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Rejecting the "Docile Body":
Resisting Students and the Regime of Truth

by

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Rejecting the "Docile Body": Resisting Students and the Regime of Truth" submitted by Lori Olafson in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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Abstract

The objective of this research project was to investigate the phenomenon of resisting middle school students and their participation in the assessment system.

Six male participants were involved in this study. Data was collected through the technique of interviewing. The resulting reconstructed life stories (van Manen 1990) were analyzed using Gore's (1993) framework for analyzing regimes of truth.

The study found that the problems of assessment experienced by resisting students can be traced to the context, or framework, of assessment systems that are located within a particular pedagogical ideology. The construction of teacher-student relationships through the enactment of power relations within this ideology had a profound effect on the student's life at school and impacted especially upon student assessment.

This study recommends the creation of a "third space" (Gutierrez, Rymes and Larson 1995) to improve the lives of resisting students and to improve the context of assessment.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my son, Rob.

He has taught me through his example the meaning of "determination".

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: "LAYING OUT THE MAP OF THE TRIP"¹

1.1 INTENT OF THE RESEARCH

There comes a moment when the researcher needs to communicate in writing what he or she has been up to.
(van Manen 1990, p. 125)

For the past year, I have "been up to" the investigation of a phenomenon that I have found to be compelling in my experience as a practicing teacher. That phenomenon involves middle school students for whom there is a significant discrepancy between achievement and grade placement and for whom there appears to be no conclusive evidence of learning disability or lower/delayed cognitive development as measured by the school division. Although they are not successful at school learning, these students do not fit into existing categories to receive modified or specialized programs. These are the students that very often "fall through the cracks" in the school system. I am particularly interested in the ways that these students participate in the assessment system and how the assessment system is problematic for these students.

¹ The title for this chapter comes from Becker (1986, p. 53).

1.1.1 THE PROBLEM

Previous studies of these students, often called "marginalized", "at-risk" or "educationally vulnerable" students, have focused on economically disadvantaged students or students from ethnic minorities (Fine 1991, McLaren 1989, Sefa Dei 1993, Solnicki 1992, Willis 1977). There is a growing realization, however, that white, middle-class students may also be disaffected and alienated from school (McLaren 1989). The school division in which this study occurred also realized that there was a growing population of these students and called for proposals in order to address the problem.

The white middle-class students that are disaffected from school in this study display certain characteristics in common with economically disadvantaged students or ethnic minority students that have been researched in previous studies. For example, the middle-class students in this study, like Willis' working-class "lads" in London, are characterized by "entrenched general and personal opposition to authority" (Willis, p. 11). Sefa Dei's study (1993) of Black high school students in Toronto showed that this attitude is outwardly demonstrated when students fail to do homework or pay attention in class, when students skip school and classes, and when students do not respect school rules, regulations and teachers. These behaviors are also demonstrated by the white middle-class disaffected students, and they result in failing marks on assignments and tests, failing marks in subjects, and failure of an entire year which increases the potential for dropping out of school (Fine 1991). Dropping out of school has severe economic and social consequences: "In Canada, currently, it is widely believed that 30% of students do not finish high school and that, at the present drop out level, as many as one million

under-educated and untrained youth will have entered the Canadian labour market by the year 2000" (Sefa Dei 1993, p. 4). For the purposes of this study, the white middle-class disaffected students in this study who have much in common with marginalized students will be known as "students of difference" (Ellsworth 1989) and resisting students. The concept of "students of difference" is discussed in Chapter Two as I respond to the problematic nature of the current understanding of marginalization. The term resisting students, comes from Bennett and LeCompte's (1990) notion of resistant students, those students who do not wish to negotiate on the school's terms. I use the term "resisting" to describe the students in this study because it is more descriptive of the active and ongoing nature of their resistance. The concept of resisting students is explicated in Chapter Three.

The attitudes and behaviors that these students engage in makes this a very visible problem. Grossberg (1989, p. 94) suggests that when problems with youth become visible it is because the problem "is positioned at the site of an already-constructed problem". The problems with resisting students occur in large part because of the institutional response to such students. In other words, the already-constructed problem in this case stems from the beliefs and practices of the school's bureaucratic organization. The problem is extremely problematic from the school's perspective, because resisting students disrupt the efficient flow of their educations (Fine 1991): "Resistors are a problem for schools because they cause trouble and are likely to drop-out" (Bennett and LeCompte, p. 106). It is my experience that schools have limited strategies for coping with resisting students. The mother of one of the participants who declined to be involved

in this study noted that "if the child doesn't fit the mold, the school doesn't know what to do with them" (Fieldnotes, 30/10/95).

The problem of resisting students is highly visible, then, and is recognized as a problem by teachers, administrators, school divisions and researchers. It is a problem that exists at the site of an already-constructed problem.

I also believe however, that these students can make a difference in the world: "The room for possibility and transformation lies with the energy of these adolescents" (Fine 1991, p. 52). Before we can begin to see that there is indeed a possibility for transformation, we need to look behind the acts of resistance. Willis (1977) says that we need to look for the potential or submerged meanings behind the attitudes and behavior of these students. That is one of the intents of this study - what does it mean when students engage in resistant behavior? Fine advocates a reframing of resistance - we need to reinterpret resistant behaviors and traditional ways of dealing with resisting students:

They don't come to school or to class. They fail to do homework, or pay attention. We need to reinterpret some of these behaviors as resistant, evaluative, and critical comments about the nature of schooling and the questionable relationship of schooling to economic mobility and social empowerment. But more important, for the moment, we need to understand that punishing these students, with retention, automatic failure, suspension or the absence of retrieval programs, has severe and adverse consequences (Fine 1991, p. 246).

1.1.2 INVESTIGATING THE PROBLEM

The intent of this research was the investigation of the problematic phenomenon of resisting students, and particularly the role of the assessment system in the perpetuation of the problem. The primary question that guided the research was "What is the experience of assessment like for resisting students?" Assessment of resisting

students is particularly problematic because in their struggle to win space from the institution and its rule, they try to defeat the school's main perceived purpose: to make you "work" (Willis 1977). When students resist doing the "work" they receive failing marks and grades, which lead to failed subjects and even failed years.

Another research question, then, was "What are the aspects of the assessment system that are problematic for resisting students, and why are they problematic?" Based on my previous work, I believed that the context of the assessment assumes greater importance than the tools or methods for assessment. Specifically, the teacher-student relationship impacts on the assessment of resisting students. This is a view shared by Johnston and Nicholls (1995, p. 370): "In the end, assessment is always more social than technical". Therefore, additional research questions were "How does the teacher-student relationship impact the assessment of resisting students?" and "What are the social aspects of assessment and how are they experienced by resisting students?"

It is important to note that this research has become part of an ongoing project. It has provided the genesis for a three year collaborative research project between the University of Calgary, the school division where this research occurred, and the middle school where I was a participant in the lives of resisting students. This project, "Understanding and Educating Resisting Students", is discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

1.1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Assessment is particularly problematic for resisting students. I argue that the problems of assessment experienced by resisting students can be traced to the context, or framework, of assessment systems that are located within a particular pedagogical

ideology.

The dominant culture produces dominant educational discourses (Gore 1993) and the dominant school culture. Developing and promoting an institutional culture is one way to coordinate the conduct of independent students and teachers: "such a school culture expresses the collective values to which individuals in the organization subscribe" (Clifton and Roberts 1993, p. 29). Giroux (1994, p. 38) maintains that the institutional culture of schools is representative of the features of the dominant culture and that the dominant vision of schools is "defined largely through the logic of corporate values and the imperatives of the marketplace." According to McLaren (1989) this dominant school culture is lived by students in the following ways: doing homework, being punctual, speaking politely, working quietly, not distracting neighbors, and showing deference to authority. Gore (1993) argues that Foucault's (1980a) notion of regime of truth can be applied at micro-levels of pedagogy as a tool for analysis, because pedagogies operate as regimes of truth. The dominant school culture can therefore be viewed as a regime of truth, and this data analysis examines particular practices in the dominant school culture using regime of truth as a tool for analysis.

In North American schools, the dominant school culture is prevalent. Some schools have made an effort to deviate from the dominant school culture and create an alternative culture. Fine (1991) mentions two such schools in New York. Another example of a school choosing to provide an alternative culture is the Alternative High School in Calgary. Individual teachers may also make an attempt to provide an alternative culture in their classrooms within their school sites. The two schools in this

study, however, functioned with the dominant school culture firmly in place.

The dominant school culture is presented as a single reality with a single voice, the "authoritative discourse" that demands "unconditional allegiance" and "permits no play with the context framing it, no play with its borders" (Bakhtin 1984, p. 194). The single reality and the single voice of the dominant school culture blend together to become a single truth. Fine's (1992, p. 124) assertion that "pedagogy requires single truths" is especially true in the dominant school culture. In the classroom, the teacher is the representative of this single truth upon which the asymmetrical power relations that characterize the teacher-student relationship are based: "the pedagogical process embodies power relations between and among teachers and learners" (Gore 1993, p. 58). The enactment of power relations is played out in countless and controlling ways by both teachers and students. Teachers use their power to maintain the regime of truth using techniques of surveillance, silencing, sarcasm, and rule enforcement. Students who respond with resistance to the regime of truth do not conform to the values of the dominant school culture.

It is within this context that assessment systems are located. I use Gore's framework (1993) to analyze the power relations in assessment systems as they occur in the regime of truth. I argue that assessment systems, in fact, operate as a socio-political dimension of the regime of truth and function to maintain the regime of truth.

Within the dominant school culture and its ideology of control and management, assessment is viewed as a technical matter. Assessment is something to be done to students, rather than with them (Johnston and Nicholls 1995). Johnston and Nicholls

provide an alternative view of assessment that takes into account the interactive nature of assessment: "Assessment as it occurs in schools, is far from a merely technical problem. Rather, it is deeply social and personal" (1995, p. 359). The problems of assessment are "people" problems, not technical problems, says Johnston, because "any assessment must be used in a social context and for a social purpose" and because "assessment is always interpretive" (1992, p. 60). The social, personal, and interpretive character of assessment is ignored by the dominant school culture's view of assessment.

1.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The most obvious limitation of this study is that participation was limited to males experiencing school failure. This occurred for several reasons. Firstly, I became oriented to the phenomenon as it occurred with male students in my classroom. That is, this phenomenon was first brought to my attention as one that occurred with male students. Secondly, as I began the exploration of the phenomenon prior to this research, I interviewed a male student. That data that was yielded was unquestionably rich, and I began a search for similar subjects for the purposes of this research. Thirdly, the resistance demonstrated by male students appears to be more visible than female resistance. Male resistant students were quickly identified by the school administrators that participated in this study.

It is important to note that female students will be included as this research continues.

1.3 PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH

This section presents the map of the trip. Chapter overviews are introduced to

provide an overview of the research. These overviews also explain many of the research decisions that were made. The literature review as a separate chapter is noticeably absent. Instead, the relevant references to the literature are interwoven through out the chapters.

1.3.1 CHAPTER TWO: THE FIELDWORK ODYSSEY

This chapter begins with a discussion of my orientation to the phenomenon, how I arrived at the stage of formal research and how the nature of that arrival influenced the research. The next section of this chapter discusses specific methodological issues, or how the research was actually conducted.

This research began as a hermeneutic phenomenological study examining the experience of assessment for resistant students. In Researching Lived Experience (1990, p. 30), van Manen outlines six research activities to pursue a phenomenon which I intended to follow: turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us; investigating experience as we live rather as we conceptualize it; reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon; describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting; maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon; balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. As I was immersed in the conversational interviews advocated by van Manen (1990), the research took an interpretive turn that I followed. As the interviews progressed, I broke away from simple description of the phenomenon. Instead of searching for the essences of the phenomenon (van Manen 1990), I became more interested with questions of the meaning of the phenomenon and with how the students themselves interpreted the meaning of their

lives at school. This direction led to an undertaking of the activities involved in researching the under-represented. These four activities constituted the methodology for the remainder of the study, and included seeking out stories, reproducing the stories, creating narratives of fidelity and rigor, and framing the reality of the narratives in a context of meaning (LeCompte 1993, Lincoln 1993). The participants in the study are not introduced in detail, but their reconstructed life stories are provided in Appendix 2 so that the reader may make their acquaintance.

1.3.2 CHAPTER THREE

The analysis for this study uses regime of truth as a tool to analyze power relations as they occur in classrooms and as they were experienced by the students in this study. The regime of truth is further used to examine the relationship of these power relations to the assessment system. The analysis focuses on four themes.

The first theme involves an examination of the institutional beliefs and practices that occur in the regime of truth. In this section, the school as a site where bureaucratic tendencies influence institutional beliefs and practices is discussed. Then, the specific example of student suspension policy is used to demonstrate the integration of the exercise of power and differentiation as it occurs in school policy.

The beliefs and practices of individual teachers and students in the exercise of power is the second theme. The objectives of the relations of power for teachers and students is discussed, followed by the ways that these objectives of power are actualized in the classroom. The teacher-student relationship is shown to have a major influence on the way that power relations are enacted in the classroom.

The third theme analyzes the ethical aspects of the regime of truth focusing on problematic aspects of the self and the assigned goals of the ethical practice of self-styling. For resisting students, there appears to be a tension between the morality imposed by the dominant school culture and their internally-constructed morality.

The final theme analyzes assessment as a socio-political aspect of the regime of truth and is truly the heart of this thesis. The lengthy analysis of the nature of power relationships in the three prior themes is necessary, I feel, for building the framework that makes a case for the operation of the regime of truth in the school, which, in turn, provides the context for assessment. A detailed analysis of the way that the dominant school culture functions as a regime of truth is required before making the argument that the assessment system sustains, and is sustained by, the regime of truth.

1.3.3 CHAPTER FOUR: THE THIRD SPACE

This chapter addresses the educational implications of this research. I advocate that a "third space" must be created in individual classrooms as an alternative to the dominant school culture in order to prevent the further alienation of resisting students. Improving the lives of resisting students involves the development of caring and reciprocal relationships between teachers and students, teacher authority that is not experienced as authoritarian, a curriculum that is relevant and responsive, and an alternative system of assessment and reporting. A "grand theory" is not presented, rather, I emphasize that understanding, educating and assessing resisting students is an enterprise that occurs at a local level. I temper the suggestions that I offer with Gore's (1993) counsel that there are no inherently liberating or oppressive practices.

1.3.4 CHAPTER FIVE: UNDERSTANDING AND EDUCATING THE RESISTANT STUDENT

The final chapter provides a brief account of the next phase of this research by outlining how a localized instance of practical action can begin to address the issues surrounding the education and assessment of resisting students at a particular site within the structures that currently exist. I address the specific practices that I envision to be necessary in order to improve the lives of resisting students.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FIELDWORK ODYSSEY: A CONFSSIONAL TALE

Emotional reactions, new ways of seeing things, new things to see, and various mundane but unexpected occurrences that spark insight are all conventional confessional tales.

(Van Maanen 1988, p. 76)

2.1 ORIENTATION TO THE PHENOMENON

I have long been interested in the phenomenon of students who experience school failure in the absence of any documented learning difficulties or disabilities. I moved from being an elementary generalist to a special education teacher in my pursuit of understanding the phenomenon and trying to assist students to be more successful academically. When I moved to middle school, it seemed that the incidence of this phenomenon increased. For the past two years I have watched in frustration as bright students experienced academic failure. As resource program coordinator I have been involved in countless meetings regarding these students as parents, administrators and teachers have struggled to come up with a solution. The solution most often proposed has been retention in the current grade, a solution that I questioned on an ethical basis. I was certain there were more appropriate strategies, some of which I tried in the classroom. I had some successes with these students but I always felt that I wasn't doing enough and that the impact I was making was limited. What I needed was a better understanding of

the phenomenon, and that is how this study began formally.

My orientation to this phenomenon, then, began long before the actualization of this study as I participated in the lives of students who were experiencing school failure. This participation allowed me to become aware of the phenomenon and to begin asking broad questions about the phenomenon. The experiences that I had as a participant in the lives of students who were struggling academically had a significant impact on the way that I conducted my research: "To orient oneself to a phenomenon always implies a particular interest, station or vantage point in life" (van Manen 1980, p. 40). I viewed the phenomenon from the vantage point of a teacher who was certain that the causes for academic failure did not reside solely with individual students.

2.2 "SCHOOL SUCKS": ERNEST AND ASSESSMENT

My involvement with a student named Ernest was one example of a prior experience that led my research in a particular direction. A casual conversation with this high school student led to a subsequent interview that was taped and transcribed. I wrote about Ernest's assessment experiences in a paper entitled "School Sucks: Marginalization, Opposition, Counter-School Culture and School Failure". In this paper, I noted that the text of our conversational interview focused mainly on the theme of the teacher-student relationship and the effect this relationship had on assessment. This theme became central to the research question in the formal study.

The experience with Ernest also led me to explore the concept of marginalization. Originally, I used the term marginalized to describe middle-class students who experienced school failure. As my research continued, though, I found this term to be

problematic: the current understanding of marginalization did not seem to reflect the experience of these students. I found that research on marginalized students has focused primarily on ethnic minorities, economically disadvantaged white students, and ESL students (Auerbach 1991, O'Loughlin 1995, Solnicki 1992, Willis 1977). I wrote that Ernest was a marginalized student because he shared the oppositional style of "the lads" in the counter-school culture described by Willis (1977), and because the experience of repeated academic failure marginalized him from the mainstream of his peers. Although Ernest shared some of the characteristics of marginalized students, there were also differences. Unlike the working-class "lads", for example, Ernest's voice should have been one of the privileged voices at school because he is white and middle class and the curriculum is "situated within relations of power that more often than not favor white, male, middle-class, English-speaking students" (Giroux 1988, p. 165). According to the critical theorists, Ernest should have been successful at school because he is middle-class and the talk and reading at school is in the kind of language favoured by middle-class students "thus increasing their opportunities for participation and validation, and ultimately their chances of succeeding on the school's terms, and hence on society's terms" (O'Loughlin 1995, p. 109). The critical theorist's view of marginalized students emphasizes class differences and sheds little light on the phenomenon of middle-class students who are unsuccessful at school.

Gore (1993) and Ellsworth (1989) criticize the critical theorist's view of the world. Gore, for example, questions the "grand theories" of critical pedagogy: Giroux and McLaren have a commitment to a particular political vision that "emphasizes a

critique of social injustices and inequities, particularly those constructed around class differences" yet they do not prescribe specific practices for use in classrooms, but offer only an abstract outline of possibilities (1993, p. 39). van Manen (1990, p. 141) too, notes that "critical educational theory has been largely inconsequential in the efforts to improve the lives of children". Critical theorists have slipped away from the specifics of instructional aspects of education, says Gore (1993), and marginalization is one example of an issue that is dealt with abstractly rather than specifically in particular classroom sites.

2.3 STUDENTS OF DIFFERENCE

Critical pedagogy, says Ellsworth, has supported "rejection of oppression, injustice, inequality, silencing of marginalized voices, and authoritarian social structures" (1993, p. 300). The phenomenon of marginalized middle-class students, however, cannot be explained by the grand theories of critical pedagogy. Applying the label of "marginalized" to middle class students who experience school failure is perhaps a mistake.

A more useful term is Ellsworth's "students of difference". Ellsworth uses this term to refer to "social positionings in relation to the mythical norm (based on ability, size, color, sexual preference, gender, ethnicity, and so on)" (p. 302). The mythical norm is defined at this moment in history as "young, White, heterosexual, Christian, able-bodied, thin, middle-class, English-speaking, and male" (Ellsworth, p. 323). In schools, the achievement of average grades can be added to the definition of the mythical norm. The critical theorist's understanding of marginalization accepts the concept of the

mythical norm by constructing marginalization primarily along class lines, which leaves no room for middle-class students that are on the outside of the mythical norm. The term "students of difference" allows us to understand that students are "inhabiting intersections of multiple, contradictory, overlapping social positions not reducible to race, or class, or gender, and so on" (Ellsworth, p. 302): it is more useful than the term "marginalized students" because it can be applied to middle-class students that may not necessarily conform to the mythical norm.

