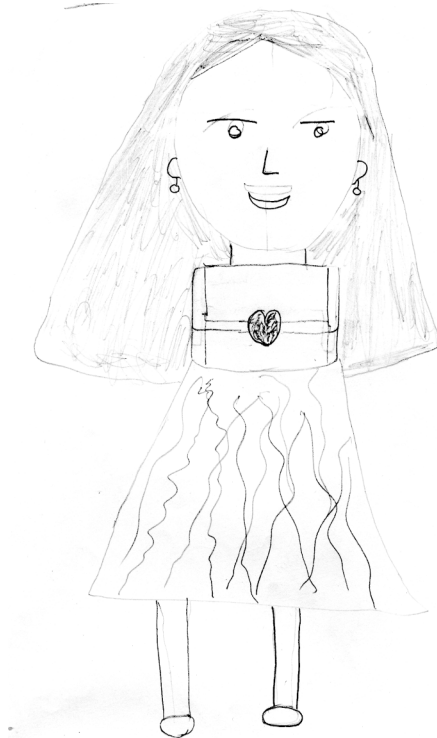


Appendix 5

A Snapshot of Child -5 [Manini]

Please note this character sketch was done, in June 2002, before I named the children (cf. Chapter 2 –p.37). Hence I have referred to them as Child 1 or C1, Child 2 or C2 and so forth, as that was the practice I followed while writing data up till June 2003.



Drawing of Manni done by Lali

C5's reputation preceded her; both the SENCO and her mother had given me a vivid description of the child. Someone who was:

Manipulative-

Child -5's mother suggested she is very manipulative. She is very clever and knows when to use her brains was what she said. The mother narrated an incident when C-5 was just five years old and her brother was a babe-in-arms. Her father's cousin had come to stay with them so her mother asked him to drop the child to the bus pick-up point explaining specifically not to cross the road as the pick-up point was on their side of the road. Once

down C-5 explained to the young man, who was 21 yrs old, how she had to actually wait across the road. Even though the cousin who was sure they did not have cross, was convinced by her that they had to in fact cross the road. Only when she noticed that the bus had gone she told the cousin that now let us go back home as she could not go to school as they had stood on the wrong side of the road and missed the school bus.

1st Parent Interview

Bossy-

Who is the child's best friend? She does have a 'best friend'

Why do you think she/he is the best friend? As that girl always listens to her

1st Parent Interview

The SENCO during the first interview told me “Be firm and strict with her, as she tends to take over and not give other children a chance.” I was warned that she was someone who would take over the control of my class unless I took care.

And what a different child walked into my class on the 1st day. C5 definitely stood out as one of the clever ones, a strong child who seemed quite sophisticated for her age. I reason it is her home environment that makes her stand out amongst others in the class. Her parents are professionals; her father is a computer engineer and mother is a psychologist. However, she fits in very comfortably and does not feel or behave as if there is a difference between the others and her. She never once tried to ‘takeover’ the class, answered sensibly and did not speak just for the sake of being heard.

C5 always wears her uniform to the drama class. At all times neatly dressed, there is nothing ‘fashionable’ about her. Her hair is oiled and tied back in a long plait. It is a joy to have her in the class, as she is always ready to do things, obedient, polite and well behaved.

She has mild general learning disabilities (MLD), a perceptual problem in the organization of written work. In her case learning disabilities interferes with the acquisition and use of written language (written expression).

Confidence

She is a very confident child, everybody; her parents, the SENCO and her class teacher, confirms this.

- She likes answering questions asked by the teacher in class. Does not feel scared when the teacher asks questions.
- Feels she can ask the teacher to explain things she does not understand in class, and she even likes to help the teacher.

C5's answers in Children's Worksheet- My Teacher Appendix 8

She has a positive relationship with the SENCO

- Loves talking. She has too many ideas to discuss, even to the smallest detail. Often comes running into my [the recourse] room to tell me something.
- Friendly.
- If she knows the answer she has to speak it, she cannot keep quiet or control herself.
- She is very bold; when she gets bored she has to convey it and says so candidly.

SENCO 1st Interview

In the first class both C7 and C5 set the tone in helping deciding the rules for the future classes. However, it was C-5 who started by giving the first answer. Even though children in Indian schools are not familiar an activity of this nature as they are not included in rule making at school C-5 picked up the concept immediately and was confident enough to answer. Importantly she answered rationally and with ease.

Swaroop: Ok? Now tell me about a few rules we should make for our class?

