language. Schnurr (2009: 25) shows how identity can be gender aligned if members of a community, 'use humour to create all-male or all-female groups from which members of the other sex are excluded'. The Maori Haka above performed prior to a major sporting event is a physical demonstration of both the insider identity of those included and the outsider identity of the opposition. This identification of the outsider creates incredible team unity whist evoking sometimes aggressive and confrontational responses in the opponents (BBC Wales, 2008). The links to a Primary School staff meeting may not be immediately obvious but I will show that what we see in both settings is the use of a shared language and shared experience to strengthen group connectivity.

Language can be both a device *for* social construction as well as product *of* social construction and that remains the case whether the language is expressive such as in shared song or functional such as in the conventions of conversation established by the group. In relation to humour, Ross (1998: 72) identified that "there is something in conversation co-operation that means we will laugh at something even if it is not funny." Aitchison (1996) suggests this is part of the language socialisation process in which our preferences become our tendencies which become our habits which become our rules and thus a social group establishes the norms that govern their own

social interaction. In her case the preference is for the group to emotionally stroke itself with laughter regardless of humorous content. Westwood and Rhodes (2007) alternatively suggest that the action of laughing at something that is not funny in the workplace could be evidence of the increased use of humour by managers to reinforce consensus. Up until this point the outsider has been identified as a person or group of people but what emerges here is the outsider as an idea or viewpoint. The act of laughing at an idea that sits outside the agreed consensus or the established status quo becomes part of the social construction processes conducted in a staff meeting.

Here though I want to include the thread of leader authenticity. As Fairclough (2015) identifies we need to understand whether an actor in a particular context is authentic in their approach. When researching humour in staff meetings this meant trying to design a methodology that could give an indication of whether an act of laughter is a genuine response to something humorous, simply following social convention or a linguistic strategy to influence others in their thinking.

Reasonable Social Constructivism

The conventions associated with social constructivism are based in Socratic teachings about the importance of questioning developed most notably by Piaget (1972). For this thesis though it is the work of Vygotsky (1978) that has the most epistemological relevance. His view that children are inherently social and that thought and therefore language begins within the social setting and moves inward to the child is in direct contrast with Piaget's view that thoughts are egotistical and extend from the individual to societal level (1972).

The step forward thinking though much criticised by Kusch (2003) on that comes from Kukla's (2000) view that since reality is constructed socially and not by an individual it is not something that can be "discovered" by individuals. The research focus for this paper is based on Kukla's "reasonable social constructivism" definition and aligns with Smith's (2010) view which would describe my research approach as being sited within the "weak social constructivism" end of the spectrum which allows for the acceptance

of “brute facts”: physical, biological and natural. These views lead on from the critical realism discussed by Bhaskar (1986: 345) who references a clear distinction between the “realm of intransitive objects, processes and events which exist independently of human conceptualisation and the transitive realm of knowledge-constitutive interests”.

The epistemological view in which humour is sited is probably best described by Blair (2010: 356).

“As an enquiring human I am drawn by the notion that there is much for me to learn. My assumptions about the world and what it is to ‘know’ reject the positivist paradigm that there is a fixed truth awaiting discovery, and I prefer to take the perspective whereby knowledge is created by the interaction of individuals.”

Although his description was not specifically related to humour its application within the social sciences is clear. Blair expresses his choice as a preference. Within the realm of humour use the rejection of a positivist conclusion is stronger. I argue that there is no fixed truth of what is and isn’t funny awaiting discovery. Rather the knowledge of what is and isn’t humorous in a particular setting is created by the social and linguistic “interaction of individuals.” Whether interacting at personal, familial or societal level the knowledge of what is and isn’t humorous remains in a constantly re-negotiated state of flux.

The social constructivism that I intend to research can be seen by bringing a rigorous and systematic procedure to the process of researching everyday social interaction. That rigour will include elements of the interaction analysis of Bales in the 1950’s, developing into the new ethnography of Goodenough (1957) and reaching its culmination in the Conversational Analysis work of Sacks, Jefferson and Schgloff in the 1960’s.

Critics of social constructivism argue that it is lazy thinking and that the rejection of positivism does not always fit with the observable world. As I outlined in the literature review trying to define what humour is or what constitutes humour cannot be separated from the interpersonal relationships and the specific context in which it

takes place. Trying to define humour away from the context in which it occurs leads to the range of definitions and theories discussed earlier. Each definition having meaning in one or more situations but each one failing to provide a grand theory of what constitutes humour. I argue instead that humour sits within a far broader social construct, a community of practice of which humour is a single element. My methodological choices and research analysis later are therefore aligned to my stated definition.

3.3 Proceduralism

There has been a long debate in the field of educational research that is best summed up in the criticism raised by Kuntz (2015) of the requirement for "proceduralism in educational research." This proceduralism has led to a pervasive view that the conclusions reached by an educational researcher have a validity that is based within the procedures they employed in reaching those conclusions rather than the inherent quality of the actual conclusion. This is not a critique of the requirement for proper procedure but rather a realisation of what Dreyfuss and Rabinow (1983) had identified as there being agreed "ways of knowing and coming to know." Ramaekers (2006) identifies this as a problem that began when educational researchers looked to replicate science-based methodologies to assist in the relentless pursuit of objectivity. This links to Moran's (2016) criticism of the current direction of educational research that sees the constant focus on the performativity agenda and continual improvement research only serving to support the narrative of a dominant state rather than challenging it. Hufton (2001: 81) described this as one of the problems associated with setting out to evidence truth in educational research. "That holding out truth as a goal, or criterion, or 'regulative ideal' of inquiry tends to emphasise what might be truth-conducive—that is, principles and methods for the conduct of inquiry". I wanted to ensure that I resist being drawn towards more science-based methodologies on the basis of their ability to create a supposed "evidence of truth" because they lack the absolute epistemic link to my area of study. I also wanted to avoid the accusation that Hufton (2001: 82) describes as being "an overconcern for truth-conduciveness

leads us to prefer an inappropriate rigour in method, to the goal of having rigour in our beliefs". Linking with Ford and Martin's (2018) rejection of grand theories my data showed that there was no grand theory that would explain humour use in Primary Schools. Instead that understanding emerged from the context I was researching.

3.4 Ethnography

I site my research in the ethno-methodological approach of Garfinkel (1986). I wanted to ensure that the value of research is in the research itself and the social cohesion it describes. The requirement for it to be used as a universally applicable approach in the school improvement agenda demonstrates a lack of understanding of the epistemological standpoint from which humour is derived. I would also suggest that my approach guards against Lederer's (2015: 279) criticism of research and methodology by stating that, "trust in mere analysis caused the intellectual to forget that every question he asks involves a decision". This methodological approach also addresses Flyvbjerg's (2001: 3) concerns that researchers should stop seeking to base their justifications for truth on their methodological choices but rather understand that we have moved on from simply arguing over the relevant benefits of natural and social science methodologies. Instead we should see that 'the social sciences are strongest where the natural sciences are weakest'.

There are of course very strong arguments for the use of a more positivistic approach to educational research not least those presented by the research of Dyckman (2009). Dyckman compares the reliability of eyewitness accounts against DNA evidence when looking at miscarriages of justice. Their research concluded that in 77% of such instances the determining factor was that an eyewitness wrongly identified someone whose verdict was later reversed using DNA evidence. They cite many examples of how an individual can construct a truth which was so strongly held that they were prepared to swear on the bible and on oath in a law court as to the accuracy of that truth. Later that truth was shown to be inaccurate when measured against the proven

scientific process of DNA sampling. How then do I ensure accuracy and consistency in my evidence base?

3.5 Consistency of Results

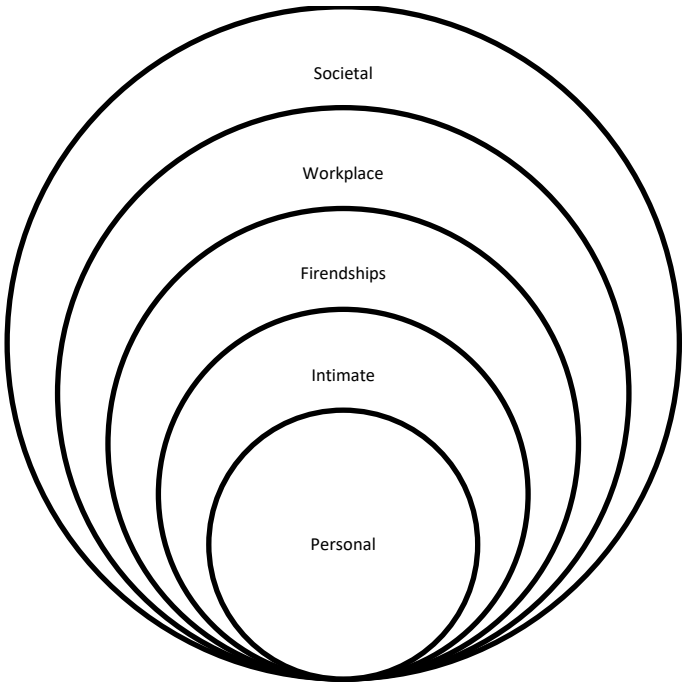
An important element of many researchers' work is Richardson's (2004: 349) view that "the most fundamental requirement of a research instrument is that it must be reliable in the sense that it would yield consistent results if used widely under the same conditions to test the same participants and is therefore relatively unaffected by errors of measurement". This repeated view within educational research raises some interesting questions relating to ethnographic studies and social constructivism as I will show now. In looking at an appropriate methodology I wanted to ensure that I followed Clarke's (2005) assertion that situations are the fundamental units of analysis. This is because it aligns closely with the context I was researching and the nature of humorous exchanges recorded in my data. The only situation I am researching is the actual recorded language-based interaction that takes place during a meeting at a particular point in time. As I will show later the individual context in which humour is socially created is critical in understanding humour use. Another researcher could not replicate the research and get consistent results due to the circles of influence that can determine whether humour is appropriate or not at any given point in time. The only consistency would be that these variables exist. In the analysis section I will show how the research into this micro-climate has relevance at the macro level in much the same way that researching the atom led to the destruction of Hiroshima. First though I want to explain the influences that are being continually brought to bear on the process of determining what constitutes humour within a given context and how these influenced the methodological approach.

Social Influences

In Fig.2. below I have tried to show the reason why going back to undertake a similar study with the same participants could yield different results. Not because of the

errors in measurement but because perfectly replicating a point in time and the influences brought to bear on social and hierarchical interaction is not possible. Although I only propose to look at humour in the workplace in this thesis, humour in the workplace cannot be removed from the wider context in which it sits.

Fig. 2. Zones of Social Influence



I have divided the various influences into five identifiable areas. The immediate problem with that approach is that they are only distinct at their core and the edges are far more blurred than a diagram could capture. It does though provide a pragmatic description of social influence which draws loosely upon Joo's (1962) work on the characteristics of speech at five different levels.

Joo's Levels of Interaction

a) Personal

At the personal level two processes are at play. Firstly the neurological; Moran, Wig et al. (2003) performed brain scans on research participants whilst they watched the television show The Simpsons. The researchers had previously identified specific

humour events that occurred during the show. They then recorded brain activity of observers at specific points during the show. Not all the points at which there was a correlation between increased brain function and a humour event resulted in laughter. The implications of this for my research are that I am only able to use those situations which contain demonstrable elements of either attempts at humour (production) or responses to humour (reception) as captured by a recording device. My definition of what will be included as evidence of the use of humour in terms of production and reception is outlined later in this section.

Secondly there is the issue of humorous thoughts that enter our consciousness that we decide not to make known to the world. Goodson and Walker (1991: 33) see this as the way in which, "humour hinges on rapid calculations that need to be made ... in the situation at particular moments in time". We may determine that comments which appear in our thoughts are inappropriate, not that funny or even offensive. For whatever reason they do not see the light of day. To relate this back to Richardson (2004) I argue that this decision is not a constant. It varies continually based upon the range of variables contained within Fig. 2. It is those variables that determine whether a humorous comment or event occurs as the producer evaluates the context into which their interjection takes place.

b) Intimate/Friendship

The next two levels described as intimate and friendships where the relationship with humour is created through close social interaction. Because the social interactions between intimate relationships and friendships are different so the way that humour manifests itself is different. Again if there is a fault in the diagram at Fig. 2. it is that it gives a false sense of the solidity of the boundaries. As social interaction is fluid so too is acceptable humour. Kmita (2015) in her work on humour use in a school staffroom identifies how humour can be used to build personal relationships. As individuals become more and more comfortable with what is being built so we strengthen and reinforce the relationship through repeated actions. This means that humour used in the staffroom is subject to change over time as a result of both internal and external influence.

c) Workplace

The humour we experience with friends and family is different again to the humour observed at work. The involvement of different actors in each group determining the "acceptability" of humour. As Kamp (2018) shows actors can be both human and non-human when working in the field of educational leadership. For the purposes of this research though the power dynamic becomes significant because of the hierarchical nature of school staff meetings. It is the overlaying of the given hierarchy that exists within schools with the co-construction and fluid power dynamics observable in individual settings that will form a key element in analysing the collected data. Another determining factor within the workplace is the length of time that different actors have been impacting on the group. The longer a social group has been formed the more the accepted social practices are entrenched. Simply changing one actor in the group may lead to changes and a new social construct of what constitutes humour may become agreed.

d) Societal

At societal level there are two issues that impact upon the receptiveness to humour identified by Ross (1998). Those with power in society use media, television, papers etc. to get their messages across. The less powerful in society use word of mouth in which jokes play a significant part. When relating this to my methodology I will seek to identify the differences or similarities between the humour used by those with hierarchical position such as the leader and those without. Ross also identifies the impact major events can have at societal level citing the example of the comedian Gerry Sadowitz. Undertaking a very successful comedy tour of the United Kingdom he arrived in Yorkshire and found the audience unresponsive and not engaging with his humour. It was only later that he discovered that it was the day of the Hillsborough disaster.

With so many fluid influences impacting on a moment in time when humour occurs my research aims to describe the use of humour at a point in time in a specific context and understand the impact it has on the immediate business function and longer-term

organisational identity. To do that I chose to use meetings as a constant in the evidence gathering process.

3.6 Meetings

I have chosen the meeting as the specific on-going action for ethnographic study because it is a fundamental part of how work is both organised and enacted throughout large parts of the world (Lehmann-Willenbrock et al. 2018). Sandler and Thedvall's (2017: 15) conclusion that, "meetings are makers of governance, resistance, discipline, development and re-articulations" will resonate strongly with many working within the education sector. Sandler and Thedvall go on to show that despite huge advances in the technology that allow us to communicate differently there has not been a decrease in the number of meetings in the workplace. At the time of writing, there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that one outcome of the Covid–19 pandemic has been the increased use of technology to replace physical with virtual meetings but it is too soon to evaluate lasting impact. Sandler and Thedvall show that for leaders to maintain power and to introduce new processes there is often an increased requirement for meetings. They build upon the early work of Schwartzman (1989) who showed how the meeting was the fundamental vehicle of power production and reproduction in an organisation. Schwartzman researched the way that participants learn about organisational power by attending meetings in which it is displayed and not by reading the rules associated with the mechanics of the meeting. When relating their research to the insider/outsider status of Holmes and Marra (2002) it can be quite common for new joiners to a community to find themselves in a meeting where they struggle to understand the nuanced behaviours that take place. Despite being completely familiar with the formal rules associated with attending meetings it is this context specific language and behaviour that can create access difficulties.

It was important here to clarify what constitutes the definition of a meeting for the purposes of this paper. The research focus includes the importance of the power dynamic which led me to use Larkin's (2013) description of the meeting as part of the

infrastructure that allows the circulation of ideas and business. This definition is closest to the point I am seeking to research and aligns with the work of Timperley (2011) who describes staff meetings as the structure through which a leader expresses their capabilities in terms of knowledge, relationships and expectations. Within a school the architectural meeting, the one that is instrumental in upholding the business of the school and which contains the most actors with both given and assumed authority is the weekly staff meeting. It is where both power and truth are established and re-established within the constant discursive flow of the interaction of all the participants. For my methodological reasoning it is the place where the truth of what constitutes humour is continually reconstructed in observable linguistic exchanges.

Leader Identification

One of the problems that I needed to overcome was the apparent difficulty associated with identifying the leader within each meeting. Clifton (2014: 100) discusses leadership identification from a social constructivist perspective and concludes that, "The leader is the manager of meaning because it is he/she who has most influence in the process of constructing organisational reality." Similarly Fairhurst and Uhl-Bien (2012) and Fairclough (2007) sought to understand how leadership was achieved through discursive practice based on the principles of social constructivism. Watson and Drew (2017:655) building on the work of Uhl- Bien defined leadership as a relational process of social influence and proposed that, "this perspective does not restrict leadership to hierarchical positions or roles. Instead it views leadership as occurring in relational dynamics throughout the organization."

The apparent conflict in my research occurred when those theoretical approaches were overlaid in the Primary School sector. Whilst many schools have sought to enact more enlightened approaches to devolved leadership, this approach is not supported by the wider structures through which schools are governed. The Education Act (2002) requires all maintained schools to have a Head Teacher or temporary alternative. The latest Academies Financial Handbook (DFE 2020) requires all

academies to have a Single Executive Officer (SEO). Ofsted reports publicly publish the name of the Head Teacher as part of their reporting requirements whether the school is judged Outstanding or requiring Special Measures. Within that policy framework it is perhaps fair to hypothesise that hierarchy may have more meaning than those industries where there is less Government Policy interference in localised management structures.

Georgakopoulou (2006) attempts to bring these two positions together by proposing that the discursive identities on display in an exchange in which leadership is seen as managing the meaning within an organisation come from two distinct positions. Any participant has an identity based on their discursive role, speaker, listener etc. They also have a situated identity, Head Teacher, Deputy, Senior leader etc. which brings with it additional discursive rites which allow them greater influence in the determination of meaning within an organisation. Clifton (2012: 161) agrees: "Whilst leadership may not be commensurate with hierarchy, access to discursive resources that are category-bound to more 'powerful' identities, such as chairperson, may skew the ability to do leadership in favour of people incumbent of certain organizational identities."

For these reasons my methodological position to identify a leader in the individual exchanges does not conflict with the identification of leadership as a fluid and dynamic process enacted through discourse. I do not seek to simply identify the enactment of leadership through the use of humour in a staff meeting as leadership could change continually throughout a single exchange. However the identification of the hierarchical leader is possible in my research both through the contextual behaviours of individuals and my personal knowledge of the schools involved. Whilst there may be many leaders throughout the course of a meeting identifiable through their discursive impact the given role remains constant. This privileged position of being able to identify the given roles of participants allows me to focus on my specific research questions. In other industries where the hierarchical structure is not governed by statute that identification would be less important.

3.7 Schools

Within a school setting the Head Teacher is one of the mediating figures between central or local policy and organisational practice. This process will often occur within the staff meeting. As this meeting brings together educationalists responsible for both class teaching and leadership activity there can be tension between the pedagogical view of the practitioner and the requirement of the leadership team to implement a policy that they may not support ideologically. This is quite apart from the internal struggle that the Head Teacher often faces in aligning their own ethical views with the requirements of their position (Rhodes and Fletcher 2013). My methodology has been designed to better understand the role of humour may play in this process.

One possible negative effect of using the weekly staff meeting is the issue raised by Holmes and Stubbe (2003). In their research into types of meetings they looked at productivity against remit and found that where meetings had a broad remit so it was more likely to entail more off task behaviour than when there was a very narrow remit. Staff meetings can often be wide ranging and seek to address both important pedagogical discussions and mundane organisational issues in a single meeting. This aspect was important for my research because I hoped that the wide remit of the staff meeting would encourage a wide range of humour use and thus enable my sample selection to be as broad as possible. These decisions about what to include in the sampling will be arbitrary and open to challenge but there is a significant amount of research (Apte 1985, Sayre 2001, Fine De Soucey 2005) on how humour is used to create social cohesion. It is not my intention to simply add to that research. I am seeking to better understand the role humour plays in the dynamic construction of organisational culture.

3.8 A Positivist Approach?

One of the drawbacks to the rise of proceduralism is that meetings can end up being judged on their ability to follow ritual rather than their ability to come up with the right decision (Kendall and Silver 2017). When determining my own methodological

approach I considered whether this positivist and structural approach to meetings should lead to a positivist approach to meeting research. I concluded that to do so would ignore the findings of both Sandler and Thedvall (2017) and Abrams (2017). They both identify that there may be a myriad of rules surrounding the operation of meetings but navigating them takes a very clear understanding of the social forces at play within any given institution. "Whatever formal rules exist we learn through a social process how to manipulate them to our own end" (Abrams 2017: 48). This is often referred to as the micro-political climate of an organisation. I intend to gain a better understanding of this micro-political climate revealed through the selection and study of representative samples.

3.9 Humour Connectivity

You're an animal who's changed his spots . . . they distrust you . . . give you a wide berth. It's hard to get anyone but the Deputy to sit next to you at the Xmas dinner! It can be lonely at the top but that's not entirely of your own making. Leadership creates a mental and physical separation that makes it very hard to work alongside those who won't 'connect' with you personally . . . (School Leader) Starr (2011: 654)

This phrase appears to suggest that if a school leader is aware of the positive impact relationships can have on achieving their agenda and that Head Teacher sites their leadership style within a more enlightened, collaborative, enabling leadership style, then one would expect to discover in the evidence gathering phase examples of deliberate attempts by the school leader to "connect" with staff on a personal level. In selecting samples for more detailed review I will ensure that they remain reflective of the commonality of humour use in schools.

This study of the micro-political interactions that take place within a meeting will be important in determining how relationships of power are constructed in individual primary schools and how that process pervades a school culture. By choosing specific points in time to look at power I am seeking to stay true to Foucault's (1978) view that power is not some fixed commodity that we can own, fractionalise and distribute. As power is flowing and dispersed and something productive which shapes both us as

individuals and our relationships so I am seeking to capture specific points of that flow as experienced by the actors in the meeting. English and Irving (2008) show how the Foucauldian view of power has resistance as an integral part of the flow, the very mechanism by which dynamism and flux are created. For some participants though the principle of fitting in may be a more significant driver of language use.

Fitting In

Keltchermans and Ballet (2002a) found that "fitting in" remains a huge driver for behaviour. Interviewing teachers early in their career as they went through induction it was found that many early joiners to a community would not confront professional practice with which they disagreed. This repression of their own professional identity was often attributed to concerns that confronting existing or accepted practice could lead to social isolation. Where there was a cultural/ideological conflict it was usually the cultural implications that were the dominant factor in determining a course of action. For the purposes of my research I will want to know if this social pressure to conform to ideological views extends to humour production and reception.

These cultural implications are not written down for study by a new member of the teaching staff. They are part of the osmotic process that creates a social group. Researching in adult education, Brookfield (2005: 126) suggests, "We learn . . . about power in adult education by studying the micro-dynamics of particular learning groups in particular classrooms (the gestures, body postures, seating arrangements, facial tics and phrases that learners and teachers commonly utter)". The same is true of the staff meeting: Does the school leader arrive after everyone? Does their arrival signify the opening of the meeting? Do they speak first? Are there seats to which everyone automatically gravitates? Do senior leaders sit near to or directly opposite the head? Is there a group of known dissenters? O'Boyle (2001) would describe these dissenters as having a self-image of committed activists whilst those around them viewed them as change blockers to be circumvented.

These and other unwritten rules are important in establishing the power dynamic at the micro-political level in a staff meeting but they are not articulated. Understanding them is important in determining how power manifests itself in a staff meeting. Keltchermans and Ballet (2002b) used the phrase "micro-political literacy" to encapsulate the skill set that new members of staff must develop if they are to, firstly understand the social landscape of a school and then secondly to 'fit' into that landscape.

3.10 Researching Power and Humour

Having established that I will seek examples of humour within power relationships I now need to identify the point in which power is being exercised through humour if it is in fact possible to separate out such instances. There are some obvious occasions such as male groups using "banter" and put-downs of women as a control tool (Datnow 1998). I want to avoid the binary choices that can be presented in relation to humour use though. Instead of the good/bad, positive/negative etc. I will seek more nuanced examples which collectively may have a far greater impact on the culture of an individual context. Using Leftwhich's (2005) definition of power as being the ability of an individual to get his or her own way I hope to be able to identify points during the meetings in which humour may be being used as a strategy to achieve a desired end such as bringing about a some level of change in direction. This point of change within education is an important research focus. Mulford et al. (2009) show how the modern school leader is judged on their ability to successfully undertake major change projects. Pedagogical knowledge and understanding of child development can often be viewed as secondary to being a highly effective change practitioner.

Linked to this is the 2016 report for the Harvard Business Review which looked at different styles of school leadership. They distilled their results into 5 "types" of school leader: philosopher, surgeon, architect, soldier and accountant. Their conclusions were that the education system would be far better served by the architects than the surgeons (and not at all by the philosophers who like to inspire and

talk about pedagogy!). This feels too simplistic to have system level resonance. It falls into the trap of using quasi-scientific methodology to justify a conclusion based upon the easily measurables within the system. It does though show the impact an externally set target-based system can have on the behaviour of the individuals operating within it.

Recording methods

My chosen method for researching humour in formal meetings was to give a digital recorder to the person responsible for minute taking and asking them to turn it on once the participants had gathered and then turn it off when the participants dispersed. Part of the Consent Agreement (Appendix 3) was that I would not be present at the meeting and that all participants had the right to turn the recorder on and off for whatever reason they felt appropriate. The decision to allow schools this level of control over the recording device was to try to lessen the perceived impact of the physical recording device on the participants. There are conflicting views on the nature of perceived impact. One view from Blaxter et al. (1996: 154) proposes that recording people may, "make respondents anxious". Hammersley and Atkinson (1983: 158) reach the somewhat stronger conclusion that "awareness that proceedings are being recorded may significantly affect what occurs". If we accept that the use of recorders significantly affects the conduct of meetings then it is entirely appropriate that a researcher takes whatever steps possible to lessen the impact of that recording device. Paul Ten Have (1999) also draws attention to how participants in recorded situations will often make humorous comments about the possible risk of exposure. There was some evidence of this view within my own research as can be seen in the extract below:

Extract 1: Meeting 1 – Minute 15.07

Leader: For the purposes of the tape, if that ever gets repeated to my children I will deny all knowledge and never speak to you again Mr Smith (Laughs)

Loud laughing from other participants.

The participant is acknowledging the recording device as a vehicle for communication directly with the researcher and states a consequence of exposure. The alternative to Blaxter (1996), Hammersley and Atkinson's (1983) view can be seen in the actor network theories of Callon and Latour working in the late 80's and early 90's. Here the technology is described as playing an active role in the social network that is created through interaction. Latterly Kamp (2018) refers to the non-human elements of actor network theory into which my recording devices would be classified. They are not inanimate objects which captured an authentic interaction, recording devices are very much part of the interaction that is taking place. Speer and Hutchby (2003: 317) continue in this view and suggest that researchers rather than seeking some imagined deeper authenticity should analyse the interactions as they occur with all influences in situ including the recording device. They suggest that researchers should stop asserting that, "being recorded gets in the way of the 'authentic' talk we are interested in gaining access to, we argue that social scientists should investigate precisely what it is that participants are doing when they orient to being recorded".