The voices of non-mainstream, or marginalized, people such as women, racial and ethnic minorities, Natives, the poor, and gays and lesbians are silenced (Lincoln 1993, p. 29). I maintain that resisting students are students of difference, and are often not heard, because, like marginalized students and other under-represented groups, "their points of view are believed to be unimportant or difficult to access by those in power" (LeCompte 1993, p. 10). The voices of students of difference, like Ernest, need to be listened to: they are "oppositional challenges that require a dismantling of the mythical norm and its uses as well as alternatives to it" (Ellsworth, p. 310).

2.4 RESEARCHING THE UNDER-REPRESENTED

Interpretive theory "views schools as places where meaning is constructed through the social interaction of people within the setting" (Bennett and LeCompte, p. 21). Students of difference, as participants in the construction of meaning, have a particular understanding of the social interaction that occurs in schools. In order to research their understanding, four primary activities for researching the under-represented were undertaken: seeking out stories, reproducing the stories, creating narratives of fidelity

and rigor, and framing the reality of the narratives in a context of meaning (LeCompte 1993, Lincoln 1993). These activities constituted the methodology for the study.

2.4.1 SEEKING OUT STORIES

The initial job of the researcher is to identify members of the group whose stories "beg to be told" (LeCompte 1993, p. 10). I was interested in seeking out more "Ernests" to be the participants in this study: as LeCompte (1993) suggests, the definition of the group of individuals is imposed in advance of fieldwork. I defined this group of "Ernests" as students who were white, male, middle-class, English-speaking, and experiencing academic failure in middle schools. Most importantly, the participants needed to have a keen interest in telling their stories.

Participants were selected from the two middle schools in a small town outside of a major urban center. A preliminary list of potential participants was derived collaboratively with the school administrators and the school psychologist. Administrators and the psychologist were provided with the research proposal highlighting the criteria for participant selection. Eighteen possible participants were recommended by the two schools. I checked the academic standing of these students by reviewing their cumulative records. Five students with final grades of B's and C's in the previous year were rejected because they did not meet the criterion of school failure defined by low achievement or previous retention. Consent forms and covering letters were sent to thirteen students and their parents (Appendix A). No consent forms were returned to the schools prior to intervention from myself. I made follow-up phone calls to the parents of the students. In most cases, the parents were extremely interested in the study but their children were

not. One mother explained that her son had decided against participating because "he was sick and tired of answering people's questions" (Fieldnotes 06/11/95). In the end, six students agreed to participate: two students in each of grades six, seven and eight. Ernest also agreed to the use of his transcript for the study, bringing the total number of student participants to seven.

It is interesting to note that all the students who agreed to participate were known to me. I knew Ernest through his extra-curricular activities, and I knew the other students because I live and work in the community where the research occurred. I believe that the six students who agreed to participate did so because we had already established a relationship. James said that the only reason he agreed to participate was because he knew me (Fieldnotes, 11/06/95).

2.4.2. REPRODUCING STORIES

Reproducing the stories of the students began with a clear phenomenological focus. I began the fieldwork by interviewing the participants using the conversational interviews advocated by van Manen (1990) in order to capture the lived experience of the students. When the fieldwork was well under way I realized that the interviews had taken an interpretive turn: they were more than accounts of lived experience - they were the students' narrative commentaries about the construction of truth and reality in schools. I followed the interpretive quality of the interviews: as van Manen says, a certain openness is required in research "that allows for choosing directions and exploring techniques, procedures and sources that are not always foreseeable at the outset of a research project" (p. 162). The phenomenological approach initiated at the beginning

of this study was a necessary component to the interpretive work that followed. Gore recognizes the value of phenomenological work to interpretive work:

There is something about the educational enterprise that leads to the local, partial, and multiple foci of poststructural theories, there is something about the lives of those in classrooms, as well as the lives of (social) "classes", about activities that deal with people as thinking, feeling individuals, that requires the phenomenological, personal accounts of multiplicity and contradiction that are beginning to emerge in the work of feminist poststructuralists in education (p. 49).

The conversational interviews, or personal accounts of multiplicity, began on October 12, 1995 and ended on January 19, 1996. Twenty-five interviews yielded one hundred forty three pages of transcript (Figure 1). In the interviews, I followed van Manen's advice for collecting accounts of personal experience by asking the students to think of specific instances, situations or events related to the assessment experience and then exploring the whole experience to the fullest. For example, after students received their report cards, I used the prompt "Yesterday was report card day. Tell me about it". After they discussed their initial reactions, I asked the students the following questions:

What do these marks mean to you?
Do you understand how you got these marks?
Do any of the teachers' comments stand out in your mind?
How do these marks compare to the marks you thought you were going to get?
How did your parents/peers react to the report card?

Through the use of the prompt and these questions, the experience of "Report Card Day" was fully explored.

The conversational quality of the interviews was maintained throughout the fieldwork. van Manen suggests that the interviews should

Figure 2.1: Summary of Interviews

Participant	Number of Interviews Conducted	Number of Interviews Recorded	Number of Interviews with Fieldnotes	Number of Interviews Transcribed
Dan	4	4	4	2
Jeff	5	5	5	3
Richard	4	4	4	2
Norman	2	2	2	1
Andrew	3	3	3	2
James	7	7	7	6
Totals	25	25	25	16

be "like talking together like friends" (1990, p. 98). The manner in which the students participated suggested that they were eager to share their stories with an interested listener.

Instead of asking a predetermined set of questions that may have imposed "any a prior categorization that may limit the field of inquiry" (Fontana and Frey 1994, p. 366) I used prompts to stay closely oriented to the research question. Some of the prompts were developed prior to the interviews while others were formulated during fieldwork. Prompts developed beforehand were based on those generated from my previous work with Ernest. These prompts included asking the student about his educational background and questions regarding the student's view of the assessment process. In the initial interview, for example, each student was asked to recount his educational history. These histories yielded experiences relevant to the research question, such as retention in a previous grade, that were followed up in subsequent interviews. I also asked students to explain the relationship between marks and final grades and how they thought final grades were formulated. One prompt that was unsuccessful involved asking students about the merits of various assessment methods. I abandoned this prompt after asking Jeff what type of test he preferred, and he responded with "A test is a test is a test" (Fieldnotes, 16/10/95).

Other directions for the interviews were often initiated by students. Stacey (1988) maintains that when subjects are perceived as collaborators, it becomes a project that the researcher can never fully control. Initially, I was uncomfortable with "letting the field speak" (Bennett and LeCompte, p. 28) as I viewed it as loss of control. The student-

initiated directions, however, became "prompts" that I used with all the participants. As the students talked about their assessment experiences, for example, they offered their perceptions about their current achievement. I utilized the student's interest in discussing their grades by asking them to predict their grades for the first report card of the year. In later interviews we compared the predicted grades to the grades actually received.

The students led the interviews in another way. After reviewing the transcript of an interview, I often had questions about what the participant said. At the beginning of each interview, I provided the student with the transcript of the previous interview. I showed the participant where I needed clarification or additional information. For example, on November 6, 1995 James mentioned that he wanted to get a better grade in language arts. In the next interview I asked him to explain how he was planning to improve his grade.

One student quickly emerged as the key informant in his initial interview. When I asked James for specific examples while he was relaying his educational history, he was able to provide detailed anecdotes that shed light on the topic. At the end of the first interview, we discussed his role as key informant:

LO: Actually, James, you're turning out to be a key informant.

JS: Like I'm helping you understand how students think?

LO: Yes, and you're able to express it clearly.

JS: Well for the past few years I've been working on my vocabulary.

LO: Great. I'll be wanting to meet with you several times, more than the other participants.

JS: I don't mind. All you want.

When I began the analysis of the transcripts, I found that they had a definite narrative quality that I wanted to retain. The conversational interviews had become an

uncovering of narratives. I proceeded with van Manen's (1990) approach for thematic analysis: reflection on the texts produced by the conversational interviews in order to uncover their thematic aspects, the elements which occurred frequently in the texts. Three distinct activities were used to uncover the themes. First, I used the selective reading approach (van Manen, p. 93), reading each participant's transcripts several times, asking "What statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon being described?", and highlighting the statements. Each participant's set of transcripts became a text of these highlighted statements. The highlighted statements were then used to write a "reconstructed life story" (Van Manen, p. 170) for each participant. These narratives were a chronological account of the student's experiences of being assessed at school, and were written in the first person. (See Appendix B for the complete reconstructed life story of each participant).

2.4.3. CREATING NARRATIVES OF FIDELITY AND RIGOR

Understandably, these narratives of experience are partial and partisan as Ellsworth (1989, p. 305) explains: "partial in the sense that they are unfinished, imperfect, limited; and partial in the sense that they project the interests of 'one side' over others." They clearly project the students' experiences over the teachers' experiences. The truth of these narratives may be questioned by some, a questioning that LeCompte advises the researcher to be prepared for: "The validity or truth of accounts by marginal people is questioned because it contests or at least is not congruent with the accepted canons of truth or reality" (1993, p 20). In these narratives, I "aimed only for 'Partial Truths'" (Stacey 1988, p. 25). As the students defined their reality, or truth, of

schooling and assessment, I was often in a state of disbelief that I had to suspend. It was difficult to discard my "teacherness" in the blurring of the boundaries between self and other, teacher and researcher (Heshusius, 1995). In the end, I accepted, as Ellsworth (1993) had, that the voices of students of difference must be accepted at their word - as valid, but not without response.

LeCompte maintains that it is important to present the reality constructed in the research process in a way that preserves the authenticity of that reality (1993). In an effort to preserve authenticity, I engaged in collaborative analysis with the participants. First, I explained to the students how the narratives had been produced by the interviews, showing how their words from different interviews had been clustered together by topic. I presented each student with his narrative by reading the story aloud, and asking him to check for accurate representation ("Is this what you meant?") and voice ("Does this sound like you?") at the end of each paragraph. The students responded with comments such as "Yup, that's true" and "That really does sound like me" (Fieldnotes, 18/01/96). They also provided additional information: what had happened since the last interview and an update of progress in specific subjects. I offered each participant a copy of his story, which they all eagerly accepted. At the end of this process, I was certain that the narratives truthfully portrayed the experience and the voice of each student.

2.4.4 FRAMING THE REALITY IN A CONTEXT OF MEANING

The reality of the student's experiences, as expressed by their stories, must be placed within a context of meaning. LeCompte refers to this framing as "the search for meaning, patterns, regularities, and principles hidden within the rich uniqueness of these

stories" (1993 p. 24). The framing of the students' narratives in a context of meaning is a means of grounding analysis in particular practices and locations.

It was immediately obvious that the students' stories of assessment focused very little on the technical aspects of assessment, or the methods and tools by which they were assessed. What was central to these stories was the importance that the students placed on the social and personal aspects of assessment: they had placed assessment in a context broader than I had envisioned. The students expressed themes of assessment that located assessment in its institutional, social and personal context. The themes that emerged included:

1. Perceptions of assessment that differed from teacher perceptions;
2. Resistance to the dominant school culture and the effect of resistance on achievement; and,
3. Issues of discipline and control and their impact on achievement.

These themes expressed the reality of assessment for the students in this study. I linked the students' themes to a central theme: the exercise of power and the location of power in schools. The students' stories were thus framed in a context of meaning that highlighted the central theme of power relations. At this point, the analysis of the narratives began in earnest.

CHAPTER THREE

RELATIONS OF POWER AND RESISTANCES²

3.1 ANALYSIS OF POWER RELATIONS

The students expressed themes of assessment that located assessment in its institutional, social and personal context. I was therefore obligated to move beyond exploring assessment methods to examining the contexts of assessment. In doing so, I linked the students' themes to a central theme: the exercise of power and the location of power in the school. This underlying theme of power relations led me in new directions for analysis, beyond phenomenology to critical, radical and feminist discourses and pedagogies that "have roots in particular political and theoretical movements and are variously constructed as oppositional to 'mainstream' or 'traditional' schooling practices" (Gore 1993, p. 3).

These oppositional theories of pedagogy are relevant to the analysis of this data because of the importance they place on power, the identified central theme of this study.

² The title for this chapter comes from Foucault (1980c, p. 142): "There are no relations of power without resistances".

Critical theory emphasizes the political aspect of power: "Central to critical theory is the notion of power ... schools are sites where power struggles between dominant and subordinate groups take place" (Bennett and LeCompte 1990, p. 26). Radical and feminist approaches also emphasize power, but some researchers within these discourses stress the relational nature of power as it operates through the "fundamental and specific relation of teacher and student" (Gore 1993, p. xiv). Relational power is "exercised or practised, rather than possessed, and so circulates, passing through every related force. Students, as well as teachers, exercise power" (Gore 1993, p. 52). Relational power is defined by Foucault (1980g, p. 198): "In reality power means relations, a more-or-less organized, hierarchical, co-ordinated cluster of relations". This view of power as relational, circulatory and occurring in specific sites through specific practices was a view of power that was consistent with the student perceptions of power that were voiced during our conversational interviews. Norman (Interview, 18/01/96), for example, suggested that teachers exercise power in the classroom through the specific practices of giving assignments and controlling behavior: "Teachers have more power and they can tell students what to do and what not to do and that's what students don't like".

Radical and feminist approaches also place importance on the presentation of "multiple voices" of all participants, "especially less powerful participants such as women, members of ethnic groups, and students" (Bennett and LeCompte 1990, p. 29). The presentation of the voices of resisting students in this study is an attempt to portray the voices of participants in the school that are often unheard or unheeded.

The relational concept of power and the concept of multiple voices in radical and

feminist theories and pedagogies were compatible with the way my research was conducted. The insights that these "oppositional" theories provide to this data analysis are justified.

Particularly useful to the analysis of power relations is Foucault's concept of "regime of truth" (1980a, p. 131), which looks at the relationship between power and truth. Prior to examining more closely regime of truth as a concept and as a tool, it is important to examine the dominant school culture as a single truth, and disciplinary power as one of the historical roots of the dominant school culture. These ideas are central to the concept of regime of truth.

3.2 DOMINANT SCHOOL CULTURE AS A SINGLE TRUTH

The institution of the school has a particular culture. Giroux (1994, p. 42) describes the dominant school culture as a reflection of the purpose of schools: "schools are seen as apolitical institutions whose primary purpose is to both prepare students for the work place and to reproduce the alleged common values that define the 'American' way of life" . Students are always on the receiving end of the learning experience in the dominant school culture (Giroux 1994). The values of the dominant school culture are found within the hidden curriculum which contains "the implicit messages we give to students about differential power and social evaluation when students learn how schools actually work, what kinds of knowledge there are, what kind of knowledge is valued and how students are viewed in relation to school" (Bennett and LeCompte, p. 188). Artificial dichotomies of right and wrong answers, appropriate and inappropriate behavior, moral and immoral behavior, and dumb and smart students, are delivered as

natural by the dominant school culture (Fine 1991). The dominant school culture presents as a single reality with a single voice, the "authoritative discourse" that demands "unconditional allegiance" and "permits no play with the context framing it, no play with its borders" (Bakhtin, p. 343). Failure to live by the ways of the dominant school culture is not tolerated: "The whole infinite domain of the nonconforming is punishable" (Foucault 1984a, p. 194). The assumed singularity of the dominant school culture does not recognize alternative ways of being and conflicts with the multiple realities of the lived experiences of the students. The single reality and the single voice of the dominant school culture blend together to become a single truth: "pedagogy requires single truths" (Fine 1992, p. 124).

The single truth of the dominant school culture can be traced to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This is when "a new technology of the exercise of power" emerged (Foucault 1980a, p. 124). According to Foucault, the new technology, disciplinary power, linked discipline and power: "Discipline makes possible the operation of a relational power" (1984b, p. 192). Disciplinary power relied on surveillance rather than penalties as a means of correct training (Foucault 1980b, p. 38). Coercion by means of observation was continual and focused on "the supervision of the smallest fragment of life and of the body" and it occurred in the barracks, the schools, the hospitals, the prisons and the workshops (Foucault 1984a, p. 184). This new technology of power made possible school discipline, "which succeeded in making children's bodies the object of highly complex systems of manipulation and conditioning" (Foucault 1980a, p. 125). Discipline produced "docile bodies" (Foucault 1984a, p. 192). This disciplinary system,

or mechanics of power, also had a functioning penal mechanism, or micropenality, with "a kind of judicial privilege, with its own laws, its specific offenses, its particular forms of judgement" (Foucault 1984b, p. 193). Foucault discusses in detail the micropenality that occurred in the schools of the eighteenth century (1984b, p. 194). The school was:

subject to a whole micropenality of time (lateness, absences, interruptions of task), of activity (inattention, negligence, lack of zeal), of behavior (impoliteness, disobedience), of speech (idle chatter, insolence), of the body (incorrect attitudes, irregular gestures, lack of cleanliness), of sexuality (impurity, indecency).

The rise of disciplinary power in the eighteenth century, which began first in the schools and then spread to hospitals and the military (Foucault 1984a) has left as its legacy a micropenality that continues to function to maintain the values and the single truth of the dominant school culture of the twentieth century.

3.3 REGIME OF TRUTH

Foucault defines truth as "the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power are attached to the true" (1980a, p. 132). Disciplinary power acts to generate the "ensemble of rules" and to ensure conformity to these rules. Foucault says that discipline is a "specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise" (1984b, p. 188). Truth, as an ensemble of rules, may also be viewed both as an object and an instrument of the exercise of power. Foucault (1980a, p. 131) says that truth isn't outside

power, or lacking in power, but is a thing of this world:

It is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth: That is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.

The concept of "regime of truth" makes clear the existence of the relationship between power and truth. What lies underneath the power in the regime of truth is discipline, the way power is exercised in the regime, a way that began in the eighteenth century and continues today: "Pedagogy is one of the major techniques through which modern disciplinary power functions" (Gore 1993, p. 147).

Regime of Truth as a Pedagogical Concept

Foucault applied regimes of truth to societies. In The Struggle for Pedagogies Jennifer Gore (1993) argues that regime of truth can be applied at micro-levels of pedagogy as a concept and as a tool. As a concept, "Regime of truth can be applied to discourses and practices that reveal sufficient regularity to enable their immanent naming, such as the discourses and practices of radical pedagogy" (1993, p. 55). Pedagogies, says Gore, operate as regimes of truth (p. 60).

The dominant school culture, or discourse, is a regime of truth that relies on asymmetrical power relations to sustain itself: " Truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it" (Foucault 1980a, p. 133). The concerns and issues expressed by the students in our conversations about assessment make visible the power relations as they

are experienced by the students. The asymmetrical power relations that characterize the teacher-student relationship is central to the regime of truth in the dominant school discourse. Gore (1993 p. 58) maintains that the classroom is an important site to see the actualization of a particular regime of truth: "The pedagogical process embodies power relations between and among teachers and learners". The enactment of the power relations is played out in countless and controlling ways by both teachers and students. Teachers use their power to maintain the regime of truth using techniques of surveillance, silencing, sarcasm, rule enforcement and assessment. Students respond by using their power to resist the regime of truth: "there are no relations of power without resistances" (Foucault 1980c, p. 142).

3.3.1 REGIME OF TRUTH AS A TOOL FOR ANALYSIS

Gore justifies using regime of truth as a tool for analysis because "disciplinary relations of power-knowledge are fundamental to pedagogy" (Gore, p. 58). Although Gore uses regime of truth to analyze critical and feminist discourses, she clearly indicates that it can also be used as a tool to analyze practice: "No other available concept seems as sufficient as 'regime of truth' to enable such an analysis of the power relations in pedagogical practice and in pedagogical discourse" (1993, p. 61). In fact, Gore invites analysis of power relations at the micro-level of instruction. Previous micro-level analyses have "tended to ignore the constitutive role of power in pedagogies. Radical pedagogies, on the other hand, have tended to focus on the 'macro' level of ideologies and institutions while down playing the instructional act" (Gore 1993, p. xiv).

Gore provides a framework for the investigation of discourses as regimes of truth,

using points "borrowed" from Foucault and Feher (1993, p. 63). I have "borrowed" Gore's "borrowing" to analyze the power relations in pedagogical practice as a regime of truth from the student's perspective, with particular emphasis on the role of assessment in the maintenance of the regime of truth.

Gore divides regime of truth into two aspects, the political and the ethical. The political aspect of the regime is concerned with "the relations of power, what goes on between people" and the ethical aspect focuses on "the relation to one's self and the way that relation changes" (Gore 1993, p. 63). Gore outlines several points that she used to investigate a regime of truth ³.