Manini: We will not laugh at each other when we make mistakes.

This was a promising start were my reflections-in-action because: 1. Someone started speaking immediately. ...

Journal Class 1-5.1.2002

- Swaroop: Let me ask you something...when we were walking around, just a while back what happened?
- C-5: When we were walking around we banged into each other.
- Swaroop: Yes ...and...?
- C-5: We should not bang into each other when we walk.
- Swaroop: Ok. What other rule should we make?
- C-5: We should not fight.
- Swaroop: Definitely. We should not fight with each other. Disorderly behaviour is undesirable.
- Swaroop: There is no recess...so...
- C-7: ...Only one hour.
- Swaroop: Yes, [the length of our class is] only one hour. Then what rule should we make? What about coming late?
- C-5: We should not come late. We should come sharp at 9.30.

Transcript: Class 1- 5.1.2002

Even during reflection time, another unfamiliar concept to Indian school children C-5 was the first to answer.

Swaroop: Now we will talk for two minutes about this class, and what we felt during the class, how we feel about this class. How did you feel in this class?

C5: Nice (*again the first to answer*)

Transcript: Class 1- 5.1.2002

In the first class when I took photographs, the students usually stopped whatever they were doing and would rush to me, and would stand right in front of the camera. I faced a great difficulty photographing the children on the first day as they invariably came too close to the lens. C-5 was the only child to follow instructions.



...the minute I took out the camera nearly all the children rushed towards the camera, so I moved back. As I moved back they rushed closer to me. As I would move backward they would move forward towards me. As a result I do not think I got any effective photographs.

Except for C-5 who following my instructions went all the way back and climbed a stool and posed. Suddenly all the children rushed toward the back...

Journal- Class 1- 5.1.2002

Competitive Disorder

There is a discrepancy in her behaviour here. She is confident but at the same time suffers from competitive disorder. With her kind of intelligence and creativity she should be able to perform much better in school. However, I believe that the fact that she has a writing problem pulls her down.

Mother: ...and SENCO told me for the English exams.....she (C5) told I have to get 105 marks I have already written enough in the of paper to get that many marks I am not writing any more.

Transcript- 2nd Parent interview

Her mother constantly compares her with her younger brother. She has repeatedly told me about how good he is at everything he does studies, karate, music and so on. She says she has offered to put C-5 in any class she wants to go to but feels if she did it would just be a waste of money as the girl is just not interested in anything. ‘No creativity’ – her mother says.

2nd Parent interview

Teachers’ multiple-choice questionnaire January 2002

(Teacher’s answers in Bold)

Paying attention always distracted / **just sits looking blankly** / pays
in class attention/ couldn’t be bothered

Working in class works independently / **doesn’t do work unless watched**
Doesn’t work / unmotivated sits blankly

New task **starts eagerly but leaves work half done** / seems scared to
start but once started is fine / avoid all new activity
likes challenges

However I noticed what was true in school was not so for my class.

C5 is always ready to do stuff, the first with suggestions, the first to answers always eager to start....

After that I asked them to walk around as if they were tired. And they walked ...cheerfully...A grin on their faces. Hopping along...this was what I was looking for. My moment to side-coach: Do you'll look as if you'll are tired? Do you'll normally walk fast when you'll are tired? Do you'll smile?

C5 was fast to pick up my meaning. She immediately walked slowly, with a pronounced stoop, and a serious expression on her face....

... I find that it's usually C2 who comes up with the most 'understood' answer. C5 is another one who understands..

Journal: Class 6- 23.2.2002

I know I have a few potential leaders C2, C5, C8, and C7.

Journal: Class 4-2.2.2002

I believe C-5 experiences stress due to failure and thus invariably answered only a part of the exam papers. It is as if she is scared she would to get poor marks even after trying her best and thus she solved just enough questions to obtain a passing grade. By leaving most of the questions unanswered her behaviour suggested that if she got poor marks it was because she did not try her best. This strategy of avoidance has been confirmed by Thomson (1988, in Miles, 1996, p114) when a boy intentionally did badly in his test *'because then neither you nor I will ever know how well I would have done if I tried'*. Chin and Crossman (1995 in Miles, 1996, p.114) make a similar point when they quote a response by a dyslexic child: *'I don't want to fail when I have done my best. If I think I am going to fail then I won't do my best so when I fail I think, 'Well I didn't try.'*

Teasing and Bullying

None

Behaviour

Her mother during the second parent interview at the end of Cycle 1 told me about C5's recently formed habit of taking money from her purse. When the mother cross-questioned her, the child invariably said she found it on the floor/ground. She also made some strong statements about C-5 during our second meeting.