Speer (2003: 321) goes on to raise two further points in relation to recording devices. The first is that there is very little evidence to quantify what the actual impact is, "in other words the precise nature of this concern tends to be assumed rather than demonstrated". The suggestion about impact appears to be based upon the fourth wall principle identified in film and theatre production in which the audience are excluded from taking part by an invisible barrier that creates a purity of experience on the stage/screen. But Speer's second point to lead on from this is that there is no "more natural" reality that is spoilt by the inclusion of the recording device unless such a reality can be proven. It is her view that, "their (recording devices) status as significant and imposing and the precise effect they are deemed to have, need to be worked up as such" (Speer 2003: 334). In my research process I have tried to follow her tenant that the recording device is part of the social constructivism that is taking place at the point of recording and my research should focus on the event that occurs rather than trying to find some possible other reality that may have occurred without the recording device in place. Going back to Extract 1. above I argue that the recording device is both part of the actor network and used by the school leader to magnify the

humour. The leader told a story that was greeted with laughter by other meeting participants and then increased that humour by referring to the fact that it was being recorded. The recording of evidence also brings significant benefits.

3.11 Returning to the data

Sacks (1984: 26) shows the value of being able return to recorded source material. "Such material had a single virtue, that I could replay them. I could transcribe them somewhat and transcribe them extendedly – however long it might take. The tape-recorded materials constituted a "good enough" record of what happened". Whilst Hammersley and Atkinson (1983: 175) proposed limitations discussed earlier of recording devices they also recognised the value of being able to "capture social processes and contexts in their integrity". In my own data capture I will show how this ability to return to the recorded data on multiple occasions allowed for much deeper analysis that simply making ethnographic notes.

An additional concern for researchers was raised by Skeggs et al. (2008: 7) who used recording devices to look at responses to reality television. They found that women would use their cultural capital to "produce performances of class *made* rather than found in each particular research event". Drawing upon the economic, social, symbolic and cultural capital framework of Bourdieu (2000), Skeggs (2008) demonstrated how self-identified working class and middle-class participants in the research responded differently to recording devices. Whilst working class women viewed the device as suspicious, something to be wary of when speaking, middle class women wanted to know the rules surrounding the device and to even suggest changes to the methodological design. This resonated with my own experience whereby having explained my thesis and methodological approach in a staff meeting was asked why I wasn't using video to capture the very important non-verbal elements of humour. The question is entirely valid I will now expand upon the answer I gave to them.

3.12 Why not video?

All research is a balance of a many elements including theoretical and practical. In choosing not to video record staff meetings I considered the views of Shrum, Duque and Brown (2005). In research there are two main actors, the researcher and the participant. For Shrum, Duque and Brown these two groups were identified by difference and sameness in which the participants were usually the same and the researcher was marked by their "difference". Where technology is introduced on the side of the researcher so that difference becomes magnified which can be to a point where the participants could be overwhelmed and not act in any meaningful way for the purposes of research. Goody (2011) identifies an additional point that the video recorder concentrates on a single perspective captured within the lens but doesn't capture what goes on around you. Considering those two points together there would need to be a camera pointing at every participant simultaneously in order to capture every incident of non-verbal nuance. That feels, notwithstanding the points raised by Skeggs (2008) earlier, an over intrusive methodology that runs the risk of having significant impact upon the data produced. As Shrum, Duque and Brown (2005: 9) argue "A camcorder is a more intrusive technology, a more threatening character, a more engaging actor on the stage". In answer to the challenge that surely multiple cameras still fit the arguments of Speer (2008) and Latour (1987) that they are simply part of the social interaction process I would argue with Shrum, Duque and Brown (2005) that there is a point at which the significance as an actor could become a dominant one. As it is the intention of this research to identify if dominance occurs through the use of humour rather than mere physical presence I wanted to both acknowledge and manage the impact of my methodological choices.

3.13 Sample Selection

The final part of my emic process will be the sample selection. The samples I will select will be related to the four threads discussed during this paper in that they will:

- Involve the use of language.

- Evidence some level of social connectivity of humour though the production and reception data.
- Suggest whether through the use of the example we are able to discern any level of authenticity applicable to the producer.
- Give a better understanding of the role of humour within the chosen context.

As part of my Literature Review I concluded that the definition of the humour on which this research would focus was, “utterances which are identified by the analyst, on the basis of paralinguistic, prosodic, and discoursal clues, as offered by the speaker to be amusing and/or perceived to be amusing by at least one participant.”

As I will show in the Applied Methodology Chapter that follows, samples will be selected that align with this definition and go on to form the evidence base for the analysis presented later.

3.14 Conclusion

My chosen methodology outlined during this chapter is sited within the epistemological and ontological viewpoints of social constructivism. This in turn is sited within the role humour plays in social interaction and the formation of cohesive groups of functioning professionals. The use of a recording device allows us the opportunity to both capture and be part of that social constructivism and select samples for analysis that align to a stated definition of humour within the individual researched contexts. In recording, presenting and analysing the data in this way I hope to capture not the “Episteme” knowledge identified by Kunneman (2005) but the far more important “Phronesis”: that context specific understanding that enables the actors within a particular setting to make those rapid calculations of Goodson and Walker (1991).

Chapter 4

4. Applied Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The methodology chapters set out the epistemological and ontological arguments that underpin my research choices. In this chapter I will show the application of that view in developing a research method. I will show how the gathering of evidence was based upon an initial general inductive approach that evolved into a typology based upon Martin's Humour Styles Questionnaire. (2013). This allowed for the recording of the productive elements of humour. Linking to Chan's (2016) description of humour as comprehension, appreciation and expression I then developed a typology that aligned the reception and production elements of humour. These linked typologies were then used to categorise the humour recorded digitally in fourteen Primary School staff meetings. This process aligned with Clarke's (2005) view that situations are the fundamental units of analysis.

4.2 Data Collection Process

The proposal submitted for approval to the ethics committee gave schools control over the recording device for both practical and methodological reasons. In the Methodology Chapter I identified the perceived impact recording devices may have on participants and therefore chose to give control over the device to the school to lessen its outsider status. Milligan (2016) discusses the implications of an insider and outsider culture developing in relation to a researcher. By ceding control over the device I wanted it to be part of their insider rather external network. The recorder was turned off at two points by research participants in nine and a half hours of recording. From a practical perspective as a working school leader had I tried to attend simultaneously occurring staff meetings in geographically separated areas it would have proven unmanageable and my research base would have been less rich.

4.3 Data Handling

Having followed a general inductive approach to qualitative data handling (Thomas 2006) my own data broadly aligned to the categories of humour identified in Martin et al.'s (2003) Humour Styles Questionnaire (HSQ). One of the leading authorities on humour research Martin worked with Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, and Weir to develop the HSQ which has been cited in over five hundred studies into humour use. Despite its extensive use I have been unable to find any research where it had been applied in the context of a Primary School staff meeting. First developed in 2003 the HSQ has undergone significant scrutiny by both advocates and those proposing alternatives.

The HSQ refers to four humour styles: affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive and self-defeating. Two of the humour styles are generally considered to be adaptive: affiliative and self-enhancing and two are generally considered to be maladaptive: aggressive and self-defeating (Martin 2016).

Whilst the self-enhancing and self-defeating styles contain a single category, the aggressive and affiliative styles have further sub-categories. The affiliative style of humour has two sub-categories: jointly constructed comments and positive comments with a humorous element. The aggressive style has three sub-categories: comments that are competing for the floor, pithy one-liners and humour used to exert influence.

Martin (2013) proposes that self-defeating and self-enhancing styles impacted negatively and positively respectively in terms of individual agency or the personal sphere. Aggressive and affiliative styles impacted negatively and positively respectively in the public sphere. As part of my research I wanted to determine whether that framework was applicable in the Primary School staff meetings I recorded.

Throughout this thesis I will use the terms impact sphere, humour style and humour category as they appear in the figure below:

Fig. 3. HSQ Styles and Categories

Impact +/-	Adaptive			Maladaptive			
Impact Sphere	Agency	Community		Agency	Community		
Humour Style	Self-Enhancing	Affiliative		Self-Defeating	Aggressive		
Humour Category		Jointly Constructed	Positive Comment		Comments competing for the floor	Pithy one-liners	Exerting Influence

Other approaches to developing typologies were considered but these were largely related to the categorisation of humour styles such as Ruch et al., (2018a). They identified eight comic styles: fun, (benevolent) humour, nonsense, wit, irony, satire/corrective humour, sarcasm, and cynicism. Whilst it is possible to create a typology from these styles and apply it to the data there were two key reasons why this approach was not developed further. Firstly the inductive approach I used initially did not make an obvious link to these categorisations and secondly this latter typology only lends itself to humour production. For this research I was also interested in the humour reception element within a staff meeting and whether it was possible to use a linked typology for both. I therefore developed the typology below in order to categorise the production data.

Fig. 4. Typology based on Humour Styles Questionnaire Categorisation

Affiliative Humour	**Self-Enhancing**	**Aggressive**	**Self-Defeating**
This is seen as non-threatening and positive and will include the telling of jokes and stories with a view to engaging individuals. It has two sub-categories:	This is non-threatening and positive but uses the self as the target of the humour. Often this will be used by someone who sees humour in every situation.	This is outwardly directed and negative in impact, it includes sarcasm and ridicule. It has three sub-categories:	Often used as an attempt to ingratiate the user into a community. It can impact negatively on the user and others.
1,) Jointly constructed events in which two or more people will build on each other's comments in pursuit of humour.		1.) Comments competing for the floor. Rather than jointly building humour, comments now compete for dominance.	
2.) Positive Comments. Single humorous statements made by an individual and positive in nature.		2.) Pithy one-liners where a single comment is aimed negatively.	
		3.) Where humour is used as a specific tool to exert influence and to interrupt.	

The typology above in Fig. 4. was consolidated further.

Fig. 5. Consolidated Typography

Jointly Constructed Humour	Positive Comments	Self-Enhancing	Comments Competing for the floor	Pithy one-liners	Comments to exert influence	Self - Defeating

It is important to acknowledge that questions within the HSQ were designed around the psychological health and well-being agenda. They were not designed for the application that I was proposing. In its designed use it usually required a conversation with an individual that sought to understand their personal context and the proposed OR perceived outcome of humour use. The concerns relating to undertaking research that relies on the self-reporting in humour use are articulated by Evans and Steptoe-Warren (2015) who report that much of the research data around humour use relies on either subordinate or self-report surveys and interviews. Paulhus and Reid (1991: 307) show how responders may distort their responses subconsciously to align with their current self-view or more deliberately to manage the impression a researcher may have of them. The latter responses are "an instrumental distortion aimed at a specific audience". It is these concerns in relation to the low-level self-reporting of the negative use of humour that led to my decision not to use the HSQ in this context in its published format. My second decision around creating a typology was based upon the original design concept of the HSQ. The HSQ is not designed as an observation tool to determine the role and nature of humour in a Primary School setting. To use it as such and then critique it afterwards felt like an injustice to the original authors. By using the proposed styles and categories of the HSQ which matched the data emerging through an inductive process felt more aligned to the methodological approach outlined earlier in this research. In the analysis I will question whether those categorisations need adjustment when humour is used in the hierarchical setting of this research.

4.4 Examples of Humour Styles and Categories

In this section I will provide a brief description of the humour style and category and an example taken from the recordings:

1.) Humour Style – Affiliative. Humour Category – Jointly Constructed

Extract 2. Meeting 2 - Minute 1.05

L = Leader A, B and C = Teacher

B.) So each lesson has a video that is available on I-player and there is a song that you can learn so erm that was a massive talking point in one of the maths meetings that I have been to recently so I tried to follow along. I have watched some of the videos but er

B.) I didn't think that was appropriate for year 6 (laughs)

A.) You'd be surprised. (Joins laughter)

C.) Pop down to year one

Laughing by both parties and other meeting participants.

B.) No no so I had never heard of that before so I am glad you guys you have, so that's one resource that was a big talking point. Another thing that I have heard of but I'm going to look at Anne and Jackie here, Primary Maths challenge?

L.) No I have not heard of that.

C.) No, I don't think I

B). So a lot of maths teachers were talking about this, its basically for your higher ability children and it does cost money.

The conversation continues about various maths resources for Primary School Children.

Jointly constructed comments were typified by participants building upon each other's humour use in a non-threatening way. This was evidenced by participants speaking in

the first and second turn aligning their humour. Often but not exclusively the target of the humour, (in this case year 6) remained constant. The target may also be classed as an outsider and I will discuss in the analysis the role this humour style may play in creating an insider/outsider status (Holmes and Marra 2002).

2.) Humour Style – Affiliative. Humour Category - Positive Comments

The conversation that builds up to this exchange is that the children have been industrious in supporting the school preparing for an event. This is a role often undertaken by a popular member of staff noted for their attention to detail, good humour and general positive character. (Jane)

Extract 3. Meeting 1 - Minute 71.13

L = Leader, A,B, C and D = Teachers

L.) Tomorrow afternoon we've got parent show-round again, it is tomorrow Jane?

Jane.) Oh yeah.

L.) Two o'clock they're arriving so if we could do a tidy round and we will need chairs.

B.) Do you need the chairs in the morning and the kids in the morning?

C.) We're at forest school, so you can use our room.

D.) Our chairs aren't as nice.

L.) Unintelligible

Jane.) and I've got a lot of parents coming.

A.) Well use my chairs. My children left behind from swimming to carry all the chairs down.

L.) Brilliant, just be aware they are coming round.

L.) They did sterling work, / they are all mini-Jane's in the making. (Laughing)

Jane.) Yeah, they're better than me.

L.) In fact we had some lovely feed back from parents last time, one of the survey things came back and it said I have been talking to my friend who has just looked around your school and she said it far outshines all the others, having said all that tomorrow it will probably go completely pear shaped.

Laughter by meeting participants.

The topic then turns to discussion about an upcoming theatre trip.

This category is typified by the targeting of a single individual in a positive and non-threatening way. The description of children as mini-Janes is offered as a compliment based upon the preceding comment relating to doing, "sterling work". In this instance the humorous element only appeared to come to the leader after the description of the children. The trigger may have been semantic in that the leader associated "sterling work" with Jane or visual as Jane was in the room. To the researcher there is no obvious humorous element to the words that are used which shows the level of micro-political understanding required to understand many aspects of humour use in the meetings (Abrams 2017). It is also evidence of how an attempt at humour can be recognised by meeting participants even when the actual humour is not considered funny. In the analysis section I will show how this linking of the production and reception data is important in reaching an understanding about humour use in staff meetings.

3.) Humour Style – Self-Enhancing

Extract 4. Meeting 4 – Minute 15.10

L=Leader. A = Teacher

In the build up to this discussion the leader thanks the staff for being flexible in supporting some staff changes that have taken place.

L.) So there's those few bits and we've got a strange few weeks coming up with various activities, we've got mini youth games suddenly take a run then bits and pieces but all

will be well I am sure. And fine. That's all right. I'm just having a flick through, the other thing I just wanted to let you know that has just come back to me now is the observations which I know you have been desperate for us to let know a date on.

L.) Now I know the thing you've all been worrying about is the timing of your observations, now I'm sure (begins smile-voice) it's been the topic of conversation over the Christmas holidays.

L.) So here we go, we are going to do some observations before the end of this term, fitting them in was a bit challenging but there we are, on Monday 28th ……

The leader reads out a timetable of observations and informs the teachers of the focus for the observations and how it relates to the new Ofsted framework.

L.) In the context of lesson observations I'm really excited about coming into your rooms and (begins laughing) I am sure your excited about having me. It's a reciprocal relationship.

A.) In the context of lesson observation, a governor came to me and said that they had walked along the Key stage Two corridors two or three times and she was sure it would be the same in Key Stage One and they were bowled over by what was going on ……. wherever she went it was such a great atmosphere and she needed to share it with someone.

L.) That's lovely, now today we were going to look at the behaviour policy.

The conversation then moves to a discussion about the behaviour policy.

This comment relies upon an acceptance that all those in the meeting understand the wider concerns relating to the use of observations as a management tool within education. The stress created by the process can have significant impact on the staff team and the individual. Research into this area is significant (Ball 2003, Sahlberg 2012, Skinner, Leavey and Rothi 2019). The leader seeks to use humour to introduce the topic early in the exchange by suggesting that staff have used the Christmas break to discuss their upcoming observations. The leader acknowledges the pressure that

staff must feel towards being observed by referencing the welcome they may receive when visiting classrooms. I will show in the analysis section how this approach impacts upon leader/follower interaction.

4.) Humour Style – Aggressive. Humour Category - Comments Competing for the Floor.

Extract 5. Meeting 4 – Minute 67.40

The staff are reviewing a policy in groups and very few responses are recorded except by one group.

L. = Leader. A, B and C = Teachers.

The discussion building up to the exchange is about the decoration of an alcove. The leader redirects the group.

L.) Looking through the aims, were there any that you wanted to or trouble you, yes? (Laughs)

A.) Yes on the second page, the second one down.

The Leader reads out a section of the policy which contains the phrase, Teachers should be supported in their professional lives by effective management structures. (Pause)

L.) Are you supported by effective management structures? (Laughs)

A.) It was just to ensure that teacher recognised the importance of quality first teaching.

L.) Is that the aim of a behaviour policy, is that what you are saying?

A.) Yes.

There is then a three-way discussion relating to the appropriateness of that line in the behaviour policy.

A.) We didn't like the words "friendly" and "professional" being so close to each other.

Leader laughs loudly, others join in but not A.

B.) We're talking about being a team here. (Laughs)

L.) We changed that to strong relationships between all parties. (Low level laughter continues by others) so that we can work together safely.

C.) Yea it's not friendly or professional is it. (Laughs)

A.) And the next one we changed as well.

Laughter by group members but not by A.)

L.) Just type it up for us A (loud laughing by L alone)

A then continues to go through the policy and explains the changes they want to the policy pointing out particular words that they wanted changing and proposing alternatives.

L.) OK how did you feel about the next one? (Laughs)

A.) We're changing that too. (No laughter)

L.) Some of the wording here is quite archaic and looks like it has been lifted straight from the Local Authority Policy and has been set in stone over the years.

The discussion continues with no humour references on the appropriateness of the language used in the behaviour policy.

On three occasions the leader attempts to take control of the dialogue by using both laughter and humorous comments. The leader and the teacher compete to complete the task in their preferred way as well as competing to control the framework in which the discussion takes place.

At no point does A respond to the offer of dealing with the task humorously as offered by the leader. A remains task focussed on reviewing the policies as requested. In the analysis chapter I will show the significance of A's position as follower. A presents as either conflicted in how to respond to leader humour or is confronting the leader's authority by refusing to respond to the leader's offer. That response confusion extends to the staff team as they change from low level laughter to silence as the

exchange progresses. During the analysis I will show how the reception of humour is an equally important element impacting on the use of humour by a school leader. In this example the strategies used to dominate the exchange are through the production of humour by the leader and the reception of it by the teacher.

5.) Humour Style – Aggressive. Humour Category - Pithy one-liners.

Extract 6. Meeting 6 - Minute 6.30

L = Leader. A, B, C, D and E are teachers

The discussion relates to an upcoming staff and governor social event that is being organised by one of the teachers.

A.) And for anyone feeling adventurous it is off to Maccy Dees afterwards.

B.) There aren't that many eateries around are there.

C.) Oh no that's true

L.) No we're not at the Pentagon we're at the Hollywood Bowl.

D.) Is that the one near the bingo?

A.) But there's also Creams which is on the corner of that building, we could go to creams

C.) Yes but then we would be trying to bowl on a sugar rush that might be difficult

Group laughter. The leader sees that a member of staff is waiting to present a different topic.

L.) You alright John do you want to get on with this

B.) Is this a staff governor thing then

L.) Yes, it's a staff governor thing that A.) is organising

D.) Jane, are you going to Creams or McDonald's

Jane.) Er Creams

E.) Last time I went to McDonalds I couldn't understand the menu.

Pause

A.) Who looks at the menu in McDonalds?

Group laughter

The meeting splits into two groups, one discussing where to eat and one that involves the leader moving on to discussions about IT.

John.) (Loud voice which gets attention.) So I have put the folder onto the system.

The presentation and subsequent conversation then became about folders stored on the IT system.

In the Methodology Chapter I showed that there is an objective interpretation to this research as well as an inherent change in the evidence base as it moves from the digital recording to the typed page. The decision to place this example in the aggressive style, pithy one liners category rather than as an affiliative style is based on three factors. Firstly, my subjective evaluation of the audible tone used by B is that the comment does not appear supportive. Secondly the laughter by the group is shorter and louder than other examples. This appears to be more nervous laughter which may indicate that the group finds the comment amusing but is unsure how it will be received by the target. The final decision to place it in this category is the change of humour target. In the first turn the teacher offers McDonalds as the target of the humour (for having menus people can't understand), as well as offering a self-deprecating statement about their own understanding. The decision by the teacher in the second turn to focus on the teacher's lack of understanding of both the menu and the requirement to read it changes the target. The teacher in the first turn is now the sole target of humour in the exchange. The response in the second turn also cuts across a social convention relating to appropriate targets of humour. A contributor exposing themselves as a target by using self-deprecating humour may have an expectation of receiving a positive comment. What classifies this as aggressive is the

decision to use the self-deprecating comment as an opportunity to further target the teacher.

6.) Humour Style – Aggressive. Humour Category - Exerting influence by using humour to interrupt.

Extract 7. Meeting 7 - Minute 3.15

A = Nursery teacher, B, C and D= Key Stage 2 Teachers, L = Leader

The school is discussing ways to improve the physical health of children, a government initiative at the time.

D.) One of the things that we could do which wouldn't cost us anything which I know many local schools do is the daily mile. I know one of the teachers is the local coordinator for this and she was saying it is not actually a mile, its fifteen minutes of continuous exercise for your children, and she talked about the research that proves that children perform better in the classroom having done sport. And it is something that Abi and I along with other teachers in the school would like to investigate to see if we could do.

The speaker is interrupted by something being knocked from a table.

C.) Emma is ready to go now.

B.) She's very keen

L.) Let's go

B.) I have to say the nursery teacher inspired me this morning when I looked out of the window this morning. I happened to look out of the window and saw you running around the nursery.

A.) Yes we run around and they chase me and sometimes I chase them and they love it, to be honest I love it as well. (Laugh voice)

B.) So we're in here doing fractions and that and you're just running round the nursery. (Mock indignation.)

C.) Playing at stuff

L.) Are you offering to do nursery next year David,

B.) I am

L.) Duly noted everyone.

Group laughter.

B.) I am happy to do any year group.

L.) Can't choose books though can you? (Laughs)

C.) So about the running.

L.) Yes try and get it back.

C.) The idea is that it is fun and we want it to be 100% inclusive and that and partly we have breaktimes and lunchtimes and we have our PE sessions where we are inclusive and we become exclusive at the mini-youth games. But this is something that all our children can be involved in.

There is then a discussion about practical considerations of running a daily mile.

Many practitioners will recognise this as dialogue that occurs across the education system. The suggestion that particular elements of teaching are "harder" and some are "easier". If we were to rewrite a section of the exchange keeping all the words the same but removing the references to the tone used and removing the laughter of both the group and the speakers the words assume a more aggressive meaning.

A.) Yes we run around and they chase me and sometimes I chase them and they love it, to be honest I love it as well.

B.) So we're in here doing fractions and that and you're just running round the nursery.

C.) Playing at stuff

L.) Are you offering to do nursery next year David,

B.) I am

L.) Duly noted everyone.

This exchange appears aggressive because it has several elements of interruption and exerting influence that are achieved using humour. The year six teacher's apparent belittling of the reception curriculum was offered as mock indignation. The head teacher continued in the same humorous frame by exerting their influence in two ways. Firstly the confrontation of the ideological position taken by the year six teacher and secondly the hierarchical reminder that the leader is responsible for class allocation. In the analysis section I show why humour may be used in this way and some issues associated with communities where this approach becomes dominant. That analysis will look at the implications of Bailey's (2008: 128) view that "the meaning of utterances are profoundly shaped by the way in which something is said in addition to what is said". It will also align with Leftwhich's (2005) definition of power as being the ability of an individual to get his or her own way. I will show how the example above raises questions as to whether the leader's use of humour to exert influence is maladaptive to the community as Martin et al's (2003) categorisations suggest.

7.) Self- Defeating

Extract 8. Meeting 2 - Minute 2.30

The school is discussing innovative approaches to the teaching of Maths.

A, B = Teacher

B.) The next thing I want to talk about, and this is A's speciality is erm, White Rose Maths.

A.) Unintelligible

B.) Do you want to tell everyone how you use it because you do use it to teach your Maths lessons don't you.

A = Erm, (pause) Every thirty-five years I try to come up with a new idea.

Someone mentioned why don't you look at it, there's no particular scheme, there's lots of problem solving, reasoning and all the Maths areas you have to cover in Year 4.

There is then a discussion between A and B regarding the appropriateness of The White Rose scheme.

In this example the teacher is introducing a new way for teachers to engage with young people using an existing IT programme. They offer the comment in a dry monotone voice which is typical of their delivery style and the comment elicits no laughter from the group. Self-defeating humour is categorised by the perceived intent of the producer (Gkorezis and Bellou 2016). If the intent is perceived as false modesty offered as humour it creates a conflict in how to respond. It is different to self-deprecating humour which may have a positive impact on the producer if the intent is perceived as genuine. In this example the comment is made by a senior teacher with many years' experience of developing information technology and has produced curriculum plans that have been shared throughout the local authority in which they work. In the McDonalds example (Extract 5 above) the staff team appeared to have a genuine belief that the teacher could not understand the menu thus making it self-deprecating.

4.5 Response Typology

The HSQ provided categories that were largely associated with the *production* of humour. Within the literature review I proposed a definition of humour which was based upon both the production of and reception of a comment because as the data was collated it became apparent that the *reception* of a comment played a significant role in the categorisation. There was also a significant amount of laughter captured on the recording device which had to be understood within the definition of humour proposed in the literature review. Holt (2010) suggested that laughter should be treated as something separate to humour. Raclaw and Ford (2017) proposed that smiling and laughter within meetings were a vital social skill in navigating the

divergence of opinion expressed during meetings in a way that did not compromise the future working relationship of the group. There were a number of other views that I took into account when considering the role of laughter humour research. Hay (2001) showed a wide range of responses to humour many of which do not include laughter. Ross (1998) had shown how conversation co-operation meant that people laugh out of social convention not just because they find something funny. Moran, Wig et al. (2003) had shown how there was a neurological response to humorous events that did not always lead to laughter. Schnurr and Chan (2011: 32) when researching teasing and self-denigrating humour concluded "that laughter is clearly not the only (or most typical) way of responding to these kinds of humour". My initial view aligned with these approaches that laughter was somehow separate to my research. That view changed as a result of the data that was collected in my specific context as I will show now.

As I collected the recordings it became apparent that laughter was hugely significant as a response to humour production within those contexts I was researching. There were reasons other than humour appreciation as to why that laughter occurred that I will discuss in the analysis section. Within this method section I wanted to ensure that how I collected and analysed data remained aligned to the practices of the communities I was researching. Almost universally the instances of humour production that occurred were linked to some form of laughter response.

Using the work of the conversation analysts (CA) Vosge, Jefferson and Sachs as a starting point I proposed a straightforward scale for measuring the laughter that was captured on the recording. This initial receptive sliding scale began with laughter only by the producer and went through to loud laughter by most meeting participants. I also used two terms from the CA approach. The term "laugh voice" was used when a comment made by the producer was uttered using laughter throughout. The term "laugh tokens" was used when a comment was made and laughter was used at the end of the comment to signify humorous intent to the audience.