I use several components of Gore's framework for the analysis of data generated in this study by the participants' reconstructed life stories. This analysis uses regime of truth as a tool to analyze power relations as they occur in the classroom and as they are experienced by students. Regime of truth is further used as a tool to examine the relationship of these power relations to the assessment systems that occur in schools. The analysis, then, focuses on four themes:

1. Institutional Beliefs and Practices;
2. Individual Beliefs and Practices;
3. Ethical Aspects; and,
4. Assessment as a Socio-Political Aspect of the Regime of Truth.

A brief explanation of these themes is provided prior to analysis. The first two themes, Institutional Beliefs and Practices and Individual Beliefs and Practices, are derived from the elements that appear under political aspects in Gore's framework.

³ For a complete explication of these points, see Gore (1993 p. 63).

Political aspects of the regime of truth involve both institutional beliefs and practices and the specific beliefs and practices of teachers and students in the enactment of power relations. Instead of addressing each of the five elements separately in this analysis, they are discussed under the two major themes of institutional beliefs and practices and the beliefs and practices of individuals within the institution. More attention, however, will be paid to the beliefs and practices of teachers and students in the enactment of power because the participants in this study focused their talk on the teacher-student relationship and the specific practices that actualized this relationship. Accordingly, the analysis of data will also focus on this component of the political aspects of the regime of truth.

The third theme, Ethical Aspects of the Regime of Truth, focuses on two of the points provided by Gore's framework: problematic aspects of the self and the assigned goals of self-styling. For resisting students, there exists a tension between the morality imposed by the dominant school culture and their internally-constructed morality. The rejection of the regime's morality, the docile body, is what lies beneath the resistant acts of students. Although the attention paid to this theme is lesser, it is important because it clearly shows the connection between the ethical aspects of the regime (rejection of the docile body) and the political aspects of the regime (resistant acts) for the resisting students in this study.

In the final theme, assessment systems are analyzed as a socio-political aspect of the regime of truth. In this theme, institutional beliefs and practices and individuals' beliefs and practices regarding assessment will be examined as they occur within the context of a particular regime of truth.

3.4 INSTITUTIONAL ELEMENTS OF THE REGIME OF TRUTH

According to Gore's framework (1993), the institutional beliefs and practices in the regime of truth include the system of differentiations that permit the exercise of power, the way that the institution integrates the specific techniques and practices in the actualization of power relations and the formation of knowledge that describes the reality produced. First, the school as a site where bureaucratic tendencies influence institutional beliefs and practices will be discussed. Then, the specific example of student suspension will be used to demonstrate how school policy operates to integrate the exercise of power in the practice of student suspension. Student suspension will also serve as an example to demonstrate differentiation as it occurs in school policy. The formation of knowledge that describes the reality produced is discussed in Chapter Four as the message system of the regime.

The school is a modified bureaucratic organization, a large multi-levelled social organization that is run by full time professional people with multiple lines of power and control (Bennett and LeCompte 1990). Schools were not always bureaucratic organizations. Bennett and LeCompte (1990, p. 46) trace this development to the efficiency movement of the early 1900's: "During the first three decades of the twentieth century, schools began to assume the organization we know today. They did so because of pressure from supports of a powerful industrial technology to reshape schools along the lines of the most efficient of America's factories". Many changes were introduced which made the functioning of schools more bureaucratic. For example, a management level in education was created, "which added layers of administrative hierarchy to school

districts" (Bennett and LeCompte, p. 48). The administrative hierarchy is one part of the system of differentiation that allows the exercise of power. Within the hierarchical nature of the bureaucratic institution, asymmetrical power relations are taken for granted: "The hierarchical relationship between teacher and student is rationalized as necessary and inescapable" (Gore, p. 126). The bureaucratic organization of schools allows disciplinary power to flourish: hierarchical observation, says Foucault, is one of the simple instruments that has contributed to the success of disciplinary power (1984b, p. 188).

The school, the school system, and the provincial department of education, as partners in the bureaucratic organization of schooling, develop policies that integrate the practices of the exercise of power and legitimate disciplinary power. For example, at the school division level there are policies on student suspensions. One such policy states: "The Board will support its teachers and principals in suspending students to help maintain proper order and discipline, provided that methods used are consistent with the School Act. Students normally may be suspended only after all other means of discipline have been exhausted." Students may be suspended for "conduct injurious to the moral tone or well being of the school including open opposition to authority, habitual neglect of duty, the use of improper or profane language on school premises, undue absenteeism, the possession and/or use of alcohol or illegal drugs on school property, improper conduct while riding a school bus, or any other conduct deemed injurious to the moral tone or well being of the school". Several participants in this study had experienced suspension as the school's response to their non-conformity. Ernest (Interview, 08/08/95) had experienced many in-school suspensions as the result of his behavior: "I didn't listen

to them, mouthed them off, didn't do work, didn't listen and do what they said, told them what I felt and they didn't like that either". Ernest never had an out of school suspension, "They didn't let me out of school. They knew I'd like it too much."

O'Loughlin says that "The dominant education system locks firmly in place spectacles that filter out dissonant knowledge and voices" (1995, p. 108). School policies act as filtering spectacles: student suspension policies permit the exportation of students who do not conform to the values of the dominant school culture. The example of student suspension clearly shows how school policy can function to legitimate the exercise of power. Additionally, Policy F11 provides an example of differentiation in the school. Hierarchical relationships are explicitly outlined in the exercise of power, from teacher to principal to school division to the invocation of the School Act.

3.5 INDIVIDUAL'S BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN THE REGIME OF TRUTH

Time has wrapped itself around the adults - with its haste, its dread, its ambitions, its bitterness, and its long-term goals. They no longer see us properly, and what they do see they have forgotten five minutes later. While we, we have no skin. And we remember them forever. That is how it was at the school. We remembered every facial expression, every insult and word of encouragement, every casual remark, every expression of power and weakness. To them we were everyday to us they were timeless, cosmic, and overwhelmingly powerful.

(Borderliners, p. 161)

The relational view of power recognizes that power is practised rather than possessed, that it is socially constructed and that it operates in a context-specific manner (Gore 1990, Foucault 1984, Gutierrez, Rymes and Larson 1995). In a relational view of power "Individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application" (Foucault 1980d, p. 99). This means that in the classroom both teachers and students exercise

power, and that the enactment of power relations may differ from classroom to classroom because certain elements of the context change. Teachers and students are complicit "in constructing the social and power relationships that unfold in particular communities of practice" (Gutierrez, Rymes and Larson 1995, p. 499). Gore's framework (1993) is useful for analyzing power relations as they operate within a regime of truth: she recommends analysis of the objectives of the relations of power and the techniques and practices that actualize the relations of power. The power relations that unfold in the classroom between the participants are constructed through the interaction of these two factors - the objectives of power and the techniques and practices used to achieve the objectives. The following section of analysis will explore this interaction, emphasizing the student's perceptions on the enactment of power relations in the classroom.

3.5.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE RELATIONS OF POWER

Teachers and students may not share the same objectives in their exercise of power. The role of the teacher in the dominant school culture is to uphold the values of the culture through the use of disciplinary power, producing what Foucault describes as "docile bodies" (1984a, p. 182). Control and compliance become the objectives of the relations of power for teachers.

Students, however, respond in different ways to cultural institutions, and this response has an impact on their objectives of power. Bennett and LeCompte (1990, p. 104) outline and adapt Valli's (1983) three forms of response: acceptance, negotiation, and resistance are ways that students respond to cultural institutions. The form of response that a student engages in largely determines the student's objectives of the

relations of power. For example, a student responding with acceptance internalizes the "school's premise that academic success and educational longevity will pay off in terms of material success and social status" (Bennett and LeCompte, p. 104). This student, a "docile body", accepts the values of the dominant school culture and shares the view of the teachers in the objectives of the relations of power. Negotiators, on the other hand, do not accept completely the premises of schooling, but "will work hard enough and conform sufficiently to the rules" in order to graduate (Bennett and LeCompte 1990, p. 105). In regard to the enactment of power, these students rely on negotiation and making deals with teachers. For example, they negotiate minimal work requirements from teachers in exchange for good behavior in the classroom (Bennett and LeCompte 1990, p. 106).

Resistance is the third form of response to an institution. Bennett and LeCompte define resisters as students who do not wish to negotiate on the school's terms: "Resistance to institutional constraints is more than simple misbehavior. Resistance is principled, conscious, and ideological. The non-conformity of resisters has its basis in philosophical differences between the individual and the institution" (1990, p. 106). McLaren (1989) also views resistance as more than misbehavior; he says that resistance is an active refusal to adopt the dominant school culture. For these students, the objective of the relations of power is characterized by resistance, the "entrenched general and personal opposition to authority" (Willis 1977, p. 11). The students in this study expressed their opposition as "getting back" at the teacher and demonstrated that their opposition to authority was indeed principled, conscious, and ideological, as Bennett and

LeCompte suggested. Jeff, for example, explained why he stopped participating in physical education classes:

I don't take Phys. Ed. this year because I stopped changing into gym strip again. I don't hate Phys. Ed., I just hate the teacher. I used to change for Phys. Ed. in grade 6. It wasn't a problem. But in grade 7 I stopped changing for Phys. Ed. around October. Sometimes I did Phys. Ed. in my jeans. But this year they won't let me do that. I won't change now because Mr. R.'s such a jerk. It's a way of getting back at him (Jeff's Story, p. 2).

"Getting back" was also expressed by Norman: "Language and Social is the biggest problem for me because of the teacher. You kind of get back at them by not doing the work" (Norman's Story, p. 2).

3.5.2 ACTUALIZING THE RELATIONS OF POWER

Power, says Gore (1993) exists only in action. To examine the way that power is enacted in classrooms, it is necessary to look at the actions of participants in specific sites and the relationships they construct in the classroom. These social relationships are constructed, in part, by the specific techniques and practices used by teachers and students in their exercise of power. The heart of these social relationships is the teacher-student relationship that is constructed between particular teachers and particular students in particular classrooms. The importance of this relationship is undeniable and has a profound effect on a student's life at school. It is particularly important to recognize that the construction of teacher-student relationships through the enactment of power relations by teachers and students impacts upon student assessment. The next section of analysis, the examination of the techniques and practices used in the exercise of power and, therefore, in the construction of the teacher-student relationship is extremely important.

The context of assessment experienced by the students in this study is grounded within these power relations as they exist in the classroom.

Because the student participants in this study are resisters, it is the resistor's techniques and practices that are focused upon. Teacher's techniques and practices will be discussed first, because the actions of resisters are often in response to the teacher's acts.

The Techniques and Practices of Teachers

The techniques and practices used by teachers, and experienced by the students in this study, to meet the objectives of control and compliance included rule enforcement, silencing, and assessment. The students in this study recognized the objective of control in their daily lives, and experienced this control via the enforcement of a multitude of school rules:

There's a million school rules. I don't have a clue why schools have so many rules. I just think it's stupid. I'm sure they've got a least a couple of hundred rules. Most of the time the teachers won't let you get away with anything. . . The stupidest rule at school is that you're not allowed to go outside and eat your lunch. You're not allowed to go off the grounds at lunch time. Not even walk across the street to the park. Not allowed (James' Story, p. 4).

The theme of teacher-as-enforcer-of rules was prevalent in the reconstructed life stories of the students. Enforcers were rigid in their upholding of "important" rules, they were "mean", and they relied on surveillance as an enforcement technique. The following excerpt from Norman's story gives a sense of what it is like for students to experience the teacher-as-enforcer:

Some of the rules really aren't fair. If you do something and you didn't know it wasn't allowed, it's not fair when they automatically punish you.

They won't even talk about it. I know that the teachers think that rules are important because they're the ones who enforce them. If there weren't as many rules teachers wouldn't be as mean because they wouldn't be enforcing rules every single step you take. It's like people are watching you all of the time waiting to catch you. It doesn't make you feel very good (Norman's Story, p. 1).

Norman said that teachers think the rules are important. Andrew echoed this sentiment and took it one step further in a sad commentary about our schools: "Sometimes I think that the teachers think the rules are more important than the students" (Andrew's Story, p. 1).

Another way for teachers to maintain control is to control student voices, which is accomplished through the specific technique of silencing. The concept of voice is somewhat problematic, however, owing to an abundance of interpretations (Bakhtin 1981, Fine 1991, Giroux 1988, Heshusius 1995, Johnston and Nicholls 1995, Lincoln 1995, Oldfather 1995, O'Loughlin 1995). It is important, therefore, to clarify the interpretation of voice beneath the analysis of this study: voice is considered as participation in dialogue (the expression of voice) and as an entity that continues to exist even in the absence of expression. This interpretation comes from the work of Giroux, Bakhtin, Ellsworth and Johnston and Nicholls. From Giroux is the simple definition of student voice as participation in dialogue: "Voice, quite simply, refers to the various measures by which teachers and students actively participate in dialogue. It is related to the discursive means whereby teachers and students attempt to make themselves 'heard'" (1988, p. 199). Bakhtin provides a more elaborate definition of voice and explains how voice is an entity. He says that voice "is the speaking personality, the speaking consciousness. A voice always has a will or desire behind it, its own timbre and

overtones" (1981, p. 431). Ellsworth (1989), Johnston and Nicholls (1995), and Bakhtin (1981) recognize also that voice is multiple and contradictory. Ellsworth (1989) adds a third descriptor to voice when she says that voice is partial. When I use the term student voice, I am not implying one voice for all students, for Bakhtin says "there is not a single voiced vehicle of expression" (1981, p. 354). The will or desire behind each student voice creates an expression of voice that is multiple, contradictory and partial. The students in this study often expressed multiple and contradictory voice, with one of the voices being the resistant voice, as they discussed their experiences at school. For example, they complained about lack of teacher help at the same time as they insisted that the teachers should leave them alone (Fieldnotes, 26/10/95). In one breath Richard asserted that grades were important and unimportant: "The mark is more important to me than the comment because then if I get a good mark I always feel good about myself. Grades aren't that big of a deal" (Richard's Story, p. 2).

The expression of voice of resisting students that I attempt to portray must, of course, be understood to be partial and problematic. van Manen (1990, p. 18) cautions that full and final descriptions are unattainable because "lived life is more complex than the explication of meaning can reveal". The lived life of resisting students presented in this study is partial, and thereby problematic, projecting, as Ellsworth (1989) says, the interests of one side over the other. Although it is interesting to speculate on how the teachers of the students in this study might respond to the student narratives, it goes beyond the primary intent of the study.

Within the regime of truth of the dominant school culture, silencing of student

voice is practised as a means of maintaining the asymmetrical power relations. Hargreaves (1996) says that pedagogies of public education subtly but systematically disregard, deny and silence students, and that it is the teachers' voices that create and sustain this silence in the classroom through such practices as monopolizing and dominating the dialogue, and by asking questions to which they already know the answers. In monopolizing and dominating classroom talk, teachers try to preserve their power "through a form of monologism that attempts to stifle dialogue and interaction" (Gutierrez, Rymes and Larson 1995, p. 446). Faced with teacher monologism, the opportunity for the expression of student voice is lost and is effectively silenced. "They won't listen," said Norman. "The teachers aren't interested in our opinions or what we have to say" (Interview, 18/01/96).

Silencing is a particularly important technique when teachers are faced with resisting students. In public schools it is important to "quiet student voices of difference and dissent so that such voices, when they burst forth, are rendered deviant and dangerous" (Fine 1992, p. 116). Within the single truth and single voice of the dominant school culture there is no place for voices of difference and dissent. These voices are silenced by teachers and by the institution. Student critiques of teachers, assignments, and the institution are not listened to, and are often punished. The critiques that students offer are viewed as insubordination. Hargreaves, however, refers to the voicing of disengagement or disillusionment as an "intelligible response to the context" (1996, p. 17). Ernest, for example, responded to the context of his schooling by questioning his teachers about issues of fairness and competency. His critiques were punished; he was

ignored, sent into the hall, or suspended (Fieldnotes, 12/09/95).

Sarcasm and derision are also used as techniques for silencing students: "one of the most oppressive forces is the belittling and sarcastic attitude of some teachers" (Willis 1977, p. 77). James related one such incident that occurred in the classroom: "Like I hate it when the teacher gives you a mouthy comment, 'Oh, get the hell in your seat and just sit there and do your damn work'" (James' Story, p. 6).

The Techniques and Practices of Students

I have argued that the resisting student's objective for the relation of power is opposition to authority and "getting back" at school staff. To meet this objective, students engage in "active refusal to adopt the dominant school culture" (McLaren 1989, p. 220). This refusal results in an apparent inversion of the usual values held up by the dominant school culture (Willis 1977). The techniques and practices of students, then, involve behaviors which are at odds with the values of the dominant school culture. The stories of the students in this study focused on two practices - avoidance of work and lack of respect for school personnel and school rules.

It is important to remember that these behaviors occur in the specific context of the classroom, and that the teacher-student relationship has a major influence on the way that power relations are enacted in classroom. The response of the teacher to a student's resistance influences further actions, and may actually increase resistant behaviors: "Resistance may begin with simple non-conforming behavior, and then be transformed into resistance by the negative responses of school staff" (Bennett and LeCompte, p. 108). A negative response, for example, would include a teacher that perceives student

resistance to be a personal attack: "Staff are incensed by what they take to be a challenge to their authority" (Willis, p. 18).

Avoidance of work is one of the central features in student resistance: "Opposition to the school is principally manifested in the struggle to win symbolic and physical space from the institution and its rule and to defeat its main purpose 'to make you work'" (Willis 1977, p. 26). There are several strategies involved in avoidance of work. The most obvious are the refusal to work in class and the incompleteness of homework. The students in this study made it clear that they were capable of doing the work but chose not to. Dan explained, "I started off doing the work. But after a couple of months I just started slowing down and then I decided to stop doing the work. I could have done the work" (Dan's Story, p.1). All of the students in this study knew that they had made a conscious decision to stop working. When we explored the reasons for that decision, the students explained that the work was too boring, or they didn't like the subject or the teacher. Norman was unsure of why he stopped working: "I don't know why I didn't do the work. I did some of it. And I didn't hand most of it in. One assignment that I never did in LA was a whole novel study. Well, I did it but I didn't ever hand it in" (Norman's Story, p. 1). Not doing the work seemed to depend on the context - the social construction of the classroom and the school. Jeff's story of not doing the work shows how a variety of factors can influence student's work - the subject matter, the teacher, and the way that teachers and the institution respond to a resistor:

I first started having trouble at the beginning of the year in grade seven because of Mr. R. I had him for Math, Science, Phys. Ed. and Health. When I started having difficulty at school it was in those subjects. I didn't like Math and Science so I stopped doing the work. I didn't like Social last

year either, so I stopped doing the work there too. Then I had to go to the office. But that didn't make me do the work. Nothing would have helped me do the work, there was no way I was going to do it. I stopped doing the work when Mr. R. started hassling me. I did some good work in L.A. I liked that class.

When the teachers bother me it's usually for work. They want me to do the work. If they're nice to me I'll do the work but if they aren't I won't. If the teachers aren't nice I'll skip. I can do the work anytime I want. I'm waiting for them to figure it out. No one did last year (Jeff's Story, p. 1).

Jeff's Story illustrates another strategy for avoiding work, that of skipping school.

Skipping school can involve missing an entire day or a specific class. James explained how a student can avoid attending a particular class, "It's easy. You just move around the school undetected. As long as that teacher doesn't think you're there, you're home free" (James' Story, p. 5). Skipping school to avoid work can be seen as winning "symbolic and physical space" from the institution.

Respect, or lack of respect, was a common theme in the students' stories, and was closely related to the issues of alienation and power. Bennett and LeCompte (1990 p. 101) believe that students may not respect teachers for two reasons, "either because they feel that the teachers don't like or respect them, or that the teachers are incompetent to teach their subjects". The students in this study clearly felt that many teachers did not respect them. James, for example, recalled that, "Just the other day one of the teachers said I was being a real bad ass" (James' Story, p. 6). Students, in turn, responded with disrespect to the teachers. Lack of respect for teachers was evident in the language students used when talking about teachers: descriptors included "gay", "idiot", "stupid", "retard", "fat cow", and "jerk" (Fieldnotes, 15/01/96).

As Bennett and LeCompte suggested, teachers that were perceived as incompetent

were not respected. The students in this study judged teachers to be incompetent if they did not receive adequate help or if they showed a lack of effort in their teaching. "Lack of help" was a familiar theme and it was also expressed as "not teaching", as James explained:

Not teaching is just assigning the homework. "Oh, read this page. Do this page". You don't learn much from that. They're the teacher, they're supposed to be teaching us. I mean, the whole point of the teacher is so we can learn and ask questions. I mean someone asks a question and they get all mad: "Oh no. Not now." That's their job (James' Story, p. 8).