She said:

- she has been speaking lies;
- she has no fear or shame;
- She was arrogant; and
- 'her behaviour pattern...[was as if] that she give two hoots'.

Concerning what her mother termed as 'stealing' behaviour I was not shocked, as C5 had already told me about this.

Children's Work sheet: My Mother

My mother feels sad when I-...take Rs.2 and buy Choco-stick[an ice cream]..she says I
should not give you money.

I wish my mother would- Give me pocket money Rs.300 everyday.

I wonder why she needs so much money. It was the first question that came to my mind when I read the answers to My Mother worksheets. Is this just a desire to break free from strict rules? Because all she wants to do is buy ice-cream (Choco-stick), apparently her mother keeps a strict watch on sweets, chocolates and ice-creams. Moreover, I speculated, if she was being deceitful would she have written in her worksheet that she takes money without telling her mother and that upsets her mother?

Journal: Class 6- 23.2.2002

These statements show a discrepancy in her behaviour in school and at home. At school she showed no 'behaviour problem', as reported by the SENCO and class teacher. Even in the drama class she did not display arrogant, brash or audacious behaviour. Therefore, I believe her relationship with her mother needs to be investigated. Her mother once told me that she is so lazy she does not like to go out and likes to play with the kitchen

toys at home. At another time she told me she just loves to come for the drama class as it is an excuse to get out of home!

Her mother mentioned that she does not discriminate between the two children. However, in her conversation with me in the 2nd parent's interview she repeatedly told me how "good" her son was in everything and how C5 could not even study well. Even C5 even felt that her mother loved her brother more.

Mother: I remember she went and told somebody...a cousin of hers, 'Our mummy loves only the son'. So I asked her, 'what makes her say that? What is it that you have not received from me, which I give the boy?'

Transcript- 2nd Parent interview

However the child is not overtly jealous of the brother as in 'My Brother' worksheet she wrote that she likes it when he gets good grades and she likes to help him 'because he needs help/ his handwriting and because he is younger I feel responsible'. She wrote that she feels sad when their parents get angry with him, and honestly added that 'sometimes I feel glad as he should get a firing for some things.'

Truancy

Besides that incident which took place when she was five years old (p. 29), there is no evidence of truancy. In fact she likes to go to school and even enjoys the 'drama classes'

Swaroop: Does she like to come for drama classes?

Mother : Oh yes! My God.

Transcript: 2nd Parent Interview

Violence

None

Communication

She has a communication problem with her mother, who is the main caretaker as her father is often away at the Oil Rig where he works.

Her mother noticed that she had stopped speaking a lot and had as if ‘gone in her shell’. She complained that C5 did not speak much; she did not share her day with her mother.

Mother: ..That is one thing I have to develop in to her.. is she does not discuss... forget your class... she doesn’t discuss what happens in school . She doesn’t discuss when she has gone with somebody. She doesn’t come home and tell me what she did... When she goes for birthday party.. you know. Come home and talk your experience...talking out....but no she doesn’t do...

Transcript: 2nd Parent Interview

This is in variance to what her teachers say:

- Excellent orally
- Loves talking. She as too many ideas to discuss, even to the smallest detail. Often comes running into my [the recourse] room to tell me something.
- If she knows the answer she has to speak it, she cannot keep quiet or control herself.
- She is very bold, when she gets bored she has to convey and says so openly.

1st SENCO Interview

Teachers’ multiple-choice questionnaire April 2002

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Talking to the | over-talkative /avoids teacher /talks only when alone |
| Teacher | with teacher / moody / |

Even I had formed a different opinion about her

C5 is a chatterbox, intelligent, full of life, very pleasant, wants to do everything, very friendly. I think the SENCO and her mother made too much about her being manipulative, over-powering and her being too talkative. She does talk but usually never out of turn.

Journal: Class 3- 26.1.2002

Her mother had said something quite different when I met her for the first time.

What is the child good at doing: Talking- 'sweet talking' (her mothers words)

She talks well and if you talk to her sweetly she is yours.

1st Parent Interview

In fact she had grilled me and asked:

Why her daughter, who was a confident child and could talk well, should attend a class to learn communication skills. Moreover did C 5 really need her self-esteem raised?