As the data was collated another category became evident on the reception side. Laughter that occurred with no perceived intent on behalf of the producer. I wanted to record whether there were times during the meetings that humour was determined by someone other than the active speaker. There were also occasions where there was an attempt at humour but it elicited no response from either the meeting participants or the producer. What became evident as I developed this scale was that there was both an adaptive and maladaptive element to the responses. The responses by no-one, only the person making the comment or anyone except the person making the comment appear to be a negative response to humour as they do not align to the perceived intention of the producer. This non-alignment would place them on the aggressive or self-defeating side of Martin's categorisations as they impact poorly on the individual or community sphere. The numerical scale I gave to the laughter responses aligned with the affiliative and self-enhancing elements of the categorisations. As the producer of a laughter event it will have both individual and group positive effect to receive the same or an increased level of laughter response than your own.

Maintaining the framework for the typology proposed for the production of humour I began to analyse the reception data within the framework at Fig. 6. below.

Fig. 6. Typology for Laughter Response

Impact +/-	Adaptive			Maladaptive		
Style	Affiliative			Aggressive		
Response Category	1-3	4-7	8-10	Laughter only by producer	No laughter	Laughter with no apparent intent by producer

In the analysis I will show how there is significant crossover between the styles and that the analysis of humour must take in production, reception and specific context. Without all three elements hypotheses concerning humour use in Primary Schools are flawed. As an example, a no laughter response to an aggressive pithy one-liner could be simultaneously categorised as both affiliative to the target of the humour and aggressive to the producer and the sentiment expressed.

The data relating to response categories was initially recorded against the following descriptors:

Fig. 7. Response Category Descriptors

Scale	**Any Except Producer**	**Only Producer**	**None**
Descriptor	This is determined as a comment made by any participant in which others laugh. The delivery or reaction of the producer indicate that they did not intend for the comment to be humorous	The person speaking does so in either a smile voice or with laughter tokens to indicate that something in offered humorously but no reaction is recorded in the rest of the group.	A comment is made, designed or observed to be humorous in which no reaction is recorded by either the producer or the participants
Scale	**1-3**	**4-7**	**8-10**
Descriptor	The comment or exchange creates a low-level laughter response by one or two responders with no or little meeting disruption.	The comment or exchange creates a mid-level response and more members of staff respond and the meeting flow is briefly disrupted.	The comment or exchange creates hilarity amongst most of the group and significantly disrupts the meeting flow.

4.6 Conclusion

In the methodology I set out the theoretical standpoint on which my research method is based. In this applied methodology chapter I have extended that to show how the decisions I made were based on those methodological positions. Having defined the process of data collection and data handling I will now present the data.

Chapter 5

5. Data - Tabular

5.1 Introduction

In the following two chapters I present the analysis of the data collected from the schools firstly in tabular form and then in an analysis of individual exchanges. In doing so I took into account that I was not seeking to describe or compare and contrast the locally constructed cultures of the individual schools. My research questions relate to finding factors related to humour use that may impact upon organisational culture. My literature review shows how culture is developed in-situ, each school that I researched will have developed and will continue to develop its own distinct culture. Part of that site specific development of organisational culture will be the fluid and dynamic processes impacting on humour use described earlier. In the analysis of the tabular data I set out to show that there is some commonality with regard to humour use in Primary Schools. I will begin by showing the frequency of all humour use that sits within my stated definition. That data is then broken down into leader and follower production categories. I will then show the reception data before presenting the data for affiliative and aggressive humour use. At the end of this chapter I will show the impact that dual or multiple classification has on the way that the data can be understood. In the situational analysis chapter I select the best examples of those areas where commonality exists for further analysis.

5.2 Headline Data

The frequency data for the production and reception of humour was:

Fig. 8. Humour Use in Primary School Staff Meetings - Data Frequency

Meeting Number	Number if Recorded Incidents of Humour Production or Reception	Length of Meeting In minutes	Frequency Incident: Time (mins)
1	36	73	1:2
2	12	35	1:2.55
3	20	60	1:3
4	31	94	1:3.02
5	27	105	1:3.53
6	21	70	1:3.20
7	13	55	1:4.13
8	3	4	1:1.20
9	22	58	1:2.38
10	2	10	1:5
11	5	8	1:1.36
12*	6	55	1:9.10
Totals	**198**	**627 minutes**	**1:3.10**
***Total with outlier removed**	**192**	**572 minutes**	**1:2.58**

This initial data collated from all schools shows that some form of either humour production or reception occurred approximately every three minutes. This supports the proposal that it is both pervasive and significant in terms of the behaviours leaders employ and are surrounded by within a Primary School staff meeting.

5.3 Outlying Data

To ensure statistical validity I want to address Meeting 12 which sits as an outlier to the other meetings. It may have undue statistical significance were it to be included in the main body of the evidence. Whilst there are statistical arguments as to whether or not the outlying data should be excluded or included I instead looked at specific context in which it occurred. The Primary Schools that were selected were given a digital audio recording device and asked to record all meetings which fell into Sandler and Thedvall's (2017) categorisation of meetings as being instruments of governance, resistance, discipline and development as shown earlier. Each school could interpret this individually but there seemed to be universal agreement as evidenced by conversations that I had with school teams when setting up the research and the meetings that they later chose to record. The two meetings which schools identified as falling into this category were the Staff meeting and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) meeting.

As the data from the individual schools was collated from the recordings every two months it became apparent that none of the recordings were SLT meetings. All the recordings were from whole staff meetings. Only one recording, Meeting 12, is an SLT meeting. That sample is far too small to attempt any considered analysis. It is of note that the Staff meeting frequency average is one incident every two minutes and fifty-eight seconds and the single SLT meeting has a frequency rate of one incident every nine minutes. An understanding of humour use by the same actors in different meetings within the same school warrants further investigation but falls beyond the scope of this research. Evidence may be emerging of what Schnurr (2009: 77) describes as "the substantial differences in the discursive repertoires developed by the various working groups clearly demonstrate that behaviour that is considered appropriate and ''effective'' for the performance of leadership varies significantly across different groups/communities of practices". Using the Staff meetings and excluding the data from Meeting 12 I then collated the production data into the styles and categories outlined in the typography.

5.4 Humour Production Frequency by Category

Having established the descriptors and examples for each of the seven production categories in the Applied Methodology Chapter the data below shows the frequency of those different humour production categories:

Fig. 9. Humour Production Frequency by Category

Adaptive				
Style/Category	Affiliative Jointly Constructed	Affiliative Positive Comments	Self-Enhancing	
Value	54	14	37	
Maladaptive				
Style/Category	Aggressive comments competing for the floor	Aggressive comments – Pithy one-liners	Aggressive Comments – Exerting Influence	Self-Defeating
Value	6	32	31	3

5.5 Follower Versus Leader

As well as the production and reception elements of humour the findings show that site specific context is critical in understanding humour use. The staff meeting is part of that context as is the person responsible for either the production or reception of humour. The recordings were made in a staff meeting which were usually led by a school leader. This was often the Head Teacher but meetings led by a non-head teacher account for one quarter of the sample size. In most cases the schools were known to me and I was able to identify whether the leader was the Head Teacher, a member of the senior leadership team or a teacher. Where this wasn't the case I was able to identify the leader through procedural and behavioural clues. This allowed me to identify two categories relating to who was responsible for the humorous comment: leader and follower. Follower was usually a teacher although there were occasions where the minute taker or a school visitor may be responsible. The data below shows the category of person producing humorous comments within the headline styles.

Fig. 10. Leader Versus Follower Humour Use – All schools

Headline Style/Categories	Affiliative*	Self-Enhancing	Aggressive*	Self-Defeating
Total Value	68	37	69	3
Total by Leader	26	28	45	2
Total by Follower	47	9	28	1

*Individual totals may exceed combined total as the affiliative style contains the category jointly constructed comments and the aggressive style contains the category comments competing for the floor. In both these categories there were occasions where both the Leader and Follower were responsible for a single exchange.

The data shows that approximately two thirds of the affiliative comments were made by follower and two thirds of the aggressive comments were made by leader.

Reflecting that the term leader represents one person and follower represents everyone else in the meeting it was important to explore this data further. In relation to leadership implications I was particularly interested in examining the data relating to comments categorised in the aggressive style. They are described by Martin (2003) as negatively impacting the community sphere. This is an outcome few leaders are likely to identify in a self-report process as an intentional strategy for the reasons proposed by Paulhus and Reid (1991). I therefore broke down the aggressive use of humour by leader and follower.

Fig. 11. Leader/Follower Aggressive Humour Use

Aggressive Style **Maladaptive** **Impacting in the Community Sphere**			
Categories	**Comments competing for the floor**	**Pithy one-liners**	**Exerting Influence/ interruption**
Leader	2	18	24
Follower	4	14	7

My data shows that the leader's use of humour to exert influence is far more prevalent than that of other meeting participants. On first viewing this may suggest that the leader was responsible for more of the humour associated with a negative impact upon the community sphere than followers. The combined data also appears to show that the leader whilst contributing to the positive impact element of the social group did so on less occasions than followers. In the analysis section I will show why this initial interpretation is inaccurate and why there needs to be a more complex understanding of the role humour plays in the workplace.

5.6 Initial Data – Reception

Using the six-point descriptive scale for reception data at Fig 4. in the Applied Methodology Chapter the data was then collated to produce the results below.

Fig. 12. Initial Humour Reception Data

	Maladaptive			**Adaptive**		
Response Scale	**Any except producer**	**Only Producer**	**None**	**1 –3**	**4-7**	**8-10**
Number of Responses	2	54	5	74	32	5

It was the frequency with which laughter was recorded in the meetings that led to the methodological choice to include it as the significant element in evaluating the response to humour production. One specific area that will support this hypothesis is the data relating to the fifty-four incidents where only the producer is recorded as

laughing. They may use a laugh voice or laugh tokens at the end of their turn but there is no similar response from the other meeting participants. Clift (2016) shows that laughter at work was often not related to humour but could be a signifier of group identity or affiliation to an individual or proposal. My analysis will seek to determine if that is accurate in the Primary School context.

To understand the leader's use of humour I further broke down the response category "only the producer laughing" into whether the producer was the leader or other meeting participant. That data was collated into the following table:

Fig. 13. Only Producer Laughter broken down by Leader and Follower

Producer	**Response Category -Only Producer Value**
Leader	41
Follower	13

This data shows that in nine and a half hours of recorded meetings across all schools there were forty-one occasions where the leader was using a laugh voice or using laugh tokens and the response from the other participants was not to respond equally. When looking at this in the analysis I will need to allow for the limitations of my methodological approach. Hay (2001), Van Hoof and Preuschoft (2003), Clift (2016) and Raclaw and Ford (2017) identify different responses to an offered laughter phrase such as a simple smile to demonstrate collegiality which would not have been captured on the recording device. However the data does show though that the response of the group is at least lower on the response scale than that offered by the leader.

To maintain the view that both production and reception were important to the understanding of humour use in Primary Schools I broke down the only producer response into the production style to which they were linked. This allowed a better understanding of the occasions where the leader or follower received a response that was at least lower on the response scale than their own offered response.

Fig. 14. Only Producer response by Humour Style and Producer

Only Producer Responses				
	Adaptive		Maladaptive	
Production Style	Affiliative	Self-Enhancing	Aggressive	Self-Defeating
Leader	7	11	22	1
Follower	8	1	4	0

In Fig. 10. above the combined data showed that the leader was responsible for forty-five comments that were categorised as being aggressive. The data in Fig. 14. shows that almost half of those aggressive comments did not elicit the same level of receptive response as provided by the leader. To determine the role of humour in leadership behaviour I wanted to further break down those comments in the aggressive style that do not get a recordable response from the group into the

different production categories. By doing this I want to add to the understanding about intent and context in relation to a leader's use of humour in a staff meeting.

Fig. 15. Leader comments within the aggressive style with "Only Producer" response broken down by humour category.

	Aggressive Style		
Humour Category	**Comments competing for the floor**	**Pithy one-liners**	**Exerting influence by interruption**
Number of Incidents	0	10	12

Combining the data from Figs. 14. and 15. a picture emerged of a lower level of response to the leaders' use of humour in two distinct areas. When the leader used humour that was self-enhancing and when they used humour to exert influence. These are from the adaptive and maladaptive sides of the typology respectively. It feels counterintuitive but the combined data appears to indicate that when the leader engages in self-enhancing, benevolent comments which find humour in all situations the response from other meeting participants is muted at best. In the analysis section I will propose possible reasons for the differences in response related to leadership and followship behaviour.

5.7 Alternative Categorisation.

Martin's categorisations provided a starting point for the typology that emerged through an inductive process. Those categorisations were devised to establish the

differing impact of various styles of humour on both the agency and community spheres. I also sought to address Evans and Steptoe-Warren's (2015) concern that much of the research data around humour use relies on either subordinate or self-report surveys and interviews. In this study I have used the categories to understand the style and category of humour that is being used by active meeting participants. In doing so I have ascribed the recorded humour to the different categories. This is a subjective process and therefore allows for a significant amount of alternative interpretation as Martin himself allows:

> "From the outset, we saw the different humour styles as having rather fuzzy boundaries. Some styles of humour may be benign or even beneficial when used sparingly, but detrimental when used excessively." (Martin and Kuiper 2016: 505)

These "fuzzy boundaries" demand a critical examination of the data to understand possible alternative categorisations. Below is an example of alternative categorisation taken from one school.

The staff have been undertaking a task that requires them to complete a survey and the leader is bringing them back together.

Extract 9. Meeting 9 - Minute 41.55

L = Leader A= Teacher

Minute 33 2.09 *L.) I want to, in the same way the marking policy was designed by teachers I want the target setting to be developed by teachers so that it is yours and it gets, it about it being workable for those children in the classroom. I'll give you a flip chart page and people can write down their ideas and then I might, I'm not sure if I will get time to make it up, but I might make up a little survey monkey and send it out to see what people actually want from that and see where we want to go from that. We've had target ladders and stickers, we've had various things but how do you make those targets bespoke to the children, how do they help the children, how do they have*

impact but at the same time not make it a big job that actually becomes unmanageable to track, because that is where we were. With three bits of evidence and the date and finding that bit of evidence it became an onerous task. So its about finding ways to set targets for children without making it onerous but still having high impact. Right, I will give out the paper and you can discuss and write things down.

There are then multiple overlapping group discussions recorded.

Minute 41.55 The Leader uses a loud voice to bring the groups back together.

L.) Ok can we stop now and come together and I'll do some kind of survey thing. It will appear miraculously in an inbox near you - so - has anyone got the holy grail.

A.) No

Group laughter

L.) I want more than that. (Light laughter)

A.) Huh, as Jonah was saying there is no right way to do this with the targets because whichever way you put forward you can always pick holes in it.

The team continue the discussion about class and individual targets and developing a Target Setting Policy.

I initially categorised the exchange above as an example of self-enhancing humour. This particular school leader asked people to undertake what could be considered a relatively mundane task and is informing them that they will get an equally uninspiring email requesting a response to a survey. The task was a requirement from an external agent and the leader is simply going through the necessary steps to ensure compliance. The leader created a humorous narrative around this task by using the language choices, "survey thing, appear miraculously and Holy Grail."

Whilst initially categorising the comment as self-enhancing I also considered the aggressive style, comments used to exert influence category. The leader brings the group activity to a conclusion by a very direct instruction. The humour comes later but still contains further instructions that teachers were expected to follow. Replacing

the three language choices used by the leader highlighted above with less humorous words the message would have been:

"Ok can we stop now and come together and I'll do a survey which will be emailed to you. So has anyone got any comments."

Both approaches had the same impact in terms of what was required of teachers in that staff meeting. They were required to stop the current activity, fill in a survey that will be emailed to them and contribute to a group discussion. The choice of humour to deliver the leadership instruction could be categorised as self-enhancing as it aligns the leader with the whole staff in expressing displeasure at having to undertake a mundane task. It could also be categorised as the leader exerting influence. They deliver a very clear instructional message to the staff using humorous language choices. In the HSQ categorisation the first is described as having a positive impact upon the leader whilst the second may have a negative impact in the community. In the analysis section I will propose possible reasons for the choice of humour as a vehicle for communication by the leader. What is shown here is how the reception of humour is subjective which has implications for both the researcher and the staff team involved in the meeting. This example demonstrates a change from adaptive to maladaptive impact based upon a level of subjective interpretation by the researcher.

This second example below shows a change from maladaptive to adaptive impact. Both individual examples are important because in the analysis I will show more generally how the leader's use of humour to exert influence may not fit the maladaptive descriptor. For this data chapter it is important to give clarity on how the analysis is based upon a reasoned subjectivity and the tolerances that have to be accepted by using that approach.

Extract 10. Meeting 9 - Minute 22.07

In this example the leader of the meeting is not the school leader, they are a member of the SLT. The leader discussed with staff that several people had not completed a piece of work required for the staff meeting. During a group break out session with lots of overlapping conversations the following exchange takes place.

L= Leader A, B and C = Teacher

B.) Well sticking it in with paper and glue is going to be a lot harder than using stickers.

A.) Well have you only done it today?

B.) Well is it due in today?

L.) (Smile voice) Well yes – today (pause) five weeks ago.

Group laughter.

Pause

L.) Right, ok have you all finished writing up the …

A.) Well I just want to highlight the

C.) That's alright

A.) Targets

L.) Can everyone just say goodbye to George, it's his last day today.

The theme of the conversation then becomes about George's departure.

In the initial data categorisation this is aggressive style, comments used to exert influence category. This particular leader (SLT member) is faced with a situation where a member of staff has not complied with an instruction given to all staff. The response by the leader is complex. Their first response of "yes" made the exchange non-confrontational because of their word choice and intonation. They appeared to agree and yet use of the word, "well" indicated a level of qualifying involved. "Today" aligned the leader to the person asking the question, the pause created tension and then the punchline; "Five weeks ago" here means "no" and conveyed a number of messages. It informed the teacher in a non-confrontational way that they have failed to comply with an instruction. It informed all teachers in the meeting that the leader is not overly concerned about the non-compliance. This may be in relation to their position as SLT member or may be related to the non-compliance by several teachers.

The SLT member used humour to exert their influence and the comments were received as such by the group.

This exchange could also be categorised as self-enhancing style. The exchange is benevolent in tone and shows that the leader is prepared to laugh at any situation. Even one in which teachers have failed to comply with the instructions they have been given. It is also possible to categorise this comment as aggressive style, pithy one-liner category. The aggressive descriptor relates to the target of the humour and a demeaning element to the humour. One of the limitations of my methodology identified earlier is that I am unable to capture silent physical responses and this would be required to determine whether B felt any level of humiliation. The teacher was publicly identified as someone who had not complied with a management instruction so it would be perfectly feasible for them to feel a level of discomfort.

5.8 Process of Second Categorisation

To set the alternative categorisation issue within a process I returned to the four headline styles: Affiliative, Self-Enhancing, Aggressive and Self Defeating.

The affiliative and aggressive styles capture the impact of humour on the community group from a positive and negative perspective respectively. Martin and Kuiper (2016) identify that in some social groups and workplaces the accepted humour style may be aggressive in certain circumstances. The use of a demeaning aggressive comment towards a newer member of staff may be affiliative if it indicates acceptance into the group. Similarly an aggressive humorous response given in those circumstances may cement social acceptance rather than create the maladaptive reaction associated with aggressive responses. Within my study the hierarchical relationship between leader and follower is an important factor. In all meetings in each school there is a clearly identified hierarchical leader. The use of aggressive humour becomes more problematic in this context as it may be perceived as bullying or confrontational depending on the originator. The unequal status of the target of the humour may also alter the response they give. This unequal status will be relevant whether the leader is the originator of the comment or the target and exists in all schools regardless of

the site-specific culture. Part of the analysis will show the common issues that arise out of this inequality in status evident during a staff meeting and the impact that has on the production and reception of humour.

The other two styles are self-enhancing and self-defeating which capture the impact of the humour on the personal sphere from a positive and negative perspective respectively. It is well researched that self-deprecating humour is seen as a positive characteristic of a leader. Because as it is well researched it could become a strategy of a leader seeking to exert influence or ingratiate themselves. This change in perceived intent will alter the categorisation from self-deprecating, which comes under the self-enhancing style to self-defeating. When looking at alternatives I therefore decided that the most significant re-categorisations were the change from adaptive to maladaptive realms and vice versa. This would allow for the analysis to focus on the commonality of leader's and followers' use of humour and its impact on culture. When all the recorded comments were re-assessed and re-categorised (where appropriate) the following data emerged.

Fig. 16. Humour Style Values allowing for Dual or multiple Categorisation

Humour Styles	**Affiliative**	**Self-Enhancing Aggressive**	**Aggressive Self-Enhancing**	**Self-Defeating**
First Categorisation	68	69	37	3
Maximum Dual Categorisation	97	102	55	20
	Impact measure on Community Sphere		**Impact measure on personal sphere**	
Movement from/to	Affiliative to Aggressive Categorisation	Aggressive to Affiliative Categorisation	Self-enhancing to self-defeating Categorisation	Self-defeating to self-enhancing Categorisation
Number of incidents	28	25	12	1

The combined data continued to show that there is only a small difference in the number of affiliative and aggressive humorous comments made in a staff meeting. Even when allowing for dual or multiple classification the number of incidents remained broadly similar. The number of affiliative comments that could be categorised as aggressive and the number of aggressive comments that could be classified as affiliative is also broadly similar.

This data shows that over three times the number of comments impacted within the public sphere than impacted in the personal one. Of those that did impact in the personal sphere only a very few were initially categorised as self-defeating. There was a concern over moving forward with the data in relation to self-defeating humour because the sample size was very low on the single classification data. Allowing for

second classification significantly increases the statistical relevance of self-defeating humour.

5.9 Conclusion

The combined data presented here was collected using digital recorders from individual schools. It was then categorised and re-categorised using a typology developed for the production and reception of humour. The data shows the frequency with which different meeting participants use humour within those categories. In the Conclusion Chapter I will show how this macro-level data links with the situation analysis contained in the next chapter to provide a better understanding of humour's relationship with the organisational cultures that may develop within individual Primary Schools.

Chapter 6

6. Data – Situational Analysis

6.1 Introduction

The Tabular Data Chapter gave a collective overview of the way that humour forms part of and is formed by the organisational culture of the Primary School staff meeting. This situational analysis is based upon Clarke's (2005) view that situations are the fundamental units for analysis. This naturalistic, authentic data provides the basis for both quantitative and qualitative analysis highlighting the role of humour in the development of organisational culture. In the analysis of the tabular data I set out to show that there is some commonality with regard to humour use in Primary Schools. In the situational analysis chapter I select the best examples of those areas where commonality exists for further analysis. I will show how the linking of the tabular data with the situational analysis combine to give a better understanding of the complex relationship between the four threads of the thesis. These are the use of language, the connectivity of the leader and follower relationship, authenticity and context.

My starting point will be to view examples based on the typology developed from Martin's (2003) HSQ. I will discuss the production and reception impact of humour use on the personal and the public sphere within meetings. I will then show the difference in the amount of affiliative and aggressive styles of humour used in the staff meeting context and suggest possible theoretical views as to why this may be the case and the possible impact of those styles on both humour use and organisational culture.

This Chapter shows that:

1. The relationship between production and reception of humour goes further than determining the humorous content of an exchange but is based upon the perception of leader and follower authenticity.

2. Where authenticity is established then the category of humour used becomes much less relevant.
3. School leaders should be aware of the role humour performs in establishing the lived rather than the published values of their community.

To enable that process I will firstly present a position on the term school leadership.

Leadership in Schools.

There are many different views on leadership in schools (Boles and Troen 1994, York-Barr and Duke 2004, Donaldson, 2006) which acknowledge the complexities of a top-down hierarchical system that also tries to encompass the notion of leadership identity invested in a community. Colloquially this has led to the notion of the term school leader referring to the Head Teacher and leadership in schools referring to the much broader leadership function displayed by all members of the community.

Cosenza (2015: 92) interviewing teachers found that they "believed that that being appointed to formal roles were empowering opportunities and overall seemed to view leadership as something that was official in nature requiring a title." However, and perhaps reassuringly, the teachers also "portray teacher leadership primarily as a collaborative activity that draws them into the decision-making process."

Clifton (2017) saw leadership as a social process and that the leader or leaders emerge through discoursal interaction in which having the most influence in organisational sense making is the identifier. Leadership identity for Clifton (2017: 65) becomes sited in the community rather than the personal qualities of the individual. The same is true for the follower in which the identities of the individual can be so fluid that it changes with each discoursal turn. One of the aspects of identifying leadership identity is that the "analyses do suggest that resources for fixing organisational meanings may be skewed to the hierarchic superior."

Clifton et al (2020: 507) conclude that, "leader identity is thus not something somebody has, rather it is something that people achieve and is therefore negotiable

throughout any interaction." This aligns with Schnurr and Schroeder's (2019: 447) view that discursive leadership 'largely focuses on analysing the specific discursive processes through which leadership is accomplished at the micro level of interaction."

Considering my research in line with these views it appears that one area that requires further investigation is the impact that hierarchical role may have on contribution within formal meetings. As already shown schools are not usually made up of one leader with everyone else at the same level. The hierarchy in a single school staff meeting may contain five or six levels. If it is not known whether those roles are responsible for the majority of the discourse, what may appear as a negotiating community with leadership identity established through dialogue, may in practice be the reverse. The discoursal rites associated with position may be reinforcing the importance of hierarchy. I propose that teachers interviewed in Cosenza's (2015) research who viewed, "leadership as something that was official in nature requiring a title", may have done so because of the discoursal rites associated with that title. As I will show in the analysis there are times in the meetings when the laughter is not by all meeting participants, comments that build on humorous offers are taken up by some but not all participants. In terms of humour this may be a signifier of group or personal identification. Knowing whether those contributors are invested in maintaining a hierarchical structure will be important for those researchers seeking to use dialogue as evidence of true distributed leadership in schools.

Hernandez et al. (2011) suggest in our post-heroic view of leadership we should not disregard or ignore previous learning in relation to leader identity. Instead we should seek a better understanding of these characteristics that will ensure that those in leadership positions are better equipped to engage in collectivistic leadership. Friedrich et al (2016: 313) asserted that "leader's characteristics, such as intelligence, experience and personality, will determine how capable they are in building the network and communication conditions that facilitate the emergence of collective leadership."

With my specific focus on humour I will show how leadership identity can flow as a result of interactions during the staff meeting: leadership identity being established

through discourse. However I will also show that the additional discoursal rites associated with school hierarchies are a significant and possibly dominating factor in determining that leadership identity.

6.2 A review of Humour Production

Using the typology developed in the Applied Methodology I will review an example of each category of humour use identified in the combined tabular data. In reviewing in this way I am seeking to understand the impact of that use on the leader, the follower and the flow of business within the meeting. I will then consider whether these examples from individual schools can deepen understanding about the way that staff meeting humour impacted in the public and personal spheres more broadly. From that I will determine whether there are any hypotheses that can be drawn from this analysis relating to organisational culture.

6.3 Positive Humour Styles

Affiliative Humour-Comments Jointly Constructed

Overview.

This category contained the greatest frequency and the largest number of comments. The description of this category as both positive and affiliative may initially suggest an overall healthy approach to humour use in staff meetings in my small sample. Plester (2009) and Fine and De Soucey (2005) show how humour use in the workplace can be important for creating a sense of common purpose, uniting a team and helping the organisation to achieve its stated aims. My data correlates with this and shows how humour use in this category retained both the operation of management processes and the social relationships that existed within the staff meetings.

The example in the Applied Methodology Chapter recorded a staff room discussion relating to the appropriateness Year 6 online maths material. This school leader (Head Teacher) used a laugh voice and laugh tokens which may suggest that the video is appropriate for that age group. This signals to the group that the leader is happy for

the subject to be discussed in a humorous way and that they are not strongly criticizing the decision of the Year 6 teacher to select such a video. This Year 6 teacher who is early in their career responded to the Head Teacher.