At another school, Andrew expressed a similar view, using words that were eerily similar to James' words:

I don't like it when the teacher says, "Do this page and then do this page," and then they go off and do something else. I like the teachers that explain everything. I find with Mr. R., he says, "Do this page, do this other page, and it's due tomorrow." And then he goes and sits down and if you have a question he'll just say, "Look in the book, read it over a couple more times", and that's basically it (Andrew's Story, p. 3).

Lack of effort on the part of the teachers was perceived as incompetence or laziness. Neither were respected. James defined a lazy teacher by saying, "And the teacher sitting at his desk all period, doing nothing, not wandering around looking to see what people are doing and not helping them? That's laziness" (James' Story, p. 8). Ernest used more forceful language, saying, "If she wanted to teach us, she could have at least put some effort into it, because she wanted us to. Yet she did nothing to help us. She sucks. She's not a good teacher" (Interview, 08/08/95).

The teachers that focused on maintaining the asymmetrical power relations through control seemed to be the teachers that were respected least, and teachers that demonstrated flexibility regarding rule enforcement were respected more: "If the teacher

isn't really picky about the rules all the time then you get along better" (Norman's Story, p. 1). James explained that teachers with "bossy" attitudes are a middle school phenomenon, and that teachers without that attitude were respected:

There's a lot of lack of respect for teachers. Kids in middle school really lose their respect for teachers. Teachers in middle school just stick it to you. You can't do this or that. If they're bossy, "Do this, do that" you don't want to do it. If they don't have that "Do this, do that" attitude, it's easier to work and you respect them more (James' Story, p. 6).

Lack of help, bossiness, and laziness were characteristics that defined an incompetent or lazy teacher, a teacher that was not respected. Respect for teachers seemed to occur in a trusting environment where students received the help they needed, again showing that the socially constructed relationships of the classroom are a critical feature in the way that students respond to the institution. The students referred to the teachers they respected as "good" teachers: "A good teacher will pay attention to you. When they pay attention to you, you kind of get to be friends, and trust each other in a way. Like you learn more about each other. Trust has to do with it. Do you trust your teachers?" (James' Story, p. 7). The students recognized the human side of teaching and knew that teaching was far more than a technical process. Good teachers, said Ernest, "aren't necessarily the greatest at teaching but are understanding, reasonable, and are the ones that have respect for you, as well" (Interview, 08/08/95).

3.6 ETHICAL ASPECTS OF THE REGIME OF TRUTH

Gore uses Foucault's notion of ethics in her framework for analyzing regimes of truth. She explains that Foucault locates ethics as separate from and located within the broader realm of morals: "Foucault distinguishes between the imposed 'prescriptions' or

moral codes that determine which acts are permitted or forbidden, which acts are attributed positive or negative values in a constellation of possible behaviors, and the ways and means by which individuals constitute themselves as the moral subjects of their own actions. In other words, he draws a distinction between socially-imposed and internally-constructed moralities" (1993, p. 53). The way that particular individuals act, their "technologies or practices of the self" (Foucault cited in Gore 1993, p. 5), is dependent upon these socially-imposed and internally-constructed moralities.

The ethical aspects of the regime of truth, then, refers to these technologies or practices of the self and "the relation to one's self and the way that relation shifts" (Gore 1993, p. 63). The analysis of ethical aspects of the dominant school culture as a regime of truth will focus on two points from Gore's framework, problematic aspects of the self and the assigned goals of the ethical practices of self-styling.

3.6.1 PROBLEMATIC ASPECTS OF THE SELF: "ACTING" versus "BEING"

In any given regime, says Gore (p. 63), there are aspects of the self considered problematic: these are "the gestures, postures, and attitudes which are in need of disciplining or styling". In the dominant school culture, resisting students are in need of disciplining: their objective of power (resistance) and the ways they enact power relationships (refusal to do work, lack of respect) are considered problematic by the regime. Resisting students have made decisions about how to act as students; they have styled themselves to ways of being resistant and this is one aspect of their internally-constructed morality. The dominant school culture, however, imposes a particular morality that requires students to style themselves as "docile bodies".

Tension occurs between the socially-constructed morality of the dominant school culture and the internally-constructed morality of the resistant student. The tension between docile bodies and resistant bodies is experienced by students. James recognized that the school promoted students self-styling themselves as docile bodies, and he referred to this type of self-styling as "acting" good: "At school you're supposed to try to be basically good. Acting good and nice at school means not bullying or speaking out of turn" (James' Story, p. 5). James knew what "acting" good at school involved and he often participated in "acting" good if he felt that it was to his advantage (Fieldnotes, 18/01/96). When James spoke about his resistant behaviors, the occasions when he self-styled himself as a resistor, he referred to himself as "being" bad (Interview, 06/11/95). For students like James, "being" resistant is being true to themselves and "acting" as a docile body is selling out. What Fine calls the "price" of academic success may be too high for resisting students, because it involves "the muting of one's own voice" (Fine 1991, p. 37).

Resisting students make moral choices: "Our ethical self styling is not the result of our moral duties, but of our moral choices" (Gore, p. 129). The moral choices of resisting students, or their self-styling, conflicts with the self-styling encouraged by the dominant school culture. Certain goals are attached to ethical practices of self-styling, which are reflected by the "kind of being to which we aspire" (Gore, p. 63). The kind of being to which resisting students aspire is not the docile body, but a kind of being that preserves the self as not merely a socially-constructed being but also an internally-constructed being. An individual's becoming, says Bakhtin (1981), is an ideological

process that is characterized by a sharp gap between the authoritative discourse and the internally persuasive discourse: "When thought begins to work in an independent, experimenting and discriminating way, what first occurs is a separation between internally persuasive discourse and the authoritarian enforced discourse, along with a rejection of the congeries of discourses that do not matter to us, that do not touch us" (1981, p. 345). Becoming a resisting student can therefore be viewed as an ideological process that rejects the authoritative discourse and the socially-constructed morality of the dominant school culture. Resisting students struggle to regain control of the self by refusing to conform mindlessly to the values of the dominant school culture, and engage in a form of self-styling that is in conflict with the regime of truth.

Examining the ethical aspects of the regime of truth helps us to understand that the acts of resisting students are indeed principled, conscious and ideological as Bennett and LeCompte (1990) and Willis (1977) have suggested. The philosophical differences between the individual and the institution involve a differing notion of how the self is to be constituted at school. It is the difference between "acting" and "being". Resisting students do not want the self to become a docile body.

3.7 ASSESSMENT AS A SOCIO-POLITICAL ASPECT OF THE REGIME OF TRUTH

They believed it was of great help to children to be assessed. I suppose they still believe that. In our society it is a pretty widespread belief. That assessment is a good thing.

(Borderliners, p. 111)

Regimes function through practices (Gore, 1993). The practices of assessment play an important role in the effective functioning of the dominant school culture as a

regime of truth. Specific assessment practices in the classroom actualize relations of power, but these practices occur as strategies of the assessment system. Accordingly, the analysis of assessment in the regime of truth begins with looking at the context of assessment systems. Then, characteristics of assessment systems as they occur in the regime of truth are examined prior to exploring how the resisting students in this study experienced assessment.

3.7.1 THE CONTEXT OF ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS

Assessment systems operate within, and as a part of, social and institutional frameworks (Johnston et. al., 1995). I have argued that the institutional framework of the dominant school culture can be viewed as a regime of truth. Therefore, assessment systems in the dominant school culture must be viewed as assessment occurring within this particular regime. The regime of truth provides the context for assessment, and this allows the opportunity to look at assessment in light of its political and ethical aspects, two of the features defined by Gore (1993) as constituting a regime of truth. Embedded within the central theme of pedagogical practice as a regime of truth, then, is this analysis of assessment systems that function to maintain the regime. The following analysis of assessment as a political aspect of the regime of truth of the dominant school culture integrates institutional beliefs and practices of assessment with the beliefs and practices of individuals within the institution. The analysis also demonstrates the inter-relatedness of the various political features of assessment: institutional beliefs and practices that largely determine the objectives and enactments of power for teachers and the ways that students construct their responses to the institution.

3.7.2 ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS WITHIN THE REGIME OF TRUTH

Within the institutional context of the dominant school culture, assessment systems can be seen to have a number of characteristics that are a reflection of the regime of truth. Assessment systems within the regime of truth, for example, are used as a means for maintaining institutional control, they perpetuate asymmetrical power relations, they are taken for granted, and they are a key message system for promoting the single truth of the dominant school culture. Assessment, as it occurs under these conditions, is largely viewed as a technical concern.

Power and Control

Hargreaves says that assessment systems are "part of a complicated apparatus of social and institutional control" (1989, p. 133). Institutional control, as we have seen, relies on asymmetrical power relations that are maintained through the exercise of disciplinary power. Foucault explicitly states the relationship of assessment to disciplinary power, and hence institutional control, when he discusses the examination:

The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgement. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify, and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them. That is why, in all the mechanisms of discipline, the examination is highly ritualized. In it are combined the ceremony of power and the form of the experiment, the deployment of force and the establishment of truth. At the heart of the procedures of discipline, it manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected. The super-imposition of the power relations and knowledge relations assumes in the examination all its visible brilliance (1984a, p. 197).

Hargreaves also views assessment systems as a means for the actualization of the exercise of disciplinary power: assessment systems "refine school's own capacity for maintaining

surveillance, for instilling an unobtrusive but pervasive kind of discipline" (1989, p. 131). Scarth, for example, found that the process of taking exams created a sense of discipline and control throughout the school (1984).

The disciplinary power that is exercised through assessment systems functions to maintain the values of the dominant school culture. Assessment systems legitimate or devalue certain types of behavior, knowledge, skills, and attributes (Broadfoot 1979). If we believe, as Eggleston (1984) does, that assessment systems are made and not given, then it would seem that the regime of truth has "made" an assessment system where the single reality of the dominant school culture, its behaviors, knowledge, skills and attributes, are legitimated while alternative behaviors, knowledge, skills and attributes that are a reflection of the multiple realities of the student's lived experience are devalued and denied. In this assessment system, student experience "is reduced to the immediacy of its performance and exists as something to be measured, administered, registered and controlled. Its distinctiveness, its lived quality are all dissolved under an ideology of control and management" (Giroux 1988, p. 122). The assessment system maintains the values of the dominant school culture by legitimating or devaluing student experience through a variety of non-cognitive assessments. Non-cognitive assessments may even take on more importance than cognitive assessments: Turner (1984, p. 77) found that many teachers "were very much concerned with inculcating in pupils certain social characteristics which they felt to be more important than academic ability". Students whose social characteristics and behaviors are at odds with the values of the dominant school culture face failure. James experienced the impact of non-cognitive assessments

of behavior and attitude on his Physical Education grade: "I got an F in gym, I think it was the second term. You get an F by not changing, not listening, goofing off, throwing balls at people" (James' Story, p. 2).

The wide range of cognitive and non-cognitive assessments that students experience are relentless because of sophisticated observation and monitoring in current assessment systems: "Not just performance, but emotional, behavior, personal relationships -all were now subject to evaluation, appraisal and institutional intervention; to the teacher-judge's ever-watchful gaze" (Hargreaves 1989, p. 136). The "eye of power" that relies on a gaze (Foucault 1980e, p. 155), is recognized by students: "Sometimes teachers mark just by watching. They'll sit there and they'll watch you" (Richard's Story, p. 4).

The Message System of the Regime

Within every regime there occurs "the formation of knowledge that describes the reality produced by a given regime of power" (Gore 1993, p. 63). The evaluation system, says Bates (1979) is one of the message systems of the school. In the regime of truth of the dominant school culture, therefore, it is the report card that describes the regime's representation of knowledge and of reality. Foucault's discussion of the documentary techniques of the examination is relevant to the way that the regime assigns meaning to student's lives through the practice of reporting. He says that the "turning of real lives into writing" makes each individual a case: "it is the individual as he may be described, judged, measured, compared with others, in his very individuality; and it is also the individual who has to be trained or corrected, classified, normalized, excluded,

etc." (1984b, p. 203).

The report card's monologism, representing only the teacher's voice, reflects the regime's view of a single voice, a single reality, and a single truth. It is a powerful "combination of eye, ear, and written word" (Hargreaves 1989, p. 137) that describes a student's acceptance of, or resistance to, the regime of truth. Conformity to the values of the dominant school culture is rewarded and non-conformity is punished through the grading system of the report card. Broadfoot notes that "There is more than a little danger that conformity, rather than ability, will be rewarded" (1984 p. 11). Understanding of concepts, in the presence of non-conforming behavior, does not ensure a passing grade, as Jeff discovered: "In Social Studies I got an F. I understand everything okay, it's easy, I just didn't get the stuff finished on time" (Jeff's Story, p. 2). The regime of truth uses the vehicle of the report card to state that the values of the dominant school culture are of utmost importance.

In any regime of truth, there are certain individuals who are "charged with saying what counts as true" (Foucault 1980a, p. 131). In schools, teachers are charged with saying what counts as true, and the report card is the document wherein which they state what is true about particular students. This is the single truth of assessment. In addition to being the truth, the report card, as the visible message system of the regime, has authority. Broadfoot explains that "Teachers' assessments are given authority - are acted upon - because they stand as guardians at the various entrances to the wider society, be they social or occupational" (1979, p. 116). The assessment system encourages students and parents to believe in the cultural myth of the linkage between

education and occupational status, that hard work in school will result in tangible rewards in the future, and that grades are a symbolical representation of "the material rewards to which success in school eventually will lead" (Bennett and LeCompte 1990, p. 98). This message was accepted by Norman after he received his first report card. "Next term, I want to raise my grades so I can pass and get the jobs that I want and stuff. I want to be a computer programmer. I need to work harder and use my class time and study" (Norman's Story, p. 2).

Johnston (1992) says that an assessment system must have some means for meting out consequences based on outcomes. The report card functions as this instrument, as rewards and sanctions are provided by the school and the student's family based on grades. Retention is one way that the institution responds to failing grades. Dan explained why he repeated grade six, "I guess that being retained was a fair thing because I wasn't doing the work, and the grades on my report card were F's" (Dan's Story, p. 1). Now in his second year of grade six, Dan said that he "learned his lesson" and he is doing his work. His grades improved on his first report card and his family rewarded him with privileges and money: "I got \$30 from my parents and my brother took me to play billiards" (Dan's Story, p. 2). Norman's parents, on the other hand, were "steamed" about his grades: "Now I have to study half an hour to an hour every night except weekends" (Norman's Story, p. 1).

Technical Assessment

The prevailing view of assessment in the dominant school culture is that assessment is a technical matter. Assessment, in this view, is something that is to be

done to students rather than with them (Johnston et. al. 1995); it is typically conducted by the powerful on the powerless (Bates 1979); and students are the targets of evaluation rather than participants in the process (Hargreaves 1996). Technical assessment is depersonalized. It encourages teachers to distance themselves from their students and their practice (Johnston 1992). This view of assessment assumes that it is the assessment task itself that is the most important factor in the assessment of students, and that assessment tasks need to be objective. The futile search for objectivity is a "search for tools that will provide facts that are untouched by human minds" (Johnston 1989, p. 510). Technical assessment is believed to ensure accountability through the removal of the human side of assessment and its context. Johnston (1995) provides a non-technical belief about assessment that takes into account the context of assessment: "Assessment, as it occurs in schools, is far from a merely technical problem. Rather, it is deeply social and personal" (p. 359).

3.7.3 STUDENTS EXPERIENCING ASSESSMENT

The conversational interviews with the participants in this study clearly showed that the student's perceptions of assessment focused on the social and personal aspects of assessment rather than the technical aspects. The students were uninterested in discussing assessment methods, preferring instead to talk about the "people" problems that they encountered when being assessed. People problems occur in assessment because "any assessment must be used in a social context and for a social purpose" and because "assessment is always interpretive" (Johnston 1992). The personal, social and interpretive characteristics of assessment that are experienced by students are ignored by the regime

of truth.

Assessment is Personal

Assessment, says Hargreaves (1989), penetrates deeply into the student's personal and emotional well being. The students in this study, in fact, appeared to collapse self and mark as they described how letter grades and anecdotal comments on report cards had the power to significantly impact their feelings of self. They expressed emotional reactions to grades ranging from "feeling like a king" to "feeling like a nothing" (Dan's Story, p.1 & 2). As Richard explained, "If I get a good mark I always feel good about myself" (Richard's Story, p. 2). Negative comments, on the other hand, had the opposite effect: "When teachers write the comments they should give the kid more of a chance at things. Like when they are writing out their report cards they shouldn't put all of the negative stuff in. Some of the comments I didn't really like. They're really really putting me down" (Richard's Story, p. 2).

Assessment is Social

The social context of assessment is determined by the teacher-student relationship that is constructed in the classroom. The nature of the teacher-student relationship has both positive and negative effects on student achievement and behavior. The students in this study felt that liking the teacher improved performance: "It's the teacher that you get that changes how well you do. I'm doing better in the subjects that I like with the teachers I like" (Andrew's Story, p. 2). Conversely, not liking the teacher led to lower grades. James linked his dislike of a teacher to poor achievement and poor behavior: "I didn't really like him and I got into a lot of trouble and that's why I didn't do too good"

(Interview, 06/11/95). James explained that a student's reputation with a teacher can also affect grading: "They'll give you a lower grade if they have a bad image of you" (James' Story, p. 1). Additionally, the teacher-student relationship is a major factor in the student's decision to complete assignments. Norman made the connection between liking the teacher, doing the work, and receiving a grade: "If you like the teacher, you work harder or even do the work and hand it in and that makes a difference for your grade" (Norman's Story, p. 2). Not liking the teacher is seen as a valid reason for not completing work or assessments in class. Jeff said, "I'm not doing the work in Language Arts this year because I don't like Mrs. D. That makes a huge difference to me, who the teacher is" (Jeff's Story, p. 2). One day I arrived at Jeff's school to interview him, only to find him sitting in the office for refusing to write a Language Arts test (Fieldnotes, 16/10/95). Jeff received a failing grade in Language Arts for the first term.

Assessment is Interpretive

Assessment is an interactive situation involving the teacher, the student, and the assessment task. Therefore, says Broadfoot, assessment "cannot be seen as a neutral process but as subject to the same interpretation and negotiation that inheres in any social interaction" (1979, p. 104). The dominant school culture, with its single truth, single voice, and single reality, cannot accept the interpretation and negotiation that is inherent in the assessment situation. The students in this study, however, expressed views of assessment that did not necessarily correspond to the regime's view of assessment. Once again, the multiple realities of the students conflicted with the single reality of the dominant school culture. Hargreaves (1996) refers to such differences as gaps of

perception. For example, student's perception of their achievement did not match the teacher's perception, their understanding of the assessment process differed from the teacher's understanding, and the aspects of assessment that the students focused upon, their perception of "what counts", was not shared by teachers.

In early conversations, I asked students to predict their grades for their first report card. All of the boys confidently predicted their grades and gave reasons for those grades: "I think I'm going to get an A in Language Arts because I did good on my autobiography and I've been trying" (Richard, Interview, 31/10/95). After the first report card was received, we compared their predicted grades to the actual grades. The boys were surprised and shocked by their grades. The following examples illustrate the gaps of perception that occurred between students and teachers as the students struggled to make sense of their achievement:

I thought that my report card this term was going to look like a bunch of B's and A's. So I was really shocked by the D plus in LA. I don't know how I got that (Dan's Story, p. 1).

I thought that I was going to get C's and D's on my report card but I got D's and F's. I was really surprised. I don't understand how I got those marks (Jeff's Story, p. 2).

I have no idea how I got a D in Health (Andrew's Story, p. 3).

In Science he gave me a C plus. I don't know why. I thought I would get an A (Richard's Story, p. 3).

I don't know how I got an F in Math. I thought I was going to do better so it was a bit of a shock (Norman's Story, p. 2).

In Math I'm not sure how I ended up with a D because as far as I knew it was going to be better. I don't know how I got that (James' Story, p. 3).

