

SECTION TWO: THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

In this section we set the theoretical and methodological frames for the research and for the book. The section consists of two chapters. The first is largely theoretical. In it we outline what we mean by a 'social practice' approach to numeracy and in particular the central concepts of numeracy events and practices. We consider the different approaches to the concept of the 'social' in numeracy research and offer an 'extended' view to counteract the sometimes narrow definitions evident in the field. Our conceptions of numeracy as social have built upon and extended work in the field of literacy as social practice and we provide here a brief account of some of that work and of conceptual development in that field. We then introduce our own concepts of numeracy events and practices that provided the building blocks for the research described in the rest of the book and indicate what we mean by an 'ideological model' of numeracy. We then summarise a number of other approaches to the sitedness of numeracy that we have built upon and offer a brief signalling of our distinction between site and domain that underpinned much of our data collection. The second chapter in this section is concerned with methodology. We describe here the sites we focused upon in our research and in particular the children and the schools that figure throughout the book. We justify the selections of subjects in terms of the theoretical and conceptual framework outlined in earlier chapters and explain for the reader the approaches we have used to explore relationships between home and school via case studies and critical incidents. In particular we draw upon the methodological debates in social science research to justify our emphasis upon case studies as the critical focus for data collection and analysis. We describe for the reader our working practices as a research team, indicating the dialectical process between building initial concepts and models and then, through report back and discussion of field data, how we came to modify these and to develop new categories. One such set of classifications that arose from this interaction with the data was the distinction between sites and domains and we offer here both a model and some illustrative data as a basis for the fuller accounts to which the reader will be exposed in Sections 3 and 4.