Extract 2. Meeting 2 - Minute 1.05 (This phrase is contained within Extract 2. For the full text see above.) *"You would be surprised what is appropriate for Year 6."*

This challenge to the authority of the leader is mitigated by the leader's offer to the group that they are happy to receive humorous responses. Other members of the group respond in a similar way either joining in the laughter or making their own humorous comments.

Leadership

The initial offer by the leader that this is a subject area suitable for humour use may reveal elements of their own approach to leadership. This may be an attempt by the leader to perform what Härtel, Samaratunge and Wijewardena, (2017) and Goswami et al's. (2016) describe as seeking greater productivity through social connection. By using jointly constructed comments to create a social group in which all members are equally invested the leader may be creating a followship that will become more receptive to agreeing future initiatives. Mesmer-Magnus et al. (2018) show that the use of humour can lead to group agreement even when meeting participants have a level of professional disagreement with the initiative.

Followship

A hierarchical leader cannot create a social group on their own they can only be a contributor to a community of practice in their individual school context. This reinforces the importance of the leader follower relationship in a staff meeting. The example here shows that the other meeting participants on this occasion understand that the leader is not making a point about whether the Year 6 teacher can make appropriate choices for their class. The Year 6 teacher also understands the humour

being offered and accepts humour as the communication frame in which the appropriateness of Year 6 literature choices can be discussed. The Year 6 teacher's reception and their subsequent response aligns with Murata's (2014) view that the alignment of responses is important in expressing solidarity. Here the response is the more important element in maintaining the positive relationships within the group.
This short social exchange appears at the end of one topic and is not continued into the next. By introducing the next topic with no humour cues this leader also signifies that as well as the topic reaching a conclusion, so the invitation for humorous responses has also changed. This shows how the contextual element of humour use extends to the way that the hierarchical leader in this school determines what may or may not be considered using a humorous frame.

Target

In this exchange the target of the humour is the Year 6 class. Their outsider status during the meeting allows them to be targeted in such a way that creates a unity amongst the teachers and leaders. Holmes and Marra (2017) identify how this targeting of the outsider can lead to a greater sense of cohesion for those with insider status. There are several other data points occurring in different schools where the leader and the group were connected by sharing laughter about an external target (Kangasharju and Nikko 2009). Meetings 1, 3 and 7 have examples in which humour targeting outsiders leads to this affiliative, joint construction of humour that in turn creates social cohesion within the insider group (Tremblay 2017). The use of an external target realigns the leader/follower relationship by placing both within that insider group.

Culture

In the Tabular Data chapter I showed how viewing humour subjectively could lead to re-categorisation. I only recorded re-categorisations where to do so led to a change from positive to negative evaluation. By targeting outsiders the group may experience the positive effect of by being connected during the meeting, evoking a sense of belonging and acceptance (Grace-Odeleye and Santiago 2019). If outsiders are targeted excessively though this may give rise to feelings of concern about the

authenticity of the leader's commitment to the values of the organisation expressed at other times. In the specific example of the Year 6 video choice both the leader and the participants in the staff meeting appear to use humour towards an outsider that is not overly cruel. This distinction is important in maintaining the overall affiliative nature of using jointly constructed comments in a humorous exchange. The context of the individual Primary School is important here as well. They all self-identify as values led communities who take pride in their status as role models within the communities they serve (Niekerk 2017). In their recorded meetings, which captured both humorous and non-humorous exchanges, there is strong evidence to suggest that there is a common belief that living the organisational values through their actions was an important aspect of the participants professional identities. Linking the value my research participants placed on professional identities to using humour to target outsiders I did not record the same level of aggression identified by other researchers (Davis 2018).

Authenticity

When trying to understand authenticity within this example I examined it in line with Sidania and Rowe's (2018: 623) view that it is not the simple evaluation of a leader's morality that determines authenticity, "It is more the case that the overlap between leaders' and followers' value systems leads to impressions of authenticity." Rather than focus on George's (2010) model of authentic leadership which suggests a behavioural evaluation approach to AL this exchange shows the way that the responses to humour can build a connected community with shared values systems.

The short exchange contains three comments by different meeting participants, one of whom is the school leader and all of which align to the original theme. As shown in the literature review the audience has a key role in determining the nature of humour (Meyer 2000) and determining authenticity (Vecchio, Justin and Pearce 2009). When the initial comment is made that the videos are not appropriate for Year 6 the offer of laugh tokens is accepted by the leader. They add their own humorous comment which is in turn added to by another teacher. By aligning their comments the three

participants are demonstrating an overlap in their values systems; this topic is suitable for discussion through humour. The laughter by other meeting participants reinforces this contextual acceptability.

Sidania and Rowe (2018) describe authentic leadership as a co-constructed leader-follower approach agreeing with McConnell (2011) that the focus should not be on the actions and words of a single individual. Here we can see a very clear link between the processes that surround the determination of AL and humour; the primacy of audience view. We can also begin to see humour use as an element that has a role to play in the broad range of factors that will be considered by an audience in determining authenticity.

This exchange also links to Fig. 1a above which described the tri-factor approach to evaluating authenticity: in the moment, historic and role expectation. Using discoursal clues the three participants appear to accept each other's in the moment contributions as genuine. The laughter by other meeting participants suggests that the comments are within the boundaries of to the role expectations of teachers within this primary school. Both factors will reinforce the historic views concerning authenticity held by the audience about the contributor.

Affiliative Humour – Positive Comments

Overview.

The example in the Methodology Chapter shows how the use of a single humorous comment is used to build relationships within a staff meeting in one school (Ponton et al 2019). In the discussion about the pupils organising an event the young people are described as *"mini-Janes"* a reference to a popular member of staff known widely for their organisational skills. The member of staff is present in the meeting and the comment is received with group laughter. The combined tabular data shows that the fifteen incidents of affiliative humour positive comments were predominantly used by the person identified as hierarchical leader in all schools.

Leader

The hierarchical leader's use of this style of humour has the effect of changing the relationship between the leader and follower from the professional to the personal sphere as part of the workplace socialisation process (Deneen, Mak and Lui 2013). The targeted use of this type of comment shows the team that the leader understands them personally and connects with them as individuals. This may add to the understanding a staff team has about the nature of their leader. The leader is able to show that they appreciate the personal as well as the professional qualities of their team. The use of this style of humour is complicated by the relationship that a leader must have with the team as a whole as I will show now.

Follower

This style of humour contained the largest number of alternative interpretations. The personal nature of these comments required an understanding of the individual about whom the comment was being made as well as their relationship to the leader to ensure that it was not received negatively (Alberts et al. 1996). Its negative twin is the aggressive pithy one-liner. By evaluating the site-specific context alongside the production and reception data I am able to offer some hypotheses as to the impact these comments may have on the target and other meeting participants.

Martin (2003) categorises these affiliative style, positive comments as positively impacting on the personal sphere. The comments identify the individual as being part of the insider group. However the use of these targeted comments could have a negative impact in the community sphere. Their use could lead to the accusation of favouritism or lead to the development of cliques where staff teams are divided by those who understand the comments and those who are excluded by them. There were times when the humour used in individual schools was inaccessible to me as a researcher and it is therefore quite conceivable that there were times when I was not the only one unable to follow the humorous references.

Affiliative comments made towards individuals may create a personal connection with those individuals but have the ability to create division if other team members are excluded during the humorous exchange. The hierachical leader in a staff meeting

would need to be aware of this and moderate their comments accordingly. The context of the staff meeting is important because without an audience the exchange is more likely to have positive effect.

Enculturation

Humour has been shown to form part of the enculturation process for new and newly qualified teachers when they join a school. New staff members have identified humour exclusion as a barrier when they are seeking to find their place within the staff group. Mathew (2017) and Thompson (2013) show how becoming part of a group can be an evolutionary process but it may also be marked by specific points in relation to humour. Leading on from their work I propose two linked elements mark those specific points. The first is reception based and is the point when a new member of staff understands the humour that underpins the use of a single positive comment. The second is production based and is the point at which new members can feel confident enough to contribute to the humour of the staff meeting in a way that aligns to the established humour norms. Both elements are significant as indicators of the effectiveness of the enculturation process. This is similar to the process Ding et al. (2015) describe as the way leaders use humour to build the psychological capital in which employees become connected to an organisation through the repetition of humour events, benefitting both them and the organisation.

Authenticity

In the Literature review I showed how the evaluation of authentic leadership was seen by Northouse (2017) as a behavioural trait that could be linked to a characteristic that linked to a dimension. The suggestion is that by evaluating these elements the extent of an individual's AL could be determined. In the positive comments example in which children at a school are described as mini-Janes we can see a very different analysis arise. The comment is personal and targeted at an individual. In the tabular data these comments were the most likely to be recategorized as negative. This is because it is the audience that assigns authenticity not the nature or intention of the comment. Jane may receive the comment well based on her relationship with the leader, she

may give the outward impression of receiving the comment well because of her role as follower or she may receive the comment badly for any number of reasons. Regardless it is her perception of authenticity that is important not the leader-centric view of evaluating leader behaviour.

Jane's response though will be subject to audience evaluation of authenticity that is equally based upon historic, in the moment and role expectations. If she responds negatively the audience will evaluate whether that is genuine (authentic) or whether it is taken as an opportunity to deliberately undermine the speaker. As part of that audience my own evaluation was that the comment was made and received authentically. Other audience members will have a different historic, in the moment and role expectations that may lead to a different evaluation.

Self-Enhancing Humour

Overview

This self-directed and positive approach to humour was the area least likely to be re-classified. This suggests that self-enhancing humour is the least likely to be perceived as negative or aggressive. The broader context in which this exchange sits is that the teaching profession has a history of viewing lesson observations as a possible source of division between school leaders and members of staff (O'Leary and Wood 2016, Skinner, Leavey and Rothi 2019). Teaching Unions have run campaigns against the use of observation by ineffective leaders as a compliance process rather than a developmental opportunity. Significant time and resources have been spent by both researchers and practitioners on seeking a solution to this contentious issue within education (Edgington 2015). That national issue is addressed by the hierarchical leader in this context using self-enhancing humour to introduce the topic of lesson observations. They used a laugh voice to suggest that staff have spent time over Christmas thinking about how best to prepare for their observation. The message that the leader may be trying to convey is how ridiculous it would be for someone to reflect on their lesson observation over the holiday period. They sought to play down the importance and sometimes high stakes accountability that accompany lesson observations by their use of humour (Vecchio, Justin and Pearce 2009). This leader

maintained the humorous approach by using sarcasm in their next comment to say that they themselves had spent time over the Christmas period thinking about lesson observations.

Production/Reception

The reception and production data in this example are closely linked. The group does not mirror the leader's laughter at the initial comment but they do respond by adding their own humorous comments (Hay 2001). I propose that this response is based upon their perceived authenticity of the leader. In a different school addressing the issue of lesson observations through the use of humour could have been a source of confrontation for the school leader. If the participants did not feel the leader was being authentic they could have responded differently by taking the words literally and sought confrontation (Billig 2005).

Authenticity is not just about the leader's production of humour. Followers must be perceived as being authentic in their response. The response comment made by a team member in this example was, *"Can't wait."* This response to a school leader proposing lesson observations is a risk. An experienced member of staff with a good relationship with the school leader responding to the leader's offer to engage with humour is received well on this occasion as the exchange continues unchecked. This example demonstrates the complex relationship between leader and follower, authenticity and the context of the comment. It is not the content of the comment that determines humour it is the interplay of relationships, context and perceived authenticity. By using humour to perform the dual relational and transactional roles (Holmes and Schnurr 2005) the team maintains the social connectivity that Levi (2017) identifies as an important element of managing conflict.

Authenticity

Cerne et al. (2014: 466) described Authentic Leadership as a "mutual understanding of situational imperatives" and in the discussion about lesson observations that takes place in one school we may see some evidence of this. The situational imperatives

are the requirement for the Head teacher to undertake lesson observations and the well recorded concerns of teachers about the high-stakes accountability model on which these observations pivot. The Head Teacher takes a risk by introducing the topic using humour which may reflect the level of psychological safety they feel within the school. "Psychological safety reflects an individual's perception of the consequences of taking interpersonal risks in the work environment." (Kark and Carmeli, 2009). They appear to use the additional discoursal rites associated with their position to determine that humour is appropriate in this situation. As the exchange continues they also appear to make the rapid calculations of Goodson and Walker (1991) and change this humorous approach.

Härtel and Ganegoda's (2008) research concluded that where the humour used by managers was perceived as having non-genuine intentions then this led to mistrust and difficult employee relationships. In this example the response to the leader's use of humour is the contribution by some participants of humorous comments that align with the overall theme taken by the leader. This may suggest that at least some of the meeting participants accept the comments made by the leader as being authentic. Their responses may also evidence the mutual understanding of situational imperatives. In this example though I also want to fine tune the argument in relation to historic, in the moment and role expectations as being central to the evaluation of authenticity by aligning it with context.

In some exchanges such as this one the "in the moment" evaluation may be negative but there may be a greater weight within the historic or role expectations that override this judgement. This will occur because of the fluid dynamic of social relationships (Holmes and Marra 2002). In a school where there is a new leader, the in the moment evaluation may have greater influence owing to the lack of historic information. Equally in the established staff teams supporting me in my research the historic may have much greater significance. Over time a view of authenticity will become established based on the perception by followers of whether the leader's language and behaviours are driven by an internal value system. It is the followers' view which is the more important factor in determining authenticity than simple self-assertion. Low-level one-off miscalculations may be excused by the audience however

the leader in this exchange appeared keen to quickly correct any possible negative interpretation by the audience.

6.4 Negative Humour Styles

Aggressive Comments Competing for the Floor

Overview.

The example in the Applied Methodology Chapter showed the staff undertaking policy revision. The exchange began with the hierarchical leader using humour. This offer was not picked up by the responder who continued the conversation in a non-humorous way. The responder remained focussed on the task set by the leader. On three occasions the leader attempted humour to seek control of the conversation and on each occasion that offer is rejected.

Leader

Using discoursal clues the hierarchical leader appeared obligated rather than committed to completing the task. Once they had started to treat something humorously it became difficult for the hierarchical leader to extricate themselves from that approach without appearing inauthentic. Extending Fairclough's (2015) view that part of the language of the leader is controlling the topic I propose that this example shows that control can also include controlling the frame in which that topic is discussed. The exchange becomes a challenge between the comments, one set humorous and the other non-humorous as both the teacher and leader seek to dominate the communication style in which the exchange takes place. The aggressiveness in this example is created by the production and reception approaches being in conflict.

The leader appears conflicted between their authenticity as an individual and what they know constitutes "expected leadership behaviour" in this context. Their leadership characteristics expressed through their behaviour, (Kong et al. 2019) do not align with the broader cultural expectations of school leadership. The leader is engaged in a conversation style which they started but does not seem to align with the responder's expectations (Jones and Kriflik 2006). The content of this leader's

comments became more confrontational whilst they appear to give the impression of remaining in humorous mode by using a laugh voice and laugh tokens. When the leader moved onto the second policy and asked, *"OK, how do you feel about the next one?"* their own laughter at the end of the sentence did not sound authentic and no other participants joined in. The impression is that this leader is conflicted as to how to maintain their status as hierarchical leader and at the same time extricate themselves from the discoursal framework.

Follower

The effect on the group alters which may be as they realise that there is a tension to what is occurring within this exchange. Plester, Cooper-Thomas and Winquist (2015) in what they term the fun paradox show how this confusion manifests itself in group behaviour. In this staff meeting the first response of the group is to join in the laughter offered by the leader. When the responder declined the offer to use humour in the exchange the laughter in the group diminished. By the time the leader makes a third attempt to use humour the group is silent and the only detectable laughter is that of the leader.

Rather than this being the unlaughter of Billig (2005) discussed earlier, this exchange shows us the importance of authenticity as applied to both the leader and follower actions. Whilst this could be viewed in terms of response confusion created by the different positions of hierarchical leader and subordinate (Schnurr and Chan 2005) my observed evaluation of the responder in this particular situation is that their response is neither confused nor a strategy to undermine management initiatives (Collinson 2002) but a genuine commitment to completing the task. A commitment that the leader in this example does not appear to share. This conflict between authentic and inauthentic positions means that the humour cannot continue.

Authenticity

In this example the difference between the leader approach and that of the follower appears to centre around an 'in the moment' and role expectation evaluation of authenticity. The leader has asked the staff team to undertake a task; one group has

followed that instruction diligently and the spokesperson is seeking to respond. The leader appears to use humour in a manner that could stifle the responses. The role expectation for a Head Teacher in this context is that they should value the responses of staff. Because that does not appear to happen the exchange becomes negative and the humour fails. Equally the member of staff responding does conform to their role expectation. Even when they are faced with the leader's attempts to limit debate the member of staff continues to offer their views on policy development without engaging with the humour.

In this example we see the link to Sidania and Rowe's (2018: 627) view that authentic leadership and followship are based on a range of factors such as "followers and contingencies, … and expected role requirements." I also want to set my own analysis of this example in the context of authenticity as audience impression. If the leader's comments are set within a leader-centric approach to authenticity then this single comment may be presented as evidence of in-authentic behaviour. If however it is set within the audience impression view of authentic evaluation then it becomes part of a much broader evidence base on which authenticity is based. It is through this process that the broader evaluation of authenticity links to humour because it is the audience that also determines the nature of a humorous comments. Alberts et al (1996) propose it is the receiver that determines whether a comment is light-hearted stress relief or veiled criticism. Humour forms part of that wider evidence base which includes all linguistic choices on which the audience's impression of authentic leadership are based.

Aggressive Comments – Pithy One-liners

Overview.

The combined tabular data shows that the number of affiliative comments was higher than those in the aggressive category. It also shows that by allowing dual categorisation and following a process of continual review the number of aggressive comments overtook affiliative ones. One of the reasons for this is that determination of intent and function of humour is made by the audience (Meyer 2000). Tremblay (2017) refers to the way high trust relationships can be used to mitigate the impact of

otherwise offensive humour which I propose translates to an evaluation of authenticity in the school staff meeting context. Tremblay shows that in some work-place cultures being the target of quite personally offensive comments is seen as a sign of acceptance into the group. The content could be offensive if seen in isolation. If the perceived intent is to include someone into a group and the comment is received positively even apparently offensive comments may have positive affect.

To gain an understanding about why this may happen in staff meetings I want to refer back to Joo's (1962) zones of language use in Fig. 2. (Literature Review). In this example of pithy one-liners the opening comment in the exchange is offered in a self-deprecating way. By saying that the last time they visited McDonalds they didn't understand the menu this teacher is both criticizing the nature of McDonalds' ordering process and opening themselves up to criticism. The comment was made by a teacher with a degree and many years' experience and thus it is reasonable to conclude that understanding a menu for a fast-food chain was well within their capabilities. They are both laughing at the world and their understanding of it. The reason that the exchange is categorised as aggressive is based upon the nature of the response. It does not follow the original humorous approach offered by the producer. Alberts et al. (1996) proposed that the receiver of a comment will determine positive or negative impact. In this example the reply, "*Who looks at the menu in McDonalds?"* removes McDonalds as one of the original targets. All of the criticism and humour is now aimed at the individual. Looking at how this particular example fits more broadly into the data this comment does not align within the "shared ways of engaging in doing things together'' (Wenger, 1998: 125) that constitute this community of practice's approach to humour.

An important element of this exchange is the possible misalignment of the production and reception intent. The first comment contained an element of self-criticism and the producer is aware that they exposed their vulnerability as well as criticized McDonalds. This responder focussed on the vulnerability of the individual making the comment aggressive. The laughter response for the first comment is communal and understanding whereas the laughter to the second comment appears harsher on the

recording.

Leader

Although the leader in this school was not directly involved in the exchange and the methodology did not allow for identifying individual laughter responses it is important to understand that the leader still has a role within this context. If a school leader is present during an event or exchange and they do not condemn it either directly or indirectly then it can become part of the culture of the organisation. Agotnes, Einarson and Hetland (2018), whilst not specifically referencing humour, show how avoidant leadership styles can create cultures in which confrontation can escalate. Applied to this specific context I propose that a leader being present in a meeting where aggressive pithy one-liners occur could give a signal that they are acceptable within the school even though the leader may not be responsible for their production. The leadership element relating to humour extends beyond the leader's own use of humour. I propose that an important aspect of the relationship between school leaders and humour is the styles of humour they allow to operate within their sphere of influence.

Follower

Moving on from the research of Holmes and Marra (2002) which shows the social connectivity of humour it is also possible to describe humour in terms of creating social dis-connectivity in this example. By laughing at a member of the group other group members risk the creation of factions aligned around humour use (Murata 2014). The laughter response which is loud and short in duration suggests that the participants didn't feel completely comfortable laughing at the staff member.

All participants in this school would have assessed their relationship with both parties and made their own decision as to whether the comment was presented or received as aggressive. Goodson and Walker's (1991) rapid calculations can be extended from the production into the reception elements of humour. Some of the team have determined that they will laugh in support of the aggressive comment. They may even have recognised its aggressive nature but their relationship with the producer of the comment may be stronger than the one they have with the target. Some of the

meeting participants though do not laugh. This may be as a result of either recognising the aggressive nature of the comment or having a closer relationship with the target. The way that humour hinges on relationships and perception is clear in this exchange and relates to both the production and reception elements.

Culture

Latemore (2017) describes the importance of dignified leadership communication in the establishment of a healthy and diverse culture. More broadly, allowing the use of aggressive pithy one-liners, even as a result of the avoidant leadership style of Agotnes, Einarson and Hetland (2018), could have long term implications for the conduct of school business and the establishment of this healthy and diverse culture. I want to reference this example with the social construction of humour and show that the lack of laughter by some of the meeting participants places organisational cultural development as the responsibility of all meeting participants. For Smircich (1983: 139), "workplace cultures revolve around the shared values and attitudes and the shared experiences that validate them". The decision to laugh (validate) or not laugh (invalidate) is as important as the decision to use or not use a pithy one-liner in determining organisational culture. The hierarchical position of the Head Teacher in setting school culture does not absolve other meeting participants of their responsibilities in this regard.

Authenticity

In determining authenticity in this example there are several relevant factors. Meyer's (2000) conclusion that "the audience or receiver of the message determines how it (humour) is interpreted and what actual function the humour use serves" suggests that only the target will determine whether the comment is offered authentically. However this comment should be seen in the context of authenticity evaluation being partly based on role expectation as well as the discoursal clues that are associated with the comment.

As discussed earlier the targets own comment is self-criticism. I have shown that my research did not contain the same level of aggressive responses found in other

research (Davis 2018). It therefore seems likely that the teacher in this particular setting would not have expected an aggressive response to their comment. Behaviourist advocates of authentic leadership would argue that simply because a comment is aggressive does not make it inauthentic. The counter argument, as shown in the literature review, relates to the differing authenticity of Margaret Thatcher and Nelson Mandela. Simply remaining true to one-self, (whichever self that may be) without considering the impact on the audience is not authentic leadership. The teacher who makes the comment, "Who looks at the menu in McDonalds?" appears to be responding in a way that does not take account of the audience when looked at alongside the contextual clues that surround it.

The Head Teacher's role is also worthy of note; as shown in the example about Year 6 video choices and defending nursery education, the head teachers became involved in the discussion by using humour to enact their leadership. In this example, which is a social discussion, the leader does not engage.

Aggressive Comments – Using Humour to Exert Influence

Overview.

The example in the Applied Methodology Chapter is a discussion as to whether Year R or Year 6 teachers are "working hardest". Whilst the specific topic may be irrelevant this exchange reveals the way a contentious topic can be approached by the different meeting participants. Immediately preceding this exchange is a general discussion about activities members of staff had been undertaking the previous day during their maths session. One member of staff had seen a big game of chase being played in the Nursery. The nursery teacher responds by saying.

Extract 11. Meeting 3 - Minute 4.35 (This phrase is contained within Extract 7. For the full text see above)
A.) Yes we run around and they chase me and sometimes I chase them and they love it, to be honest I love it as well. (laugh voice).

This reception teacher is clearly enjoying their work and I categorised this initial comment as self-enhancing. The teacher is laughing at the situation of running around

the nursery and also self – orientating the humour by laughing about the fact that they really enjoy playing chase with the children in the Nursery. The first comment that falls into the negative category comes from the Year 6 teacher who comments:

Extract 12. Meeting 3 - Minute 4.50 (This phrase is contained within Extract 7. For the full text see above.)

"*So we're in here doing fractions and that and you're just running... round... the nursery.* (Mock indignation.)"

The influence they are seeking on this occasion is to suggest that there is a greater value and benefit to young people in the work that they do than that of the Nursery teacher. This is picked up by another meeting participant who adds:

Extract 13. Meeting 3 - Minute 4.55 (This phrase is contained within Extract 7. For the full text see above.)

"*Playing at stuff."*

The leader enters the conversation with their own use of humour to exert influence. Setting this in the broader context of issues that impact Primary Schools, the leader should be aware of the long running debate about which year group works the hardest. They should also be aware of the complexities of Early Years education where a game of chase could be used to develop the essential building blocks of a child's future educational experience. Conversely they should be aware that in the sometimes test-driven curriculum culture that exists in Year 6 there can be a distrust of trying to establish long term learning behaviours when they are seen to be at the expense of short-term gains against external evaluations.

The context of it being a staff meeting and the school leader's understanding of the balance between educational excellence and external yardsticks gives this particular exchange far more meaning than simply discussing a game of chase. The leader comments:

Extract 14. Meeting 3 - Minute 5.00 (This phrase is contained within Extract 7. For the full text see above.)
"Are you offering to do Nursery next year David?"

which elicits group laughter.

The specific use of humour here is a good example of the face-saving and politeness theories of Holmes (2000). Views are confronted using humour to maintain the face needs of the contributors. This comment informs both the teacher and the group that teaching Early Years is more complex than some teachers recognise. The response of the Year 6 teacher continues the humour in the aggressive vein.

Extract 15. Meeting 3 - Minute 5.03 (This phrase is contained within Extract 7. For the full text see above.)
"I am"

This comment is an oblique challenge to the school leader. I think it fair to suggest that the Head Teacher in this school was not trying to establish who was teaching which class next year rather they were making the point that the Year 6 teacher did not understand the complexities of Nursery teaching.
The final comment in this exchange is from the leader:

Extract 16. Meeting 3 - Minute 5.05 (This phrase is contained within Extract 7. For the full text see above.)
"Duly noted everyone."

Here the use of humour to exert influence continues but the topic is different. The discussion is no longer about Early Years teaching, this exchange is now about hierarchical leadership as dominance. This leader makes it clear that they are responsible for allocating class teachers to specific year groups and when they come to do it next year the leader may well remember this exchange.

Leadership

I use this particular example to challenge Martin's (2003) view that the use of humour to interrupt and exert influence has a negative impact on the public sphere. In the example above the leader in this school used humour effectively to exert influence in two different ways. They make the point about the complexities of Early Years education and then remind both the teacher and the group of their position as leader and how they can use that position in allocating classes. I want to set those two uses in the context of the actions of the Nursery Teacher. Once the defence of Early Years education has been taken up the leader, the Nursery teacher who was the original target of the humour takes no further part in the conversation. The meeting participants in this school have an expectation about leadership behaviour which overrides the negative implications of using aggressive humour to exert influence. In this case I propose that the leader's use of this aggressive style humour has a positive impact in the public sphere because of the followers' expectations. To support that argument I want to look at the impact of this exchange on the group.