The students perception of their achievement differed from the teacher's perception partially because students constructed a different notion of what counts in school, another gap of perception. Broadfoot (1979) suggests that students who receive negative evaluations learn to devalue these evaluations and develop alternative value systems in which they can experience success. Jeff's comment of "School's not that important to me" is an example of a student who has devalued the school experience (Jeff's Story, p. 1). "Grades aren't that big of a deal," said Richard (Richard's Story, p. 2). What is important to these students are the experiences that happen out of school. James, for example, has been investing his allowance in foreign money markets and plans to be a millionaire by the time he is thirty (Fieldnotes, 05/02/96). Math, as far as James is concerned, resides in the math textbook and has no relevance to his life outside of school. A "D" in grade eight math is relatively unimportant to him.

The student's opinion of what is important, or "what counts", often differed from what the teachers see as important. Broadfoot (1979, p. 110) argues that there is "an underlying structure of rules and regulations on which success depends." The students' alternative perceptions of what counts occurred because they misunderstood the underlying structure, or because they resisted the underlying structure. The underlying structures to be resisted in the regime of truth, as discussed in section 3.6 (Ethical Aspects of the Regime of Truth), include the authoritative discourse and the socially-imposed morality of the docile body.

Students agreed that effort was an important component of achievement. Norman said, "Ten percent of your grade is for effort in this school. So working hard can raise

your grade. Not working hard can lower it" (Norman's Story, p. 1). Although students were in agreement with teachers on the idea that effort "counts", they did not understand how effort was counted. When I asked students how teachers measured effort they were unsure. Norman thought it was based on how well students used their class time and how hard they tried (Norman's Story, p. 1). When students tried hard, they were confused if this wasn't recognized by the teacher: " I worked my ass off. I worked really really hard to get a good mark. I really tried and I still didn't do good. I don't get it" (James' Story, p. 4).

In addition to effort, students perceived that neatness, spelling, and finishing assignments on time were important. Although students recognized these values of the dominant school culture, they overemphasized their importance in relation to their grades. "I got a B because I have neat notes" was the reason that Andrew gave for a good mark in Science (Andrew's Story p. 2). To do well in Health Richard said, "If you stuck up your hand twice you'd most likely get a B", and in Social Studies, he thought the following was important: "I think he looked at good effort and being done on time. He was looking for good team work instead of everybody slacking off and being bored and just sitting there" (Richard's Story, p. 3).

For the students in this study, assessment was indeed something that was done to them, rather than with them. Student participation in the assessment system was characterized by uncertainty: "I'd sit there, be good, do everything she wanted but she marks too hard. I'm not sure what she wants" (Richard's Story, p. 1). They found it difficult to grasp the meaning of what was being done to them in the name of assessment:

I got an "F" in Language Arts. I got an "unacceptable" for "Thoughtfully responds to and reflects on reading". I don't know what that means. And I got "unacceptable" for comprehension but I don't know what they mean by that. "Selecting appropriate strategies when reading", I don't know what that means either. **I don't know what any of it means** (Jeff's Story, p. 2).

The lived reality for the students in this study as they experienced assessment was academic failure. The dominant school culture relies on the deficit model of student failure. McLaren (1989, p. 221) explains this model as resting "on the propensity of teachers to psychologize that failure. 'Psychologizing' student failure amounts to blaming it on an individual trait or series of traits (eg., lack of motivation or low self-concept.)" The deficit model of student failure is also recognized by Giroux as being the model that is currently in place: "Not only do students bear the sole responsibility for school failure, but also there is little or no theoretical room for interrogating the ways in which administrators and teachers actually create and sustain the problems they attribute to students" (1988, p. 126). As we have seen, however, through the reconstructed life stories of the participants, academic failure is often based on non-cognitive assessments. Bennett and LeCompte (p. 189) maintain that "Children can flunk out of school more readily by failing to behave appropriately as dictated by the hidden curriculum than they can by doing poor academic work". This is an example of a system where the supposed educational purposes of the evaluation system is subsumed by wider processes (Bates, 1979). The wider processes involve the maintenance of the regime through the use of disciplinary power to uphold the values of the dominant school culture. Assessment sustains, and is sustained by, the regime of truth of the dominant school culture. The story of academic failure shows how the beliefs and practices of assessment held by the

institution and individuals within the regime function to maintain the mythical single reality of the dominant school culture. The gaps of perception that occur between resisting students and teachers regarding assessment are an example of the individual aspects of academic failure. These gaps occur primarily because the reality of assessment as it is experienced by students, with its personal, social and interpretive characteristics, is at odds with the technical view of assessment that is held by the regime of truth.

Academic failure and other institutional responses to resistant behavior lead to students being at risk for completing their education: "Resistors are a problem for schools because they cause trouble and are likely to drop out" (Bennett and LeCompte, p. 106). Bennett and LeCompte's description of the process of dropping out shows how the regime of truth must accept some responsibility for "pushing out" resisting students who fail to accept the truth of the regime:

Students who are drop-out risks become "pushouts" - forced out of school by an establishment which will not or cannot accommodate them. This occurs when student behavior diverges farther and farther from the pattern which school staffs find acceptable and bearable. As teachers, counsellors, and administrators mobilize to neutralize, isolate, or otherwise eliminate the behavior (and often the student engaging it), students find themselves in a less and less congenial environment - detention, suspension, remedial classes, and repeated confrontations with parents and school staff. They may also find that nobody cares enough to rescue them and stop the process (p. 108).

CHAPTER 4

THE THIRD SPACE

4.1 EVERYTHING IS DANGEROUS

The student narratives are compelling and clearly express some of the harmful practices that operate in the regime of truth in schools. Addressing these harmful practices presents a complex problem. On the one hand, as a researcher and educator, I have an obligation to present my conception of alleviating the problems experienced by the students in this study. Willis (1977, p. 186) expresses the practical problem for the practitioner: "Practitioners have the problem of 'Monday morning'. If we have nothing to say about what to do on Monday morning everything is yielded to a purist structuralist immobilising reductionist tautology: nothing can be done until the basic structures are changed but the structures prevent us from making any changes." The analysis of the stories of the students suggest some possibilities for improving the lives of resistant students - these possibilities are what I have to "say about what to do on Monday morning". Instead of being immobilised by the regime of truth, the regime can be viewed as a mobilizing agent. Gore maintains that the concept of regime of truth can mobilize

us in its identification of previously unrecognized workings of power, and that naming a regime of truth is liberating because "it liberates us (in thought at least) from within the regime" (p. 136).

Although I have been mobilized by the concept of regime of truth and I do indeed have something to say about what to do on Monday morning, I must also caution, as Gore does (citing Foucault) that "everything is dangerous" (1993, p. 56). The changes to practice that I advocate can be potentially dangerous, or repressive, at other sites: it must be remembered that there are no inherently liberating or repressive practices (Gore, 1993). The suggestions that I offer must be understood to occur in a personal context as I reflect on my own teaching practice. I do not present a "grand theory". Understanding, educating and assessing resisting students is an enterprise that occurs at a local level because "Issues of power and control are worked out in classrooms by individual participants" (Bennett and LeCompte, p. 27).

4.2 CONSTITUTING A NEW POLITICS OF TRUTH

Truth, according to Foucault, "is linked in a circular relationship with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it" (1980a, p. 131). In schools, a single truth is produced and sustained by the dominant school culture, which functions as a system of power, or a regime of truth. This truth accepts and attempts to make function as true the dominant school culture through a system of techniques and procedures. Resisting students rupture the efficient flow of the circular relationship between truth and power, and demonstrate visibly and loudly the mythical nature of the purported single truth of the dominant school culture.

What is needed is a "new politics of truth" (Foucault 1980a, p. 133). Constituting a new politics of truth involves changing the way that truth is produced: "The problem is not changing people's consciousness - or what's in their heads - but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth" (Foucault 1980a, p. 133). Changing the institutional regime of the production of truth at the local level requires the construction of a classroom that provides an alternative to the production of the mythical single truth of the dominant school culture.

4.3 CREATION OF THE "THIRD SPACE"

Gutierrez, Rymes and Larson (1995) use the term "third space" to describe the intersection of teacher script and student counter-script in the classroom. Their analysis defines the theoretical construct of social space as the mutually informing but seemingly exclusive places where teacher and students reside and interact in the classroom: "We describe these as official and unofficial spaces within which the teacher script and student counter-script are constituted" (1995, p. 446). The intersection of these spaces occurs in the third space and "creates the potential for more authentic interaction" (Gutierrez, Rymes and Larson 1995, p. 446). I borrow their term to describe the possibility of an intersection between the mythical single truth and the multiple realities of students - an intersection between the authoritative discourse and the internally-persuasive discourse, and the socially-constructed morality and the internally constructed morality. This intersection relies heavily upon the beliefs and actions of the teacher: "educators help to construct classrooms of silencing or community" (Fine 1991, p. 59). To construct a third space in which teachers and resisting students can reside, individual teachers must

commit themselves to what Bennett and LeCompte (1990) refer to as the care and rescue of these students.

The care and rescue of resisting students is based upon integrity in teaching as teachers strive to act in students' best interests. Integrity in teaching is fundamentally rooted in the intersections of the moral and knowledge dimensions of practice (Ball and Wilson, 1996, p. 185). I explicitly address the moral and knowledge dimensions of practice in the third space by discussing caring and reciprocal relationships between teachers and students (the moral) and relevant and responsive curriculum (the knowledge).

As teachers work to create in their classrooms a third space that resides within the current structure of the school, I anticipate that they will be making a number of decisions that are not of the type they have previously made. I have substituted the word "teacher" for "bureaucrat" in Taylor's statement about decision-making: "A bureaucrat (teacher), in spite of his personal insight, may be forced by the rules under which he operates to make decisions he knows to be against humanity and good sense" (1991, p. 7). I believe that there is room for teachers to suspend the rules of the regime of truth, or to creatively interpret the regime's rules in order to make decisions about students that are not against humanity and good sense.

4.3.1 CARING AND RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIPS

We must act responsibly and responsively in our relations with youth.
(van Manen 1990, p. 12)

As we have seen in the analysis, the students in this study focused on the importance of the teacher-student relationship in their construction of reality. Aspects of

this relationship that were important to the students included teachers paying attention to them in positive ways, being helped when they didn't understand, dialogue that was "off-topic" with their teachers, avoidance of power struggles over minor issues, being respected by school personnel, and a focus on students rather than on the enforcement of school rules (Fieldnotes, 15/01/96). The interviews of the resisting students in this study were suggestive of possibilities for altering the teacher-student relationship as they experienced it, leading to the creation of caring and reciprocal relationships in the third space.

A cautionary note is required. The development of caring and reciprocal relationships between teachers and students is a necessary, but not sufficient condition, in the creation of the third space. Furthermore, caring relationships do not imply the abdication of responsibility on the part of the teacher. I am not advocating a classroom ethos where "anything goes", and neither did the students in this study. In fact, teachers that were nice to the students and let anything go were not respected by the students. James (Interview, 10/11/95) recounted the story of a band teacher who was "just a nice guy" but who was unable, or unwilling, to set limits in the class: "he couldn't control the class." Destructive behavior escalated in his class to include incidents of swearing at the teacher and hitting him. The band teacher eventually quit. The students in this study appreciated teachers who set limits that were fair: Andrew said, "He's a nice teacher. He's strict but not too, too strict and he's fair. The teacher has to draw a certain line" (Andrew's Story, p. 3). Caring and reciprocal relationships does not mean that a teacher must surrender his/her responsibility and authority to the students. Gore (1993) advocates

a form of authority that is "not experienced as authoritarian but based in caring and reciprocal relationships" (p. 27).

Caring and reciprocal relationships may seem to imply a redistribution of power in the classroom, where students are "given" more power. Such notions of empowerment are dangerous, says Gore (p. 121) because the "teacher is assumed to know what is empowering, and in such capacity, is thus positioned as the constructor and conveyor of truth." In the third space, teachers and students must talk openly and honestly about the concept of relational power and the exercise of power. Gore suggests that the "teacher might do better to admit his or her exercise of authority vis-a-vis specific intentions" (p. 126). The students in this study felt that the exercise of power was often arbitrary (Fieldnotes, 23/11/95). Frank discussions about the way that power operates in the classroom and the school might aid in decreasing this feeling of arbitrariness.

The exercise of power for enforcement of school rules that are viewed to be insignificant or "stupid", such as not throwing garbage in the garbage can during class or not yawning in class (Norman's Story, p. 1) should be avoided in third space. Willis calls this a tactical withdrawal from confrontation, but insists that such withdrawal must avoid "any simplistic expression of sympathy and maintains a degree of institutional authority (1977, p. 190). What is required, then, is Gore's (1993) notion of the exercise of authority that is not authoritarian. Authority in the third space resides between tight control of the class through sarcasm and discipline that fosters increased resistance (Fine, 1991) and lack of control that results in chaos.

In the third space the exercise of authority that is not authoritarian should lead to

a safe and comfortable environment for learning. Students would no longer have the experience of feeling scared in class:

Some kids are scared like if they don't understand, and they don't know but everyone else knows. They don't want to put up their hand and say, "Teacher, excuse me, I don't know this." They'd be scared because everyone else knows it and might make fun of them maybe. So they're like, "Okay, everyone else knows it, I know it too" and they end up getting an F (James' Story, p. 7).

One way to develop caring and reciprocal relationships is through dialogue. Through out the interviews, I was repeatedly struck by the willingness of the students to continue the dialogue with me, similar to Willis' (1977) experience with "the lads". When I asked James why he continued to agree to be interviewed, he replied that I was "someone who would listen" (Interview, 18/01/96). The resisting students in this study, and in Willis' study, were open to participation in honest and open dialogue. As a researcher, I reflected upon the fact that as a teacher I hadn't been "someone who would listen" for the students in my classes. I hadn't made the time to ask the questions or provide the time to listen to students individually. In many ways, the relationships that I developed through dialogue with the participants in the study were deeper than the relationships that I had with students I had taught. I was saddened to realize that I was implicated in maintaining the communicative barrier that Gutierrez, Rymes and Larson (1995) detailed.

Being "someone who listens" fosters trust, an essential component of a caring and reciprocal relationships. Trust is developed through dialogue, as James explained:

You can build trust by getting to know them (teachers) through communication, like speaking off topic. Like just in the halls, talk. Not during class time, may be at the minute break you'll run into him and have

a little conversation that's not related to school. If you have the same interests you can talk about that in the halls and this and that (James' Story, p. 7).

Although encouraging students to participate in dialogue is an important consideration in the development of caring and reciprocal relationships, it becomes a dangerous practice when teachers assume that the invitation to participate is all that is required of them. Fine outlines the potential problem of pedagogies that invite participation but then ignore it: "But the solicitation of student views is often followed by an authorized teacher 'truth'" (1991, p. 45). Simply encouraging students to tell their stories (McLaren 1989) is equally dangerous if " 'shared' narratives are assumed to equalize participants" (Gore, p. 125).

Ellsworth (1989) advocates constructing alternative ground rules for communication because dialogue in its conventional sense is difficult in classrooms. In communication in the third space, participants must recognize the multiple, shifting, intersecting and sometimes contradictory groups in the classroom (Ellsworth 1989, p. 317). Ellsworth provides a glimpse of the type of communication that is required in the third space:

If you can talk to me in ways that show you understand that y o u r knowledge of me, the world, and "the Right thing to do" will always be partial, interested, and potentially oppressive to others, and if I can do the same, then we can work together on shaping and reshaping alliances for constructing circumstances in which students of difference can thrive (p. 324).

James supplied a statement about dialogue between teachers and students that could be heeded as a directive for communication in the third space:

It's important for people to listen to us with open minds and open ears.

People don't understand what we're going through. If they only took the time to stop and listen and try to understand from our point of view. After all, we are the future. You don't have a choice here (Interview, 18/01/96).

4.3.2 RELEVANT AND RESPONSIVE CURRICULUM

The typical curriculum does not interest adolescents: Bennet and LeCompte (1990) feel that it is hardly surprising that students see little future benefit from the boring studies they slog through. The theme of boredom surfaced regularly in the interviews with the participants in this study. For example, Richard talked about being bored in LA: "Now in LA we're just reading a book and doing chapter summaries everyday. It gets boring" (Richard's Story, p. 4). Norman said,

Most of the time what we're learning is boring. It's better when you get to do fun things. Like in Science, doing experiments. Not just sitting at your desk all of the time writing. There's no such thing as something fun in LA or Math (Norman's Story, p. 1).

To avoid a learning environment that is potentially boring to students, the third space requires a curriculum that is relevant and responsive to students' interests, and teaching that is responsible and caring. Ball and Wilson define responsible and caring teaching: "To steer students' investigations in ways that are at once responsive and responsible is to act on teaching's basic commitments: care for students and for knowledge" (1996, p. 178). The curriculum in the third space must be "intellectually honest" (Ball and Wilson 1996), taking into account students' interest and the careful consideration of subject matter, and must also be taught in a responsible and caring manner.

The case of James investing in foreign money markets can be used as an example to demonstrate the possibility of merging student interest with curricular goals: investing

money could be a topic to investigate within the math curriculum. Students need to be shown that "math" occurs outside of school and has applications in the real world. Math does not reside solely in the textbook, as James believed.

An interdisciplinary, integrated curriculum is a relevant curriculum: "real curriculum integration occurs when young people confront personally meaningful questions and engage in experiences related to those questions - experiences they can integrate into their own system of meanings" (Beane 1991, p. 9). This type of curriculum is planned around the questions and concerns that adolescents have about themselves and the world and is therefore a matter to be taken up locally by teachers and students (Beane 1991). When curriculum is planned with the students, it becomes responsive and relevant.

4.4 ASSESSMENT IN THE THIRD SPACE

When you assess others, no harm is ever intended.
(Borderliners, p. 111)

We are, however, responsible for checking on the consequences of our assessments and seeking alternative perspectives.
(Johnston 1992, p. 62)

The consequences of assessment have been harmful for the resisting students in this study: academic failure is the reality of assessment in the regime of truth. The harmful consequences experienced by the students have been outlined in the previous chapter (the impact of negative assessments on the sense of self, negative assessments that are based upon willingness to conform to the values of the dominant school culture). These consequences are produced by the clash of the mythical single truth with the multiple realities of students. Within the single truth of assessment, teachers are again

positioned as the constructors and conveyors of truth (Gore 1993) as they manage and assign meaning to the lives of students (Hargreaves 1996). Foucault (1980f) discusses objectification as corresponding to a technology of power. I have argued that the report card acts as an objectifying instrument: it is an "oppressive process of objectification of human beings, which falsifies their real essence" (Foucault 1980f, p. 238).

Improving assessment, say Johnston and Nicholls, involves "changing the situation within which assessment takes place" (1995, p. 369). Assessment reform that focuses merely on changing the assessment tasks, such as those advocated by the authentic assessment movement (Cambourne and Turbill 1990, Eisner 1993, Harnisch and Mabry 1993, Linn, Baker and Dunbar 1991, Wiggins 1989, Winograd, Paris and Bridge 1991), do little to change the assessment situation. In my view, the authentic assessment movement has therefore failed in its attempt to reform assessment. That the problems of assessment have continued attests to this fact. One has only to become involved in a school's report card committee to understand that the problematic nature of assessment has not been solved by the use of performance assessments such as writing samples or student self-assessment. What is required is the use of authentic assessment methods within a changed assessment situation.

The creation of the third space in classrooms is one way to effectively change the assessment situation in an attempt to respond to the harmful consequences of assessment. Unlike the technical assessment in the regime of truth which is focused on assessment method, assessment in the third space recognizes the primacy of the social and personal aspects of assessment. For the students in this study, the importance they

placed on the social and personal aspects of assessment was more reflective of their lived reality than the single truth of the technical assessment as it was reported by the teacher.

Bennett and LeCompte (1990) state that teaching and learning are intimate social acts. Assessment is also an intimate social act and the kind of detailed knowledge that leads to better assessments comes from proximity and involvement with students (Johnston 1992): "In order to know our students, we must listen to them and interact with them on an individual basis. Further, unless we take the role of advocates, we will find that they will not let us know them. If they will not talk, we cannot listen" (Johnston 1987, p. 354). Proximity and involvement with students is a part of the caring and reciprocal relationships in the third space.

Assessment in the third space must make an attempt to reveal and address the gaps of perception encountered in the assessment situation. The question of "What counts?" must be taken up locally by the participants in each classroom. If effort is to be counted, for example, the teacher must be explicit in the explanation of how it is to be counted. If students are, in fact, to be measured according to how well they conform to the values of the dominant culture instead of their understanding of concepts, this too must be addressed by the teacher. To some degree, the question of "What counts?" can be negotiated locally among the participants.

For the resisting student, the traditional report card is not an effective means for reporting student progress. As we have seen, the report card is the official and visible message system of the regime which functions to sustain the single truth of the dominant school culture. Resisting students require a system of reporting that allows for their

participation in the production of truth regarding their progress, and that recognizes the multiple realities of students. In the third space, it is entirely likely that the traditional system of reporting is eliminated altogether. We assume, says Johnston, "that reports are necessary" (1992, p. 61).

CHAPTER FIVE

UNDERSTANDING AND EDUCATING THE RESISTANT STUDENT

5.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT

I have argued that the creation of the third space is necessary to improve the lives of resisting students, and that this undertaking must be understood to occur in local contexts: particular sites with particular teachers and particular students. At the local level, says Gore (1993), there is always something to be done.

Understanding and educating resisting students at local sites requires what van Manen (1990) calls a pedagogical theory of the particular case: the teacher must ask "What is appropriate for this child in this situation?" (p. 150). The answers to such a question would vary according to the context of the teaching and learning situation. I am obliged, as a part of this research, to consider how I might begin to answer the question of "What is appropriate for resisting students?" within my own practice.

5.2 A LOCALIZED INSTANCE OF PRACTICAL ACTION

To be oriented as researchers or theorists means that we do not separate theory from life.
(van Manen 1990, p. 151)

This research has spawned a collaborative research project between the University, the School Division, and the middle school where I have been a practicing teacher. This three year project is entitled "Understanding and Educating the Resisting Student" and is an attempt to address the issues surrounding understanding and educating resisting students at a particular site within the structures that currently exist. A complete explication of the conditions for this research is provided in the proposal which is included under Appendix C.

We have proposed an alternative program in a specific school in order to immediately address the needs of resisting students and to develop a prototype of a program that could be generalized to other schools. Our goals are to prevent the further alienation of these students and to keep them in school, and to help them become independent learners.

To begin with, we envision a small group of ten to fifteen students in grades seven and eight in a self-contained classroom with myself acting as the teacher-researcher. These students would receive an integrated curriculum involving the four core subjects in this setting for approximately one half of the school day. The remainder of the day would be spent in complementary courses or options, physical education and health with their homeroom classes.

The self-contained classroom is necessary in order for us to create a third space

that functions independently of the remainder of the school. We will construct an alternative rule structure that will eliminate the rules that are not necessary to the operation of this classroom. Involvement of students in this process should assist in eliminating the students' perception that the rule system is arbitrary. Students will recognize that different rule systems operate in various places, in school and out of school.

The self-contained classroom is also necessary in order to implement a flexible integrated curriculum and to avoid the time-tabling problems associated with subject-specific teaching. The curriculum will be based on the needs and interests of the students, the Junior High Program of Studies (Alberta Education 1987), and curricular initiatives developed by professional organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. We anticipate that the curriculum will focus on real life applications and developing independent inquiry and information processing skills involving the use of computers and multi-media technology. Modifying and planning the curriculum will not occur until students participating in the program are identified and we have completed initial interviews.

The progress of students will be documented with a broad range of indicators that will include collecting samples of student work, administering performance assessments and conducting interviews. Global indicators developed by professional bodies such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the International Reading Association, and the National Science Council will be used to judge progress in the four core subjects. We intend to develop an alternative assessment scheme that includes student and parent

involvement in the collection, analysis and communication of growth and achievement inside and outside of school.

I have argued that traditional report cards are not an effective means for reporting the progress of resisting students and are perhaps unnecessary. I am not suggesting, however, that reporting is unnecessary in the third space. Teachers have a legal obligation under the School Act to report on student progress: teachers must "regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to the students, the students' parents and the board" (Province of Alberta 1988, p. 13). I envision an alternative system of reporting that is complementary to the alternative assessment system that we propose. For example, bi-monthly reports of student progress based on the achievement of collaboratively developed student goals is an alternative to the standard three reports per year.

It is exciting for me as a teacher and as a researcher to have the opportunity to be positioned at the intersection of theory and practice. As I participate once again in the lives of resisting students, I hope to effect change at the local level in order to improve the lives of these students. The support of the School Division and the school principal along with the collaboration of the University places me in the enviable position of utilizing the research from this study in a localized instance of practice.

At the same time, however, I am reminded that "everything is dangerous". As I seek to suspend the rules of the regime of truth and to interrupt the production of docile bodies, I become a resisting teacher within the regime. I wonder if the regime will resist me as it has resisted the students in this study.

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Appendix A
Consent Forms and Cover Letters

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

September 30, 1995

Dear Parent:

My name is Lori Olafson. I am a graduate student at the University of Calgary working under the supervision of Dr. Jim Field, who is a professor in the Faculty of Education. The principal of your son's school, Mrs. Dorothy Kristensen/Mr. Terry Miller, has indicated that your son may be interested in participating in a research study.

The purpose of the study is to gain a greater understanding of student's perceptions of assessment and to examine assessment alternatives for students who are encountering difficulty in school. To do this, I am asking for your permission for your son to take part in this study. If you agree, your son will be asked to talk about his experiences when being assessed in school. These conversations will be tape-recorded and transcribed.

Your son's participation in this study is voluntary, and you or your son have the right to suggest withdrawing from the study at any time. The identity of your son and his school will be kept confidential, and I will not discuss the content of our conversations with anyone at the school.

If you or your son would like more detail about something mentioned in the consent form please feel free to ask myself or Dr. Field. You may also contact the Office of the Chair of the Education Joint Research Committee at 220-5626, or the Vice-President of Research at 220-3381.

Please take the time to carefully read and understand the consent forms. If you choose to allow your son to participate in this study, please sign the attached consent form and return it to the school's office as soon as possible.

Thank you for considering your son's participation in this research study.

Sincerely,

Lori Olafson
Graduate Student
932-7027

Dr. Jim Field
Supervisor
220-7455

CONSENT FORM (Participant's Parent/Guardian)

I am willing to have my son participate in the research project titled, "Assessment of Marginalized Students" conducted by Lori Olafson under the supervision of Dr. Jim Field in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. I understand that my son has been asked to volunteer for this study because he has experienced difficulty academically and/or socially or behaviorally at school.

I understand that my son's involvement in the study will include between one and five one hour taped interviews with the researcher occurring between October 1995 and February 1996. Interviews will be conducted at the school during regular school hours. I understand that the researcher will schedule interviews in collaboration with my son and his teachers. Scheduling interviews during exams or special activities will be avoided. It will be my son's responsibility to complete any work missed during the interviewing. I understand that the researcher will have access to my son's Cumulative Record and Confidential File.

During the research all data, including the audiotapes, will be kept in a secure place inaccessible to others. The data will be destroyed when the project has been completed and the audiotapes will be erased.

I understand that my son and his school will be identified by pseudonyms in all transcripts of the taped interviews and in the writing resulting from his participation in the study. I understand that the researcher will make available to me a transcript of the interviews for me to review.

I understand that the researcher will be making recommendations to the school regarding the assessment of students encountering difficulty and that this may be of some benefit to my son. The risks involved in participating in this study include no greater risks than those ordinarily encountered in daily classroom life.

Name of Participant _____

Name of Participant's Parent/Guardian _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____

Date _____

CONSENT FORM (Participant)

I am willing to participate in the research project titled, "Assessment of Marginalized Students" conducted by Lori Olafson under the supervision of Dr. Jim Field in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. I understand that I have been asked to volunteer for this study because I have experienced difficulty academically and/or socially or behaviorally at school.

I understand that my involvement in the study will include between one and five one hour taped interviews with the researcher occurring between October 1995 and February 1996. Interviews will be conducted at the school during regular school hours. I understand that the researcher will schedule interviews in collaboration with myself and my teachers. Scheduling interviews during exams or special activities will be avoided. It will be my responsibility to complete any work missed during the interviewing. I understand that the researcher will have access to my Cumulative Record and Confidential File.

During the research all data, including the audiotapes, will be kept in a secure place. The data will be destroyed when the project has been completed and the audiotapes will be erased.

I understand that myself and my school will be identified by pseudonyms in all transcripts of the taped interviews and in the writing resulting from my participation in the study. I understand that the researcher will make available to me a transcript of the interviews for me to review.

I understand that the researcher will be making recommendations to the school regarding the assessment of students encountering difficulty and that this may be of some benefit to me. The risks involved in participating in this study include no greater risks than those ordinarily encountered in daily classroom life.

Name of Participant _____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____

Appendix B
Reconstructed Life Stories

ANDREW'S STORY

In grade 1 I went to a school called Annie Foote. I think my teacher's name was Miss G. She was a fairly nice teacher. She just understood what we were thinking. She kind of knew us, like, we were friends. She was fair and she listened to you. Miss G. would hear your story, and see what you have to say. In grade 3 the work was getting harder. It jumped quite a bit from grade 2 to 3. I remember it being quite easy in grade 2 and then it got quite a bit harder in grade 3. And from grade 3 to 4 it jumped quite a bit again. That's when I started having more difficulty with the work.

In grade 5 I came to middle school. That was my roughest year. That's when I got a bad reputation. It was the first time I had trouble with behaviour at school. When I first walked into grade 5 I thought, "Well I'm going to try hard and do good in school" but then I didn't really like my teacher Miss M. so that kind of mixed the whole year up. I just didn't get along with her. It ruined the whole year. And I wasn't doing my best work either. It bummed me out because I didn't like the teacher. My marks fell in grade 5 basically because I didn't like the teacher. It's the teacher that you get that changes how well you do. I'm doing better in the subjects that I like with the teachers that I like.

When I got a bad reputation with Miss M. when ever something would happen in the classroom and I was near she said, "Andrew, go down to the office". And that's kind of unfair. I was getting in a lot of trouble. It wasn't very much fighting, it was more just talking out in class. I can remember one incident when all the girls were dancing around the class - we were having a party. I was walking by and someone pushed Holly and she ran into me and fell on the ground. And Holly said it was on purpose, that I had pushed her. It was actually some other girl but Holly didn't want that girl to get in trouble so she blamed it on me and Miss M. believed it because of my reputation at the time.

Miss M. favoured the girls. When anything went wrong if the girls did it she said "Oh, okay just don't do it again". But if the boys did it she said, "Go down to the office and fill out an incident report." She wasn't fair and she didn't listen. Sometimes I think that the teachers think that the rules are more important than the students. Like if you're doing something mild and then the teacher reacts as if it's a major incident.

In grade 6 I made an effort to turn things around. My marks went up and I had less incident reports. I decided when I first came into grade 6 that I would try as much as possible to get the work done and get along with the teacher. And I did. And that made the year a whole lot better.

Last year there were a couple of final marks that I think were kind of unfair. One of them was math. Like I got a C minus and I think I probably should have got a C plus or a B because I did most of my work in class and I completed virtually all of my work that last semester and I got quite high on the math achievement test. I got somewhere around 70%. And I got quite high on most of my other tests and I did all the corrections that we're supposed to do. Maybe I got the C minus because sometimes I might have shouted out or something.

One mark that I think I got higher than I should have was music. I got a B and I probably should have had about a D or D plus. I didn't really like music, because it

was just recorders and talking about these dead musicians and it really doesn't interest me.

I know I passed all of the grade six achievement tests. I think in Social I got 60% or something like that and then in LA I think I got maybe a 60 - 70 %. Science, I don't really remember the science test. Some of the questions on the tests were hard and some were pretty easy. There were quite a few easy questions in math. And some in social. I thought that the math test was pretty good. I got the best mark in that. It was a bit easy for an achievement test.

This year, in Grade 7 I just decided I would do good and not shout out in class and not fight and just avoid problems. I just looked at my report card and said, "Well I don't like this, so I'm going to do better." The student has to make that decision. It kind of matters what the parents and teachers do. Like they can influence you a little bit. But it's mostly you.

I've had just one incident report this year. And that was when me and Tommy had a fight in the lunchroom. I got an in-school suspension. You sit in the infirmary and you do work. I basically just read, and did math. I got caught up in LA and social. It was kind of boring. Just sitting in there and doing work. I'll try not to get into any more fights this year. But if someone bugs me enough I'll just lose my temper.

I like LA pretty good. I'm getting all the work done, and working hard. Anything I don't finish in class I do for homework. I got a C for the first term. I thought it might have been a bit higher.

In Social there were a couple of quizzes. We're working on Japan. We've had 2 vocabulary tests. I got 8 out of 9 on the first vocabulary test and 5 out of 8 on the last vocabulary test. On the first report card I got a B because I've done well on the tests. I think the teacher also looked at some of your major tests and how much of the work you've completed and the neatness of your notes.

In Science, that's Mr. C., I got a B because I have neat notes. We've had about 8 or 9 small tests, like just charts, and the lowest I've got is 9 out of 10. The rest are 10 out of 10. We've handed in 2 labs and I got 8 out of 10. I work very well for Mr. C. But sometimes he can get on my nerves. If the teachers nag you it gets worse because they get on your bad side and they really don't like you at all.

In Math I have Mr. R. I'm doing not too bad, I got a D in the first term. I did pretty good on the tests and I've completed most of my work neatly. I didn't get some of the assignments finished. I'm getting along with him pretty good. I don't like it when the teacher says, "Do this page and then do this page", and then they go off and do something else. I like the teachers that explain everything. I find with Mr. R., he says "Do this page, do this other page, and it's due tomorrow." And then he goes and sits down and if you have a question he'll just say, "Look in the book, read it over a couple of more times", and that's basically it. The teacher has to walk around the classroom and look and see if you understand what you are doing.

I have no idea how I got a D in Health. Well, there's this booklet that we had to do. I lost my first one. I had it the day before it was due and I thought it was in my locker and I lost it. So I had to redo it. It was a rush job and maybe that brought me down. A D doesn't make me feel that great. It's still a passing grade, it's just not a very

good passing grade.

Probably my favourite subject this year is IA. I got my first A ever. It was amazing. I'd never ever had an A on a report card before. My parents were really proud of me.

Band is pretty good because of Mr. B. He's a nice teacher. He's strict, but not too, too strict and he's fair. The teacher has to draw a certain line.

So basically I only had two low marks this term and even those two marks were still passing. And in terms of importance of subject, one of them is not that important. I've got something like 5 or 6 B's. They don't make me feel quite as good as A's but they are still good. I'm going to try to keep my marks up there. And the ones that are a little bit lower I'm going to try and make them up to the B's and C's.

I find that self assessments are kind of weird and it takes quite a bit of time to fill them out. They're just boring and I don't really see the point of them. Writing samples are a good way to know how somebody is at writing, but I'm not really good at those, I'm not good at writing. It's just that I get writer's block and I can't think of anything to write. But I usually do fairly well on project assessments. Last year in science we had to do a project on energy. You had to make something work. We had a small bike and we hooked a turbine up to it, pedalled the bike and the light turned on. I got a B. I prefer projects to tests. You get quite a bit of time to work on your projects and the test you just have a certain amount of time, like a class, to finish it so you're trying to hurry up to finish the test and sometimes you just get the answer wrong because of that.

NORMAN'S STORY

One of the good things about middle school is that when you get into the higher grades you get to do more things. You get options. Sometimes you get more privileges. Like, in gym sometimes you get your choice of what you want to do. But mostly, school is boring. Most of the time what we're learning is boring. It's better when you get to do fun things. Like in Science, doing experiments. Not just sitting at your desk all of the time writing. I don't think that there's no such thing as something fun in LA or Math. But maybe in Social.

Another thing about middle school is all the rules. Some of the rules really aren't fair. If you do something and you didn't know it wasn't allowed, it's not fair when they automatically punish you. They won't even talk about it. I know that the teachers think that rules are important because they're the ones who enforce them. If there weren't as many rules teachers wouldn't be as mean because they wouldn't be enforcing rules every single step you take. It's like people are watching you all of the time waiting to catch you. It doesn't make you feel very good. Like in Social and LA we're not allowed to yawn. If you yawn, he'll go, "Quit talking back to me." But if the teacher isn't really picky about the rules all of the time, then you get along better.

My report card this term wasn't very good. I was surprised. I got a C in Science and the rest were F's. It makes you feel pretty bad when you get a report card with lots of F's on it. I did better last year in grade 6. I got better grades. I don't really remember them but I know I didn't get F's in the core subjects. Or else I wouldn't have passed. I'm sort of worried that I might not pass grade 7. I wouldn't feel very good about being kept back. I don't think it's too late for me.

My parents got steamed about my grades. Now I have to study half an hour to an hour every night except on weekends. Hopefully, it'll last. I have to review most of the work I did that day. That might help my grades. My mom and dad are going to check that I'm actually doing it. I wasn't doing that in the first term. I think I'm capable of doing the work. I think that I could get B's and A's. 10% of your grade is for effort in this school. So working hard can raise your grade. Not working hard can lower it. The teacher marks your effort by how you use your class time. If teachers watch you closely, it's pretty obvious.

I think I got the F in LA by some of the things I did. I got a couple of bad marks in LA. Like eight out of twenty on my skill book. It's this book where you've got to fill in the commas, periods or capitals or whatever. I know how to do that stuff but I don't really try. It's not that fun. And I guess that I wasn't working hard enough in class. I don't know why I didn't do the work. I did some of it. And I didn't hand most of it in. Most of it I just forgot. I sometimes lose track of when things are due until it's too late. I need reminders of when things are due. One assignment that I never did in LA was a whole novel study. Well, I did it but I didn't ever hand it in. By the time I could have handed it in it was already too late. So I would have gotten zero for it anyway. I just didn't hand it in because I forgot and the teacher didn't remind me till it was too late. I think I probably would have gotten about 20 out of 30. There was a multiple choice test that had like things and people from a novel and you had to match it with the novel. I didn't do very good on that.

I understand most of the Math. I don't know how I got an F. I thought I was going to do better so it was a bit of a shock. I usually got about 50% on my tests. That should be passing.

And I got an F in Social. I didn't get the work done.

It was Science that I got a C in. I like the teacher and I sort of like Science. And I got my assignments and labs handed in. I did better on my tests. I studied just for the hard one, a unit test. It was called "A Close Look At Life" and one of the questions was, "What are the 7 things organisms do," or something. We had to write out the answers. I think I did good on that one. In Science, we also had a multiple choice test about notes from a movie. We also get quizzes in Science. They're multiple choice and short answer. I think he adds up all of our marks and then he finds the average to get our mark. Bigger things should be worth more. But he hasn't told us that.

In Science lots of kids pretend to be working. You have your text book and you'd be writing and you'd keep on looking up at your text book and keep on writing. But actually what you're doing is writing a letter or something. Or passing notes.

I got S's in all of my complementary courses. I have Outdoor Ed and Computer Multimedia and Art. S means Satisfactory.

Science and Outdoor Ed is the same teacher. That's the teacher that I like. If you like the teacher, you work harder or even do the work and hand it in and that makes a difference for your grade. Language and Social is the biggest problem for me because of the teacher. You kind of get back at them by not doing the work. My math teacher is okay.

Some classes I fool around a lot. It depends on the teacher and the subject and what we're doing. I usually whistle. Sometimes the teacher knows it's me. I do it mostly to bug the teacher.

Next term, I want to raise my grades so I can pass and get the jobs that I want and stuff. I want to be a computer programmer. I need to work harder and use my class time and study.

DAN'S STORY

I don't remember that much about the earlier grades. In grade 1 we didn't exactly have a really nice teacher. Her name was Mrs. E. One day, Zachary White, he was kind of one of the problem kids in class, well, she put him through the wall. He had stitches all over on his bottom of his chin. We just sat there. We were scared of her. In Grade 2 I had Ms. B. and it was really fun. In grades 3 and 4 I had nice teachers.

In grade 5 I came to middle school and I had Miss M. In grade 5 I was tested because they thought I might have a learning disability. But I was above grade level. I think I was referred for testing in grade 5 because I wasn't really paying attention.

Most of my school problems started last year in grade 6. I didn't do the work, I was bored with it. And I didn't pay attention and I had really really messy notes. I started off doing the work. But after a couple of months I just started slowing down and then I decided to stop doing the work. I could have done the work. It just got too boring. And I got further and further behind. Like, I had a lot of trouble with my Greece report in Social. I had it in a binder and we had to put them in a duotang, and I couldn't find a duotang, so it ended up being a month late. I had it all done and ready to go, but not in a duotang. I didn't get a very good mark on that, because it was so late. If your work's late you should be docked off marks, but some people just can't help it.