Follower

The staff team in this school became voyeurs to an exchange of views presented within a humorous discoursal frame. They witnessed the leader expressing their opinion and then reminding the teacher of their ability to allocate classes. They also saw the leader use humour to defend a member of the group targeted by other group members. Members of staff present in this meeting will observe the exchange and either form or re-affirm views relating to what Schnurr (2009) refers to as leadership identity expressed through discourse. But it is not just leadership identity that is exposed, the nature of other participants is revealed through their linked comments, laughter and other responses.

This particular example is a complex social and hierarchical exchange which contains elements of both affiliative and aggressive humour. In the tabular data chapter I have classified this example firmly within this category of aggressive humour use because the perceived intent of all participants is not to be affiliative, it is to exert influence. Both parties appear to use humour as a veil that prevents open confrontation whilst

ensuring their views are aired. Seeking cohesion is a subsidiary element to voicing their respective positions in what Pouthier (2017) suggests is the way that transactional and relational communication occurs simultaneously. What maintains the humour is the perceived authenticity of the participants and the agreement to continue in the communication styles developed within their specific context (Wenger 1998).

Business function

This exchange alters the topic under discussion. This change in direction aligns with Fairclough's (2015) view about a hierarchical leader's additional discoursal rites. In this example the discussion changed to consider whether all staff in this school appreciated the complexities of the Early Years curriculum. The leader also used this exchange as an opportunity to re-enforce their given hierarchical position. The discussion did not go back to Maths after this exchange as there appeared to be an acceptance within the staff meeting that the discussion was taken to a higher pedagogical level than simply talking about various Maths activities.

Authenticity

Impressions of authenticity may be evident in this exchange through the bringing together of two processes. Firstly it involves Sidania and Rowe's (2018: 623) view that authenticity is not determined by a simple evaluation of morality but, "It is more the case that the overlap between leaders' and followers' value systems leads to impressions of authenticity." But we can also see evidence of the evaluation of authenticity through the matrix at Fig. 1a above which includes historic, in the moment and preconceived role specific expectations. Whilst assigning intent is problematic (O' Driscoll 2013) there is evidence that the Year 6 teacher may be conforming to their role expectations. Primary Schools are heavily judged on the exam outcomes at Year 6 and this particular teacher is demonstrating a commitment to these exam outcomes that will be shared by many of their Year 6 colleagues and understood by most in the teaching profession. Evidence from other non-humorous exchanges in several meetings show a historic commitment to this view by the Year 6 teacher and the specific comments in this exchange align with that position. This gives

the Year 6 teacher responses the “impression of authenticity,” during this example.

Equally the Head Teacher creates Sidania and Rowe’s impression of authenticity through a similar process. They conform to their role expectation of Head Teacher in a church school in several ways: by asserting that there are higher ideals in education than simply passing exams, by defending a teacher publicly singled out for their practice and by using a humorous frame to gently admonish the Year 6 teacher. This in the moment exchange aligns with their historically expressed views which demonstrate a desire to balance the importance of providing a broad education and compliance with external yardsticks.

Whilst remaining conscious of Strahle’s (1993: 227), view that interactions "can be understood only with regard to the participants' specific relationships," it appears that both parties are able to maintain the humorous format of the exchange because they recognise the contemporaneous authenticity of the other.

Self-Defeating Humour

Overview

This was the least used of all humour styles with only three incidents classified during the fourteen hours of recordings in all the schools. As shown in the descriptors earlier in my research this category falls within the more negative side of humour use and is the opposing twin to self-enhancing humour. The example I selected came from a conversation relating to technology in which a teacher said.

Extract 17. Meeting 2 - Minute 2.30

The school is discussing innovative approaches to the teaching of Maths.

A, B = Teacher

B.) The next thing I want to talk about, and this is A’s speciality is erm, White Rose Maths.

A.) Unintelligible

B.) Do you want to tell everyone how you use it because you do use it to teach you Maths lessons don't you.

A = Erm, (pause) Every thirty-five years I try to come up with a new idea.

Pause

Someone mentioned why don't you look at it, there's no particular scheme, there's lots of problem solving, reasoning and all the Maths areas you have to cover in Year 4.

There is then a discussion between A and B regarding the appropriateness of The White Rose scheme.

This comment, every thirty-five years I try to come up with a new idea, stands alone as neither the build up to, nor the response following the comment are humorous.

Martin's classification of self-defeating humour as a having a negative impact upon the personal sphere is evident here but within this staff meeting I think it important to consider the impact on the public sphere as well. This staff team appears to understand that the person using the phrase is seeking to use humour by being self-critical however they do not find the comment funny and are therefore conflicted in their response. Any laughter or reaction to the comment does not appear to be in relation to the content of the phrase but rather an attempt by some members of the group to comply with what Butler (2015) suggests is socially expected behaviour of responding to an attempt at humour by either politely laughing or smiling.

Leader

In the context of a staff meeting that reaction conflict may become more complex when the hierarchical leader attempts to use humour that is overly negative and self-directed. By adding the hierarchical element into the relationship between a school leader and participants in the staff meeting the exchange does not just involve social considerations but also career and workplace elements (Meyer 2000). The impact on the group therefore is confusion as they navigate the different responses required by the leader, the group and their own appreciation of the humour of the comment.

Timperley (2011) describes staff meetings as the structure through which a given leader expresses their capabilities in terms of knowledge, relationships and expectations. It may be that the complexities of response required explains why comments classified in this category soon cease to be used within the staff meetings I recorded generally. That appears to be the case for this small sample here and further research is required to determine whether this is reflected in a wider range of school settings. In the comments competing for the floor category I showed how the response was a critical element of humour use. In this example I propose that responses over time may influence which categories of humour are accepted within individual communities of practice.

Authenticity

I have shown how humour links to the evaluation of authentic leadership because of its links to audience interpretation. Perhaps the humour style where this is most evident is self-defeating humour. In the example in which a teacher says that they come up with an idea every thirty-five years it is the audience perception that this is not genuine that defines the comment as self-defeating. As in the examples above the audience's perception based on their in the moment, historic and role expectations determine their response. In this case there is no laughter response and the conversation continues as if the comment had not been made. It is neither acknowledged by the other active speaker or by the audience.

What my research was unable to capture was whether the audience had a historic view of this particular teacher's use of this style of humour. If so the speaker does not appear to have an understanding of the impact of their words on the audience or if they do, they are not minded to change their approach in light of the audience reaction. Again if we accepted the behavioural approaches to authentic leadership of Northouse (2017) and George (2010) this teacher's approach could be seen as authentic because it aligns with their inner self. The issue here as raised by Tomkins and Nicholds (2017) is that there will always be questions about the nature of self and which particular self one is being true to when self-determining the authenticity of leadership. Rather than seeing this from a behavioural perspective the Gardner and

Avolio (1998) and Sidania and Rowe (2018) view that characteristics such as charisma and authenticity are far more about follower ascriptions and audience co-constructions are a more accurate explanation of what is happening in this exchange as evidenced by the response of other meeting participants.

6.5 A Review of Humour Reception

Introduction

In the Literature Review I have shown the range of responses to humour (Hay 2001) only one of which is laughter. Laughter is neither a necessary response to humour for humour to exist nor is it a random event unrelated to humour. Laughter sits in a space between the two and its precise usage is determined by the community in which it occurs. Within the communities that I researched both individually and collectively, laughter was the dominant response. The situated cultural norms which the schools had created individually had a commonality in their linking of humour and laughter. In acquiring the cultural norms of the individual communities (Marra 2004) participants would need to understand the role laughter played in their situated communicative processes.

I will now show the different ways that humour is received by the groups using the six-point reception scale from the Applied Methodology Chapter. I will suggest hypotheses as to why different categories of humour production may result in different responses by the meeting participants and if there are any implications for this for a school leader. I will suggest reasons why laughter for reasons other than simply finding something amusing may occur in a staff meeting as a response to humour production. This will build on Section 1 above by adding to the analysis concerning the relationship between leader, follower, context and authenticity in humour use.

Laughter response to Jointly Constructed Humour

The combined data for all schools shows that this style of humour was responsible for

the most laughter occurrences. In the response category 1-3 (light laughter by two or more participants) jointly constructed humour was responsible for three times as many incidents as any other style. Jointly constructed humour accounted for approximately the same number of incidents as all other humour styles combined. This outcome remained constant when the responses were broken down into whether the producer of the initial comment was the leader or other participant. The data also showed that this category had very low incidents of the negative response indicators of either no laughter or laughter only by the producer.

The laughter responses within this category of humour suggested a high degree of social connectivity occurring during the staff meeting (Butler 2015). Whether the humour is instigated by the leader or by another member of staff and then built upon by other participants the laughter response appeared to have a communal affect. This activity reinforces the ties that exist within the group and may assist the group in functioning as a cohesive body. The work of Turan and Reinhart (2018) and Haynes, Suckley and Nunnington. (2017) demonstrate the importance of this social connectivity in the workplace. My reception evidence here adds to the hypothesis that staff meetings play a key role in the socialisation of teachers at work.

The linking of this social connectivity to increased productivity made by West, Hoff and Carlson (2016) and Torretta (2014) may be happening in this example but for the purposes of my research I think it is a step too far to establish this outcome as intentional. The first step is to determine intent in humour use concerning social connectivity, to make a subsequent assertion that the intended outcome of that social connectivity is improved productivity seems stretched. It does not take in the full range of reasons why humans engage in social connectivity. Nor does it consider Härtel and Ganegoda's (2008) view that perceived non-genuine interaction by leadership can significantly damage employee relationships. My proposal is that a leader using laughter to create social cohesion to impact on productivity would be seen as inauthentic by followers and thus not achieve their intended outcome (Collison 2002).

One area not captured in my research was whether there was a factional element to the laughter recorded within this category or laughter being used as an indicator of support to a person or viewpoint as put forward by Schaefer (2013). My interpretation from listening to the specific data for this humour category is that there isn't enough evidence to support this view. The responses within this category sounded genuine and benign in their tone. When I examine subsequent categories there is evidence in some particular examples that suggests laughter is used as an indicator of belonging to a particular faction (Schaefer 2013) or as a signaller of agreement to a particular view as identified by Scott et al. (2014).

Laughter Response to Positive Comments

Overview

Of the 15 responses recorded in this category three are in the, "Laughter only by the producer" and all of these are when the comment is initiated by the leader. On every occasion when a positive humorous comment is made by another participant there is at least a level 1-3 response from meeting participants. This data may suggest that where a leader employs a targeted positive comment it may cause a degree of confusion in meeting participants that results in no response. There is a measurable difference in response data when a leader uses this style of humour and when it is used by other meeting participants. Whilst Rogerson-Revell (2007) posits that laughter may be more attributable to embarrassment or nervousness I propose that the context of the staff meeting may change this assessment.

To help understand this change I will refer to research of Dunbar and Mehu (2008) who showed how the hierarchy that exists within a meeting played a role in the laughter response. The leader of the meeting may offer the comment as positive humour but the lack of response may come from their hierarchical difference. This style of humour is described as affiliative and personal. By being singled out by the leader the recipient of the comment is now identified as being different to other group members who have not been singled out for such a comment. When the leader uses a targeted humorous comment in a staff-meeting they are crossing the blurred boundaries of Joo's (1962) zones of interaction which could cause the confusion of

response. If the recipient of the comment is comfortable with the school leader relating within the personal zone and does exhibit a response in the 1-3 category the group may also identify the change of zonal interaction. Palermo et al. (2019) show the impact of favouritism at work and the lack of response to leader comments here may be a result of perceived favouritism by the staff team. Meeting participants will evaluate whether the leader interacts with all staff members in this way or whether targeted comments are evidence of some members of staff relating to their school leader on a personal level whilst others do so on an only professional one.

This is an important area where the leader/follower relationship and context of the staff meeting is central to understanding the impact of humour use. This humour category is described as both affiliative and positive. In an interaction between two equals my evidence shows this to be the case. It may be possible to suggest that were the leader to use this approach in a personal conversation with a staff member outside the formal staff meeting the response may be entirely different. However the combined response data suggests that witnessing an interaction on this personal level, within a staff meeting that contains hierarchical relationships, appears to confuse the response of both the recipient and other staff members.

Laughter Response to Self-Enhancing Humour

Evidence in the Tabular Data Chapter shows that of the thirty-seven responses recorded against this category of humour twenty-eight were in response to a leader's comment. Of these twenty-eight responses thirteen were in the response category, "Laughter only by the producer." This combined evidence from all schools may suggest that there is a degree of confusion about how to respond authentically to the leader's use of self-directed humour. This style of humour is positive and self-directed so will include the use of self-effacing humour; a behaviour that Hoption, Barling and Turner (2013) identify as being a positive leadership characteristic. This combined data shows that participants responded at a lower level than the leader. Gkorezis and Bellou (2016) show how followers exercise caution as to whether they should laugh at the leader when a leader tells a humorous story in which they do not present themselves in a particularly good light. I further suggest that the responses I recorded

are based on the follower's perception of the leader's authenticity (Westwood and Johnston 2012). In my data the hierarchical nature of the relationships within the staff meeting seem to indicate that laughing at the leader is seen as an activity that may contain a level of risk which some or all participants do not wish to accept. Even when the leader is offering themselves as the opportunity to engage with humour the response can be muted. As well as the relationship driver for this response there may be perceptions about the leader's use of narrative that impact on response data.

Narrative Leadership

There is a body of research relating to a leader's use of narrative, (Denning 2007, Shaw 2010) which may also offer an explanation as to why staff meeting participants do not laugh as much as their leader in response to a humorous story. Meeting participants will be aware that a narrative told by their leader can sometimes have a message or point connected to it. When the leader uses humour it may be that participants are still seeking the leadership message within the story and not engaging with the humorous elements. It is this knowledge of narrative use as leadership strategy that becomes the dominant element influencing the response. As the story concludes and it transpires that the leader was simply offering a funny story to the group the moment of humour has passed. It is possible that there was simply a smiling acknowledgement that maintains the social relationship. In this example it is the position of leader and the followers' perception of leader in the context of the staff meeting that are significant factors in the reception of humour.

Laughter Response to Comments Competing for the Floor

This style of humour is generally seen as negatively impacting the public sphere. In my combined data from all schools there were four recorded responses, three when the leader was the producer of the comment and one from another participant. All four responses were in the 4-7 response category. (Mid-level laughter, more members of staff involved and the meeting flow is briefly disrupted.) The response data for this style of humour shows that it elicits some of the highest laughter responses within the staff meeting particularly when used by the leader. This may suggest that during a staff meeting participants recognise when a challenge or attempt to dominate is

taking place. To understand why this may be the case I want to briefly refer to the research in the literature review by Caron (2002) in which laughter was shown as being an evolutionary event within primates that allowed for group members to groom the dominant members without physical touch.

Laughter in response to a leader seeking to dominate the floor with humour may be a signalling by group members about aligning with individuals or expressed ideologies (Scott et al. 2014). My definition of a leader within a staff meeting is about the given leadership position rather than the distributed leadership defined through discourse which occurs within a social group. In the exchange where the instigator is not the given leader the response is equally high. My evidence suggests that in particular exchanges in individual schools we may be seeing a challenge between the given and assumed leadership roles within the staff meeting. The preferred person or ideology is revealed by which comments elicit the highest levels of laughter response.

In the context of the staff meeting the leader holds additional hierarchical discoursal rites that can be used if they start to recognise that they are losing face in the humorous exchanges. They simply change the frame in which the discussion takes place. Such an act may secure their leadership role but may equally diminish their perceived authentic self. Pound (2011) shows how laughter in a group setting is an indicator of social identity and this may also suggest membership of different factions within larger groups. The loud laughter in response to comments competing for the floor may be evidence of group members within the staff meeting revealing their positionality by supporting their own combatant in the exchanges.

The school leader will need to be aware of these exchanges even when they are not involved. From a group dynamic perspective the school leader should view these exchanges as an indication of how groups are emerging within the staff compliment. They may also be able to identify early signs of bullying which can often be hidden within these competitive humour exchanges. We know from the work of Endvik and Emstad (2017) that the socialisation of NQT's is an important factor in their impact on student outcomes and future professional lives. There is some evidence that NQT's

faced with the challenge of speaking out against a culture they do not think is right or moderating their views to maintain their social position will largely tend towards the socially acceptable response. Laughing in support of a colleague engaged in a humorous yet combative exchange may help an NQT or any team member to find or establish their place in a group but it may also have longer term detrimental impact on the staff team as a whole. Some of that factionalism may be arranged along gender lines. Schnurr (2009) identified gender difference in humour use. My research did not record this as an issue which may be as a result of the limited number of male teachers working in Primary School education. An additional piece of research would be required to see whether the number of comments competing for the floor and the number of responses would be higher if the leaders and participants had a gender balance that equated to the general population rather than the female gender balance found in the Primary School staff meetings I recorded. It is an important issue that requires further exploration particularly in relation to the development of organisational culture.

Laughter Response to Pithy One-Liners

The combined response data for all schools for this humour category shows the hierarchical leader uses pithy one-liners on eighteen occasions. On ten of those occasions they are the only one producing recordable laughter. When this production category is used by other participants on thirteen occasions the biggest single response category is none. When the data for both the leader and the other meeting participant is combined the data shows that this category also recorded over half of the total number of 8-10 responses which is described as loud laughter by most or all participants which interrupts the business of the meeting.

When analysing the response data combined from all schools I tried to remain mindful of the style descriptors of the humour itself. Pithy one-liners are the negative twin of the positive comments style both of which target an individual. I also had to remain cognisant of the subjective boundaries between the different categories. When a leader uses a pithy one-liner directed at an individual there could be several outcomes for both the leader and the targeted staff member dependent upon the individual

school context. Plester (2016) shows how some incredibly unkind comments directed at an individual can be a signifier of group inclusion to that individual and therefore feel very positive for them regardless of content. The reverse may also be the case. The pithy one-liner may be evidence of a possible bullying culture where individuals within a staff meeting are humiliated by the use of acerbic comments that seek power and influence rather than cohesion.

If the intention of the leader is to use pithy one-liners to signify inclusion then the leader's use of accompanying laughter may be important. The "laughter only by producer" signified to the group and the individual that the leader offered this as an inclusive comment in an authentic attempt at cohesion. However that same laughter can also be used to disguise intent. Again it is the followers' perception of leader authenticity within the site-specific discourse that is the important element in determining the response to this humour style (Meyer 2000). In the Tabular Data Chapter this is one of the reasons that in the second categorisations of humour style a significant number of pithy one-liners could be reclassified as positive comments and vice versa.

Leader and Follower Response.

The combined data from all schools showed different responses to this category occasioned by other participants and particularly the number of times when there was no laughter from any of the staff meeting participants. This is different to the response data relating to the leader where there was some level of laughter recorded against every occasion. Other participants do not appear bound by the same expectations as the leader within a staff meeting. Jones and Kriflik (2006) show that followers do not have to conform to the same levels of behaviour we demand of our leaders. When another participant uses a pithy one-liner they did not appear to feel the same compulsion to offer it with the moderating effects of laughing themselves. This lack of moderating laughter led to these comments being classified as aggressive.

This also has implications for the response data. In a meeting in which a staff member is highlighted by the leader using a pithy one-liner that staff member may feel a degree of compulsion to laugh in response based on their hierarchical relationship and the

site-specific expectation. This compulsion to use laughter to maintain hierarchical cohesion does not appear to extend to the other meeting participants. Where pithy one-liners are received as being more acerbic than humorous then the target did not appear to feel the same level of requirement to respond in a socially or organisationally coherent way. There may be social pressure to respond to a peer that can be resisted by the target but not when combined with the hierarchical pressure brought about by the context of the staff meeting and the involvement of the leader/follower relationship.

The extremes in terms of response data show that this style of humour presents a risk for staff meeting participants. In some schools and in specific moments it may be met by silence and in others may cause the producer of the comment to increase their social standing within the group. Beckman et al. (2007) show how the ability to make others laugh within a social group can be linked to self-worth and group positionality. If we relate that to processes within a staff meeting the pithy one-liner may increase a staff members' standing by creating a sense of community through shared laughter. However these comments are usually targeted at individuals and the positive/negative impact evaluation on the target may be different to the positive/negative impact on the group. That complex evaluation of intended and possible impact and the risk/reward assessment of each comment may only take milliseconds in the mind of the producer but may have lasting impact on the targeted individual.

Laughter Response to Exerting Influence Using humour

The combined data for all schools relating to this humour category shows thirty-two recorded responses. Of those, twenty-six were as a result of comments instigated by the hierarchical leader and of those twenty-six, thirteen were "laughter only by the producer" (leader). We know from the work of Fairclough (2015) that the use of language is the principal leadership tool. My data shows that humour was used to convey a leadership message or to exert influence on many occasions in the individual schools. In terms of combined frequency data this production category was used by the leader approximately twice per meeting and for other participants once every two

meetings.

We know from the work of Mesmer-Magnus, Glew and Vishwevaran (2012) that laughter has moderating effect on conversation. The combined data shows that in a staff meeting the leader appears to add this moderating effect of laughter to their comments when they are exerting influence. The fact that they are the leader in the meeting and could simply use the discoursal rites associated with their given position to exert that influence appears to be subordinate to their decision to use humour. By using a laugh voice and laugh tokens when exerting influence the leader appears to be appealing to the social connectivity within the meeting rather than the hierarchical one to achieve their aims. The staff meetings recorded in Primary Schools here often only had between ten and twenty participants and usually contained the majority of the staff team. They play an important social role in the life of the school (Haynes, Suckley and Nunnington 2017) as well as communicating key leadership messages. This blurring of transactional and relational communication (Rogerson-Revell 2007) relating to the conduct of the meeting seems to extend to the communication choices of the participants.

The impact of using humour to exert influence in the staff meeting on other participants created a degree of confusion in how to respond. For the reasons given in the methodology I did not video record participants in individual schools so I cannot attest as to whether the comments were acknowledged in a non-verbal way. The combined data for all schools does show with some certainty that the laughter response of other staff members was at a lower level than the leader on at least half of the occasions when this humour style was used. The second highest category of recorded responses was in the 1-3 area where there is light laughter from a few participants that does not interrupt the flow of the meeting. The nine responses here suggest that the other participants recognise that the leader is both exerting influence and trying to do it in a way that ensures the social connectivity of the group is maintained. As in the production side of this style of humour there is evidence of the actual and perceived authenticity as important elements in determining a response to the humour.

Laughter Response to Self-Defeating Humour

Responses to this category of humour are so low that any analysis would be subject to accusations of conjecture. The three recorded responses are in the no laughter, only by producer and 1-3 categories. We saw in the production element of this analysis section that other researchers found that this category can create confusion in meeting participants when a leader uses it. The combined response data in my research for this category does not add anything to that analysis.

6.6 Affiliative and Aggressive Humour Use

Introduction

I will now consider the combined response data from all the schools to the two different categories of humour defined as aggressive and affiliative. The bringing together of affiliative and aggressive responses enables the analysis to link Martin's theories of humour categorisation and Fairclough's theories of language use in a way that shows leader impact on both the public and personal spheres. This section will look at the responses comparatively to improve understanding of the impact of the two categories on the individual school context, the participants and the leader themselves. The analysis will seek to establish whether there is a difference between a hierarchical leader's use of the affiliative and aggressive categories and other meeting participants. This approach will further understanding of how both the production and reception of humour are important elements of humour use by staff meeting participants.

Affiliative Humour

In the staff meetings recorded in all schools there were fifty-six laughter responses to the given leader using affiliative styles of humour. Although twenty of these were when they were the only person laughing the majority of the comments elicited a laughter response from meeting participants. There were forty-nine recorded occasions of laughter in response to affiliative humour being used by other meeting participants. Only seven of these responses were laughing only by the producer with the remainder being in the 1-3, 4-7 and two in the 8-10 category of response. The

data shows that the leader is responsible for half the affiliative humour used within the staff meetings.

This may suggest that the leaders I recorded wanted to set a positive tone and valued the creation of social and personal cohesion enough to continually use affiliative humour in their meetings. The data also shows that there is a different response to the leader's use of affiliative humour and its use by other staff members. One reason for this difference is the perceptions about the position of leader within the staff meeting. Research into the leader's use of language is extensive, Fairclough (1995), Sarros et al. (2014), Denning (2007) Schnurr (2009), all show how a leader uses language to enact their leadership and construct their identity as leader. When a leader uses humour in a staff meeting it may not be accepted as a genuine attempt to engage with staff at that personal level based on both site specific and hierarchical factors. Their position as leader may invoke a reaction in other meeting participants that is based upon a hierarchical relationship rather than a social one.

When affiliative humour is used by the other participants there appears to be no confusion of motive. Humour appears to be being used between staff members as it would be in a social setting, to create group cohesion, mutual satisfaction and positive feelings towards group members (Holmes and Marra 2002). The data shows that it is not the category of humour or indeed the use of humour that is the most important factor in how comments are perceived. As we saw in the research of Roberts and Wilbanks (2012) in the literature review for something to be considered humorous then the humour must be the dominant element. In some of the staff meetings I recorded we begin to see that a determining factor in the response a comment attracts appears to be the perceived authenticity of the person making the comment. The data is strongly suggestive of the conclusion that the leader's use of affiliative humour is not always accepted as authentic in terms of social connection whereas it is when used by other meeting participants. If affiliative humour use is problematic what of aggressive humour?

Aggressive Humour

Aggressive and affiliative humour are used by the leader at very similar rates; fifty-six times for affiliative and fifty for aggressive. The data shows that other participants used the aggressive categories to a much lesser degree than they did affiliative ones. For the leader the ratio of affiliative to aggressive is approximately 1:1 whilst for other participants the ratio is approximately 4:1. This is concerning when seen in the light of Pundt and Herrmann's (2015) research which shows how the aggressive use of humour by leaders reduces the team's ability to meet organisational goals. The combined response data for all schools for the aggressive categories appears to follow a similar pattern to the affiliative ones whereby approximately half of the responses to the leader's use of aggressive humour categories are laughter only by them. The biggest single response category for other participants is none. Given the size of the data set it would be possible to create an argument that the use of aggressive humour accompanied by a laugh voice or their own laughter is evidence of nothing more than the personal choice of the leaders in the individual settings that I chose. This though does not fit with my definition of hierarchical leader. I did not identify the Head Teacher as the leader for the purposes of this research. The designation of the leader of the staff meeting for the purposes of my research was the person whose behaviour identified them as being the leader. Behaviours such as setting the agenda, controlling the conversation and closing items for discussion were considered in the leader's identification rather than knowledge about who held the given title of leader (Kelly, Iszatt-White and Rouncefield 2006).

Understanding the combined response data to aggressive humour by leaders requires a reminder of the earlier discussion relating to styles of aggressive humour. Whilst there are three aggressive styles in my typology the two that are used most by the leader are pithy one-liners and using humour to exert influence. According to Martin (2013) these two aggressive categories impact on the individual and public sphere respectively and my data suggests that the leader may be using humour to both exercise and moderate their authority. Leaders in all the schools appeared to do this in relation to individual members of staff and either the direction of travel of a particular argument or a group of people who may be opposing a direction. The leader

had to be cognisant of their different relationships with individuals and the staff team as a whole as well. This conflict in leader behaviour appeared to occur when they wanted to confront or oppose a direction of travel or ideology and also maintain a social connection. What occurs in the staff meeting more broadly is humour use to avoid open conflict even if that humour style is aggressive because of the leader/follower authentic and inauthentic interplay.

6.7 Conclusion

This understanding of selective examples of humour use taken from the different schools combined with an overview of the affiliative and aggressive styles begins to reveal key elements of understanding the role humour may perform in Primary School staff meetings. The leader/follower relationship are important in both production and reception data. Perceived authenticity and the contextual understanding of each individual school also play a role in the complex exchanges that form part of discoursal leadership activity. I now want to continue to address the research questions by looking at the role humour may play in enabling the operation of school business.