Instead of doing the work I would just draw pictures and stuff. I'd just sit there, draw, fool around with my pencil. Sometimes I'd get some of my work done. Then Mr. L. said, "You should start doing your work better," and I said, "Yeah okay". I thought I'd better pull my act together.

My parents said, "If you don't pull your act together you'll spend another year in grade 6." And then I was retained because I never did the work. I could have done the work. I tried harder at the end of the year but it was too late. I don't know why I was still retained. When I found out that I was being retained for sure I felt like a nothing. I guess that being retained was a fair thing because I wasn't doing the work, and the grades on my report card were E's. I'd recommend retaining other kids too if they don't do their work. Some kids just sit there and do nothing. I think retention was a good thing for me, honestly.

This year, my second year in grade 6, it started fine, because everyone started to respect me. The new grade sixers really respect me because I'm taking it without getting really ticked off. I'm not ticked off any more, because I'm way ahead in my work. I'm doing the work this time. It's not as boring. This year I think I've figured out that if I do the work I can have more time to play, so that's why I get it done. It still gets boring, its just that I deal with it now. If I didn't do the work I'd probably get retained again. This year, Ms. M. said if I keep the good work up I'm going into grade 7 after Christmas.

I thought that my report card this term was going to look like a bunch of B's and A's. So I was really shocked by the D plus in Language Arts. I don't know how I got that. My other marks were good so I got \$30 from my parents and my brother took me to play billiards. They were really pleased. I want to raise my grades so I can pass and get the jobs that I want and stuff. I want to be a computer programmer. When I compared marks with my two friends, I had higher marks. I felt like a king. I'm thinking

maybe I shouldn't go to grade 7 after Christmas. I don't know if I can handle it - it would be way more work.

JEFF'S STORY

School's not that important to me. I don't remember much about elementary school but I did okay. One thing that stands out in my mind is grade 3. In grade 3 my teacher hit me in the head with a textbook but I don't remember why.

I started Middle School in grade 6. Middle school is quite a bit different than elementary because of the teachers. The expectations are really high with the middle school teachers. And they don't pay as much attention to you as they did in elementary.

I didn't have any trouble in grade 6. My marks were all B's and C's and I did the work. I got along all right with Mr. L. and I wasn't in the office very often.

I first started having trouble at the beginning of the year in grade 7 because of Mr. R. I had him for Math, Science, Phys. Ed. and Health. When I started having difficulty at school it was in those subjects. I didn't like Math and Science so I didn't do the work. I didn't like Social last year either, so I stopped doing the work there too. Then I had to go to the office. But that didn't make me do the work. Nothing would have helped me do the work, there was no way I was going to do it. I stopped doing the work when Mr. R. started hassling me. I did some good work in LA. I liked that class. If I like the subject then I do more work. The only good thing about last year was Industrial Arts. It was fun. Then they decided that I had to do work till the end of the year but I didn't have to come to school. That was easy. I got to work at home and I didn't have teachers bothering me.

I'm having some problems in grade 8. Sometimes I like coming to school. It depends on what we have that day. Like Monday afternoon is good because we have Options, like Art, Drama and Industrial Arts. Also, if the teachers are nice to me I'll come back the next day. You can tell how nice they are by their attitude, by how they take care of kids and if they can tolerate bad kids. By nice I also mean if they don't bother me as much and just leave me alone. When the teachers bother me it's usually for work. They want me to do the work. If they are nice to me I'll do the work but if they aren't I won't. If the teachers aren't nice I'll skip. I can do the work anytime I want. I'm waiting for them to figure it out. No one did last year.

I haven't skipped school much this year. I haven't skipped since November. A couple of periods and probably two afternoons. I just walk out of the building. If I had a rough morning then I just walk out at lunch time. Sometimes I take other people with me, like Karen. I tell her I'm skipping and then she decides if she wants to come. I don't go home. I go to my neighbour's because he's on home schooling. So I just go over there and hang out for a bit. It's better than being at school. And then I go home and get grounded.

I don't take Phys. Ed this year because I stopped changing into gym strip again. I don't hate Phys. Ed., I just hate the teacher. I used to change for Phys. Ed in grade 6. It wasn't a problem. But in grade 7 I stopped changing for Phys. Ed. around October. Sometimes I did Phys. Ed. in my jeans. But this year they won't let me do that. I won't change now because Mr. R.'s such a jerk. It's a way of getting back at him.

I'm not doing the work in Language Arts this year because I don't like Mrs. S. That makes a huge difference to me who the teacher is. I'll work for Mr. C. and I'll work if like the subject.

I thought that I was going to get C's and D's on the first report card but I got D's and F's. I was really surprised. I don't understand how they got those marks. Getting lower marks that you thought is disappointing.

I got an F in LA. An F means failing. I got a three for "Thoughtfully responds to and reflects on reading". I don't know what a three means. And I got a three for comprehension but I don't know what they mean by that. "Selecting appropriate strategies when reading", I don't what that means either. I don't know what any of it means. In LA she said, "An evaluation of Jeff's abilities or progress is not available because Jeff did not submit any assignments. Many attempts have been made to encourage and support Jeff in the completion of his work. He has taken no responsibility for his learning." I don't agree with that. I worked, I just didn't hand anything in.

In Social Studies, I got an F. He said, "Try to stay more on task so you can finish your assignments". I understand everything okay, it's easy, I just didn't get stuff finished on time.

In Math I got a D. He said, "This term has been one of ups and downs for Jeff in Math. At times he has put forth a sincere effort and shown a desire to improve while at others he refuses to cooperate at all." Mr. W. knows how I am.

Science, I got an F. He said, "In order to improve you need to improve both at home and at school on your Science work." I didn't hand in any labs or anything last term but I understand it better than last year.

I'm hoping to improve in the second term. I want to pass grade 8 so that I can go to the high school and get out of this place. I've started doing some of the work. I still hate doing it but I've got to pass. I think that I can do it on my own. I don't need the teachers' help or my parents' help. I think high school will be better. It's bigger and I won't be hassled as much.

JAMES' STORY

I did really well in the earlier grades. I remember that ECS was easy. It was fun, we didn't do anything. I learned to read, learned little problems and stuff.

In Grade 1 I was in French immersion. Both my sisters were in French immersion. They took to it like that. So my mom figured I should try. I went into French immersion for one year and all the math I could understand. But the language, I had a hard time understanding it. I went through the whole year and then I had to go into just the English classes the next year. I had to repeat grade 1.

Then, in grade two I did really well. Math was easy, everything was easy. I got A's and B's. Maybe one C in music because I don't like singing. I liked the teacher. In grade 2 I started getting into a bit of trouble. At recess you were supposed to go outside but me and my friends would just stay inside. Whenever the teacher did catch me, she just let me stay in the class and work quietly. She let me break the rules as long as I wasn't doing anything destructive, like if I was doing something I needed work on, like reading. Then she just let me stay in. Part of what made her nice was a little flexibility in terms of school rules.

Grade 3 was okay. I dropped. It has to do with the teacher mostly. Like I find that I do really really well when I have a lady teacher. When I have a man, I have an attitude towards it. Men just treat you differently. With lady teachers I've had no bad images. I find it easy to work with them, to work around them. We can get along easier cause they're not strict. There was one male teacher that I actually got along with, he was the best science teacher I ever had. He was easy going, laid back, funny. He couldn't write worth a darn. But I had a man in grade 3. I didn't really like him and I got into a lot of trouble from him and that's why I didn't do too good. I figure I had a reputation with him that started in grade 2. They'll give you a lower grade if they have a bad image of you.

In grade 4 again I had a woman teacher. She was really nice, She basically helped me, and when I was bad all she'd do was put me in the corner in another desk. And I had to sit there. My marks were C's and B's again. As soon as it was math class I'd get to go see a different teacher if I got 5 checkmarks from the behaviour plan. There were 2 students. She would teach me math with my friend. That made for some good learning because that way there's only one person that needs help. She could pay specific attention to me. We did really well. When we went to mark our homework in the class with the normal teacher we'd always get it all right, because we understood it more. What I don't get is I had a C average in grade 4 and my parents were proud of me. A C average sucks.

Grade 5, wow, I hated that grade. I had a man teacher. Mr., I can't remember his name, we called him Mr. K. He was very strict and hard to work with. He was really mean. He was strict about homework and behaviour and he wasn't very flexible or anything.

In grade 6 my marks dropped. I wasn't doing anything. I wasn't doing the work. I felt worried, angry, a whole bunch of mixed emotions because I wasn't getting the same attention as I was in the earlier grades. In middle school, they treat you a lot differently. They don't bring you into the year just easily. They start out playing hardball

and keep it going all the way through. They don't really give you a break at all. I think another reason why it's hard in middle school is that all the teachers teach differently. Like you have to look at basically all the teachers teaching styles and all that. In grade 6 they talked to me about retention. I did totally bad. They said, "You have 2 months to bring up your grades or we'll retain you in grade 6 for another year." But then I did really well, as soon as they totally scare you.

Last year, I figure, some of my problem was not paying attention. In grade 7 I had a real hard time. In math I got a tutor. I couldn't understand it. The teacher wasn't teaching it at all. And I didn't get the help I needed. That's why I got a tutor. Then in Language Arts, I was getting a C and I missed the last test of the year for some reason. I think I was sick. And I got an F because I missed the test. I couldn't rewrite it. He said, "If you miss it you can't write it again." That's not fair. If you have an illness, I mean, you can't help that at all. Teachers are lazy and they want to mark the tests all at once. I figure it's only one more test. I didn't understand why I got the F. Why couldn't he just give me the C? There was still a week left of school. I don't see why he couldn't let me write it. If he knows I'm doing bad, he might as well give me a chance to try and pull my mark up. If I would have got a B on that final my grade would have gone up a bit more. And it was worth something like 40% of our mark. You know, in grade 6 I loved LA.

Overall, in grade 7 my marks dropped even more than what they were in grade 6. The 4 core subjects I did pretty good except for LA, I got the F. And then, science I pulled my mark up from an F to a C plus by just doing the work. Doing extra stuff. I didn't want to fail so many subjects. And math, I was doing okay. I think I got a C minus. I got an F in gym, I think it was second term. You get an F by not changing, not listening, goofing off, throwing balls at people. That's fun.

In grade 7 I didn't like the teachers so I was bad. I goofed off a lot and got a bad image. I was throwing things during class, chewing gum and blowing bubbles, breaking the rules. Throwing things though, it's irresistible. It's fun! Someone will just be sitting there reading and you hit them in the head with a piece of chalk. If you're not doing anything fun in class, you have to make your own fun, and it's usually bad. I got a lot of bad effort grades in grade 7.

I didn't want to stay back in grade 7 because I would just feel bad. People would always make fun of you and stuff. And I wouldn't like that. No one wants to be retained. I guess, in the long run retention might have done me some good. I could have gone through, but you just feel so dumb. You'd feel, like, totally younger, so no one wants to be retained, but yeah, I think it can do some good. Through the second year it would probably seem harder, cause you're like, "Oh, I'm stupid".

If students are bad, they have a bad name, the school just wants to get them out as soon as possible. Why hang onto them for an extra year when they can become the high school's problem? It's too much work for the school. They're just lazy, that's what I figure. The school doesn't really care. A kid that's a real pain, a nuisance, if he's totally bad, they just want him out. They just push them along. They say, "You got an F that's okay you can still go to the next grade." That says to a student, "Well I guess it doesn't matter. Okay if I'm in grade 8. Fine with me." But there's no point of pushing

them into the next grade if they don't know what they're doing. If I got an F in math, whose to say that I'd do even better with harder work.

In grade 8, this year, I'm really kind of stressed out. Like on Thursdays we have triple LA in a row and then Math. So that makes for a crappy morning. For the past few weeks in LA he's been making us just do work, but he doesn't give us enough time to work on our subject. In LA, he gives us monthly things on how we're doing. And on my first one I got a D 2. The 2 is the effort and that's really good effort, except I wasn't understanding it so I didn't get as good a mark on it. On my first report card I got a D. I don't know how I'll improve in LA this year. I need to get at least 65% so I don't have to go in the non-academic stream, the ninety-three stream in grade nine. I'm going to have to really kick ass. I'm just kind of hoping. I don't have a clue about how to do it. I need someone to help me make a plan how to do this. I can't ask the LA teacher because I hate his guts. He's too mean and I wouldn't know how to ask. I could ask the other LA teacher, but she's a cow.

In math I was doing good and then I ran into a harder unit. And I asked my teacher for 3 weeks to switch me into the lower class, the not as advanced class, because I didn't want to get a bad mark and I'm trying to do something about my grade. And he kept making me do the tests that we're having and yet I didn't know it. I couldn't keep up cause they were teaching it faster, so I went where they're teaching a little bit slower. The less advanced class is still grade 8 math but it's just less kids, slower pace, and more attention. They decide who goes into less advanced class basically from your last year's grades. I got a C so that's why I went into the regular math class. The class average, not including me, is very very low, like 40%. In math I guess I was assessed on my marks before. Just the mark when I left. In Math I'm not sure how I ended up with a D because as far as I knew it was going to be better in Math. I don't know how I got that.

And in science I wasn't doing badly. I got a D for the first term. He's only made us do graphs and now we have a big unit test coming up. In Science the comment was "James is improving." I went from an F to D. Because I did quite well on the last tests.

In Social I got a D and three for effort. I did well on the tests but I missed one assignment. I missed one assignment and now I'm getting a D. I can't believe it. He gave me the same comment as last year: "James needs to work harder and socialize less." And I didn't socialize, not as much as I did. I asked to appeal that grade and he said, "Oh yes, you can do that" but he's procrastinated so many times and nothing's been done. He's a jerk. I think he's gay.

I did better on my complementary courses. In Gym I got a B+ and 1 for effort. In Art I got a B+ and 2 effort. Outdoor Ed was a B+ and 2 effort. Computer Studies, a B and 3 for effort. D's in the core subjects and B's in the complementary courses. I did better in the complementary courses because they are more fun. You don't do any work. LA I have a hard time because you have to do a lot of work. I looked up my marks on the computer before the report cards came out. I know the administrator password, so you just sneak into the computer room and check your grades. The people in the office keep on changing it but everyone finds out. They've changed the code and made it harder to get into but we can still do it. Me and my friends are the first to find

out and tell everybody. We go into this program called administer and we set up administrator password ... nobody else knows that. I don't even think half of the teachers know that. I could have changed my grades like that if I wanted to. Changing them to all A's wouldn't be plausible, you know. C's would be plausible, but it's just not right. I mean giving myself a good grade when I don't even know anything. It's kind of fun to see what the teachers are giving me, though.

My dad was pretty satisfied by this report card. I need to do way better. I was kind of satisfied but not really, because I have to get at least a C average. I need to do a lot better in the second term to get out of the ninety-three class.

I compared report cards with my friends. I did better than a few of them. My one friend who's really smart, a brainiac, always getting good grades, he got two F's. I beat him. He got an F in LA.

I'm not getting any kind of resource help or special program or anything this year. No one helps me. So I find it hard. I want to do really well. I am plenty motivated. And I know I can do it because I did so well in elementary. My mother keeps telling me, you know how can get your babies tested and all that, like their IQ. I came out really high, but sometimes I feel, "How did I do that when I'm doing so poorly in these grades." I'm trying as hard as I can. Like last year, I tried, I worked my ass off. I worked really really hard to get a good mark. I really tried and I still didn't do good. I don't get it.

There's a million school rules. I don't have a clue why schools have so many rules. I just think it's stupid. I'm sure they've got at least a couple of hundred rules. Most of the time the teachers won't let you get away with anything. Maybe earlier on in their teaching careers they would have but not any more. At school you're supposed to try to be basically good. Acting good and nice at school means not bullying, or speaking out of turn.

The most important rule at school is don't threaten kids. Cause that's how I got suspended, my first day here. Don't threaten people at all, whatsoever. I'm like physically stronger than all of the other kids. I walk up to them and scare them. I won't hit them or anything. It's a bit of intimidation: Shut up or I'll beat you up type thing. And they know.

The stupidest rule at school is that you're not allowed to go outside and eat your lunch. You're not allowed to go off the grounds at lunch time. Not even walk across the street to the park. Not allowed. There's not that much to do at lunch time. You can go out there and walk around and talk. The school doesn't supply any sports things, that I know of. Going off grounds at lunch, it's not that bad, but you can into trouble if your parents are strict. All the school does is give you a few detentions. I got two detentions from the "Big One". I skipped one and then I did the full lunch detention. Then I got to go to the Consequence Room where I got another consequence from the chaperone person, the retard. I've skipped that one for three days. They don't care.

A stupid rule in the classroom is no throwing garbage into the garbage can. You can't launch it. You get in trouble. I was sitting at my desk and the garbage can was right there and I just went like that and I got an essay. I think that's a dumb rule. No throwing airplanes. That's a stupid rule. You should always be allowed to throw

airplanes. But most people don't.

Another classroom rule is speaking out of turn. You're not allowed to speak out of turn. If someone stops talking you have to put your hand up to say something. And we've got this really stupid rule, if you talk out of turn you get an essay assigned as punishment. It's called the essay game. It's kind of fun sometimes when you watch other people get them, it's "ha ha". And then you get one.

And reading, I mean you're not allowed to talk quietly even to a partner. You have to read a book. If you don't bring a book, you get an essay. I can think of lots of rules.

I admit, I've skipped only twice this year. I didn't get in trouble because I didn't get caught the first time. It's easy. You just move around the school undetected. As long as the teacher doesn't think you're there, you're homefree. I only do it once in a while. I was going to skip today but we were getting our things marked so I thought I'd stick around. I got in trouble the second time because the "Big One" saw me in the hall. I was supposed to do five or six detentions but I just ignored it and nothing happened.

Generally, I don't really like teachers. It depends how they are. Like if you're being hassled in the class then you don't like them. But the next day, things could be fine. It's a day to day thing. Period to period.

There's a lot of lack of respect for teachers. Here's an example. Last year there was this band teacher. No one respected him whatsoever. They'd mouth off to him, hit him and stuff. I don't know how to put this but the kids thought he was a shitty teacher, but I mean that's no reason to mouth him off. He'd give them a consequence, like a detention, and then they'd totally mouth him off, like swearing and that kind of thing. And then he quit. And now, there's a whole bunch of teachers that are not respected, like, "Oh that's a stupid teacher", or "He's gay" or something. And people just go along with it, conforming to it. The band teacher, he just didn't have it, you know. He was just a nice guy. If they're nice, good, let them be. Keep them. You'd think they'd want the mean ones to go and not the nice ones. But the mean teachers are the ones that can control better. Like the teacher I have LA with. He's really mean. He can control no problem. He's the one if you throw the garbage, it's big, big trouble. You'll get a detention. If you come into class and start opening your books, he'll get mad at you. "Quit shuffling your papers. I'm trying to talk." I can't name one student in the school that likes him. I have some respect for him, not as much as I should. I don't think he's a total idiot.

There's a lot of lack of respect for teachers. I think that kids in middle schools really lose their respect for teachers. Teachers in middle school just stick it to you. You can't do this or that. If they're bossy, "Do this, do that" you don't want to do it. If they don't have that "Do this, do that" attitude it's easier to work and you respect them more. And just the other day one of the teachers said I was being a real bad ass. I'm like, "What? I haven't done anything. I've been at my desk the whole period." I got up twice, to ask him to go the bathroom. He said "Yes", he's the only teacher that will say "Yes". And I got up to get a dictionary. And he said I was being a bad ass. He said I was being rude and bad. I didn't get it. I didn't do anything. Like I was doing my work. I'm almost done. And like I hate when the teacher gives you a mouthy comment, just mouths you

off, "Oh, get the hell in your seat and just sit there and do your damn work."

When kids do really well it's because they like the teacher. Like if they can get along with the teacher pretty well. It's dependent on what you think of them, how they act. A good teacher will help you. One teacher I had, when I asked for help she was like "Come to my desk. Show me what you're doing" and then she made sure I knew what I was doing. She was nice in the sense of just being kind and that. Whenever I was bad I'd get in trouble, no question, but I never felt that it was that bad.

I like student teachers because they can figure out where you're coming from and if you don't understand they help you. But the regular teacher, if you don't understand, they just say, "Well, you just have to listen and learn". That's not going to help me. I am listening, but I don't understand so you want the teacher to come explain. Speak face to face with you, you know.