Chapter 7

7. Humour Use Categories

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 provides a tabular overview of the humour categories and Chapter 6 presents an analysis of examples, taken from different schools, of those categories. Whilst organisational cultural development will take place in-situ, each school developing its own unique culture, there were some elements of humour use which appeared common to all schools.

An understanding of leader/follower relationship, authenticity and site-specific context are emerging as a way to gain a better insight into humour use in Primary School staff meetings. Those elements also combine to give a better understanding of how humour is used as part of the discoursal interaction of that meeting. In this Chapter I will review the way that humour is used more broadly in staff meetings and offer some general categories into which that usage fits. The importance of this process is that it shows the practical application in specific schools of the relationship matrix that surrounds humour in individual settings. I will then propose some key themes that emerge from that humour use.

I will show how humour can be an effective communication frame for a staff meeting and propose six areas in which it was used. The areas are establishing a discoursal culture, conflict management, creating a safe place for contentious discussion, emotional release, reducing scrutiny and enabling control. The individual schools determined the frequency and importance of each area through their negotiated interactions. I will further show that humour use in the staff meetings I recorded could be evidence of a more broadly applicable deliberate choice made by all participants in the production and reception of humour to exercise leadership through dialogue in Primary Schools. I will show how this links Fairclough's (2015) categories of language and power, Denning's (2007) theories on the use of leader narrative and Watson and

Drew's (2017) theories on humour being used to exert influence in meetings. The chapter will conclude by considering key themes that have emerged from those categories.

7.2 Establishing a Discoursal Culture

We know from social scientists such as Butler (2015), Billig (2005) and Mesmer-Magnus et al. (2018) that humour plays a key role in the social construction of groups. Indicators of factions, insiders and outsiders, acceptance may all be evidenced by the role humour plays in a meeting. Holmes and Marra (2002), Milligan (2016) and Tremblay (2017) recognise the importance of insider/outsider identity in the workplace as revealed by humour use. The data I have collected though moves on from that research and further suggests that this socialisation serves specific purposes within a staff meeting and by using humour as a reminder of our social connectivity to in-group the leader may be responsible for both intended and unintended outcomes.

The following sections of this chapter will suggest reasons as to why humour may be used within generic situations. However during the recordings it became apparent that there was evidence in some schools that humour was being used to avoid those situations occurring in the first place. The use of humour prior to or at the onset of a discussion or as part of the discoursal norms of a particular organisation may be an attempt to establish a safe framework or culture in which discussion can take place. This outcome may or may not be deliberate but by establishing a safe space for debate the leader appears to be using humour to remind staff of their social connectivity. By doing so they may to be trying to prevent situations occurring rather than using humour to diffuse them once they have. In the example below the leader is introducing a topic about rewriting the behaviour policy.

Extract 18. Meeting 4 - Minute 81.35

L = Leader. A and B = Teacher.

The school is reviewing the School behaviour Policy and gets to a section called, "Consequences". The Head Teacher reads out the word Consequences which is

followed by a seven second pause.

L.) You know, this is the bit that parents will want to know.

B.) Hmm

L.) You know what happens when they don't behave, this is probably the

B.) Hmm

L.) I mean there isn't a particular order there, I mean they are just erm a random list of things that could potentially happen, aren't they?

Teachers then begin commenting on the individual consequences.

A*.) I mean you've got loss of school disco.*

B.) Yea I was just looking at that.

L.) Why are we having that there.

C.) What's a behaviour modification programme, that sounds like electric shock treatment.

Laughter

L.) I'd love to see Social Services get involved for behaviour, I can't get them involved for bad behaving parents. (Laugh voice)

B.) And we don't send them home at lunchtime really do we.

L.) By writing them in there, as a parent, I would be wanting to know at what stage, you know are you going to be calling the health professionals or starting on the modification programme or

B.) Yes

L.) You know you are tying yourself down to very specific things there whereas a statement you know like an example, you could give an example. You know we are a team and we work together, we support each other, you know it goes back to the ethos behind it rather than your parents will be getting a letter tonight and you'll be banned from the next school disco. You know it's not quite... (Laughs)

L.) *I'd like to be banned from the school disco*

B.) Yea bad behaviour from staff

L.) Yea, how do I do that, where do I go? So I am suggesting we take all that out, lovely.

The staff continue to read the policy.

L.) I would like to put things in here about the sanctuary, you know to turn it around to the positive. We support children who struggle not just ban them from playtime.

A.) By giving them responsibility.

L.) Yeah

A.) Them taking responsibility, designing their own clubs.

The staff team continue their discussion on the behaviour policy.

Behaviour policies can be contentious discussions in staff meetings. This tension between leadership and staff members can be attributed to who is responsible for which elements (Braun et al. 2010). In my example the Head teacher in this school decided to introduce this topic with a comment about their school disco. This approach was then continued by other staff meeting participants which showed that they also recognised the potential contentiousness of the topic. All parties used affiliative elements of humour as an avoidance of possible future conflict. The recorded conversation had the sense of being, consciously or otherwise, an attempt to use humour to establish a cohesive starting point. The response of other meeting participants is crucial in that they accept the offer and respond in similar fashion. Compared to the humour example within the aggressive category it is the acceptance or not of the offer to converse humorously that made the exchange appear aggressive rather than the content of the comment itself. Whilst a leader may decide to initiate a framework for discussion by using affiliative humour other staff meeting participants can alter that approach in their response. One of the fundamental principles of communication is that it has both productive and receptive elements (Kotler and Keller 2012). Within a staff meeting in which humour is offered we can see how both elements are important in establishing the discussion framework. In this example the leader offered the opportunity to create a safe space for discussion and this was accepted by the team.

Humour was used in a staff meeting approximately every 2 minutes 30 seconds. This frequency, both combined and reflected in the individual data for each setting, shows that humour is a significant part of the discourse that takes place in all staff meetings I recorded. The positioning of humour at the start of what could be a contentious discussion suggests that school leaders may use humour to pre-empt the impact of contentious discussion on the business function of their meeting. Fairclough (2015)

and Sarros et al (2012) show the importance of language for leadership processes such as topic formulation. Going further I would suggest that my research demonstrates school leaders may use humour to establish a non-confrontational culture in which discussion can take place. The leader in this school used their position to set both the topic and the discoursal frame.

7.3 Managing Conflict

Even though a leader may have tried to establish a framework for discussion designed to avoid conflict that conflict may still occur. There are several examples in meetings four and seven, where the leader in one school uses an aggressive humour approach to manage a conflict situation. We saw in the example of the Early Years debate the way that the leader used humour aggressively to exert influence and did so in a way that managed the conflict and maintained the equilibrium of the staff meeting. The conflict examples I recorded often took the form of a leader recognising that a staff meeting participant had not carried out an instruction or followed a policy. Rather than confront them directly the leader uses humour which de-escalates any tension in the situation whilst still making their point. As an example:

Extract 19. Meeting 7 - Minute 14.35

L= Leader. A and B = Teacher

The staff team are discussing using the IT system to push email notifications to them to remind them about when various reports are due.

A.) Another thing I was going to say was that at the end of that week the mid-term reports are due.

L.) I was going to say that, its on my list.

A.) If we switch or do we need to switch the education file because that will tell me everyone's report who has come through.

L.) I like that idea personally.

B.) Have some people done them.

A.) I think they have, you know there is curriculum and then in curriculum you have that curriculum coordinators report that you are supposed to do for your subject.

B.) And you save it under your curriculum name.

L.) *But you've done yours haven't you Mary.*

Mary) Mine *No no I haven't touched it yet.*

L) *There you go Mary we thought we would just draw attention to that for you,* (laugh voice) *named and shamed.*

B.) Sorry , I didn't mean to, I thought you had done yours.

Mary) No, no no last years.

B.) There are things that are blank already so that we be good, I wouldn't mind notifications for that so that would tell me where to look and that.

The staff then discuss the technical aspects of uploading the files to the shared area on the system.

This is different to the research of Anderson (2005) who suggests that humour is used in the workplace to *resolve* conflict. I have deliberately used the term *manage* because the context of the staff meeting and the leader follower relationship means that the conflict is still there. Humour allows the conflict to be addressed in a less combative way enabling a face-saving effect (Hargie 2018). In the example above the leader has still made the point that Mary has not complied with a leadership request. To address this conflict directly would change the tone of the meeting and may negatively impact the relationship between leader and follower. The leader in this school has elected to use an aggressive humour style to manage the conflict.

I want to build on from the work of Watson and Drew (2017) on the use of humour in meetings to show that it is not only the production of humour but also the reception of humour that the leader can use to manage conflict situations. As an example in one school:

Extract 20. Meeting 4 - Minute 70.57

L= Leader. A B and C = Teacher.

The staff team are discussing the behaviour policy and the Head Teacher is going through each aim of the policy and leading a discussion about whether it should be

kept, modified or discarded.

L.) Jane and I were discussing earlier, not about the behaviour policy specifically but about our individual approach to children that is the heart of our school. It is that recognition that we are building up relationships with individuals, we are teaching individuals, we are not teaching circles, triangle and squares we are teaching individual children and therefore we will treat behaviour in the same way.

The staff then discuss individual aims of the policy and several are removed.

L.) Its going to be a really cut down policy we could do it on the back of a stamp. (Laughs)

A.) *What you were saying earlier about all stakeholders model the behaviour. You think it should say all parties involved are expected to model the behaviour policy?*

L.) *No I think that's good*

An ongoing discussion within schools and the broader education sector is the extent to which the school or central policy should determine how teachers behave in their free time (Grund, Brassler and Fries 2016). During the exchange below staff members used an affiliative humour style to address the topic.

Extract 20. Continued.

A: *When you're at your Christmas party? (laughter signifying disbelief)*

B: *Even at your Christmas party.*

A: *What still upholding our school values? (Laughing) (wording changed to prevent school identification.)*

B*: I didn't mean you personally I meant all stakeholders*

C*: John's feeling guilty now cos he thinks you did. (Group laughter)*

B: *Well I'm thinking what does he do at our Christmas parties. (Rising laugh voice)*

L: *That mini youth games thing got really wild at one point.*

Leader: *No - that consistency from adults is important and er actually I do think that should be an aim of the policy so that people read it and behave in the same way*

regardless of your class or where you work.

L.) Erm now lets look at the values bit, friendships gone, wisdoms in, now I would like us to produce those rules for around the school and use them in worship over the next few weeks if you are happy to leave me with that. I don't think it will be vastly different but erm I do think our rules do need to include some and I may want to change the wording a little bit. Now does anyone have anything in those school rules or values that you have seen that you want to change.

The staff team then discuss their values.

Although the leader comment is not aggressive in tone there is no offer of laughter from the leader and all humorous comments from the other meeting participants stop immediately. The power imbalance that gives additional discoursal rites to the hierarchical leader in a staff meeting means that they are responsible for the both the topics that are allowed for discussion and whether humour discourse is appropriate. In the example above the leader appears to have a different view to other staff meeting participants as to whether teacher's behaviour at the Christmas party should be subject to policy interference. I suggest the example in this school shows how the influence that Watson and Drew (2017) refers to and the "enforcing explicitness" that Fairclough (2015) describes are combined in the leader's refusal to continue the humour. Not only does the leader express their view and manage the conflict of views they do so by changing the discoursal frame. In terms of managing conflict more broadly the school leader may use both the production of humour and their own reception of humour to determine the way in which conflict is managed during a staff meeting.

7.4 Creating a Safe Space for Contentious Discussion

Frequently in research this use of humour is usually attributed to meeting participants who want to raise something with their leader without openly confronting them. Butler (2015) describes this as maintaining a cynical distance from management. As a communication process it sits between establishing a culture around discussion and managing conflict. It is the point in the discussion when opposing views are being

made known using humour to avoid a conflict situation. The conversation is no longer seeking to establish a culture because it has progressed to discussing the topic but it is not yet in conflict. An example of a meeting participants establishing a safe place occurs in Meeting 1.

In the example below the pupils have undertaken a survey to decide what they would like for a school pet and presented results as a tally.

Extract 21. Meeting 1 - Minute 58.03

A), B), C), D) E) are teachers and support staff. L) is the leader

The children in the school have undertaken a survey on their favourite animal and the staff are discussing the different schools in the area that have animals.

A) *At my sister's school they have chickens that they have but the parents have to come in at the weekend and they cook with ... the eggs and that.*

Loud group laughter

B) *The chickens*

C) *We thought you were going to say the chickens*

L) *We've got lamb one week, chicken the next, maybe a cow?*

D) *We could have chickens if someone could explore that option.*

B) *Oh horses as well*

C) *Yes horses*

D) *Be interesting to see what they come back and say*

L) I was going to say -let's just see how this one pans out. (Tonal clues indicate they are not keen)

A) (Questioningly) *But a dog definitely out of the ..*

L – Loud Laughter

B) *I'd have a dog … an allergy free dog.*

C) *I'd definitely have a dog*

D) *I'd take it home*

The leader then uses humour to interrupt the growing possibility of the staff thinking that a school dog is a realistic proposition.

L) (Laugh voice) *Did you want the staff to do a tally as well?*

Group laughter

D) *We are all about sharing aren't we*

L) *Mary, get a picture up on the wall and you know let's start …*

Some staff members now return to discussing practical possibilities of having a dog. D) had expressed a willingness to take the dog home.

C) to D) *Would your partner let you have a dog?*

A) *My nephew's kids have got um …*

D) *The only problem with having a dog is that we are out of the house a lot of the time but if it came to it … if it could come to school with me … could that…*

A) *Their headteachers got a dog but it's a school dog …that she takes home at the weekends.*

D) *What a lovely head teacher.*

Loud group laughter

The tone of comment suggests that D) feels that if they had a "lovely Head Teacher" then the school would have a dog. The loud laughter by both the staff team and the leader evidence that they understand the double meaning of the comment

L- *Listen, you've got one that can't even look after a tortoise ... and then my mother - in-law kebabbed the budgie, she's crawling around the floor in her stilettos and I will leave the rest to your imagination.*

Loud group laughter

L.) The police haven't tracked us down yet, we've got a bit of history in our family.

Group laughter.

L.) The cats still OK though.

A.) So the children will be coming to you and asking for votes so if you could you know.

B.) Two quick things for next week, Year 6 are going to the cinema to see Fantastic Mr Fox freebie trip. The letters should come home tomorrow.

The staff then discuss the logistical arrangements of getting the children to the cinema.

Both sides are equally effective in conveying their message. The messages conveyed within this exchange appear to be that staff in this school would like a dog and the head teacher does not. This alternative communication recorded here uses humour to create the safe space for contentious discussion that maintains the social cohesion of the school.

Holmes and Stubbe (2003) describe the way that humour creates a mediating process between power and politeness. In my research the leader in this school appeared to choose this mediation of power on several occasions even though their position as school leader would suggest this was unnecessary. This was not a follower using humour to challenge a leadership view but a leader moderating their leadership language in a polite way. The leader appeared to use this approach to create their own safe space in which to express their views. In the example below the leader in a different school makes a point about the accountability framework using their own laughter to apparently soften the message.

Extract 22. Meeting 5 - Minute 96.15

L = Leader. Betty = SLT member

The Leader is giving a monologue on the school expectations associated with being a curriculum leader.

L.) You know, is your subject one that is being updated, so if you are keen to go on there and its not we can create other versions can't we Betty.

Betty.) Yeah

L.) You can look at it and are you taking that data and looking at it and if you are a subject leader you may look at it and ask if there is a day this term where I can pull my subject across the school so its do you know if we are a successful school in the teaching of your subject area. That's the last box and to evidence that there is a sheet you will be a bit more familiar with and the evidence on the other side. And please remember this is teaching standards. This isn't about me saying you know we talked about the children going over and above didn't we. There's a lot where we can put ongoing but actually in your teaching standards this is your contribution to the wider school community, its number eight on there and this is you as a subject lead ensuring that your subject is being where it needs to be in the school.

L.) (Cont.) *As SLT we have the final say, you know, it's our heads on the block, I say it's our heads, I'm looking for a united front here. (Laughs)*

But you know come and tell us, look I'm not convinced that this is going on then you need to have had the conversation but you as subject lead as part of your role as a teacher is to ensure you are monitoring and looking at ways of doing, it doesn't mean this term you must have done a lesson observation, a book scrutiny, you know. You may not do them all but these are just ideas.

The leader continues to outline their expectations for subject leaders.

We also saw in the example from a third school used in the self-enhancing category in the Applied Methodology how the leader used humour to make the point that a teacher had missed a deadline.

Extract 23. Meeting 9 - Minute 22.05

In this example the leader of the meeting is not the school leader, they are a member of the SLT. The leader discussed with staff that several people had not completed a piece of work required for the staff meeting. During a group break out session with lots of overlapping conversations the following exchange takes place.

L= Leader A, B and C = Teacher

B.) Well sticking it in with paper and glue is going to be a lot harder than using stickers.

A.) Well have you only done it today?

B.) Well is it due in today?

L.) (Smile voice) Well yes – today (pause) five weeks ago.

Group laughter.

Pause

L.) Right, ok have you all finished writing up the …

A.) Well I just want to highlight the

C.) That's alright

A.) Targets

L.) Can everyone just say goodbye to George, its his last day today.

The theme of the conversation then becomes about George's departure.

These examples show the use of affiliative humour to create a safe place for the leader to express their leadership without being openly confrontational. Pundt and Hermann (2015), Goswami et al. (2016) and Mesmer-Magnus et al. (2018) have offered possible reasons why a meeting participant other than the leader may use this approach. It is the use of this a strategy by the school leader on which I would like to focus as it reveals the importance of the leader/follower relationship in the individual school context. These examples are evidence that the leaders may value the social cohesion

of the school to such an extent that they express their leadership in a way that mirrors the social conventions of the group. In a staff meeting where contentious issues are addressed through humour a leader may simply start using those same norms as any other group participant. As discussed earlier in the managing conflict category the leader may choose to change the approach to a more aggressive style of humour use or stop the humour altogether. If there is an established communication process for the group then fitting into it may be part of the leader's valuing of group socialisation.

Equally the leader may be creating a safe space for themselves to establish their views within the group out of a sense of nervousness relating to their leadership identity. Parkman (2019) shows the way that school leaders can often feel imposter syndrome. The decision to use humour to avoid direct instruction may be a way of managing their own sense of self-worth. By initiating humour to create a safe space the leaders allow for a discussion about the subject area that is not a direct confrontation to their leadership. If teachers can express different views to those of the leader using humour to avoid confrontation this benefits the teachers because it is not confrontational. It also appeals to the leader's own desire to feel safe. Other studies (Young 2008) attribute this element of humour use to the leader seeking to reduce scrutiny of their views. I would argue that whilst there is evidence within my research (discussed later) that supports this reduction in scrutiny approach during certain exchanges the frequency of humour use in my data shows reasoning more closely related to individual leader's understanding of social cohesion. The use of humour by a leader on some occasions came from their leader identity within a staff meeting rather than what they are seeking to achieve by humour use. As researchers we can sometimes seek to link outcome to intent whereas one of the key points of humour use in a staff meeting may be that its use masks intent.

What is clear from the examples above is that the leader in the Primary School staff meetings I recorded appeared to use humour to create a safe framework for themselves within which they could exercise their leadership. It may be that the leader has brought this approach across from their social communication style where humour is a signaller of feeling at ease and comfortable with the surroundings or as

Fabio et al. (2019) suggest a defence against the leader's own perfectionism. Subconsciously or otherwise the leader may be using humour as a communication style to appear confident and at ease with their own hierarchical position.

The interplay between methodology and analysis here is important. I showed in the methodology how the accuracy of the self-reporting of humour use by leaders could be challenged (Paulhus and Reid 1991). Leaders may not be as willing to report their negative use of humour, to express personal vulnerability or be as open as a researcher requires in their reasons for using humour. Equally by using follower reports about the impact of humour a researcher may not be able to discern the intent of the leader. The researcher will be using the already processed reception data from the teacher. My data suggests that humour can be a device that allows leaders to create distance between their personal and projected professional identities.

7. 5 Emotional Release

As well as using humour as a leadership device linked to the language of Fairclough (2015) and Watkins (2017) there are also times when it can moderate heightened emotions within the workplace. In my data there were only two occasions in two separate schools when humour was used by the leader to reduce the emotion of an occasion. During a discussion about a child who presented with behaviour that challenged staff physically a comment is made about the child sweating. The leader in this school makes the following comment:

Extract 24. Meeting 1 - Minute 4.06

A, B and C = Teacher.

The staff are discussing a child that is presenting with emotional needs. The teacher has been on a course to learn support strategies and is feeding back her learning. She describes how the child may be operating within his reptilian brain and this triggers flight or fight responses in him.

A.) *There is a poster here which I think is really cool, so he sees everything, he sweats, he often needs the toilet in situations like that. I don't know if he was sweating yesterday?*

B.) I didn't get too close if I am honest with you erm (Laughs)

C.) He definitely glows.

B.) He goes so red its unbelievable

A.) And he's not able to think and there is another one which is your freeze and collapse survival mode but I don't think he tends to do that, he's more of a flight or fight child.

The teacher then describes the actions that she wants other staff to take in relation to supporting the child.

"I didn't get too close if I am honest" is said with a laugh voice which occasions a laughter response of 1-3 by other meeting participants. The conversation prior to the comment and afterwards is evidence of both the teachers' and leader's passion about doing their very best for the pupil in question. But the conversation prior to this also shows how emotive the subject can be and the difficulties that the teachers faced in balancing the requirements of the young person against all their other demands. The conversation also exposed their own feelings about lacking the skills to do the very best for that particular young person. The leader appears to sense this rising tension and alters the emotion in the room to one of humour rather than personal concern. The leader increases what Ding et al. (2015) refer to as the psychological capital that employees invest in their workplace. The leader in this school achieves this by acknowledging and then reducing the followers' negative emotional state. The conversation following the leader's comment is more reasoned and is clearly seeking solutions for the young person. Prior to the comment the conversation was focussed on concerns and the challenges presented by the situation. The comment here serves the purpose of telling the staff that whilst this is a difficult situation it can't be that bad because we can laugh about it (Plester 2009).

As with many aspects of humour use it comes with risk. The inappropriate use of humour can cause significant damage to both the producer and the receiver so the Head Teacher would have had to have considered the impact of their comment on the

group. The evidence that they knew this is that they lowered their voice and made the comment as an aside albeit an aside that was audible to the whole group. By creating an atmosphere of conspiratorial bonding this school leader brings the group together and laughs at something they all find challenging, releasing the emotion to a manageable level which allowed the team to then focus on the solution. In this example there is evidence of the interruption category that Fairclough (2015) identifies as a feature of the way leaders use language. The interruption in this case is not topic based but is the interruption of a negative emotional state.

Leader/Follower Emotions

Leaders and followers used this effect of humour within the staff meeting differently. Whilst the leader appeared to use it for emotional release for the group, teachers appeared to use humour for their own emotional release or as Kmita (2015) proposes as part of their relationship nurturing process. When teachers used humour to reduce emotional tension in some schools it took the form of a narrative re-telling of a situation which they may have found stressful. The target may be a parent such as in Meeting 6, Minute 5 or an external educational professional such as a Local Authority or Multi-Academy Trust representative such as in Meeting 8, Minute 2. This emotional release was done with the inclusion of the leader although their role on these occasions was only as observer. Whilst I did record times that the school leader used this narrative humour for their own emotional release my recordings did not capture any examples of a staff member in any of the schools seeking to reduce the tension of a group emotional state through humour use. This may be reflective of the risk involved and the nature of hierarchical positions played out in a staff meeting. Whilst there is risk for the leader to attempt to reduce emotion that risk is greater for a teacher or meeting participant who not only has to evaluate the possible response of the group but also that of the leader and whether they are receptive to this approach. The possible intent connected to the use of humour as emotional release appears to be different therefore between the leader and other staff members. The evidence suggests that the leader is seeking to impact the public sphere whilst other staff members use it as a personal coping mechanism (Ho 2017).

7.6 Reducing Scrutiny

Young (2008) identifies how the use of humour can reduce scrutiny of a subject area when used in meetings. In my own research I found several examples of this in different schools. The following is a policy debate in one particular school:

Extract 25. Meeting 4 - Minute 65.18

L= Leader. A B and C = Teacher

The staff are discussing policies and the first page of the policy is the logo. The conversation has gone off track with discussions about logo design rather than policy content.

L.) When we get it done I'll put it in the shared area.

A.) Yes I'm working on it at the moment.

L.) Right

A.) The old one, we're working on replacing the old one at the moment. I haven't had a chance yet to design. So we could put something up there where the old one was.

L.) *As we went through the aims, are there any that trouble you?*

B: *Yes*

L.) YES (loudly, surprised) oh dear which one's trouble you? (laugh voice)

B.) On the second page, the second one down.

L.) (Reading from policy.) To ensure that teachers recognise, this one?

B.) Yea

L.) (Reading) "To ensure that teachers recognise the importance of quality first teaching and that they are supported in their professional lives by effective management structures." Do you feel supported by effective management structures Mary? (Laughs)

B.) Well its just that "to recognise the importance of quality first teaching" you know everyone just does.

C.) Should that be an aim of a behaviour policy, it doesn't actually make sense.

Analysis of comments in this category in other settings often comes from analysing the level of scrutiny undertaken afterwards using outcome as indicator of impact (Young 2008). I intend to concentrate on whether it is possible to attribute any level of intent that a leader is seeking to use humour to reduce scrutiny in this example. The question that the leader used to open the discussion aligned with the general policy review process undertaken by teachers within staff meetings. When the response the leader received is that there *are* areas that a teacher wanted to scrutinise the leader's follow up comment appeared to be intended to minimise the discussion. The, *"Yes"* that indicates surprise is a stand-alone initiator of humour and doesn't fit with the build-up discussion. The leader did not appear to want to engage in the conversation they had started and their question about which aims the teacher disagreed with was accompanied by mocking laughter. The leader appears to be communicating the opposite meaning from the actual words being used. More broadly it is this alternative communication which humour allows that may expose leader authenticity when seeking to reduce scrutiny.

When the leader sets the discoursal frame in this way then staff members have two barriers to overcome if they wish to challenge the leader. They need to challenge the leaders' implied topic-related viewpoint which in my example asserts that the aims of the policy are suitable. They also need to challenge the discoursal frame that the leader has established. I showed in the example in the Applied Methodology chapter that it is possible to confront the leader in this situation. In that particular school the staff member pursued a non-humorous discussion whilst the leader persevered with comic responses. In this second example the leader's strategy is effective in that the challenge to the correctness of aims continues for a few more sentences and then stops.

The use of humour to reduce scrutiny within my data may suggest a deliberate intent to control dialogue in a staff meeting that we can review from the production side rather than analyse it on an outcome basis. From the perspective of language and power, I would suggest that this links to the interruption category (Fairclough 2015) whereby we see humour being used to interrupt the ability of another participant to

control the flow of their argument. The subversive use of humour identified by Butler (2015) is used by the leader to subvert scrutiny.

7.7 Enabling Control

Fairclough (2015), Watson and Drew (2017) and Young (2008) view this humour category as a standalone area with blurred subjective boundaries. My evidence suggests that it could also be more closely linked to the reducing scrutiny use in that we may be able to identify a level of intent in leader behaviour. That intent becomes even more evident if we widen this category to include not just control of the topic but also a level of physical control of the meeting participants. In the example below staff members in one school are discussing which venue they should use for an approaching social event. At the same time one member of staff is waiting to present a paper on a curriculum-area.

Extract 26. Meeting 6 - Minute 12.59

L = Leader. A, B, C, D and John = Teacher

The staff are discussing an evening out and so far about five minutes of the staff meeting has been taken up discussing where to eat. The staff then start discussing the activity.

A.) Are we having teams for the bowling?

B.) Teams, that's a good idea

L.) (Loud laugh voice) You alright John, do you want to get on with it.

B.) Can I eat my cake now.

The conversations returns to the social event and organising food and travel.

L.) (Laugh Voice) - *How long is your bit going to take John?*

John.) Are you recording this?

C.) Yes I started ages ago.

L.) Right come on then John go for it.

John.) I've forgotten what I was going to say.

D.) Oh come on (Laughs).

C.) Is that it then.

John.) Apologies but the folder I am looking for has disappeared.

The teacher then explains the new approach to IT storage.

The rest of the staff team have their attention drawn to the awaiting staff member, quickly turn their attention to the presentation and the teacher begins their presentation. I would suggest that this may demonstrate intent by the leader in making a conscious decision to use humour to both change the topic and to control the meeting participants. Whilst this also links to the section on creating a safe space to express leadership views the intent in this example seems far more obvious. In order to progress the staff meeting the leader needs the topic to change and can select several linguistic approaches to achieve this. The selection of humour may be because the leader knows from previous experience that it is both an effective and non-confrontational vehicle to manage the situation.

Another example taken from a different school where humour is used to control both the topic and the meeting participants another suggestion begins to emerge that again may signal intent.

Extract 27. Meeting 5 - Minute 49.54

L = Leader.

L*.) And it is, its about being smart with it. I don't want anyone having to do more than they are already doing, I don't think that is what this is about but one way or another we have to identify how we are teaching that curriculum and how we are covering it and we are. You know this school is good at that so let's make sure we are showing it. Have a look at each other's books and pass them around and then we will have a chat about what seems to work as well. Thankyou.*

The staff then work together in groups and multiple snippets of conversation are recorded.

Minute 63.03

L.) O*kay shall we er…. Can we ..get back together … before Mary decides … to go home. I know I know* (laugh tokens) (Laughter response 1-3)

So positively speaking what was it, is it Maths and English that is working particularly well or am I barking up the wrong tree. I haven't been looking at any books because I have been looking at dates with Samir. What have you seen that works with erm. I spoke with a local school recently who had just been Ofsted-ed and the word they used was progress, progress, progress. Now our progress sheets were designed with that in mind. Erm what's working, (pause), what's working.

The teachers then begin to give their feedback on measuring the progress of pupils within the school.

The combined evidence of these two examples should be seen in the context of the specific leadership development pathway that school leaders undertake. All the leaders involved in my research were once Primary School teachers and have spent considerable time in classrooms being responsible for both determining the topic and controlling the actions of the class. During their development school leaders have had the opportunity to learn communication skills that consider the impact of spoken language and communication styles on their audience. It is possible to construct an argument that the very fabric of teaching is the ability to understand the impact of your words and actions on others. To avoid being in permanent conflict with their students, effective teachers learn a variety of communication styles and then select the correct one for the context. During the staff meeting the leaders had to make a choice about how to communicate their meaning. Their leadership development pathway would have been significant in forming their leader identity which in turn played a role in determining their selection of humour as a discoursal strategy during a staff meeting.

7.8 Thematic Understanding

This chapter builds on the Tabular Data and the Situational data to look at the ways that humour has function within the Primary School staff meeting. It shows that humour a safe vehicle for the leaders to practice their discoursal identities and for

communities to establish leadership through discourse. Before bringing together the four elements of leader/follower relationship, specific context and perceived authenticity I will briefly outline some key linking themes that emerged relating to humour use in the individual school contexts that will improve understanding of the findings presented in the next chapter.

Frequency

Robert and Wilbanks (2012: 22) quote that "humour's pervasiveness in human interaction blinds us to its existence, importance and influence" is certainly true in the study of Primary School staff meeting behaviours. My combined data showed that language-based humour occurred in a staff meeting every two and half minutes. The data also showed that the school leader is responsible for approximately half the total number of humorous comments made within the staff meeting.

Research shows the use of humour outside of the school setting is used by employees for several reasons such as moderating conflict and creating social cohesion (Janes and Olson 2015, Martin and Yip 2006) and my data supported this view. I want to go further though and suggest that humour should also be analysed from its pervasiveness and I was frequently drawn back to the two and half minutes evidence. I propose humour has a deeper impact and forms part of the habitus to which Bourdieu (1990) refers. Humour in the school staff meetings recorded here is not just functional it is part of the system of functioning. Humour is not just relational it is part of the process of relating. Accessing the humour of an individual school requires social, cultural and organisational capital and without those elements a Primary School staff member could feel excluded from those around them every two half minutes. A significant part of becoming an effective teacher within a Primary School will be understanding the role that humour plays in the enabling of business practices.

The context of the staff meeting is important in arriving at that hypothesis. We saw in the Literature Review that the staff meeting is part of the architecture of a Primary School. It is where power is constructed and the whole staff come together. I do not propose that exclusion is intentional but in the same way that art galleries are

culturally exclusive and universities are socially exclusive awareness of the power to unintentionally exclude is the first step towards future inclusivity. The exclusion is not simply social. The role that humour plays in uniting or dividing groups has been well researched. What the frequency aspect of my data shows is the central role that humour plays in enabling individual Primary Schools to function. Any participant that does not understand the role humour plays in enabling their school to function will be disenfranchised from a significant part of the school's communication process.

Affiliative/Aggressive.

The combined frequency data shows us that a leader uses four times the amount of aggressive humour than affiliative. The two main sub-categories used by leaders in all schools were pithy one-liners and humour to exert influence. Martin (2018) shows how these two styles impact negatively on the public and personal sphere. Does this mean that the leaders I recorded were responsible for significant amounts of negativity within the meetings that they led? That is not my analysis. I suggest there is a different evaluation required for the school leader's use of humour occasioned by the role expectations associated with their hierarchical position. Research into effective schools cites leadership as a critical factor in organisational success or failure (Baars et al 2014). Despite the drive towards shared and devolved leadership the structures within a Primary School are still hierarchical organisations. Role titles such as Head, Deputy, Senior Teacher etc. reinforce this hierarchy. These titles have organisational expectations attached to them linked to traditions dating back to Victorian times. One of the expectations followers have of leaders is that they exert influence. Within the Primary Schools I recorded there was also a culture where other meeting participants were also able to exert influence. The culture appeared to be one of reasoned debate within which humour played a significant role. I therefore propose that the classification of humour to exert influence as having a negative impact unfairly categorises the effective discoursal behaviours of meeting participants in a Primary School.

During the staff meetings much of the conversation, whether humorous or not, could be regarded as exerting influence. The use of language to exert influence is not

negative in itself because of the leader/follower expectations. I propose that the negative element of the use of humour to exert influence is triggered at the point when it is used inauthentically. Where humour is used to either dominate or close down discussion or when it is received as such then humour had a negative impact. This negative impact occurred regardless of whether the leader or other participant was responsible for using humour in this way. There were a small number of examples in my data of negative humour in the exerting influence category. The majority of exchanges within the exerting influence category were simply part of the professional dialogue that occurs in a staff meeting as conflicting ideologies sought a common way forward.

Reception Data

Reception to humour in a Primary School staff meeting is important because it is one of the few occasions when reaction to the use of language is instantly observable. If a Head Teacher gives an instruction in a staff meeting the evidence of whether it has been understood may only be observable in the changed behaviour of other staff members at a future point in time. If the instruction or messaging is contained within a humorous narrative or exchange then there is instant feedback on understanding. That understanding may be centred on "getting the humour" but within the many hours of recordings and hundreds of humorous exchanges there are no examples of externally referenced humour events. During a period of time in which the presidency of Donald Trump and Brexit were causing a societal level of humour and concern in equal measure all the humour recorded in the staff meetings was related to the functioning of the individual school, broader educational policy or specific meeting participants. Humour was very context specific and messages contained within the humour were related to individual school functioning. Whether the message was delivered by the leader or other meeting participant the reception data may reveal audience understanding.

Laughter as Response

We know from research in other fields and as I have shown earlier the laughter response is complex and within a work setting only twenty per cent of laughter may

be in response to finding something funny (Provine 2000). Responding to a person who is offering a subject using humour is part of our social interaction (Ross 1998). When set within a staff meeting the reception of humour becomes as powerful in exerting influence as the production of it. Both leaders and other participants in the individual schools use the disruption of this social norm to directly affect the conduct of business within the staff meeting. The acceptance or rejection of humour as a discoursal style became an element of leader behaviour. It allowed those engaged in an ideological conversation to demonstrate their disagreement through control of the discoursal frame. The data from different schools shows both school leaders and teachers rejecting the use of humour as a control device. This is one of the key reasons that my methodological approach aligns to the context I am researching and the nature of humour within it. Capturing the contemporaneous data of the laughter response allowed for a greater understanding of how humour was being used in a Primary School staff meeting. In other contexts laughter as part of the production and reception process of humour use may not be the socially constructed norm. In the different schools that I recorded laughter played a signifying role in humour use understanding.

Leader/Follower Authenticity

Throughout this thesis I have looked a humour as a discoursal device used in staff meetings. But it also fits within an emotional part of the human condition alongside such elements as sincerity, desires and feelings. These are personal qualities that are assessed by others to ascertain if they are either genuine personality traits or constructed professional identities. A leadership position in a staff meeting exposes constructed leader personality because both the "what they are seeking to achieve" and the "how they are going to achieve it" are revealed. It is important for the function of leadership that both are assessed as being genuine.

The data showed occasions in individual schools when there is a tension between what the leader wanted to do and what the leader had to do to comply with the external expectations of Ofsted, Governors and Trust Officers. The leader references these external drivers to maintain their own authenticity. Responsibility for a course of

action was outsourced and the leader's authentically held ideologies relating to the nature of education were protected. The same was also true of humour use. Evidence provided by the response data shows that meeting participants appeared able to recognise when the speaker was using humour as a strategy and when they were genuinely engaged in humorous dialogue. It was not just the authenticity of the speaker's ideologies in relation to education that were important but also their authentic use of humour.

In this chapter I have I identified six categories of humour use within staff meetings taking place in the different schools. These categories are split into positive and negative effects of the use of humour. Enabling a culture for discussion, managing conflict, creating a safe space for contentious discussion and emotional release are all areas which can have a positive impact on the functioning of a Primary School. They align to more positive leadership qualities in which dialogue is enabled and managed in a way that allows contribution from all participants.

Enabling control and reducing scrutiny align to the more negative elements of leader behaviour in which dialogue is restricted and the contributions of participants in the staff meeting are either reduced or negated. Communication through humour can be a positive element of the human condition and the use of humour to achieve positive outcomes aligns to a leader's authenticity. When that positive element is used to achieve a negative outcome then other meeting participants will question the speaker's authenticity of approach. I would further argue that this revealing of inauthenticity in relation to a speaker's use of humour will also call into question the sincerity of their ideology and values.

Protection of Self

This linking of authenticity to the use of humour as a management tool is not absolute and creates the blurred boundaries similar to Joo's (1962) zones of language use. Creating a safe space for contentious discussion is a positive aspect of a communities use of humour. It allows for proper debate in a way that creates a buffer between the constructed identities in the staff meeting and the personal self. Any meeting

participant that wished to confront the leader's views did so in a way that respected those different identities. In this area there is a more complex relationship between leader and perceived authenticity. Where the overall authenticity of the speaker is questioned as a result of in the moment, historic and role expectation evaluations, staff meeting participants may also be less likely to accept the humour as genuine. Equally a lack of perceived authenticity in the use of humour will form part of the overall evaluation of assigned leader identity undertaken by school staff. The authenticity of the leader and their use of humour cannot be separated from the leader/follower relationship. Authenticity and humour use are more related to perception than self-assertions within a Primary School staff meeting. Regardless of the actual intention of the speaker when using humour how its intention is assessed becomes the more dominant factor in determining positive and negative affect.

Reflexive Analysis

Some elements of the four threads approach to understanding humour use will only truly be known by those involved. By placing the leader-follower relationship and the perception of authenticity as central in that understanding I will always stand accused of looking through a translucent rather than transparent window. To gain greater insights into that process, if I were to repeat this study, I would like to video exchanges and then play them back separately with those involved. I would then discuss through a supported dialogue, not their intentions, but how they felt they were being perceived and how they were perceiving others in the moment.

Whilst the schools I selected provided a wealth of evidence they were quite similar in their characteristics; this gave an ability to understand some broader issues but also stopped some lines of enquiry that could have been explored. One such characteristic was that the schools had established staff teams. The line of enquiry I intend to explore further is how responses to humour may shape culture over time, particularly following a change in the leader. The studies that have looked at this so far, although none of these were carried out in schools, focused on the discourse of the leader. By selecting a school at a point of Head Teacher change and studying responses over time, both before and after that change, it may be possible to achieve greater insight

into the importance of follower response in shaping culture.

The second characteristic of note is the gender balance in Primary Schools where between seventy-five and eighty percent of the workforce is female (BESA 2017, DFE 2019). Schnurr (2009) and others have identified gender imbalances in the styles of humour used by male and female managers in non-school settings. My research did not feature some of the more aggressive humour styles seen in other workplace research reports. Presenting arguments for why this may be the case; the nuanced culture of the individual Primary Schools, the nature of Primary Schools more broadly as nurturing environments or the specific gender of those involved in the exchanges became problematic without having a more balanced gender distribution.

7.9 Conclusion

This chapter shows the function of humour in staff meetings within some generic situations and also reveals some themes in relation to that humour use. By combining this with approach with the data in both tabular and situational form I will now turn to the key findings of this paper.

Chapter 8

8. Conclusion

8.1 Contribution to Knowledge or Understanding

The Uniqueness of schools

The view of some researchers that their conclusions are universally applicable have long been a concern for the teaching profession and Primary Schools in particular. Sahlberg (2012) identified the Global Reform Movement in which the imposition of business-based research threatened the professional nature of teaching reducing it to technician status. Within humour research many theorists propose the importance of site-specific context and yet none of that research has been undertaken in a Primary School. I have shown the duality of school development which creates similar structures to comply with external yardsticks whilst at the same time being unique in the culture each school can develop through dialogue. In this way I have sought to understand the Aristotelian "phronesis", the context specific practical wisdom created in each individual school setting.

The uniqueness of schools is set out below. Humour in meetings is largely language based and the teaching profession, unlike any other, has communication as its foundation stone. The ability to communicate a message, an idea, a theory, a skill is fundamental to the ability to teach. The professional development and career progression of teachers is entirely based upon their ability to communicate with others. Humour research sits within that ability to communicate. Almost all, including my own, definitions of humour contain some level of audience involvement, a social element that may not always be obvious. Because humour sits within the communicative discoursal flow of a community my research seeks to address that serious lack of humour research within the profession that has communication as its core skill.

But schools contain another unique factor which impacts dialogue in meetings. The hierarchical nature of schools contains structures that would still be recognisable to

Victorian society. Titles such as Head teacher, Deputy Head Teacher, Senior Teacher, Senior Leadership Team may clash with the theoretical proponents of distributed leadership. The requirement for these structures is not created by the individual schools but are the response to the compliance processes which surround schools. Schools may enact distributed leadership locally through their practice but the external requirement for hierarchy creates a unique context because of the discoursal rites associated with those hierarchical positions. It is these additional discoursal rites that become significant in how leadership is enacted within an individual setting.

The multi-layered nature of primary school structures may also lead some researchers not familiar with the context to see the exchanges as evidence of leadership being constructed through dialogue. To a certain extent that may be the case however if the dominant speakers belong to the hierarchical structure then what may appear as distributed leadership may actually be a reinforcement of the hierarchical structure through discourse. In reaching this conclusion I was drawn to the research of Cosenza (2015: 92) who interviewed teachers about leadership and reported that teachers "overall seemed to view leadership as something that was official in nature requiring a title".

Primary schools, unlike secondary schools and other educational settings, are far more closely linked to their immediate community. There are approximately forty-five thousand primary schools across the country and in built up areas their catchment area may be as little as a few hundred yards. The school in which I was researching all self-identified as values led communities who take pride in their status as role models within the communities they serve (Niekerk 2017). I will show later that the values that school's publish on their website may be mirrored in their use of humour in their staff meetings. Part of that analysis was based on the evidence that I did not record the same level of humour aggression in schools identified by other researchers working in non-school settings (Davis 2018). However that links to the second area where I hope to make a contribution to the use of humour in Primary Schools.

The Aggressive Use of Humour Category

Categorising humour use as aggressive in any setting is problematic for a number of reasons. I have shown in the analysis that the audience is the dominant element in determining the nature of humour. As the researcher listening to the recordings of the staff meetings I was part of that audience. I do not claim that other audience members were making the same judgment as my own. However I do claim that they were using the same factors as I was in assigning aggression to a particular comment. As shown in the analysis they are the historic, in the moment and role expectation factors that combine in the discursive flow of a meeting. Specifically, within a school, hierarchical relationships are given legitimacy by the acceptance of the audience. Shapiro (2003: 53) sees domination as 'arising only from the illegitimate exercise of power' thus the determination of aggressive humour is not about the nature of the comment or the subject matter but whether the speaker is legitimately exercising power as determined by the group. The meeting participants in these schools had an expectation about leader behaviour which overrides the negative implications of using aggressive humour to exert influence.

I would further suggest that this is not only applicable to the leader, but other meeting participants are subject to the same evaluation by group members. Thus the classification of humour to exert influence as having a negative impact (Martin 2018) unfairly categorises the effective discoursal behaviours of all participants. In the staff meetings I researched there was an acceptance that using humour to exert influence was not negative or aggressive but simply part of the accepted communicative practices of those individual communities. It also aligned with the role expectations of the differing positions. Both teachers and leaders in the meeting were encouraged to "exert influence" by using their linguistic skills, one of which is the use of humour.

This mirroring of discoursal norms may be evident in other areas of school leader humour use. Parkman (2019) shows the way that school leaders can often feel imposter syndrome. The decision to use humour to avoid direct instruction may be a way of managing their own sense of self-worth. In the analysis I presented evidence that primary school leaders may value the social cohesion of their school to such an

extent that they express their leadership in a way that mirrors the social conventions of the group even when their hierarchical status renders this unnecessary.

Linking Humour to Authentic Leadership

Another area where I hope to make a specific contribution to understanding the role of humour in a Primary School is by demonstrating the link that humour has with evaluations of authentic leadership. Whilst this has its own section within this conclusion chapter I want to make it explicit that both the impact of humour and authenticity are assigned by the audience. Humour use forms part of that wider evidence base which includes all linguistic choices on which the audience's impression of authentic leadership are based. This primacy of audience ascription aligns with Sidania and Rowe's (2018) and McConnell's (2011) description of authentic leadership as a co-constructed leader-follower approach and extends it into humour use. Humour use as a co-constructed leader-follower approach is an element of the co-constructed leader-follower approach that applies to authentic leadership. This is shown to be particularly the case when humour is used by the hierarchical leader in which my reception data shows that the perception of authenticity is the important element not the leader-centric view of evaluating leader behaviour (e.g., Northouse 2017).

Similar to the aggressive use of humour above the evaluation of authenticity is not a static event that is carried forward but rather a fluid combination of historic, in the moment and role specific influences. What I showed in the analysis was that when any meeting participant is behaving as expected within the context the positive and negative categorisation of humour use is of secondary importance to the audiences' perception of authentic leadership.

8.2 Research Questions

In this section I present my findings in relation to the research questions.

> RQ 1.) How is humour used in a Primary School staff meeting and how does that impact within a community of practice?

Whilst organisational cultural development will take place in-situ, each school developing its own unique culture, there were some areas of commonality relating to the way in which humour is used in all the schools.

- Establishing a discoursal culture.
- Conflict management.
- Creating a safe place for contentious discussion.
- Emotional release.
- Reducing scrutiny.
- Enabling control.

Whilst there was some humour use that had crossover into other industries, there were two areas where humour was used differently by the leaders in these schools than has been recorded in other research. The first was the way that different meeting participants used humour as emotional release. The hierarchical leaders in my research used humour to relieve the heightened emotion of the group in a way that was not evidenced by other meeting participants. Other meeting participants used humour to reduce their own heightened anxiety by using narrative humour. The leader within these schools used pithy one-liners to reduce group stress.

Similar to other research there was evidence that leadership was co-constructed through discourse however I think it is important to add a caveat to that within schools. I have shown the complexity of hierarchical positions that still exist in primary schools today. The structures are encouraged and maintained by central policy. The Education Act (2002) requires all maintained schools to have a headteacher or

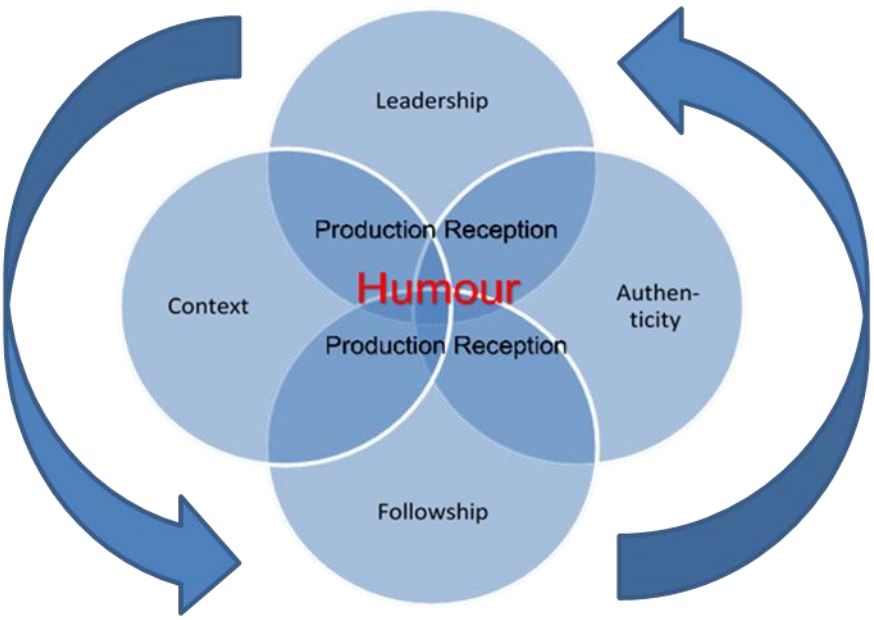
temporary alternative. The latest Academies Financial Handbook (DFE 2020) requires all academies to have a Single Executive Officer. Ofsted reports write the name of the head teacher as part of their reporting requirements. If that hierarchy is not known to the researcher then the conversational analysis of a linguistic exchange may be mis-interpreted as co-constructed leadership when in fact the additional discoursal rites associated with hierarchy may mean that rather than being distributed, leadership may be being centralised within the structures. In understanding humour use I wanted to avoid Arundale's (2013a) criticism that researchers often look at the language and then overlay the context when the reality is that participants are completely immersed in the context before any words are spoken.

Humour was also used in at least one school in a way that closely aligned with Noggle's (2018) theories on salience. Humour was used to decrease the salience of points during an exchange and in doing so impacted on the decision-making process. Perhaps the best example of this was the conversation relating to the Head Teacher's ability to look after animals in which the possibility of having a pet in school was denied through humorous dialogue.

RQ 2.) What factors contribute to gaining a better understanding of humour use in Primary Schools?

In this research I have presented evidence that shows the complexity of understanding humour in a Primary School staff meeting. The constant threads that run through the tabular data, the situational data and the analysis are the constant interplay between leadership, followship, context and authenticity. My research findings for RQ 2 are that the factors that contribute to gaining a better understanding of humour use in Primary Schools can be described using the diagram below.

Fig. 17. Understanding Humour in Primary School Meetings



Leadership

Research into humour use in schools has either focussed on it as a teaching strategy (Gablinske 2014, Ghazal and Shahid 2019) or a coping mechanism for staff based on relationships (Kmita 2015). Understanding the use of humour as a management tool is often borrowed from industries where the impact upon productivity is considered the significant factor (Pundt and Hermann 2015). I have demonstrated that there are factors in education that make the study of educational leadership context specific. Culturally and to a lesser extent ideologically Primary Schools can operate as silos.

Schools have tried to enact models of distributed leadership over many years but creating such a structure is entirely reliant on the Head Teacher support. Success of these structures is reliant on individuals and alternative leadership models which invest leadership as a cultural responsibility for all participants are not supported by the system wide processes that surround schools.

The professional development pathway of school leaders is an important factor in understanding humour use. In 2002 the statutory requirement for Head Teachers to

hold Qualified Teacher status was removed. In 2012 the statutory requirement to hold the National Professional Qualification for Headship was also removed. However the closing down of the National College's "Tomorrow's Heads Programme" designed to prepare non-teachers for school leadership and the limited number of Head Teacher positions filled by non-teachers shows that these initiatives have not had sector wide impact. The overwhelming majority of headteachers were once classroom teachers. Neither humour use nor leadership sit outside the process of developing language use to achieve a particular end. In the education sector leadership is constructed identity through language use where interpersonal skills are crucial in achieving organisational goals.

The constructed identity of leadership within schools is further confused by the research methodology of using self-report questionnaires in trying to understand how leaders perceive humour use within their own sphere of influence. This projected identity can make its way into the researched responses presented by leaders. This perception of projected leadership is part of the matrix that links leadership to the role of followship in understanding humour use. Because leadership cannot exist without followship.

Followship

Followship is not a passive activity nor an acceptance of being powerless in fact quite the reverse in the Primary School context. Humour use has been described as a way of conforming with management whilst maintaining a cynical distance (Butler 2015). Laughter at work can be seen as signifying group identity (Clift 2016). There is evidence contained within my data to show that humour use in meetings does operate at this level. A deeper understanding is the way that humour use by all meeting participants should be seen as complimentary approaches that co-create organisational culture and leadership practices. My evidence showed that leadership could be at times described in terms of Clifton's (2017) model of leadership as a social process and that the leader or leaders emerge through discoursal interaction. This process of establishing leadership and followship through the constant flow of

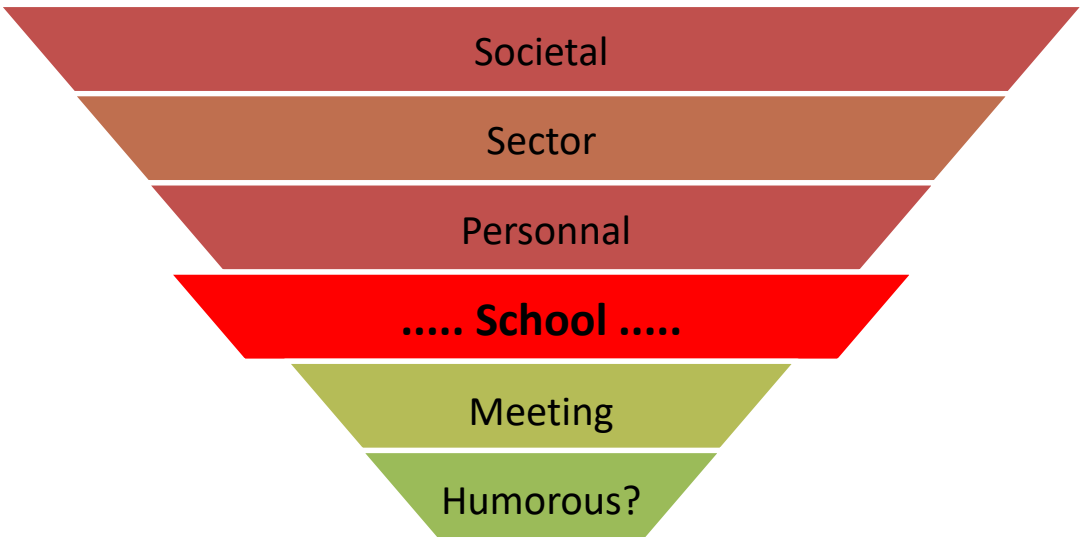
dialogue means that during individual exchanges participants may assume both roles. Humour use formed part of the lexicon of conducting business within the meetings I recorded and accepted humour use was negotiated through the discoursal interaction of both leader and follower.