The kind of help that I need is like when I went to the lower math class. There's a smaller class, 15 students. More time for a teacher to go around and make sure everyone understand it. I mean, you need someone there. The teacher. There. Right by you to tell you what to do if you're having trouble with something.

A good teacher will pay attention to you. When they pay attention to you, you kind of get to be friends, and trust each other in a way. Trust has to do with it. Do you trust your teachers? You need to know what you can do and what you can't do. But even if you know you can get away with a lot, you should still be basically good. You can build trust by getting to know them, and through communication, like speaking off topic. Like just in the halls, talk. Not during class time, maybe at the minute break you'll run into him and have a little conversation that's not related to school. If you have the same interests you can talk about that in the halls and this and that. If it's school related, forget it, I mean, that's the whole point of you being there anyway.

Some kids are scared like if they don't understand, and they don't know but everyone else knows. They don't want to put up their hand and say, "Teacher, excuse me, I don't know this". They'd be scared because everyone else knows it and might make fun of them maybe. So they're like, "Okay, everyone else knows it, I know it too" and they end up getting an F. Like the teacher will sometimes ask, "Okay, who understands it?" and everyone will put up their hands. They don't want to keep their hands down. Even if everyone puts up their hands and say, "Oh, I understand it", the teacher should go to the people who are having the most trouble, or whoever has a frustrated look on their face, and ask them a question, like, "Okay, answer this question for me". You put them under a lot of pressure by asking them in front of the class. Or the teacher could just keep them after class. Because if they don't know it, and you're making them do it, they'll get scared, it'll make them get the question even worse.

It's better to answer questions. If you're asking the questions and no one else is asking questions, you feel kind of dumb. If you ask the questions you're stupid.

Not teaching is just assigning the homework. "Oh, read this page. Do this page." You don't learn much from that. They're the teacher, they're supposed to be teaching us. I mean, the whole point of the teacher is so we can learn and ask questions. I mean someone asks a question and they get all mad: "Oh no. Not now." That's their job.

Some teachers are lazy, some teachers aren't. It depends on the situation. I think

a lot of them are lazy though. You can tell that a teacher isn't lazy when they get straight at it. Like at the beginning of class. Sometimes, some teachers will never have their marks in on time, like never. Always get them in a week late. Or we don't get assignments back very quickly. We want to know how we did the next day. I mean it should be marked. I can see if it's a big huge essay, and there's like 30 essays. I can see that taking 4 or 5 days. Laziness is also not knowing what they want to do for the class. They didn't plan anything, they just didn't do anything. And if they didn't plan whether or not we're having a test. I mean, Mr. H., he'll say "Guess what guys, we're having a test. Oh, actually, I don't have the test ready." And the teacher sitting at his desk all period, doing nothing, and not wandering around looking to see what people are doing and not helping them. That's laziness. It happens all the time. Especially in LA. He doesn't help anybody. Last year, I asked him for help. He didn't do anything.

What counts as fun in class would be like a free period. It's more fun in class if they don't make you work at your desk the whole period and stuff like that. I can't stand sitting at the desk and working the whole period. Sometimes the learning can be fun if you enjoy that subject. Another thing that makes a class fun is if they kind of talk you in to it for 10 minutes. Like, "Oh this is what we're doing," and ease you into it a little bit.

I hate sitting at the front in class. It makes you feel that the teacher thinks you're a bad ass. So they figure you have to sit up at the front cause you're bad. At the back you can goof off, and you have more freedom. But at the front, you have to work.

Teachers usually now combine question types on tests. They mix them all up. So it'll be short answer, essay forms, multiple choice and all that. I prefer multiple choice because the question's there, and their answers are already there. Or if it's true or false, you've got a 50-50 chance of getting it right. But I think it would prove students are smarter if they had to write it down. Then you would know that it came from their head. I think that multiple choice tests are more popular with teachers because the kids will do them.

I don't think teachers change their tests a lot of the time. In gr. 6, the end of the year test we said, "Why are we using this test?" and the teacher said, "Because I've used this test year after year after year." Then I kind of went looking for someone who had written last year's test.

We had this big science test. And the class before us had it and they all failed, 29 out of 100, 50 out of 100. That's bad. Anyway, I studied, and he said I did pretty well, but he didn't really remember. It was pretty simple. It didn't seem hard. I had to peek at my study cards a few times. They were in my pocket. I was studying the class before. I wasn't really cheating, mind you. I knew the answer I just didn't know how to spell it and spelling counts.

Sometimes you can do well on a test without studying or knowing much about it. I don't even know how to study. I have a lot of background knowledge though. My dad has been everywhere, does everything, you know. And he's gone to all these places and he brings back books for me and stuff. That helps me out when I'm taking tests. For example, in Social when the teacher was talking about the migrating and stuff, I didn't really know about that sort of thing. But on the first test I got 76%. And I didn't even

study.

RICHARD'S STORY

I was surprised I even passed grade 5 last year. My marks last year weren't very good. In the middle of the year I caught onto skipping and I lost interest in school and didn't get the work done. That's why my marks went down.

I got a C in Language Arts. That means that I should have just tried a little harder and I should actually study for my tests instead of not studying.

The D in Social Studies meant that I needed to try harder instead of slacking off. Slacking off is when you just sit there and don't pay attention. And just be bored. I understood what was going on in Social Studies. I just probably didn't pay attention a lot.

In Math I should have got a higher mark than a D because I'm really good at math. I just should have tried harder on the test and actually studied cause I never studied for the final exams. That was probably it because I barely tried. I understood everything but I just decided not to do it. I didn't know I was going to get a mark like that.

In Science I got a B. Science I understood everything but I could never keep up but then I caught up at the very end of the year. I couldn't keep up when she was like writing on the board and then she would erase it.

I'm really not that good at French and I do bad on exams and stuff. I'm not sure why I got a higher mark in French than in math, social and science. I don't really get it but I guess that I just did really good on my skits.

Phys. Ed. was a B-. That's because I like gym and I do really good in the subject. I just didn't get it cause all through the semester I had a B-, B-, B- and B-. I couldn't believe it. I thought I should have gotten an A because I was really good at it and I always get like excellent on the physical education stuff. I guess that I didn't try for the running part. And that lowered my grade because I wouldn't try things because I didn't want to and some of the times I would sit out. And I missed days so that's why I think I just got a B- even though I'm a good athlete.

In Health I got a B. I got a good mark where I didn't do anything. She would talk and talk and talk and ask for questions. We barely did anything. That was an easy class to get good marks. To get a B all you had to do was fill out these forms and stuff and we had to make a paragraph and we had to make pictures and columns of things. If you stuck up your hand twice you'd most likely get like a B.

In Music I got a C. She marks too hard. I'd sit there, be good, do everything she wanted but she marks too hard. I'm not sure what she wants.

I'm having a pretty good year this year in grade six so I'm just going to try and keep up with the work. I want to do better in school because I have lots of things on my mind and I want to try for a football scholarship one day. I thought I was going to get better marks this year on my first report card because I was getting my homework done and I got all my assignments done.

I was nervous about getting my report card. We got them at the end of the day and then I went on the bus and looked at it. I ripped it open and looked at it right away. I couldn't believe that F in French though. Everybody on the bus opens up their report cards. You look at the grades first and read the comments at home. We talk about our marks on the bus, like, "What did you get in this subject? Oh, I got an A." And someone else says, "I got a B." I told my friends that I got an F in French. I'm like, "I

can't believe it." And they went, "Ha, ha - I got an A." Everybody is good in French but I don't like studying for it because my mom doesn't know nothing about French.

When my mom read my report card she just said keep up the good work. And I said okay. And she said that she doesn't really mind about getting an F in French. I wouldn't show my mom my report card if I got like strictly F's or something. I could hide it from her by keeping it in my backpack or keeping it in my locker. And then I would get my brother to sign it.

My brothers and sisters looked at my report card, too. As soon as I walk in the door it's like, "Can I see your report card?" My sister just likes to bug us about it after. She'll be like, "Ha, ha you really suck at French." My sister and my older brother won't stop looking at. They read all the comments and bug me about it after for a couple of weeks.

Overall, I was surprised by my report card. Some of the marks, like in Science, I was surprised with that mark. I should have got some better marks. The mark is more important to me than the comment because then if I get a good mark I always feel good about myself. Grades aren't that big of a deal, but sometimes they are. Like if I know I'm doing bad and I have to bring up my marks. That's when I'm worried. When teachers write the comments they should give the kid more of a chance at things. Like when they are writing out their report cards they shouldn't put all of the negative stuff in it. Some of the comments I didn't really like. They're really, really putting me down. Most of the stuff like forgetting things they shouldn't even put that. Because it's not the kids' fault that they can't get it done, even me. They should give you better marks because they don't know what you have to do to get those assignments done and bring them back to school. I'd like to see more positive comments.

None of the comments I got really stand out in my mind. In Social he said I should try harder, study for my tests. That's what they all said. The LA teacher just said I did a pretty good job and to try and study for my tests and do good work. In Science he said, "Study for your tests. Overall you did a pretty good job. You need to work harder, and bring in all your assignments". In Math he just said that I did a good job for the first term and "Keep up the good work."

I don't know why I got such a bad mark in LA this year because I tried. I got a C+. I thought it was going to be higher. I can't believe it because I did good on my autobiography. I've been trying, not with spelling though. I'm not sure how she came up with a C+ for me. Probably most of the marks were from the autobiography. I got the best mark in the school on my autobiography. She was looking for details and she was looking for a bedroom map really good. And we also were marked on the reading charts. I'm just reading things and she marks down how many times we read a week and then if you get 200 pages you get a prize or whatever and if you read all week you get a mint. And then we also have these weird tests. I'm not sure what they're for. We have to write out like as many words as we can then she looks around. She likes to see how many words we got wrong so she checks through it. And then if you are doing bad she'll just say, "Please stop now and look it over", and then you read a book. Now in LA we're just reading a book and doing chapter summaries every day. It gets boring.

In Social Studies I thought I'd get a B, but I got a D+. I don't know what

happened - I just got a D+. A D means bad. I thought I was doing really well and I did well on the test. I think it was the end part when we had to do skits for China and ours wasn't long enough. I don't know how he came up with the D+. I'm not sure how we were marked in Social. I think he looked at good effort and being done on time. He probably marked us on this thing we did outside. He hid all these words and they had longitude and latitude and you had to find where the place was. And there was this special word and you had to put them in the right order. I think he was trying to mark map reading. It sure was better than a test because pen and paper tests are like sitting there writing down everything. Now I actually know how to use longitude and latitude.

For our China Unit we were in groups and there were all these questions and we had to find the answers in the book. And they had to be good answers. He was looking for good team work instead of everybody slacking off and being bored and just sitting there. He was looking for words good, spelt out good, good copies instead of just giving him the rough draft. The teacher already knew all this. He's been doing this for five or six years in a row. He knew the book off by heart. He knew a lot about China so it was really hard to get a good mark.

In Math I got a B or a B plus - I'm not sure. I did good on my test and I tried. I got all of my assignments done. In math we were just pre-tested. Its like a real test but you don't get marked on it. I really did bad. I can't remember how to do multiplication. I'm doing good in math. I understand everything and it's easy.

In Science, he gave me a C+. I don't know why. I thought I would get an A. It must be just because of my tests. Because my tests I do really bad on but all my labs I would get perfect, 10 out of 10. The tests were multiple choice. I'm not too good on multiple choice. On the first test I got a 52% and then I got 44% on my second.

Our science labs are marked out of 10. He's looking for like everything has to be perfect, it has to be neatly printed or you can type it out on your computer and he just looks for neatness. He tells us extra things that we can put in the labs so that we can get 10 out 10. Extra things are like something descriptive instead of something boring. There's a certain way we have to do our labs. We have to write out an observation and what materials, procedures and then we have to put our observation and conclusions.

French, I thought I'd get a C+ and that's where I got an F. I couldn't believe cause she just marked me really, really hard on the workbook so that's why I think I got a bad mark. And tests, I did bad on those. Like 2 out of 10 because I don't really like French. French is my main weakness. But now we have a new French teacher because the other one's having a baby. She's giving us more of a chance. She asks us questions just to make sure we're not getting an F. I think I'm going to do better this semester and for the rest of the year she's going to be here.

In Phys. Ed. I got a B+ but I should have had an A. Because when I did my curl ups, I did about 30, and I hit my head on the ground, and I had a bad headache so I stopped. He said that I could redo but I ended up not redoing it. The curl ups changed my mark from an A to a B+. I should have had an A in gym. In gym, he's always writing down notes about me, like say if you are trying or not. This term I'll try everything. And if I'm sick, I'll get a note to him so then he won't mark it down. I got to get an A, I've never got an A in gym. I got to get an A. That's what I'm focusing

on. I think I'm going to get an A this term because I'm pretty good at gymnastics, except for the stretching. Some girls can put their feet behind their head. It's true! I'm like, "Ooh, that could hurt."

Sometimes, teachers mark just by watching. They'll sit there and they will watch you. They see if you are keeping up with your group or just sitting there looking at their answers. They also mark tests and projects and stuff.

I prefer being marked on a project instead of a test. It's easier because you have time to do all the work, you finish it and then you do your presentation then you are done instead of sitting there for a couple of hours writing on a piece of paper. Then your hands are all limp. You can't even feel them.

Tests, you have to be careful. Not all tests are the same. Math tests you will be sitting there writing for an hour. On another test you'll be checking off a, b, c, or d. Another test you just write it out instead of putting numbers and stuff. You can have tests where you just sit there and oral tests where they sit there and ask you questions and you answer everything. I prefer multiple choice because you just read them and just think which answer is the most likely to be it. It really gets frustrating because one answer will be close. Multiple choice tests are just easier and you don't have to spend as much time on them.

Appendix C

Proposal: Understanding and Educating Resisting Students

Understanding and Educating the Resisting Student

The Problem

Impetus for this project stems from the identification by Student Services of a growing population of students within the School Division for whom there is a significant discrepancy between achievement and grade placement and for whom there appears to be no conclusive evidence of learning disability or lower/delayed cognitive development as we know it.

Research indicates that this is not simply a localized problem, but a serious concern in other Western industrialized nations as well (Fine 1991, McLaren 1989, Solnicki 1992, Willis 1977). Previous studies of these students, often called "marginalized", "at-risk" or "educationally vulnerable" students, have focused on economically disadvantaged students or students from ethnic minorities. There is a growing realization, however, that white, middle class students may also be disaffected and alienated from school (McLaren 1989). These students are characterized by "entrenched general and personal opposition to authority" (Willis, p. 11). This attitude is outwardly demonstrated when students fail to do homework or pay attention in class, when students skip school and classes, and when students do not respect school rules and regulations (Sefa Dei, 1993). These behaviours result in failing marks on assignments and tests, failing marks in subjects, and failure of an entire year which increases the potential for dropping out of school (Fine, 1991). Dropping out of school has severe economic and social consequences: "In Canada, currently, it is widely believed that 30% of students do not finish school and that, at the present drop out level, as many as one million under-educated and untrained youth will have entered the Canadian labour market by the year 2000" (Sefa Dei, p. 4).

We believe that these students can make a difference in the world: "The room for possibility and transformation lies with the energy of these adolescents (Fine 1991, p. 52). We also believe that the system has a responsibility to adapt both the structure and delivery of the curriculum so that it can be more effective for a more diverse population of students. Our goal is not only to prevent the further alienation of these students and to keep them in school, but also to help them become strong, independent learners.

The proposal

In the School Division, these students have demonstrated an inability to adapt to the regular program, given the resources and structures that currently exist. We propose an alternative program within a specific school in order to: (a) immediately address the needs of these students, and (b) develop a prototype that could be generalized through the system. To begin, we envision a small group of students (10-15) in grades seven and

eight in a self-contained classroom with the teacher-researcher. These students would receive an integrated curriculum involving the four core subjects in this setting for approximately one half of the school day. For the remainder of the day, they would receive options, physical education and health with their homeroom class.

Overview of the project

We envisage a three year project that will provide us with the time to work through implementing the curriculum, develop a prototype and provide us with longitudinal data on the original core of grade 8 students as they progress through grade 11. Although we anticipate the involvement of the team to be continuous, for purposes of clarity we have conceived of the program in three phases.

Phase I: Identification and Interpretation (Winter/Spring, 1997)

- * identify potential candidates and establish baselines regarding their achievement
- * develop an understanding of the problems these student's experience from their perspective
- * modify and prepare a "generative" curriculum based on: (1) the needs and interests of the students; (2) the Program of Studies; and, (3) curricular initiatives developed by professional organizations (like the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics). It is anticipated that curriculum would focus on real life applications and developing independent inquiry and information processing skills involving the use of computers and multi-media technology
- * develop an alternative assessment scheme that includes student and parent involvement in the collection, analysis and communication of growth and achievement, both inside and outside of school.

Phase II: Implementation, Documentation and Interim Analysis and Reporting (Fall '97 - Spring, 2000)

- * implement and adjust the curriculum
- * document the progress of the students with a broad range of indicators that will include collecting samples of work, administering performance assessments and conducting interviews. Global indicators developed by such professional bodies as the N.T.C.M., I.R.A., and National Science Council will be used to judge the progress in four core subject areas
- * monitor and evaluate the program on the basis of the goals of the initiative. Feedback from students and parents will be collected via surveys and interviews and considered in reformulating the program
- * develop interim reports to be presented in the spring of each school year (97 & 98). These will also be used to provide the knowledge and impetus for planning for the following year

Phase III: Reflection and Final Report (Summer, 2000)

- * interpretation of collected documentation

* production of final report by September, 2000

The project team

We have assembled a strong, collaborative team for the implementation of this project that is well suited to the needs of the identified population. This team is committed to the initiatives of the study, to the needs of the students, to a more integrated school experience and to a broad-based notion of assessment. We have demonstrated a familiarity with the proposed context of the study and success with teaching and assessing the identified population. We have also conducted formal research in this area. We believe that the strength of this team will ensure the success of the project.

Participants of the project include:

- Mrs. Dorothy Kristensen, Principal, the Middle School
- Ms. Lori Olafson, Teacher-Researcher, the Middle School
- Mr. Gerry van Nie, Psychologist, the School Division
- Dr. Jim Field and Dr. Jim Paul, University of Calgary

The involvement of Dr. Field and Dr. Paul would include participation in the following:

- identifying students and establishing baselines
- developing the curriculum and alternative assessment scheme
- documenting the implementation of the curriculum
- monitoring and evaluating the worth of the program
- developing and presenting research reports

Anticipated sources of funding

1. The School Division

- a. .5 FTE (6 months for initial preparation)
- a. .6 FTE (supplementary to regular staffing) for three years
- b. \$1000 per year for classroom and curricular materials

2. The University of Calgary

- a. \$8000 Grant Application under the auspices of a federally funded, collaborative research project with University of Alberta and University of Lethbridge entitled "Perspectives for Understanding and Interpreting the Problem of Serious Learning Disruptive Behaviour"
-defray costs of data gathering (travel, audio-taping, transcription, analysis, photocopying, mailing and secretarial services

3. The Alberta Teachers Association

- a. \$3000 Grant Application through the Alberta Advisory Committee for Educational Studies (AACES)
-as in #2, defray costs of research

Benefits

We anticipate benefits in a number of areas. Primarily, the project will provide a deeper of understanding of these particular students and students like them within the School Division. We believe that this will lead to the following.

1. Prevention of further alienation and isolation. We anticipate the program would lead to greater academic success for these students and decrease their potential for dropping out of school. In addition, we hope that this program would also lead to the development of preventative measures for future populations, including the means for early identification of students with similar problems. Our goal is to enable these and future students to persevere through high school and become independent, lifelong learners.
2. Development of a working model, or prototype within the School Division. This localized instance of practical action would demonstrate the feasibility of such a program and its effects within the existing structure of the school district.
3. Development of localized expertise and insight. The research team would be used as a resource in the school division through the development of workshops and teacher institutes at the school or divisional levels. Highlights of the final report with programming recommendations could be included in the Student Services Handbook. We also believe the understanding gained from this project will provide insight for the wider discussion occurring at professional conferences, in the research literature and in the pre-service programs of professional teachers.
4. Provision of a forum for the continued development of innovative practice in collaboration with the University of Calgary and a strengthening of professional ties between the School Division, the other Alberta Universities, and the A.T.A.

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