Understanding the impact of language use through observed and reflective practice is not just a leadership quality, it is part of the professional work of all Primary School teachers. Pedagogy as the ability to communicate remains a central activity within the daily life of a teacher. In my research it was clear that both leader and follower were adept at using language to communicate meaning and part of that language use was humour. It was this collective impact of individually skilled practitioners that co-constructed the acceptable use of humour in the shared space of a school meeting. That environment is part of the context in which humour exists.

Context

In Fig. 18 below I have shown context as being divided between external and internal factors relating to the individual school. The link or barrier between the two influences is the culture that the leader/follower interaction enacts.

Fig. 18. Contextual Influences Impacting Humour Use



The funnelling of context begins at societal level. As I write this during the Covid-19 pandemic it is easy to see how humour use could be impacted by societal level events. The level of that impact will be determined in-situ through dialogue and it is possible to imagine a spectrum of responses. Humour use may be reduced in the workplace as the weight of negative emotions reduce our collective telic state. Humour use may be increased as people seek refuge in laughter from the horror of a pandemic. The style of humour may change. Humour may become softer as teams recognise the emotional fragility of living in lockdown or it may become harsher as humanity laughs at the things that it fears.

Sector level influences such as current policy directives, funding levels, changing inspection frameworks, school closures etc. all contribute to the context in which humour use in schools occurs. The final factor that sits outside of the school relating to context is the personal element that includes all the influences that determines an individual's propensity to operate in a telic or para-telic state.

In Fig. 18 above I have highlighted the school in the inverse pyramid. This is because the single biggest determining factor in the way that societal, sector level events and personal influences impact in individual schools will be the culture that leaders and followers have co-created in-situ. I propose that in the education sector humour use could impacted as a result of external factors but it is the leader, follower, specific context and perceived authenticity interplay that determines the nature of that change within each individual setting. It is significant that in my data there were no humorous references to societal level events and less than five humour references that were either sector or personal in origin. The majority of humour events were directly related to the shared experience of the participants and the business that they were trying to conduct within that individual school.

The staff meeting context of a Primary School is a key structure where humour culture is continually re-constructed through its enactment. It should be seen as one of the major factors that contribute to gaining a better understanding of humour use in Primary Schools. Its importance is magnified by the role it pays in determining the fourth element of the matrix; authenticity.

Authenticity

In the Literature review I set out how, by extending the work of Sidania and Rowe (2018), it was possible to see how the audience evaluation of humour use formed part of the wider perception of authentic leadership. It also set out how this evaluation of authenticity through perception was not restricted to the single leadership position but also extended to include any speaker's use of humour. An important element of the exchange in the results chapter was not the intent of the speaker but the perception of the audience. It is this preconception that has significant impact on the evaluation of the use of certain styles of humour in Primary School staff meetings as I will show now.

There were very few examples in my data of the self-defeating humour style. It is self-defeating because it is an attempt by the user to put themselves down *in order to* ingratiate themselves into a community. It is the perceived intent that is important in categorising this humour style. I extend that perceived intention to suggest that all humour use in staff meetings should be evaluated with reference to the audience evaluation of intent which impacts upon authenticity. Evaluating humour is more complex than a simple affiliative/aggressive or positive/negative sliding scale continuum. The evaluation of humour should be made in relation to the perceived intent by the audience based on the authenticity (or trust, Tremblay 2016) of the producer and the specific comment. Even when the intentions of the person producing the comments are misconstrued it is that misconception that is of greater importance than the actual intention. It is the misconception that has impact within the public or personal sphere and contributed to the evaluation of authenticity. This appeared to be the case whether the evaluation was of authentic leadership or followship.

Within the hierarchy of a school there are certain preconceived and accepted practices relating to leadership and followship. School leaders are expected to lead in a way that is inclusive and cohesive. Followers are allowed to challenge and disagree with leadership. In my research there were examples where the leader used styles of humour categorised as aggressive. These were predominantly exerting influence using humour and pithy one-liners. Aggressive categories are judged as impacting

negatively on the public and personal sphere. This categorisation does not fit the staff meeting within a primary school. It does not fit because "the public sphere" is the staff members who have a preconception and acceptance that the leader will exert influence. That preconception comes from them granting the leader authority to lead through their words and behaviours. The leader is behaving as expected within the context therefore the positivity and negativity categorisation of humour use is of secondary importance to the audiences' perception of their authentic leadership.

When the audience perceives that the leader's use of humour is no longer simply exerting influence and has become more about denying debate or attacking an individual the evaluation changes. It changes because the leader's words and actions may no longer align with the preconceived ideas that the audience has about authentic leader behaviour in staff meetings. In the data it is the lack of response that provides evidence that humour use on some occasions and with regard to some styles is evaluated as being inauthentic. Humour use cannot be separated from other forms of language in determining authenticity: As I have shown, the evaluation of authenticity is not a static event that is carried forward but rather a fluid combination of historic, in the moment and role specific influences. Humour is part of that evaluation as is other language use and behaviour. If the language/humour/behaviour is used in a way that aligns to immediate, historic and preconceived views about the authenticity of the producer then it is more likely to be accepted by the team as authentic.

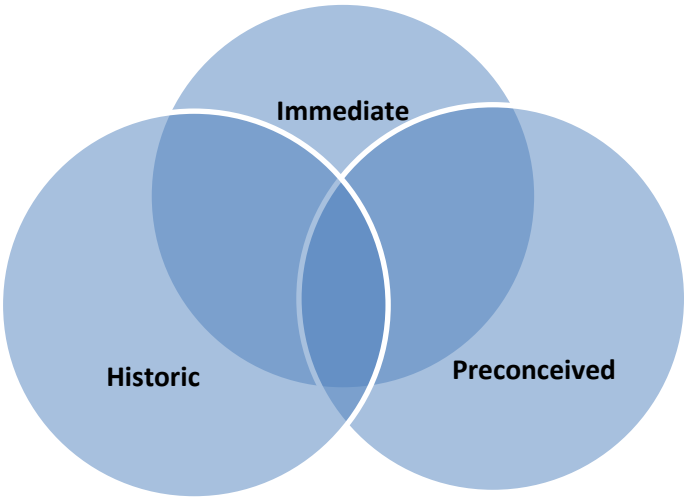
The same is true of follower use of and response to humour. Where it is used to make a point or further an argument and the follower is perceived as honestly holding that view then humour use is accepted by the group. The judgement is not positive or negative but rather accepted or not accepted as an authentic position. Inauthentic humour use can be seen in those incidents when either the leader or the follower is perceived as using humour to achieve an end that does not align with the preconceptions of what constitutes authentic leader or follower behaviour.

There were not just self-defeating examples to show that humour is evaluated through the lens of audience assigned authenticity. Three aggressive style, pithy one-

liners made by staff members and directed at other staff members are met with no laughter as a response. In those short exchanges the culture of the individual organisation is revealed through an understanding of authenticity. The lack of laughter demonstrates that this humour does not fit with the preconceived view of how staff members interact. Referring back to the diagram at Fig. 1a above this preconception has to be set in terms of the relationship between authenticity and context. In some of the schools where I recorded negative comments targeted at individuals, this did not align with the site-specific culture and therefore elicited very low-level responses. Individual schools and work contexts may develop different cultures through their negotiated co-constructed interactions which is why humour use can be seen as exposing the lived culture rather than the articulated culture of a particular school.

In another example the silence recorded in one school as a leader tried to extricate themselves from seeking to use humour to reduce the scrutiny of a particular policy reveals the expectation that all participants should behave authentically and humour use forms part of that flowing continuous evaluation. The lack of a response by staff members suggests that the leader is behaving in a way that does not align with the audiences' expectations in relation to leadership behaviour. This example goes further and shows how authenticity should not only be applied to the production of humour but also in the response to humour. Provine (2000) showed how much laughter in the workplace was unrelated to humour, I propose that the perceived authenticity of laughter or other response will also fit within the Venn diagram repeated below:

Fig 1a (Repeated)



In the next section I will show how the relationship between the four threads of leader, follower, context and authenticity are observable in the production and reception of humour.

8.6 Production and Reception

Some organisations have taken research into the production of humour so literally that they have undertaken training courses for their leaders in how to use humour to boost productivity (Vecchio, Justin and Pearce 2009). My research determines that humour is far more revealing as a cultural indicator rather than simply a management tool to be deployed when productivity dips. As a cultural indicator the response to humour becomes as important as the production. My research does not support the conclusion that the response to humour is more important in setting the humour culture but I propose that it *could be* as I will now show.

My research was undertaken in Primary Schools where the team had been together for a minimum of twelve months. I recorded incidents where the production of humour did not elicit a response. This lack of response forms part of the complex interplay of leader, follower, context and authenticity. The impact of giving no response to the offer of humour though has implications for the development of what

constitutes acceptable humour within a given context. I showed earlier how humour is unlike other behaviours in terms of how we view trying. *Trying* to be funny is seen as a critical or negative comment. There seems to be something in the fabric of humour that sees the failure to create a response in others as a failure of the producer to understand the audience. In the schools in which I researched there was a clear link between a mirth response and a humorous comment. Where that mirth response is absent then power moves from the producer to the receiver. The producer has tried to achieve something but has not been successful because of the actions (lack of) of the receiver. In their study of humour Clift (2016) identifies the way in which laughter in the workplace can be a signifier of group or individual affiliation. Whilst my evidence supports this conclusion I also suggest that the response may have a significant impact on organisational culture as well as I will show in the next section.

Billig (2005) concluded that non-laughter can be a deliberate strategy to seek control in an exchange. The non-laughter or non-response over a period a time can be seen as the formation and re-formation of humour culture and may operate at a deliberate or subconscious level. For this reason I propose that the production and reception of data should both be seen as significant factors in understanding humour use in Primary schools. It is the interplay between the two that is the contributory factor in determining humour culture and why they appear in flux in the matrix at Fig. 17.

RQ 3). Can humour use in a Primary School staff meeting reveal the lived organisational culture?

Because of the importance of organisational development within schools, many have published their values and mission statements within the public domain. I separate these noble assertions from the lived experience of practitioners with each setting using the term lived organisational culture. If we describe lived organisational culture as the norms of actual interaction, practice and policy within a particular work environment then it is possible to see humour as an indicator of how the published values are evident in daily interaction. As part of the discoursal practices of both leaders and followers though humour did not present as somehow separate to the development of organisational culture in the schools in which I researched.

The staff meeting represents the enactment of power and forms an influential site for cultural development. Values are discussed, directives are issued and policy is debated. The organisational culture of how values are debated, how directives are issued and how policies are discussed is also determined through dialogue within the staff meeting. Abrams (2017) refers to this as the micro-political climate of an individual context. Each participant must access the locally defined social processes in order to manipulate the formal rules to achieve a higher level of influence. Brookfield (2005: 126) showed how we learn "about power in adult education by studying the micro-dynamics" of interaction.

By studying those micro-dynamics I propose that humour may not give additional insight into organisational culture than would be evident in other discursive practices. It does though contribute to an overall evaluation of culture because humour use does not sit separate to that which is revealed by all language use. This is because of the key link to authenticity. In the section on authenticity, I showed how the repeated evaluations in relation to immediate exchanges build up over time to create a historic view of humour use. The same is true of responses to humour when applied at organisational level. Over time certain styles of humour will either elicit or not laughter and other responses. The lack of or negative response to a particular style of humour will reduce the number of incidents of that style of humour occurring and in doing so the humour culture of that context will be co-created. This process will also determine what subjects, targets and the harshness of humour that is acceptable in each context. It is this evaluation of targets, subjects and harshness that will contribute towards the overall evaluation of lived organisational culture.

An important point to make here though is that there is nothing within humour that determines that the site-specific culture that a school will develop in relation to humour use will be a positive one. Whilst I have shown that all participants will be evaluated against the expectations associated with their role, confronting an inauthentic approach with anything other than a blank response can be difficult within a staff meeting. In extreme cases within the workplace this can lead to negative affect and present opportunities for bullying and suppressive activities to take place in the public space of a staff meeting as part of the lived organisational culture. These less

positive behaviours may be excused by the producer as “only joking” as they fail to understand that the determination of humour is ascribed by the audience. Humour as part of the lexicon of school life can be misunderstood in the same way all spoken language is open to the interpretation of the audience.

Creation of culture through dialogue is not a fixed process with a beginning, middle and end. It is fluid and ongoing throughout the life of the organisation. Each staff meeting brings with it further opportunity to change the boundaries of accepted humour culture by both productive and receptive methods. Individual schools develop their different cultures through their negotiated co-constructed interactions. The use of humour can be seen as an element of the discoursal process that reveals the lived culture rather than the articulated culture of a particular school. The research of humour can sometimes place it as a singular operational process that sits apart from other communicative processes, an interesting aside to the real work of creating organisational culture within individual contexts. Humour should be seen as one window through which the lived culture of an organisation can be viewed.

Because there is nothing in the nature of humour or humour use that determines it as a positive force I will now reflect on the implications for members of a school team and the school leader.

> RQ 4.) What implications for school leaders and other meeting participants can be suggested by gaining a better understanding of humour use within Primary School staff meetings?

8.7 Contribution to Leadership Practice

School leaders are held accountable for establishing the organisational culture of their school. When humour is researched in schools it is usually discussed in relation to humour use in the classroom or for developing relationships within the staffroom. I have shown that humour occurred in the staff meetings every two and a half minutes. In none of the fourteen meetings was the use of humour discussed as a topic in itself.

School teams do not appear to discuss humour use as part of their cultural development. The pervading view in practice and research appears to be that humour culture and organisational culture are two different things that can be treated separately.

By separating them the school leader may be neglecting a key area in the cultural development of their organisation. Without a proper understanding of the link to organisational development it would be possible for a school leader to dismiss humour as unimportant in their grand vision. But humour use could also be one of the significant processes by which their vision is either enacted or undermined. School leaders cannot ignore humour culture nor can they stop it. It is possible for a school leader to use their position to conduct meetings that contain very little humour use. This does not mean that there is no humour culture in the school. It may mean that there is a culture in a school which determines the way in which young people and staff members are discussed about which the school leader is unaware. By not supressing the use of humour in a staff meeting the school leader is able to both observe the culture in practice and to influence that culture if they feel appropriate.

The emotional response example in my data demonstrates complexities of decision making that leaders must navigate and the nuanced nature of creating culture through repeated words and actions. In that example the school leader used humour at the expense of a young person to reduce the heightened emotional state of the staff team. This reduction in emotional state changed the focus of the staff from themselves and enabled the staff to concentrate on finding solutions for the young person. The evaluation of culture that sits alongside this example will take into account the frequency that such incidents occur and the harshness of the language used. In a staff room where young people were regularly targeted to reduce the emotional stress of teachers it would be possible to see how the published values of the school no longer aligned with the language used. However if the acceptability of that regular targeting had been socially agreed by all participants including the leader it is possible for a culture to develop through osmotic agreement. It is not a subversive or counter-culture, it is *the* culture. This is why school leaders must be aware of and engage with humour in schools.

Whilst I have shown that school leaders need to engage with humour in their communities I do not advocate a position with regard to their own use of humour. The decision to send leaders on courses to use humour feels at odds with the education sectors approach to leadership and the outcome of this research showing the complexity of inter-related factors. I suggest that a far more relevant approach is for school leaders to view their own use of humour (if they choose to use it) and the humour that occurs in their presence as indicators of culture. A school leader's engagement with humour should be an evaluation of whether it aligns with the culture they are trying to create. Where humour is used to express views that do not align with culture then a leader may be required to act in a way that addresses that threat as they would if those views were expressed without the use of humour. Should the leader use humour themselves they will need to monitor that usage and its alignment to the organisational culture they are seeking to achieve. Of course organisational culture does not remain the sole responsibility of the leader. All staff meeting participants have a significant role to play in co-creating culture.

Contribution to Participant Practice

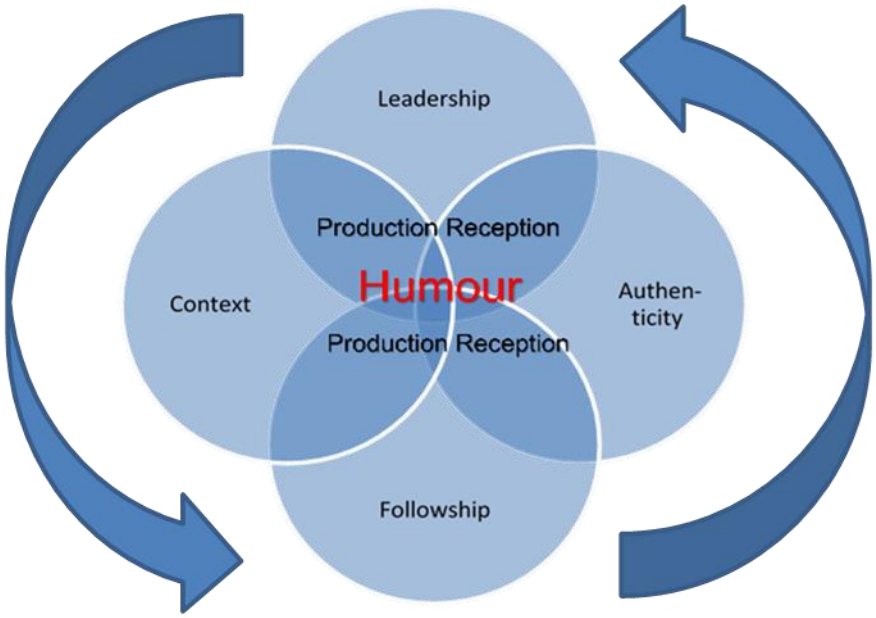
In discussions about culture, language can be used that appears to suggest that culture can somehow be divided up into individual elements. Terms such as subversive culture, counterculture and organisational culture give the impression of disconnected groups (Fitzsimmons and Nehring 2011). My research indicates that these components are facets of a singular co-created culture with all members using humour fluidly in support of and to subvert organisational goals. The importance of culture in schools is its impact upon the lives of the children and adults that make up that community. My research contains many occasions where humour use by the leader does not create a laughter response in the staff team. I have discussed in the data and analysis section why that may be the case. Some critical management theorists (Collinson, 1988, Grugulis, 2002, Holmes, 2000) may identify that the inherent quality of humour to be disordering or subversive is manifested in this lack of response. Subversion as much through a lack of response as by the production of

humorous comments. But I would go further and link this to the work of Huber and Brown (2017: 1110), “we show that there are forms of control in organizations that are not exercised by any one individual or elite group, that are not intentional or purpose-driven, and that affect everyone”. It is this view that has implications for participant practice within a staff meeting. Whilst the various frameworks that govern education hold the school leader to account for cultural development all participants, jointly and individually, have responsibilities in this regard. All participants in a primary school staff meeting have the opportunity to contribute to the organisational culture through their production of and response to humour.

My evidence supports Westwood and Johnston’s (2012) conclusion that the challenge that humour allows may only be superficial. I have examples of humour being used to challenge authority and examples of humour’s mediating effect between power and politeness (Holmes 2000). Huber and Brown’s proposal (2017: 1108) that, “all organizational members are complicit in defining discourses, subject positions and appropriate conduct through discursive processes that are distributed and self-regulatory” have more resonance here. Primary School staff meeting participants have responsibilities in regard to humour similar to those of the leader. The participant production and reception of different styles of humour will be part of the process that determines school culture. The manner in which the school treats young people, each other, parents, stakeholders, gender issues etc. will be affected by the humour use that the community of practice allows. The production/reception, leader/follower interaction is important in understanding humour use in schools. The context of the primary school staff meeting and evaluation of authenticity add additional levels of influence in understanding how humour use can be a cultural indicator. Combining those factors produced Fig. 17 repeated below. This provides a framework which school practitioners and researchers can use to evaluate the nature of humour use and its contribution to individual school cultures. By analysing the leader/follower interactions alongside evaluations of authenticity in a specific context, practitioners may be able to offer some conclusions relating to the lived culture of that organisation. I, along with the schools, chose the staff meeting as the point of research but other meetings and less formal interactions can also be understood using

this tool. Whilst the nature of the participants and the context in which the exchange occurs will change the process of evaluating against these factors will remain constant. Also remaining constant will be the evaluation of authenticity as a fluid process formed and re-formed in every interaction. Throughout this study I have acknowledged some similar processes found within different sectors whilst at the same time demonstrating the unique nature of the Primary School context. Researchers seeking to use this tool outside of education will first need to demonstrate that the dominant factors that I have shown to be central to understanding humour use in Primary Schools are equally dominant within other industries.

Fig. 17. Understanding Humour in Primary School Meetings



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Appendix One – Omissions

As there are no similar studies into the use of humour in Primary School staff meetings there were many lines of enquiry that deserve much greater consideration but sit outside my research questions. The two main areas where I think further study is required are:

1.) I think further work is required to understand how humour use changes over time in relation the responses given to attempts at humour following leadership changes. When a new leader joins a school there will be an existing culture of humour creation and reception that exists within the staff meeting. The leaders impact on humour is well researched however I would like to undertake a longitudinal study over a three year period on the development of humour use starting from day one of the appointment of a new head teacher in a school, in particular to understand the response to humour. Mapping the change over time may give additional insights into how humour culture develops in line with leader stated culture and the impact that has on the acceptability of different humour styles and usage. That same understanding may be achieved by returning to the schools that kindly engaged in this research six months after a leadership change to ascertain whether and how humour use has changed in these particular contexts.

2.) The second area where further study is required is in relation to whether there is a gender imbalance in the humour use by leaders in primary school staff meetings. Where other researchers have identified differences in the styles of humour used by male and female leaders (Schnurr 2009) this has not been within the context of Primary Schools where between seventy-five and eighty percent of the workforce is female (BESA 2017, DFE 2019). The leaders in the schools that assisted me in my research were female as were most of the staff. There is an identified issue of males being disproportionately represented in leadership positions within the Primary sector and I propose a similar study to this one that targets Primary School contexts where the leaders are male so that a comparison can be made with the data collected

for this research.

3.) The final area for further research relates to the methodology. I remain committed to my methodological decisions and the use of audio recordings over video to reduce the active influencing of the data I collected. The lack of evidence relating to non-verbal responses means that there are occasions where my analysis is based on procedural contextual and discoursal clues. If I were to repeat the study, I would propose a more ethnographic approach whereby I not only recorded the meetings but was present in them to note non-verbal responses. The EdD. programme is aimed at practitioners and being present during fourteen staff meetings not connected to my own school would have been impractical as a full-time school leader myself. This approach would bring its own methodological concerns but the presence of the researcher whilst the recordings were being made would have added an additional layer of evidence to further support the outcomes.

Appendix Two Extracts

Extract 20. Meeting 4 - Minute 70.57

Extract 21. Meeting 1 - Minute 58.03

Extract 22. Meeting 5 - Minute 96.15

Extract 23. Meeting 9 - Minute 22.05

Extract 24. Meeting 1 - Minute 4.06

Extract 25. Meeting 4 - Minute 65.18

Extract 26. Meeting 6 - Minute 12.59

Extract 27. Meeting 5 - Minute 63.03

Appendix Three Introductory Letter

Dear Participant,

As a teacher you will be aware of the value of lifelong learning; for me this has led to my undertaking of a Doctoral Study in Leadership. The particular element I want to look at is the way that conversations are structured in staff meetings. I'm not really interested in the content or quality of debate, I know that will be excellent, I want to look at conventions surrounding how we talk to each other in meetings.

The focus for this will be to look at how conversation structures such as humour, turn taking, interruption etc. are used in staff meetings. In order to study this I want to record a number of your staff meetings. I will then select relevant sections and transcribe them. When I do that the individual contributors will be identified by a number or a letter to ensure total anonymity for all participants. The recording instrument will be in the room and you can turn it off and on if you feel there are parts of the conversation you don't want recorded.

When I have analysed how conversations are structured, I will write it up into a thesis, which if it is of sufficient quality, will be published. The names of the schools and any contributors will be anonymised. I would also like to come back to your school at the end of the research and let you know my findings. I hope that it will give a greater insight into the way that elements of conversation are used to create a shared understanding.

In terms of what happens next, I hope to have 10 minutes at the end of one of your staff meetings which will give you the chance of asking any questions, receive an information sheet and to sign consent forms. Remember participation is entirely voluntary and no-one has to take part that doesn't want to. Clearly I hope you do decide to help as the outcome should be a better understanding of leadership behaviours within education.

If you want further information or want to ask specific questions I can be contacted via the university or by e-mail at j.d.smith19@canterbury.ac.uk

Kindest Regards

Justin Smith

Project: An analysis of conversation structures used within formal meetings.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

A research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) by Justin Smith. This is a solo research project

Background

The purpose of the study is to look at how the way we communicate within a staff meeting or other formal meeting. I want to work with you to understand the role that conversational elements such as turn taking, direction, humour etc. play in meetings that are more formal. What I am NOT looking at is the content of the meeting, the subject matter is largely irrelevant, I am looking at the way that communication in these meetings is structured. The research is the final and most significant part of my Doctoral Study.

What will you be required to do?

If you agree to participate in this study all that you will be required to do is to take part in meetings that form part of your normal working life; staff meetings, team meetings, SLT meetings etc.

To participate in this research you must:

Ideally, I would like all participants to be members of the school team and be familiar with the meeting protocols that they are attending.

Procedures

In order that the research goes ahead it is important that I get permission from everyone attending the meetings. Once that permission has been agreed I will attend the school with a recording device on the days of the meeting or have it delivered. The meeting will be recorded and the device removed from site – this is to ensure that nobody feels any sense that recordings can happen at any point other than the formal meetings. As a participant, your role will be to simply take part in the meeting in your usual way. If during your meeting you want to turn off the recorder, because of subject matter etc. you can do.

Feedback

As the meetings are group activities I will not be feeding back to individual participants. On completion of my Doctorate, everyone who has taken part will be

invited to an evening explanation of the work and their role in it and anyone who wants an electronic copy will be given access to it.

Confidentiality

All data and personal information will be stored securely within CCCU premises in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the University's own data protection requirements. Data can only be accessed by me Justin Smith. After completion of the recording, all data will be made anonymous (i.e. all personal information associated with the data will be removed). Where transcripts are made of any segments, participants will be referred to as, "A", "B" etc.

Dissemination of results

Following completion of my thesis, it may be published in full or in part and may be used as part of the wider academic knowledge base accessible via the university or other databases.

Deciding whether to participate

If you have any questions or concerns about the nature, procedures or requirements for participation do not hesitate to contact me. Should you decide to participate, you will be free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.

Any questions?

Please contact Justin Smith on j.d.smith19@canterbury.ac.uk if you've got any further questions.

Appendix Five Consent Form

Canterbury Christ Church University

CONSENT FORM

An analysis of different conversation structures used within formal meetings.

Name of Researcher: Justin Smith

Address:	Doctoral Student, SOTED, Canterbury Christ Church University, Canterbury, Kent
Tel:	01227 927700
Email:	j.d.smith19@canterbury.ac.uk

	Please initial box
1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.	
3. I understand that any information that I provide to the researchers will be kept strictly confidential and will only be used for research purposes.	
4. I agree to take part in the above study.	

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	
Name of Person taking consent (if different from researcher)	Date	Signature
_____	_____	
Researcher	Date	Signature